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OLD MUSCAT AIRPORT TO BE TURNED INTO LEISURE HUB

Our Correspondent Muscat

Plans are taking shape to redevelop Muscat's former international airport into a vibrant aviation-themed destination, with proposals including an aviation museum, shopping centres, restaurants, and other leisure and commercial attractions.

Naif bin Ali al Abri, Chairman of Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), revealed that several investment opportunities have been proposed to breathe new life into the historic site, once the primary hub for Oman Air.

Speaking to media last week, Abri said the transformation aims to create an economically viable development that honours the airport's legacy in Oman's aviation journey. "These proposals aim to turn the old airport into a dynamic destination while preserving its historical significance. Oman Airports is currently reviewing the submissions to determine the most suitable and strategic options for implementation."

Highlighting the authority's achievements, Abri noted that 2024 was a strong year for Oman's aviation sector. CAA recorded revenues of RO105mn, reflecting operational efficiency and financial sustainability.

There has been marked increase in air traffic with over 540,300 aircraft transiting through Omani airspace - a 14% increase compared to 2023. Passenger traffic grew 2% and more than 120,000 flights were recorded during the year. Air cargo volumes exceeded 150,000 tonnes underlining robust activity in the aviation sector.

Abri further pointed out that in response to the recent regional crisis, Oman hosted numerous international flights, leading to a 28% increase in air traffic over a 12-day period.

In a bid to support growth and enhance service quality, CAA issued new operating permits to 19 foreign airlines in 2024.

Significant upgrades were also made to national aviation infrastructure, including installation of a new air navigation radar in Jalan Bani Bu Ali to bolster airspace surveillance. Operational manuals were implemented at both Duqm and Marmul airports, while aviation security and cybersecurity policies were ratified to ensure high safety standards.

The national meteorological monitoring network expanded to 80 stations, reinforcing the sultanate's climate and weather forecasting capabilities.

The authority addressed and resolved 520 customer complaints in 2024, showcasing its responsiveness and dedication to service excellence.

Marriage support fund launched

Our Correspondent Muscat

In line with Royal Directives aimed at promoting social stability and alleviating financial pressures facing young Omanis, Governorate of Muscat has officially launched the Marriage Fund Support Request Service. It is now available through the governorate's official website.

The initiative enables eligible Omani citizens residing in Muscat to apply for financial assistance to support the costs of marriage. It seeks to encourage making families by reducing the economic challenges typically associated with starting married life.

The service is provided free of charge and applications processed within 30 working days, provided all necessary documentation is submitted in full.

To be eligible, applicants must reside in Muscat governorate, be aged between 22 and 45 years, have never been married, and have a monthly income not exceeding RO600. Additionally, the marriage must be to an Omani national.

Required documents include a copy of the applicant's identity card (both sides), a certified marriage contract and a salary certificate verified by the applicant's employer. Applications may be submitted either via the official website or by email. Once received, the relevant department will review the submission, verify documentation and assess eligibility. Approved applicants will be contacted telephonically.

Applications can be submitted via <https://gom.gov.om/services.aspx?id=15>

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Spirit of Summer

Explore, dream, discover

Aarti Menon
Teacher

Summer is the perfect time for students to explore hobbies outside the syllabus - music, painting, creative writing or coding. I do think Oman needs more affordable, structured summer camps for different age groups. Many children end up glued to screens because parents can't always engage them. Activities should focus on both fun and life skills..

Faisal al Amr
Private sector employee

Children today spend too much time indoors, especially during the hot months. We need more cultural and indoor sports programmes that connect them with Omani heritage. My sons love astronomy. I wish we had more workshops on astronomy conducted by Oman Astronomical Society. Meaningful engagement will keep them learning, active and off their phones.

Neha Prakash
Marketing executive

As a working parent, I find the long summer break very difficult to manage. Private workshops are expensive and often not age-appropriate. I'd love to see more community-led free or low-cost sessions in art, environment and even robotics. Teens, in particular, need group activities to keep them social and mentally healthy.

Sunayna Bobby
Teacher

Summer vacations could be utilised to make children understand the importance of community service. They need to understand that as responsible individuals they should become meaningful contributors - whether small or big - to society. It could be working at an NGO, volunteering for clean ups, spending time with elderly at old age homes, part of soup kitchens, organising donations for a purpose etc.



Sulaima Khalid al Kindi
IT professional

Libraries, museums and parks should host interactive holiday sessions. If students are exposed to real-world challenges - sustainability, digital skills, social work etc - even once a week, it leaves a huge impact. I also

wish some more physical activity classes in late evening like swimming or indoor football and basketball.

Supriya Jain
Artist

With schools closed for summer, students can be meaningfully en-

gaged through art, sports, reading and skill-based workshops. These activities nurture creativity, discipline and learning beyond academics. There is indeed a growing need for more structured summer programmes that offer fun, safe and enriching experiences for children and teenagers during the holidays.

Joyita Dasgupta
Teacher

Speaking from my experience as a middle and secondary school teacher, engaging students meaningfully during summer holidays is important to prevent learning loss, maintain curiosity and support



overall development. Children must be presented the opportunity for enrichment with life skills and global awareness. Volunteering will allow them to connect with local community service projects, while entrepreneurial tasks can help them plan small business ideas, like a handmade craft stall or tutoring young peers. Additionally, students can start a summer journal or blog about their experiences or interests.

Fatima Khan
Homemaker

My children often get bored during summer unless they travel. I wish there were short filmmaking, writing or design camps in malls or schools for reasonable charges. We love learning in creative ways, but it's hard to find such opportunities. And when available, these are often expensive. Summer shouldn't feel like a pause from learning.

Ahmed al Balushi
Student

Younger students don't always have access to activities outside Muscat. It would be great to have mobile workshops or online clubs run by trained volunteers. We must include teenagers in planning so it's relevant to their interests. Photography, writing or volunteering could shape their thinking and open career paths.

Srirupa Mukherjee Thakur
Teacher

Instead of going for curated summer camps and activities, I would rather prefer children to read, travel, pick up a hobby or simply discover nature during the summer break. They are already part of a regimented system in schools round the year. Better let them explore and discover themselves!

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What is your opinion on Oman's decision to introduce a 5% personal income tax on high-income earners starting in 2028?

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Nepal promotes trade, investment and manpower cooperation with Oman

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Embassy of Nepal in Muscat hosted a trade, investment, employment and tourism promotion event last week aimed at strengthening bilateral cooperation with Oman in key sectors including manpower, tourism and business.

The event brought together Omani business leaders, company representatives and hypermarket executives to explore avenues for collaboration and investment.

Addressing the gathering, H E Dornath Aryal, Ambassador of Nepal to Oman, reaffirmed his country's commitment to



H E Dornath Aryal, Ambassador of Nepal to Oman

expanding manpower deployment to the sultanate. "We are committed to increasing the number of Nepali workers in Oman and simplifying their recruitment process through digital systems, robust support services and policy reforms," he

said.

He also encouraged Omani stakeholders to explore investment opportunities in Nepal, highlighting potential in hydropower, tourism and energy.

Bishesh Kumar Sah, Second Secretary at the embassy, made a detailed presentation outlining key areas for Omani investment, including hydropower, agriculture and IT. He also showcased Nepali products with strong export potential and briefed attendees on simplified recruitment procedures.

As part of its digital transformation strategy, the Embassy of Nepal launched an online portal for Institutional Demand Attestation in 2024. Since then, all

attestation-related procedures have been conducted digitally, eliminating the need for manual submissions.

Recruiters in Oman can now complete all documentation through the portal after selecting from among 1,400 registered recruiting agencies in Nepal. Embassy officials noted the fact that the digital shift has improved transparency and efficiency in the recruitment process.

The embassy reiterated its intention to continue facilitating bilateral engagement, with a focus on promoting tourism, employment and trade cooperation between the two countries.

Indian Embassy to start 11 centres for passport, visa services

Muscat - Embassy of India in Muscat will begin offering consular, passport and visa services through a new service provider - SGIVS Global Services - starting July 1, 2025.

In the initial phase, services will be available from the embassy premises located on

Jami'at al Dowal al Arabiya Street in the Diplomatic Area of Al Khuwair.

To improve service delivery, SGIVS Global will gradually establish 11 dedicated application centres across the sultanate. These centres will be located in Muscat, Salalah, Suhar, Ibri, Sur,

Nizwa, Duqm, Ibra, Khasab, Buraimi and Barka, and are expected to be fully operational by August 15, 2025.

The embassy has advised applicants to expect possible service disruptions during the transition and requested them to plan their visits accordingly. Up-

dates on the opening of the new centres and related developments will be shared through the embassy's official website and social media platforms.

The embassy has expressed appreciation for the understanding and cooperation of applicants during this period of transition.

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H M sends message to Bulgarian President

Sofia, Bulgaria - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a written message to President Rumen Georgiev Radev of the Republic of Bulgaria pertaining to bilateral relations between the two friendly countries and ways to enhance these.

The message was delivered by Yousef bin Ahmed al Jabri, Oman's Non-Resident Ambassador to Bulgaria, during his reception by the Bulgarian President at the Presidential Palace in the capital Sofia on Sunday.

During the meeting, President Radev praised the mediation efforts of Oman, its contribution to finding solutions to tensions through dialogue and diplomatic means, and its commitment to achieving lasting and just peace in the Middle East and the world.

Surge in freelancing as e-commerce grows

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The freelancing sector in Oman is witnessing marked growth, in line with global shifts in the labour market and trends in the digital economy. National initiatives aimed at creating sustainable income streams for youth and encouraging entrepreneurship across digital platforms are further accelerating this transformation.

Government efforts to build a supportive legislative and technical ecosystem are central to this shift, aligning with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040, which seeks to establish a diversified and innovation-driven economy.

Azza bint Ibrahim al Kindi, Director of Commercial Affairs and E-Commerce Department at Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, said e-commerce has become a key area for freelance work. She noted that this growth is being supported by enabling government procedures that allow individuals to legally operate in the space.

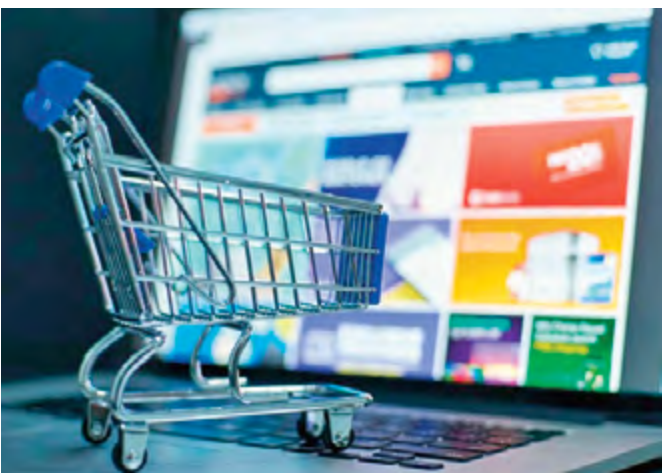


She highlighted the introduction of the Freelance Business Register, a licensing mechanism allowing Omanis to engage in e-commerce activities for a nominal fee. "E-commerce requires relatively low operational costs, with no need for a physical storefront. It also gives businesses access to wider markets, both regionally and internationally," she said.

According to Azza, freelance

E-commerce has become a key area for freelance work. The low entry barrier is making it a viable option for many in the community to explore new income sources

AZZA BINT IBRAHIM AL KINDI



e-commerce ventures are helping raise business awareness and professionalism among Omani youth. The low entry barrier is making it a viable option for many in the community to explore new income sources.

The ministry has authorised over 200 commercial activities under freelance licences, developed in coordination with other authorities. These activities are supported through platforms like 'Maroof Oman', which documents and verifies e-stores, strengthening consumer trust and providing legal cover for on-line businesses.

Azza noted that e-commerce is playing an increasingly important role in the digital economy, offering flexible job opportunities, particularly for young people and recent graduates. Fields such as digital marketing, design and software development are seeing steady freelance engagement.

Freelancing also enables showcasing of Omani talent in

professional and technical areas. "It expands the scope of economic activity and supports the adoption of modern tools and technologies," Azza said, adding that this contributes to creating innovative local solutions and services.

The director cited approval of the National E-Commerce Plan by the Secretariat General of Council of Ministers as a key milestone. Part of the broader National Digital Economy Programme, the plan outlines devel-

opment initiatives running from 2022 to 2027.

Among these, an initiative to improve institutional capacity in e-commerce, implemented by Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development, has offered training to help local merchants access platforms such as Amazon and Noon. Guidelines have been issued to help SMEs integrate into global supply chains.

Additionally, the 'Makin' programme, under Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, is focused on enhancing technical skills in the job market, equipping Omanis with the digital capabilities required for current and future work environments.

Azza noted that various government bodies are actively supporting the shift towards digital commerce. "This sector is shaping the future of business and services. It gives youth the flexibility to test and develop ideas, reducing risks and encouraging innovation," she said.

24 integrated aquaculture farms granted MAFWR licences in 2024

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (MAFWR) gave licences to 24 integrated aquaculture farms across the sultanate in 2024 with expected total output of 498 tonnes of tilapia at estimated RO746,000 market value.

The announcement was made during a regional workshop, titled 'Developing Integrated Freshwater Aquaculture - Best Practices and Modern Technologies', held in Muscat on Wednesday in co-operation with regional and international organisations engaged in the sector.

Participants reviewed best practices for setting up and managing integrated aquaculture farms, with a focus on improving fish quality and reducing disease and mortality rates. Technologies such as 'elevator system' and



'biofloc system' were introduced to improve production efficiency and maintain product standards before and after harvest.

The workshop also addressed marketing strategies and harvesting techniques, while familiarising farmers with improved farm management practices. Investment opportunities in the aquaculture sector were presented as part of wider efforts to support national food security and sustainable rural

development.

Dr Issa bin Mohammed al Farsi, Director of Aquaculture Development Department at MAFWR, said the government aims to develop aquaculture as a key pillar of the fisheries sector. He noted that Oman is positioned to attract both local and foreign investment in the industry, while continuing to support small-scale producers.

He added that aquaculture is central to the sultanate's food

security goals. "The National Aquaculture Strategy was developed in partnership with Food and Agriculture Organization in 2007, and the sector's development vision was prepared with World Bank in 2015," Farsi said.

He highlighted the role of integrated aquaculture as a sustainable model that combines crop and fish farming, maximising land and water use to improve farmer income and productivity.

CAA unveils user-friendly weather app with real-time forecasts

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) has launched an upgraded Oman Meteorology website and mobile application offering real-time weather data and improved forecasting tools across the sultanate.

The announcement was made during the authority's annual media briefing last week held under the patronage of H E Dr Abdullah bin Nasser al Harasi, Minister of Information, in the presence of representatives from government bodies and strategic partners.

