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Electronic platform to boost disaster response launched

Our Correspondent
Muscat

A new electronic platform to improve national emergency response and coordination has been introduced marking a key step in strengthening Oman's disaster management capabilities.

The launch was announced during the first meeting of National Emergency Management Committee in 2025, held at the General Command of Royal Oman Police (ROP) on Monday. The meeting was chaired by Lt Gen Hassan Mohsin al Shuraiqi, Inspector General of Police and Customs and Chairman of the committee, and attended by senior officials, military commanders and committee members.

The platform is designed to enable faster and more coordinated responses during emergencies by integrating multiple government agencies through a central digital system. It employs advanced information and communications technologies to enhance data sharing and streamline operations across different phases of emergency management - from early warnings and preparedness to response and recovery.

Key entities including Ministry of Health, Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority and ROP will be linked through the platform allowing real-time collaboration. It will also connect emergency sub-committees in governorates and various operational centres, supporting local and national coordination.



Lt Gen Hassan Mohsin al Shuraiqi



The platform is part of the sultanate's digital transformation strategy and reflects efforts to modernise public sector services through adoption of advanced technologies.

During the meeting, the committee reviewed national efforts to strengthen emergency systems, improve sectoral integration and enhance operational readiness. It also discussed strategies for improving crisis response and coordination between national and local authorities.

Lt Gen Shuraiqi underscored the importance of regular training and public awareness in reducing risks.

H M sends greetings to leaders of five nations

Muscat - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent cables of greetings to the heads of state of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, Burundi, Rwanda and Canada on the occasion of their respective national days.

In a message to President Felix Tshisekedi of Democratic Republic of Congo on the country's Independence Anniversary, His Majesty conveyed his sincere congratulations and best wishes for continued progress and stability under President Tshisekedi's leadership. He also wished for further growth in bilateral relations in support of mutual interests.

His Majesty sent similar greetings to President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud of the Federal Republic of Somalia, conveying his best wishes for the country's development and success in achieving national goals.

Cables were also dispatched to President Évariste Ndayishimiye of Burundi and President Paul Kagame of Rwanda in which His Majesty conveyed his heartfelt sentiments and wished both nations continued prosperity and stability.

On the occasion of Canada's National Day, His Majesty sent a greetings cable to Governor-General Mary Simon, expressing his wishes for the country's continued growth and reaffirming the desire to see bilateral cooperation strengthened across various sectors.

RO3.4mn drug rehab centre opens in Amerat



Our Correspondent
Muscat

Ministry of Health (MoH) inaugurated Muscat Rehabilitation Centre in Amerat, a specialised facility for addiction recovery built at cost of RO3.4mn, on Monday.

It was funded in two phases, the first supported by Petroleum Development Oman with RO2.5mn, and the second by Al Jisr Foundation with RO900,000. MoH outfitted the centre with medical equipment, devices and furnishings.

Opened under the patronage of Sayyid Saud bin Hilal al Busaidi, Governor of Muscat, in the presence of H E Dr Hilal Ali al Sabti, Minister of Health, the centre is part of Oman's broader health-care development strategy and Vision 2040 goals.

Dr Yousef al Farsi, Director General of Health in the governorate, said the centre offers a structured treatment approach, starting with detoxification, followed by short-term psychological rehabilitation and long-term care to reintegrate individuals into society.

"This approach seeks to provide real opportunities for a return to a normal and healthy life, thereby directly contributing to enhancing community safety and the psychological stability of society members," he said.

The centre includes five inpatient wards with total capacity of 130 beds - 96 for males and 34 for females - including detoxification and short-term rehabilitation units. It also has a separate ward with ten beds for those referred for compulsory treatment and a long-term rehabilitation unit with 40 beds.

Jumana al Zadjali of Al Jisr Foundation described the facility as a joint public-private-civil society effort, offering multidisciplinary services such as medical care, psychotherapy, physiotherapy and vocational training.

The centre includes outpatient clinics, labs, a pharmacy and recreational spaces.

Industry panel flags energy costs as key threat to manufacturing

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Industry Committee of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) held a meeting recently to discuss the impact of rising electricity and gas prices on manufacturing costs and competitiveness of Omani products.

The meeting was chaired by Tawfiq al Lawati, Chairman of the committee, and attended by committee members and officials of relevant government bodies.

Participants stressed that electricity and gas are among the most significant operational costs for factories. They cautioned that high tariffs drive up the final cost of products, reduce profit margins, and weaken the sector's ability to compete regionally and globally.

"The industrial sector is a key pillar of economic diversification. Any increase in electricity or gas prices directly affects its competitiveness and long-term sustainability," Lawati said.

The committee also warned that persistently high energy costs could undermine Oman's attractiveness as a destination for industrial investment, especially in energy-intensive sectors such as metals, petrochemicals and cement.

Members called for greater support for renewable energy adoption, including financing mechanisms and tax incentives, which they said could help lower production costs and promote sustainability throughout the industrial value chain.

The meeting reviewed the broader industrial landscape, including proposed reforms and incentives in special economic and free zones.



Tawfiq al Lawati



The National Hospitality Institute (NHI) has long been a cornerstone of Oman's hospitality industry, playing a vital role in shaping its workforce. The Hospitality Champions competition stands as a proud reflection of NHI's ongoing commitment to raising industry standards while inspiring local talent to take pride in their craft. We view this initiative as one that not only supports the professional growth of hospitality in Oman but also aligns with the nation's vision.

Panos Panagis, District Director
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Muscat Daily's tech summit returns with focus on quantum-era opportunities

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Children's Culture Centre summer event from today

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Children's Culture Centre, an affiliate of Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth (MCSY), is set to launch its annual summer programme titled 'Our Summer: Vision and Launch', from July 1 to July 30. Targeted at children aged six to 16, the programme aims to nurture young talent, expand their knowledge, and develop essential life skills through a wide range of educational and interactive activities.

This year's programme has been carefully curated to provide a vibrant and stimulating environment that fosters creativity, critical thinking and a strong sense of identity. It is designed to support the goals of Oman Vision 2040 and Sustainable Development Goals, ensuring participants not only learn but also grow into responsible, culturally grounded and innovative leaders in the future. Through hands-on experiences in fields such as culture, arts, technology, innovation, leadership, and environmental awareness, the programme promotes personal development and social responsibility among participants.

It kicks off by introducing children to the basics of program-



The programme aims to nurture young talent, expand their knowledge, and develop essential life skills through a wide range of educational and interactive activities

ming and logical thinking using fun, interactive tools tailored to different age groups in the first week. In the second week, participants will explore artistic expression while learning the importance of recycling, including a practical exercise in handmade paper production. The third

week, to be held at Bait al Zubair Foundation, will focus on national identity, where children will engage in activities that highlight Omani values, heritage and cultural diversity, deepening their sense of belonging and pride.

In the fourth week, the programme shifts to a simulated

medical environment where participants will be introduced to the fundamentals of the healthcare field. They will learn how to deal with minor injuries in a safe and engaging setting designed to build confidence and awareness. The final week will emphasise digital literacy and cybersecurity. Children will be introduced to safe Internet practices, learn about cyber threats and explore the growing field of cybersecurity as a future career path.

All programme activities, except those in Week 3, will take place at Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher, which is equipped to provide a rich and supportive learning environment. The cultural immersion activities in Week 3 will be hosted by Bait al Zubair Foundation, offering participants a unique opportunity to engage with Omani cultural institutions firsthand.

'Our Summer: Vision and Launch' reflects the centre's commitment to building a well-rounded, culturally aware generation through engaging, meaningful and enjoyable learning experiences. By combining education with creativity, and innovation with tradition, the programme aspires to prepare youth to contribute confidently and positively to the future of Oman.



FFC 3.0 puts Oman on combat sports map

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Muscat played host on Friday to an action-packed night of boxing at the third edition of Fitbox Fighting Championship (FFC 3.0) which brought together rising regional talent and international fighters in a WBC-sanctioned event.

Held in coordination with Oman Martial Arts and Self-Defence Committee and World Boxing Council (WBC), FFC 3.0 featured over ten bouts with 20 fighters participating across various weight categories. The event was part of the WBC Amateur Series and saw both amateur and professional fights - headgear and non-headgear

fighters in three-minute rounds.

Hosted at Sheraton Oman Hotel, the event attracted a large number of fans and marked a significant step forward for Oman's presence in global combat sports.

The fight card featured athletes from Iran, Lebanon, Syria, Pakistan, Japan, Kazakhstan and India, besides Oman. Among the standout bouts of the evening was the light heavyweight clash between Iran's Sina Yadollahifard and Lebanon's Salman Kerdi, which drew loud cheers from the crowd before the latter emerged victorious. Omani fighter Munner Rasheed impressed spectators with a balanced display of defence and offence in his contest against

Lebanon's Ziad Fadi.

Ali Kerdi, President and Founder of FFC, said the event was a landmark for the sport in Oman. "FFC 3.0 was more than a series of fights. It was a platform for regional fighters to compete with international athletes and showcase their skills."

Kerdi added that the event aimed to raise the profile of boxing in Oman and create opportunities for local athletes to step into the global arena. "The boxing culture is slowly changing in Oman and more people are taking a keen interest in this sport."

With growing interest in combat sports in the region, organisers believe the success of FFC 3.0 could pave the way for more international events in Oman.



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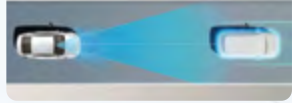
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OCCI aims to take 25 Omani brands global

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) has launched the fourth edition of its Franchise Programme aimed at assisting 25 Omani brands through training, consultancy and field support.

The programme is part of the chamber's wider strategy to develop national brands and enhance their competitiveness in local and international markets.

Speaking at the launch, Faisal bin Abdullah al Rawas, Chairman of OCCI, said the programme focuses on building sustainable business models based on global best practices. "This programme underscores our commitment to enhancing

the value of Omani products and creating a supportive environment for business growth and international competitiveness," he stated.

Rawas urged local business owners to take advantage of programme, which he described as a key opportunity for companies seeking to scale and enter the international franchise ecosystem.

Humood bin Salim al Saadi, Second Deputy Chairman of OCCI and Head of Central Franchise Committee, said the programme responds to growing demand for scalable and innovative business models. He noted that selected brands will receive targeted guidance to support their transition into franchising.

In a move to enhance regional collaboration, OCCI signed a

memorandum of cooperation with Federation of Saudi Chambers during the launch event. As part of the agreement, the first Oman-Saudi Franchise Exhibition will be held from September 29 to October 2, 2025. The event aims to create a platform for investment, promote Omani and Saudi brands, and encourage cross-border partnerships.

OCCI also signed a memorandum of understanding with UAE Association of Franchise & Trademarks (TAGMOA) for collaborations in exhibitions, conferences, training, marketing and knowledge exchange.

The agreements are expected to strengthen Oman's franchise sector and expand the presence of Omani brands in regional and global markets.

ASMED opens registration for Artisan Support Service

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development (ASMED) has announced the opening of applications for the 2025 edition of its Artisan Support Service, reaffirming its commitment to empowering local

artisans and enhancing visibility of Omani handicrafts both locally and internationally.

The programme is part of ASMED's ongoing strategy to improve quality and competitiveness of traditional craft products, while offering comprehensive support to artisans and craft enterprises across the sultanate.

The programme provides a tailored assistance package encompassing financial aid, technical support and marketing guidance. Through this approach, ASMED aims to help artisans upgrade their production environments, improve the quality of products and foster sustainable business growth.

To be eligible, applicants must be Omani nationals and possess a valid home-business licence. In addition, applicants must not have received financial support from ASMED in the last two years.

Applications can be submitted at <https://eservices.sme.gov.om>, with the deadline set for July 3.

Oman Air joins Oneworld alliance

Our Correspondent
Muscat

In a strategic move set to boost inbound tourism, Oman Air has officially joined the Oneworld alliance, becoming its 15th full member. Its inclusion in one of the world's most prestigious airline networks positions Oman as a more connected and accessible destination than ever before, opening new travel corridors to and from over 900 destinations across 170 countries.

This milestone follows more than two years of integration ef-

forts and is expected to drive tourism, economic growth and global recognition for the sultanate.

Speaking during a breakfast meeting at W Hotel on Monday, Con Korfiatis, CEO of the airline, said, "Oman Air is honoured to be joining the Oneworld alliance. We are thrilled to welcome Oneworld customers to experience Oman's rich culture, mountain adventures, serene beaches and heartfelt hospitality. For Oman-based travellers, this opens up a world of seamless global journeys."

As a full member, Oman Air's



top-tier guests will now enjoy access to nearly 700 business lounges worldwide, including

newly opened Oneworld-branded lounges at Amsterdam Schiphol and Seoul Incheon.

Oman Air is honoured to be joining the Oneworld alliance. For Oman-based travellers, this opens up a world of seamless global journeys

CON KORFIATIS

Guests will also benefit from priority check-in, boarding, mileage earning and redemp-

tion, and full status recognition across the alliance.

The move is set to attract more visitors from key long-haul markets such as the United States, Japan and Australia, offering them smoother travel to Oman through partner airlines.

Welcoming the development, Nat Pieper, CEO of Oneworld, said, "Oman Air brings valuable strategic reach and award-winning service to our network. This partnership enhances our connectivity across the Gulf and South Asia, and strengthens our position as the alliance of choice for inter-

national travellers. With Oneworld membership, Oman Air not only enhances its service portfolio but also places the sultanate firmly on the global travel map as a must-visit destination."

The announcement comes as Oman Air expands its global footprint, with new direct flights from Muscat to Amsterdam launching on July 1, and a double daily Muscat-London service starting in October. Oman Air currently operates flights to 42 destinations in 22 countries, and this partnership significantly increases its reach.



S Batinah offers over 100 plots for investment to drive growth

Our Correspondent
Rustaq

In a major step towards enhancing economic growth and food security, South Batinah is offering more than 100 plots of land for investment as part of its drive to meet the objectives of Oman Vision 2040.

The initiative aims to attract quality investments across multiple sectors, including agriculture, industry, education and commercial services.

Haider bin Abdul Hadi al Lawati, Director General of Housing and Urban Planning in South Batinah, said the governorate is seeing strong interest from investors, thanks to an attractive business environment and diverse investment opportunities being made available.

"In the first half of 2025, we've added 40 new agricultural plots and are preparing 54 more for industrial, commercial and



mixed-use projects," Lawati said. "These plots will soon be offered through the Tatwir platform to ensure transparency and easy access for investors."

He informed that six special plots have been set aside for private schools, fuel stations and business incubators. Addition-

The move to offer land for investment is part of broader efforts under Oman Vision 2040 to diversify the economy, create job opportunities and foster sustainable development across the sultanate

HAIDER ALLAWATI

industrial plots via public auction. Thirty-five industrial plots were distributed in Musannah under the Choose and Invest initiative.

Lawati added that land distribution continues to follow updated urban planning guidelines with focus on digital platforms and sustainable practices to ensure balanced growth while preserving natural resources.

In the agricultural sector, usufruct land contracts are playing a vital role in supporting food security. Initiatives such as greenhouse farming, aquaculture and livestock production are helping reduce reliance on imports and improve national self-sufficiency.

The move to offer land for investment is part of broader efforts under Oman Vision 2040 to diversify the economy, create job opportunities and foster sustainable development across the sultanate.

