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Directive reinforces Arabic for official communications

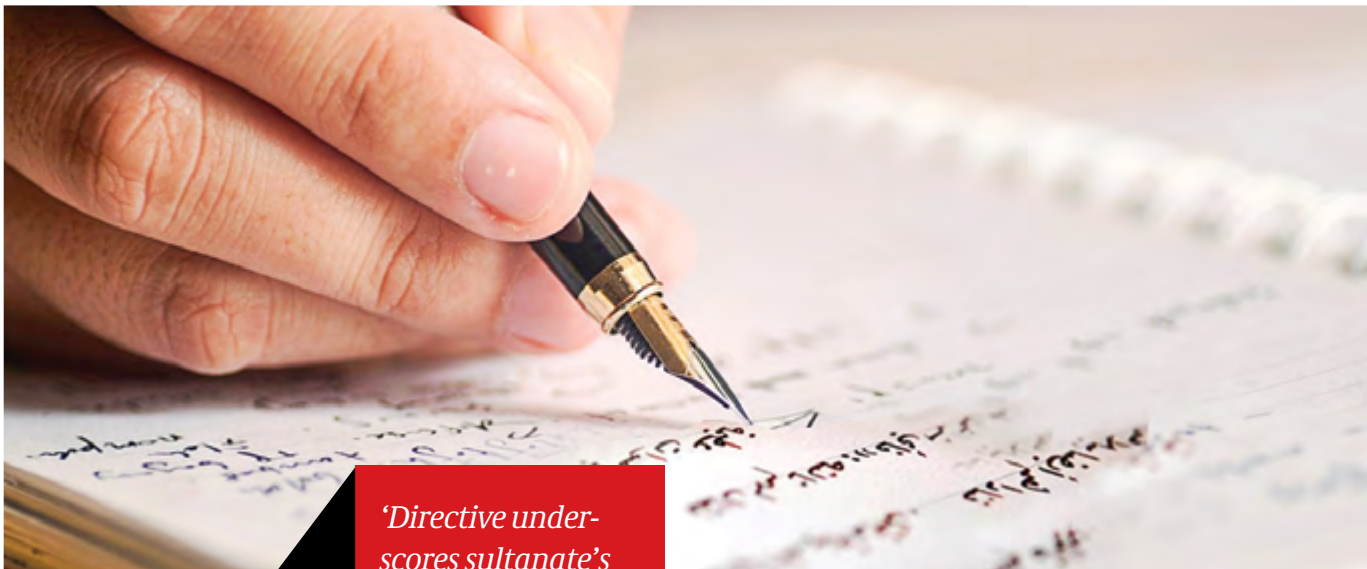
Our Correspondent
Muscat

Government Communication Centre has confirmed that the Council of Ministers has issued a directive mandating proper use of Arabic across all sectors in a move aimed at preserving the language as a cornerstone of national identity.

The decision applies to all units of the state's administrative apparatus, state-owned enterprises, public and private legal entities, civil institutions and associations.

"In response to what has been circulated on social media concerning the document regulating the use of Arabic, Government Communication Centre affirms that Council of Ministers has recently issued a directive requiring all relevant bodies - governmental and non-governmental - to comply with this regulation. This directive underscores the sultanate's ongoing efforts to preserve the Arabic language as a vital element of Oman's national identity," the statement said.

The directive requires accurate Arabic to be used in naming government projects including streets, neighbourhoods, squares



'Directive underscores sultanate's ongoing efforts to preserve the Arabic language as a vital element of Oman's national identity'

and parks, with names in other languages permitted in parentheses where necessary.

It also mandates the use of proper Arabic in official communications such as meetings, events, agreements, MoUs, contracts, decisions, regulations and media advertisements. Translations or simultaneous interpretation may be provided in the public interest.

The directive extends to the education sector, covering both public and private schools and higher education institutions, unless otherwise exempted by

competent authorities.

Correct Arabic must also be used in medical reports, prescriptions, academic certificates, degree equivalency decisions, and on official documents such as banknotes, stamps and medals. The use of other languages is permitted alongside Arabic when

needed.

The Council of Ministers has also urged private sector entities including banks, insurance companies, telecom firms and utility providers to ensure Arabic is used correctly in all public communications and documentation.

The move is part of a wider national initiative to preserve the Arabic language and ensure its consistent use across all institutional and societal levels.

The directive has received strong public support, with many seeing it as a reaffirmation of Oman's cultural and linguistic

heritage.

"This is a declaration of loyalty to our identity and a covenant with the Arabic tongue. The statement restores Arabic to its rightful place in the national system," Hilal al Zaidi posted on social media.

Citizen Aisha al Riyami said, "Language is the soul of a nation. By reinforcing the use of Arabic, Oman is ensuring that future generations remain connected to their heritage and roots. This decision reflects the significance of language in shaping identity and unity."



MoH tightens rules on promotion, marketing of drugs

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Ministry of Health (MoH) has announced new regulations for advertising and promoting medicines aimed at safeguarding public health and ensuring ethical marketing practices in the pharmaceutical sector.

Issued by H E Dr Hilal bin Ali al Sabti, Minister of Health, Ministerial Decision No 135/2025 outlines procedures and conditions that pharmaceutical firms, agents and consultants must follow before promoting any medicinal product in Oman. The decision was issued on May 29 and will come into effect from today.

Under the new rules, only licensed pharmaceutical companies, authorised local agents and approved pharmaceutical consulting offices can advertise medicines. All advertising must be pre-approved by the Drug Safety Centre.

To be eligible for a licence, the product must be registered, and the advertising content must match the approved drug leaflet and summary of product characteristics. It must clearly define the target audience and avoid any wording that could mislead consumers, exaggerate benefits, harm public health or breach public morals.

"The objective is to protect consumers from misleading information and to ensure that advertisements remain factual and within the ethical boundaries of public health," a ministry official said.

The objective is to protect consumers from misleading information and to ensure that advertisements remain factual and within ethical boundaries

MOH OFFICIAL

Applicants must submit a copy of the advertisement, the drug's registration certificate, proof of fee payment and any other documents requested by the centre.

The Drug Safety Centre is mandated to respond within 60 days. No response within that timeframe implies rejection.