Abdullah bin Rashid al Khadouri, Director General of Oman Meteorology at CAA, said the platform now features a more accessible interface and a colour-coded alert system to indicate the intensity of weather conditions such as wind, rain and wave activity. The aim, he said, is



to help users better understand forecasts and take necessary precaution.

The enhanced website and app integrate artificial intelligence to analyse meteorological data, providing more accurate forecasts and alerts tailored to users based on location and activity.

Key features include daily and hourly forecasts, early warning for weather risks such as heavy rain, high winds, fog, flooding and tropical systems, along with interactive maps, data visualisation tools and de-

tailed weather reports. These are designed to support public use, emergency preparedness, and academic and climate research within Oman.

Previously reliant on external sources for radar data, the platform now delivers direct access to meteorological inputs from five operational radars located within Oman, in addition to satellite data. This upgrade is intended to serve a wide user base, including government agencies, private companies and the military.

Khadouri said the platform will also benefit professionals and weather enthusiasts by offering real-time access to data for analysis, improving public awareness and response to weather conditions.

He described the initiative as part of the CAA's broader effort to enhance transparency and innovation in the delivery of meteorological services.

FAO to establish permanent office in Oman to boost national strategies

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman and Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of United Nations have signed an agreement to establish a representative office in Muscat, marking a new phase in cooperation.

The agreement was signed in Rome on Saturday by H E Dr Sa-ud bin Hamoud al Habsi, Minister

of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, and Dr Qu Dongyu, Director-General of FAO, in the presence of H H Sayyid Nizar bin al Julanda al Said, Ambassador of Oman to Italy, and senior officials from both sides.

The move is expected to expand Oman's presence in international forums dealing with food, climate and water, while strengthening joint technical programmes

in agriculture, fisheries and natural resource management.

H E Habsi said the agreement reflects FAO's role in shaping agricultural, food security and rural development policies at both regional and global levels.

He added that establishment of a permanent FAO office in Oman represents a major step in enhancing cooperation, particularly in implementation of na-

tional strategies and coordination across sectors under the ministry's oversight.

Dr Thaer Yassin, Head of the FAO Mission in Oman, described the agreement as a strategic development that will deepen the organisation's engagement in the country. He said the presence of a permanent representative will enhance knowledge exchange and broaden technical coopera-

tion both nationally and across the region.

FAO has supported projects in Oman since 2012, particularly in the agriculture and fisheries sectors, with emphasis on sustainable development and climate resilience. The organisation's project portfolio in the sultanate grew 83% between 2022 and 2024, with contributions from government entities, academic institu-

tions and the private sector.

This growth, FAO official noted, reflects increased mutual confidence and a shared commitment to advancing sustainable food systems and rural development in line with environmental goals.

A permanent FAO office positions Oman as a key partner in the organisation's efforts to reform agri-food systems in the Gulf region. It also aligns with

both parties' priorities to promote food security, sustainability and innovation across the sector.

According to FAO, the Muscat office will support progress towards several Sustainable Development Goals, particularly those linked to ending hunger, climate action and sustainable land use. It will also strengthen coordination with other UN agencies operating in the sultanate.

Oman's GDP grows 4.7% during Q1 this year, reaches R010.53bn

The sultanate’s non-Oil activities drive economic growth in first quarter, reports NCSI

Muscat - Oman's gross domestic product (GDP) at current prices rose by 4.7% in the first quarter of 2025, reaching R010.53bn compared to R010.05bn in the same period last year, according to preliminary data released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The increase was primarily driven by non-oil activities, which grew 4.1% to R07.13bn, up from R06.85bn in the first quarter of 2024.

Among non-oil sectors, agriculture and fishing recorded the highest growth at 11.1%, contributing R0326.6mn to the economy. Industrial activities increased by 2.8%, reaching R01.97bn, while services rose 4.2% with a total contribution of R04.84bn.

Oil activities also contributed to the overall growth, rising by 6.8% to R03.71bn, compared to R03.47bn in the corresponding quarter last year. This increase came despite a 7.5% decline in crude oil activity, which dropped to R02.74bn.

Natural gas activity showed



the strongest performance in the energy sector, growing by 89%

year-on-year to reach R0970.8mn in added value.

The figures reflect a continued shift towards economic diversifi-

cation, with both traditional and emerging sectors contributing to

Oman's economic performance in the first quarter of 2025.

Türkiye secures new funding from World Bank

Ankara, Türkiye - Türkiye secured funding of US\$660,000 from the World Bank for a two-component project for the Middle Corridor trade route, according to the country's Official Gazette on Friday.

The project will be co-financed by the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the Islamic Development Bank (IDB). The first phase of the project, estimated at US\$1.3bn, is to modernise the Divrigi-Kars-Georgia border railway.

The estimated budget for the second part, project management, is US\$5.5mn.

The process for World Bank-financed contracts will follow the bank's Procurement in Investment Project Financing (IPF) regulations and will be open to all eligible companies and individuals. The World Bank and the AIIB will publish special procurement notices for international open tenders. These will also be available on the Turkish General Directorate of Infrastructure Investments website.



Rusayl localises 17 projects worth R049mn

Muscat - Al Rusayl Industrial City, affiliated to the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates 'Madayn', signed 17 new contracts in 2024, covering over 235,000sqm and attracting investments exceeding R049mn.

These projects cover a diverse range of sectors, including industrial, logistics and service.

Since its establishment in 1983, the city has played a central role in providing a conducive business environment and supporting government efforts aimed at economic diversification in line with Oman Vision 2040.

Fahad bin Nasser al Abrawi, acting CEO of Al Rusayl Industrial City Company, highlighted that cumulative investments in the city have surpassed R0767mn by the end of 2024, spread across nearly 11mn sqm area. The industrial city hosts activities in chemicals, electrical materials, building materials, fiber optic cables, food products, textiles, stationery, paints, filters, furniture, and more.

Madayn is currently advancing several strategic projects in Al Rusayl Industrial City, including the infrastructure project of the Madayn Entrepreneurial Complex in collaboration with the SMEs Development Authority. Covering over 60,000sqm area, this project aims to provide fully serviced industrial workshops of 500sqm each, dedi-

cated to supporting small and medium enterprises.

Additionally, the consultancy project for infrastructure improvements in Al Rusayl Industrial City is underway to address rainwater accumulation in several areas. This includes constructing new access roads to some leased lands along with other enhancements.

Abrawi pointed out that the approved future projects include the redevelopment of the commercial area to increase retail capacity, an integrated project to support food security in cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (MAFWR), and a sustainable wastewater recycling project to support industrial cooling and manufacturing processes within Al Rusayl Industrial City.

Moreover, Madayn completed in 2024 the modernisation and beautification of the industrial city's main entrance with a contemporary design, reflecting its commitment to an attractive and modern industrial hub. Since its inception, the Masar Service Centre in Al Rusayl Industrial City has played a key role in streamlining investment procedures by providing a unified platform for all required approvals, permits, and licenses. The centre offers integrated support services including consulting, financing, banking, medical checks, beside others.

Saudi Arabia's FDI inflows reach \$6bn in Q1, unemployment rate declines to below 8%

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia - The Saudi General Authority for Statistics reported on Sunday that Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) inflows reached SAR22.2bn (US\$5.9bn) in Q1 2025, while the unemployment rate declined to 7.8%.

The data indicated a 44% increase in FDI inflows compared to the same period last year, when it amounted to SAR15.5bn (US\$4.1bn), despite a 7% decline compared to the fourth quarter of 2024, which recorded SAR23.9bn (US\$6.4bn).

FDI inflows into the kingdom totalled SAR24.0bn (US\$6.4bn) in Q1 2025, reflecting a 24% year-on-year increase but a 6% drop compared to Q4 2024.

In the labour market, the data showed a decline in the overall unemployment rate for individuals aged 15 and older to 7.8% in Q1 2025, compared to 8.5% in Q4 2024, 3.7% males, and



18.4% females.

The authority reported Saudi unemployment falling to 7.6%, down from 8.4%, with male un-

employment sliding from 5.1% to 4.7% and female easing from 14.3% to 13%.

The labour force participation

rate for Saudis stood at 47.6%, with 66.6% for males and 35.4% for females, while the employment-to-population ratio was

92.4%.

The data showed that the majority of Saudi job seekers are in the 20-29 age group, with the

The authority reported Saudi unemployment falling to 7.6%, down from 8.4%, with male unemployment sliding from 5.1% to 4.7% and female easing from 14.3% to 13%

highest numbers in Riyadh, Makkah, the Eastern Province, Aseer, and Qassim. WAM

Türkiye, Russia sign economic cooperation protocol

Istanbul, Türkiye - Türkiye and Russia signed the Joint Intergovernmental Commission on Trade and Economic Cooperation (JEC) protocol Friday in Moscow, which covers the two countries' bilateral trade and economic relations and topics such as energy, agriculture, contracting, environment, education and transport.

Turkish and Russian delegations met in Moscow to hold the Turkish-Russian JEC meeting under the chairmanship of Turkish Trade Minister Omer Bolat and Russian Deputy Prime Minister Aleksander Novak.

Bolat and Novak signed the JEC protocol at a ceremony held after the meeting, where economic and trade issues between the two countries were discussed. Bolat said that the protocol will be a roadmap for Türkiye-Russia trade and economic relations.

"Turkish and Russian economies, which have already



proven their resilience, offer the necessary opportunities to build stronger cooperation with their complementary qualities," Bolat said, noting that Türkiye and Russia continue to develop their

economic relations.

Pointing out that Türkiye and Russia are important actors and neighbours in the region, Bolat said that the trade and economic cooperation that the two coun-

tries have developed over the years has laid the foundation for peace and stability in the region.

Bolat said that Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Russian President Vladimir Putin

continue their joint efforts to further develop these relations and reach the target set by the two countries to reach US\$100bn in bilateral trade.

Stating that the Turkish economy has been growing consecutively for 19 quarters, Bolat noted that it grew by 3.2% last year and reached a size of \$1.3 trillion.

Bolat noted that Türkiye has increased its export volume from US\$36bn in 2002 to US\$262bn in 2024 by seven times. "The undeniable potential of the Turkish economy is echoed on a global scale. As a matter of fact, the World Bank has recently revised our country's growth forecasts upwards from 2.6% to 3.1%."

Pointing out that the Russian economy also showed a superior performance contrary to global forecasts, Bolat stated that according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) data, it recorded 4.1% growth in both 2023 and 2024.

Anadolu Agency

C-suite overconfidence in AI could prove bad for business: Survey

Doloresz Katanich

Many business leaders have ‘misplaced confidence’ in the strength of their responsible AI practises, according to a new survey by EY.

In an ever-changing geo-political and economic climate, the key to business success appears to be the ability to adapt.

Add into that the fast-paced world of tech and AI, and if

you’re not ready for change, you’ll get left behind.

“AI is [such] an evolving ecosystem that companies are thinking through introducing a level of agility in their decision-making to give them the capacity to take on what AI is going to bring our way over the next while, without really, completely knowing what the answer is,” Jad Shimaly, global managing partner of client service at EY,

told Euronews. But as companies prepare for increased AI adoption and innovation, are their consumers happy with the risks they’re taking?

Responsible AI look like? The true definition of responsible AI appears to be somewhat up for debate, and that could have serious business consequences, according to EY’s latest Responsible AI Pulse survey.

“There seems to be a decent gap between C-suite expectations and understanding of what responsible AI and what the risk of AI is and what customer and consumer’s expectations are,” Jad explained.

The survey highlighted that, in organisations that have already fully integrated AI, many C-suite leaders “have misplaced confidence in the strength of their responsible AI practices

and their alignment with consumer concerns”.

This could lead to a reduction in consumer trust and a reduced competitive edge for the company, which is only set to increase as things like agentic AI become more prevalent.

“CEOs stand out as an exception - showing greater concern around responsible AI, a viewpoint that’s more closely aligned with consumer sentiment,” the

report noted, however.

“One in five CEOs think that they have AI risk under control, while a third of their C-suite think that they have AI risks under control,” Jad said.

“So the CEOs seem to be a bit less comfortable that AI risk is being fully understood and mitigated than their C-suite.”

This difference in perception between CEOs and their senior colleagues is potentially linked

to lower awareness levels or lower perceived accountability.

‘It may also exhibit an imperfect understanding of the true potential of AI,’ the survey added. Jad was confident, however, that as regulations around responsible AI become clearer and more harmonised across the world, consumers will feel more assured that risks are being sufficiently mitigated.

Euronews

France and Germany pursue different tacks towards US

Berlin, Germany - France and Germany are at odds over the negotiating strategy on trade with the US, while the Commission is increasingly doubtful about securing a zero-tariff deal.

France and Germany exhibited diverging strategies in the trade dispute between the EU and the US ongoing since mid-March, following a Council summit in Brussels on Thursday. While Germany is eager to reach a swift agreement at all costs, France emphasised the necessity that bloc should not display weakness.



In a press conference after the summit, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz said the Council encouraged the Commission to use the remaining two weeks to come to a swift agreement. But he said that the Council had encouraged von der Leyen to pursue the EU’s own countermeasures if necessary. He said it was important to conclude something quickly and flagged the risks to the auto, chemicals and pharma sectors if 9 July arrives and the Trump tariffs take effect.

“My hope is that we can reach a swift conclusion,” French President Emmanuel Macron said, adding: “However, this willingness should not be mistaken for weakness. We want to conclude quickly because it serves our collective interest, supports the stability of international trade, and benefits our businesses - but not

at any price.”

On Monday, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz criticised the Commission’s strategy as overly technical and called for accelerating the negotiations by focusing on strategic sectors such as automobiles, steel, and energy, chemicals and pharma.

The US currently imposes 50% tariffs on EU steel and aluminium, 25% on cars and a 10% baseline on all EU imports.

Negotiations between the US and the EU have gained momentum since President Donald Trump and Commission President Ursula von der Leyen met at the G7 summit in Canada on 16 June, as the critical 9 July deadline approaches, after which Trump has threatened to impose 50% tariffs on all EU imports.

On Thursday evening, EU

Commission President Ursula von der Leyen announced to EU member states that she had received a US counter-proposal to the EU’s offer, though she did not disclose any details.

For several months, the EU has been offering the US a zero-for-zero tariff deal on all industrial products, along with commitments to purchase strategic goods such as liquid natural gas and soybeans.

However, few believe that securing 0% tariffs from the US is still a realistic possibility. “Since they decided to impose multiple tariffs on their trade partners across the globe, the US now has an appetite for the revenue that tariffs generate,” an EU official said, implying that the US rejected the EU offer.

The Commission is now re-

considering its approach to a future tariff-based deal, though the specific terms have yet to be determined. “The prevailing assumption is that a 10% tariff might be the benchmark,” an EU diplomat said.

“On some areas 10% is not so much, the EU imposes 10% on a lot of imports of cars, whether they are Chinese or Japanese,” another EU official told Euronews, adding that “for other products, such as aircraft, it’s much more complicated because the production line is very interdependent between the US and the EU. That’s why, you need a granular analysis.”