Shura reviews law to boost GCC industrial integration



Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Economic and Financial Committee of Majlis A'Shura held a meeting on Monday where it reviewed the draft Unified Industrial Regulation Law for GCC member states in the presence of officials from Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion.

Chaired by Ahmed bin Saeed al Sharqi, the meeting discussed the government-referred draft law which aims to unify industrial legislation across the Gulf bloc. Ministry officials said the proposed law is intended to stimulate industrial growth, enhance sectoral contribution to national income, attract investment and foster regional integration.

The regulation also aims to support harmonisation of industrial policies among GCC countries, encourage innovation and

promote localisation of advanced technologies to strengthen competitiveness in the sector.

Committee members emphasised the need to ensure the legislation reflects Oman's local industrial context and aligns with existing national laws and regulations.

The committee also reviewed and approved two final reports during the meeting. The first addressed the state of local industries in the sultanate, assessing challenges and opportunities in the sector and its alignment with the National Industrial Strategy and Oman Vision 2040. The report recommended better policy coordination and introduction of incentive packages to support industrial growth.

The second report evaluated the competitiveness and appeal of Oman's business environment, identifying key structural obstacles and offering strategic pro-

posals to improve the sultanate's investment climate in line with diversification goals.

Both reports were developed following consultations with experts and stakeholders from relevant sectors, in accordance with Article 59 of the Law of Council of Oman, which allows the shura to make recommendations on matters of public interest.

The committee also adopted its suggestions on Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion's 2023 annual report, in line with Article 55 of Law of Council of Oman, which mandates annual reporting by service ministers and allows parliamentary review and questioning.

Additionally, the committee reviewed a draft amendment to the GCC Common Customs Law, continuing its efforts to support legislative coordination in the region.

MoH calls on public to donate blood amid critical summer shortage

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Central Blood Bank in Bausher has issued an urgent appeal to the public for blood and platelet donations, as the number of donations has dropped significantly during the summer months.

In a statement issued by Ministry of Health, the Department of Blood Bank Services (DBBS) stressed the importance of maintaining a sustainable supply of blood and its components to meet the growing needs of patients across the sultanate.

According to DBBS, the demand for blood units can reach up to 150 units per day, making



it essential for both individuals and institutions to contribute actively to donation efforts.

"To ensure sustainable availability of blood and its components, we urge all blood and platelet donors to take the initiative and continue to donate periodically, every three to four months," the statement said.

The department appreciated

organisations that regularly hold blood donation drives and encouraged them to continue their support by motivating their employees and members to participate. "These institutional campaigns play a key role in helping meet the daily target for blood collection."

Central Blood Bank in Bausher remains open to the public from Saturday to Thursday, between 8am and 8pm, and on Fridays from 8am to 2pm.

Members of the public who are eligible to donate are encouraged to visit the blood bank during these hours or reach out through official MoH channels for more information.

Compass installed on peak of Jabal Samhan, the highest point in Dhofar

Our Correspondent
Salalah

Environment Authority installed a compass on the summit of Jabal Samhan, Dhofar on Monday in cooperation with National Survey Authority and Royal Air Force of Oman.

Located within the Jabal Samhan Nature Reserve, the compass marks the highest point in Dhofar.

The summit at 1,757.6m above sea level now has a stone pedestal featuring a metal compass plate marking the four cardinal directions and pointing to nearby environmental and tourism sites.

Zahrar Ahmed al Abdulsalam, Director General of Environment in Dhofar, said the compass installation aims to establish the site as a landmark of environmental, tourism and cultural



significance.

"The compass offers an opportunity for visitors and researchers to connect with the mountain's ecological and geographic features," he said.

The installation is also intended to support scientific research and conservation. By documenting key aspects of Jabal Samhan Nature Reserve, it is expected to aid conservation and raise awareness on the

area's biodiversity.

Jabal Samhan is recognised as an ecotourism destination, known for its distinct ecosystem. Installation of the compass is expected to attract more visitors while reinforcing conservation efforts.

Abdulsalam called on the public to visit the site, noting that it serves both tourism and environmental education goals.

MUSCAT DAILY'S TECH SUMMIT RETURNS WITH FOCUS ON QUANTUM-ERA CHALLENGES

Muscat - The highly anticipated second edition of Muscat Daily's Cybersecurity and Cloud Conference & Awards is set to take place on July 9, at the Intercity Hotel in Al Khuwair, Muscat.

Building on the success of its inaugural edition, this year's conference will bring together leading minds in cybersecurity, cloud computing, and tech innovation to address the rapidly evolving digital landscape - particularly the emerging challenges and opportunities introduced by quantum technologies.

The event will host a distinguished gathering of policymakers, business leaders, security professionals, and digital transformation experts.

Dr Salim Sultan al Ruzaiqi, Member of the State Council and Chairman of the Oman Information Technology Society (OITS), will be present as the chief guest, while Dr Salim al Shuaili, Chief AI Officer at the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MTCIT), will deliver the keynote address.

This year's conference is endorsed by the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MTCIT) and is supported by prominent organisations from both the public and private sectors. Strategic support comes from Securado and Khimji ITC, powered by Tatweer, with Oman



Dr Salim Sultan al Ruzaiqi, Member of the State Council and Chairman of the Oman Information Technology Society (OITS), will attend the prestigious conference and awards as the chief guest

Housing Bank as the official banking partner. Additional partners include Sultan Qaboos University, OITS, the Oman American Business Council, VI-Dopix, and the Academy of Research & Innovation. The conference also welcomes Fem-

ina and Empowered Entrepreneur as online media partners, engaging audiences across the Middle East, the USA, the UK and India.

To be held under the theme 'Cybersecurity in the Quantum Era: Challenges and Opportunities', the conference will explore how rapidly advancing technologies like quantum computing and artificial intelligence are reshaping cybersecurity frameworks worldwide.

As these tools evolve, they introduce new vulnerabilities - demanding bold, resilient strategies to protect data and critical infrastructure. The event will serve as a platform for sharing insights, best practices, and practical solutions for the digital age.

Throughout the day, attendees will benefit from expert-led discussions, interactive panel sessions and real-world case



studies. The programme also includes a prestigious awards ceremony, recognising organisations and professionals who have demonstrated excellence in cybersecurity and cloud adoption across diverse sectors.

More than 200 delegates are expected, including CISOs, CIOs, CTOs, IT heads, policymakers, cybersecurity and cloud consultants, and digital forensics professionals. Attendees will represent a wide range of sectors including banking and finance, energy, telecommunications, logistics, healthcare, manufacturing, and consulting, making the conference an essential destination for knowledge-sharing and industry networking.

Adding to the excitement, the Cyber Guardians of Oman Challenge 2025 will be held on the sidelines of the conference. This high-intensity Capture the Flag (CTF) competition will challenge participants in two phases - an online elimination round starts on July 3 and finale during the main event. The challenge aims to inspire, identify, and celebrate top cybersecurity talent in Oman.

The event is being organised by Interactive Apex. For inquiries regarding partnerships, participation, or award nominations, one may contact sajjir@interactive-apex.com or call +968-9947 4314.



GCC inflation rate stands at 1.7% in 2024

Muscat - The average inflation rate in the GCC countries stood at 1.7% in 2024, compared to 2.2% in 2023, according to the latest data released by the GCC-Stat.

The data show a noticeable variation in the rates of change across the main groups, with the housing group recording the highest increase at 5.7%, followed by restaurants and hotels and culture and entertainment, both at 1.8%.

This was followed by education at 1.7%, food and beverages at 1.5%, and goods and services at 1.1%. Meanwhile, the health group recorded a slight decline of 0.2%, followed by clothing and footwear at 0.7%, communications at 1.0%, tobacco at 1.1%, and furniture at 1.6%, while the transport group registered the largest drop at 2.0%.

According to recent data, price levels in the GCC experienced moderate fluctuations between 2020 and 2024. The region's inflation rate stood at 1.7% in 2020, rising to 2.4% in 2021 and reaching its peak at 3.1% in 2022. It then eased to 2.2% in 2023, continuing its downward trajectory to settle at 1.7% in 2024.

These figures reflect the success of the economic policies adopted by GCC countries in containing inflationary pressures, particularly following the notable increase in 2022. They also indicate a state of relative stability in the region compared to the fluctuations seen in global markets.

In 2024, the GCC inflation rate remained notably lower than that of several major trading partners, underscoring the region's economic resilience. Inflation stood at 4.4% in Brazil, 3.8% in India, 3.3% in the UK, 2.9% in the US and 2.7% in Japan.

Meanwhile, South Korea and Germany reported rates of 2.3%, with France recording 2.0%. The inflation rate in both China and Italy was lower than the GCC rate, recording 0.2% and 1.0% respectively, while the rate in the European Union stood at 2.6%.

ONA

Dubai South launches 'Hayat' community

Dubai, UAE - Dubai South Properties has announced the launch of Hayat, a new master-planned community spanning 10mn square feet.

The development is located in the Golf District at Dubai South, near the existing terminal of Al Maktoum International Airport. Hayat by Dubai South will feature approximately 2,500 residential units.

Strategically located, Hayat offers easy access to major roads and key economic hubs, including Al Maktoum International Airport, Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Road, Emirates Road, Jebel Ali Free Zone, and Dubai South Free Zone.

WAM



Canada scraps tax on US tech firms to salvage trade talks

Ottawa, Canada - Canada said that it is rescinding its digital services tax that would have targeted US technology firms, in a bid to restart trade talks between Washington and Ottawa.

"Canada rescinds digital services tax to advance broader trade negotiations with the United States," Canada stated.

US President Donald Trump paused trade talks on Friday over Canada's adoption of the 3% tax on technology companies' revenue from providing digital services to domestic users. Collection of the tax was slated to begin on Monday.



Donald Trump

"To support those negotiations, the Minister of Finance and

National Revenue, the Honourable François-Philippe Champagne, announced today that Canada would rescind the Digital Services Tax (DST) in anticipation of a mutually beneficial comprehensive trade arrangement with the United States," Canada's Finance Ministry said on Sunday.

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney said rescinding the tax would "support a resumption of negotiations toward the July 21, 2025, timeline set out at this month's G7 Leaders' Summit in Kananaskis".

Investopedia

Defence sector outpaces overall job market in Europe as spending rises 30%

Brussels, Belgium - EU defence spending rose by over 30% between 2021 and 2024, driving increased labour demand across the sector. Defence job postings have outpaced the wider job market since 2022.

EU member states increased their total defence spending by over 30% between 2021 and 2024, rising from €214bn to an estimated €326bn, according to the European Defence Agency.

Europe's defence industry is also facing growing labour needs, leading to a rise in job postings. Hiring has increased sharply across Europe's defence sector compared to the broader job market, according to global hiring platform Indeed.

Defence-related job postings have outpaced overall market trends since 2022. France, Germany, and the UK remain the main hubs for defence recruitment.

Security has long been a key



priority for Europe, but it has taken on greater importance since the Russian invasion of Ukraine in early 2022.

More recently, tensions have also escalated in the Middle East due to the conflict involving Israel and Iran. Job postings data

suggests that all have an impact on Europe's defence industry, according to Indeed.

Following a pandemic-driven decline in 2020, job postings in both the defence sector and the overall labour market initially recovered at a similar pace. However, their paths diverged sharply beginning in early 2022, around the time of Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February.

Overall job postings peaked in July 2022 at 46% above their 2021 average. The index used for this data sets 2021 average

Although postings in the defence sector have eased somewhat since then, they remained 41% above 2021 levels as of May 2025. The broader job market, by comparison, has dipped slightly below its 2021 benchmark, standing at 99.5 index points. The companies included in the analysis are mostly private-sector employers. Roles within the armed forces are not considered.

"Jobseeker interest in the defence sector has increased since the outbreak of the war, particularly in Germany, where search activity spiked in early 2022 and has remained elevated," Virginia Sondergeld, economist at Indeed Hiring Lab, told Euronews Business.

"This illustrates how geopolitical events can shape public perception of the sector and potentially attract new talent."

She noted that sustaining and expanding a skilled workforce in

defence requires long-term public investment.

"If such funding continues, the sector could experience a structural rise in its relevance within the labour market," she added.

France dominates

France accounts for the largest share of European job postings from major defence companies, with about 43% as of May 2025. This is down from 57% in early 2020.

Germany and the UK each make up 17% of postings. The share from other European countries has grown from 7% to 23% in this period. This is "reflecting geographical diversification of defence investment and hiring" according to Indeed economist Alexandre Judes and Virginia Sondergeld.

France, Germany, and the UK each have large and specialised defence industries.

Euronews

EU reports decline in value and volume of imported petroleum in Q1 of this year

Brussels, Belgium - In the first quarter of 2025, the EU imported €95.3bn worth of energy products, amounting to a total of 176.4mn tonnes. Compared with the first quarter of 2024, the value of imports increased slightly by 0.3%, while the volume decreased by 3.9%, according to figures published by Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union.

A closer look at year-on-year developments in the first quarter shows a decline in both value (-11.9%) and volume (-8.0%) of imported petroleum. In contrast, imported liquefied gas recorded a sharp increase in value (+45.3%) and volume (+12.1%).

Meanwhile, the value of imported natural gas in gaseous state rose 19.0%, although the volume decreased 12.1%.

When comparing monthly averages in the first quarter of 2025 with the averages from 2024, imports of petroleum oils recorded a decrease of 9.4% in value and 7.1% in volume. At the same time, large changes were recorded for natural gas - imports of liquified gas increased by 55.0% in value and 24.7% in volume,



while imports of gas in gaseous state increased by 6.4% in value but dropped 13.8% in volume. In the first quarter of 2025, the largest partners for EU imports of petroleum oils were the United States (15.0% of imports in value), Norway (13.5%) and Kazakhstan (12.7%).

When comparing monthly averages in Q1 of 2025 with the averages from 2024, imports of petroleum oils recorded a decrease of 9.4% in value and 7.1% in volume

Half of the imports of liquefied natural gas were from the United States (50.7% of all imports in value), ahead of Russia (17.0%) and Qatar (10.8%).

More than half of the natural gas in gaseous state was imported from Norway (52.6%). Algeria followed with 19.4%, ahead of Russia with 11.1%.

WAM

Saudi imposes anti-dumping duties on steel pipes from China

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia - The General Authority of Foreign Trade (GAFT) announced the imposition of final anti-dumping duties on imports of steel or stainless steel pipes with longitudinally welded circular sections originating from China and Taiwan.

The decision, issued by Chairman of the Board of Directors of GAFT Dr Majid al Kassabi, was published in the *Umm Al-Qura* newspaper on Sunday.

The duties will take effect for a five-year period starting Monday. As part of the decision, the Zakat, Tax, and Customs Authority has been directed to implement and collect duties ranging from 6.5% to 27.3%, depending on the manufacturer, as detailed in the official announcement.



and its executive regulations, designed to protect the domestic market from unfair trade practices such as dumping.

GAFT emphasised that this step is part of broader efforts to safeguard national industries, enhance the kingdom's position in global trade, and contribute to the country's economic growth.

SPA

The measure follows the results of an investigation launched in 2024, after the local industry submitted a complaint

S Korea lifts 14-year restriction on kimchi bond investment

Seoul, South Korea - The Bank of Korea (BOK) on Monday lifted restrictions on local institutions investing in foreign currency-denominated bonds issued for domestic use, known as kimchi bonds, in an effort to improve foreign exchange liquidity, officials said.