If an application is found incomplete, the applicant will be given 30 days to address shortcomings. Failure to do so within that period will result in application cancellation.

Licences are valid for three months and may be renewed for similar periods. Renewal requests must be submitted at least 20 days before licence expiry and will be assessed under the same terms.

Advertisers must include the licence number in all materials and documentation, use only approved formats and obtain prior approval for any change.

Advertising prescription-only medicines is restricted to scientific publications or at conferences and professional meetings attended by pharmacists and healthcare workers.

Marriage support fund to be launched in June

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Following a directive issued by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, a marriage support fund will be launched in all governorates before the end of June.

The announcement was made during the first governors' meeting convened this year, chaired by Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal al Busaidi, Minister of Interior, on Sunday.

Busaidi underscored the importance of aligning local development plans with His Majesty the Sultan's vision to empower



governorates and strengthen community participation in driving progress of wilayats.

One of the main items discussed

was implementation of a marriage support fund. Governors have been instructed to take the necessary executive measures

to activate the Royal Directive, which will be implemented according to specific standards to be outlined by Ministry of

Interior.

The initiative stems from a Royal Directive issued in January to establish the marriage support fund allocating RO1mn to each of the sultanate's 11 governorates. These funds aim to provide financial assistance to citizens intending to marry. Details of application process and eligibility criteria will be announced by relevant authorities soon.

The meeting also addressed several common issues affecting the governorates and reviewed progress on implementation of municipal council recommendations.

Oman to debut at London Design Biennale with 'Memory Grid' pavilion

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman will participate for the first time in the prestigious London Design Biennale in 2025 with a national pavilion titled 'Memory Grid', a conceptual installation designed by multidisciplinary artist Haitham al Busafi.

With over 30 pavilions representing nations, cities or institutions, the three-week exhibition starting June 5 will feature curated installations accompanied by a programme of events, thought-leadership talks, performances and workshops.

Expressing his excitement in a post on LinkedIn, Busafi wrote, "A moment of immense pride!



Haitham al Busafi

I'm deeply honoured and privileged to share that I will be designing Oman's debut pavilion at the London Design Biennale 2025. This opportunity to represent my country on such a global platform is truly



special."

Curated by Zawraq Collective and commissioned by Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, the pavilion represents the ideas of memory, value and preservation in a rapidly evolving world. It invites visitors to consider how perception changes with perspective, offering an experience where meaning shifts based on how closely - or distantly - one observes.

"This pavilion is multilayered,"

Busafi explained. "We move through life constantly shifting our lens - sometimes catching the smallest details, sometimes stepping back to see the whole. Without realising it, we adjust our resolution of perception and thought, finding different meanings at different scales."

'Memory Grid' draws inspiration from Oman's pottery tradition, reimagining ancient vessels as metaphors for how humanity protects what it values most. Historically, these vessels were lifelines - shaped from the earth, fired with care and used to carry water; these connected communities to land and to each other. Over time, they evolved from tools of survival into symbols of

cultural legacy.

The installation juxtaposes this traditional symbolism with modern needs, suggesting that today's essential resource - data - now demands similar protection. Through this immersive experience, visitors are invited to consider what these vessels can teach us about the preservation of knowledge, values and identity across generations.

As visitors move through the space, the installation challenges them to reflect on shifting notions of value - what we keep, share or pass on. In doing so, it bridges the past and present, exploring how physical objects can hold conceptual weight and carry human stories forward.



03 Eid habtas boost trade and traditions



15 H E Raul Hernandez speaks on Oman-Philippines ties

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HEALTH AND DIGNITY OVER DEADLINES

Considering the rising temperatures, should the mandatory 12:30pm to 3:30pm midday break for outdoor workers be extended from the current June-August to May-August? Here is what *Muscat Daily* readers said -

Salim al Balushi
Engineer

I agree absolutely. The heat in May has become just as intense as June. Workers doing physical labour under the sun are at real risk. Extending the break to include May is a humane and practical step. Their safety should always come first, especially when we see clear signs

Amal al Riyami
Teacher

May is no longer mild. Temperatures often touch 40°C by mid-month. Prolonged exposure during this time can cause serious health issues. Extending the midday break shows we value human dig-

Khalid al Hinai
Business owner

We must adapt to climate realities. May is getting hotter and workers - especially in construction and delivery sectors - face exhausting conditions. Rules should evolve accordingly. From a business perspective too, healthy

Reem al Zadjali
Consultant

As someone working in sustainability, I believe protecting our workforce from extreme heat is urgent. Scientific data shows that May temperatures now rival those of peak summer. Extending the break period by a month

Rakesh Mehra
Construction supervisor

For us in construction, May is already too hot. We start early, but by midday it's unbearable. Extending the break will help reduce pressure on our teams. I've seen men faint in May while working on scaffolds. A safer schedule

Anitha Ramesh
Homemaker

It's a much-needed move. Most workers are already adapting unofficially by slowing down work around noon in May. Making it official will protect them from exploitation. The difference between 38°C and 43°C doesn't change the fact that the sun is harsh. Our health and dignity are more important than deadlines.

YOUR SAY

of rising temperatures earlier every year.

nity and labour rights. Besides, productivity can be better when workers aren't exhausted or falling ill due to avoidable heat stress.

workers mean fewer medical emergencies and better efficiency. It's time the law considered shifts in weather patterns.

could prevent heat strokes and long-term health complications. It's a simple but powerful act of care and responsibility.

?

NEXT ON YOUR SAY

With extreme heat in June, do you support holding exams in Omani schools earlier? When is it best to hold the final exams in Omani government schools?

The views stated here are those of the respondents and not endorsed by *Muscat Daily*. If you feel strongly about the issues discussed here, you can email your comments to muscatdaily@apexmedia.co.om You can also log on to our Facebook page or tweet us your comments on the issue.

SEND YOUR COMMENTS

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

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Oman Arab Bank Leads the Economic Empowerment Landscape in the Sultanate of Oman and is Crowned with the “Outstanding Commitment to SME Growth and Empowerment” Award

In a remarkable achievement that set the standard for banking expertise in the Sultanate of Oman, Oman Arab Bank's added to its growing record of success, proudly announcing it being the receipt of the “Outstanding Commitment to SME Growth and Empowerment” award — a well-deserved recognition of a deeply rooted strategic vision and clear affirmation of the bank's pivotal role in leading the economic empowerment of entrepreneurs across the Sultanate.