If the EU manages to reach an agreement by July 9, it will not be a comprehensive agreement, two senior EU diplomats said.

Euronews



UK car production falls in May to lowest since 1949

Istanbul, Türkiye - The UK’s car production plunged for the fifth consecutive month to the lowest level since 1949 in May due to the impact of the US tariffs, according to data by the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT) on Friday.

The new car and commercial vehicle production volumes fell by 32.8% year-on-year to 49,810 units in May.

“Excluding 2020, when COVID lockdowns saw factories shuttered or running at greatly reduced capacity, it was the lowest performance for the month since 1949,” a statement from the SMMT said.

The decline was due to ongoing model changeovers, restructuring, and the impact of US tariffs.

Last month, shipments to the US and the EU, the UK’s two biggest markets, decreased 55.4% and 22.5% year-on-year, respectively.

The production volumes fell by 32.8% year-on-year due to ongoing model changeovers, restructuring, and the impact of US tariffs

and trade that recognise the critical role the sector plays in driving economic growth, should help recovery,” said SMMT CEO Mike Hawes.

“With rapid implementation, particularly on the energy costs constraining our competitiveness, the UK can deliver the jobs, growth and decarbonization that is desperately needed,” he added.

In April, US President Donald Trump imposed a 25% tariff on all US imports of cars and car parts.

However, Trump signed an executive order in May lowering the duty that US-based companies pay on British autos to 10% for the first 100,000 cars imported annually.

Anadolu Agency

Sharjah ready for summer tourists

Sharjah, UAE - Sharjah Airport has announced its full readiness to handle the significant increase in travel volume to and from Sharjah during the peak summer season.

The airport is set to welcome over 800,000 passengers from July 1 to 15, as part of a comprehensive plan to provide a distinguished and seamless travel experience for all passengers.

Sharjah Airport Authority



(SAA) has outlined a series of operational measures in coordination with strategic partners to ensure the highest levels of efficiency and comfort. Efforts are

being intensified around the clock by working teams and customer service staff to provide necessary support, respond to passenger inquiries, and guide them in using the airport’s smart services and innovative technologies with ease. This ensures a smooth and integrated travel experience. In this context, the authority continues to enhance all logistical and health aspects.

WAM

Nike expects \$1bn from US tariffs

Istanbul, Türkiye - American athletic footwear and apparel corporation Nike has said it anticipates an additional US\$1bn in costs due to tariffs imposed under the US’ Trump administration, as the company seeks to shift production away from China.

“These tariffs represent a new and meaningful cost headwind,” Matthew Friend, Nike’s chief financial officer, said on Thursday.

Anadolu Agency



شركة الكروم العمانية
Oman Chromite Company

P.O. Box: 346, PC 321, Sohar, Sultanate of Oman,
Tel: 26845115, Fax: 26845155

Auction announcement No. (1/2025)

Oman Chromite Company (SAOG) invites interested parties to submit offers for the purchase of used equipment, vehicles, and scrap items on an "as is, where is" basis. Auction documents containing full terms and item details can be obtained from the company's **Sohar office** during working hours (9:00 A.M. – 3:00 P.M.), from **1 July, 2025 to 7th July, 2025**, upon payment of a **non-refundable fee of OMR 10**.

No	Type
1	Equipment, Trucks & Light Vehicles
2	Air Compressors, Air conditioners, Scrap, Electronics, Furniture & Generators

For more information please.
Call Mr. Issa Albalushi 96725792.

TENDER NOTICE



SULTANATE OF OMAN
The Ministry of Agricultural
Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources

The Ministry of Agricultural, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources Announces the following Tenders :-

Tender No.	Tender Title	Tender Document Sales Start Date	Tender Document Sales End Date	Bid Submission Closing	Companies that are eligible to participate	Tender Document fee (R.O)
401/2025/MAFWR/HQ- 43	Consultancy Services & interior Designing for Ministry Building lobby at Al-Khuwair	Monday 23/6/2025	Sunday 13/7/2025	Monday 4/8/2025	SMEs Specialized companies registered with Third grades	(25/-) Omani riyals for local companies (10/-) Omani riyals for SMEs
402/2025/MAFWR/HQ- 44	Rehabilitation and Improvement of AL-belad Falaj in AL-Ghafat village at Wilayat Bahla at AL-Dhakliyah Governorate	Monday 23/6/2025	Sunday 13/7/2025	Monday 4/8/2025	SMEs Specialized companies registered with Third, fourth grades	(25/-) Omani riyals for local companies (10/-) Omani riyals for SMEs
410/2025/MAFWR/HQ- 45	Consultancy Services for Construction Supervision of the Fish Landing Site in Bamma, Quriyat	Wednesday 25/6/2025	Tuesday 15/7/2025	Monday 4/8/2025	Specialized companies registered with First, Second grades	(50/-) Omani riyals for local companies (10/-) Omani riyals for SMEs

- above mentioned Grade) may obtain Tender documents from the E-Tendering **website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>**.
- The value of the document will be paid & submitted on line on given website.
- The Tenderer should attach Bid Commitment Declaration for local companies.
- All correspondence pertaining to the tender inquiry must be online at e-tendering System.
- All correspondence pertaining to the e-tendering System technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number: **+968 24402200 or etenderhd@gstb.gov.om**.

TENDERS COMMOTTEE
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources

Kia K8 luxury sedan available with Welcome Bonus plus more benefits

This summer, welcome the luxurious Kia K8 – the dynamic, high-powered sedan with an attractive bouquet of welcome benefits.

Now available with a Welcome Bonus of RO500, service of 50,000km, insurance, registration and much more, Kia K8 offers an attractive raffle of 5 units of Apple iPhone 15 (256 GB).

The Welcome Bonus can be utilised in any convenient way that the customers' demands such as price adjustment, as an addition in down payment or upgrading trade-in price of the old vehicle, a press release said.

The Kia K8 delivers a complete package that sets new quality benchmarks in automotive excellence. Equipped with state-of-the-art technology, the K8 offers a progressive, modern design and superior handling performance.

Set off on family journeys in the refined comfort of the executive lounge setting of the K8. Powered by a 3.5ltr GDI Smartstream powertrain and paired with an 8-speed automatic transmission with 296hp/6400rpm, the K8 makes every trip enjoyable and memorable.



Each feature inside the K8 is thoughtfully designed to deliver seamless connectivity, safety and control for all passengers. Step inside and be welcomed by

cutting-edge technology, Crisp leather seats, a 12.3-inch TFT digital cluster for key driving information, a 12.3-inch infotainment system with Apple

CarPlay, Android Auto, Bluetooth with voice recognition, and a sophisticated 14-speaker Meridian surround sound system, ensuring you're connected

to the outside world. Furthermore, experience enhanced convenience with features like remote engine start and a keyless entry system.

While you set the pace for your day and load belongings into the spacious 510L rear boot, enjoy the ease of wirelessly charging your smartphone using the inte-

grated charging trays. To maximise driver comfort, the K8 includes a memory seating system with lumbar support, ventilated power leather front seats, and a panoramic sunroof that enhances the cabin's spacious feel. Driver-focused technologies such as the head-up display provide a clear and accurate view of the road ahead, improving safety and confidence behind the wheel.

Safety remains a top priority with Kia's Advanced Driver Assistance System (ADAS), offering intelligent features to reduce risks and protect all occupants. With Forward Collision-Avoidance Assist (FCA), you can drive with peace of mind knowing the K8 will intervene in the event of a potential collision. Parking is made effortless with the Surround View Monitor (SVM) and Front & Reverse Parking Assist systems, simplifying parking in tight spaces.

The Kia K8 symbolises Kia's commitment to innovation, sustainability, and customer-centric design. Visit your nearest Kia showroom today and embrace a new era of executive driving with the Kia K8.



ahli islamic opens branch in Al Ansab

Ahli Islamic is undergoing a strategically planned expansion phase, driven by its clear vision to enhance access to its Sharia-compliant banking products and services.

The latest step in this journey is the inauguration of its newest branch in the Al Ansab area of Muscat Governorate.

The new branch offers a comprehensive range of Islamic banking products and services, including the opening of various types of Sharia-compliant accounts, along with a selection of banking cards, a press release said.

The branch provides a wide array of BancaTakaful Ser-

vices, including home, travel, domestic helper, and auto Takaful. In addition, it offers inclusive financing solutions tailored to meet the needs of both individuals and institutions. Its services extend to corporate banking, including support for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) along with governmental institution services.

Furthermore, Al Shumookh Wealth Management provides top-tier, personalised financial services and solutions that help leverage the best investment opportunities, offering high expected returns through Ahli Islamic Sukuk Funds.

Geely Emgrand celebrates 4 millionth vehicle produced

The 4 millionth Geely Emgrand rolled off the production line at the Zhejiang Huzhou Changxing plant, marking a historic milestone for Geely Auto.

This moment not only set records and cemented Geely Emgrand's reputation as a global name in the B-segment sedan market. This achievement signals a bold shift for Chinese automakers, moving from industrial strength to global value creation. With its world-class quality and innovation, the Geely Emgrand is redefining the rules of what a sedan can be, setting a new standard for excellence in the automotive market, a press release said.

The Emgrand's journey to produce 4 million units is filled with pioneering triumphs. Since its debut, the Emgrand has claimed six 'firsts and uniqueness' in Chinese automotive history, earning its title as the 'national champion sedan'. It became the first to achieve monthly sales exceeding 60,000 units



Emgrand's journey is filled with pioneering triumphs. Since its debut, Emgrand has claimed six 'firsts and uniqueness' in Chinese automotive history, earning its title as the 'national champion sedan'

and the first to secure export exemption qualifications.

For nine years, it has held a spot in China's top 10 sedan

sales, topped independent sedan sales for three consecutive years, and notched 159 months with over 10,000 units sold. Certified

as the top compact sedan by J D Power's China Automotive Product Charm Index for two years running and the first to earn China Automotive Research Institute's reliability certification.

Over 15 years, four generations of Emgrand have transformed the sedan landscape. The journey began in 2009 with the first-generation 'Safety Champion', which earned a C-NCAP five-star rating.

OBG, NFC video shows economic diversification

A new Growth Perspectives video produced by Oxford Business Group (OBG) in partnership with National Finance Company, Oman's leading finance company, explores how the finance and leasing segment is fuelling economic diversification by addressing funding gaps and facilitating investment across key sectors.

The video, titled Sultanate of Oman Finance and Leasing Sector Fuelling Economic Diversification, examines the ways in which financial solutions are enabling businesses to scale up operations, create employment opportunities and contribute to national growth. Particular emphasis is placed on the role of tailored financing mechanisms in supporting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which are recognised as vital to private sector development, a press release said.

Under Oman Vision 2040, economic diversification and private sector participation are top priorities. The finance and leasing sector is well positioned to contribute to these objectives through the provision of capital for logistics, construction, manufacturing and other industries. Leasing arrangements for industrial equipment, working capital loans and sale-and-leaseback options are among the solutions highlighted in the video as helping to bridge the financing gap for businesses of all sizes.

The interview features insights from Tariq Sulaiman al Farsi, CEO of National Finance Company, who outlines the company's approach to facilitating access to finance.

LuLu Retail wins Best IPO in Middle East award by EMEA

LuLu Retail Holding has been honoured with the prestigious 'Best IPO in the Middle East' award by EMEA Finance magazine.

The recognition was presented at the annual EMEA Finance Achievement Awards 2024, held in London last week, a press release said.

The accolade celebrates LuLu Retail's landmark Initial Public Offering, which successfully raised US\$1.7bn in Q4 2024, and marked the company's official listing on the Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange (ADX). The IPO drew widespread investor interest and was one of the most anticipated public listings in the region, reinforcing strong market confidence in the Group's growth trajectory, financial resilience, and retail leadership.

The EMEA Finance Achieve-



ment Awards are regarded as a benchmark of excellence in capital markets across Europe, the Middle East, and Africa. Winners are selected by the editorial board from a pool of nominations submitted by investment banks, corporates, and market participants. The awards spotlight the most impactful and innovative financial transactions spanning IPOs, debt issuance, Islamic finance, structured deals, and mergers and acquisitions.

Saifee Rupawala, CEO of LuLu Retail Holdings, said, "We are truly honoured to receive this award, which reflects the strength of our business, the commitment of our team, and the trust placed in us by our investors. The IPO marked a transformative chapter for LuLu Retail, and we remain committed to delivering long-term value."

Mitsubishi Motors gets ‘Best Distributor of the Year’ award

General Automotive Company (GAC), the official distributor for Mitsubishi Motors in Oman and part of The Zubair Corporation, has been awarded ‘Best Distributor of the Year’ by Mitsubishi Motors Middle East and Africa (MMMEA).

The award reflects GAC’s exceptional performance across all key business areas and reinforces its position as one of the most accomplished Mitsubishi distributors in the entire Middle East and Africa region, a press release said. In a landmark achievement, Mitsubishi Oman secured a total of five prestigious awards, each highlighting a core strength of the company’s operations.

The title of ‘Distributor of the Year’ is awarded to the top-performing distributor in the Middle East and Africa region, based on a holistic evaluation of performance in sales, marketing, customer experience, after-sales, and overall business growth. This award stands as a testament to Mitsubishi Oman’s consistent excellence, strategic development, and unwavering customer-centric approach.

In addition, Mitsubishi Oman received the prestigious ‘Best in After-Sales’ award, distinguishing itself as the only winner in the entire Middle East and Africa region. This recognition highlights the company’s operational strengths, including exceptional workshop standards, technical



expertise, parts availability, and proactive service outreach. These factors all contribute to high levels of customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Mitsubishi Oman was also honoured with the award for ‘Best Customer Experience’, which recognises organisations that excel at creating seamless, customer-centric touchpoints, from digital platforms to show-

room interactions and after-sales support, ensuring an elevated ownership journey.

Further, the ‘Platinum Award for Sales and Marketing Excellence’ was presented to Mitsubishi Oman as recognition for its innovative campaigns, effective branding, and data-driven retail strategies that have significantly contributed to Mitsubishi’s market presence and

consumer appeal in Oman.

Hani M Al Zubair, chairman of the Mobility and Equipment Sector at The Zubair Corporation, said, “Our achievements this year are a direct result of focused leadership, operational excellence, and a company-wide culture of customer-first approach. This recognition reaffirms our long-standing commitment to setting industry standards and building lasting trust with our customers. Achieving this amazing feat, especially in the 50th Golden Anniversary of our partnership with Mitsubishi Motors, makes it even more special.”

Niels Bormans, Group CEO of The Zubair Corporation, said, “We are immensely proud of

Gulf Foods presents Noor Arabian – the best tea in Oman

Gulf Foods – the name behind the promise ‘Better Food, Better Life’ – has introduced for the first time in Oman Noor Arabian, a range of teas to appeal to varying tastes of consumers in the sultanate.