Under the new measure, foreign exchange institutions, including foreign exchange banks, securities firms and insurance companies, are allowed to invest in kimchi bonds without limitations starting from Monday, according to BOK.

The restriction was introduced in 2011 to prevent debt issuance intended to circumvent currency loan regulations and to curb excessive domestic investment in foreign currency debt.



With a growing imbalance in foreign exchange (FX) supply and demand, however, there have been calls to ease the regulations.

'This measure is expected to

contribute to resolving the imbalance in forex supply and demand by improving foreign currency liquidity conditions and easing pressure on the weak won,' the BoK said in a statement.

Spain's Roca Group to invest €70mn in Kazakhstan factories

Madrid, Spain - Leading bathroom hardware manufacturer, Roca Group to invest in Kazakhstan production sites in a bid to expand central Asian business. Roca CEO explains the decision in an exclusive interview with Euronews.

Spanish bathroom goods company, Roca Group has announced it will invest €70mn to build production capacity in Kazakhstan. The global leader in design, production and distribution of bathroom space products, which first began in Barcelona in 1917, announced the move as part of their plans to expand in Central Asia.

Roca CEO Albert Magrans gave an exclusive interview to Euronews, commenting the investment decision.

the ground up until completion.

We will have a furniture assembly plant and installation system unit, together with the production of acrylic and composite bath and shower tiles. This project is about delivering to the market complete solutions for the bathroom.

The total investment is going to be €70mn - in terms of job creation, we're talking about 300 people.

Q: What drove your decision to build this factory in Kazakhstan in particular?

A: Some markets are not delivering the growth that they were supposed to deliver. So, we were very keen to analyse potential areas where this growth is going to be important. We took a lot of care to analyse Kazakhstan as a country, as a potential market, not only Kazakhstan itself, but also the possibility to build a regional hub for all the Central Asian countries.

It's a country with a huge potential for growth in an area where Roca Group was not directly present. We have been present through exports, but it's not the same.

The growth of Kazakhstan is



Roca CEO Albert Magrans

Q: Tell us about Roca Group's decision to invest in Kazakhstan. What does the project entail?

A: The project is the construction of an industrial park in Kyzylorda (a city in the south of Kazakhstan). We call it an industrial park because it will be composed of several production units, including a factory. The construction is expected to last between one and a half to two years, from

going to be very important in the next year - that was a fundamental factor because like any company we need to have a strong demand for our products.

Q: It was announced last year that Kazakhstan is offering you access to raw materials. Why is it important and did it play a role in choosing the location?

A: In the case of ceramic production, which is going to be the flagship of this industrial project,

we are talking about basic ceramic components like clay, feldspar, and cowling. It is very important to be close to the mines because of transportation costs. Also, we have certain specifications for materials in our production.

So, as part of the analysis of where to put the factory, we were recommended the Kyzylorda region by the authorities [because of the] access to raw materials, very good infrastructure, connection to the main cities, and a pool of talent.

Engineers came here, spent a lot of time testing materials and sending samples to the central labs.

Q: One of the company's key values is sustainable production. How do you make sure that your production practices are sustainable and will continue to be in Kazakhstan?

A: We are very proud to say that Roca Group was awarded EcoVadis Platinum status back in January. This is the highest recognition for sustainability.

Just to give you an idea, only 1% of the 150,000 audited companies are platinum rated. We are very proud of this achievement. It signals how important sustainability is for us.

And, of course, as the project in Kazakhstan will be the newest, we will deploy the most advanced technology and most advanced sustainability standards to it.

The new factory will deploy the latest generation of equipment that can recycle all the inputs, like water, for instance. It will be a net zero factory in all elements. When it comes to electricity generation, we will use the entire roof space to install solar panels.

It's also our responsibility to bring sustainability to our supply chain network to become a more sustainable ecosystem.

Q: Do you think that opening a factory in Kazakhstan is a gateway for more Spanish companies to be represented in the country in the future?

A: Absolutely. Spain is a very dynamic country, we have one of the highest growth rates in the world. There are a lot of competitive Spanish companies, which for sure will be looking at this business case, and we would be more than happy to use this as a way to convince them to come to Kazakhstan.

Q: Roca Group closed its production in Russia in 2022. Is the new industrial park in Kazakhstan a relocation or a new business venture?

A: It's a total separate issue. Our intention is to find growth for the company and we are always looking for opportunities to materialise this potential growth. In this case, it's strictly about Kazakhstan and the Central Asian region, where we have little coverage.

Q: Do you hope to reach to China through Central Asian production later?

A: We have been represented in the Chinese market for many years. We have several factories, but the majority of what we do in China stays in China. There are some exports, but not a lot.

Euronews

Sohar International takes lead in digital finance with Open Banking launch

In a landmark move underscoring its commitment to driving digital innovation and financial inclusion, Sohar International has announced the official launch of its Open Banking platform, making it the first bank in the sultanate to introduce a fully integrated Open Banking solution.

This strategic advancement enhances the bank's digital ecosystem and reflects its role as a catalyst for technology-driven progress within Oman's financial sector, a press release said.

Open Banking gives businesses greater visibility and control over their financial information, helping them manage cash flow, plan more accurately, and make informed decisions. The platform also enables faster, more efficient financial transactions, reducing complexity and improving daily business operations.

"This launch reflects our strong alignment with the Central Bank of Oman's forward-looking regulatory framework," said Abdulwahid Mohamed al Murshidi, CEO of Sohar International. "Through Open Banking, we are not only meeting compliance requirements but also enabling the development of industry-specific financial and non-financial services. These capabilities empower businesses to streamline their operations, drive innovation, and contribute meaningfully to national priorities such as financial inclusion, private sector growth, and digital advancement under Oman Vision 2040."

By providing secure and compliant access to banking services through open APIs, Sohar International's Open Banking platform allows fintech companies, corporates, and government entities to build tailored financial solutions with greater agility. The platform aims to lower integration costs, shorten time-to-market, and allow for more customer-centric services to emerge.

"At Sohar International, we continue to reinforce our position as a digital leader by accelerating innovation and delivering solutions at speed," said Sajeel Bashiruddin, chief technology and digital officer. "Our commitment to leveraging advanced digital capabilities enables us to respond swiftly to market needs, foster meaningful partnerships, and shape a future-ready financial ecosystem for the sultanate."

The launch reflects Sohar International's long-term vision to serve as a strategic partner in Oman's journey toward a more digital, knowledge-based economy. As the financial sector evolves, the bank remains focused on creating value for businesses.



Bank Muscat awarded for Mobile Banking Growth

Bank Muscat has proudly received the prestigious Platinum Award from Infosys Finacle, recognising its significant increase in mobile banking application users.

This accolade highlights the Bank's unwavering commitment to enhancing customer experience and delivering innovative services that adapt to the evolving needs of its clientele, a press release said.

The mobile app boasts a user-friendly interface and introduces cutting-edge features, including biometric login options such as facial recognition and fingerprint authentication, ensuring secure and seamless access to banking services. The latest version of the app has undergone extensive enhancements, improving the design and functionality of over 200 banking services, all aimed at offering a cohesive and integrated user experience that underscores the bank's dedication to innovation and excellence.

Customers can now enjoy a wide range of services, including card encoding through mobile banking, instant account openings for children, and the ability to create secure numbers for debit, credit, and prepaid cards. Other functionalities include opening a "Themar" savings plan account, applying for a prepaid Shukran card, making payments via Quick Response (QR) codes, obtaining stamped account statements, and submitting requests for card delivery by courier. Additionally, users can easily manage checks, pay fines to the Royal Oman Police, and update their contact information for credit and prepaid cards.

The application also facilitates payment for utilities such as electricity, water, telecommunications, and school fees, as well as enabling quick international transfers to countries including India, the Philippines, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Egypt, and Bangladesh, covering over 70 countries in total. Users can also access a Zakat calculator and donation services.

The application features a modern homepage designed to facilitate easy access to the latest services and products offered by the bank. It enhances user convenience by displaying card options tailored to specific categories. Customers can enjoy greater privacy with the option to show or hide their account balance within the app interface, as well as share essential account details such as name, number, SWIFT, and IBAN.

The updated version also includes a customisable control panel with a side menu that highlights customer preferences and frequently used options. This new design is aligned with the growing number of customers utilizing the bank's digital channels, reflecting the bank's commitment to innovation and excellence in developing internet and mobile banking services as part of its customer-centric vision.

Sultan Qaboos University Council holds its 4th meeting

The Sultan Qaboos University Council held its fourth meeting for the academic year 2024-2025 on June 25, at the University Council Hall. The meeting was chaired by Her Excellency Professor Rahma bint Ibrahim al Mahrouqi, Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation and chairperson of the University Council.

The meeting was also attended by H H Sayyid Dr Fahd bin al Julanda al Said, vice chancellor of Sultan Qaboos University and deputy chairman of the Council, along with other esteemed council members, a press release said. The council reviewed updates on the overall progress of the university across all its sectors and the implementation status of various resolutions and recommendations previously adopted.

As part of its efforts to expand academic disciplines at all levels and increase the number of academic programmes, the council approved two new PhD programmes - Doctor of Philosophy in Finance and Doctor of Philosophy in Economics at the College of Economics and Political Science, as well as a Bachelor's degree in Data Science at the College of Science. This expansion aims to enhance SQU's academic standing, ensure the quality of its graduates, and supply the labour market with qualified and competent professionals.

The council approved the transfer requirements for the Early Childhood Education programme at the College of Education. It also agreed to the redistribution of overhead costs from external research consultancy between colleges and research centres, and approved the grievance procedures for final grades in accordance with the academic regulations governing both, undergraduates and postgraduates.



UTAS continues 'Summer of the Future'

The University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS) - Al Mussanah continues to implement its 'Summer of the Future' programme, organised by the Department of Continuing Education and Community Service, as part of its efforts to strengthen its educational role in society.

The programme reflects the university's commitment to active partnerships with institutions and individuals, in alignment with Oman's vision for building a sustainable, innovation-driven knowledge economy that empowers youth, a press release said.

Running through mid-August 2025, the programme aims to help participants make productive use of their summer break by offering a diverse range of training workshops tailored to meet the needs of various community groups. The programme covers multiple fields, including modern technology, innovation, digital transformation, leadership, and entrepreneurship, all designed to enhance participants' knowledge and professional capabilities.

With over 45 training programmes led by a team of academics and specialised experts, the initiative ensures high-quality, hands-on learning experience that equips participants with practical, market-relevant skills applicable across different sectors.

Dr Nasser Salim al Baimani, assistant vice-chancellor of UTAS Al Mussanah, emphasised that organising such programmes aligns with the university's strategic plan to integrate education with real community and labour market needs. He highlighted that community-focused initiatives are a core pillar of the university's vision, and resonate with Oman Vision 2040, contributing to the development of generations capable of adapting to the fast-paced changes across knowledge domains.

Dr Khalifa Salim al Hatmi, head of the Department of Continuing Education and Community Service, described 'Summer of the Future' as a practical embodiment of the university's mission to spread knowledge and promote lifelong learning.

"We are proud to launch this programme, which opens new horizons for participants and helps them discover their potential and develop their skills," he stated. Dr Hatmi added that the programme has received significant attention, an encouraging sign of growing awareness about the value of investing summertime in skill-building and personal development, beyond traditional vacation norms.

Participants also expressed the importance of such initiatives in supporting their professional aspirations, noting that 'Summer of the Future' provided them with a unique learning opportunity.



SOHAR Port gets second RoSPA Gold award for 2025

In recognition of its commitment to the highest health and safety standards, SOHAR Port and Freezone has been awarded the RoSPA Gold Sector Award for Health and Safety for 2025, marking its second consecutive win.

This achievement, presented by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA), the UK's largest and most respected safety awards programme now in its 68th year, highlights SOHAR's dedication to fostering a safe, efficient, and sustainability-driven operational culture. The awards attract nearly 2,000 entries annually from over 50 countries, impacting over seven million employees worldwide, underscoring the significance of this achievement, a press release said.

Commenting on the recognition, Eng Batti al Shibli, harbour master at SOHAR Port and Freezone, stated, "We are proud to receive the RoSPA Award for the second year in a row, a reflection of the strong partnerships we have built with our tenants, operators, and stakeholders across the port and freezone. This international recognition is a tangible outcome of our shared commitment to upholding world-class health and safety standards, while fostering an operational environment rooted in sustainability and efficiency. We remain focused on this path, working together to create a safer workplace that reflects our long-term vision of institutional excellence."

This award aligns with SOHAR's strategic direction to build a world-class operational ecosystem, driven by a deeply embedded safety culture and long-term partnerships that continue to strengthen the port's competitiveness as a leading industrial and logistics hub.



All New Kia K4 unveiled in Oman

Opening a bold, daring and progressive new chapter, Reliable International Automotive unveiled the much-anticipated, class-leading sedan, the Kia K4 in an exclusive event with customers from the public and private sectors. The dynamic sedan is now officially available for the Omani market.

Set at the Kia showroom in Wattayah, an official from Reliable International Automotive said, "We are excited to be able to present this progressive vehicle in front of our audience today. Kia, through K4 brings in the fastback profile, a high tech interior and a user-centric design that truly impresses. It is no surprise that Kia K4 is the winner of 2024 Good Design Award."

The evening progressed with formal introductions of the Kia K4, discussing Kia's change-inspired ideas, future plans and a detailed product presentation on the vehicle. Shortly after, the audience applauded the grand reveal of the dynamic K4, unveiling its attractive futuristic exterior, a press release said.

Providing a deep insight into Kia's design philosophy of Opposites United, the dynamic Kia K4, highlighted key features and performance attributes. With precision crafted in every detail, the



Kia K4 creates a fun-to-drive yet exhilarating driving experience. The 2ltr engine, paired with a six-speed automatic transmission, offers a maximum power of 150hp for an efficient yet respon-

sive drive.

Soon after the unveiling, the audience experienced the aesthetically pleasing K4, witnessing the bold statement it makes with its fastback and forward-looking

profile. Built to impress and designed with the modern, young, bold and energetic drivers in mind, the Kia K4 offers an experience that goes beyond expectations.

Later in the evening, the first owner of the all-new K4 was felicitated, marking the beginning of a highly anticipated and growing base of K4 customers in Oman.

Now available at Kia showrooms across Oman in 2 trims, the all-new Kia K4 comes with a special summer offer. Customers can enjoy a welcome bonus of RO500 on purchase, along with

complimentary first-year insurance, registration and service coverage for up to 100,000km. Additionally, every Kia customer will be entered into a raffle for a chance to win an iPhone 15 (256 GB). This limited-time offer is valid until July 16.

Built to form a deeper connection with your ride and cover meaningful journeys, the Kia K4's luxurious interiors raise the bar for excellence. The centerpiece of the expansive cockpit features a leather wrapped steering wheel and integrated digital features such as the keyless entry system and a smart key with button start for easy access.

The vehicle also features intuitive technologies and convenience and safety features to ensure absolute control once the driver gets behind the wheel. As part of Kia's overall commitment to providing confidence, the higher grade of K4 features Front Thorax & Pelvis + Curtain Airbags, Electric Parking Brake with Auto Hold (EPB), Driver and Front Passenger Airbags, Anti-lock Braking System (ABS), Electronic Stability Control (ESC), Hill Assist Control (HAC), Multi-Collision Brake (MCB), Manual Speed Limit Assist, Rear View Camera, and more.