This award is not merely a celebratory milestone, but the natural result of an integrated journey of tireless effort, carefully structured plans, and a real investment in Oman's economic future. It reflects years of consistent dedication, culminating in the development of the bank's comprehensive Tumouhi ecosystem — the most inclusive banking platform designed to support SMEs on every level: financial, technical, digital, and advisory. Oman Arab Bank has transformed from a financial service provider into an active growth partner in the success stories of thousands of local companies by offering flexible, customizable financial solutions, including term loans, working capital financing, and a full range of trade facilities tailored to different stages of business development; however, the bank's role has never been limited to financing — it has built a fully integrated digital infrastructure aligned with global standards, including smart payment solutions such as Soft POS, payment links, full digital banking platforms, and dedicated corporate branches and regional cash centers. Even more, the bank has



Recognizing that many freelance and informal businesses are often overlooked by traditional banking, Oman Arab Bank designed dedicated solutions that accommodate the unique needs of this segment — from street vendors and market traders to taxi drivers and independent service providers — thus driving tangible financial inclusion at the grassroots level. This ground-level presence has helped the bank expand its developmental footprint and reach underserved populations in a practical and meaningful way. Commenting on this achievement, Sulaiman Al Hinai, Chief Wholesale Banking Officer at Oman Arab Bank, stated: “This award is a confirmation of what we have committed to from day one — to be a creator of opportunity, not just a responder; a builder of business ecosystems, not just a lender. We believe SMEs are not a complementary sector, but the economic center of gravity and the axis of national transformation toward sustainable growth.” He added, “We don't just offer banking products — we provide a fully integrated environment of support, guidance, expertise, and networks to help every entrepreneur turn ideas into impact.”

With this recognition, Oman Arab Bank once again proves that it is more than a bank — it is a vital developmental force helping reshape Oman's economic landscape and placing SMEs at the heart of the national equation. This aligns directly with Oman Vision 2040's priorities of economic diversification, productivity, youth empowerment, and building a knowledge- and innovation-driven

economy. The Bank stands firmly present across every step of the SME journey — from funding to advisory, training to partnership, and digital solutions to on-the-ground support — forging ahead with an unwavering commitment to solidify its position as the number one partner for entrepreneurship in Oman, driven by a national vision, relentless ambition, and limitless potential.



OMAN CX AWARD

Outstanding Commitment to SME Growth & Empowerment

Oman Arab Bank

Eid habtas boost trade and traditions

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Eid al Adha habtas (traditional markets) have opened across several governorates in Oman, with a surge in commercial activity and public participation. These markets, held in the days leading up to the festival, are showcasing the country's deep-rooted cultural, social and commercial practices.

In North Sharqiyah, villages are witnessing brisk trade, especially in Ibra, where evening habta gatherings are drawing large crowds. Open markets and consumer tents have become popular venues, creating a festive atmosphere while contributing to local trade.

"Markets in Sinaw are seeing exceptional commercial activity with the launch of the Eid al Adha habta. There's a strong turnout of shoppers and all necessities are readily available, especially in the livestock market, which is buzzing with activity ahead of the festival," said Salem al Siyabi from the wilayat of Sinaw.

For livestock breeders, the



season presents a prime opportunity. Ahmed al Balushi from Suwaiq noted that the demands for sheep, cows and camels are high. "The habta season presents a lucrative opportunity for breeders to sell their livestock through 'Al Munadah', a traditional bidding process that adds excitement to the sales."

Children are also having a noticeable presence at these mar-

kets, dressed in traditional Omani attire and enjoying toys, sweets and nuts. "The habta truly captures the essence of our customs and traditions passed down through generations," Balushi added.

In North Batinah, merchant Abdullah al Wahaibi highlighted that the seventh day of Dhu al

preparations are under way with a focus on public hygiene, organising habta markets and livestock souqs, and holding traditional events across the governorate.

Municipalities across the country are also prioritising health and safety, preparing slaughterhouses and conducting

The seventh day of Dhu al Hijjah typically marks the peak of the habta, as residents purchase Eid essentials such as Omani daggers, men's canes and traditional jewellery

ABDULLAH AL WAHAIBI

Hijjah typically marks the peak of the habta, as residents purchase Eid essentials such as Omani daggers, men's canes and traditional jewellery.

"These events help showcase local products, support small businesses and promote cultural continuity," he said.

In South Batinah, Nakhal Municipality has ramped up activities in villages and tourist areas ahead of Eid.

Meanwhile, in Dakhliyah, food safety inspections. Food and Health Control and Licensing departments are ensuring that hygiene standards are met in establishments handling food.

To support small businesses and entrepreneurs, the Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development is holding Eid bazaars and product exhibitions in various governorates, promoting local crafts and productive families during the festive season.

Ras al Hadd Reserve ready for annual turtle nesting season

Our Correspondent
Sur

The Ras al Hadd Turtle Reserve has confirmed its readiness for the annual sea turtle nesting season, one of Oman's most significant environmental events, which begins in June and continues for five months.

The Ras al Hadd Advisory Committee convened last week to review final preparations. The meeting, chaired by Dr Hilal al Habsi, wali of Sur, was attended by officials from the South Sharqiyah governorate.

The nesting season draws



thousands of visitors each year to witness green turtles laying their eggs on the reserve's protected beaches. The phenomenon is considered unique to

Oman and holds ecological significance.

During the meeting, committee members reviewed a range of measures, including the re-

serve's capacity to handle tourist numbers, implementation of conservation protocols, and awareness campaigns targeting visitors and local communities. Authorities stressed the need to preserve natural habitats during the nesting period and ensure visitor activities remain sustainable.

Covering 120sqkm, the Ras al Hadd Turtle Reserve is one of the largest and most important nesting sites in the Indian Ocean for green turtle (Chelonia mydas), which has been classified as endangered. More than 20,000 turtles are estimated to migrate

Midday work ban takes effect across outdoor sites in Oman

Muscat - The Ministry of Labour has announced the enforcement of its annual midday work ban at construction sites and other outdoor workplaces exposed to extreme heat.