The introduction of the new products has come after a full year of deep market research when the company discovered a powerful truth:

‘In Oman, a strong Arabic brand name isn’t just important – it is essential.’ Also, this serves as ‘a symbol of authenticity, pride, and connection’.

“That’s why we present Noor Arabian – a brand born from heritage, shaped by consumer insight, and designed for the modern Omani market,” says Abdul Hakeem Kilayil, an entrepreneur from Kerala (India) and the proprietor of Gulf Foods

“This is just the beginning. As part of Gulf Foods’ mission to elevate everyday experiences, we’re preparing to launch more regionally inspired brands – crafted to reflect the tastes and traditions of the communities we serve,” he asserts.

Kilayil further stressed, “We believe that everyday essentials deserve exceptional care. Founded in 2025 under Gulf Foods International, Noor Arabian brings premium quality tea, rice, sugar, and coffee to households across Oman — without compromising on affordability.

The story of Noor Arabian began with a simple idea - to



honour tradition through taste. For its founder, tea-time was never just about a beverage — it was about family. After years of industry experience and a year-long research journey, he launched Noor Arabian to close

The story of Noor Arabian began with a simple idea - to honour tradition through taste, and to close the gap between price and quality

the gap between price and quality, delivering everyday products that are both, trusted and distinctive. Gulf Foods International is an FMCG startup in Oman officially launched in the market by April 2025. It supplies quality tea powder, sugar, rice and coffee. Tea powder is available in more than five flavours.

Sohar Islamic supports third Rummana Agritourism Season

In alignment with its enduring commitment to sustainable development, cultural preservation, and community empowerment, Sohar Islamic – Sohar International’s Islamic banking window, has announced its role as the Gold Sponsor of the 3rd Rummana Agritourism Season, set to take place in the scenic highlands of Jabal Akhdar from July to September.

The festival highlights the richness of Oman’s agricultural heritage and the increasing significance of community-based tourism in driving inclusive economic growth. Coinciding with the peak of the pomegranate harvest season, the Rummana festival offers visitors an immersive cultural and eco-tourism experience, celebrating the beauty of Oman’s natural environment, traditional practices, and the en-



trepreneurial spirit of its people. The initiative is a dynamic platform for small and medium-sized Omani enterprises to engage with wider audiences and create long-term value, a press release said.

To formalise the partnership, an official agreement signing ceremony was held at Sohar International’s headquarters in the presence of Mazin Mahmood al

Raisi, chief marketing officer at Sohar International, and Al Amjad Hilal al Maawali, CEO of TEEPEE. The ceremony further underscored the bank’s strategic collaboration with key national stakeholders in support of Oman’s tourism and economic diversification agenda.

Raisi said, “At Sohar International, we take pride in supporting national initiatives that

Training workshop on Risk Management held in capital

Within the framework of Muscat Governorate’s efforts to improve the efficiency and skills of its staff and apply the best modern management practices, a training workshop entitled ‘Strengthening Management Capabilities in Risk Management and Continuous Operations Methodologies’ was conducted last Wednesday in Muscat Governorate by Engineer Yousuf al Jamoudi, an expert in governance, risk management and compliance.

This workshop aimed to raise institutional awareness and enable the governorate’s employees to implement scientific and practical methodologies in the field of institutional risk management and addressing crises to ensure continuous operations according to the latest global standards and frameworks, a press release said.



During the workshop, several specialised topics were explained. They included the key concepts and definitions of institutional risk management, and relevant international frameworks and standards in this field. As well as, introducing risk management and its significance in organisations, creating an effective risk management methodology, and the association between risk management and continuous operations.

It reviewed the differences between risks, opportunities and issues, and the types and classifications of risks. Besides, the chief processes and procedures that contribute to the safe evaluation of risks and the appropriate response.

Shura Council youth committee discusses military service for Omani youth

The Youth and Human Resources Committee of the Shura Council held its fifteenth regular meeting on Wednesday chaired by Younis bin Ali al Mandhari, chairman, and attended by Taher Makhout al Janibi, deputy chairman of the Shura Council and proponent of the proposal regarding the implementation of national military service for Omani youth.

The meeting featured in-depth discussions covering various aspects of the proposed initiative, a press release said.

Members of the Committee explored the practical challenges associated with implementing national service, while also emphasising its potential national benefits. These include fostering a sense of belonging, discipline,



and responsibility among youth, instilling national values, and enhancing physical and professional skills, ultimately preparing them to contribute actively to so-

ciety and the state.

The committee also discussed incentives and privileges that could make national service an attractive option for young peo-

ple. In addition, they examined the potential financial and logistical costs of implementing such a programme, including infrastructure requirements, training

expenses, administrative and technical preparations, and strategies to ensure the program’s sustainability and effectiveness.

The discussions included a review of international experiences in national service. Successful models from various countries were analysed to understand the motivations behind their implementation, the societal and human development benefits achieved, and the challenges encountered.

France: Smoking ban on beaches, parks goes into effect

Paris, France - France has introduced new rules banning smoking on beaches, in parks and a number of other public spaces that went into force on Sunday. The rules aim to protect children from the dangers of passive smoking, which, according to official figures, kills between 3,000 to 5,000 people a year in the country. The rules, which were published in the official government gazette on Saturday, also forbid smoking in bus shelters and within a 10 metre (33 foot) radius of libraries, swimming pools and schools, all places frequented by children. However, the ban does not apply to the terraces of bars and restaurants, unlike new rules that are soon to be introduced in neighbouring Spain. E-cigarettes are also not mentioned in the rules. Anyone violating the ban could face a



Smoking is now banned in several public spaces in France

fine between €135 (US\$160) and 700, though there will be an initial grace period. "Tobacco must disappear from places where there are children. A park, a beach, a school - these are places to play, learn and breathe. Not for smoking," Health and Family Minister Catherine Vautrin said. She said the new rules represented another step 'toward a tobacco-free generation', which

France is targeting from 2032.

Smoking rate still high

More than 30% of French adults still smoke cigarettes, making it one of the more tobacco-friendly countries in Europe and the world. Particularly concerning for health authorities is the statistic showing that 15% of 17-year-olds also smoke.

However, according to the French addiction agency, the OFDT, the habit is nonetheless declining in France, with the current figure 'the lowest prevalence ever recorded since 2000'. More than 200 people in France die each day - around 75,000 a year - of illnesses related to tobacco consumption, Vautrin said in a statement on Saturday. DW

Moscow launches fresh wave of attacks on Ukraine's eastern region

Moscow, Russia - The much-anticipated peace talks between Russia and Ukraine blew up as the former attempted to gnaw on more of Ukraine's eastern regions on Sunday, CNN reported. "I consider the Russian and Ukrainian peoples to be one people," CNN quoted Russian President Vladimir Putin as saying. "In this sense, all of Ukraine is ours." Even so, the Ukrainians have launched counterattacks in some areas and are rapidly developing a domestic weapons industry. And Russia's wartime economy is facing stronger headwinds.

Russian troops are trying to advance in multiple areas of the 1,200km (746-mile) frontline. Ukrainian Commander-in-Chief Oleksandr Syrskyi said this week there are now 111,000 Russian troops in one part of the frontline alone - near the flashpoint city of Pokrovsk in Donetsk, where there are at least 50 clashes every day. That compares to about 70,000 Russian troops in the area last December, according to the Ukrainian General Staff.

Oleksandr Stanislavovych Syrskyi, a Ukrainian military officer claimed that the Russian infiltration of the northern region of Sumy had been halted. The Institute for the Study of War - a Washington-based think-tank, says Ukrainian forces have regained some territory in Sumy and the pace of Russian ad-



vances there has slowed. "We can say that the wave of attempts at a 'summer offensive' launched by the enemy from Russian territory is fizzling out," Syrskyi claimed. DeepState, a Ukrainian open-source analyst, asserted that Ukrainian 'defences continue to collapse rapidly, and the enemy

is making significant advances ... with constant assaults' in that area. The Kremlin has long insisted its campaign will continue until it holds all of the eastern Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions, as per CNN. At the current rate of progress that would take many years. But

with the Trump administration apparently less committed to driving ceasefire negotiations, the conflict seems likely to drag on through the end of the year and into 2026. The three-dimensional battlefield is now an unlikely combination of ingenious drone-led special operations and very basic

infantry assaults. At one end of the spectrum, Ukraine's audacious attacks at the beginning of June on Russian strategic bombers used drones operated from trucks deep inside Russian territory - a mission that took out about a dozen aircraft used to launch missiles against Ukraine.

Russian troops are trying to advance in multiple areas of the 1,200km frontline. The Ukrainians have launched counterattacks in some areas

Ukraine loses F-16 and pilot

Meanwhile, a Ukrainian pilot has been killed and his F-16 fighter jet lost as Ukraine's military forces worked to repel a large-scale Russian drone and missile attack. Ukraine's military confirmed the loss on Sunday morning. This is the third such loss of an F-16 fighter jet since Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022, the military said. "The pilot used all of his on-board weapons and shot down seven air targets. While shooting down the last one, his aircraft was damaged and began to lose altitude," Ukraine's air force said on the Telegram messaging app. The pilot flew the jet away from civilian settlements and did not have time to eject to save himself, the message read.

Russia launches fresh attacks

Russia had launched a fresh

wave attack on Ukraine overnight, targeting the country's central, southern and western region. Some 500 aerial weapons were deployed including drones, cruise missiles and ballistic missiles, Ukraine's military said. At least three people were injured and there were reports of damaged houses and other infrastructure. Air raid sirens sounded across the country, including the western region which is considerably far from the Russian front lines. "To repel the massive attack, all available means of the defense forces that can operate on enemy air assets were deployed," Ukraine's military said. Reports cited the operational command of the Polish Armed Forces saying they scrambled fighter jets and activated ground-based air defences in response to the raids in Ukraine which were close to Poland's border. This comes after Ukraine's air force had warned of an attack involving Russian bombers and drones on Saturday evening. RBK-Ukraine, a local news agency, reported explosions in Kyiv overnight. Ukraine's military said Russia had launched some 477 drones and 60 missiles but that 211 of the drones and 38 of the missiles had been intercepted and destroyed. Agencies

Eastern Europe plans to secure its borders with land mines

Berlin, Germany - Since the start of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine in February 2022, there has hardly been a more pressing issue for NATO than the defence of its eastern borders. Over the past three years, five of the six NATO countries that share a border with Russia or Belarus - Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland - have already made significant investments to better secure these borders, for example with fences and surveillance systems. But now, a new plan is in the works: land mines.

Increased border security

Those five NATO countries recently announced their withdrawal from the Ottawa Convention, the 1997 treaty which bans anti-personnel mines worldwide and prohibits their use, production and transfer. Only Norway, which shares a nearly 200km (124-mile) border with Russia, wants to stick to the treaty. Such mines are highly controversial, as they can be a danger for both soldiers and civilians.



Finland has increased security along its border with Russia, including a 200km (124-mile) fence

Uncleared mines remain a long-term threat after the end of a conflict: In 2023, nearly 6,000 people worldwide were killed or injured by land mines. Some 80% of the victims were civilians, including many children. Clearing these explosive devices is dangerous, expensive and extremely time-consuming. According to the nongovernmental organisation Handicap International, 58 countries around the world and other areas

are still contaminated with land mines, even if some of the underlying conflicts ended decades ago. From the end of 2025, these five NATO countries could restart the production and storage of anti-personnel mines near the border. In case of an emergency, these mines would then be deployed quickly. While 164 countries worldwide have signed the Ottawa Convention, 33 have not. In addition

to the major powers US and China, this includes Russia. In fact, the Kremlin has by far the world's largest stockpile of anti-personnel mines, with an estimated 26mn. Many of these are already being used in Ukraine. From Finnish Lapland in the north to the Polish province of Lublin in the south, the border between the five NATO states and Russia and Belarus is around 3,500km (2150 miles) long. DW

Germany: Bärbel Bas offers new hope for ailing SPD

Berlin, Germany - Bärbel Bas comes from a humble background. Her father was a bus driver, her mother a homemaker. Bas began her political career at the same time. In 1988, she joined Germany's centre-left Social Democratic Party (SPD), became a city councillor and made her way into the country's parliament, the Bundestag.

In 2009, she won her first direct parliamentary mandate in Duisburg and became the parliamentary secretary and deputy leader of the SPD parliamentary group. From 2021 to 2025, she was president of the Bundestag, the second-highest state office in Germany. And now, she heads the SPD alongside Lars Klingbeil. At the SPD party conference in Berlin on Friday, Bas pointed out that she wasn't born into her political and professional career. "But I had the chance to progress step by step," she said. "I have continued to educate myself and worked my way up." Bas wants to ensure that this kind of professional advancement through is possible for many more people in Germany. "That's also why I joined the SPD back then," she said.

Collective rebuke for Lars Klingbeil

Bas belongs to the SPD's left wing. As co-leader of the party, her role will be to act as counterweight to Lars Klingbeil, who belongs to the party's conservative wing. Now in his third term, the 47-year-old has co-chaired the party since 2021. That makes



Bärbel Bas

him partly responsible for SPD's disastrous election defeat in February, when it received just 16.4% of the vote - the worst result since the end of the 19th century. With Klingbeil, Bas will now have the task of rebuilding the SPD and leading it forward. It will be a daunting task for a deeply wounded party, and it showed at

the party conference. Klingbeil was only re-elected by just under 65% of the party's delegates - a poor result laden with frustrations. Immediately after the election defeat, Klingbeil positioned himself for the new governing coalition with the leading conservative Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and its Bavarian sister party, the Christian Social Union (CSU), expanding his power to become both finance minister and vice chancellor. Saskia Esken, his SPD co-chair at the time, was sidelined until she eventually gave up. "I found much of what came from within my own ranks, but also from outside as comments, to be unfair," she said in an interview with the Stuttgarter Zeitung, in which she also admitted to making mistakes. "But the way I was maligned was disproportionate and undignified." Bas agreed with Esken's assessment. "You, dear Saskia, have had to experience that it can sometimes be damn lonely in politics - even in a party with over 350,000 members," she said at the party conference. DW

Iran: Israeli strike on Evin prison killed 71

The victims included administrative staff, guards, prisoners and visiting relatives

Tehran/Tel Aviv - An Israeli strike on Tehran's Evin prison last Monday killed at least 71 people, Iran's judiciary said on Sunday.

"According to official figures, 71 people were killed in the attack on Evin prison," said judiciary spokesman Asghar Jahangir.

Jahangir said the victims included administrative staff, guards, prisoners and visiting relatives, as well as people living nearby.

Evin prison, situated in the north of Tehran, is Iran's most notorious jail for political prisoners. The inmates at Evin have included Nobel Peace Prize laureate Narges Mohammadi as well as several French nationals and other foreigners.