Hakkasan Muscat unveils 'Cantonese Journey' at St Regis

Hakkasan Muscat at The St Regis Al Mouj Muscat Resort invites diners to embark on The Cantonese Journey, an exciting new dining experience that will be available through to the end of the year.

This exclusive menu is a masterful ode to Oman's extraordinary natural bounty, where the finest locally sourced ingredients are thoughtfully elevated through Hakkasan's signature artistry and Cantonese flair.

At the heart of The Cantonese Journey lies a deep commitment to celebrating Oman's rich culinary heritage and supporting the local community. By partnering with dedicated local fishermen,

renowned for their sustainable seafood practices and local organic producers, Hakkasan Muscat ensures every ingredient tells a story of authenticity, sustainability and respect for the land and sea. This collaboration allows the kitchen to craft dishes that are not only vibrant but also connects to the sultanate's seasons.

"This menu is a heartfelt tribute to the land and sea of Oman," said Chef Leon Lee, head chef at Hakkasan Muscat. "By harnessing the freshest, seasonal produce and seafood from within the sultanate, we have crafted a dining experience that is deeply connected to the place and is unmistakably Hakkasan.

JETOUR, Huawei launch bold desert drive in Oman

JETOUR officially kicked off its collaboration with the Test Drive Fleet Departure Ceremony in Oman on June 22, marking the launch of the JETOUR T2 Hybrid Middle East Road Trip.

Huawei participated in this milestone event, highlighting a partnership that positions both brands at the forefront of adventure and the digital lifestyle, a press release said.

The ceremony opened with an address from JETOUR leadership, reinforcing the brand's Travel strategy, which merges premium automotive experiences with exploration and travel. "With the T2 hybrid, we are not only showcasing our engineering capabilities, but also inviting consumers to rediscover the spirit of adventure, seamlessly



blending innovation, comfort, and culture," said region director Finn Luan.

The event spotlighted JETOUR's rugged T2 Hybrid SUV, built for performance in the toughest terrains, alongside Huawei's cutting-edge smart ecosystem, including the HUAWEI WATCH 5, a sleek,

next-generation wearable featuring advanced health tracking, seamless connectivity, and the MatePad Pro 12.2", a powerful productivity tablet designed for effortless multitasking, creative on-the-go workflows, and immersive entertainment.

As the drivers boarded their vehicles, twelve Bedouin eque-

trians spurred their horses into a dramatic gallop, circling the fleet in a star-shaped formation amid clouds of the Omani golden desert sand, capturing the bold spirit of Oman in a powerful display. As a token of appreciation, Huawei devices were presented to the fleet drivers, further reinforcing the collaboration and

shared commitment to delivering cutting-edge, user-centric experiences.

This road trip signals JETOUR's ambition to lead in the Middle Eastern automotive market. By aligning with Huawei's powerful ecosystem, JETOUR is creating a new benchmark in connected travel.

3rd Qatar Toy Festival returns at DECC

Visit Qatar has announced the return of the highly anticipated Qatar Toy Festival (QTF), now in its third edition, taking place from July 6 to August 4 at the Doha Exhibition and Convention Center (DECC), with Ooredoo as telecom partner.

As a flagship event on

Qatar's summer calendar, this year's festival features new live shows, immersive activations, and, for the first time, a dedicated QTF Summer Camp for children and young teens, a press release said.

Spanning more than 17,000 sqm, the festival will include

five zones - Fancy Island for girls, Champions Land for boys and teenagers, Cutie Pie Land for pre-school, Hyper Land for inflatables and a main stage.

Visitors can look forward to the new experiences being introduced this year, including fan favourites such as PUBG,

Lilo & Stitch, Sherlock, Five Nights at Freddy's, Vroom, and Harry Potter, as well as new additions such as Labubu and Haribo.

Families can look forward to daily stage shows featuring musical performances, science demonstrations, dance acts,

and interactive competitions, along with celebrity appearances from stars like AboFlah and the ALJ Sisters. Making his festival debut, AboFlah will headline a special activation with an exclusive animation premiere, interactive games, and meet-and-greet sessions.

Sports Psychology course at OOA headquarters well attended

Oman Olympic Academy (OOA) launched a Sports Psychology course at its headquarters, organised under the umbrella of Oman Olympic Committee (OOC) this week.

The course is attended by a number of specialists and stakeholders from various relevant institutions. It comes as part of ongoing efforts to develop and qualify national sports professionals in the psychological and mental aspects of athletic preparation - areas that have become essential components of a comprehensive sports training system, a press release said.

The course is led by Dr Ali bin Salam al Ya'rubi, head of the Department of Physical Education



and Sports Sciences at Sultan Qaboos University. It focuses on enhancing participants' understanding of modern sports psychology and its practical applications. Additionally, it

range of topics related to the psychological dimensions of sports, including motivation building, self-confidence, strategies for managing anxiety and stress, mental imagery skills,

The course, led by Dr Ali bin Salam al Ya'rubi, focuses on enhancing participants' understanding of modern sports psychology and its practical applications

equips them with tools and techniques necessary for psychological preparation to support athletes before, during, and after competitions - ultimately contributing to improved performance and mental stability.

The course covers a wide

focus, and mental resilience under pressure. It also addresses the promotion of sportsmanship, the creation of a positive psychological environment, effective team communication, and leadership styles in sports.

Turkish-made drone deployed in hunt for fugutive in Poland

Istanbul, Turkey - After winning rave reviews on the battlefield, a famed Turkish drone has now taken to the skies in the hunt for a wanted, armed fugitive.

Polish authorities have deployed a Bayraktar TB2 drone to aid in the manhunt for a 57-year-old man suspected of killing two family members and evading capture in a remote region of southern Poland, local media reported on Monday.

The suspect, identified as Tadeusz Duda, is accused of fatally shooting his daughter and son-in-law in the village of Stara Wies near Limanowa, Polish state-run TVPWorld reported.

Following the attack, Duda fled into the nearby mountainous forest.

On Saturday, he reportedly opened fire on police officers after being sighted, before escaping again into wooded ter-



The Turkish-made Bayraktar TB2 UAV can fly up to 220km per hour

rain. A large-scale operation involving hundreds of officers, including counterterrorism units, has been launched in the Malopolska region to locate the suspect.

On Sunday, Poland's Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister Wladyslaw Kosiniak-Kamysz announced military support for the police effort.

"At the request of the Malopolska governor, the BSP

Bayraktar will assist in the search for a suspect in the murders near Limanowa, with FlyEye drones also on standby to provide support," Kosiniak-Kamysz said on X.

The Turkish-made Bayraktar TB2 UAV, known for its role in Ukraine during the ongoing war, can fly up to 220km per hour (137 miles per hour) and stay airborne for 27 hours.

The Polish military also oper-

ates FlyEye drones, which are used primarily for reconnaissance missions.

Authorities confirmed that prosecutors have issued an arrest warrant, and a court has approved a 14-day detention order.

Duda has a criminal history, with previous charges of domestic abuse and making criminal threats in 2022 and again earlier this year.

Anadolu Agency

Germany: Social Democrats urge for banning far-right AfD party

The SPD motion calls on the relevant constitutional bodies to lay groundwork for filing a case

Berlin, Germany - A number of Germany's conservative lawmakers have called for a cautious approach after the Social Democratic Party (SPD), the junior coalition partner, on Sunday passed a motion calling for preparations to ban the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) party.

The debate on whether to ban the AfD, which forms the strongest opposition force in parliament, has gained momentum after it was reclassified by Germany's domestic intelligence agency in May as a 'confirmed right-wing extremist' group - an assessment that is now under court review after a legal challenge by the party.



The AfD has long been under scrutiny for its far-right agenda

Germany's Social Democratic Party says first legal steps should be taken to ban the far-right AfD party as unconstitutional. Conservative lawmakers - from Christian Social Union (CSU) and the Bavarian sister party of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), which leads the coalition - are less keen on the idea

What did the SPD say?

The SPD motion put forward at the close of its three-day congress in Berlin calls on the relevant constitutional bodies to lay the groundwork for filing a case to declare the anti-immigrant AfD unconstitutional.

"The moment at which domestic intelligence says this is a confirmed right-wing extremist party, there is no more room for tactics," party co-leader Lars

Klingbeil, who also serves as finance minister and vice chancellor in the conservative-led government, said at the congress.

The text of the motion reads: "Now is the time for the constitutional bodies entitled to do so to create the conditions for immediately filing a motion to determine the unconstitutionality of the AfD," party co-leader said.

What have the conservatives said?

German Interior Minister Alexander Dobrindt, a member of the conservative Christian Social Union (CSU), the Bavarian sister party of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), which leads the coalition, on Sunday threw cold water on the motion.

Speaking to the 'Table.Today' podcast, Dobrindt said: "Decisions made at the SPD party con-

ference are not yet a mandate for the interior minister."

Dobrindt instead called for a cautious approach and for allowing the legal process to play out.

He said a working group of interior ministers from the German states will address the AfD issue if the 'right-wing extremist' designation is upheld in court.

The working group is awaiting a ruling from the Cologne Administrative Court on

whether it agrees with the 'extremist' designation.

Dobrindt, as well as Chancellor Friedrich Merz (CDU), have previously said they are sceptical of banning the AfD, which is known for its nationalist, anti-immigration, anti-Muslim and Eurosceptic policies.

Chancery head Thorsten Frei, from Merz's CDU, also said that he felt that a ban could not be justified, conceding that 'there are many good reasons for one'.

He told broadcaster ARD that a ban should not be pursued unless there is absolute certainty on the matter.

"That is why I urge caution. The AfD must be fought with political means," he said.

DW



Pakistan's Deputy PM and Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar

'Pakistan-China ties continue to scale new heights'

Islamabad, Pakistan - Pakistan's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Monday highlighted the growing strength and evolving depth of the Pakistan-China all-weather strategic cooperative partnership, calling it a cornerstone of Islamabad's foreign policy and a key driver of regional peace, development, and connectivity.

Speaking at an event marking the 52nd anniversary of the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad, Dar said the Pakistan-China bilateral relationship continues to 'scale new heights', adapting to shifting global and regional dynamics with enhanced cooperation across multiple sectors.

"Our foreign policy remains proactive and result-oriented, and the Pakistan-China all-weather strategic cooperative partnership continues to grow in depth and scope," he said, adding that the partnership is being elevated wherever necessary to meet the demands of a transforming world.

He underscored China's leading role in fostering regional connectivity through inclusive,

multilateral mechanisms. He highlighted the recent trilateral forums - China-Pakistan-Afghanistan and China-Pakistan-Bangladesh - as examples of a shared commitment to regional integration and win-win cooperation.

The China-Pakistan-Afghanistan ministerial meeting in Beijing recently, he said, marked a 'qualitative change' in ties and laid the groundwork for extending the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) into Afghanistan.

"Such cooperation mechanisms, based on mutual benefit and common interest, are central to Pakistan's pivot to geoeconomics," he added.

Launched in 2013, CPEC, a flagship project of the China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative, is a corridor linking Gwadar Port in Pakistan with Kashgar in northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, which highlights energy, transport, and industrial cooperation in the first phase, while in the new phase it expands to fields of agriculture and livelihood, among others.

Xinhua

Abu Dhabi population grows 7.5%

Abu Dhabi, UAE - New data released by the Statistics Centre - Abu Dhabi (SCAD) shows that Abu Dhabi achieved a 7.5% growth in population in 2024, to reach a total of 4,135,985 people.

This growth rate substantially exceeds that of established international financial centres, reflecting Abu Dhabi's strengthened position as a preferred destination for international professionals, investments, and businesses, according to a press release.

The emirate's population has increased by 51% over the past decade, rising from 2.7mn in 2014 to over 4.1mn in 2024. This sustained demographic expansion coincides with significant economic achievements, the release added.

Southern Europe swelters as major heatwave triggers wildfires

Istanbul, Turkey - Southern Europe is experiencing its first major heatwave of the summer, with temperatures soaring above 40C (104F) across Italy, Spain, Greece, Portugal and France, prompting widespread health warnings and raising the risk of wildfires.

In Portugal, two-thirds of the country was placed on high alert on Sunday, with temperatures in the capital Lisbon forecast to reach 42C (107.6F).

The national meteorological service issued warnings of extreme fire danger across much of the territory.

Spain's weather agency Aemet issued a special alert, warning that 'very high and persistent temperatures' could pose a serious threat to vulnerable populations, particularly in the southern city of Seville, where temperatures also hit 42C.

Health officials urged the public to avoid sun exposure, stay hydrated and check on the elderly and those with chronic illnesses.

In Italy, the Health Ministry placed 21 of the country's 27



In France's Aude region, wildfires forced the evacuation of a campsite and an abbey

major cities, including Rome, Milan and Naples, under red alert.

Several regions, including Lazio, Tuscany and Umbria, announced plans to suspend outdoor work during peak heat hours. In Sicily and Liguria, bans on outdoor labour have already been introduced, while trade

unions are calling on the government to extend such measures nationwide.

France also braced for extreme temperatures, with 84 of its 101 departments placed under heatwave alert as forecasts pointed to highs above 40C.

In the Aude region, wildfires

forced the evacuation of a campsite and an abbey. In Marseille, public swimming pools were opened free of charge to help residents cope with the heat.

In Greece, authorities responded to a large wildfire that broke out south of Athens last Thursday. Five areas were evac-

uated and a section of the coastal highway near the ancient Temple of Poseidon was closed due to the blaze.

Meanwhile, in the UK, amber heat-health alerts have been issued for five regions, East Midlands, South East, South West, London, and the East of England, until Tuesday, with tem-

peratures expected to reach 36C on Monday. A yellow alert remains in place for Yorkshire and the Humber, and the West Midlands. The London Fire Brigade also warned of a 'severe' wildfire risk amid contin-

Temperatures are soaring above 40C (104F) across Italy, Spain, Greece, Portugal and France, prompting widespread health warnings and raising the risk of wildfires

ued dry conditions.

All these recent heatwaves come after Copernicus, the EU's climate monitoring agency, confirmed that March 2025 was the hottest March ever recorded in Europe, with average temperatures 2.41C above the 1991-2020 norm.

Anadolu Agency

Iran slams IAEA silence to attacks

Tehran/Washington, D.C. - Iran criticised the UN nuclear watchdog on Monday over silence to recent Israeli and US attacks on the country, calling for accountability for 'aggressors'.

"One cannot expect a country to be a member of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and to fulfil its obligations, while the IAEA and its Director General (Rafael Grossi), as the competent authority, either remain silent or justify illegal attacks against Iran's peaceful nuclear facilities," Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei told a news briefing in Tehran.

"This situation requires the agency and its chief to undertake a serious and fundamental revision of their approach regarding cooperation with Iran," he added.

Baghaei said a recent IAEA resolution declaring Iran in breach of its nuclear obligations 'provided an excuse for the military aggression by the Zionist (Israeli) regime and the US against Iran's peaceful nuclear facilities'.

"We have raised this issue in the relevant bodies and continue to follow it up," he said.

