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Manufacturing contributes R04.15bn

R030.04bn	R03.39bn	R0878mn	872,000
Foreign direct investment	Trade sector's contribution	Value of 32 licensed projects	Commercial registrations

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The manufacturing sector recorded an annual growth rate of 14.2% with its contribution to the national economy rising to R04.149bn in 2024 from R02.438bn in 2020, H E Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, stated to Majlis A'Shura on Wednesday.

Presenting the ministry's progress report, H E Yousef said the growth reflects outcomes of the 10th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025) which is focused on economic diversification and industrial development. The plan prioritises foreign investment, industrial innovation and infrastructure support.

He cited strategic infrastructure upgrades, improved investor services and targeted financing programmes as key enablers.

The manufacturing sector



Oman will prioritise industrial innovation, research and adoption of Industry 4.0 technologies, focusing on high-potential sectors such as food, pharmaceuticals, chemicals and minerals

H E QAIS AL YOUSEF

continued to lead economic growth with key expansions in the food, chemical, mining and medical industries. Registered industrial establishments grew from 180 in 2020 to 243 in 2024, an average annual increase of 7.7%.

Thirty-two major industrial projects worth over R0878mn were licensed during this period, in line with the government's goal

to raise the sector's contribution to R011.648bn by 2040.

The broader trade sector expanded from R02.627bn in 2020 to R03.392bn in 2024, growing at an annual rate of 6.6%. Real estate and professional services rose to R02.277bn from R01.951bn, showing an annual growth of 3.9%.

Foreign direct investment doubled reaching R030.042bn in

2024 from R014.261bn in 2018, with a compound annual growth rate of 15.4%. Investment was concentrated in the energy, mining, chemicals and logistics sectors.

Fee reductions, licensing simplifications and upgraded infrastructure played a major role in attracting investors.

The Invest in Oman digital platform expanded to offer 68

electronic services, helping streamline licensing and registration.

Foreign investor registration fee was cut to R0150 annually, and several fees were waived off to promote entrepreneurship. By 2024, Oman had more than 872,000 commercial registrations.

Efforts to enhance exports included the launch of the National Export Development Strategy, 98 targeted marketing studies and the 'Made in Oman' platform to promote local products. Support was extended to 52 companies participating in overseas exhibitions.

In e-commerce, the number of registered online stores grew by 236.4% between 2020 and 2024.

Intellectual property also saw improvements. Trademark registrations rose to 487 in 2024 from 412 in 2020, and patent applications increased from 35 to 96. A

national IP strategy was launched to support innovation and foster the creative economy.

The ministry also introduced legislation to regulate social media marketing, commercial naming, e-commerce, exhibitions and fair competition.

Programmes like 'Own It', 'Localisation' and 'Made in Oman' were launched in partnership with Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning to deepen local content and support SMEs.

Despite the gains, the minister acknowledged challenges including weak local supply chains, dependence on imports and productivity gaps.

Moving forward, H E Yousef said Oman will prioritise industrial innovation, research and adoption of Industry 4.0 technologies, focusing on high-potential sectors such as food, pharmaceuticals, chemicals and minerals to meet Oman Vision 2040 targets.

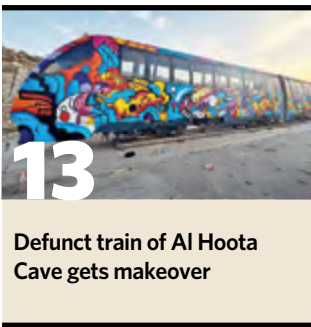
Sayyid Badr speaks with Indonesian FM

Muscat - H E Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, held a telephone conversation with Sugiono, Foreign Minister of Indonesia, on Wednesday.

They reviewed relations between the two countries and explored ways to enhance these across various fields. They also discussed recent developments in the Middle East and emphasised de-escalation of tensions.

Earlier in the day, H E Sayyid Badr received H E Stella Kloth, Ambassador of the Netherlands, and H E Ezzedine al Tiss, Ambassador of Tunisia, to bid them farewell at the end of their tours of duty in Oman.

There will be no edition on Sunday, June 29 on the occasion of Islamic New Year



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Adventure beckons in Al Qasha's ancient terraces

Our Correspondent
Jabal Akhdar

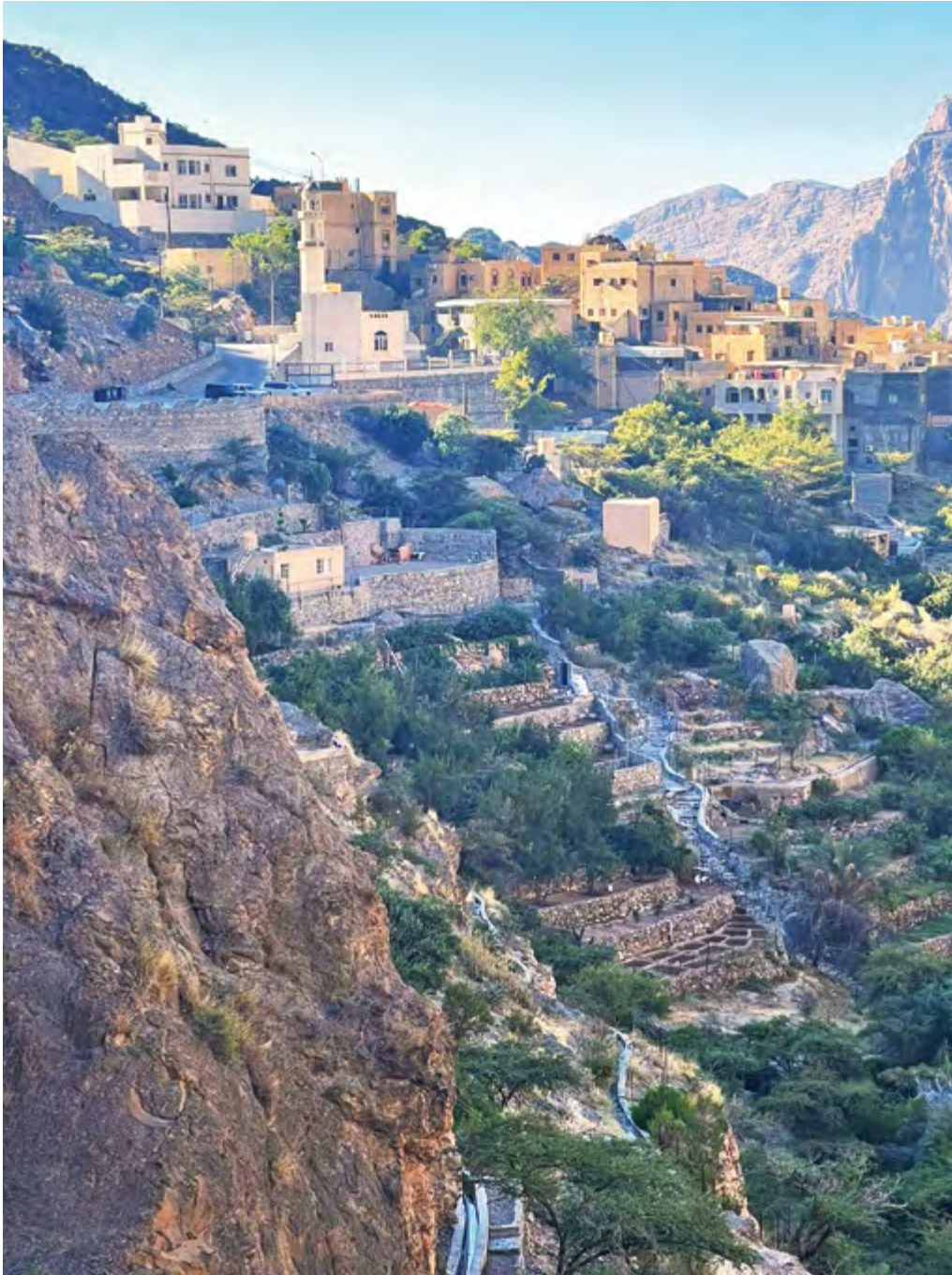
Al Qasha village in Jabal Akhdar, Dakhliyah is gaining recognition as a key destination for adventure tourism, drawing visitors to its unique blend of geology, heritage and agricultural richness.

Perched at the eastern foot of the towering mountain, Al Qasha sits at the end of one of Jabal Akhdar's longest terraces. The village is surrounded by Al Ain to the north and Salut and Masirah al Rawajih to the south. Its setting provides a striking backdrop for nature lovers and those seeking quiet exploration.

Al Qasha's agricultural terraces are lined with fruit trees such as pomegranates, walnuts, peaches and apricots. Seasonal crops like garlic and onions are bountiful. These farms are sustained by a network of aflaj and water springs, including Falaj al Awar, Falaj al Ghuj and Ain al Suwaib.

According to Walid bin Saif al Zakwani, a member of Jabal Akhdar Municipal Council and resident of the village, its name is believed to originate from the rock formations cascading towards it or metaphorically from the scattering of clouds - both fitting for the village's dramatic setting.

Zakwani said the village presents archaeological evidence of



The village presents archaeological evidence of early human settlement, including non-Islamic graves, fossilised terraces and cave dwellings with fire remnants

WALID BIN SAIF AL ZAKWANI

early human settlement, including non-Islamic graves, fossilised terraces and cave dwellings with fire remnants. Historic mosques and stone structures further link Al Qasha to its past, calling for detailed study and preservation.

Rose and pomegranate are harvested during summer, attracting tourists to witness traditional rose water extraction. The village also offers access to waterfalls such as Wadi al Ain and Sharjat al Anbur, along with unique rock formations and caves like Lambard.

Marked trails such as Al Lamd and Al Sab take hikers through valleys and ancient paths once used by villagers. "Al Qasha combines adventure, heritage and nature tourism," said another resident Hamad bin Subaih al Zakwani. "This is a destination unlike any other in Jabal Akhdar."

South Sharqiyah proposes turtle reserve in Masirah



Our Correspondent
Muscat

Municipal Council of South Sharqiyah has proposed establishment of a turtle reserve in Masirah Islands as part of broader environmental and urban development efforts in the governorate.

The initiative was discussed at a meeting of the council held on Tuesday chaired by Juma Abdullah al Araimi, Deputy Chairman. A presentation by the Health and Environmental Affairs Committee of the council recommended including the proposed site in Oman's national network of nature reserves.

The reserve would focus on protecting sea turtle populations around Masirah Island and its coastal areas. To support the project, the council suggested forming a technical committee to assess environmental needs and threats to marine life, while draft-

ing a comprehensive strategy that includes improving waste management, reducing plastic use, promoting recycling and working with international conservation bodies.

The council also reviewed other key proposals, including development of an integrated fish market at the Sur fishing port, aimed at enhancing infrastructure and services for the local fisheries sector.

In the healthcare sector, members examined the Rafiq al Shifa (Healing Companion) initiative, which seeks to provide accommodation facilities in Sur for individuals accompanying patients during treatment.

Additionally, the council discussed standardising commercial signage across the governorate's wilayats. The plan aims to introduce a unified design framework to improve visual harmony, support tourism and reinforce the governorate's urban identity.

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OCCI to launch 4th Franchise Programme on June 29

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) will launch the fourth edition of its Franchise Programme on June 29 under the patronage of Sheikh al Fadhli bin Mohammed al Harthi, Secretary-General of Council of Ministers.

The launch will be attended by Sheikh Faisal bin Abdullah al Rawas, Chairman of OCCI, Humood bin Salim al Saadi, Second Deputy Chairman and head of Central Franchise Committee, board members of the chamber and business representatives.

The programme aims to promote franchising as a business model among Omani entrepreneurs, highlighting its economic benefits and role in developing competitive local brands. It also seeks to help these brands expand into regional and international markets.

The programme supports efforts to diversify income sources and strengthen the SME sector, aligning with OCCI's strategy to improve the business climate and expand the private sector's contribution to Oman's economy under Vision 2040.

According to Saadi, the

We aim to create competitive Omani brands that can thrive both domestically and internationally

HUMOOD AL SAADI

fourth edition of the programme will build on the achievements of the previous one, reinforcing the chamber's commitment to empowering local businesses. "We aim to create competitive Omani brands that can thrive both domestically and internationally," he said.

He added that a Franchise

Centre was established as part of broader efforts to institutionalise franchising and offer targeted support to companies and entrepreneurs looking to scale. The centre plays a key role in facilitating expansion and reinforcing private sector leadership in development of the national economy.

OFA elects new board chairman

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Sayyid Sulaiman bin Hamoud al Busaidi has been elected Chairman of Board of Directors of Oman Football Association (OFA) for the 2025-2029 term after securing 30 out of 43 votes in a general assembly held on Wednesday. Qutaiba bin Saeed al Ghailani was elected Vice-Chairman having won 22 votes.

Sayyid Sulaiman al Busaidi

The session, attended by representatives of all 43 member clubs, confirmed quorum and proceeded with electronic voting under supervision of officials from Asian Football Confederation and FIFA.

The newly elected board will serve a four-year term, during which it is expected to lead key initiatives to strengthen Omani football both locally and internationally.

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Researcher feted at Unesco AI ethics forum in Bangkok

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Ayoub bin Mohammed al Balushi, a lecturer at University of Technology and Applied Sciences, has been awarded an honorary prize at the Unesco International Forum on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence 2025, currently taking place in Bangkok.

Running till June 27, the forum serves as a high-level international platform to discuss ethical governance frameworks for emerging AI technologies.

The accolade was granted in recognition of Balushi's research paper which was selected as one

of the top contributions to the forum's accompanying scientific seminar hosted by Burapha University.

Commended for its academic originality and forward-thinking perspective, the paper highlights key principles for promoting ethical practices in the field of AI.

The award reflects Oman's active engagement in the global discourse on the future of AI and underscores the commitment of Omani academic institutions to responsible, internationally aligned scientific research.

The forum highlights achievements in AI ethics since Unesco's 2021 recommendation statement on the ethics of AI.

NCEM joins IAEA-led exercise to test nuclear crisis response

Our Correspondent
Muscat

National Emergency Management Centre (NCEM) participated in ConvEx-3, a large-scale international nuclear emergency exercise coordinated by International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and hosted virtually by Romania.

The two-day simulation, which concluded on Wednesday, was designed to test global readiness in the event of a radiological crisis. The exercise simulated a severe radiological leak at Romania's Cernavodă Nuclear Power Plant and involved more than 75 countries and ten international organisations.

The drill assessed emergency preparedness through a series of complex scenarios and evaluated response mechanisms at national and international levels. Oman's participation involved several agencies under NCEM, with a focus on enhancing coordination, testing alert systems and enhancing inter-agency communication during a nuclear emergency.



ConvEx-3 simulated a severe radiological leak at Romania's Cernavodă Nuclear Power Plant and involved more than 75 countries and ten international organisations

NCEM stated that the exercise supported national efforts to align with international best practices, improve emergency procedures, and reinforce the country's ability to respond to radiological threats swiftly and effectively.

Rafael Mariano Grossi, Director

General of IAEA, said the exercise demonstrated the global community's shared commitment to safety. "This exercise was a clear demonstration of the international community's commitment to protect people and the environment by working together, across borders and systems, when every minute counts."