41 killed at IRGC headquarters

At least 41 people were killed in an Israeli strike on the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) headquarters in northern Alborz province, the group announced on Saturday.

The IRGC's public relations office said the attack resulted in deaths to civilians and conscripted soldiers.



The airstrike took place last Monday as part of a broader wave of attacks launched by the Israeli army on multiple targets across Tehran

Tehran could resume enriching uranium within months, despite damage to several nuclear facilities from US and Israeli attacks, the head of the UN's nuclear watchdog, Rafael Grossi, has told CBS News

The Israeli army said on Monday it targeted the headquarters of the Basij paramilitary forces, as well as internal security forces in Alborz.

A 12day conflict between Israel and Iran erupted on June 13 when Israel launched air strikes on Iranian military, nuclear, and civilian sites, killing at least 606 people and injuring 5,332 others,

according to Iran's Health Ministry.

Tehran launched retaliatory missile and drone strikes, killing at least 29 people and wounding more than 3,400, according to figures released by the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

The conflict came to a halt under a US-sponsored ceasefire that took effect on June 24.

'Iran could start enriching uranium'

Tehran could resume enriching uranium within months, despite damage to several nuclear facilities from US and Israeli attacks, the head of the UN's nuclear watchdog, Rafael Grossi, has told US broadcaster CBS News.

"The capacities they have are there. They can have - in a matter of months, I would say - a few cascades of centrifuges spinning and producing enriched uranium," Grossi said, in an interview to be broadcast on Sunday.

Grossi's remarks are in strong contrast to claims by President Donald Trump that the recent US attacks on three

nuclear sites in Iran had set back the country's nuclear programme by years.

The extent of the damage caused by the strikes last week remains unclear, though Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi recently said it had been 'serious'.

Grossi said his International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) was mostly concerned about the whereabouts of some 400kg (882 pounds) of uranium that it says has already been enriched to 60%, just under the 90% needed for a nuclear bomb.

"We don't know where this material could be," Grossi said. "Some could have been destroyed as part of the attack, but some could have been moved. So there has to be at some point a clarification."

Iranian lawmakers recently voted to suspend cooperation with the IAEA in the wake of the US and Israeli attacks.

'Unacceptable' demand

Meanwhile, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio condemned on Saturday the demands in Iran for the arrest and execution of the IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi as 'unacceptable'.

"We support the IAEA's critical verification and monitoring efforts in Iran and commend the

Director General and the IAEA for their dedication and professionalism," Rubio wrote on X.

He said the US urges Iran to provide the safety and security of IAEA personnel.

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi announced Saturday that the country will prohibit Grossi from entering.

"We will not allow the International Atomic Energy Agency to install cameras at our nuclear sites, and the agency's chief will be banned from entering the country," Araghchi said in a statement that was reported by the Iranian national news agency, IRNA.

Agencies

HEATWAVE ALERT IN SHANGHAI



Tourists visit the Bund area in Shanghai, east China on Sunday. Shanghai issued a heatwave alert on Sunday, which will last for about 10 days with high temperature hitting 39-40 degrees Celsius (Xinhua)

Türkiye, Syria restore road transport

Istanbul, Türkiye - The Global Transport Connectivity Forum concluded on Sunday in Istanbul with the signing of 12 cooperation agreements aimed at enhancing cross-border logistics and regional integration.

Among them was a landmark agreement between Turkish and Syrian delegations to resume direct road transport between the two countries after years of suspension. "Commercial transport will resume under the International Road Transport Agreement signed between the two countries in 2004," announced Turkish Transport and Infrastructure Minister Abdulkadir Uraloglu, noting that cargo transfers at border gates will end, allowing goods to move directly between Türkiye and Syria with-



out transshipment.

"The resumption of transport links will reinforce our countries' positions in regional trade between Europe and Asia and integrate the Middle Corridor with Gulf nations," Uraloglu said. "This will enable direct road access from Türkiye to Jordan, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and other Gulf countries."

The strategic importance of the Middle Corridor - a key east-west trade route - was a recurring theme throughout the forum. Addressing participants on Friday, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan underscored efforts to align the Middle Corridor with China's Belt and

Road Initiative, describing it as a transformative project to connect Europe and Asia more securely and efficiently.

Also known as the Trans-Caspian East-West Middle Corridor Initiative, this route connects Türkiye with the South Caucasus, the Caspian Sea, Central Asia, and ultimately China, as part of Türkiye's ongoing efforts to revitalise the ancient Silk Road, according to the Turkish Foreign Ministry. Erdogan noted that while shipments through the Suez Canal typically take around 35 days and those via the Cape of Good Hope about 45 days, the Middle Corridor is projected to reduce transit times to under 15 days once planned investments are complete.

Xinhua

Tanzania: 38 killed after 2 buses collide, catch fire

Dar es Salaam, Tanzania - At least 38 people were killed and 28 others injured on Saturday night when two buses collided head-on and burst into flames in Moshi District in Tanzania's northern region of Kilimanjaro.

Kilimanjaro Regional Commissioner Nurdin Babu told Xinhua in a phone interview on Sunday that the victims included members of the same family who were traveling to attend a wedding in the Moshi municipality.

Babu said the crash occurred about 5pm local time (1400 GMT) after a front tire on one of the buses burst, triggering a fire that engulfed both vehicles, causing fatalities in both buses.

Babu added that 22 of the

28 injured passengers were treated and discharged from the hospital, while six remain under medical care.

Tanzanian President Samia Suluhu Hassan on Sunday conveyed a message of condolence to the Kilimanjaro regional commissioner, expressing deep sorrow over Saturday's fatal bus collision.

"I pray that those who were injured make a speedy recovery," said Hassan, extending heartfelt condolences to all the bereaved families, relatives, and friends.

"I urge all drivers to strictly observe traffic safety regulations, and I call upon the police to continue enforcing these laws with diligence," the president added.

Xinhua

21 Palestinians killed by Israeli army across Gaza

Gaza, City, Palestine - At least 21 Palestinians were killed on Sunday in Israeli airstrikes and gunfire across the Gaza Strip, Gaza's civil defence said, as the Israeli army ordered the evacuation of wide areas in Gaza City and northern parts of the enclave amid escalating military operations.

According to Mahmoud Basal, spokesperson for the civil defence in Gaza, Israeli warplanes struck residential houses and tents sheltering displaced people in various areas of the enclave, killing at least 17 people, including women and children. Dozens of others were injured, some critically.

Basal told Xinhua that four other Palestinians were killed while searching for food near the US-backed aid distribution centre in the Shakoush area, north of Rafah in southern Gaza.

There was no immediate



comment from the Israeli army on these incidents.

Munir al-Bursh, director general of Gaza's health authorities, told Xinhua on Sunday the Israeli army has intensified its attacks over the past 24 hours, targeting residential areas and shelter centres. "We are witnessing daily casualties and a worsening

health crisis. Artillery fire is dispersing crowds waiting for aid," Al-Bursh said, noting that most injuries were to the head and chest.

Gaza's health authorities warned that the humanitarian and medical situation has reached catastrophic levels due to the continued blockade that

restricts the entry of emergency medical supplies.

Meanwhile, local sources told Xinhua that Israeli artillery shelled the eastern and southern outskirts of Gaza City, Jabalia in the north, and Khan Younis in the south, amid fierce fighting with Palestinian armed groups.

Al-Qassam Brigades, the mil-

itary wing of Hamas, said in a press statement on Sunday that its fighters had targeted an Israeli D9 bulldozer with a Yasin 105 missile east of Khan Younis, causing it to catch fire.

The group also claimed to have shelled Israeli army positions in the Ma'an area with mortars. Also on Sunday, the Israeli army issued evacuation orders for residents in Jabalia and the Gaza City neighbourhoods of Al-Zaytoun, Al-Tuffah, Al-Daraj, and Al-Sabra, urging civilians to move to the al-Mawasi area in southern Gaza. The directive marks one of the largest evacuation orders issued in recent months.

Israeli army spokesperson for Arabic media Avichay Adraee warned that military operations would intensify in these areas and expand westward toward the city centre.

Xinhua

Pakistani women leverage social media to drive change

Islamabad, Pakistan - As more women in Pakistan embrace self-expression and economic freedom online, they're often met with harassment, privacy violations and violence.

Earlier this month, 17-year-old TikTok star Sana Yousaf was shot dead by a man who had repeatedly contacted her online, according to police.

The killing of the popular Pakistani teenager, who had more than one million followers across TikTok and Instagram, has raised renewed concerns over the safety of online personalities in Pakistan, particularly young women.

"I had posted a story on social media while at a burger shop," Hira Zainab, a Pakistani social media user, told DW.

"On my way back, a car passed by, and someone called out my name." Zainab, who has been active on Instagram since 2017, has maintained several public accounts, including a food blog and a society column. She said this wasn't the only instance where online stalking turned into a real-life encounter.

"Once, I was at a salon, and after I left, I received a message saying, 'That colour looks nice on you.'" Both times, Zainab said the messages came from strangers who had previously made online advances she had ignored.

Are patriarchal norms to blame?

Other recent incidents - such as



As more women in Pakistan embrace self-expression and economic freedom online, they're often met with harassment, privacy violations and violence

leaked video footage purporting to show TikToker Maryam Faisal in a private moment with a partner - have highlighted concerns about women's digital safety.

In Pakistan, self-expression and economic independence in digital spaces comes with a surge of threats, privacy violations and social backlash pressures that often escalate into real-world violence. According to a 2023 study by the Digital Rights Foundation, an NGO that

advocates women's rights in the digital space, 58.5% of online harassment complaints in Pakistan are filed by women.

But public conversation rarely addresses the deeper, systemic issue - particularly the patriarchal norms that stretch from the online world into homes, workplaces and society at large.

Women with public-facing digital lives have been asking why visibility so often come at a cost.

DW spoke with several Pakistani women who use social media in a public capacity.

Yusra Amjad, a Pakistani poet, has used Instagram publicly since 2017.

"What started with poetry grew into opportunities for content creation and collaboration," she told DW. "The coolest thing that happened was when Yrsa Daley-Ward, a British African poet, selected someone from Instagram comments for a video call and I won," Amjad said. "I also connected with Indian writers and poets."

But she also recalled one of many hate comments she has received. "When my mother and I did yoga in a park, hate comments alluded to it being shame-

less and dishonourable," she said.

Women seen as threat to patriarchy

Bisma Shakeel, who is based in the Pakistani city of Kohat, uses social media to raise awareness about mental health, focusing on narcissistic abuse and domestic violence.

Her motivation stems from personal experience, having left a toxic relationship in which her partner was controlling and discouraged her from using social media to build a professional presence. But the 29-year-old's journey wasn't straightforward.

Securing permission from her family to post videos showing her face took time. For many

women, freedom on social media, just like in offline spaces, exists on a spectrum. "My father is liberal, but even he said, 'You shouldn't post. People will talk. In our community, girls don't do that,'" said Shakeel. Though she is now active on social media, she said it doesn't come without risk.

"Not so much on Instagram, but on TikTok, you can't imagine the kind of threats we get. Rape threats, death threats," she said.

Women in Pakistan - especially those who are visibly active online, whether talking about politics or society or simply owning their space - are often judged and perceived as a threat to religious and cultural values.

DW

India: 3 people die in Puri Rath Yatra stampede

Puri, India - Three people died and at least six people sustained injuries near the Gundicha Temple during the ongoing Lord Jagannath Rath Yatra in Puri.

Speaking to ANI over the phone, Odisha Law Minister Prithviraj Harichandan: "It is an unfortunate incident. We are taking note of that. I spoke with the CM this morning. We are taking stringent action."

"Three people have passed away because of suffocation in the huge gathering. Six to seven people are injured. I am moving to Puri. I am monitoring the situation over the phone. We are trying our best to manage the crowd. Additional police have been deployed. The reasons for the incident are being investigated," Harichandan said.

"The situation is now under control and the people are having darshan," he said adding that the State DGP has been sent to the site.

The mishap took place early on Sunday morning. The chariots had arrived at Saradha Bali from the Jagannath Temple on Saturday, a day after the Rath Yatra commenced.

Meanwhile, Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi announced a financial assistance of Rs 25 lakh for the families of those who lost their lives.

The chief minister has ordered a detailed administrative inquiry into the incident to be conducted under the supervision of the Development Commissioner. He also directed the transfer of the District Collector and Superintendent of Police (SP). Chanchal Rana has been appointed as the new District Collector, and Pinak Mishra as the new SP.

Additionally, DCP Vishnu Pati and Commandant Ajay Padhi have been suspended for negligence of duty, the press note said.

The Chief Minister reaffirmed that Rath Yatra is a source of pride for Odisha and assured strict action against those responsible for the mishap. He emphasised that such incidents must not recur, ensuring the safety and sanctity of the festival in the future.

ANI

Rain wreaks havoc in India's Himachal Pradesh

Shimla, India - Himachal Pradesh Revenue and Horticulture Minister Jagat Singh Negi on Sunday informed that road connectivity and power lines have been impacted in several regions of the state as heavy rainfall over the past 24 hours has caused significant damage across several parts of Himachal Pradesh, with incidents of landslides, waterlogging, and disrupted connectivity being reported from multiple districts.

Negi stated that flash floods have caused significant loss of life and property.

"In the districts of Shimla, Kangra, and Sirmaur, there has been a significant rainfall outbreak, with some impact in the Kullu area as well.... Flash floods have caused considerable loss of life and property. In Dharamshala (Kangra district), at a power project site, nine individuals were



Water level of the Beas river increases amid heavy rainfall, in Mandi, Himachal Pradesh, on Sunday (ANI)

caught in the flash floods, eight were swept away, and one survived. Six bodies have been recovered so far, with one more unidentified today.... Road connectivity, drinking water schemes, and power lines have

also been impacted in several regions," Negi told ANI.

He stated that efforts are underway to restore road connectivity and all district-level disaster management units have been placed on high alert.

Negi stated that 34 people have lost their lives in the state since June 20 due to rain-related incidents and accidents triggered by the adverse weather.

In Nalagarh, heavy rains caused waterlogging near Chakki

and Jo bridges, with rainwater entering houses in parts of Baddi. However, the situation is now under control.

Uttarakhand: 9 people missing

Meanwhile, a severe landslide caused by heavy rainfall struck a labour camp at Silai Band on the Yamunotri Highway on Sunday, resulting in nine workers missing while ten others were rescued.

Officials confirmed that a 10-12 metre stretch of the highway was completely washed away, severely disrupting road connectivity and delaying immediate rescue operations.

According to officials, teams from the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF), National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), and local police rushed to the site and initiated relief and rescue opera-

tions immediately.

"Ten workers have been safely rescued and evacuated from the site. However, nine others are still missing and efforts are underway to locate them," said Uttarakhand police. The disaster management department issued an advisory to all travellers and pilgrims, stating: "Request to travellers: Stay at safe locations."