Effective from June 1, the ban will be in place daily from 12:30pm to 3:30pm through the months of June, July, and August. The regulation is aimed at protecting workers from the risks associated with prolonged exposure to high temperatures during peak summer. The directive is in line with Article 16, Clause 3 of

the Occupational Safety and Health Regulation, which mandates safeguards in hazardous working environments.

Oman is experiencing searing summer temperatures that have crossed 45°C in some parts of the sultanate.

The ministry has urged all employers to adhere strictly to the rule, warning that any violations will attract fines ranging from RO500 to RO1,000.

Officials stressed that ensuring the health and safety of workers is a shared responsibility.

Registration opens for Gulf Film Festival in Muscat

Muscat - The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth has announced the opening of registration for the Gulf Film Festival, set to take place in Muscat from November 16 to 19.

Organised in cooperation with the General Secretariat of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), the festival is held annually in line with regulations issued by the General Secretariat and as part of the GCC Cultural Strategy 2020-2030.

The ministry has called on filmmakers in Oman to submit their works and take part in the festival's competitions, which cover a range of categories including feature films, documentaries and short films.

Participants will compete for a number of cash prizes, including Best Feature Film, Best Short Film and Best Documentary Film. Additional awards will be given for Best Direction, Best Screenplay, Best Cinematography, Best Soundtrack, and Best Actor and Actress. The event offers a valuable platform for Omani filmmakers to highlight their talent and creativity, and underscores Oman's growing role in the region's cinematic landscape.



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(PRE-25-020)	Design and Construction of Road Connections in A'Seeb (Lump Sum) (Re-Call)	08/06/2025	16/06/2025
(PRE-25-021)	Design and Construction of Road Connections in ALAmerat (Lump Sum) (Re-Call)	08/06/2025	16/06/2025
(PRE-25-078)	Parking Pavement Works in Al Khoudk 7 Park & Hay Al Shurooq Park	20/06/2025	10/07/2025

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Novel Muscat International Signs 15-Year Agreement to Develop Oman's National Port Community System



H.E. Sayyid Saud bin Hilal Al Busaidi, Governor of Muscat; H.E.Saeed bin Hamoud bin Saeed al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology; H.E. Eng. Khamis bin Mohammed al Shamakhi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology for Transport; Eng. Abdullah bin Ali Al Busaidi, Acting Head of the Oman Logistics Center at the MTCIT; along with Novel Muscat team, Mr Hamood Al Oufi Chairman of Novel Muscat International; Mr.Sivakumar Sundarajan, Managing Director of Novel Muscat International; Board of Directors- Mr. Badrinath Srinivasan and Ms.Krishnapriya Kumaraguru; Mr Vineeth Malhotra & Mr Umesh Kurlekar- Kale Info Solutions.

Muscat - Novel Muscat International has signed a 15-year concession agreement with the Ministry of Transport, Communications, and Information Technology in the Sultanate of Oman to implement and operate the National Port Community System (NPCS).

This landmark project will streamline logistics and trade operations across all ports, airports, free zones, and border crossings in Oman, aligning closely with His Majesty the Sultan's Vision 2040. The system aims to enhance efficiency, transparency, and integration within the national logistics ecosystem.



Implementation will begin immediately, with a phased rollout across Oman's major trade gateways. Novel Muscat International reiterates its commitment to driving innovation and operational excellence in support of Oman's long-term develop-

ment goals.

As a leading investment company and provider of advanced logistics and technology solutions, Novel Muscat International is dedicated to transforming trade and transport ecosystems through cutting-edge digital platforms.

Advertorial

GCC bank consolidation may accelerate amid lower oil prices

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Consolidation among GCC banks may gather pace if lower oil prices increase competitive pressure in the region, according to Fitch Ratings.

Fitch said that persistently low oil prices and subdued global demand may place strain on the operating environments of GCC banks, potentially leading to weaker profitability and acting as a catalyst for mergers and acquisitions (M&A), as institutions look to diversify revenues and achieve greater scale. 'Smaller banks may become targets due to their weaker franchises, and often higher funding costs and thinner capital buffers,' Fitch stated in a note.

The rating agency observed that most banking sectors in the GCC are 'overbanked'-characterised by a high number of banks relative to the population size, with over 150 institutions operating across the region, including 75 domestic commercial banks.

'Many GCC banks have shareholders in common, which could help to bring about M&A in some cases. However, many of the common shareholders are not sufficiently large to wield significant influence,' Fitch said.



Most banking sectors in GCC are overbanked – characterised by a high number of banks relative to the population size, with over 150 institutions operating across the region, including 75 domestic commercial banks

It said Bahrain appears to be the market most ripe for consolidation, according to the agency, as it is particularly overbanked and has generally weaker profitability and growth prospects in its banking sector. 'Oman and Kuwait are also overbanked, with modest banking sector profitability. However, consolidation pressures in Kuwait may ease if economic reforms result in stronger growth and improved profitability prospects, and Oman's banking sector could ex-

pand given its relatively low ratio of banking sector assets to GDP.' In the UAE, Fitch said that some smaller banks with weaker franchises and limited revenue generation may require strategic mergers to remain viable, particularly if profitability is squeezed over an extended period. Nevertheless, robust growth prospects may reduce the need for such action in the near term. Fitch believes consolidation is likely to be less pronounced in Qatar and Saudi Arabia. Qatar

does have a large number of banks relative to its population, but strong profitability lessens the pressure to merge in order to diversify revenues. Saudi Arabia, meanwhile, is the only GCC country that does not appear overbanked, thanks to its significantly larger population, lower banking system assets-to-GDP ratio and solid growth outlook. Banking sector M&A in the GCC has primarily been driven by a desire to enhance shareholder value by strengthening

market positions and achieving economies of scale. This trend has resulted in the formation of dominant players such as First Abu Dhabi Bank and Saudi National Bank, according to Fitch.

'We expect digital banking and new digital entrants to be an increasingly significant driver of consolidation in the region, with banks seeking technological partnerships to improve competitiveness. The expansion of open banking is also likely to influence M&A strategies, fostering joint ventures between tech companies, telecoms firms and banks,' Fitch added.

The agency also noted that Islamic banks based in the GCC have become more active in M&A in a bid to strengthen their positions, as seen in Dubai Islamic Bank's acquisition of Noor.