Cantemir Ciurea-Ercău, President of Romania's National Commission for Nuclear Activities Control, noted that hosting the exercise highlighted Romania's longstanding commitment

to nuclear safety. "In today's interconnected world, effective preparedness must transcend borders - this exercise reflected our shared commitment to safety, cooperation and transparency," he said.

ConvEx-3 was the largest simulation of its kind conducted by IAEA and was part of efforts to strengthen global nuclear and radiological emergency preparedness through collaboration and regular testing.

Omani wins silver at World Military Taekwondo Championship

Berlin, Germany - An Omani martial artist has claimed a silver medal at the 28th World Military Taekwondo Championship being held in Germany till June 29.

Cpl Shabeeb bin Salem al Wuhaibi earned the silver in the under-58kg weight category. The medal marks a significant achievement for the sultanate on the international military sports stage.

Col Hamed bin Salem al Balushi, Director of Military



Sports at Sultan's Armed Forces and head of the Omani delegation, praised the team's efforts at the championship.

"Our participation in this championship has been successful by all standards," he said. "Securing a silver medal reflects the commitment and determination of our athletes. I extend appreciation to everyone who supported the team and contributed to this result."

Coach Sgt Adel bin Khalifa al Wuhaibi credited the medal to Cpl Wuhaibi and the team's preparation and focus. "Our players demonstrated a high level of technical ability and strong competitiveness. Their performance reflects the hard work and collective effort behind the scenes. We are pleased to begin the championship with this success and aim for more medals in the coming days."

Major road upgrades underway in Dhofar to facilitate khareef travel

Our Correspondent
Salalah

In preparation for khareef 2025, Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology is accelerating implementation of strategic road development projects across Dhofar to support tourism, economic growth and public mobility.

The ministry confirmed that major upgrades and maintenance works are in progress throughout the governorate, aimed at enhancing road connectivity and traffic flow.

Among the flagship projects is the Attin Tunnel in Salalah, which has reached 93% completion -



well ahead of schedule. The tunnel is expected to significantly ease congestion during peak tourist months.

Work is also advancing on dualisation of key roads in Salalah. Sultan Taimur Street (6.8km) is 40% complete, while 45% of

work on Al Farouq Street (7.6km) has been finalised.

In Mughsail, 20% of work has been completed on a new road project that includes a 12m-high bridge, pedestrian paths, lighting and an underpass connecting tourist sites. The 33km Raysut-

Mughsail Road is also being dualised, with six interchanges and a 5.5km extension to 18th November Road.

The Al Shuwaimiya Ascent Improvement Project in Shalim and Hallaniyat Islands has been awarded. The 2.5km stretch includes new drainage systems, safety barriers and road signage.

According to Said bin Mohammed Tabuk, Director General of Road and Land Transport in Dhofar, the third, fourth and fifth phases of Sultan Said bin Taimur Road dualisation - spanning 400km - has commenced. The total investment in the project exceeds RO258mn.

Oman Astronomical Society to host stargazing camp in Jabal Shams

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman Astronomical Society (OAS) will host the 16th edition of its annual Family Astronomy Camp over the weekend of June 27 and 28, bringing together nearly 50 families for a unique stargazing experience in the mountain.

Held each year, the event combines education with practical astronomy, offering telescope observations, planetarium shows, interactive space science workshops, and activities tailored for children. Designed to foster interest in

astronomy among all age groups, the camp aims to make space science accessible and engaging for the public.

"This camp isn't just about looking at stars - it's about opening minds to the vast wonders of our universe," said Abdul Wahab al Busaidi, a senior member of OAS. "We want to cultivate a love for science through hands-on experiences that families can enjoy and remember together."

Interested families can register directly with the society.

Beyond local outreach, OAS has extended its scien-

tific engagement to the wider region. Through an agreement between Oman and Zanzibar, the society has enrolled 30 university students from Zanzibar in the International Astronomical Search Collaboration programme, supported by NASA.

Running from June 20 to July 16, the programme trains participants to analyse astronomical data and identify potential asteroids. On completion, students will receive NASA-issued certificates, providing encouragement to pursue further scientific research.

US consumer confidence falls in June, despite forecasts

Istanbul, s - The Conference Board's US Consumer Confidence Index fell 5.4 points to 93 in June, reversing an upward move in the previous month, according to data released Tuesday.

The figure for May was revised up to 98.4 points, while markets expected the June figure to come in at 99.4.

The Present Situation Index, which reflects American consumers' assessments of current job and labor market conditions, fell 6.4 points to 129.1 in June.

The Expectations Index, which is consumers' short-term assessments of income, job, and labor market conditions, fell 4.6 points to 69.

The index was well below the threshold of 80 - the level indicating a recession is expected in the next year.

"Consumer confidence weakened in June, erasing almost half of May's sharp gains," said Stephanie Guichard, senior economist at the Conference Board.

Saying that consumers' evaluations of the current state of affairs and their hopes for the future contributed to the fall, Guichard added that consumers were also less optimistic about current business conditions than in May.

Anadolu Agency

OQX celebrates graduation of first accelerator cohort, pact with ITHCA

Muscat - OQX, the research, development and innovation arm of OQ Group, has celebrated a major milestone with the graduation of the first cohort from its business accelerator programme.

Thirteen startups took the stage to present their innovative solutions to a panel of energy and entrepreneurship experts from Oman and abroad, marking a significant step in OQ's mission to drive technology-led economic growth.

Spanning sustainable energy, clean tech, artificial intelligence and energy asset optimisation, the showcased ventures reflected a bold vision for a smarter, greener future. The event drew interest from investors across Oman, Europe, Asia and South America, offering a platform for cross-border collaboration and shared investment potential.

In a key highlight of the event, OQX signed a strategic agreement with ITHCA Group to support commercialisation of outcomes from the accelerator. The partnership aims to connect participating startups with funding opportunities and ecosystem initiatives, strengthening their



In a key highlight of the event, OQX signed a strategic agreement with ITHCA Group to support commercialisation of outcomes from the accelerator

path to market.

The agreement was signed by Dr Ammar Mohammed al Ojaili, Vice President of Innovation at OQ, and Maha bint Mohammed al Balushi, Group Director at ITHCA.

Dr Ojaili noted that this graduation marks a pivotal moment for the accelerator. "It is a proof of the programme's impact on launching startups that offer real, scalable solutions for the energy sector."

Echoing this, Maha al Balushi

said, "Our partnership with OQ reflects ITHCA's commitment to nurturing Oman's entrepreneurship ecosystem. By aligning innovation with market demand, we believe we can unlock new opportunities in ICT and related sectors while reinforcing Oman's position as a regional hub for technology and investment."

The accelerator forms part of OQ's broader commitment to developing a dynamic, private sector-driven innovative economy.

Omani pavilion draws strong crowd at international fair

Algiers, Algeria - The Sultanate of Oman, the guest of honour at the 56th Algiers International Fair, continues to attract significant attention from visitors and Algerian business leaders at its national pavilion, which highlights the country's economic diversification and export capabilities.

The Omani pavilion has received wide acclaim for its distinctive design that embodies Omani heritage, culture, and authenticity, as well as for the diversity of participating companies representing the industrial, commercial, and services sectors.

Commenting on the pavilion, Algerian businessman Tarek Mousouni, who specialises in the plastics sector, said he was impressed by the high quality and competitive pricing of Omani plastic products, which have gained strong appeal among Algerian consumers.

Visitor Iman Boutaljah described the pavilion as 'impressive', noting the diversity and quality of products on display. She anticipated that several Omani companies would enter into agency and trade agreements with Algerian firms, given



Over 60 companies showcase national capabilities; bilateral meetings open doors for trade and investment

the growing confidence in Omani goods. Abderrahmane bin Omar, another Algerian entrepreneur,

said the pavilion offers a valuable platform for exploring investment and trade opportunities with Oman. He revealed plans to pursue business partnerships with Omani firms operating in the electricity and agriculture sectors.

Oman's participation in the fair includes more than 60 companies engaged in pharmaceuticals, transport, electrical solutions, real estate, fisheries,

tourism, food industries, and handicrafts, among other sectors.

In parallel, the Algerian-Omani Economic Forum saw bilateral business meetings held between companies and investors from both countries. These engagements aimed to explore opportunities for trade cooperation, establish joint investment ventures, and open new marketing channels for Omani products in Algeria.

Italy's Monte dei Paschi gets ECB nod for Mediobanca takeover

Rome, Italy - Mediobanca has shown its opposition to the takeover bid, launched in January, warning it would weaken its business model.

Monte dei Paschi di Siena (MPS) said on Wednesday that the European Central Bank had approved its proposed takeover of larger Italian lender Mediobanca.

MPS, which still counts the state as its largest shareholder since a 2017 bailout, launched the bid in January - setting in motion one of the many consolidation battles currently playing out in Italy's banking sector. The lender is offering investors 23 new shares for every ten shares they hold in Mediobanca. This would value the latter at €14.2bn, based on the closing stock price on Tuesday. Mediobanca's market capitalisation is currently about €16.7bn.

The ECB has set conditions for the proposed takeover, although not in the way that certain analysts had expected it to. Some speculated that the central bank would require a minimum number of investors



to accept the offer for the deal to proceed.

In reality, there is no stipulated threshold for the deal to go ahead, although MPS must satisfy other conditions if it receives an acceptance rate lower than 50%.

If this is the case, it must provide the ECB with a report confirming its 'de facto control' of Mediobanca, or otherwise provide a strategy outlining what it will do with the stake.

If the deal secures a support level higher than 50%, the bank has six months to submit an integration plan.

Mediobanca rejected MPS' bid in January, warning that it

would be 'strongly destructive' and weaken its business model.

In April, Mediobanca then played a defensive strategy, launching a separate takeover bid for Italian lender Banca Generali, giving shareholders an alternative option to the MPS deal. Another chapter in the saga involves the Del Vecchio and Caltagirone families, who are major shareholders in Mediobanca.

The Italian government sold MPS shares to the families in November, although there are reports that some investors were shut out of this process.

Euronews

Witthal Gulf Industries to set up AED40mn plant in Abu Dhabi

Abu Dhabi, UAE - Khalifa Economic Zones Abu Dhabi (KEZAD Group) and Witthal Gulf Industries have announced the signing of a 50-year land lease agreement for the establishment of a state-of-the-art plant in Taweelah, KEZAD.

Witthal Gulf Industries will invest AED40mn for the project that will establish the UAE's first lithium battery recycling plant in KEZAD. As both KEZAD Group and Witthal Gulf Industries envision a sustainable future for industrial development, the collaboration is slated to create a robust infrastructure for responsible recycling of lithium batter-

ies. The plant will leverage cutting-edge technology for recycling end-of-phase batteries used in manufacturing industries, particularly electric vehicles, solar farms and other renewable energy systems to recover valuable materials such as black mass, copper and aluminium, and produce sustainable alternatives.

Witthal Gulf Industries is part of Singapore-based Witthal Group and has a significant presence across the Middle East, Asia, and West Africa. The company stands at the forefront of the global commodities market, ethically sourcing and trading es-



sential materials such as rubber, tyres, minerals, and lithium ore to fuel sustainable industrial growth and strengthen critical global supply chains.

Abdullah al Hameli, CEO, Economic Cities and Free Zones, AD Ports Group, said: "Both KEZAD Group and Witthal Gulf Industries are driven by the same vision for sustainability. The partnership is based on a solid foundation that will provide the platform for innovation, and focus on technological advancements that contribute to sustainable industry growth in KEZAD."

"KEZAD Group is excited to facilitate and support a project

that offers sustainable solutions for industry waste, and aligns with the UAE's net zero goals."

Suresh Kumar Nalappa (Vijayendra), CEO, Witthal Gulf Industries, said: "Witthal Gulf Industries is excited to start its journey in KEZAD. We are thrilled to be part of an ecosystem that only provides the best resources but also encourages collaboration and innovation. We are confident that with our shared goals for sustainability, we will continue to push boundaries, address market demands responsibly, and ignite a new era of growth for both parties."

WAM

Oil prices rise despite fragile ceasefire

Brussels, Belgium - Markets rose slightly on news that the ceasefire appears to be holding, while oil prices also continued to climb.

Investors kept an eye on the Middle East on Wednesday as a fragile ceasefire between Iran and Israel appeared to hold after initial shakiness.

Both sides claimed victory; Iran's president said Israel had suffered a "historic punishment", while Israel's prime minister argued the offensive had removed "the Iranian nuclear threat".

A new US intelligence report nonetheless found that Tehran's nuclear programme had only been set back by a few months by US strikes. Washington denied the findings of the leaked report.

Early in Europe, Brent crude had risen around 1.15% to \$67.91 a barrel, while WTI was 1.21% higher at US\$65.15. The prices suggest the market has still not fully calmed after the conflict in the Middle East, with investors continuing to monitor the shaky ceasefire.

"Israel, as soon as we made the deal, they came out and they dropped a load of bombs, the likes of which I've never seen before, the biggest load that we've seen," Trump said. On his social media platform, Truth Social, he wrote: "Israel, do not drop those bombs. If you do, it is a major violation. Bring your pilots home, now!" Trump claimed that neither Iran nor Israel "know what the f*** they're doing".

Stocks, meanwhile, rose modestly on Wednesday.

France's CAC 40 was up 0.4% at 7,647.07 in morning trading, Germany's DAX rose 0.08% to 23,660.55, the UK's FTSE 100 increased 0.35% to 8,790.03, and Italy's FTSE MIB rose 0.24% to 39,568.10. The STOXX 600 jumped 0.35% to 542.88, while the STOXX 50 rose 0.21% to 5,308.40.

Looking to the US, Dow Jones futures were 0.06% higher at 43,452.00, while S&P



US stocks close higher following Israel-Iran ceasefire

Istanbul, Türkiye - US stocks closed Tuesday with gains after US President Donald Trump announced that a ceasefire was reached between Israel and Iran, suspending armed conflict which began on June 13.

The Dow was up 1.19%, or 507.24 points, to close at 43,089.02.

The S&P 500 earned 1.11% to 6,092.18 points, and Nasdaq composite gained 1.43% to finish at 19,912.53.

Airline stocks were higher as oil fell, with shares of United Airlines, Frontier and Delta all climbing more than 2%.



Tech firms such as Broadcom and Nvidia advanced 3.9% and 2.5%, respectively, as investor appetite for risk grew.

The truce was initially announced by Trump, who said it would involve a phased halt to operations, with Iran beginning the ceasefire first and Israel following 12 hours later. A full end to hostilities would then be declared at the 24th hour, he said.

Dow Jones up 1.19%, Nasdaq rises 1.43% and S&P 500 climbs 1.11%, while Brent crude falls around 3.7%, 'fear index' down 11.85%

they are well-positioned to wait to learn more about the likely course of the economy before considering any adjustments to the policy stance of the central bank.

He also said the effects of tariffs will depend on their final levels and increases in tariffs this year are likely to push up prices and weigh on economic activity.

Oil prices fell following the announcement of the ceasefire, after reaching 2-month high levels with concerns that Iran may close the Strait of Hormuz.

Anadolu Agency

500 futures gained 0.05% to reach 6,149.25.