Furthermore, the Char Dham Yatra has been suspended for 24 hours amid a heavy rain alert. Garhwal Division Commissioner Vinay Shankar Pandey told ANI that the pilgrimage has been temporarily halted as a precaution. "I have given instructions to the police and administration officials to stop the pilgrims in Haridwar, Rishikesh, Srinagar, Rudraprayag, Sonprayag and Vikasnagar," Pandey said.

ANI

Pakistan: 11 people die after being swept away in Swat river

Swat, Pakistan - A family from Pakistan's Sialkot lost 11 members to sudden surge in the water level of Swat river, Geo News reported.

17 members of the family were swept away during a picnic along the Swat River, as per Geo News.

The search is still on for two individuals, while four were rescued. The national meteorological service warned that the risk of heavy rain and possible flash floods will remain high until at least Tuesday, as per Geo News.

Heavy rain and flash flooding across Pakistan have killed 32 people since the start of the monsoon season earlier this week, according to the disaster management officials, Al Jazeera reported.

Flash floods and roof collapses since Wednesday have claimed the lives of 19 people, eight of

them children, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provincial disaster management authority said in a statement on Saturday, as per Al Jazeera.

Flooding in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has also damaged 56 houses, six of which were destroyed, the disaster authority said.

Rains claim 14 lives in Punjab

At least 14 people, including five children and three women, lost their lives while 43 others sustained injuries across Pakistan's Punjab due to rain-related incidents between June 25 and 28, Geo News reported.

Data released by Pakistan's Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) showed that casualties were reported from 14 districts as torrential downpours,



Heavy rain and flash flooding across Pakistan have killed 32 people since start of monsoon season earlier this week

17 members of the family were swept away during a picnic along the Swat River. Flash floods and roof collapses since Wednesday have claimed the lives of 19 people

thunderstorms, lightning, and strong winds lashed multiple areas of the province, as per Geo News.

The majority of the deaths were caused by roof and wall collapses triggered by heavy rain, while two men drowned in a rainwater nullah and another individual died due to electrocution.

In Lahore's Abbas Nagar area, two people died and four others sustained injuries, Rescue 1122 said. Lightning strikes claimed two lives, including one in Okara and another in Khanewal, Geo News reported.

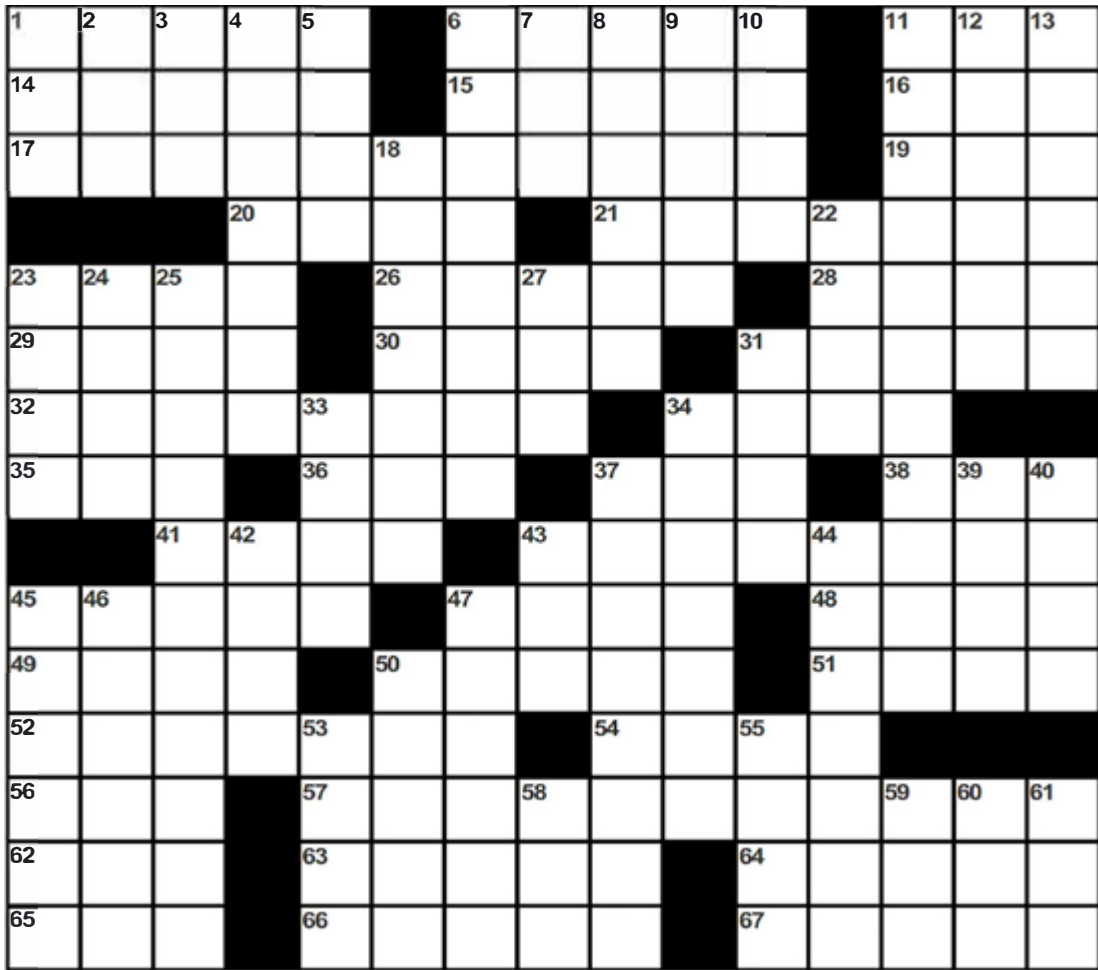
Okara saw the highest number of cases with eight incidents resulting in the death of one child and injuries to two children, two women, and three men. Mandi Bahauddin reported two fatalities - a woman and a child - and three injuries. In Bahawalnagar and Faisalabad, a child was killed in each district.

Kasur reported the deaths of two children and one injury, while Wazirabad recorded the loss of one man and one child and two injuries.

In Jhelum, two men drowned in a flooded ravine.

ANI

DAILY CROSSWORD



ACROSS
1) Intensely angry
6) Place of residence
11) JFK watchdog
14) Do penance
15) Like unsorted mail
16) Snug bug's locale
17) Merciless
19) Bloated "I"
20) Airline predictions (Abbr.)
21) Do-it-yourselfer
23) Cut or gather
26) A couple of bucks
28) Old Testament book
29) Rudely terse
30) Store's attraction
31) "God-America" link
32) Collector of antiquities
34) Word with "brother" or "nelson"
35) Drunkard
36) Susan of "The Partridge Family"
37) Shark part
38) "Norma_" (Sally Field movie)
41) Flower or eye part
43) Pianist with a candela-labra
45) Race where ties are common?
47) Irene of "Fame"
48) Words of reluctant agreement

49) Fired, as a gun
50) Sine's reciprocal, in trig
51) Fixes a hem
52) Highest-pitched woodwind
54) Walk-way connector
56) Houston-to-Baltimore dir.
57) Frigid climate feature
62) Theater-funding gp.
63) Persona's opposite
64) Serengeti antelope
65) Nine-digit ID
66) Subside to a drizzle
67) Narrow strips of wood
DOWN
1) Fond du_, Wisconsin
2) "Who am_ judge?"
3) Remote-control button, briefly
4) Comprehensive
5) Credit card balance
6) Abandonment of one's faith
7) Life story, in brief
8) Methuselah's claim to fame
9) Judges to be
10) Icelandic epic
11) Cinematic still image
12) Signs of the future
13) Ancient Greek market-places
18) Bonny girls
22) Be a snitch

23) Some old TVs
24) Continental currency
25) Water surrounding the North Pole
27) Keyboard key
31) Source of ruin
33) Miner's exit
34) Grill on a patio
37) It might go up in flames
39) "Don't have_ man!" (Bart Simpson quote)
40) Mouse-sighting squeals
42) Campus cadet's org.
43) "Leaving_ Vegas" (1995 movie)
44) Basketball legend Bill
45) Quaking trees
46) Stands out significantly
47) "Whoa! Easy there!"
50) Biological duplicate
53) Gem with a play of colors
55) Chills, as a beverage
58)_ Darya (Aral Sea feeder)
59) 21st U.S. president's monogram
60) Army insect
61) Places for sgts. and <lets.

NOTE PAD



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19
You've trained yourself to relax and count to ten when you feel the fire rising up to color your cheeks. If it happens today, you're better off putting some distance between you and whoever has turned up the thermostat, especially if that flushed feeling starts creeping around to the back of your neck. That's a sure sign that the situation is just about to get really tricky. Take a power walk!

LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22
You have the knack for getting along with higher-ups, and it's only going to get better in the future. That said, if you need to talk with an authority figure about a problem, even if it's embarrassing, now is definitely the time. You may not be able to solve the issue even with their help, but you definitely don't feel competent to do it without them. It's certainly worth a shot.

SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21
As fiery as you can be, when you say you're ready to get the show on the road at work, there's no doubt that it's all going to come together smoothly. You're all set to pull off something like that right now, and there's no stopping you as long as you manage your time carefully and don't waste a single moment. You just need to believe in yourself.

TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20
You've found a new way to let go of what you've been holding on to, though you're more relieved than delighted about it. You're also more than ready to show the world that you're not to be treated lightly. That goes for your own bosses and all other authority figures too, especially since this may end up seeing you infiltrating their ranks.

VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22
Once you make up your mind about a person, it's tough for you to change it, especially if a long-term dispute is coloring your opinion. For now, it might be best for you to let it all go, no matter what it was all about, and try to let the past truly become the past. Of course, everything depends on whether the issue is forgivable. If so, give it a try, but if not, you may as well be as civil as possible.

CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19
You've been trying to get someone to cooperate with you, to act as respectfully as you know they can. They may not be living up to your expectations, much less their own. Your job is to let go of how you believe they should act and just let them be who they are, even if who they are is disappointing. It's not an easy task, but it's essential to help them finish growing up.

GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21
If you haven't already made plans to bring together the old and the new, now is the time to put an end to the waiting period. You're given to worrying like this, and you know it. You've done it for a long time. The good news is that if you think about it, all that worrying has never served you well. If it's friends you're worried about, quit it. Get them together, let them handle it, and see what happens next.

LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22
Lately, you've been feeling that someone you've never really trusted much is trying to insert himself between you and the person (or goal) you've been pursuing. If you're not totally sure about this, just sit tight and try not to do anything that might embarrass either of you. If you are certain, then present your case to the right people, who should know how to handle it.

AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18
Someone you've been thinking about fondly for some time has finally come around, or at least it seems that way. There are a few obstacles in their path, many of which can't move aside easily. The hard part is your urge to clear their way without enlisting any help. Even harder is the absolute necessity of letting go so they can make this happen alone. That's what really counts.

CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22
It's never easy handing out advice, whether it's invited or uninvited. Either way, the odds are good that the receiver doesn't actually take it, even after you've spent at least an hour reciting your best lines. They listen, then they frown, shake their head, and recite a long, drawn-out list of reasons why they can't possibly put your plan in action. Every now and then, though, you get lucky. Give them at least five minutes before you call it quits.

SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21
You need to stop thinking about work so much! At the moment, since it's going along so well, you're ready to focus on the other big part of your life: the person you love. Rather than just saying something directly to let them know how devoted you are, do something subtle to let them see it. That's more your style, more what they expect, and definitely what they want.

PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20
Just when you thought you'd never hear from that person again, and just when you were starting to cope, things change. You see or hear from someone who mentions seeing the person in question, and that they mentioned you. When we think of someone, it's often because they're thinking of us too. Prepare yourself for a meeting, and don't pretend that you're not happy about it.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

01. What were the first names of comedians Abbott and Costello?

- A. Eric and Ernie
- B. Bud and Lou
- C. Mick and Keith
- D. Stan and Oliver

02. When was the Red Bull Air Race World Championship started?

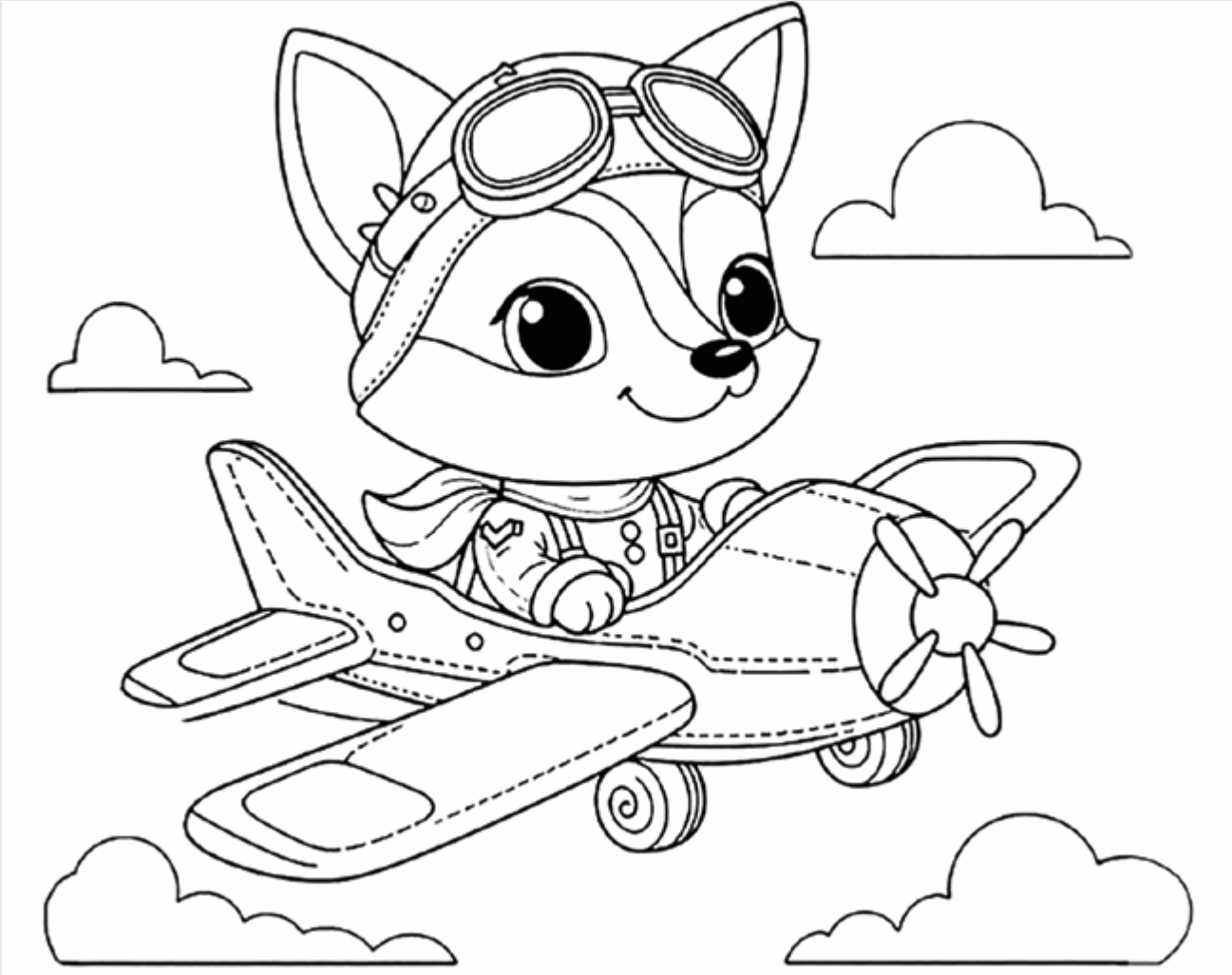
- A. 2010
- B. 2008
- C. 1980
- D. 2003

03. What type of rock is formed by the solidification of molten magma?

- A. Sedimentary
- B. Igneous
- C. Heavy
- D. Metamorphic

Answers: 1.B 2.D 3.B

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

S	C	X	A
L	I	D	E
D	E	M	E
E	P	A	H

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

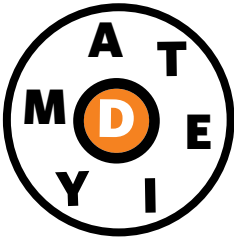
SOLUTION
20-25 words: Excellent,
15-20 words: Very good,
10-15 words: Good,
5-10 words: Average

DO YOU SUDOKU?