'The UAE's ambitious domestic Islamic finance strategy may lead to further M&A involving Islamic banks. Emirates NBD and Abu Dhabi Commercial Bank have acquired domestic Islamic subsidiaries, which should support growth in financing and deposits. In Oman, banks such as Oman Arab Bank and Sohar International Bank have completed or are pursuing acquisitions of Islamic banks to cement their market presence,' Fitch said.



OPEC+ announces oil output increase in July

Vienna, Austria - OPEC and its allies, known as OPEC+, announced that they will increase oil output by 411,000 barrels per day (bpd) in July.

According to a statement on the OPEC website, the decision was made at a virtual meeting where member countries, including Saudi Arabia, Russia, Iraq, the UAE, Kuwait, Kazakhstan, Algeria, and Oman, assessed global market conditions and outlook.

The OPEC+ countries had originally planned to raise output by 134,000 bpd in July as part of a plan to gradually unwind their most recent layer of output cuts.

However, the group adjusted its strategy, citing "a steady global economic outlook and current healthy market fundamentals, as reflected in the low oil inventories." The statement also noted that the

gradual increases may be paused or reversed subject to evolving market conditions.

The eight OPEC+ countries also stated that this strategy will allow member countries to hasten their compensation. The eight countries reaffirmed their commitment to achieving full compliance with the Declaration of Cooperation, including the extra optional output adjustments that were agreed to be reviewed by the Joint Ministerial Monitoring Committee (JMMC) at its 53rd meeting in April 2024.

Initially announced in November 2023, the 2.2m bpd production cuts were introduced for the first quarter of 2024. The cuts have been extended multiple times since then, with the latest extension pushing them through the first quarter of 2025.

Agencies

Sohar Port and Freezone inaugurates Emergency Response Organization

Sohar - Under the patronage of H E Eng Saeed bin Hamoud bin Saeed al Mawali, Minister of Transport, Communication, and Information Technology, Sohar Port and Freezone hosted the inauguration ceremony of the Sohar Emergency Response Organization, a milestone that redefines industrial safety and resilience in Oman.

The Sohar Emergency Response Organization is a fully integrated initiative, jointly established by Sohar Port and Freezone in close partnership with its tenant community. Designed to serve all stakeholders, from employees and contractors to port users and visitors, this model represents a unified, community-wide approach to emer-



gency preparedness. Its collective nature is what sets it apart as a first-of-its-kind initiative in the region.

Ensuring the safety of people and the protection of valuable assets are fundamental principles at Sohar Port and Freezone. The

Emergency Response Organization enhances risk mitigation, safeguards facilities, and ensures business continuity, directly supporting Sohar Port and Freezone's mission to be a reliable, safe, and sustainable industrial hub.

H E Eng Mawali said, "The

Sohar Emergency Response Organization represents a critical step in aligning with Oman's vision for resilience and sustainability. By enhancing safety standards and ensuring operational continuity, it supports not only Sohar's growth but also Oman's strategic objectives in the logistics sector."

"This is not just a facility, it is a strategic outcome of collaboration," said Abdullah al Jabri, Chairman of the Board of Sohar Port and Freezone. "Together with our tenants, we have built a shared resource that protects the entire SOHAR ecosystem. This unified model reflects our collective responsibility toward safety, operational excellence, and long-term resilience."

Cigna secures Category A health insurance licence in Oman

Muscat - Cigna Healthcare Middle East, a global health service company, has secured a Category 'A' health insurance license from the Financial Services Authority (FSA) in Oman. The license authorises Cigna Healthcare to underwrite, manage and issue health insurance under the sultanate's newly established Health Insurance Framework.

As the first international health insurer, and one of only a select few providers in the market, to be granted the coveted Category 'A' health insurance license, the distinction places the Cigna among the market's most trusted insurers, recognised by the FSA for meeting stringent regulatory, operational and ser-



vice excellence standards. It also affirms Cigna Healthcare's strategic role in helping shape a more inclusive, high quality and trusted health insurance landscape in Oman.

In a press release, Raed Labaki, General Manager of Cigna Healthcare, Middle East (excluding UAE and Saudi Arabia), said, "Being granted the Category 'A' license is more than

a regulatory milestone - it's a powerful endorsement of our commitment to Oman, and our ability to deliver lasting value in Oman's transforming healthcare landscape."

This milestone builds on Cigna Healthcare's deep-rooted presence in Oman, which began in 2017 with the acquisition of Zurich's regional health insurance portfolio.

GCC MACRO & MARKETS



M.R. RAGHU,
CEO OF MARMORE
MENA INTELLIGENCE

All GCC markets ended May on a positive note, with the exception of Saudi Arabia. The Saudi Tadawul Index recorded a sharp decline of 5.8% for the month, weighed down by weak earnings from select blue-chip companies and continued pressure from declining oil prices, despite broadly positive global sentiment driven by developments on the tariff front. In contrast, the Dubai market maintained its upward trajectory, posting a monthly gain of 3.3%, sup-

ported by continued strength in the real estate sector.

GCC should command a premium
Global investors remain underweight on the GCC, which is rather surprising. The GCC represents approximately 8% of the MSCI Emerging Markets (EM) Index. However, active EM managers are underweight relative to this figure and have yet to fully appreciate a bloc that arguably deserves an overweight position.

The GCC offers an intriguing mix of markets led by Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Other countries, such as Kuwait, Qatar, Oman and Bahrain, also play significant roles. Although the GCC is yet to evolve into a bloc akin to the European Union, it presents a compelling oil play without the typical volatility associated with oil and gas markets. The global economy still relies heavily on conventional energy, and industries built near the source are often more secure - something the GCC offers in abundance. While energy security, independence, and transition remain widely debated themes, reliance on oil and gas is likely to persist for at least the next decade

or two.

Though GCC economies have historically depended on oil, they have made concerted efforts to diversify - albeit with mixed success. For instance, non-oil industries account for over 50% of the non-oil GDP in Saudi Arabia, while the UAE has successfully positioned itself as a global trade hub. The GCC also boasts some of the lowest debt-to-GDP ratios globally, resulting in high credit ratings. A predominantly young population (with the majority under 35) continues to fuel a consumption boom. Numerous reforms are underway, including enhancements in ease of doing business (Saudi Arabia), capital market development (Saudi Arabia and Kuwait), and fiscal consolidation (Oman).