In Asian trading, the Shanghai Composite index climbed 0.44% to 3,435.60, the Nikkei 225 rose 0.31% to 38,910.93, Hong Kong's Hang Seng jumped 0.78% to 24,364.79, while South Korea's Kospi was almost flat, rising 0.01% to 3,104.20.

Australia's S&P/ASX 200 notched up 0.09% to 8,563.20.

The US Dollar Index was up 0.13% at 97.98 although the currency has still failed to recover from losses seen earlier this year. The euro rose less than 1% against the dollar while the Japanese Yen dropped around 0.12% against its US safe-haven alternative.

Euronews

Türkiye's trade with Africa grows on back of 'win-win' strategy

Ankara, Türkiye - Türkiye's trade with Africa is on the rise with the country's 'win-win' strategy aimed at strengthening political, cultural, and economic relations with African countries through mutual investments.

Türkiye's 'Developing Commercial and Economic Relations with African Countries' strategy aims to foster cooperation between the business communities of Türkiye and African countries in sectors such as contracting, energy, health, and agriculture.

Ankara has also transferred its defence industry success to Africa, with growing exports from Turkish defence firms including Baykar, Aselsan, Turkish Aerospace Industries and Nurol Holding. These exports, along with various projects, organizations, and activities, contribute to expanding trade between Türkiye and the African continent.

Turkish exports to African countries rose 1.7% year-on-year in 2024, reaching US\$19.4bn. Egypt was the top recipient, with US\$3.5bn in imports from Türkiye, followed by Morocco with US\$3.1bn and Libya with US\$2.5bn, according to data from the Turkish Exporters' Assembly.

In the January-May period of 2025, Turkish exports reached US\$8.4bn, an increase of 8.3% compared to the same period last year.



Turkish exports to African countries rose 1.7% year-on-year in 2024, reaching US\$19.4bn. Egypt was the top recipient, with US\$3.5bn in imports from Türkiye

Morocco received the highest volume of Turkish exports during the first five months of the year, totalling US\$1.5bn, followed by Egypt with US\$1.3bn and Libya with US\$1.1bn. Turkish contractors in Morocco have completed construction projects worth US\$4.3bn to date. Efforts are ongoing to further enhance bilateral cooperation under the Free Trade Agreement.

Motor vehicles, electrical machinery and equipment, mineral fuels, and oils are among the

leading sectors in Türkiye's trade with Morocco. Trade between the two countries is expected to grow under the ongoing 'win-win' approach.

Meanwhile, Türkiye is targeting a trade volume of US\$15bn with Egypt, its most significant trading partner in Africa.

Machinery, mechanical equipment and tools, mineral fuels, oils, and iron and steel comprise the largest sectors in Türkiye-Egypt trade. Turkish companies operating in Egypt

are active in the textile, electronics, and home appliance industries.

Regarding Türkiye's trade with Libya, a memorandum of understanding on security and military cooperation was signed between the two countries in 2019. Türkiye also exports unmanned combat aerial vehicles (UCAVs) to African countries such as Niger, Mali, and Ethiopia, and armored vehicles to Gambia, Uganda, and Kenya.

The AFEX'25 Africa Business Forum and Expo starts Wednesday in Istanbul, bringing together Turkish and African business communities to establish partnerships in key sectors such as agriculture, energy, construction, health, finance, and technology.

Anadolu Agency

MSX loses 26 points, closes at 4,513

Muscat - Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) 30 Index on Wednesday closed at 4,513.93 points, decreased by 26.6 points (0.59%) from the previous session's close of 4,540.54 points.

Trading value decreased to RO11,238,468, reflecting a 35.3% drop compared to the last session's RO17,360,211. The MSX report indicated that market capitalisation saw a marginal decrease of 0.011%, settling at approximately RO28.30bn.

Non-Omani investors recorded purchases worth RO566,000 (5.03% of total trading volume), while sales by foreign investors reached RO1,609mn (14.32%). Net foreign investment declined by



RO1.044mn (9.29%).

Gold prices stabilise

Gold prices on Wednesday stabilised due to a decline in investor interest in the yellow metal as a safe-haven.

Spot gold was unchanged at US\$3,326.39 per ounce, after

hitting an over two-week low on Tuesday. US gold futures edged 0.2% higher to US\$3,340.

Elsewhere, spot silver was up 0.1% at \$35.94 per ounce, platinum fell 0.2% to US\$1,313.88, while palladium was down 0.2% at US\$1,064.01.

ONA

Sharjah promotes economic, investment scopes with Oman

Sharjah, UAE - Sharjah Economic Development Department (SEDD) organised a virtual workshop in coordination with UAE Embassy in the Sultanate of Oman and Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI). The workshop aimed to promote promising economic sectors and investment opportunities in the emirate of Sharjah.

This comes as part of strengthening the strong economic relations between Sharjah and the Sultanate of Oman, expanding cooperation, and

exploring investment opportunities in Sharjah.

The workshop was attended by a number of officials, representatives of government and private entities, and investors from various sectors.

The workshop highlighted the investment opportunities available in Sharjah and reviewed successful experiences in the fields of manufacturing, supply chains, industrial zones, transformation industries, and other sectors.

Commenting on that, Hamad Ali Abdalla al Mah-

moud, SEDD Chairman, pointed out that Sharjah is keen on providing an ideal investment climate and ensuring business continuity at the area, which contributes to encouraging companies to develop their businesses and facilitate as well as to attract more investments.

"Such thing can be achieved by adopting policies and providing advanced services that contribute to facilitating investor procedures and stimulating economic growth.

WAM

Toyota Hilux offers holiday packages to Istanbul via raffle

Toyota Hilux buyers can now gain entry into a Raffle Draw to win 1 of 16 iPhone 16 Pro Max and a chance to win one of five international holiday packages to Istanbul for two adults (4 nights, 5 days).

The powerful and exhilarating Toyota Hilux is now available with free service from 3 years/30,000km up to 10 years/100,000km (whichever is earlier), 1 year insurance and Scratch & Win prizes. Benefits vary by model, variant, model year and manufacturing year. The campaign, that began on June 1, will last until July 31.

For those who live for the thrill of the journey, the Hilux Adventure is built to deliver. A mighty 4ltr V6 engine generates 235HP and 38.3kg-m of torque, delivering powerful, pulse-raising performance. With an Auto Disconnect Differential that ensures seamless traction, the Hilux Adventure turns every drive into an exhilarating experience. This bold, high-performance machine is engineered by Toyota to stir your spirit and command the road.

The Hilux 4X4 offers a dependable 2.7ltr petrol engine with 164HP, available with both a 5-speed manual and a 6-speed



Tough meets stylish in the Hilux. Its assertive exterior features a sculpted SUV-like front bumper, sleek fog lamps, sporty alloy wheels and eye-catching side stripes, all contributing to its bold presence

automatic transmission that combines power with versatility to match your driving style.

Tough meets stylish in the Hilux. Its assertive exterior features a sculpted SUV-like front

bumper, sleek fog lamps, sporty alloy wheels and eye-catching side stripes, all contributing to its bold and unmistakable presence. Whether powering through the workweek or embarking on weekend getaways, the Hilux is a perfect companion. It effortlessly shifts between being a rugged workhorse and a refined family vehicle, thanks to its spacious cabin, smart technology and ro-

bust engineering.

Inside, the Hilux reflects Toyota's 'Tough and Emotional' design language. The cabin draws SUV-style inspiration with refined detailing and premium finishes. Comfort is thoughtfully enhanced with features such as an automatic air conditioning system with rear vents, an 8-inch touchscreen navigation system and multi-information display.

BankDhofar offers travel insurance safety coverage

Travel insurance is no longer just a travel extra—it serves as a crucial safeguard for individuals embarking on family holidays, corporate travel, or overseas assignments.

In an era marked by uncertainties such as flight delays, sudden health issues, and unpredictable weather, having robust insurance coverage offers essential reassurance and security, a press release said.

Understanding the importance of this protection, BankDhofar—one of Oman's largest banks—has joined forces with Dhofar Insurance Company, a leading name in the sultanate's insurance sector, to introduce a comprehensive travel insurance solution. With wide-ranging coverage, generous benefits, and adaptable features tailored to travellers' needs, this policy delivers dependable protection and reflects a strong focus on customer well-being.

Fully underwritten by Dhofar Insurance, the Travel Insurance policy offers comprehensive protection for travellers facing unexpected events abroad. It covers emer-



gency medical expenses and hospitalisation up to USD150,000, including emergency dental treatment up to USD1,000 per year. In case of serious illness or accident, the insurance covers transportation or repatriation costs up to USD100,000, and sea or mountain search and rescue expenses up to USD20,000.

Additional support is provided for family members during medical emergencies. If a traveller is hospitalised for more than seven days, the policy includes one economy class air ticket or a first-class rail ticket for a visiting relative, along with accommodation expenses of USD100 per day for up to 15 days.

Oman Air, Nation Brand Office sign strategic MoU

In a landmark step to amplify Oman's presence on the world stage, Oman Air has signed a strategic Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Nation Brand Office, aligning the sultanate's national airline with Oman's flagship promotional brand initiative launched by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq earlier this year.

The agreement cements a powerful alliance between two national entities committed to placing Oman's identity, culture, and values at the forefront of the global travel experience. As one of the first institutions to formally embrace the Oman Promotional Brand, Oman Air will serve as a flagship channel for storytelling, bringing to life the essence of Oman's Nation Brand through every journey it operates, a press release said.

"This partnership is more than symbolic, it's strategic," said H H Dr Faris bin Turki al Said, assistant professor at Sultan Qaboos University and a member of the Nation Brand Technical Team. "Oman Air represents our first impression to the world. Infusing our national brand across such a



The agreement cements a powerful alliance between two entities committed to Oman's identity and values

visible platform sends a strong, unified message about Oman and the opportunities it offers in tourism, investment, and as a thriving destination overall." Con Korfiatis, CEO of Oman

Air, added, "We have always carried the soul of Oman across continents from our cabin service to our iconic hospitality. This MoU signals a new chapter, where our brand and our nation's brand walk hand in hand. We are proud to be one of the key strategic partners of this initiative, and even prouder to be part of the journey shaping how Oman is seen, felt, and remembered around the world."

Under the agreement, both parties will work to co-develop brand integration initiatives.

Evening with VinFast held for media

To celebrate the official arrival of the all-electric VinFast VF 8 in Oman, Bahwan Automobiles and Trading hosted 'Evening with VinFast', an exclusive event curated for media representatives, influencers and select customers.

The evening offered guests a firsthand look at the VF 8's striking design, advanced technologies, and eco-conscious engineering. The event provided an immersive platform to showcase VinFast's bold vision for the future of smart mobility and its unwavering commitment to delivering innovative, sustainable driving solutions, a press release



said.

G K Ganesh, COO, Bahwan Automobiles and Trading, said, "We are delighted to introduce the VinFast VF 8 to the Sultanate of Oman. This launch marks a significant milestone in our efforts to offer forward-

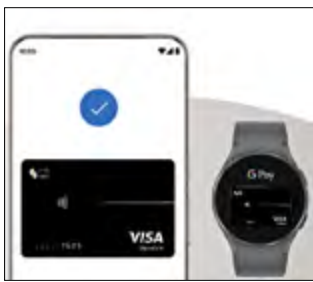
thinking, sustainable, and high-quality mobility solutions to our customers. VinFast's trailblazing EV innovation and contemporary design align perfectly with our aspirations for the future of automotive excellence in the region." Do Hoai Linh, market CEO of

VinFast Middle East, added, "The VF 8's debut in Oman represents a pivotal moment in VinFast's regional growth journey. We believe the Middle East is poised for a transformative shift toward intelligent, zero-emission mobility."

Sohar International launches Google Pay

Sohar International and its Islamic banking window Sohar Islamic have announced the launch of Google Pay, introducing yet another secure and contactless payment solution to their growing suite of digital offerings.

The service is now available to all Sohar International and Sohar Islamic customers, enabling fast, seamless, and secure transac-



tions through Android smartphones and Wear OS devices

across point-of-sale terminals, online platforms, and supported mobile applications worldwide, a press release said.

The introduction of Google Pay marks a significant step forward in the bank's digital transformation journey, reflecting its ongoing commitment to adopting globally trusted technologies that deliver enhanced value to customers. This launch is not just

an addition to Sohar International and Sohar Islamic's payment ecosystem - it is a testament to the bank's strategic focus on innovation, security, and customer-centric banking experiences.

As Sohar International continues to evolve its digital capabilities, the bank remains steadfast in offering intuitive, future-ready solutions.

Bank Muscat hosts seminar on GFM

As part of its initiative to highlight the latest developments in the sector, Bank Muscat organised a seminar focusing on Global Financial Markets (FM).

The event was attended by a number of decision-makers and financial professionals representing various institutions and companies in Muscat.

This seminar is a continuation of the bank's ongoing efforts to enhance communication with its customers, facilitating discussions on various topics.

Oman Shell, MoE host NXplorers Juniors and Seniors Awards

In a vibrant celebration of innovation, creativity, and youth-led problem solving, Oman Shell, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education (MoE), hosted the NXplorers Juniors and Seniors Award Ceremony.

The event gathered 31 outstanding student teams - a dynamic mix of junior and senior participants, each presenting innovative solutions to real-world sustainability challenges. These final presentations were the culmination of hands-on workshops, interactive training sessions, and guided mentorship that equipped students with critical thinking tools and the NXplorers methodology to tackle the food, water, and energy nexus, a press release said.



Representing their schools in pairs, the students took part in a vibrant exhibition, where they showcased their ideas to, evaluators, special guests, and the guest of honour. Their projects were guided by Shell's NXthinking methodology, a unique approach that combines systems thinking, scenario planning, and change management.

The day concluded on a celebratory note, as 5 junior and 10 senior teams were honoured for their exceptional ideas and potential to drive tangible, positive change within communities.

Speaking on the occasion, Al Ahnaf al Zubaidi, Oman Shell's Social Investment and Community Relations Manager, said, "Every year, we are inspired by

the boldness and clarity with which our youth confront the challenges of tomorrow. NXplorers is more than a competition or a series of workshops, it's a launchpad for future change-makers. Together with the Ministry of Education, we are proud to nurture a generation that doesn't just imagine a better world, but actively builds it."

The programme's organisers reaffirmed that it serves as a dynamic extension of classroom learning—bringing to life the connection between theoretical knowledge and practical, creative thinking.

Launched in 2018, Shell NXplorers is a longstanding partnership between Oman Shell and the Ministry of Education.

Iran's withdrawal from NPT would be very regrettable, says IAEA chief

Istanbul, Turkey - The head of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) on Wednesday warned that Iran's withdrawal from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) would be 'very regrettable'.

"This would be, of course, very regrettable. I hope this is not the case. I don't think this would help anybody," IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi said about Iran's withdrawal from the NPT during a joint news briefing at Austria's Security Cabinet meeting with Austrian Chancellor Christian Stocker, Vice-Chancellor Andreas Babler, and Foreign Minister Beate Meinl-Reisinger.

He warned that it could also lead to 'isolation' and unravel a 'serious erosion' in the NPT structure.