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

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

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

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

Blue storm after lightning delay

Chelsea sink 10-man Benfica in extra time to reach Club World Cup quarters

Charlotte, US - Chelsea scored three times in the second period of extra-time to hand 10-man Benfica a 4-1 defeat in Charlotte in their weather-affected last 16 Club World Cup clash on Saturday as the English side set up a quarter-final meeting with Brazil's Palmeiras.

Christopher Nkunku, Pedro Neto and Kiernan Dewsbury-Hall scored in a nine-minute spell to take Enzo Maresca's side through after the teams had been forced off the pitch for almost two hours due to a lightning storm.

Chelsea had taken the lead through Reece James in the 64th minute and, after the teams returned to the field, Benfica's Gilanluca Prestianni was sent off two minutes into injury time.

But Angel di Maria scored from the penalty spot three minutes later to take the game into extra-time, from where Chelsea eventually prevailed to set up their meeting with Palmeiras on Friday.

Maresca lashed out after a two-hour weather delay disrupted his team's rhythm, suggesting the United States was not a suitable country for the competition - a year before it is due to



Chelsea's Christopher Nkunku celebrates with his teammates after scoring against Benfica in their Club World Cup last 16 clash on Saturday

host the men's World Cup.

It was the sixth time that a game was stopped at the 32-club tournament because of the risk of lightning.

"For me personally, it's not football," Maresca told a press conference. "I think it's a joke. It's not football."

I can understand that for security reasons, you have to suspend the game. But if you suspend seven or eight games, that means that probably this is not the right place to do this competition

ENZO MARESCA

"I can understand that for security reasons, you have to suspend the game. But if you suspend seven or eight games, that means that probably this is not the right place to do this competition.

"It's a fantastic competition. It's the Club World Cup, all the best clubs are here," he added.

"But six, seven games suspended? It's not normal. In a World Cup how many have they suspended? Probably zero. In a European (championship), how many games? Zero. There is some problem."

FIFA, which organised the

tournament, was not immediately available for comment.

Chelsea were 1-0 up when the players were asked to leave the pitch and play only resumed almost two hours later.

"The game was very good for 85 minutes, then we stopped for two hours, and when we started it was a completely different game. It's not the same game because you break the tempo," Maresca said.

Chelsea captain James showcased his set-piece prowess to give the Premier League side the lead, breaking the deadlock in the 64th minute when he curled home a sublime free kick.

The match was halted five minutes from time due to a lightning storm near the Bank of America Stadium, activating the weather protocol and resulting in a break of almost two hours as teams and supporters were moved out of exposed areas.

Upon the teams' return, Prestianni was sent off for a second bookable offence seven minutes after the restart, but Benfica were given hope when di Maria scored from the penalty spot following Malo Gusto's handball.

Chelsea, though, made the most of their one-man advantage in extra-time.

Nkunku put Chelsea back in front three minutes into the second period when he lifted the ball over Nicolas Otamendi with an astute finish after Benfica goalkeeper Anatoliy Trubin had blocked Moises Caicedo's initial shot.

Six minutes later Neto hit Chelsea's third with a composed finish.

‘Expanded Club World Cup is a pointless competition’

Former Liverpool manager Juergen Klopp has criticised the introduction of the expanded Club World Cup format, calling it the worst idea ever implemented in football.

In an interview with German newspaper Die Welt published late on Friday Klopp said the tournament would put more strain on an already packed calendar for the players.

The expanded format features a 32-team event



Juergen Klopp

held every four years during the pre-season, in the summers between major international tournaments.

"It's a pointless competition. Whoever wins it will be the worst winner of all time because they'll have played all summer and then gone straight back into the league," Klopp said.

"There are people who have never been involved in the day-to-day business of football and are now coming up with ideas."

Klopp pointed out that today's players are getting less and less time to rest, warning that adding another tournament was potentially dangerous for their health.

Ronaldo had offers to play in Club World Cup, but preferred rest

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia - Cristiano Ronaldo preferred to take a rest rather than play in the revamped Club World Cup, the Portuguese international said on Saturday after renewing his contract with Al-Nassr.

The Saudi Pro League club announced on Thursday that Ronaldo had signed a two-year contract which would keep him at the club past his 42nd birthday.

Speculation over the 40-year-old's plans intensified last month when FIFA President Gianni Infantino said discussions were underway about Ronaldo playing in the Club World Cup, despite Al Nassr failing to qualify.

"I had some offers to play in the World Cup but I think it didn't make sense because I prefer to have a good rest, a good preparation, because this season will be very long as it is the World Cup season at the end of the year," Ronaldo said in a video posted by Al Nassr on X.

"I want to be ready not only for Al-Nassr but also for the na-



Cristiano Ronaldo

tional team. So, this is why I decided to play the last game for the Nations League and not listen to anything," he added.

"And of course, to be in this club, which I love".

Ronaldo scored for Portugal in the Nations League final against Spain earlier this month which ended 2-2 before his side went

Winning title would mean a lot for Chelsea: Caicedo

Charlotte, US - In one of the most dramatic matches at the FIFA Club World Cup 2025, Chelsea FC defeated SL Benfica 4-1 in extra time to claim a memorable Round of 16 at the Bank of America Stadium in Charlotte, North Carolina.

The Blues showed great character in bouncing back from conceding an equaliser in second-half stoppage time, when victory had looked to be within their grasp. Having absorbed that blow, three fine goals in extra time booked Chelsea a quarter-final date with Palmeiras.

In the thick of the action for Chelsea, like always, was Moises Caicedo, who provided the assist for his team's third goal and was a workhorse in the middle of the park throughout. For his efforts, the Ecuadorian was named the Michelob Ultra Superior Player of the Match, although he was quick to share any adulation.

"I'm very happy, very happy to help the team, and for the team's performance as well," said Caicedo to FIFA. "If I could share



Moises Caicedo has been a powerhouse in the Chelsea midfield

the award with anyone, I would give it to each of one of my teammates, including the ones on the bench. They help us a lot, they push us on from afar, so the truth is that I would give it to everyone."

Since their 3-1 defeat to CR Flamengo in their second group stage match, Chelsea have

picked up some momentum with two straight wins and are now in the final eight. Caicedo believes the Londoners have what it takes to lift the trophy.

"We are going to keep doing things well," said the midfielder. "Now we are in the quarter-finals and we're going to keep showing we can do it."

Injured Al Dawsari ruled out of Club World Cup

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia - Al Hilal captain Salem al Dawsari will miss the remainder of the Club World Cup with a hamstring injury, the Saudi club said on Saturday.

"Medical tests have confirmed that Salem al Dawsari has suffered from a hamstring injury. He will be undergoing a treatment and rehabilitation program that will last between four to six weeks," Al Hilal said in a statement via X.

This means Al Dawsari will

miss Monday's round of 16 clash against Manchester City.

Al Dawsari played a pivotal role in Al Hilal's campaign in the club world cup, after scoring the opening goal in the team's 2-0 victory over Pachuca on Friday in the third round of the group stage.

The win against Pachuca secured the four-times Asian champions qualification for the last 16 after they finished second in Group H behind Real Madrid.

FIFA's Wenger promises better pitches at World Cup

Miami, US - FIFA's Global Football Development chief Arsene Wenger acknowledged that the quality of pitches hosting Club World Cup matches in the US was not good enough, but insisted it would be better when the country co-hosts the 2026 World Cup.

The pitches, often very dry and sprinkled with water during cooling breaks or at halftime, have been widely criticised, mainly by coaches and players of the European teams taking part.

"I've been personally on the pitch at Orlando," former Arsenal manager Wenger said on



Arsene Wenger with Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola during his visit to the English team's training camp at the Club World Cup

Saturday. "It's not at the level that the European clubs are used to because it's not perfect, but that will be rectified for the World Cup next year."

Paris St Germain coach Luis Enrique raised the issue early in the expanded Club World Cup tournament.

"The ball bounces like a rabbit," Luis Enrique said.

"Today, for example, the field used to be artificial turf, and now it's natural grass laid over it, which means it has to be watered manually. It's a big problem for the way we play," said Luis Enrique.

Norris leads McLaren one-two in Austrian Grand Prix

Spielberg, Austria - Lando Norris won the Austrian Grand Prix from pole position in a McLaren one-two on Sunday after fending off championship-leading team mate Oscar Piastri in an early wheel-to-wheel duel and then withstanding intense pressure to the end.

The Briton's third victory of the season cut Australian Piastri's Formula One lead from 22 to 15 points after 11 of 24 rounds, with the two McLaren drivers locked in an increasingly private title battle.

Charles Leclerc completed the podium for Ferrari with team-mate Lewis Hamilton fourth and George Russell, last year's winner in Austria, fifth for Mercedes.



McLaren's Lando Norris celebrates after winning the Austrian Grand Prix on Sunday

The Briton's third victory of the season cut Australian Piastri's Formula One lead from 22 to 15 points after 11 of 24 rounds

Red Bull's four-time world champion Max Verstappen suffered his first retirement of the season, in his team's home race, after a first-lap collision with Mercedes's Italian rookie Kimi Antonelli.

The Dutch driver stayed third overall but is now 61 points behind Piastri.

Marc Marquez wins Dutch Grand Prix

Marc Marquez delivered a clinical masterclass at MotoGP's Cathedral of Speed on Sunday to claim victory at the Dutch Grand Prix while his brother and closest contender Alex suffered a race-ending crash that left him with a fractured hand.

As Assen celebrated its centenary of motorcycle racing, the elder Marquez seized control on the second lap and did not look back as he extended his championship advantage to a commanding 68 points over Alex as he seeks a seventh title.

Aprilia's Marco Bezzecchi finished second while Ducati's Francesco Bagnaia came third, with the two-time champion

now staring at a daunting 126-point gap to his teammate.

"I'm super happy one more time to take the 37 points... Not 100% happy because my father told me that Alex broke one finger and I wish him a good recovery," Marquez told TNT Sports.

"First of all, because he's my main opponent for the championship. I want to have all the opponents on the racetrack. And secondly because he's my brother and I will try to help him to stay motivated and have a good recovery."

Bagnaia had won the last three races in Assen but despite taking the lead early on, he was pushed down to fourth place before he recovered to finish on the podium.

Paulinho breaks Botafogo hearts

Substitute's extra-time goal sends Palmeiras into Club World Cup quarters

Philadelphia, US - Paulinho came off the bench to score a dramatic extra-time winner as Palmeiras edged out fellow Brazilians Botafogo 1-0 on Saturday to book their place in the Club World Cup quarterfinals.

The match, played in Philadelphia's sweltering summer heat, remained goalless after 90 minutes of cagey and ill-tempered football.

In the 100th minute, Paulinho delivered the decisive moment, cutting in from the right, dribbling past two defenders and firing a low angled shot into the bottom corner, beyond the reach of Botafogo keeper John.

Botafogo pushed for an equaliser but failed to capitalise, even after Palmeiras were reduced to 10 men when Gustavo Gomez received a second yellow card for a tactical foul.

Palmeiras held firm to secure their first win against bitter rivals Botafogo in nearly two years, and will next face Chelsea on Friday in Philadelphia.

"We played an incredible game," Palmeiras manager Abel Ferreira told reporters. "We did very well in the 90 minutes and



Paulinho of Palmeiras celebrates after scoring the winner against Botafogo in their Club World Cup last-16 match on Saturday

in extra time. We suffered together with one player less, but we deserved it."

It was a tense, compelling clash between familiar foes who have met in several significant games in recent years. Palmeiras overturned a three-goal deficit to beat Botafogo 4-3 in 2023, a result that derailed the Rio club's Brazilian league campaign.

Botafogo responded by eliminating Palmeiras en route to their 2024 Copa Libertadores triumph and had since gone unbeaten against them in five consecutive matches until Saturday.

We played an incredible game. We did very well in the 90 minutes and in extra time. We suffered together with one player less, but we deserved it

ABEL FERREIRA, PALMEIRAS MANAGER

The first half was a sluggish affair, with Palmeiras dominating possession but struggling to break down a deep-lying Botafogo defence.

Teenage winger Estevao, bound for Chelsea in a 60 million-euro deal after the tournament, provided Palmeiras' only spark down the left flank. However, chances were few, and the first half saw just one shot on target, a fierce strike from Richard Rios that John superbly parried.

Botafogo looked far from the side who inflicted a shock defeat on Champions League winners Paris St Germain last week, and Palmeiras dominated possession

against the South American champions.

Palmeiras returned with more urgency after the break, and Estevao tested John with a low shot from outside the box.

Botafogo responded through Artur, whose curling strike was comfortably saved by Palmeiras keeper Weverton, but they kept struggling to create clearcut chances.

Estevao had a goal ruled out for offside in the 50th minute before being substituted, a decision that proved pivotal as his replacement Paulinho came up

Pogba joins Monaco after doping ban

Monaco - Paul Pogba has joined AS Monaco on a free transfer after signing a two-year contract, the Ligue 1 club said on Saturday, as the 32-year-old French midfielder looks to revive his career following a doping ban.

Pogba was handed a four-year doping ban in February 2024 after testing positive for DHEA, which boosts testosterone levels. The suspension was cut to 18 months after a successful appeal at the Court of Arbitration for Sport.

Italian club Juventus announced in November that they had mutually agreed to terminate his contract, which was due to expire in June 2026.