"Our main demand from international bodies, especially the UN Security Council, is that the aggressors be officially identified. The Security Council must confirm this and take necessary measures to hold Israel and the US accountable for their actions."

The spokesman cast doubts on continuing cooperation with the IAEA chief after the Israeli assault.



The nuclear site in Isfahan and the centrifuge production facilities that were struck on June 21

Iran says 935 killed in Israeli attacks

Tehran, Iran - Iranian authorities said on Monday that at least 935 people were killed in Israeli attacks during a 12-day conflict with Israel.

The fatalities included 132 women and 38 children, Judiciary Authority spokesman Asghar Jahangir said in a

statement cited by the semi-official Tasnim news agency.

The Health Ministry earlier put the death toll from the Israeli attacks at 606, plus 5,332 injured people.

Jahangir said Israeli strikes on the Evin Prison in the northwest of Tehran claimed 79

lives, including prisoners, staff members, and locals living nearby.

Evin Prison was rendered inoperable, and the prisoners were evacuated, he said, calling the attack a 'blatant violation of the basic human rights and international resolutions'.

E3 countries condemn Iran's 'threats' against IAEA

Paris, Berlin and London have condemned what they called

'threats' against the head of the United Nations' nuclear watchdog after Tehran turned down a request by IAEA to visit its bombed nuclear sites.

"France, Germany and the United Kingdom condemn threats against the director general of the IAEA, Rafael Grossi, and reiterate our full support to the agency," Foreign Ministers Jean-Noel Barrot, Johann Wadephul and David Lammy said in a joint statement.

The trio called on Tehran to 'refrain from any steps to cease cooperation with the IAEA', and 'immediately resume full cooperation in line with its legally binding obligations'.

The three countries comprise the E3 group, which coordinates on foreign and security matters, particularly Iran's nuclear programme.

On Friday, Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi had criticised IAEA chief Rafael Grossi's insistence on visiting the nuclear sites bombed by Israel and the US during the recent war, saying such insistence was 'meaningless and possibly even malign in intent'.

Israel struck Iranian nuclear and military sites on June 13, prompting a response from Tehran which started a 12-day

war where the US also struck three Iranian nuclear sites, before US President Donald Trump announced a ceasefire.

One cannot expect a country to be a member of Nuclear NPT and to fulfil its obligations, while the IAEA... remain silent or justify illegal attacks against Iran's peaceful nuclear facilities

No offers to Iran, says Trump

Meanwhile, US President Donald Trump said on Monday that he has made no offers to Iran and is not personally engaged in any talks with the country.

"Tell phony Democrat Senator Chris Coons that I am not offering Iran ANYTHING ... nor am I even talking to them," Trump said on social media, pushing back against any suggestions of his talking with Tehran.

He also criticised former President Barack Obama over the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

Trump's 2018 unilateral withdrawal from the deal paved the way to the current standoff with Iran over its nuclear enrichment.

Agencies



Relatives of Palestinians, who died in Israeli attack, attend the funeral ceremony in Gaza City on Monday

Israeli airstrikes kill 40 more Palestinians in Gaza

Gaza City, Palestine - At least 40 Palestinians were killed and several others injured on Monday when Israeli warplanes and artillery struck multiple locations across the Gaza Strip, including areas sheltering displaced families.

The Israeli army has escalated its airstrikes and artillery shelling on the southern and eastern parts of Gaza City, especially in the neighbourhoods of Zeitoun, Shejaiya, and al-Tuffah, witnesses said.

The army also conducted air strikes on four schools sheltering displaced Palestinians after issuing evacuation warnings - three of them in the Zeitoun neighbourhood and one in Al-Tuffah neighbourhood east of Gaza City, according to local sources.

Five bodies were brought to Al-Shifa Medical Complex following a drone strike targeting a group of civilians in Al-Shati refugee camp, west of Gaza City, a medical source told Anadolu.

Another Palestinian was killed and 23 others were injured after being targeted by the Israeli army while seeking aid on Salah al-Din Street, south of the Wadi Gaza

area, the statement from Al-Awda Hospital in central Gaza said. Israeli forces also killed one Palestinian and injured others in

Qatar said on Monday that it is seeking to resume negotiations between Israel and Hamas to reach a Gaza ceasefire

shelling targeting their tents in al-Mawasi area west of Khan Younis in southern Gaza, according to medical sources.

Body parts of 10 Palestinians and a number of injured were brought to the Al-Ahli Baptist Hospital following an Israeli airstrike targeting a commercial warehouse in the Sabra neighbourhood of Gaza City, a medical source told Anadolu. The commercial warehouse is used by charitable organisations to receive and distribute humanitarian aid to people in the enclave.

Meanwhile, the body of a

woman and several others injured were brought to the Baptist Hospital after an Israeli helicopter dropped a bomb on Al-Sikka Street in the Zeitoun neighbourhood in Gaza City.

Thirteen more people were killed and 50 others injured in an Israeli airstrike targeting aid seekers southwest of Khan Younis, another medical source said.

Meanwhile, Qatar said on Monday that it is seeking to resume negotiations between Israel and Hamas to reach a Gaza ceasefire. Foreign Ministry spokesman Majid al-Ansari also said that Doha is working to reach an agreement on Iran's nuclear programme. "There are no talks regarding a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip," Ansari told a press conference in Doha.

"Communications are underway to reach a formula to return to negotiations," he added, without elaborating. "We see positive language from Washington regarding reaching an agreement in Gaza, and there are serious intentions from them to push towards resuming negotiations on Gaza, but there are complications," the spokesman said.

Israel to keep its grip on Golan Heights

Jerusalem - Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar vowed on Monday to maintain Israel's grip on the occupied Syrian Golan Heights under any future peace agreement with Syria.

"Israel ruled over the Golan Heights more than 40 years ago, and it will remain as part of Israel under any peace agreement," Sa'ar said at a joint press conference with his Austrian counterpart, Beate Meinel-Reisinger, in West Jerusalem.

"We have an interest in including countries such as our neighbours Syria and Lebanon into the circle of peace and normalisation, based on the Abraham Accords," he added, without



Since 1967, Israel has occupied the majority of Syria's Golan Heights

elaborating. On Sunday, US President Donald Trump said that some countries expressed interest in joining the normalisation agreements between Arab countries and Israel, known as the Abraham Accord.

In 2020, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Sudan, and Morocco signed US-sponsored agreements to normalise relations with Israel, in which came to

be known as the Abraham Accord. Since 1967, Israel has occupied the majority of Syria's Golan Heights.

After the fall of the Bashar al-Assad regime last year, Tel Aviv expanded its control into the Syrian buffer zone and declared the 1974 Disengagement Agreement with Syria defunct.

Assad, who ruled Syria for nearly 25 years, fled to Russia in December, ending the Baath Party's decades-long grip on power that began in 1963.

A new transitional administration led by President Ahmad al-Sharaa was formed in Syria in January.

Anadolu Agency

Washington-brokered peace deal is 'a step, albeit limited, but useful': DRC rebel alliance

Kigali, Rwanda - A conglomerate of various rebel groups in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo said on Monday that a US-brokered peace deal signed between Congo and Rwanda is 'a step, albeit limited, but useful'.

However, Alliance Fleuve Congo (AFC) coordinator Corneille Nangaa said reducing the crisis in Congo to a mere conflict between Kigali and Kinshasa is an 'unacceptable deception'.

The AFC includes rebel groups and political parties, including the armed group M23.

"This commitment covers only a tiny part of the real cause of the conflict. The legitimate demands of the AFC/M23 remain. They can only be addressed within an inclusive framework," Nangaa said in a message marking Congo's 65th independence anniversary from Belgian colonial rule.

The peace agreement, signed on Friday by the Congolese and Rwandan foreign ministers,



raises hopes of ending the intense fighting in eastern Congo.

Therese Kayikwamba Wagner, Congo's foreign minister, described the initiative not only as a diplomatic victory but also as a triumph for the Congolese people. Rwandan Foreign Minister Olivier Nduhurgirehe said the agreement is based on a commitment to irreversibly and verifiably end state support for militia groups.

The deal also calls for a cessation of hostilities between the two neighbouring countries' armies.

M23's role in the conflict

Clashes between M23 and government forces in eastern Congo displaced at least 500,000 and killed more than 3,000 by late February, according to the Africa Centre for Strategic Studies.

The rebel group, supported by neighbouring Rwanda, according

to the UN and Western nations, now controls significant territory in eastern Congo, including the provincial capitals of Goma and Bukavu that it seized early this year. Nduhurgirehe told Anadolu that Rwanda has no comment on the AFC/M23's statement.

"But we committed, in the Washington Peace Agreement, to support the ongoing negotiations in Doha between that movement and the DRC government," he said.

Nangaa said the coalition supports the Doha talks mediated by Qatar as a framework that should impose direct discussions between the group and the Rwandan government.

"No military solution can resolve the Congolese crisis in the long term," he said.

Congolese President Felix Tshisekedi has long refused any negotiation with M23, a stance Nangaa denounced as a 'betrayal of our future generations'.

Anadolu Agency

EU extends sectoral sanctions on Russia

Istanbul/Kyiv - The European Council on Monday announced that the EU would extend its sectoral sanctions on Russia for six more months.

“The Council today renewed the EU restrictive measures in view of the Russian Federation’s continuing actions destabilising the situation in Ukraine for a further 6 months, until 31 January 2026,” said a written statement issued by the council.

First introduced in 2014 following Russia’s illegal annexation of Ukraine’s Crimea region and expanded in 2022, with the start of the current Ukraine war, the sectoral measures include restrictions across trade, finance, energy, technology, transport, and luxury goods.

A ban on Russian seaborne oil imports, the exclusion of major banks from the SWIFT international banking system, and the suspension of Kremlin-backed media in the EU are also covered under the measures, according to the statement.

“The EU today officially agreed to extend sectoral sanctions on Russia,” EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas also wrote on X.

She expressed their commitment to ‘pile pressure’ on Moscow to end the war in Ukraine.

“Each sanction weakens Russia’s ability to wage war,” Kallas added.

Germany’s new FM arrives in Kyiv

Germany’s new foreign minister, Johann Wadephul, arrived in Kyiv on Monday on his first official visit to the Ukrainian capital since assuming the post last month.



The Council today renewed the EU restrictive measures in view of the Russian Federation’s continuing actions destabilising the situation in Ukraine for a further 6 months, until 31 January 2026

EUROPEAN COUNCIL

“Ukraine will determine whether our Europe remains a place where freedom and human dignity count - or a continent where violence shifts borders,” Wadephul was quoted as saying after his arrival in Kyiv in a statement by Germany’s Federal Foreign Office.

Expressing that Berlin will continue to focus its attention on supporting Ukraine as it defends not only its freedom and

sovereignty but also Europe’s security and freedom, Wadephul described Kyiv’s freedom and future as ‘the most important task of our foreign and security policy’.

Wadephul accused Moscow of aiming to ‘subjugate’ Kyiv in the ongoing war, which continues since February 2022, arguing that Russia is counting on Europe to weaken its support for Ukraine.

“We will continue to stand

firmly by Ukraine’s side so that it can continue to defend itself successfully - with modern air defence and other weapons, with humanitarian and economic aid. That is the promise with which I travel to Kyiv today,” he said.

The German foreign minister also accused Russian President

on ‘with the utmost pressure’ in the EU and with their partners in the Group of Seven.

“The ideology of imperialism that drives Putin is the greatest threat to our security in Germany and Europe. The determination of NATO partners to invest 5 per cent in defence and security in the future clearly demonstrates that we, as allies, are prepared to permanently defend our freedom and security,” he added.

‘Talks depend on Kyiv, US’

The progress of direct peace talks between Russia and Ukraine depends on Kyiv and Washington’s efforts in this regard, the Kremlin spokesman said.

“A great deal depends, naturally, on the position of the Kyiv regime. It depends on how effectively Washington’s mediation efforts will continue,” Dmitry Peskov said in remarks aired by Belarus 1 TV on Sunday.

Saying Russia’s position in this regard is ‘well known’, Peskov said the situation on the ground cannot be ignored and must be taken into account.

He said Moscow hopes the date for the third round of negotiations will be determined ‘in the very next few days’.

Later on Monday, Andriy Yermak, head of Ukraine’s Presidential Office, slammed Peskov’s remarks as an attempt to shift responsibility for prolonging the conflict.

“Russian statements claiming that ‘the dynamics of negotiations depend on Kyiv’ are yet another manipulation. These words are uttered in parallel with missile strikes on Ukrainian cities and attempts to destroy critical infrastructure,” Yermak said on X.

Russia is ‘unprepared’ for peace, he said, adding that it proves this ‘every single day through its actions’, further accusing Moscow of trying to impose a ‘distorted narrative on the world’.

“The truth is simple: it is Moscow that initiated and continues to drive this war. It is the Kremlin that blocks all peace initiatives,” he added.

Anadolu Agency

OFF TO LEARN, RAIN OR SHINE



School students commute amid heavy rains, at Karimpur city in Indian state of West Bengal on Monday (ANI)

India: 12 killed in explosion at chemical factory

Sangareddy, India - At least 12 people were killed and 26 injured following the explosion at a chemical factory in Pasamailaram Phase 1 area of Telangana’s Sangareddy district on Monday.

Telangana Ministers Venkatswamy and Damodar Raja Narasimha visited the site, where a blast occurred earlier in the day. Speaking to the media, Venkatswamy said that currently, 12 people are in critical condition, whose treatment is underway.

“Nearly 63 people reported for work at this factory this morning. Initially, it was said that a reactor blast had occurred in the factory. We have just visited the site, and we now



Firefighters try to douse a fire at a chemical factory in Telangana, India (ANI)

know that it was not a reactor blast,” he said.

“The factory incharge also

lost his life in the accident. There is no one here who can tell what exactly happened out

of the 63 people who reported here in the morning. We have learned that eight people have died. Right now, four more bodies have been recovered. Twelve people are critical with burn injuries. The remaining 22 people have 20-25% burns and are receiving treatment. We will get more clarity in the next one or two hours,” he added.

Earlier, Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed sorrow over the loss of lives in the explosion and announced an ex-gratia of Rs 2 lakhs for the next of kin of each deceased and Rs 50,000 for the injured from the Prime Minister’s National Relief Fund.

ANI

Air India crash: Bodies of 260 victims handed over to families

Ahmedabad, India - The bodies of 260 people who died in the Air India-171 plane crash have been handed over to their family members, Medical Superintendent of Civil Hospital, Rakesh Joshi said on Monday.

254 victims of the crash were identified through DNA matching, while six were identified

through facial recognition.

Joshi added that out of the 260 bodies handed over, 241 were passengers while 19 were non-passengers.

“Out of these 241 passengers, 181 were Indians, 52 were Britishers, seven were Portuguese, and one was Canadian,” Joshi said.

He further said it was ‘a chal-

lenging task, but the health department and police worked together to complete the procedures within 13 days’.

“It was a great teamwork. We are supported and guided by our seniors and administrators. All the departments, including the health department, police and the corporation collectively

worked to tackle this challenging situation,” he said.

On June 12, the London-bound Air India Boeing 787-8 Dreamliner crashed into a hostel complex of BJ Medical College, Gujarat’s Ahmedabad, shortly after takeoff from Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel International Airport. The tragedy claimed 241 lives

out of 242 onboard, including former Gujarat CM Vijay Rupani.

The Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) is leading the investigation into the crash and working intensively on analysing data retrieved from the black boxes of the flight, in their lab in New Delhi.

ANI



UN chief Guterres warns of ‘decimated’ foreign aid budgets

Oviedo, Spain - UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Monday warned that foreign aid budgets have been ‘decimated’, saying this isn’t a crisis of numbers but of ‘families going hungry, children unvaccinated, children dropping out of school’, at a major development conference in Seville.

He noted that meeting the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals - a global agenda to end

poverty, protect the planet and promote peace - requires about US\$4tn a year. “But we are here in Seville to change course, to restore a message of fairness and justice for all,” Guterres added.

The secretary-general was addressing the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development - the first such gathering in a decade. About 50 world leaders and 4,000 representatives from business, civil



UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres

society and financial institutions are attending the four-day event.

Earlier this month, the US announced it would not attend.

Washington, which recently cut funding to the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) - historically one of the world’s largest aid agencies - has also formally rejected the Sustainable Development Goals. “For decades, the mission of sustainable develop-

ment has united countries large and small. Together, we achieved progress,” Guterres said. “But today, development and international cooperation are facing massive headwinds. We are living in a world where trust is fraying and multilateralism is strained.”

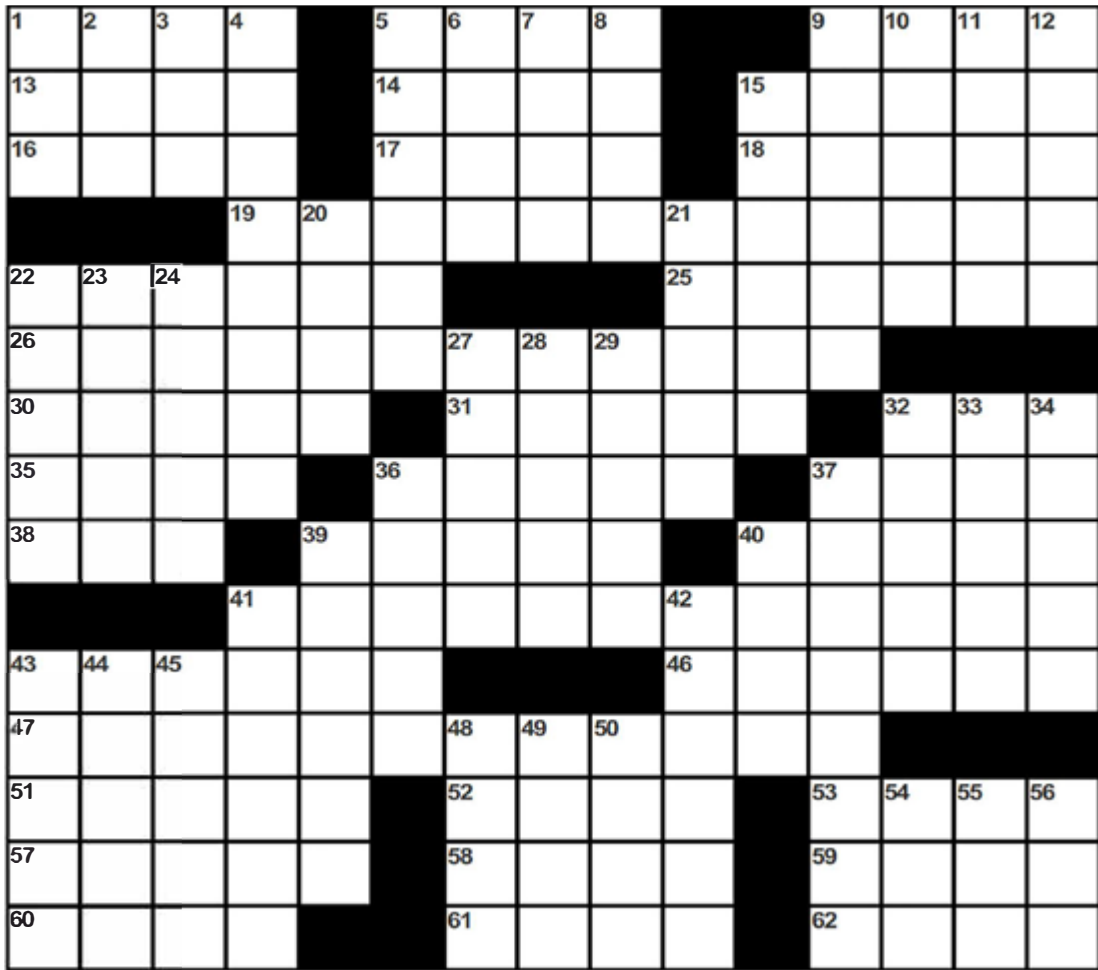
Despite the challenges, participants in Seville remain optimistic that the world can still overcome common threats.

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez emphasised empathy as essential to multilateralism in a speech delivered at the event.

“Today, I want to emphasise the value of empathy - an inherent good within multilateralism that allows us to see the world from someone else’s perspective. Let us look beyond the random scars of history, called borders, and act,” Sanchez said.

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DAILY CROSSWORD



- ACROSS**
- 1) "30 Rock" star Baldwin
 - 5) Aberdeen toppers
 - 9) Busy folks in Apr.
 - 13) " ... _ , whatever will be, will be"
 - 14) Skip
 - 15) Glide via gravity
 - 16) Chicken_ (Ukrainian dish)
 - 17) Great number
 - 18) Ham's place, sometimes
 - 19) Queens TV character
 - 22) Showy bloom
 - 25) Sleep inducer
 - 26) Hidden advantage
 - 30) Sobbed
 - 31) Companion less
 - 32) Early jazz
 - 35) Frau's beloved
 - 36) Allen or Martin
 - 37) Preserve meat by smoking
 - 38) Personals, e.g.
 - 39) Public display of anger
 - 40) Better
 - 41) Shatmook color
 - 43) Start the day's broad-

- casting
 - 46) Baseball miscues
 - 47) Hanes offering
 - 51) Sheep's cry
 - 52) Orchestral "tuning fork"
 - 53) Point a finger at
 - 57) Pet store purchase
 - 58) Young lady
 - 59) Mountaineer's challenge
 - 60) Marine eagle
 - 61) "Don't change this!"
 - 62) Safe cracker
- DOWN**
- 1) Name as a price
 - 2) Festive neckwear
 - 3) Previously, in poems
 - 4) Chevy automobile, once
 - 5) Tabby's mate
 - 6) Chinese nurse
 - 7) Short skirt
 - 8) Eyelid problem
 - 9) Chung of TV
 - 10) Heavy coat
 - 11) Up to this point
 - 12) About 1.3 cubic yards
 - 15) Two of a kind
 - 20) Navel castaway
 - 21) Kentucky explorer Daniel
 - 22) Russian country house
 - 23) Having land
 - 24) They get what's coming to them
 - 27) One with a lot of enmity
 - 28) "Uncle Vanya" role
 - 29) Humble dwelling
 - 32) Soaring bird of prey
 - 33) Batting_ (lineup)
 - 34) Unskilled workers
 - 36) Bloodhound's clue
 - 37) Medium of exchange
 - 39) Polished
 - 40) Fairy-tale creature
 - 41) Put in a crate
 - 42) Dislike, and then some
 - 43) Dark fur
 - 44) More under the weather
 - 45) Gather little by little
 - 48) Male turkeys
 - 49) Life sentences?
 - 50) Close victory margin
 - 54) " _ we having fun yet?"
 - 55) Flashy wheel
 - 56) Cadbury confection

NOTE PAD



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19
Put your money where your mouth is today, unless you've just realized that you don't have any cash on hand. Financial concerns pop up out of nowhere and demand your closest attention. Make sure you address these issues right away, or the next time they come knocking they're not likely to let you know in quite as polite a fashion.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22
Career frustration could be coming soon, but you don't have to let it distract you from the important tasks at hand. Try to distract yourself and just keep your focus as you work on big projects that you've been dreaming of for quite some time. If someone persistent insists on flagging your attention, it's definitely appropriate to acknowledge them and let them know that you can talk later.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21
When you set your mind to it, you're the best at analyzing situations and seeing the deeper meaning of things. Recent events may have the people around you in a tizzy, but you can take a shrewd, clear-eyed look at what is really going on. Not only do you know just what to do to make things better, but you're aware of exactly how much work it should take to get you where you want to go.



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20
Being pragmatic and being creative may seem to be opposites, but that's far from true, and you're living proof that both can coexist. In fact, it goes beyond mere coexistence. These two qualities actually complement each other. Your practical side ensures you have everything done so you can create your master-piece, and your creativity ensures that everything that's vital gets done with flair.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22
Something you've been keeping to yourself for quite some time needs to see the light of day, but rather than being scared you're actually grateful that it's finally coming out. In fact, you feel more lighthearted than you have in some time! It's great to discover that what you thought was such a big deal is actually not really a matter of life or death. The support of family and friends makes all the difference.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19
Double your fun today by making sure you get your favorite people in on the action. You're all set to have a good time no matter what you do, but things are even sweeter if you have all the right folks along for the ride. It should all go especially well if you make a serious effort to contact someone you haven't seen in far too long. You should catch up with each other and have a great time.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21
Shyness is nice sometimes, but it can stop you from doing things you'd like to. While you're not known for being especially reticent, you can sometimes be less than forthcoming, especially if you need to show off a skill that's not really in your repertoire. Don't worry. Just step up to the plate and swing at the next good pitch. What happens next will surprise everyone, including you.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22
When deciding to lend a hand, you end up helping yourself discover a new path. Rather than feeling put upon or worn out by others' demands, you find yourself rising to the challenge. It does help that you get to use your best assets in aiding this person or cause. Diplomacy, tact, and charisma all come in handy for the time being.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18
The temptation to tune out is pretty much irresistible, especially if someone close calls who wants to tell you some never-ending story about a dream they had or something they're trying to put behind them. Try listening attentively. You may just learn something about yourself that could really put things in a different light.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22
You've been planning that big dinner party in your head for ages now, but you realize today that you have all the necessary ingredients on hand. What more do you need than good friends, family, and food? Call people up and tell them you're throwing an impromptu get-together, and don't take no for an answer. Once they see it's low-key, easygoing socializing on the menu, they're sure to turn up.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21
Your strong opinions and magnetic personality ensure that you're always engaging if occasionally challenging. Remember that there are others involved and that their opinions might be as valid as yours. A free spirit who is on your side could agitate you with their off-the-wall suggestions, but exercise patience and give all their opinions a fair hearing rather than just shutting them down right away.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20
Think back to your favorite childhood meal and recreate it for someone you love today. It's a great time for good food, good company, and even better chatter. It doesn't have to be anything fancy. You just need to enjoy each other's company in a comfortable setting. Go ahead and call that special person and tell them what you have in mind. They should be ecstatic.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

- 01. The sinking, approximately 200 miles off Hampton Roads, Virginia, of which steamship on 12 November 1928, with a loss of over 100 lives, particularly of women and children after it was abandoned, had a major impact on the second International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea in 1929?**
A. Titanic
B. Vestris
C. Lusitania
D. Reuben James
- 02. Who in his last two years at ballet school choreographed the pas de deux "La Nuit" (1920), and the following year the duet, "Enigma", for bare feet rather than ballet shoes? started?**
A. Jerome Robbins
B. George Balanchine
C. Gene Kelly
D. Sergei Diaghilev
- 03. Which of these is a concrete noun?**
A. Reversion
B. Fraternity
C. Stew
D. Freedom

Answers: 1.B 2.B 3.C

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

G	O	N	O
R	I	I	O
M	I	D	T
A	R	S	M

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

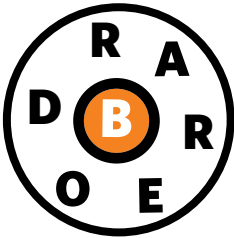
SOLUTION
20-25 words: Excellent,
15-20 words: Very good,
10-15 words: Good,
5-10 words: Average

DO YOU SUDOKU?

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

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

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

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

NO MESSI SPARK AS PSG LEAVE THEIR MARK

Neves scores brace as PSG hammer Messi's Miami to reach Club World Cup quarterfinals

Atlanta, US - Joao Neves scored twice as Paris St Germain swept aside Lionel Messi's Inter Miami 4-0 at Atlanta's Mercedes-Benz Stadium on Sunday to secure their place in the Club World Cup quarterfinals with ruthless efficiency.

The French side asserted their dominance within six minutes, with Neves moving unmarked to the far post to power home a precise header from a free kick.

Neves doubled their lead in the 39th minute after a flowing move as Bradley Barcola found Fabian Ruiz, whose exquisite cross was clinically converted by the Portuguese.

Neves, who was awarded the Player of the Match prize for his exceptional display, outlined how Luis Enrique's philosophy was a key reason for him joining PSG.

The Portugal international said: "It's his mindset, the way he sees football. I think it's the best way. That was for sure one of the things I thought before coming. I am very happy to be here at PSG and with this project.

"In this game, it was my first time scoring two goals in one match, but I'm happier for the win. I will keep my mindset forever like this."

Any hopes of a Miami come-

back were extinguished in the first half as Messi and company barely got a look in, and their misery deepened further when Tomas Aviles turned Desire Doue's cross into his own net.

Achraf Hakimi added the fourth, pouncing after his initial shot struck the crossbar, on the stroke of halftime.

"It was an almost perfect match, we created a lot of chances, and I'm happy yet I think we still need to improve, that's football," PSG coach Luis Enrique said.

"We did great last year with the players we signed, and Joao was one of them," the Spanish coach said. "He is very young, but we didn't have any doubts about him because of his intensity and quality on and off the ball. I think he can improve a lot of things. One of them is scoring goals, like he did today. He is an amazing player and we're very happy to have him."

Messi became more involved after the break and his header was saved by Gianluigi Donnarumma following a quick counter-attack, while he struck the wall with a late free kick that brought the crowd to their feet in anticipation of a consolation goal that never materialised.



Paris St Germain's Joao Neves jumps for joy after scoring against Inter Miami on Sunday

Luis Enrique and PSG eye historic season

Atlanta, US - Paris St Germain manager Luis Enrique said his team were making history after they brushed aside Inter Miami 4-0 in the Club World Cup last 16 on Sunday.

The French side, who have already won their domestic league, the French Cup and the Champions League, are edging closer to completing a perfect season by lifting the Club World Cup.

"This is clearly a historic season for our club, and we intend to continue making history in this competition," former Barcelona coach Luis Enrique told reporters.

The reunion with ex-Barcelona players Lionel Messi and Miami coach Javier Mascherano - both central figures during Luis Enrique's Camp Nou tenure between 2014 and 2017 - added emotional weight to what was otherwise a clinical dismantling of the MLS side.

"It was a very special game



Luis Enrique (R) with Inter Miami manager Javier Mascherano

because I met people who are very important to me, people with whom we shared successes and failures," the 55-year-old Spaniard said.

When asked if he would like to coach Messi in Europe again, he said it was a question for the Argentine.

"We have all seen his qualities as a player, and he still has them. It's very difficult to play against this kind of player. It was hard, but I believe that as a team we did a really great job."

PSG's ruthless first-half display effectively settled matters before Miami found their footing after the interval.