While global economic influence is gradually shifting towards China, India, and Saudi Arabia, portfolio allocations by EM managers have yet to reflect this shift - particularly in the case of Saudi Arabia. GCC economies are grounded in real assets, affording them long-term resilience. This is also evident in market performance, with the MSCI GCC index delivering a compound annual growth rate



Global investors remain underweight on the GCC, which is rather surprising given that the region represents approximately 8% of the MSCI Emerging Markets Index

(CAGR) of 5.5% over the past decade, compared to 4.3% for the MSCI EM index.

So, what is holding back foreign investors?

The GCC is widely recognised as a hotspot for sovereign wealth funds (SWFs), and is often seen more as a provider of capital than a seeker of it. SWFs such as the Abu Dhabi Investment Authority (ADIA), Public Investment Fund (PIF), and Kuwait Investment Authority rank among the world's top ten, reinforcing this perception. Former US President Donald Trump's visit to the region underscored this belief to a considerable extent.

Historically, these SWFs have invested globally to diversify risk. However, PIF and ADIA are now committing significant resources to domestic projects, backed by ambitious national visions. The GCC is keen to attract foreign capital, not only to support these diversification goals, but also to invest in talent and technology. A growing youth population must be provided with meaningful employment opportunities, aligning

well with the need for inward investment.

A key challenge for EM managers may lie in the narrow sectoral representation in regional stock markets, which are dominated by banking and petrochemicals. Prominent industries such as aviation (e.g., Emirates) or logistics (e.g., Dubai) have minimal stock market presence. Likewise, sectors such as information technology, healthcare, and defence (Saudi Arabia ranks among the top ten global military spenders) are also under-represented.

EM managers would do well to take a broader, long-term view and consider overweighting the region. The advantages far outweigh the risks, and we believe the GCC will soon command a premium in an increasingly unpredictable world marked by policy uncertainty and rising global risks.

The views and opinions expressed in this column are solely those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of Muscat Daily or Apex Press & Publishing

Nord Stream: Is a return to Russian pipeline gas on table for Germany?

Arthur Sullivan

As the war in Ukraine grinds into its fourth year, the idea that Russia could once again pump gas to the European Union via Germany is not as outlandish as it might have been just a few months ago. With efforts ongoing to end the war, speculation continues over the possible reintegration of Russian gas into the EU's energy mix. For months, some members of Germany's centre-right Christian Democratic Union (CDU), which leads the government, have been hinting strongly at support for such a proposal, particularly with regard to the Nord Stream pipelines. The latest came from Saxony's CDU state premier, Michael Kretschmer.

In an interview with German newspaper Die Zeit, he described the Nord Stream pipelines as a possible "opening for talks with Russia." He even specified how much of Germany's gas supply should come from Russia - 20%. In March, some of his colleagues welcomed the idea of repairing both pipelines of the damaged Nord Stream 1 and the single damaged pipeline on Nord Stream 2. The three were damaged after an act of sabotage in September 2022. Nord Stream 1 brought gas to Germany before the start of the Ukraine war in early 2022, while Nord Stream 2 was finished in September 2021 but never actually entered service. However, even if some in the



Germany always called Nord Stream a strictly commercial project. Now, the pipelines are fraught with politics

German government are keen, many are not. Friedrich Merz, Germany's new chancellor and CDU leader, has made it clear that he supports EU plans to prevent the reactivation of the pipelines as part of the next sanctions package against Russia. Amid the rumours about the possible repair of the pipelines, the European Commission is currently consulting member states about permanently banning the use of Nord Stream.

US, Russia reportedly keen on Nord Stream deal
However, both Russia and the United States are reportedly eager to agree on a deal to get gas flowing through the pipelines again.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said recently that discussions with the US have included Nord Stream. Meanwhile, according to several reports, US investors are interested in buying Nord Stream 2 AG - the Swiss-based subsidiary of the Russian state-owned energy giant Gazprom which owns the Nord Stream 2 pipeline. In January, bankruptcy proceedings against Nord Stream 2 AG were delayed until May, with a redacted court document showing that Gazprom argued that the Trump administration could "have significant consequences on the circumstances of Nord Stream 2." Chris Weaver, an investment adviser who has worked in Russia for more than 25 years, told

DW that there are serious discussions taking place regarding a US purchase of the company. **German business suffers under energy costs**
So, is there any way Europe would want to buy Russian pipeline gas again? Europe's diversification away from Russian gas and oil after Moscow launched its full-scale invasion was the main factor that led to a surge in energy costs throughout 2022 and 2023. Although prices have come down significantly from those highs, the re-emergence of Russian energy into the mix would likely push costs down further. German companies such as the chemical giant BASF bore the

For months, there has been speculation that the US and Russia want to repair the Nord Stream gas pipelines running through the Baltic Sea and bring them back online. The question remains whether Germany might agree

not speculate on any possible deals regarding Russian energy, but it did emphasise it was not the only factor affecting its business. "The increased gas price is only one factor affecting BASF's competitiveness," the spokesperson said. "Other important reasons are the current weak demand and increasing import volumes." Wolfgang Grosse Entrup, managing director of Germany's Chemical Industry Association, told DW that his members "welcome measures that reduce excessively high energy prices," but he emphasised the importance of "reliable partners." "Supplies via Nord Stream 1 were unilaterally suspended by Russia in August 2022," he said. "With a major effort, it has been possible to ensure security of supply even without Russian oil and gas. We should not fall back into old, supposedly comfortable, habits and avoid excessive dependence on individual countries in the future."

Complicated route
Yet political opposition to a restoration of supply remains fierce in Europe. The EU Commission has repeatedly reiterated its strong stance against, in keeping with its current sanctions plans. "Nord Stream 2 is not a project of common interest, it does not diversify the EU's energy sources," an EU Commission spokesperson said at a press briefing on March 3.