When asked about Iran's remaining highly enriched uranium stocks following the recent conflict with Israel, Grossi said it is the 'number one priority' to return to the sites to assess the situation. "We have to go back, and going back with inspectors to these places is not an easy thing. So, my idea is to try to engage with them as soon as possible," he added.

His remarks come after the Iranian parliament ON Wednesday



IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi warned that it could also lead to 'isolation' and unravel a 'serious erosion' in the NPT structure

day morning voted to suspend cooperation with the UN nuclear watchdog, one day after a US-proposed ceasefire with Israel took effect.

"The Atomic Energy Organization of Iran will suspend its cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency until the security of nuclear facilities is

guaranteed," Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, speaker of the parliament, said in a statement cited by Fars News Agency.

Meanwhile, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio on Wednesday said Iran is now 'much further away from a nuclear weapon', despite intelligence reports indicating that three of

Iran's nuclear facilities were not destroyed in a recent US strike.

Speaking to *Politico's* Dasha Burns during the NATO summit, Rubio presented a more cautious view than President Donald Trump, who has claimed that the nuclear sites in Fordo, Natanz, and Isfahan were 'completely destroyed'.

"The bottom line is, they are much further away from a nuclear weapon today than they were before the president took this bold action," Rubio told *Politico*.

"That's the most important thing to understand - significant, very significant, substantial damage was done to a variety of dif-

ferent components, and we're just learning more about it," *Politico* cited Rubio as saying.

CNN claimed that a preliminary assessment from the Defence Intelligence Agency concluded that the recent strikes on Iran's nuclear programme delayed its progress by only a few

and it's one that really shouldn't be rereported because it doesn't accurately reflect what's happening," Rubio added.

Israel began its air campaign against Iran's military and nuclear facilities on June 13, striking several of the same sites hit by the US on Sunday.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said Iran is now 'much further away from a nuclear weapon', despite intelligence reports indicating that three of Iran's nuclear facilities were not destroyed

months.

The US intelligence community is expected to release further evaluations in the coming days and weeks, though it's common for different intelligence agencies to reach differing conclusions in their analyses, according to *Politico*.

Rubio rejected the media coverage as 'false', saying it failed to reflect the complete situation.

"I hate commenting on these stories, because often the first story is wrong and the person putting it out there has an agenda," he said.

"That story is a false story,

The US struck the Fordo and Natanz facilities with bunker-buster bombs dropped from B-2 stealth bombers, Joint Chiefs Chairman General Dan Caine said on Sunday.

Over two dozen submarine-launched cruise missiles targeted the Isfahan site, he added.

Trump has maintained that the sites 'were totally destroyed, and everyone knows it'.

"It was my great honour to Destroy All Nuclear facilities & capability, and then, STOP THE WAR!" he said on social media on Tuesday.

Anadolu Agency



Gaza is 'very close' to a deal: Donald Trump

The Hague, Netherlands - US President Donald Trump said on Wednesday that 'making a deal on Gaza is very close', linking this to recent US strikes on Iran's nuclear facilities.

"I think great progress is being made on Gaza. Because of this attack that we made, I think we're going to have some very good news," Trump said during a meeting with NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte on the sidelines of a NATO summit in The Hague.

He added that efforts to reach a deal were already advancing before the strike, but claimed that the US strikes on Iran helped accelerate the process.

"It showed a lot of power. I think it helped... Separately, even before this, we were very close to making a deal on Gaza," he said.

Trump also said he was told by US Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff that 'Gaza is very close' to an agreement.

He compared Sunday's massive bomb strikes on Iran's nuclear plants to the nuclear bombs the US dropped on Japanese cities near the end of World War II.

"That hit ended the war. I don't want to use an example of Hiroshima, I don't want to use an example of Nagasaki, but that was essentially the same thing, that ended that war. If we didn't take that out, they would have been fighting right now," said

Trump.

Iran-Israel ceasefire

On the ceasefire between Iran and Israel, announced on Monday, he characterised it as going 'very good', adding, 'I was so proud of them', unlike earlier remarks when he was apparently angry at them for continuing the fighting.

Trump described the US operation against Iran's nuclear sites as a 'perfect operation' and 'an unbelievable success', claiming the strike had set back Tehran's nuclear programme 'by decades'.

"I don't think they're ever going to do it again," he said.

On whether the US would attack Iran again if it restarted its nuclear programme, Trump said: "Sure, but we're not going to have to worry about that, it's gone for years."

Separately, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said Iran's conversion facility, essential for nuclear weapons development, was 'wiped out'.

"We can't even find where it is, where it used to be on the map. You can't even find where it used to be, because the whole thing is just blackened out. It's gone," Rubio told reporters.

Both Trump and Rubio have disputed an alleged top-secret US report saying the attacks set Iran's nuclear programme back 'a few months' at most.

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YACHT EXCURSIONS IN SUMMER



Yachts are seen sailing in waters in Sanya, south China's Hainan Province, on Tuesday. As the 2025 summer travel peak season approaches, the waters in Sanya have gathered a variety of yachts, attracting many domestic and international tourists to experience yacht excursions (Xinhua)

Kenya: 1 person killed, 17 injured on anniversary of 2024 unrest



Nairobi, Kenya - One person was killed and at least 17 others were injured on Wednesday in Kenya during nationwide protests to mark the anniversary of the deadly 2024 anti-taxation protests, according to local media.

At least 10 people, including a female police officer who sustained head injuries, were brought to Kenyatta National Hospital in the capital Nairobi, according to local media outlet *Citizen*.

In the county of Machakos, one individual was killed by gunfire, and at least seven others were taken to the hospital in Matuu town with gunshot wounds.

Police used tear gas and water cannons to disperse the protesters.

The East African country's Communications Authority ordered all television and radio stations to end live coverage of the protests, warning of 'regulatory action' in case of rejection to abide by the directive.

Thousands of people took to the streets across the country on Wednesday to mark the first anniversary of the dramatic anti-Finance Bill demonstrations held on June 25, 2024, that led to the storming of parliament, police gunfire, and over 60 deaths.

President William Ruto's administration faced intense scrutiny for how it handled the

protests, which also caused widespread property damage.

The government later acknowledged fatalities and disappearances linked to the unrest. Ruto dissolved nearly his entire Cabinet in July, retaining only Prime Cabinet Secretary Musalia Mudavadi and pledging to form a 'broad-based government'.

Sparked by public anger over rising living costs and President Ruto's tax policies, demonstrations in Nairobi, Kisumu, and Mombasa were among the most intense. Initially focused on economic demands, the protests escalated into calls for Ruto's resignation and caused widespread property damage.

Anadolu Agency

Zelenskyy holds talks with Trump

The Hague, Netherlands - Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Wednesday said that he had a 'long and substantive' meeting with US President Donald Trump on the sidelines of the NATO summit in The Hague, Netherlands.

Zelenskyy also said they discussed how to 'achieve a ceasefire and a real peace' in Ukraine, as well as 'how to protect our people' amid the ongoing Moscow-Kyiv armed conflict.

Anadolu Agency

Ready to work with Trump to achieve peace with Israel: Palestine's Abbas

Ramallah, Palestine - Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas said on Wednesday that he is ready to work with US President Donald Trump to reach a comprehensive peace agreement with Israel.

In a letter to the US president, Abbas expressed his 'deep gratitude and appreciation for Trump's successful efforts in reaching a ceasefire between Israel and Iran', the official news agency Wafa reported.

Abbas called the ceasefire between Iran and Israel a 'necessary and important step to defuse the crises plaguing the world, which will positively impact the security and stability of the region'. After 12 days of aerial combat between the two regional arch-foes, Trump on Monday announced a ceasefire between Israel and Iran to end

their conflict.

"A ceasefire in Gaza would constitute an additional step to Trump's crucial efforts to achieve a just and comprehensive peace between the Palestinians, the Israelis, and the entire world," Abbas said.

The Palestinian leader signalled readiness to work with Trump, Saudi Arabia, and the entire international community 'to fulfil the promise of peace, leading to achieving security and stability for all'.

"With you, we can achieve what seemed impossible: a recognised, free, sovereign, and secure Palestine; a recognised and secure Israel; and a region that enjoys peace, prosperity, and integration," Abbas said in his letter to Trump.

Anadolu Agency



Canada: Muslim woman ‘forced to remove hijab’ at airport

Hamilton, Canada - A Canadian airline is under fire after a Muslim woman was allegedly forced to remove her hijab, or headscarf, in public at Toronto Pearson Airport on June 20 before boarding a flight to Winnipeg.

Afsara Raidah, the woman’s daughter, shared the incident on social media, saying her mother was ‘humiliated’ by ‘a Flair Airlines employee’ at the gate for flight F8641.

“Flair Airlines, you violated my mother’s rights and humiliated her at Toronto Pearson Airport today. We will not stay silent,” she wrote.

“This was Islamophobia. This was a violation of my mother’s religious freedom and basic human rights. It happened in Canada, a country that claims to value diversity, inclusion, and respect,” she said.

Raidah also said the employee insisted that her mother remove her hijab because her passport photo was taken before she began wearing it, even though her face was fully visible.

When her father objected, the staff member allegedly replied: “Well, you should’ve updated your passport picture.”

Transport Canada rules state



that religious head coverings such as the hijab do not need to be removed as long as the person’s face is visible.

In a statement to Anadolu, Flair Airlines said on Tuesday that the staff member works for AGI, its ground handling partner.

“While the individual involved is employed by AGI, our ground handling partner, not Flair Airlines directly, we expect all service partners to uphold the same standards of respect, professionalism, and non-discrimination that we require of our own team,” said Flair CEO Maciej Wilk.

Flair said AGI issued a formal apology and placed the employee on leave.

The National Council of Canadian Muslims (NCCM) in a statement announced on Tuesday that its legal team is involved and added: “There is no room for Islamophobia in Canada’s airports or airlines, period.”

“We are very concerned that such an alleged incident took place within an airport and flight service, where so many of us depend on the professionalism of the staff for basic safety,” NCCM noted.

Anadolu Agency

NATO allies agree to allocate 5% of GDP to defence by 2035

Member states will submit annual plans outlining credible trajectory to reach the goal

The Hague, Netherlands - NATO’s 32 member states on Wednesday committed to a significant boost in defence spending, pledging to allocate 5% of gross domestic product (GDP) annually by 2035 to meet both core defence requirements and broader security needs.

In a declaration issued at the end of a summit in The Hague, the alliance said the investment aims to strengthen deterrence and defence capabilities amid growing security challenges, particularly the ‘long-term threat’ posed by Russia and the persistent danger of terrorism.

“Allies commit to invest 5% of GDP annually on core defence requirements as well as defence- and security-related spending by 2035 to ensure our individual and collective obligations, in accordance with Article 3 of the Washington Treaty,” the declaration said.

The 5% target includes two main components: at least 3.5% of GDP annually for core defence expenditures to meet NATO Capability Targets, and up to 1.5% of GDP for areas such as critical infrastructure protection, cybersecurity, civil resilience, innovation, and industrial capacity-building.

Each member state will submit annual plans outlining a credible trajectory to reach the spending goal.

NATO leaders agreed to review progress in 2029, adjusting the balance based on the evolving strategic environment and defence requirements.

The Hague declaration underscores that these increased investments will enable NATO to fulfil its three core tasks: deterrence and defence, crisis prevention and management, and cooperative security.

Support for Ukraine’s de-



The declaration also confirmed that next year’s NATO summit will be held in Türkiye, followed by Albania in 2027

The 5% target includes two main components: at least 3.5% of GDP annually for core defence expenditures to meet NATO Capability Targets, and up to 1.5% of GDP for critical infrastructure protection, cybersecurity, civil resilience, innovation, and industrial capacity-building

fence efforts and industrial base will be included in the calculation of allies’ defence spending under the new 5% framework.

“Allies reaffirm their enduring sovereign commitments to provide support to Ukraine, whose security contributes to ours, and, to this end, will include di-

rect contributions towards Ukraine’s defence and its defence industry when calculating Allies’ defence spending,” said the declaration.

The declaration reaffirmed NATO’s intention to expand transatlantic defence industrial cooperation and reduce barriers

to defence trade among allies. It stated: “We will work to eliminate defence trade barriers among Allies and will leverage our partnerships to promote defence industrial cooperation.”

The declaration also confirmed that next year’s NATO summit will be held in Türkiye, followed by Albania in 2027.

‘Massive blow’ to Iran’s ambitions

Speaking at a press conference at the end of the summit, NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte praised the recent US operation targeting Iran’s nuclear capabilities, calling it a ‘very targeted’ move and ‘a massive blow’ to Tehran’s ambitions.

“I commend the president for that,” he added.

On Russia, Rutte maintained his established stance, saying: “I don’t trust (President Vladimir) Putin.” He stressed that the Russian leader’s goal to divide the West backfired, as Finland and Sweden joined NATO since the start of the Ukraine war and its allies committed to more defence spending.

Regarding the lack of language on Ukraine’s membership in the summit declaration, Rutte said that NATO chose a concise format: “What we really want to do here is not to recall all the language, like the ‘irreversible path’ of the way (for Ukraine) into NATO. It’s still there. Nothing changed, but really to focus on three core issues in five paragraphs.”

Anadolu Agency



Siarhei Tsikhanouski was released following US mediation

Released Belarus dissident speaks out against Lukashenko

Belarus - On June 21, former presidential candidate and popular blogger Siarhei Tsikhanouski and 13 other Belarusian political prisoners were released following US mediation. The day after his release, he spoke about his political convictions at a press conference in Vilnius, Lithuania, with his wife, Belarusian opposition leader Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya.

Tsikhanouski told journalists that he can hardly believe he is free and he may not have survived if he’d had to spend 20 years in prison.

In 2021, the entrepreneur and blogger was sentenced to 18 years in a penal colony during a court trial held behind closed doors. Investigators accused the activist of organising street protests in Belarus.

Known for his Telegram channel, ‘The Country for Life’, Tsikhanouski had announced in May 2020 that he would run for president in the election on August 9, but was not allowed to do so. His wife ran instead.

Tsikhanouski was detained in Grodno on May 29, 2020, during a campaign event in support of his wife.

Held under the harshest prison conditions, Tsikhanouski said he was unable to see lawyers or priests. “For five years, I wasn’t able to confess once,” he said. “Not a single visit to the prison store to at least buy soap or a toothbrush. Other prisoners had to get them for me with great difficulty.”

Political prisoners treated worse than murderers, Tsikhanouski says

As a political prisoner, Tsikhanouski had to clean his single cell four times a day. “What’s there to scrub?” Tsikhanouski said through tears. “Everything is clean. But the guards checked the dust with their fingers - and sent me back to the punishment

cell. The rapists and murderers sitting next door have televisions, they have everything, but we are not allowed anything. Human rights also apply to prisoners.”

Tsikhanouski said former presidential contender Viktor Babariko and opposition leader Maria Kolesnikova were being held in equally terrible conditions, a fact he gleaned from secret service agents.

In August 2024, Tsikhanouski first heard that preparations were underway

Entrepreneur and blogger Tsikhanouski, in 2021, was sentenced to 18 years in a penal colony during a trial held behind closed doors

for the release of political prisoners who are marked with yellow name tags in Belarusian prisons.