"I think that's the first half where we really dominated the game. We didn't concede a single chance, but then in the second half, maybe because of the results, Inter Miami created more chances and got us into trouble," he added.

Guler and Yildiz have so much talent, says Fenerbahce legend Alex

For nearly a decade, one name was synonymous with the midfield in Turkish football: Alex. A Fenerbahce legend, the Brazilian ruled the pitches of Turkey between 2004 and 2012, winning a legion of fans and inspiring a new generation who are now facing off at the FIFA Club World Cup 2025.

On Tuesday, the clash between Real Madrid and Juventus brings together two Turkish midfielders who grew up during Alex's reign. The meeting of Arda Guler and Kenan Yildiz adds an extra layer of intrigue to a showdown between two of Europe's heavyweight clubs.

"There's more to the game than those two, but I expect a really lively match, and I hope they can both bring their best, that they can help out their teams as much as possible" Alex told FIFA.

The Turkish midfield duo have



Arda Guler and Kenan Yildiz, two young Turkish stars, will face each other when Real Madrid take on Juventus on Tuesday

lit up the early stages of this Club World Cup. Yildiz has become the focal point of Juventus' attack and his goal tally tells much of that story. In three matches, he has scored three goals and provided one assist, as well as forcing an own goal by Wydad AC in the second round.

Guler, meanwhile, began the tournament as a substitute in Xabi Alonso's Real Madrid side. Brought on at half-time in their opening match, he has since earned a place in the starting lineup.

Barcola marks 100 caps with bright display

Atlanta, US - As Paris Saint-Germain showcased their title credentials with a 4-0 dismantling of Inter Miami, Bradley Barcola quietly celebrated a major personal milestone. The 22-year-old winger delivered a lively display in his 100th game for PSG, reinforcing his status as the unsung hero of this star-studded squad.

"We set the pace throughout the game. There was only going to be one outcome in that match", the 22-year-old said after the game.

Like Ousmane Dembele, the formidable winger arrived in the United States short of full fitness due to discomfort in his right knee. Also ruled out of the tournament opener, the former

Olympique Lyonnais man didn't generate the same level of media attention as Paris No10 Dembele, despite facing a similar setback.

Off the pitch, the 22-year-old maintains a quiet, low-key presence - a sharp contrast to the sparkling flair he displays when he steps onto the field. He's not the loudest voice in the dressing room and his fellow forwards have often been the ones in the

spotlight during PSG's rampant last six months. The more experienced Dembele has been one of the best players in the world this year, while Desire Doue's scintillating breakthrough season reached its crescendo in the Champions League final, and former Napoli star Khvicha Kvaratskhelia wasted no time in getting up to speed in the French capital following his arrival in January.

Barcola has embraced being in the shadows of his peers, never losing his spark as a game-changer - or the trust of his coach - in this close-knit Paris Saint-Germain side. And this Sunday's match against Inter Miami marked 100 games for the French international, who arrived in the summer of 2023. "I'm proud to reach 100 games. I can only be happy today", he reflected after the match.

Despite not getting on the scoresheet against Lionel Messi's Inter Miami side, Barcola once again impressed, impacting the game with his creativity and dazzling footwork. The Frenchman saw a drop in his output in the second

half of the season; he scored just four Ligue 1 goals in 2025 after 10 in the first four months of the season, and his contributions were overshadowed by electrifying performances from Dembele and Kvaratskhelia. Yet he remains vital to his team - whether it's providing the final ball or the often-overlooked one before it.

Against Miami, the midfielder's quick feet and inch-perfect pass to Fabian Ruiz allowed Joao Neves to double their lead. Barcola then almost lit up the Mercedes-Benz Stadium in the second half with a deft flick and spin around the defender before his powerful strike was parried away by Oscar Ustari.



Bradley Barcola

BAYERN SHUT DOWN FLAMENGO



Bayern Munich's Harry Kane scores against Flamengo in their Club World Cup last 16 match on Sunday

Kane bags double as German champions set up quarterfinal clash against Paris St Germain

Miami, US - Harry Kane scored twice as Bayern Munich tamed Flamengo 4-2 in a tense affair at the Hard Rock Stadium on Sunday to set up a much-anticipated all-European quarter-final against Paris St Germain at the Club World Cup.

Erick Pulgar's own goal opened the scoring for Bayern

and Leon Goretzka was also on target for the German side, while Flamengo, who were defensively naive, twice reduced the deficit through Gerson and Jorginho.

Backed by a raucous crowd, Flamengo played with aggression but Bayern converted all their shots on target and reaped the rewards of a fast start, scoring

twice in the opening 10 minutes.

"It was tough. We were playing against a really good side in difficult conditions, it was really hot," Kane said.

"I thought we played well for large spells but every time we got away they clawed their way back and made it difficult. The fourth goal was important to ease the nerves and from there we managed it well."

Earlier on Sunday, Champions League winners PSG sent a brutal reminder of their firepower when they cruised past Inter Miami 4-0, taking their foot off the pedal

after the break in what could have turned into a humiliation for Lionel Messi's MLS team.

Bayern got off to a flying start, opening the scoring in the sixth minute when Pulgar deflected a corner kick into his own net.

Three minutes later, Kane doubled the advantage with a low shot that went in off the post.

Flamengo got into something of a groove and went close in the 15th minute, only for Manuel Neuer to save Luiz Araujo's effort from point-blank range.

Shortly after the cooling break, the Brazilian side pulled one back

I thought we played well for large spells but every time we got away they clawed their way back and made it difficult

HARRY KANE



as Gerson fired a missile that went in off the underside of the bar, triggering a deafening roar from the crowd.

Bayern, however, restored their two-goal lead before the interval when Goretzka, capitalising on the space left by the Flamengo defence, whipped a shot from outside the box past keeper Agustin Rossi.



Filipe Luis (R) with Bayern Munich manager Vincent Kompany

European teams have better players, says Flamengo coach Filipe Luis after Bayern defeat

Miami, US - Flamengo coach Filipe Luis said the football elite remained in Europe after the Brazilian side were beaten 4-2 in a last-16 clash against Bayern Munich at the Club World Cup on Sunday.

Flamengo conceded two goals in the opening 10 minutes and although they twice reduced the arrears, Bayern were always in control as they set up a quarter-final tie with Champions League winners Paris St Germain.

European teams were expected to dominate the Club World Cup but sometimes struggled in the group phase while all Brazilian teams advanced and made an impression.

Bayern, however, restored a measure of what the European football establishment would call "order" ahead of Inter Milan's clash with Brazil's Fluminense,

also in the last 16. Palmeiras progressed by beating fellow Brazilian side Botafogo on Saturday.

"The pressure they put on you is immense. They come at you with eight, 10 players. They deserved to win," said Flamengo coach Luis Filipe.

"Our plan did work and we were able to apply pressure and create goal scoring opportunities but they were better than us, we're playing against the football elite. If Vinicius Jr had not left for Real Madrid, we would have the best player in the world.

"They (South American players) want to be in the elite and that's what they are, had we won today and the tournament, it would not change the reality - they're high quality teams. We have many Brazilian players in our teams but they (the European teams) have the best ones."

F1 now a two-horse race, says Horner

Spielberg, Austria - Red Bull boss Christian Horner said the 2025 Formula One season was turning into a two-horse race between the McLaren drivers after his team had a home Austrian Grand Prix to forget on Sunday.

Defending champion Max Verstappen retired on the first lap after being driven into by Mercedes rookie Kimi Antonelli, while team mate Yuki Tsunoda finished last.

As a result of Lando Norris leading home team mate Oscar Piastri in a McLaren one-two, Verstappen was left languishing 61 points behind championship leader Piastri.

"The buffer they have is significant. It looks very much like a two-horse race. They (McLaren) have got a cushion to the rest of the field," said Horner.

"For us, we focus one race at a time. We don't even think about championships. We just focus on the next race at Silverstone, what can we achieve there; same with Spa, same with Budapest.

"You try to grab every opportunity



Lando Norris (R) and Oscar Piastri have made the F1 title challenge a two horse race

like we did in Imola (where Verstappen won)."

Verstappen had qualified a lowly seventh, partly undone by yellow flags as a result of a spin by Pierre Gasly in the final moments of Saturday's session.

In the race, he was the unfortunate recipient as Antonelli hit him after misjudging under braking

into turn three, ending Verstappen's race in the process.

Tsunoda struggled all afternoon and was later given a 10-second penalty for a clash with Alpine's Franco Colapinto, which resulted in the Japanese driver finishing last.

Ferrari's Charles Leclerc and Lewis Hamilton took third and

fourth places to move their team into second place in the constructors' standings.

Horner said: "Well, that was a home race to forget. We got unlucky yesterday with the yellow flag which puts us in a position where you're unfortunately in the crash zone and Kimi just lost it in spectacular fashion.

Former F1 supremo Ecclestone makes first podium appearance at 94

Spielberg, Austria - Bernie Ecclestone, the former Formula One supremo who rarely stayed to watch races beyond halfway when he was in charge, made his first grand prix podium appearance at the age of 94 in Austria on Sunday.

The Briton was present at the Red Bull Ring to hand out a medal on behalf of the president of the governing FIA, Mohammed Ben Sulayem, to McLaren's race winner Lando Norris.

Norris hopped off the top step of the podium so that he would be standing at the same level as his diminutive compatriot.

"I think it's really nice that the president gives a personal congratulations to the winning competitor," said Ecclestone, who ran the commercial side of the sport for some 40 years until being ousted in 2017.

"As he could not attend the race here in Austria, he asked me to present his medal for him which I am pleased and honoured



Bernie Ecclestone hands out a medal on behalf of the president of the governing FIA, Mohammed Ben Sulayem, to race winner Lando Norris

to do.

"It was also great to be there as, though it might seem strange, this was the first time in almost 70 years in this sport that I've actually been on the podium."

Norris won Formula One's 1,136th championship grand prix and Ecclestone attended the first at Silverstone in 1950.

He once said he left races soon after the start because by then his business was done.

The President's Medal was first presented to Red Bull's Max Verstappen at the season-ending 2022 Abu Dhabi Grand Prix and each one carries the race number and highlights the event's history.

Late McLaren co-owner Ojeh's unique car collection up for sale

London, England - A unique collection of 20 barely used McLaren road cars that belonged to the Formula One team's late co-owner Mansour Ojeh is being put up for sale, with hopes one very wealthy buyer might keep it together.

Classic and historic car dealer Tom Hartley Jnr announced on Sunday he had been appointed by Ojeh's family to handle the sale, which could fetch more than \$70 million.

Hartley also oversaw the sale earlier this year of former F1 supremo Bernie Ecclestone's

collection of 69 historic grand prix and Formula One racers to Red Bull heir Mark Mateschitz.

Ojeh's collection includes the very last model of the McLaren F1 to be built, finished in a unique 'Yquem' colour that was subsequently renamed 'Mansour Orange' by McLaren and which has just over 1,800km on the clock.

Only 106 of the McLaren F1 sportscars were made between 1992 and 1998 and a 1995 one that had done less than 390km sold for \$20.4m in a 2021 auction at Pebble Beach, California.



F1 team McLaren's late co-owner Mansour Ojeh's collection is expected to fetch more than \$70 million

Apart from the F1 and a P1 GTR, the cars are all unused and have been maintained by the manufacturer

All the other cars are in the same orange colour and all are the final chassis made of each model.

Apart from the F1 and a P1 GTR, the cars are all unused and

have been maintained by the manufacturer. Accompanying photographs showed them displayed at the Bahrain F1 circuit.

"Mansour was a founding father of McLaren as we know it today," said McLaren Racing chief executive Zak Brown in a statement.

"A massively passionate racer and automotive enthusiast and no bigger fan of McLaren. His collection is very special, I'm not aware of anything else that compares with it," added the American, who has his own impressive collection of cars.

HEARTBREAK FOR JABEUR

Tunisian star retires from first-round match; Medvedev stunned

London, England - Twice Wimbledon runner-up Ons Jabeur's tournament lasted only one hour and 25 minutes as the Tunisian retired in her first-round match against Viktoriya Tomova on Monday.

Bulgarian Tomova took a tight opening set on a tiebreak and was 2-0 ahead in the second when Jabeur, who reached the final in 2022 and 2023, decided she could not continue.

The 30-year-old former world number two had looked uncomfortable in fiercely hot conditions on Court 14 and needed a long medical timeout in the first set.

Jabeur, who has slipped outside the world's top 50, suffers from asthma and experienced breathing difficulties at this year's Australian Open.

"I wasn't expecting not to feel good," Jabeur said. "I have been practising pretty well the last few days but I guess these things happen."

"I'm pretty sad, it really doesn't really help with my confidence and what I keep pushing myself to do even though it was a very tough season for me. I hope I can feel better and see what is going to happen."

Temperatures at Wimbledon were expected to reach 34 degrees Celsius on the opening day of the championships and the All England Club has implemented its warm weather policy.

Meanwhile, the biggest British assault on Wimbledon for 41 years got off to a great start when Sonay Kartal upset 20th seed and former French Open champion Jelena Ostapenko 7-5 2-6 6-2.

Fourth seed Draper, one of 13 Britons in the men's draw, is the



Ons Jabeur was visibly upset after retiring from her first-round match against Viktoriya Tomova at Wimbledon on Monday

I'm pretty sad, it really doesn't really help with my confidence and what I keep pushing myself to do even though it was a very tough season for me

ONS JABEUR

biggest home hope since Andy Murray and kicks off his campaign against Argentine Sebastian Baez on Tuesday.

Daniil Medvedev found the roasting conditions and a French opponent who had not won a match on grass for three years

too hot to handle on Monday as the ninth seed suffered a 7-6(2) 3-6 7-6(3) 6-2 loss to Benjamin Bonzi in the first round.

The Russian, who reached the semi-finals at the All England Club last year, got all hot and bothered as Bonzi brought out what he described as his "A-game" to dispatch the 2021 U.S. Open champion on Court Two, which felt like an oven throughout the three-hour match.

With Medvedev desperate to preserve his 100% record of reaching at least the second round at Wimbledon, he took out his frustrations on his racket, smashing it to the ground after Bonzi had got the better of him yet again in the third set.

But there was no respite for the former world number one.

"I was surprised by his level... there was not much I could do," Medvedev told reporters.



Al Faisal al Zubair was happy that his team 'did the best we could with the power they gave us with the BMW'

Al Manar Racing by Team WRT finish fifth in Gold Cup class at Spa

Spa, Belgium - Al Faisal al Zubair, Jens Klingmann, Ben Tuck and Neil Verhagen picked up valuable points after finishing fifth in the Gold Cup category at the CrowdStrike 24 Hours of Spa in Belgium on Sunday.

After qualifying their Al Manar Racing by Team WRT BMW M4 GT3 EVO down in ninth place for the flagship event in the GT World Challenge Europe Endurance Cup powered by AWS calendar third round, the quartet quickly made their way into the top five and held fourth place briefly on a few occasions on the demanding Spa-Francorchamps circuit.

In front of a record crowd of over 128,000 people who witnessed the weekend's action, the Al Manar Racing crew completed 546 laps but were just two short of the triumphant Verstappen.com Racing Aston Martin and the second-placed Garage 59 McLaren that lost out on a potential victory with a tyre issue in the final hour.