Project of Common Interest (PCI) status is given to energy infrastructure projects, allowing them to benefit from an accelerated approval process and more flexible regulation. The EU has pledged to quit all Russian fossil fuels by 2027, and the European Commission released a detailed strategy and road map on 6 May as to how it plans to achieve this goal. The strategy mentions the end of all imports of Russian gas by the end of 2027, and says new contracts to supply any kind of Russian gas will be stopped by the end of 2025. In this context, Hilgenstock thinks supporting the restoration of Nord Stream would be "absolutely bizarre and grotesque." "I think we would demonstrate that we're fundamentally not serious about Russian sanctions. Turning around on this, specifically, means we are absolutely not serious about restraining Vladimir Putin's ability to continue his war in Ukraine and threaten peace and prosperity in Europe. It would be an absurd development," he said. Even if some in the German and European political establishment were in favour of restoring one or both Nord Stream pipelines, argued Hilgenstock, there are "multiple technical obstacles." The Nord Stream 2 pipeline has never been legally certified by Germany, for one, and Hilgenstock said he doesn't see the new German government doing that DW

Global EV sales surge: 1 in 4 cars sold worldwide in 2025 will be electric

Paris, France - Following another year of robust growth, global sales of electric cars are on track to surpass 20mn in 2025, accounting for over a quarter of cars sold worldwide, according to the new edition of the IEA's annual Global EV Outlook. The report shows that despite recent economic headwinds that have put pressure on the auto sector, global sales of electric cars have continued to break records as electric models become increasingly affordable. Sales exceeded 17mn globally in 2024, putting EVs' share of the global car market above 20% for the first time, as forecasted by the IEA previously. And in the first three months of 2025, electric car sales were up 35% year-on-year. All major markets, and many others, saw new records for first-quarter sales.



China maintains its position as the EV market leader, with electric cars accounting for almost half of all car sales in 2024. The number of electric cars sold in China last year (more than 11mn) is equivalent to the total sold worldwide in 2022. Emerging markets in Asia and Latin America have also become new centres of growth, with total electric car sales across these regions surging by more than 60% in 2024. In the United States, electric car sales grew by about 10% year-on-year, reaching more than one in ten cars sold. Europe saw sales stagnate as subsidy schemes and other supportive policies waned, though the market share of electric cars remained around 20%. "Our data shows that, despite significant uncertainties, electric cars remain on a strong growth

trajectory globally. Sales continue to set new records, with major implications for the international auto industry," said IEA Executive Director Fatih Birol. "This year, we expect more than one in four cars sold worldwide to be electric, with growth accelerating in many emerging economies. By the end of this decade, it is set to be more than two in five cars as EVs become increasingly affordable." Uncertainties over global economic growth and the evolution of trade and industrial policies could affect the outlook. But sales of EVs are being supported by

their increasing affordability, the report finds. On a global level, the average price of a battery electric car fell in 2024 amid growing competition and declining battery costs. In China, two-thirds of all electric cars sold last year were priced lower than their conventional equivalents, even without purchase incentives. However, the purchase price gap with conventional cars persisted in many other markets. The average battery electric car price in Germany, for example, remained 20% higher than that of its conven-

tional counterpart. In the United States, battery electric cars were still 30% more expensive. EVs remain consistently cheaper to operate across many markets, based on current energy market prices. Even if oil prices were to fall as low as \$40 per barrel, running an electric car in Europe via home charging would still cost about half as much as running a conventional car at today's residential electricity prices. According to the report, almost one-fifth of electric car sales worldwide are of imported vehicles. China, which accounts for more than 70% of global production, shipped nearly 1.25mn electric cars to other countries in 2024. This included to many emerging economies, where electric car prices fell considerably on the back of Chinese imports.

US tariffs take hit on South Korean exports

Seoul, South Korea - South Korea said the US's so-called "reciprocal" tariff policies seem to be affecting its exports, which have dropped 1.3% from a year earlier in May, snapping a three-month winning streak, media reports said Sunday. "The US tariffs seem to be affecting the global economy and South Korea's exports, proven by a decrease in South Korea's exports to the two biggest markets - the US and China," Industry Minister Ahn Duk-geun was quoted by Seoul-based Yonhap News.



Government data showed Sunday that outbound shipments came to \$57.3bn last month, compared with \$58.02bn last May. Imports dipped 5.3% year-on-year to \$50.3bn, resulting in a trade surplus of \$6.94bn. Shipments to the US shrank 8.1% from a year ago to \$10bn, mainly due to the weak exports in the automotive sector, hit by the Trump administration's 25% tariffs. Exports to China also slid 8.4% year-on-year to \$10.4bn on low demand for semiconductors and petrochemical products,

while exports to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) fell 1.3% to \$10bn. In contrast, exports to the European Union increased 4% to \$6bn, up for the third successive month due to a strong demand for automobiles and semiconductors. "To minimise the damage to our export companies and maximize national interest, the government will clearly communicate our position on US tariff measures to the Trump administration and work toward mutually beneficial solutions," said Ahn. Anadolu Agency

US economy contracts by 0.2% in Q1

The US economy has contracted by 0.2% in the first quarter of the year on a quarterly basis, the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) data showed on Thursday. The BEA stated that the US GDP decreased at an annual rate of 0.2% in the first quarter of 2025, according to the bureau's second estimate, while the first estimate was at minus 0.3%. The bureau said the decrease in the GDP in the first quarter primarily reflected an increase in imports, adding that imports are a subtraction in the calculation of GDP, and a decrease in government spending. Anadolu Agency



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Meethaq Islamic enriching haj travel experience with gifts for pilgrims

Meethaq Islamic Banking from Bank Muscat is continuing its initiative to support pilgrims during their haj journey.

Running until Wednesday (June 4), Meethaq teams have deployed themselves at the Muscat International Airport and the Rub al Khali border with Saudi Arabia in Ibra, in partnership with Ibra Charity.

The teams are distributing gifts to the pilgrims, including specially designed haj bags with essential supplies, ensuring smooth travel experience.

Sami Bait Rashid, Assistant General Manager - Meethaq Personal Banking, said: "I would like to express my sincere appreciation to our valued customers and visitors for their positive feedback regarding this initiative, which reflects Meethaq's commitment to community engagement during religious, national and social occasions.

"This effort reinforces our dedication to social responsibility and community service. During the haj season, Meethaq is offering tailored banking services for pilgrims, including Travel Finance at a competitive profit rate and a variety of credit card benefits."