Tsikhanouski said they had all received visits from the public prosecutor’s office. “They tried to persuade us to submit a petition for clemency,” he said. “They talked to me for three hours, but I refused because I hadn’t committed the crimes I was accused of.”

On January 14, Tsikhanouski received a visit from Raman Pratasevich in Shodino prison. The former editor-in-chief of the opposition Telegram channel Nexta, who called for protests against the authoritarian ruler Alexander Lukashenko after the 2020 presidential election, had also been sentenced to eight years in prison at the beginning of May 2023.

DW

‘Heat dome’ hits eastern United States

New York City, US - A brutal heat wave has gripped the eastern part of the United States as tens of millions of people sweltered in record high temperatures on Tuesday.

A climate phenomenon called a ‘heat dome’ has sent temperatures soaring to dangerous triple digits in some cities while also triggering extreme humidity.

New York bears the brunt

A heat dome occurs when high pressure in the upper atmosphere traps heat and humidity, increasing temperatures in the lower atmosphere.



New York City’s John F Kennedy Airport reported a temperature of 100 degrees Fahrenheit (38 Celsius) shortly after noon - the first time since 2013.

Temperatures in Central Park were forecasted to reach 99 F (37 Celsius), beating the area’s previous high of 96.

Cities like Boston and Baltimore also saw temperatures rising to 101 degrees Fahrenheit. “It looks like today is probably the worst day for widespread heat records,” news agency Reuters quoted Bob Oravec, who is the lead forecaster at the National Weather Service in College Park, Maryland, as saying.

Millions battle the heat

Hospitals in some places saw people arriving with heat-related illnesses.

The scorching heat also caused disruptions to public transport, including delays of Amtrak trains.

As over 150mn people received heat warnings, utilities called on customers to conserve power.

Meanwhile, electronics stores in the region reported a huge spike in the sale of air conditioners and fans.

The National Weather Service said that the heat would not subside entirely by the weekend but swathes of the eastern US could see improved conditions in the next few days.

DW

Israeli army kills 36 more Gazans

Ten Palestinians were killed in attack on two houses in Deir al-Balah and Nuseirat camp

Gaza City/Istanbul - At least 36 Palestinians, including many seeking food aid, were killed and hundreds more wounded in fresh Israeli attacks across the Gaza Strip on Wednesday, medical sources said.

One of the sources told Anadolu that 12 people lost their lives and several others were injured in a strike in the Shejaiya neighbourhood in eastern Gaza City.

Eight more people were killed by Israeli gunfire while attempting to obtain humanitarian aid in the Nitzarim area in central Gaza, the official news agency Wafa said, citing medical sources.

Rescue teams recovered the bodies of three Palestinians and rescued five others from the rubble of two houses in Jabalia Al-Nazla in northern Gaza, following an Israeli airstrike. Some individuals remain missing under the rubble.

Ten Palestinians were also killed and others injured in another Israeli attack on two houses in Deir al-Balah and Nuseirat refugee camp in central Gaza.

Rescue teams recovered the body of a young Palestinian from the rubble in the town of Abasan in eastern Khan Younis in southern Gaza, a medical source said.

Two more Palestinians were killed, and others injured in an Israeli airstrike targeting a gathering of people near the Omari Mosque in Jabalia Al-Balad, northern Gaza.

Rejecting international calls for a ceasefire, the Israeli army has pursued a brutal offensive against Gaza since October 2023, killing over 56,000 Palestinians, most



12 people lost their lives and several others were injured in a strike in the Shejaiya neighbourhood in eastern Gaza City

Eight more people were killed by Israeli gunfire while attempting to obtain humanitarian aid in the Nitzarim area in central Gaza, the official news agency Wafa said, citing medical sources

of them women and children.

Last November, the International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his former Defence Minister Yoav Gallant for war crimes and crimes against humanity in Gaza.

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

Elderly woman shot dead

An elderly Palestinian woman was shot dead early on Wednesday

by Israeli soldiers in Shuafat refugee camp, northern occupied East Jerusalem, the Palestinian news agency Wafa reported.

"The 66-year-old woman, Zahia Jawda Al-Obaidi, was killed after being shot in the head by (Israeli) occupation soldiers during the storming of the Shuafat camp," the Jerusalem Governorate said in a statement.

"Israeli intelligence summoned the husband of the deceased, Al-Obaidi, for questioning," added the governorate.

The Israeli forces raided the

camp and searched Palestinian homes.

Since the start of the Israeli onslaught on the Gaza Strip on October 7, 2023, at least 982 Palestinians have been killed and more than 7,000 injured in attacks by the Israeli army and illegal settlers across the occupied West Bank, according to the Palestinian Health Ministry.

The International Court of Justice declared last July that Israel's longstanding occupation of Palestinian territories is illegal, and called for the evacuation of all settlements in the West Bank

and East Jerusalem.

Meanwhile, the head of the World Health Organization (WHO) late on Tuesday expressed condolences over the killing of another International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) staff member in Gaza amid Israel's ongoing offensive.

"We extend our deepest condolences to the ICRC for the tragic loss of one more colleague in Gaza while on duty," WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said on X. "This horror must end! Ceasefire!"

Anadolu Agency

7 Israel army men killed in Gaza blast

Jerusalem - An Israeli officer and six soldiers were killed when their armoured vehicle struck an explosive device in the south of the Gaza Strip, the Israeli military said on Wednesday.

The blast took place east of the city of Khan Younis, marking one of the deadliest incidents for Israeli forces since their ground offensive in Gaza began in October 2023. It came after a fragile ceasefire between Israel and Iran took effect on Tuesday after a 12-day conflict.

The military said the seven 'fell during combat'. According to Israel's state-owned Kan TV, the explosive was made against an armoured personnel carrier (APC), which caught fire after the blast. Israeli troops at the scene reportedly used a D9 bulldozer to cover the burning vehicle with sand before towing it back into Israeli territory.

In another separate incident on Tuesday, a soldier from the 605th Battalion of the 188th Brigade was seriously wounded during a combat in southern Gaza, the military added.

The al-Qassam Brigades, the armed wing of Hamas, claimed responsibility for the attack. In a statement on its Telegram channel, the group said its fighters ambushed Israeli troops and targeted a rescue unit in a second assault.

Anadolu Agency

Iran-Israel ceasefire could redirect attention to Gaza's plight: UNRWA

Berlin, Germany - Philippe Lazzarini, the head of the UN agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA), expressed hope that the announced ceasefire between Iran and Israel would hold and redirect international focus back to Gaza's deepening humanitarian crisis.

"It is true that the attention over the last week on Gaza has significantly decreased, but the situation has continued to worsen in Gaza. There have been daily military strikes, people are still on the move," Lazzarini told Anadolu in an interview.

He said Israel's continued blockade of aid into Gaza has further deepened the humanitarian crisis in the Palestinian territory over the past weeks, while Israel's newly created aid mechanism has become a 'death trap', costing more lives than it saves.



Philippe Lazzarini, expressed hope that international focus will now be back on Gaza's crisis

"We have this abomination of this new aid system where people (in Gaza) feel completely trapped and ask themselves,

'What do I do? Do I let my family starve to death, or do I take the risk to be killed trying to find some humanitarian assistance?'" he said.

"We have an absolutely terrible situation in Gaza, which many describe as being a dystopian, post-apocalyptic type of environment, which requires all the attention of the international community," he stressed.

The UN official expressed hope that the ceasefire between Iran and Israel, which was announced by US President Donald Trump after he pressured both sides, would hold and redirect the international community's attention to the worsening humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

"First, I hope it will last. De-escalation is definitely needed in the region. The region cannot afford a spread of a conflict," Lazzarini said.

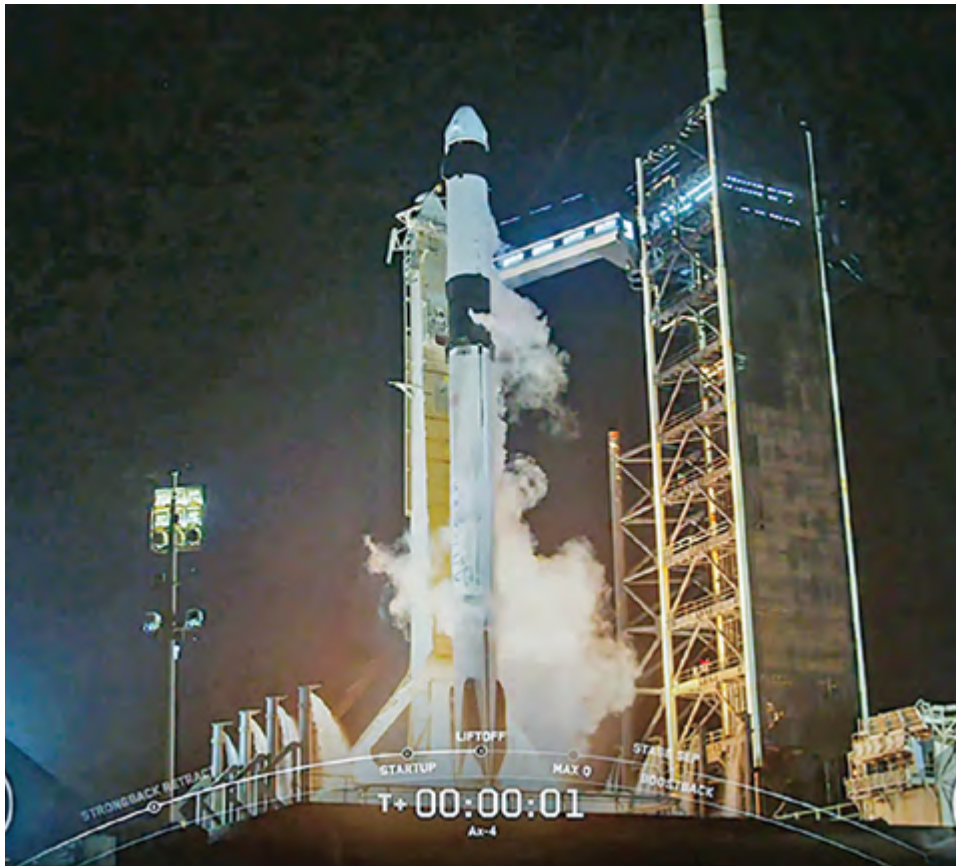
zarinini said.

"I really hope also that this ceasefire means that we can now focus again on a ceasefire in Gaza, on the release of the hostages, but also on the lifting of the siege and uninterrupted humanitarian assistance," he said, reiterating their demand that the UN and humanitarian organisations be allowed to operate in Gaza.

"We have the expertise, we have the resources, we have demonstrated during the ceasefire that we can turn the tide and address the spreading hunger we were already witnessing at that time, and as I mentioned this morning, we have a lot of resources waiting just outside the Gaza Strip, whether in Ashdod, in Jordan, or in El-Arish," Lazzarini said.

Anadolu Agency

AXIOM-4 MISSION LIFTS OFF TO ISS



Axiom-4 Mission lifts off from NASA's Kennedy Space Centre en route to the ISS, in Florida on Wednesday (ANI)

Germany press freedom: Ban on right-wing magazine Compact is lifted

Berlin, Germany - The decision by the Federal Administrative Court in Leipzig not to ban the magazine Compact was a difficult one, according to Judge Ingo Kraft. "However, the Basic Law guarantees freedom of opinion and freedom of the press even to the enemies of freedom, trusting in the power of free social debate," he said on Tuesday.

The ruling is a defeat for former German Interior Minister Nancy Faeser, who banned Compact magazine in 2024. At the time, she justified the move saying the magazine is 'a central mouthpiece for the right-wing extremist scene. This magazine incites against Jews, people with ethnic migrant backgrounds and

against parliamentary democracy in the most abhorrent way'.

The judges now said there was reason to doubt whether freedom of the press and freedom of expression had been sufficiently taken into account in the ban. They argued that terms such as 'remigration' and 'cult of guilt' are covered by freedom of expression. This also applied to conspiracy theories and historical revisionist theories.

'Resistance movement'

A 2023 report from the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (BfV), Germany's domestic intelligence agency, features an entire page dedicated



Compact editor-in-chief Jürgen Elsässer won an appeal for an expedited case

to Compact - a magazine and multimedia company headquartered in Falkensee, on the outskirts of Berlin.

According to the BfV, the

magazine's publisher says it sells 40,000 print copies a month. The number of subscribers to the Compact YouTube channel is significantly higher, at 513,000 as

of June 10, 2025. "Compact sees itself as part of what it calls the resistance movement, and it is seen by other actors among the so-called new right as part of the scene," the BfV wrote. "The main feature of many of its published articles is agitation against the federal government and against the current political system."

Still, Article 5 does put some limits on speech, saying: "These rights shall find their limits in the provisions of general laws, in provisions for the protection of young persons and in the right to personal honour."

Ties to extremist movement

Examples cited by the BfV in-

clude abstruse conspiracy theories used to agitate against state institutions and pluralist society. "Historic revisionist content and antisemitic narratives round out the agenda," it added.

Moreover, the report said, the outfit maintains ties with right-wing extremist groups like the German Identitarian movement (IBD) and the eastern German regional party the 'Freie Sachsen', or Free Saxons.

Faeser had leaned heavily on the constitution, Germany's Basic Law, in calling for the right-wing extremist publication to be banned. Article 9 of the Basic Law, which regulates freedom of assembly, reads: "Associations whose aims or activities contra-

vene the criminal laws or that are directed against the constitutional order or the concept of international understanding shall be prohibited."

Compact's editor-in-chief, Jürgen Elsässer, is a suspected right-wing extremist who belonged to the far left as a young man. Now in his 60s, Elsässer was once a member of the Communist Youth Wing and wrote for the newspaper, Arbeiterkampf (The Workers' Fight). He later worked as a reporter for other left-wing media, including Neue Deutschland (New Germany), which was a key news organ for the socialist East German government when the country was still partitioned. DW

FIFA launches probe into Real's Rudiger racism allegation against Cabral

Miami, US - FIFA said on Tuesday it has opened disciplinary proceedings against Pachuca player Gustavo Cabral following an incident involving Real Madrid's Antonio Rudiger during their Club World Cup match on Sunday, which prompted the activation of the anti-discrimination protocol.

"Following an assessment of the match reports, the FIFA Disciplinary Committee has opened proceedings against CF Pachuca player Gustavo Cabral in relation to the incident involving him and Real Madrid's Antonio Rudiger during the FIFA Club World Cup game played in Charlotte on June 22," FIFA told Reuters.

Match referee Ramon Abatti activated the anti-discrimination protocol by crossing his forearms in front of his chest five minutes into stoppage time after a brief scuffle erupted following an apparent foul on Germany international Rudiger.

Asked during a post-match press conference if Rudiger had been a victim of racism, Real Madrid coach Xabi Alonso said: "That's what Rudiger said, and we believe him."

FIFA did not specify the nature of the disciplinary action.

Chelsea's Jackson gets two-match ban

Chelsea striker Nicolas Jackson has been given an extended two-match ban for his red card in the English club's 3-1 loss to Flamengo at the Club World Cup.

Jackson had been on the pitch for only four minutes in the second half when he was sent off for a nasty studs-up challenge on Ayrton Lucas, his second red card in his last four matches in all competitions.