The CSA Racing McLaren finished third and the Wright Motorsport Porsche was fourth on the same lap as the Al Manar Racing by Team WRT BMW. The result keeps the team firmly in contention for the Drivers' and Teams' Championships. They now hold second in the Team's series and third in the Drivers'

Championship.

Al Zubair said: "The race was not the greatest for us in terms of the result. But, the most important thing was that we did the best we could with the power they gave us with the BMW."

"We saw here that no BMW had the pace to fight for the win this year because of BOP (Balance of Performance). We got an extra 15 kilogrammes (weight penalty) after qualifying. I think that was unjust. I am happy that we finished the race and it is important to gain points for the championship, especially after six

ished the race. It wasn't what we aimed for but you cannot win them all. We still have half the season remaining so we have plenty of time."

Klingmann took the wheel for the first session and started the race from ninth in the Gold Cup category. After three laps, the German had climbed to seventh with the Herberth Motorsport Porsche leading the way in the hands of Joel Sturm into the second hour after 24 laps.

Tim Heinemann then took over the leading Porsche and Tuck replaced Klingmann in the Al-Manar Racing BMW but the team slipped back to ninth in the changeover.

The crew managed to climb to fifth through the 4hr 30min hour mark but slipped back to seventh through 6hr 30min. During the night stint, after 10hr 30min, they had moved back up to fourth and then slipped back to fifth shortly after daybreak. They retained fifth through mid-morning

With six hours remaining, Klingmann was again at the wheel and the Al-Manar Racing car was in fifth with the Verstappen.com Racing Aston Martin leading the way. Klingmann climbed to fourth with 5hr 40min on the clock but Verhagen took over for the next stint and the team was back in fifth place with four hours left on the clock.

We got an extra 15 kilogrammes (weight penalty) after qualifying. I think that was unjust. I am happy we finished the race

AL FAISAL AL ZUBAIR

hours, 12 and 24. It's tough though after the success of winning last year.

"It wasn't easy. We drove well with no penalties and our averages were consistent. We had a bit of contact in the night but that was due to another driver. Luckily, the car was fine and we fin-

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IDEAL FACIAL

FACIAL



the facts

PICKING THE RIGHT FACIAL TO SUIT YOUR OWN SKIN TYPE CAN BE QUITE TRICKY. WHETHER YOU DO IT YOURSELF AT HOME OR VISIT A SPA, YOU NEED TO FIRST ANALYSE YOUR SKIN TYPE TO SEE WHAT IS BEST SUITED FOR YOU

Our skin is a unique canvas that requires careful attention and nourishment to maintain its natural radiance and beauty. With so many facials on the market, selecting the suited one can be overwhelming, especially if you're still getting familiar with your skin type and concerns.

The good news is that picking the ideal facial for your skin type and concerns doesn't have to be complicated. By understanding your skin's characteristics and identifying your specific cases, you can make an informed decision and choose a facial that will address your skin's unique needs.

Knowing your skin type

Skin types vary widely, from dry to oily to combination, and each type has unique characteristics that require specific attention. Determining your skin type can help you choose a facial that will provide the maximum benefit and avoid treatments that could exacerbate existing skin issues.

Here's a breakdown of the different skin types and their characteristics:

Dry skin

Dry skin often appears tight, itchy, or flaky and

may feel rough or uneven. It can be easily irritated, especially by harsh chemicals or soaps. Look for facials that offer deep hydration and nourishment to replenish and soothe the skin. Ingredients such as hyaluronic acid, honey, and aloe vera can provide lasting hydration to help restore the skin's natural moisture balance.

Oily skin

Oily skin appears shiny and greasy, with visible pores prone to clogging. It can be more prone to breakouts and blemishes. Look for facials that can control excess oil production and remove impurities from the skin. A deep-cleansing facial that includes salicylic acid, tea tree oil, or charcoal can help unclog pores and regulate oil production.

Combination skin

Combination skin has dry and oily areas, with the T-zone (forehead, nose, and chin) being oilier than the rest of the face. This skin type requires a careful balance of hydrating and oil-controlling ingredients to keep both areas of the face in optimal condition. Look for facials that hydrate the dry areas while controlling oil production in the T-zone. Ingredients such as jojoba oil, green tea, and alpha-hydroxy acids help achieve a balance between the two.

SKIN CONCERNS



Identifying your skin concerns is the next crucial step in selecting the best facial for your skin type and concerns. Skin concerns can range from acne and hyperpigmentation to aging and dehydration, and each requires a targeted approach to address the issue effectively. You can select a facial with ingredients and techniques to tackle your skin concerns by identifying your skin concerns - acne (manifest as blackheads, whiteheads, cysts, or pimples), hyperpigmentation (appears as dark spots or patches on the skin), aging (fine lines, wrinkles, loss of elasticity, and dullness), dehydration (manifest as dry, flaky, or itchy skin)

Sensitive skin

Sensitive skin is easily irritated and often feels tight or uncomfortable.

It may be prone to redness, itching, or burning sensations. Avoid facials with harsh chem-

icals, fragrances, or abrasive scrubs, as these can exacerbate existing issues. Instead, look for gentle, non-irritating facials with soothing ingredients such as chamomile, oatmeal, or calendula.

The right facial

Now that you've identified your skin type and concerns, the next step is choosing the right facial to provide the maximum benefit.

FACIAL TYPE: Choose a facial that addresses your specific skin problems. For instance, if you have dry skin, choose a facial that provides deep hydration, or if you have aging concerns, choose a facial that includes anti-aging ingredients.

SKIN TYPE: Consider your skin type when selecting a facial. Some facials may be too harsh for sensitive skin, while others may not provide enough hydration for dry skin. Ensure your facial suits your skin type to avoid exacerbating existing skin issues.

ESTHETICIAN EXPERIENCE: Your esthetician's experience and qualifications can impact your facial quality. Look for an esthetician with experience with your skin type and concerns which has received formal training in esthetics.

SPA ENVIRONMENT: The environment in which you receive your facial can also impact your experience. Look for a clean, relaxing spa that provides a comfortable atmosphere. (Courtesy: aestheticsatdmc.com)



NUTRITION & YOU



Nutritional profile

Ginger is a knobby root packed with potent plant compounds. While it may not be a significant source of vitamins or minerals in the small quantities typically consumed, it is rich in bioactive components, the most notable being gingerol.

Key compounds found in ginger:

- Gingerol - the primary bioactive compound, which gives pungency to ginger, comes with strong anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties.
 - Shogaols and zingerone - formed during drying or cooking, offering additional medicinal effects. Zingerone gives ginger a pungent taste and possess anti-oxidant properties.
- While the actual micronutrient content may be minimal per gramme, ginger's strength lies in its functional nutrition, which provides powerful therapeutic benefits even in small doses.

Ginger - root that heals

Health benefits

Ginger has a long list of science-backed health benefits, many of which are rooted in its ability to combat inflammation and oxidative stress. Some of the key health benefits ginger are: Natural anti-inflammatory - Gingerol inhibits inflammatory pathways in the body, helping to reduce chronic inflammation, which is the root cause of many modern diseases, like, arthritis, heart disease, and metabolic disorders.

Helps to control nausea and morning sickness - One of the most well-known and studied uses of ginger is in controlling nausea and vomiting. It is especially helpful in early pregnancy, during chemotherapy, or after



surgery.

Supports digestive health - Ginger helps stimulate saliva, bile, and gastric enzymes, thereby promoting easy di-

gestion and reducing bloating, gas, and constipation. It can also ease indigestion and discomfort after meals.

Cardiovascular support - Clinical studies have indicated that high doses of ginger as supplements may improve blood cholesterol levels and blood pressure.

Antioxidant protection - By neutralising free radicals, ginger can help protect the body's cells from oxidative damage, which is linked to aging and degenerative diseases.

How to use ginger

Ginger can be used in many forms: fresh, dried, powdered, pickled, or juiced. Each form has its unique prop-

erties:

- Fresh ginger is ideal for teas, curries, or morning shots with lemon and honey.
 - Powdered ginger is more concentrated and great for baking or spiced drinks.
 - Ginger tea is soothing for digestion and immunity, especially during colder months.
- Opting for ginger ale is not a good choice, as it has minimal or no ginger, but in addition has loads of high-fructose corn syrup.

For better absorption and added benefits, combine ginger with lemon, turmeric (for added anti-inflammatory action), and black pepper (to aid absorption of active compounds).

To conclude, ginger is a small but mighty root with big nutritional benefits. Whether one is sipping it in tea, grating it into stir-fries, or adding it to detox shots, ginger supports digestion, reduces inflammation, plus gives a zing to every recipe.

(Vandana Chawla is an Online Nutrition Expert and a Registered Nutritionist-UKVRN)



Have you tasted ‘Dubai Chocolate’

ARABIC DESSERT

‘Dubai chocolate’ is a chocolate bar filled with pistachio and knafeh - a traditional Arabic dessert – that instantly became a rage in the gulf and has now gained popularity in other parts of the world. First created in 2021 by Fix Desserts chocolatier, which branded it as ‘Can’t Get Knafeh of It’, this product, however, has not yet made any dent in Oman

As foodies and chocolate connoisseurs have had enough of the experiments with ‘fruit n nut’, orange, red chilli, basil, mint, and even hints of frankincense in chocolate bars, here comes an innovative venture from Arabia, of enclosing milk chocolate with a sumptuous filling of pistachios and Knafeh - the popular Arabic dessert made with spun pastry dough.

What began as a combination of pistachio, knafeh, and milk chocolate to satisfy Fix Desserts’ chocolatier Sarah Hamouda’s pregnancy cravings has now evolved into a chocolate bar worth millions of dollars, propelling the family-business to expand exponentially in ways they couldn’t imagine.

After a viral influencer campaign by TikTok influencer Maria Vehera gathered millions of views from followers now yearning for a bite, the world affectionately gave it the nickname of ‘Dubai chocolate’. The name can be seen as an ode to the place of origin of this chocolate as well as a celebration of the Middle East cuisine.

Though popular in Dubai, the chocolate bar - which doesn’t bear the name ‘Dubai Chocolate’ - went viral internationally from late 2023 through to 2024 when it was promoted online by influencers and social media personalities. After multiple popular videos, a surge in demand led to 30,000 online orders, briefly crashing the Fix Dessert Chocolatier delivery platform.

So if you are looking out for ‘Dubai Chocolate’, look for the title - ‘Can’t Get Knafeh of It’. In Oman, the demand for this product is picking up as retailers as well as consumers are yet coming to terms with this new chocolate that offers a welcome deviation from what other chocolate brands offer.

Muscat Daily checked out the popularity of

this chocolate among young consumers in the capital. Students from The National University of Science and Technology (NUST) like Maryam al Saadi, Pooja Mathiarasan, Ishaan Gupta and Muhammad Osman felt that the price for the authentic Dubai chocolate is too expensive and generally, inaccessible in Oman.

Some students from Muscat University, like Deema al Mamari, assert, “I haven’t tried the chocolate from Fix Desserts, but a similar one I tried from Oman was too sweet for me.” The taste of the pistachio filling seemed unauthentic, she said.

Fatima Amri, another student from NUST, said, “I haven’t tasted Dubai chocolate, but I’d recommend getting chocolate from shops like Le Chocola because I prefer the taste of slightly bitter dark chocolates.”

Ahmed al Tamibi from Muscat University added, “I have not seen this product yet in supermarkets in Muscat. However, every culture has products we grow more attached to, even if it is a product you may not enjoy as much. I personally enjoy the taste of Al Nassma chocolates because of how they use camel milk to enhance the flavour of its products.”

This demand for chocolates from local brands has unintentionally brought light to a discrepancy caused by the demand and supply of these bars to the wider public. Especially when stores like KM, Spar and Lulu Hypermarkets promote and carry other brands like Galaxy, Bounty, Cadbury, Lindt and Hershey’s because of their widely recognisable brand names and the wide array of popular flavours they provide for Chocolate enthusiasts in Oman.

Retail Manager of KM Trading, Dinesh Nair clarifies, “We tend to place chocolates from brands like Kit-Kat, Galaxy and M&M near the cash counters as these are the brands that are

popular amongst younger children and families. We try to increase their visibility in these areas, as they are smaller bars which are easier to miss in our regular chocolate and confectionary aisles.”

An assistant store manager at a Lulu Hypermarket outlet explained, “Recently, we started to promote Pistachio-Kunafa chocolates from brands like Choco Lake which is a popular brand from UAE, to give our customers special access to this kind of trendy chocolate that is too expensive to purchase otherwise. The quantity over quality model proves a big barrier for local Omani chocolatiers to be carried in these supermarket chains as their focus is to create a culturally enriching experience with their products.”

The market is, however, seeing a proliferation of lower quality imitations of the Dubai chocolate. But, Omani chocolatiers and consumers alike are not concerned over it. Instead, they wish to remain authentic to their culture by sharing their rich flavours with the rest of Oman.

Salma al Hajri, business owner of Salma’s Chocolates, said, “As we are a proud Omani company, we wish to share a piece of Oman with the rest of the world by combining past flavours in each season with the present to make new flavours that chocolate lovers around the world can appreciate.”

This sentiment is echoed in similar shops, such as the employees in Fuala Chocolate, who believe in improving the experience customers have with their brand through their special attention to aroma and visual appeal of their chocolates to reflect the values of hospitality that is associated with the people of Oman.

Owner of Prestige Chocolate, Khawla al Bahri claims, “Even if people like me prefer local Omani brands of chocolate, we settle with imported products because we feel like the Omani brands are not as well-known. That is why, when I started the company in 2015, I wanted to give people good custom-engraved chocolates that they can enjoy for any occasion. We currently sell them in a variety of fillings like Pistachio, Hazelnut and Saffron as those flavours are associated with other food we enjoy, like Halwa and other nutty sweets.”

From customisable chocolates that have consumer’s names written on the chocolate to Chips Oman and Halwa-flavoured chocolate bars that capture the culinary extravagance of Omani cuisine, these brands continue to grow and flourish within the country.

Reshaping the nation’s perspective of success within the confectionary industry is something that cannot be quantified or easily replicated through cheap imitations but as something sweet that brings consumers together for their love of their own culture and their love of chocolates.

(Contributed by: Ishita Shetty)

CAPITALISING ON POPULARITY

Jumping in to make hay while the Sun shines is The Turkish Delight Mediterranean Sweetery, a family-owned and run business that began as a successful pop-up stall at the Central Market in Adelaide (Australia) in 2016. This confectionary has been dedicated to serving up authentic Mediterranean treats to Adelaide’s sweet-tooths from their brick-and-mortar location on Rundle Street while shipping nationwide.

The store, run by the mother-son duo of Mona and Mohammad Hassan, has now added another delectable treat to their arsenal by bringing ‘Dubai chocolate’ to the hungry foodies of Adelaide. When you visit their stall at the Adelaide Central Market,

you won’t miss the new 3-tier silver platter tower covered in pristinely wrapped chocolate bars that have been branded as ‘Dubai Chocolates’, indeed!

So, whether you’re a chocolate connoisseur, someone who simply appreciates fine things, or someone eager to try something new, this Dubai’s viral chocolate is a must-try for those visiting Adelaide who are probably unaware that this sweetery has created a new product inspired by the original and branded it with the popular nickname.

Though deceptive, this venture has instantly struck a chord with buyers in Adelaide Central Markets at The Turkish Delight Mediterranean Sweetery at Stall 8.



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