The 2018 World Cup winner had a disappointing second spell



Paul Pogba

with Juventus due to injuries after returning to the Turin-based club following his departure from Manchester United on a free transfer in 2022.

Pogba was signed by United in 2016 for a then-world record fee of 89 million pounds (\$122 million) but the four-times Serie A champion won only two trophies with the Premier League club — the League Cup and Europa League in his first season.

He last played for France in 2022 but knee surgery prevented him from appearing at the World Cup in Qatar.

Monaco finished third behind Ligue 1 champions Paris St Germain and Olympique de Marseille last season.

Rowe strikes in extra time as England beat Germany to retain Euro Under-21 title

Bratislava, Slovakia - Jonathan Rowe came off the bench to score an extra-time goal which gave holders England a 3-2 win over Germany in the Under-21 European Championship final on Saturday after they had let slip a two-goal lead.

Lee Carsley's side retained the title won two years ago which brings England's total haul to four, but they were pushed all the way by a German side who came into the final as favourites and had beaten England in the group stage.

"I'm so happy for them; to be European champions for the second time is a great achievement and the challenge now is to do it again in two years," Carsley told Channel 4.

"I'm going to try and enjoy tonight. It's important. I love my job, I'm very proud of the job I do, I love working with the players. It's important they have a shandy



England players celebrate with the trophy after winning the Under-21 European Championship

or two tonight."

England took the lead in the fifth minute when Omari Hutchinson had his effort saved by the keeper and a defensive clearance fell to Harvey Elliot who had time and space to pick his spot and steer a low shot inside the near post.

Elliot began the move for England's second goal with a chipped pass into the path of James McAtee and when the midfielder found his route blocked by two defenders he laid off the ball to Hutchinson who drilled his strike through the keeper's legs.

Mexico blank Saudi Arabia to reach Gold Cup semis

Glendale, US - Alexis Vega's strike just after the break and a late own goal by Abdullah Madu secured a 2-0 victory for Mexico over Saudi Arabia in the CONCACAF Gold Cup quarterfinals in Glendale, Arizona, on Saturday, setting up a clash with Honduras in the last four.

Honduras, who knocked out Panama in a penalty shootout earlier in the day, will face defending champions Mexico in the semi-finals in Santa Clara on Wednesday.

"I'm really happy with the team's work," said Vega, who scored for Mexico for the first time since 2022.

NOTHING ELSE MATTERS

History beckons, but Alcaraz only focused on winning his hat-trick title at Wimbledon

London, England - Carlos Alcaraz is chasing a slice of tennis immortality as he arrives at Wimbledon's pristine lawns, where he has the opportunity to join an illustrious but short list of men who have won the grasscourt Grand Slam three years in a row.

The Spaniard could join an elite club of just four men - Bjorn Borg, Pete Sampras, Roger Federer and Novak Djokovic - who have claimed three consecutive Wimbledon titles in the Open era.

Yet the 22-year-old Alcaraz, radiating confidence that belies his youth, says the only thing on his mind is the trophy itself and not its legacy.

"I'm coming here thinking that I really want to win the title, I really want to lift the trophy, not thinking about how many players have won three Wimbledon in a row," Alcaraz told reporters on Saturday.

"I just want to be ready, to prepare myself in the best way possible to start the tournament with a lot of confidence. Obviously I feel a lot of confidence right now," he added with a smile.

"Two weeks could be really long in a Grand Slam but right now I'm not thinking about who I could join if I win three Wimbledon in a row."

Such confidence is not misplaced, after he cemented his

status as the Prince of Clay when he won a 5-1/2 hour epic to beat Jannik Sinner in the French Open final earlier this month.

The world number two is now seeking to extend his reign on the grasscourts as well, warming up for Wimbledon by winning the Queen's Club Championship for a second time.

Once billed as a claycourt specialist as he climbed up the rankings, Alcaraz now speaks of grasscourts with the reverence of a true convert, saying that the "most beautiful tennis that we can watch" is on grass.

"The style that the people bring to the court when they play on grass, I think is so beautiful. The sound of the ball, the movement is really tough - but when you get it, it's like you're flying," he said.

"It's just pretty to me because I really want to hit slices, dropshots, go to the net all the time and play aggressively. I think on grass it's the style that you have to play, so that's what I like the most."

What truly sets Alcaraz apart from other players is his fearlessness in the face of adversity, evident from how he saved three championship points against Sinner to eventually lift a second straight title at Roland Garros.

"When I'm playing without thinking about anything else, but just playing or just thinking about



Carlos Alcaraz hits a return during a practice session at Wimbledon

the enjoyment, I think I get that freedom to play whatever I like - I just enjoy," he explained.

"When that happens, I always show my best tennis, my best level. So far I'm feeling the most freedom that I've played."

Fritz champion

Three-time champion Taylor Fritz came out on top in an all-American decider, beating lucky loser Jensen Brooksby 7-5 6-1 in the Eastbourne Open final on Saturday to retain his title.

Fritz has never lost a final at Eastbourne, also beating fellow Americans when winning in 2019 and 2022 and, having been

I just want to be ready, to prepare myself in the best way possible to start the tournament with a lot of confidence. Obviously I feel a lot of confidence right now

CARLOS ALCARAZ

taken to three sets in his three previous matches at this year's edition, the final was a more straightforward affair.

"There's something about Eastbourne," said Fritz.

"I just love it here. Every year I come here and it's such a good week. This year it's been different and I've had to fight through my matches. I feel like I've really upped my level."

The top seed was made to battle in the opening set, with Brooksby breaking first, but Fritz responded immediately and broke a second time to clinch the set.

It's not affecting me: Sinner underplays split with trainer and physio ahead of Wimbledon

London, England - Parting company with two of your team days before Wimbledon might not sound ideal but world number one Jannik Sinner has played down any negative impact as he prepares for the grass-court Grand Slam.

The 23-year-old Italian surprisingly split with Marco Panichi and Ulises Badio, his trainer and physiotherapist respectively, after the Halle tournament and was asked about the situation on Saturday.



Jannik Sinner

"Nothing big happened. I parted ways not long ago but it's not affecting me. I feel ready to compete. I feel free. I feel me and my team, we are ready to do the best we can," said Sinner, who is bidding to win his first Wimbledon title "We've reached incredible results in the past with them, so huge thanks to them. We made some great job, but I decided to do something different."

Panichi and Badio had been part of Sinner's team since September 2024 and helped him

to win this year's Australian Open to take his career Grand Slam haul to three. He also reached the French Open final but lost to Carlos Alcaraz.

"Look, in this sport things can happen. Sometimes a player feels something different, and that's my case."

Sinner suffered a crushing disappointment at Roland Garros. He won one match at Halle before losing to Alexander Bublik, but said he was mentally prepared for Wimbledon where he

hopes to become the first Italian singles champion.

"Honestly, I feel ready to play. I feel ready. We are practising very well. What happened in the past is in the past already," said Sinner, who faces fellow Italian Luca Nardi in the first round.

"I feel good. Especially mentally I feel in a very good spot. Halle was a little bit different. Now it's gone and I see also the reactions of other players and people, they talked the level (of the French Open final) was very

high. I feel like that I'm playing great, great tennis on grass. Hopefully I can show this also in the match court."

Sinner served a three-month suspension earlier this year after agreeing a settlement with the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) in February after authorities accepted that the anabolic agent clostebol had entered his system inadvertently via massages from his former physio Giacomo Naldi at Indian Wells in March 2024.

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CHONDRICHTHYES

PREDATOR POPULATIONS DECLINE

SHARK AND RAY POPULATIONS HAVE HALVED SINCE 1970 AND OVERFISHING IS SAID TO BE THE MAIN CULPRIT

"Sharks and rays are important predators, and their decline disrupts food webs throughout the ocean", said one of a study's authors.

More than half of all sharks and rays have disappeared since 1970, but a new study shows a clear path to preventing their numbers from dwindling even further.

Research reveals that overfishing has caused chondrichthyan fishes - sharks, rays, and chimeras (closely related to sharks) - to decline by over 50 per cent in the last 50 years.

This ancient and ecologically diverse group is made up of more than 1,199 species that are increasingly threatened. Though we now know more than ever before about these animals, a lack of knowledge about the scale of their decline threatens to outstrip improvements in research and policy.

"In addition to intentional targeting and bycatch, the threat to sharks is compounded by habitat degradation, climate change and pollution," says co-author of the research Professor Colin Simpfendorfer from James Cook University in Australia.

"The result is over one-third of chondrichthyans now face the threat of extinction."

Effect on food webs

Lead author Professor Nicholas Dulvy from Simon Fraser University in Canada, says the study shows how population decline first started in rivers, estuaries and coastal waters near the shore. From there they spread across the oceans and down into the deep seas.

Though they may have a bad reputation for being dangerous or tough, these marine creatures fulfil important ecological roles across various ecosystems. Widespread declines in shark and ray populations will also have significant consequences on other species and aquatic environments.

"Sharks and rays are important predators, and their decline disrupts food webs throughout the ocean. Larger wide-ranging species connect ecosystems, for example, reef sharks are vital in transferring nutrients from deeper waters to coral reefs, helping to sustain those ecosystems", says co-author Dr Nathan Pacoureau from the European Institute for Marine Studies at Brest University, France.

"Rays, meanwhile, are important foraging animals that mix and oxygenate sediments, influencing marine productivity and carbon storage."

Can sharks and rays recover from overfishing?

Despite these alarming trends, the answer to curbing the decline of sharks and rays is pretty simple.

Overfishing occurs when too many fish are caught and there aren't enough left to breed and maintain a sustainable population. The number of overfished stocks has tripled over the last 50 years one-third of the world's assessed fisheries are currently pushed beyond their biological limits, according to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (UNFAO).

Overfishing is closely tied to bycatch or the capture of unwanted sea life while fishing for a different species.

"Nations can reduce the extinction risk by lowering fishing pressure to sustainable levels, strengthening fisheries governance, and eliminating harmful subsidies," says Professor Simpfendorfer.

Progress on this front has already created spots of hope for chondrichthyans in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United States, and parts of Europe and South Africa.

He says science-based limits on fishing catches and measures to minimise these species from being accidentally caught are essential to help them recover.

(euronews.com)



In addition to intentional targeting and bycatch, the threat to sharks is compounded by habitat degradation, climate change, and pollution

Colin Simpfendorfer





POPULAR STIMULANT

SIP FOR THE SOUL

TEA IS THE MOST POPULAR BEVERAGE IN THE WORLD AFTER WATER. IT'S A SIMPLE PREPARATION OF POURING HOT WATER OVER CURED LEAVES OF THE CAMELLIA SINENSIS PLANT. TODAY, TEA LEAVES ARE AVAILABLE WITH MULTIPLE FLAVOURS BUT THE KEY PURPOSE REMAINS THE SAME: TO UPLIFT AND RELAX ONE'S SPIRIT

The first recording of tea described it as a medicinal beverage in China in the 3rd century AD and merchants helped its popularity to spread quickly across continents. In the early 19th century, Great Britain popularised the concept of afternoon tea, a break from one's routine in which tea is served alongside sandwiches and baked goods such as scones. The tradition continues till date, especially at hotels and resorts all over the world, including Oman. The flavour of tea varies by where the tea leaves are harvested and how they are grown and processed. Black tea is the most popular worldwide, followed by green, oolong, and white tea.

Tea and health

Studies suggest potential health benefits of tea due to its high polyphenol content. Some studies have generally been less conclusive, yet show promise. Observational research, however, has found that tea consumption of 2-3 cups daily is associated with a reduced risk of premature death, heart disease, stroke, and type 2 diabetes. There appears to be little risk associated with drinking tea except for frequent consumption of very hot tea, as is the case of consumption of 'chai' the south Asian version wherein tea leaves are boiled at high temperatures with water and spices, and served with milk and a sweetener. Polyphenols, or flavonoids, are

likely a key component to what makes tea a healthful drink. These chemical compounds act as antioxidants, which control the damaging effects of free radicals in the body. Free radicals can alter DNA by stealing its electrons, and this mutated DNA can increase LDL cholesterol or alter cell membrane traffic -both harmful to our health. Though green tea is often believed to be richer in polyphenols than black or oolong (red) teas, studies show that - with the exception of decaffeinated tea - all plain teas have about the same levels of these chemicals, albeit in different proportions. Green tea is richest in epigallocatechin-3 gallate whereas black tea is richest in theaflavins; research has shown that both can exert health benefits.

Decaffeinated tea

Decaffeinated tea is an option if you enjoy the flavour and experience of tea but are sensitive to caffeine. People have varying sensitivity to caffeine but it is classified as a stimulant that has the potential to affect the nervous system and heart rate, and cause jitteriness. In general, traditional teas already have about half the caffeine of coffee and even less if the brewing time is shorter. To decaffeinate tea, there are different methods. One process uses an organic chemical solvent (either ethyl acetate or methylene chloride) that also removes most of tea's polyphenols. The residual amount of the chemical after processing is min-

imal to none, and no research has shown negative health effects. Another method called 'effervescence' uses water and carbon dioxide, which retains the majority of polyphenols. Both methods apply the chemical or gas onto moistened tea leaves, which bonds to the caffeine; when the leaves are dried, the caffeine evaporates along with the solvent/gas. If you wish to know which processing method is used, check the package label.

Storage of tea

There are five elements to avoid to keep tea as fresh as possible - light, heat, moisture, odour, and air. Tea bags should be stored in their original container or placed in a sealed plastic bin. Loose-leaf teas should be stored in an airtight container. Place all teas in a dark cupboard at a consistent room temperature. Tea tends to absorb odours from food and even other strongly scented teas, so keep them separate. Freezing and refrigerating is not recommended as the moisture introduced can degrade the tea. If unopened, tea will last about one year beyond the 'best by' date. After opening, packaged and loose-leaf teas last about one year. However, some black and oolong teas can last up to two years, and more delicate teas may last only 6 months. The flavour is your best guide to determining how long to keep a tea in your cupboard. (Courtesy: nutrition source.hsph.harvard.edu)



Queen Anne

INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT TEA

- Tea reached Europe only in the 16th Century though people were using ceramic teapots in Asia and the Middle East 11,000 years ago.
- According to legend, in 2732 BC Emperor Shen Nung discovered tea when leaves from a wild tree blew into his pot of boiling water.
- The art of reading tea leaves is called tasseography.
- Queen Anne of England drank tea so regularly that she substituted a large bell-shaped silver teapot for the tiny Chinese tea pots. The earliest tea service dates from her reign.
- During the 18th century, tea gardens became popular. Ladies and gentlemen would take their tea together outdoors surrounded by entertainers.
- In 1840, afternoon tea was introduced in England by Anna, the seventh Duchess of Bedford who would become hungry around four o'clock in the afternoon.
- Drinking tea is less likely to produce a 'caffeine crash' than drinking coffee. This is because the high levels of antioxidants in tea slow the absorption of caffeine.

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