The 24-year-old received an automatic one-match suspension, ruling him out of Tuesday's final group-stage clash against Esperance Sportive de Tunis.

However, FIFA's disciplinary committee reviewed the incident and deemed it serious foul play and extended the ban.

"The FIFA Disciplinary Committee has imposed the following sanction on Chelsea's player Nicolas Jackson who was sent off as a result of a direct red card during the FIFA Club World Cup 2025 match between his team and CR Flamengo..." FIFA said in a statement as quoted by ESPN on Tuesday.

"(A) 2-match suspension for breach under article 14 paragraph 1 e) of the FIFA Disciplinary Code. This decision is final and binding and cannot be appealed."



Gustavo Cabral with Antonio Reudiger

BENFICA STUN BAYERN

Schjelderup's goal helps Portuguese side take top spot in Group C; to meet Chelsea in the last 16



Benfica's Andreas Schjelderup is ecstatic after scoring against Bayern Munich at the Club World Cup on Tuesday

Charlotte, US - Benfica's Andreas Schjelderup struck in the first half to seal a 1-0 win over Bayern Munich in sweltering heat on Tuesday, sending the Portuguese side to the top of Group C at the Club World Cup.

After securing their first-ever victory over Bayern, Benfica will face Chelsea in the last 16. Bayern, finishing second, are set to face Group D leaders Flamengo.

"I think our first half wasn't good at all. With the pitch and the heat, I just feared this wouldn't go as fluid as normal," Bayern coach Vincent Kompany told DAZN.

"It's football. If you have chances and don't take them, you pay the price... (against Flamengo) it's going to be a tough game. We know we can create chances."

Schjelderup broke the deadlock after 13 minutes, netting with a first-time effort from Fredrik Aursnes' low cross from the right, capitalising on a lapse in Bayern's back line.

Benfica manager Bruno Lage urged fans to have more faith in his team after their stunning win.

"It's teamwork. I think it was teamwork, but also we played against Bayern before," said Lage. "And you know how tough they are to play against, so we learned from that game, but more importantly, it's what we were going to do with the ball. And I think we managed very well. When we had time to attack quickly, we did it. But when we had time to control the game with the ball and run with it, we did."

"We went into this game with a lot of confidence. The first half was very good, we created the best chances to score. We wanted to be aggressive and we finished first in the group and the feeling is good," said Lage.

"We finished first and it means a lot for us. People need to believe more in the work we are doing. They were speaking about Boca needing to win by a lot of goals (to advance) and they forgot about this game. No one believed we were going to win against Bayern."

"We have a very good group, we are evaluated every three days by the result, but when we win we are not the best and when we do not win we are not the worst."

"Now we have to stay humble, recover, rest as much as possible, understand who our opponents will be and go into the game with the same ambitions."

With Bayern already assured of a place in the next round, their rotated lineup lacked urgency and failed to register a single shot on target in a flat first half.

The German champions improved after the break and Joshua Kimmich thought he had equalised only for his effort to be ruled out for a Harry Kane offside just past the hour mark.

Benfica goalkeeper Anatoliy Trubin played a key role in preserving the lead, producing sharp saves to deny Aleksandar Pavlovic and Leroy Sane.

It's teamwork. I think it was teamwork, but also we played against Bayern before. And you know how tough they are to play against, so we learned from that game

BRUNO LAGE, BENFICA MANAGER

Neuer optimistic despite Bayern's shock defeat

Charlotte, US - Disappointment was evident on the faces of Bayern Munich as they departed Charlotte's Bank of America Stadium, and with good reason. After a sparkling start to the FIFA Club World Cup 2025 with victories over Auckland City and Boca Juniors, Bayern succumbed 1-0 to Benfica in their Group C finale to finish second in the group.

The German giants were plagued by a slow start, as Benfica tallied a first half goal that held until the final whistle. Despite pegging the Portuguese back deep in their own half for much of the second stanza, the equaliser never arrived, leaving goalkeeper Manuel Neuer and his team-mates frustrated at the second-place finish.

Yet the incisive nature of the Bayern attack after the introductions of Harry Kane, Michael Olise and Joshua Kimmich at half-time suggests that it was simply a day in which luck was not on their side.

If anything, Neuer, is taking confidence from their performance in the second 45 and believes it will suit them well the rest of the way.

"The start of the first half wasn't that good, but you saw another team in the second half with the tempo we played, the possession we had and how we defended as well," said Neuer to FIFA. "It was much better than how we started in the first half and I think the intensity was much higher. If we play the ball quick, if we have high-tempo actions, we create a lot of chances, but we missed the momentum today and that was the key."

"Of course, [Anatoliy] Trubin was a great goalkeeper today and he performed very well. We missed the situation where Harry [Kane] was in offside, it was a great shot from Joshua [Kimmich], but all these little things and details created the loss," added Neuer.

Bayern's slip-up sets up a Round of 16 showdown with Brazilian side Flamengo, who have taken the tournament by storm.



Bayern Munich goalkeeper Manuel Neuer is powerless to stop Andreas Schjelderup's shot

School teacher Grey's dream goal hands Auckland historic draw

Nashville, US - Christian Grey, a 28-year-old physical education teacher from New Zealand, scored against Argentine powerhouse Boca Juniors at the Club World Cup on Tuesday, offering the amateur side a fleeting moment of jubilation to make their participation in the elite tournament worthwhile.

Argentine side Boca came into the game needing both a convincing win against already-eliminated Auckland City to overturn a seven-goal difference with Benfica and for the Portuguese club to lose to German champions Bayern Munich in the other Group C fixture.

Auckland City had just drawn level shortly after the break when lightning in the area forced play-

ers off the field for nearly 50 minutes. By the time play resumed, Benfica had secured a 1-0 win to qualify top of Group C and reach the last 16 along with Bayern.

Boca went ahead in the 26th minute when Lautaro Di Lollo received a well-delivered corner and headed it against the post before the ball bounced off Auckland City goalkeeper Nathan Garrow's arm and into the net for an own goal.

Auckland scored their first goal of the tournament in the 52nd minute when Christian Gray sent a header inside the right post and past an outstretched Agustin Marchesin moments before play was suspended.

Gray's strike secured a 1-1 draw that sparked like gold amid the rubble of Auckland City's tournament, a campaign that had seen the amateur side brutally exposed by a 10-0 hammering from Bayern Munich and a 6-0 defeat to Benfica.

"I'm from a small town, a long way from here and a lot different to this environment. So it is somewhat of a dream," Grey said after the match.

Auckland City's squad — comprising teachers, delivery drivers and tradesmen — had paid a heavy price for their footballing ambitions, quite literally.

Many fund their own participation while juggling day jobs, a stark contrast to the millionaire professionals they faced on the pitch.



Auckland City's Christian Grey celebrates with teammates after scoring against Boca Juniors on Tuesday



The party will feature a headlining performance by pop star Rita Ora

BLUES CRUISE

Chelsea blank Esperance to reach Club World Cup knockouts

Philadelphia, US - Goals from Tosin Adarabioyo, Liam Delap and Tyrique George saw Chelsea's second-string side secure a place in the round of 16 at the Club World Cup with a 3-0 victory over Esperance de Tunis in their final Group D match on Tuesday.

Group winners Flamengo were held 1-1 by Los Angeles FC to finish on seven points, one ahead of Chelsea. Esperance finished third with three points while LA FC were bottom with one point.

Chelsea next face Group C winners Benfica on Saturday at the Bank of America Stadium in Charlotte, while Flamengo take on Bayern Munich, Group C runners-up, in Miami on Sunday.

Despite the stakes, Chelsea manager Enzo Maresca opted to rotate his squad once more, resting key players such as Cole Palmer and goalkeeper Robert Sanchez.

He was missing striker Nicolas Jackson, who will also be unavailable against Benfica as he serves a two-match suspension following his red card in Friday's 3-1 loss to Flamengo.

Delap, a 30 million pounds (\$40.66 million) signing from Ipswich Town, came close to opening the scoring in the 20th



Chelsea's Liam Delap scores against Esperance de Tunis in their final Group D match at the Club World Cup on Tuesday

Unfortunately, he didn't score against Flamengo, and tonight he scored. We know that Liam is going to score goals with us, and we don't have any doubt about that

ENZO MARESCA, CHELSEA MANAGER

minute but his header was cleared off the line.

Chelsea dominated possession in a lacklustre first half but struggled for creativity in the final third, with Delap squandering another golden chance in the

30th minute when he missed the target from close range.

The breakthrough finally came in first-half stoppage time when Adarabioyo rose highest to head the ball into the bottom left corner.

Moments later Delap doubled Chelsea's lead, capitalising on a loose ball inside the box, cutting inside a defender and finishing neatly into the far corner.

Delap has settled in well and his quick progress will please Maresca given Chelsea will be without Jackson against Benfica on Saturday.

"I'm pleased with Liam, with him scoring for us, but against Flamengo he had three clear chances to score goals, so that is already a good feeling because that means that he's there, he's

in the right position, he's doing well," said Maresca.

"Unfortunately, he didn't score against Flamengo, and tonight he scored. We know that Liam is going to score goals with us, and we don't have any doubt about that.

"The process is quite quick with Liam, and the reason why is because we know him, and he knows us in the way we want to play. So, for instance, for Dario Essugo, or for Mamadou Sarr, or even for Andrey that he was just with us last pre-season, it's going

to be a little bit more complicated.

"They need more time because they don't know the way we want to play exactly. But Liam, as I said, we know each other very well. So, the process for him is quite quick, and then it's also because he's a very good player."

The second half saw Chelsea largely control proceedings without pressing for a third goal and their resolute defensive display ensured there was no way back for Esperance.

Neymar extends contract with Santos

Santos, Brazil - Brazilian forward Neymar has signed a six-month contract extension with Santos, his boyhood club announced on Tuesday.

The deal means the 33-year-old remains with Santos until the end of the year, with the possibility of renewing after it expires.

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"I made a decision and I



Neymar

listened to my heart. Santos is not just my team; it is my home, my roots, my history and my life. I grew up here and became a man here. I am truly loved here. Here I can be myself and be truly happy," Neymar said in a statement.

Since returning to Santos in January, Neymar has only played in four Brazilian Championship matches due to a thigh injury that left him sidelined for more than a month.

Palmeiras, Botafogo fans ready to raise the roof in last-16 clash

Miami, US - As the expanded 32-team Club World Cup approaches the knockout rounds, one clear highlight has been the electric atmosphere generated by South American supporters, whose passion, volume and spectacle have left their global counterparts in the shade.

Some arenas, particularly Miami's Hard Rock Stadium, have been transformed not just by Lionel Messi-mania, but by the sonic boom of Boca Juniors and Palmeiras fans.

Boca's blue and gold, as well as Palmeiras' cream and green, have filled the stands in roaring, boisterous displays.

While some matches in Cincinnati and Orlando struggled to draw more than a few thousand spectators, Boca and Palmeiras played in front of 60,000-plus fans, creating scenes more akin to Sao Paulo or Buenos Aires than suburban America. Palmeiras fans brought the flair and noise to their final Group A game against Inter Miami on Monday.

But beneath the celebrations lurks a rivalry that is becoming



Palmeiras fans have been turning the stands into a fortress in the Club World Cup

Boca and Palmeiras played in front of 60,000-plus fans, creating scenes more akin to Sao Paulo or Buenos Aires than suburban America

one of South America's fiercest: Palmeiras v Botafogo.

Though the two clubs hail from different Brazilian cities — Palmeiras from Sao Paulo, Botafogo from Rio — fate has thrown them together repeatedly over the past three years.

It began when Palmeiras staged a dramatic surge to snatch the Brazilian league title from Botafogo two years ago, a

collapse that stung deeply in Rio.

The following season Botafogo got revenge, knocking Palmeiras out in the round of 16 of the Copa Libertadores before going all the way to win the title.

Sunday's last-16 showdown in Philadelphia promises to be the fiercest yet and will add another chapter to what is rapidly becoming the defining duel of modern Brazilian football.

Werner appointed Leipzig coach

Leipzig, Germany - RB Leipzig have appointed Ole Werner as their new head coach with a contract until 2027, the Bundesliga club announced on Tuesday.

The appointment ends Leipzig's months-long search for a permanent replacement after parting ways with Marco Rose in March. Interim coach Zsolt Low took the reins for the remainder of the campaign that ended in a disappointing seventh-placed league finish.



Ole Werner

Werner, 37, who had recently declined to extend his contract at Werder Bremen, will coach a Leipzig side who will compete only in domestic competitions next season after failing to secure European qualification for the first time since 2016.

"Ole is a young, ambitious and extremely ambitious head coach who will take the next step in his development with us," said Leipzig managing director Marcel Schafer. "RB Leipzig stands for a bold, attacking style of play with a clear identity, as well as professional and ambitious thinking," Werner said.



Flamengo's Wallace Yan celebrates after scoring against LAFC

Yan strikes late as Flamengo move into last 16 with unbeaten record

Orlando, US - Misfiring Flamengo were held to a 1-1 draw by Los Angeles FC in their final group match at the Club World Cup on Tuesday but the Brazilian side still go into the knockout stage with some momentum after another strong performance.

Denis Bouanga put the MLS club ahead in the 84th minute but substitute Wallace Yan responded two minutes later to ensure Flamengo would progress unbeaten to their last-16 tie against Bayern Munich in Miami on Sunday.

With top spot in Group D already assured, Flamengo coach Filipe Luis made seven changes to his starting side but there was no change to the style that already earned the Rio de Janeiro

club wins over Chelsea and Esperance.

With a little more accuracy in front of goal, they would have comfortably beaten an LA FC side who were already condemned to a group stage exit after losing their first two games without scoring a goal.

"We had a great group stage," Felipe Luis told reporters. "We achieved our objective early so we've been able to bench players with yellow cards and give minutes to players that hadn't played yet."

"We had rhythm and we had chances to score. Unfortunately, it didn't happen. We are very happy, no injuries and a great group stage, and now we're thinking about Bayern and nothing but Bayern."

Seven-time French champions Lyon relegated to Ligue 2

Paris, France - Olympique Lyon have been relegated to Ligue 2, French football's financial watchdog (DNCG) said on Tuesday following an audit of the club, which said it would appeal the decision immediately.

Lyon were provisionally demoted by the DNCG in November due to the poor state of their finances and the decision was confirmed on Tuesday after a meeting between club owner John Textor and the DNCG.

The club criticised the decision in a statement on Tuesday and said it had worked closely with the DNCG, satisfying all their requests.

"Olympique Lyonnais takes note of the incomprehensible decision handed down by the DNCG this evening and confirms that it will appeal immediately," the club said.

"With demonstrated funds and sporting success that has earned us a place in European

competition two years running, we sincerely fail to understand how an administrative decision could relegate such a great French club."

The decision to relegate Lyon comes a day after U.S. businessman Textor sold a 43% stake in English club Crystal Palace.

"Thanks to the equity contributions from our shareholders and the sale of Crystal Palace, our cash position has improved considerably and we have more

than sufficient resources for the 2025/26 season," the Lyon statement added.

In October, Textor's Eagle Football Group revealed debts totalling around 422 million pounds (\$574.85 million), raising concerns about the French club's financial stability.

Since then, Lyon have raised funds by offloading several players, including Maxence Caqueret to Como and Rayan Cherki to Manchester City.

ENGLAND HOME AND DRY

Duckett’s brilliant hundred powers hosts to historic win against India at Headingley

Leeds, England - A superb century from Ben Duckett helped steer England to a sensational five-wicket win in the first Test against India after a thrilling day five on Tuesday, the hosts reaching a target of 371 - the 10th highest successful run chase in Test history.

Having turned the match on its head at Headingley after India had been 430-3 in their first innings, England appeared to be cruising to a dramatic win as openers Duckett and Zak Crawley eased their side to lunch on 117-0 in their second innings.

Duckett continued his imperious form with another four through the covers to reach his sixth Test hundred, before Crawley fell for 65, their 188-run partnership the second highest England opening fourth-innings stand in Tests.

Two wickets in two balls - Duckett and Harry Brook - dragged India back into the enthralling contest and when Ben Stokes fell for 33 attempting an ambitious reverse sweep, England’s hopes of victory lay precariously in the balance.



England’s Jamie Smith and Joe Root celebrate their win against India in the first Test on Tuesday

Joe Root’s unbeaten 53 calmed the nerves around his home ground, with the former skipper and Jamie Smith, who hit a six to seal victory, seeing England home as India, having scored five centuries in the match, somehow contrived to start the

five-Test series in defeat.

“Incredible, what a Test match. It was a huge number of runs and we have been lucky with the weather,” Duckett said. “I am lost for words.

“We only had to look at the scoreboard to know that if we

batted the overs, we would win the game. There were moments when I thought about stepping into another gear but the breaks in the game helped us to stay calm. To start this series with a 1-0 win is huge for us. It felt calm in the dressing room. To have Root

out there, it’s pretty easy to be calm.”

Resuming day five on 21-0, uncharacteristically for a team renowned for their ultra-aggressive batting, Crawley and Duckett took 99 balls to bring up their 50 partnership - the longest it has

There were moments when I thought about stepping into another gear but the breaks in the game helped us stay calm... To start this series with a win is huge for us

BEN DUCKETT

taken the pair to do so for England - before upping the ante.

There was slight concern for England when first-innings centurion Ollie Pope quickly followed Crawley back to the pavilion mid-way through the afternoon session, the number three becoming

Plenty of dropped catches and two batting collapses ultimately cost India. From 430-3 in the first innings, they lost their final seven wickets for just 41 runs, with the tail crumbling again in the second innings, 31 runs accumulated for the fall of the final six wickets.

Managing Bumrah’s workload is very important, says India coach Gambhir

Leeds, England - India will continue to prioritise Jasprit Bumrah’s fitness and stick to their plan of playing the pace spearhead in only three out of the five Tests against England despite losing the opener by five wickets on Tuesday, head coach Gautam Gambhir said.

Bumrah, who declined the Test captaincy in order to manage his workload after four months out with a back issue, was India’s top bowler with 5-83 in the first innings of the Headingley thriller but went wicketless in the second.

The 31-year-old’s expected absence in two of the remaining four Tests could see India field an inexperienced attack against the hosts’ aggressive batters but Gambhir remained focused on the longer-term picture.

“For us to manage Bumrah’s workload is more important,” he told reporters. “There’s a lot of cricket going forward and we know what he brings to the table.

“Before he came on this tour it



Jasprit Bumrah

The 31-year-old’s expected absence in two of the remaining four Tests could see India field an inexperienced attack against the hosts

was already decided that he’s going to play three Tests, but let’s see how his body turns up. We haven’t decided which other Tests he’s going to play.”

Seamer Prasidh Krishna took five wickets in the match and leaked runs, while bowling all-rounder Shardul Thakur bagged two wickets while contributing only five runs with the bat, but

Gambhir backed the under-fire duo. “Prasidh bowled really well,” Gambhir said.

“He got us crucial wickets. We picked him because we thought he’s got something different. He’s got bounce, and in the first innings, he used that really well, even in the second innings. He’ll keep getting better with experience.”

England’s ‘Bazball with brains’ proves too much for India

Leeds, England - England’s ultra-aggressive approach has brought plenty of highs and also drawn criticism for some self-inflicted lows, but their thrilling win over India showed a refined version of ‘Bazball’ that could produce a year to remember.

When coach Brendon McCullum teamed up with bit-hitting skipper Ben Stokes, the term ‘Bazball’ quickly became a staple in cricket vernacular, as the normally conservative English Test arena was treated to a new, rip-roaring style.

A team who had won one of their previous 17 Test matches not only enjoyed a massive uplift in results, the manner of their victories came about thanks to a rapid run rate not previously seen in Test cricket.

Criticism came when their aggressive approach was seen as too cavalier, especially during last year’s Ashes series where they were the better side in many matches but ended up drawing the series.

Skipper Stokes hinted prior to



Although England benefitted from contributions across the board, it was Ben Duckett’s brilliant century that made the difference

the highly-anticipated Test series with India that his team would refine their approach slightly, to become “smarter” in certain situations.

After an exhilarating five-wicket victory over India in the first test, achieved by the 10th highest successful run chase in history, a controlled England

backed up their skipper’s promises.

A performance former captain Michael Vaughan labelled “Bazball with brains” ensured a crucial period got off to the perfect start ahead of 10 tests, with the Ashes series in Australia to come next, which could define the McCullum-Stokes era.

Swiatek beats Azarenka for milestone win at Bad Homburg

Bad Homburg, Germany - Fourth-seeded Iga Swiatek overcame a slow start against another former World No. 1, Victoria Azarenka, to win 6-4, 6-4 on Tuesday at the Bad Homburg Open in Germany.

Poland’s Swiatek notched her 300th career tour-level win and first of the grass-court season after being down 4-1 in the first set to Belarus’ Azarenka. Swiatek converted 4 of 8 break-point opportunities and saved 4 of 6.

Top seed Jessica Pegula dispatched the Czech Republic’s Katerina Siniakova 6-2, 6-3 in the Round of 16, while second-

seeded Italian Jasmine Paolini won a battle with Canadian Leylah Fernandez 7-6 (8), 7-6 (6).

Fifth-seed Emma Navarro ousted four-time Grand Slam champion Naomi Osaka of Japan, 6-4, 6-4. In one last Round of 32 match, Brazil’s Beatriz Haddad Maia defeated Ashlyn Krueger 6-1, 6-4.

In Eastbourne, England, Czech second seed Barbora Krejickova fought back by saving two match points with British wild card Harriet Dart serving at 5-4 in the third set and went on to win their first-round grass-court match.

Krejickova, the 2024 Wimble-

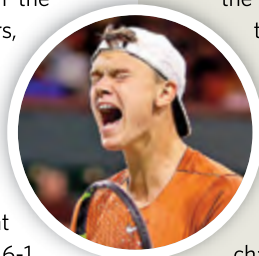


Iga Swiatek

don champion, won 6-3, 6-7 (4), 7-5, compiling five aces and converting 6 of 7 break points. Dart converted all four of her break-point opportunities in the match lasting two hours, 40 minutes.

Seventh seed Emma Raducanu of Great Britain dropped the first set before roaring back to defeat Ann Li 6-7 (5), 6-3, 6-1.

Third seed Jelena Ostapenko of Latvia topped Brit Sonay Kartal 6-3, 7-6 (2), and sixth-seeded Peyton Stearns won in straight sets over Brit Mingge Xu 6-3, 6-4.



Rune turns smashed rackets into charity opportunity

Holger Rune has put the mangled rackets that have borne the brunt of his frustration in matches over the years up for sale among a collection of items in his new online store which he hopes will help charitable causes.

The world number eight launched the website, giving fans the chance to buy items such

as books, posters and match-worn clothing.

Several used rackets were on sale for close to \$6,000, while two that were bent and smashed beyond repair during the Dane’s rare moments of rage on court were priced at more than \$7,000.

“I’ve been working behind the scenes with my sister Alma to create a space where you can get closer to my world,” Rune said on social media.



14

SUMMER DINNERS

Switch your apron and your ingredients - churn out the unusual during summer



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IN TOWN

Celebrations of African Unity Nite and International Yoga Day



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ENTERTAINMENT

A peek into tinsel town, in Hollywood and Bollywood



PUBLIC ART

Al Hoota Cave Train gets converted into an artistic canvas to promote tourism in Oman. “Art should relax, not stress,” says **Abdulmalik al Maskari**, the graffiti artist who created a window to the two-million-year-old natural wonder on the body of the defunct electric locomotive

Mohammed Taha

In a unique blend of public art and tourism promotion, the out-of-service train at Al Hoota Cave has now been transformed into a vibrant graffiti mural, thanks to the creative vision of Omani street artist Abdulmalik Sultan al Maskari. The 19m-long train, previously installed at the entrance to one of Oman’s most iconic natural attractions, now stands as a vivid gateway, adorned with images of the cave’s dramatic rock formations and native wildlife. Speaking exclusively to Muscat Daily, Maskari said, “The idea was not easy at all. The train was long, unused, and the surface was difficult to work on. But I love challenges, so I decided - along with a group of my friends - to turn it into a visual delight that supports national tourism.” The project began on October 10, 2024, and was completed on November 10, 2024. The transformation unfolded

over several weekends with support from Maskari’s brothers and close friends. Backed by Omran Group - particularly its Youth and Cultural Projects Department - the initiative aimed to enhance the visitor experience by merging art, nature, and culture into one compelling installation. The final artwork draws inspiration from the natural colours and terrain of the cave, encouraging visitors to interact, take photos, and share their experience. “Graffiti art grabs attention instantly,” Maskari said. “When visitors see the train, the vivid images spark curiosity. It’s an invitation to explore the cave’s hidden beauty.” Creating the artwork under Oman’s sweltering summer sun posed major challenges. “Transforming a metal train in that heat was no easy task,” he noted. “We had to use special tools and materials to ensure that the colours adhered properly to the metal surface. We also coordinated closely with the site’s management to avoid disrupting visitors.” Maskari added, “When we get permis-



Graffiti art grabs attention instantly. When visitors see the train, the vivid images spark curiosity. It’s an invitation to explore the cave’s hidden beauty

sion to spray outdoors, there is always a message in the murals. I personally put deep thought into my work. I prefer quiet colours - especially shades of blue - because I want the public to feel calm rather than overwhelmed. Art should relax, not stress.” With his graffiti journey that began in 2007, Maskari has participated in numerous major art initiatives, both locally and abroad. These include creating a large-scale mural in Mina Zayed, UAE, in collaboration with international artists, as well as landmark projects in Oman at hotel W Muscat, Al Mouj Marina, commercial venues, gyms, and various public spaces. He had also taken part in the Frankincense Tree Exhibition at Zubair Foundation. Looking ahead, Maskari hopes this project will inspire a broader movement to promote Oman’s diverse landmarks through public art. “My dream is to expand this initiative to other sites - castles, old souqs, natural reserves - anywhere that showcases the richness of Oman’s culture and heritage. Art is a universal language, and through it, we can tell the world about the beauty of our country.” Maskari expressed gratitude to his brothers - Abdulsalam Sultan Said al Maskari and Abdullah Sultan Said al Maskari - and his friends Qusai Ali Saif al Musallami and Saeed Salem Said al Naabi, whose support and dedication were instrumental in bringing the project to life.

cook-up

Summer Dinners



Summer Risotto Stuffed Peppers

- Ingredients
- 4 medium bell peppers - sliced in half lengthwise

2tbsp olive oil

½ cup arborio rice

1 cup chicken or vegetable stock

½ sweet onion - diced

2 garlic cloves - minced

2 ears corn - kernels cut from the cob

1 medium zucchini - diced

½ cup finely grated parmesan cheese

1½ cups marinara sauce

½ cup seasoned breadcrumbs

Method

Preheat the oven to 220° C. Place the peppers on a baking sheet and brush or spray them with 1tbsp olive oil. Sprinkle with salt and pepper. Roast the peppers for 15 minutes.

Heat a saucepan over medium heat and add 1tbsp olive oil. Add in the onions and garlic with a pinch of salt and cook for 1 minute. Add in the rice and cook, toasting it for 1 to



Summer Squash Pasta with Brown Butter & Goat Cheese

- Ingredients
- 250g any pasta, ¼ cup pine nuts

5tbsp unsalted butter

2 garlic cloves - minced

1 small zucchini squash - sliced into rounds

1 small summer squash - sliced into rounds

Kosher salt, Freshly cracked black pepper

100g goat cheese - crumbled

¼ cup fresh basil leaves

Method

Bring a pot of salted water to a boil and cook the pasta according to the directions. While the pasta is cooking, heat a skillet over medium-low heat. Add the pine nuts. Toss and stir them until they are golden and fragrant, about 5 to 6 minutes. Remove from the heat immediately.



Heat a skillet over medium heat and add the butter. Whisk it constantly until brown bits begin to form on the bottom and the butter is golden. When that happens, add the garlic and squash rounds and toss to coat, then cook for 5 minutes until the zucchini softens. Sprinkle it with salt and pepper.

The pasta should be finished by now, so add it to the skillet with the zucchini. Turn the heat to low. Toss the pasta and squash well, making sure everything is combined and has a bit of butter on it. Crumble in the goat cheese and toss it well. Add in another few cracks of fresh black pepper. Toss in the pine nuts. Stir in the fresh basil and serve immediately.

Chimichurri Grilled Chicken with Couscous Salad

- Ingredients
- 1 cup fresh cilantro

2/3 cup fresh parsley

1/4 cup fresh oregano

2 garlic cloves - minced

1/4 cup red vinegar

2/3 cup olive oil

1/2tsp salt

1/2tsp pepper

1/4tsp crushed red pepper flakes

400g chicken thighs

For couscous salad

- 2 cups cooked couscous

¼ cup chimichurri

1 cup cherry tomatoes - halved

½ cup crumbled feta cheese

3tbsp chopped chives

Method

Combine the parsley, cilantro, oregano and garlic in a food processor and pulse until small leaves and pieces remain. Add in the vinegar and pulse once more. With the processor going, stream in the olive oil and mix until just combined. Stir in the salt, pepper and red pepper flakes. Taste and season additionally if needed.

Place the chicken in a bowl or dish and pour ¼ cup chimichurri over it. Toss and coat the chicken. Cover and place in the fridge, marinating it for at least 30 minutes or even overnight.

To make the couscous salad, toss the cooked couscous with ¼ cup chimichurri. Add the tomatoes, feta and chives along with a pinch of salt and pepper. Toss well.

When ready to grill the chicken, preheat the grill to high. Let it heat for 10 to 15 minutes. Grill the chicken about 5 minutes per side and let the chicken rest for 5 minutes. Serve the chicken with the couscous salad and the extra chimichurri for drizzling.

Summer’s the time to experiment with your palate. Avoid the regular fare and try out recipes that bring in some intrigue on your dinner table

2 minutes. Stir in the corn and zucchini. Pour in the broth and a pinch of salt and bring to a boil, then reduce to a simmer and cover. Cook for 15 to 20 minutes, then stir in the parmesan cheese.

Place the marinara in a baking dish. Place the peppers on top, cut side up. Scoop the rice into the peppers. Top with the breadcrumbs and an extra sprinkle of parmesan cheese. Roast the peppers for 15 to 20 minutes. Top with fresh herbs. Serve immediately.

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take a break

IN TOWN

African Unity Nite



Under the patronage of the African Committee in Oman, African Unity Nite 2025 was held at Sheraton Oman hotel last Thursday

Photos: V K Shafer

International Yoga Day



The Embassy of India held a special yoga session to mark International Day of Yoga last weekend

Photos: V K Shafer

BOGGLER

E	Y	U	I
S	E	D	L
T	F	R	X
F	L	A	I

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

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

TRIVIA QUIZ - FOR TEENS

1. Where is the tallest flagpole in the world?
A. Teheran
B. Muscat
C. Amman
D. Cairo



2. When was Pringles potato chips created?
A. 1964
B. 1968
C. 1972
D. 1976

3. What is the name of Oman's first satellite?
A. Oman-1
B. OL-1
C. SAMA-1
D. SL-1

Answers
3. B
2. B
1. D

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

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

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

**ARIES** MARCH 21-APRIL 19

**TAURUS** APRIL 20-MAY 20

**GEMINI** MAY 21-JUNE 21

**CANCER** JUNE 22-JULY 22

**LEO** JULY 23-AUGUST 22

**VIRGO** AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

**LIBRA** SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

**SCORPIO** OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

**SAGITTARIUS** NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

**CAPRICORN** DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

**AQUARIUS** JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

**PISCES** FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

It's hard to convince people you don't know well that you mean what you say, even if you've said it (and meant it) a thousand times before, and all those others can vouch for you. The first time a new person hears it from you and then sees you keep the promise you've made, that's what really counts.

You're ready to take someone under your wing who shows real promise, and they're so honoured that they can't believe it's actually going to happen. They may even be waiting for the other shoe to drop. How about a little getting-to-know-you-party? Try a table for four at the casual, comfortable location of your choice. That way, they get the support of their partner.

When something fails to go as it should with an authority figure, it's too easy to blame it on them. Aren't they just there to irritate, aggravate, and annoy you anyway? You know better, though. To some, being in charge isn't just their job, it's their life's work. To others, being in charge is the way they give back to the community.

You're currently wrapped up in making some kind of relationship work. Platonic, romantic or professional, it really doesn't matter. You want to make and keep a promise and be sure that the promise or pledge that's been made in return was given with equally honest intentions. There's only one thing to take into consideration, and that's time.

You're much fonder of making things public, regardless of the issues, than of keeping them a secret. Still, every now and then it's absolutely essential to let things out in the right way, and this is one of those times. The good news is that someone has been working behind the scenes for you without you having any inkling that anything was going on.

If this isn't the right time to propose making your relationship permanent, there just may not be a better one. Be brave, be willing to get those feelings out, and let your loved one know that you're no longer thinking in terms of weeks or months. You're thinking that it's time to start making a lot more reservations for a party of two.

You can tell what's really going on by the way that one person has been making excuses to walk by you, by the glances they've been tossing your way across crowded rooms, and by the comments they've made behind your back you've heard through well-meaning friends who'd like nothing better than to see you two get together.

It's tough for you to listen when someone offers advice on a subject you're sure you know everything about. That's the case now, or at least that's how you feel at the moment. Believe it or not, though, you may not know absolutely everything about this particular issue. Just in case, give this person the opportunity to share what they know too.

Family or not, your people have always struck you as being a bit on the loony side. Still, they're close, so you've been patient and working the smiles, nods, and shrugs whenever you're questioned. Of course there's a certain type of brilliance that goes along with that kind of eccentricity. Expect it to show up soon.

Public displays of affection just aren't your style. Occasionally, a tear or grin you weren't expecting might slip by you unnoticed. By you, that is. The rest of the world pretends not to see, but they're amazed and astounded. The good news is that you're feeling so good right now that you don't care who sees. While you're at it, why not let it all out and get it over with?

Yesterday opened your eyes in many ways, the biggest of which was the fact that your current relationships need some tweaks. You may even be thinking that it's you, not the others, who need to make those changes. You've been thinking of little else since, and you're willing to put stage one into operation your-self.

Every now and then everyone feels insecure. It could be because someone whose loyalty we're unsure of says or does something that makes us feel doubtful. That doesn't mean we're right about it everything, though. It might just mean that we're just having a needy moment. If you're feeling that way now, think it over first. Then do something vitally important.

entertainment

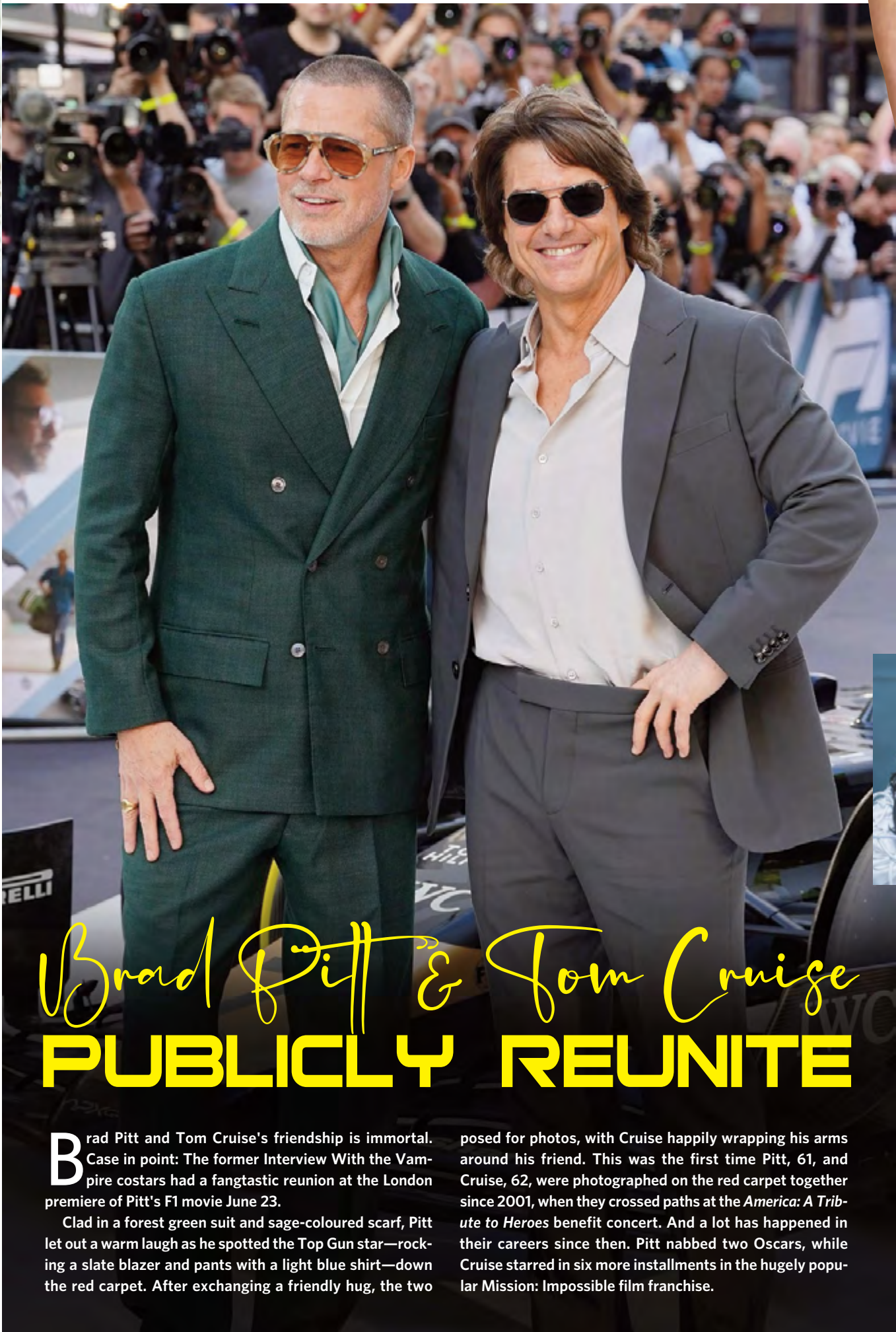


VICKY KAUSHAL SPOTTED AT MADDOCK OFFICE

Vicky Kaushal, who is currently busy with the shoot of *Love And War* with Alia Bhatt and Ranbir Kapoor, was recently seen outside Maddock Films' office in Mumbai. His spotting has ignited speculation among fans that he may be gearing up for another high-profile collaboration. Well, nothing is official till now. *Mahavatar* was announced last year in November and will star Vicky Kaushal as Chiranjeevi Parashurama. The actor's first look has also been revealed. The film is slated to release on Christmas 2026

BTS V dance video gets 70000000 TikTok views

Popular choreographer Lee Jung-Lee posted a dance video with Kim Taehyung, aka V, on her TikTok account, after V's military discharge, and ARMY couldn't get enough of V's dance moves. ARMYs were impressed by V's footwork and his toned physique. The video quickly went viral, amassing over 70 million views on TikTok and 69 million views on Instagram, setting a new record for the K-pop star. This makes V the most liked K-pop artist on TikTok in 2025. Even though V doesn't have a TikTok account



Brad Pitt & Tom Cruise PUBLICLY REUNITE

Brad Pitt and Tom Cruise's friendship is immortal. Case in point: The former *Interview With the Vampire* costars had a fantastic reunion at the London premiere of Pitt's *F1* movie June 23. Clad in a forest green suit and sage-coloured scarf, Pitt let out a warm laugh as he spotted the *Top Gun* star—rocking a slate blazer and pants with a light blue shirt—down the red carpet. After exchanging a friendly hug, the two

posed for photos, with Cruise happily wrapping his arms around his friend. This was the first time Pitt, 61, and Cruise, 62, were photographed on the red carpet together since 2001, when they crossed paths at the *America: A Tribute to Heroes* benefit concert. And a lot has happened in their careers since then. Pitt nabbed two Oscars, while Cruise starred in six more installments in the hugely popular *Mission: Impossible* film franchise.



LINDSAY LOHAN SHARES STRUGGLES WITH L A AFTER MOVING TO DUBAI

After nearly 30 years in the spotlight, Lindsay Lohan took a step back from the hustle and bustle of Hollywood and uprooted her life from Los Angeles to Dubai in 2014. Since then, the *Mean Girls* actress, 38, has not only become a wife and a mother, she has found peace within herself. "It's hard in L A. Even taking my son to the park in L A, I get stressed. I'm like, 'Are there cameras?' In New York, there's no worry, no one bothers us," said Lohan, who shares one-year-old son Luai with husband Bader Shammas. "Everyone has their own thing going on. There's a different kind of energy in New York. I'd rather have downtime in New York than I would in L A."



Brandy and Monica announce first co-headlining tour

R&B icons Brandy and Monica are embarking on a co-headlining tour together for the first time, the stars confirmed on Tuesday. Called *The Boy Is Mine Tour*, referencing the duo's 1998 hit, the tour will also feature Kelly Rowland and Muni Long, along with Jamal Roberts, who just won Season 23 of *American Idol*. The tour will be produced by the Black Promoters Collective. "This really is a full-circle moment," Brandy said in a statement of the tour. "Monica and I coming together again isn't just about the music — it's about honouring where we came from and how far we've both come."



ATEEZ enters Billboard Hot 100

ATEEZ has made their debut on Billboard's Hot 100! On June 24, Billboard announced that ATEEZ's new title track 'Lemon Drop' had debuted at No 69 on the Hot 100 (its weekly ranking of the most popular songs in the United States), marking the group's first-ever entry on the chart. Notably, ATEEZ is only the third K-pop boy group in history (comprising eight lollypops - Hongjoong, Seonghwa, Yunho, Yeosang, San, Mingi, Wooyoung and Jongho) to enter the Hot 100, following BTS and Stray Kids. Outside of the Hot 100, ATEEZ topped four different Billboard charts this week. 'Lemon Drop' de-

buted at No 1 on Billboard's World Digital Song Sales chart, while their new mini album 'GOLDEN HOUR: Part.3' - the best-selling album of the week in the United States - swept the No 1 spot on the Top Album Sales chart, Top Current Album Sales chart, and World Albums chart. 'Lemon Drop' also debuted at No 9 on Billboard's Digital Song Sales chart, meaning it was the ninth best-selling song of the week in the United States. Additionally, ATEEZ re-entered Billboard's Artist 100 at No 2, marking their 39th overall week on the chart. We (and the entire Atiny) sure can keep this eight-pronged 'treasure' with us forever!



HOLLYWOOD MOVIE REVIEW: 28 YEARS LATER Genre: Horror, slow burn Starring: Aaron Taylor-Johnson, Jodie Comer, Jack O'Connell

Academy Award winning director Danny Boyle and Academy Award-nominated writer Alex Garland reunite for the terrifying dystopian post-apocalyptic tale of horror, trauma, anxiety and survival named *28 Days Later*. One thing must be cleared: It is not just a zombie movie — it's a thoughtful, terrifying commentary on the present world. The story goes as: It has been almost three decades since the Rage virus escaped a biological weapons laboratory, and is now making a ruthless impact on people. Though people are stuck and are forced in quarantine, some have found ways to exist amidst the infected. One group of survivors lives on a small island connected to the mainland by a single, heavily-defended

Not just about zombies



causeway. When one of the group members leaves the island on a mission into the dark heart of the mainland, he discovers secrets, wonders, and horrors that have mutated not only the infected but other survivors as well. Boyle, back in the director's chair, brings his unmistakable visual ur-

gency and emotional tension in every frame. His direction is lean, precise, and drenched in dread. Every scene feels lived in, soaked in atmosphere, and purposefully chaotic. Cinematographer Anthony Dod Mantle returns with raw, visceral camerawork that captures the eeriness of desolate cityscapes and the

explosive bursts of violence with a hyper-realistic edge. The film pulses with nervous energy, aided by a haunting score that evokes both nostalgia and terror. The performances are striking. Cillian Murphy (remember him in *Oppenheimer*?) reprises his role as Jim in a chilling, nuanced cameo, while new leads deliver gripping portrayals of humans on the brink. Their performances balance fear, resilience, and quiet despair with authenticity. The script is perhaps the darkest yet in the series, exploring not just infected monsters, but the political and ethical decay of those rebuilding in the aftermath. Boyle doesn't waste a frame — every moment feels purposeful and urgent. 28 Years Later may not reach the raw originality of the first film, but it evolves the saga with maturity, tension, and cinematic style. The movie is indeed a triumphant return to a genre Boyle helped redefine — emotional, brutal, thoughtful and deeply cinematic.

Rating ★★★★★

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DRIVE AWAY TO YAS ISLAND ABU DHABI



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TRIP TO YAS MARINA & FERRARI WORLD

Limited Time Offer 24th, 25th & 26th of June

INSURANCE &
REGISTRATION

SERVICE FOR
5YRS/100000 KMS

EXTENDED WARRANTY
6 YRS UNLIMITED



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Together
let's drive™

*Terms & Conditions Apply: Offer valid for MY24 Z71 and Premier 6.2L V8 engine models only. The getaway includes accommodation and access to Yas Marina and Ferrari World for a maximum of 5 family members (Mother, Father, and three Children). Alternatively, you may choose a cash benefit equivalent to the total value of the package.