Meethaq's Travel Finance solution is designed to be comprehensive and customer-centric. It provides financing with convenient installment plans, competitive pricing and minimal charges. The offering is made more accessible through strategic partnerships with top travel operators across the Sultanate. Pensioners are also eligible to benefit from Travel Finance product by assigning their pension to Meethaq.

Notably, Travel Finance offering has been developed under the principle of sharia'a compliant Ijarah, ensuring full alignment with Islamic finance practices.

Meethaq Islamic Banking also offers a wide range of credit cards designed to meet diverse customer needs.

These include Meethaq Lulu Credit Card, Visa Gold Credit



Card, Visa Platinum Credit Card and Hafawa Visa Signature Credit Card. Cardholders can enjoy exclusive benefits such as airport lounge access, cashback rewards, and the flexibility of the Easy Payment Plan.

Additional features include free issuance of supplementary

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tive is designed to support their working capital needs and facilitates the purchase of buses, further enabling them to efficiently serve pilgrims during the haj and umrah seasons.

As a pioneer in Islamic digital banking, Meethaq continues to introduce innovative products

The bank has deployed teams at Muscat International Airport and the Rab al Khali border to distribute gifts, including specially designed haj bags with essential supplies

cards for family members, secure online shopping, global acceptance, and access to an extensive range of international privileges and discounts.

Furthermore, Meethaq has provided a package of banking facilities for companies and contractors involved in haj and umrah trips, who are accredited by the Ministry of Endowment and Religious Affairs. The initiative is designed to support their working capital needs and facilitates the purchase of buses, further enabling them to efficiently serve pilgrims during the haj and umrah seasons.

As a pioneer in Islamic digital banking, Meethaq continues to introduce innovative products

BankDhofar's exclusive services to support SMEs

Aligned with the government's ongoing efforts to empower small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) across Oman, BankDhofar - second-largest bank by branch network in Oman - offers exclusive benefits for SMEs, contributing towards the growth and expansion of these businesses that further support & build the local economy.

BankDhofar offers its SMEs a dedicated business account with features tailored specifically to the day-to-day needs. These include a smart point-of-sale (POS) system to facilitate sales transactions and boost revenue, a wage protection system that streamlines salary payments, and a remote cheque collection and deposit service that enables efficient processing of bulk cheques, offering greater flexibility to business owners.

BankDhofar recently launched SME Pro innovative solutions that simplifies banking for SMEs by enabling instant registration without the need for paperwork or in-person visits. Business owners can sign up securely using a one-time password (OTP), ensuring convenience and enhanced protection.

With BankDhofar SME Pro, Business owners can benefit from a host of exclusive features designed to support their business needs. These include free transfers on the first transaction and every third transaction thereafter, applicable to both local and international transfers. Additionally, they will receive a complimentary annual checkbook, along with exemptions from service fees and annual credit card fees for the first year. SME owners will also be provided with a free direct debit card for the first year, six free Wage Protection System (WPS) transactions, access to a smart device point-of-sale system, and remote check collection services.



Alizz Islamic recognised as Oman's 'Best Islamic Bank in Customer Experience'

In recognition of its outstanding commitment to customer experience, Alizz Islamic Bank recently awarded for 'Best Islamic Banking Brand in Customer Experience (CX)' at the Oman CX Awards that was held at the St Regis, Al Mouj Muscat Resort under the patronage of H H Mohammed bin Salim al Said.

The award was received on behalf of the bank by Saif al Yahyai, Acting Chief Retail Banking Officer of the bank.

Winning this award is a significant recognition of the bank's commitment to 'Personalising every experience through innovative & smart solutions'.

Alizz Islamic Bank continues to place customers at the heart of their strategy, transforming customer experience through technology, empathy and excellence.

In the past year, Alizz Islamic Bank has gone through significant progress, accomplished numerous achievements and implemented several initiatives redefining and refining the customer experience journey including but not limited to: The strategic partnership with Visa to introduce instant issuance debit cards, credit cards and pre-paid cards, launching the new 'Alizz X' mobile banking application with a seamless and secure way of banking, opening the smart branch in Bawsher, the upgrade of the entire ATM/CDM network to best in class machines and introducing self-service machines, introducing the banks chatbot to enhance customer contact and investing in frontline development programmes to strengthen its customer service across all branches.

In line with Oman Vision 2040 the bank has also played a leading role in creating an environment to facilitate financial inclusivity and is dedicated to continuing to remove barriers and simplify access to financial services for all via training programmes educating staff on how to communicate with the visually/ hearing impaired and answer their related inquiries via braille forms or sign language. Alizz Islamic Bank also enhanced the customer experience through the introduction of its key value propositions Alizz Junior, Alizz Youth, Alizz One, Alizz Tharwa and Alizz Business.

The Oman CX Awards recognises outstanding CX professionals and companies that are shaping customer-centric excellence in the Sultanate and is designed to foster collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and excellence.

On winning the award, Saif al Yahyai said "We are honoured to receive this recognition from the Oman CX Awards and to be recognised for our continued efforts to provide innovative sharia'a compliant solutions for our customers."



Oman Perfume Show to end today at Oman Convention & Exhibition Centre

The celebrated annual event - Oman Perfume Show, which opened at the Oman Convention & Exhibition Centre (OCEC) on Thursday, will come to an end on Monday, a release stated.

The exhibition officially opened under the patronage of Halima bint Rashid al Zari Chairperson, Small and Medium Enterprise Development Authority, in the presence of Said al Shanfari, CEO of OCEC.

This year's edition is a celebration of the very essence of Oman: its ingredients, its craftsmanship, and the scents that define its identity.

Bringing together over 100 exhibitors, the five-day show is expected to welcome more than 30,000 visitors, matching last year's attendance. With the GCC fragrance and perfume market valued at over US\$3bn in 2024 (Mordor Intelligence), the sector continues to grow, spanning



from niche artisanal labels to established international names. The Oman Perfume Show responds to this growing demand, offering a platform for discovery and connection.

Oman's natural richness, from frankincense to Damask rose, has shaped the region's fragrance heritage. These scents reflect a deep connection to tradition and craftsmanship. The Oman Perfume Show highlights this journey, showcasing the country's biodiversity and creative spirit as raw ingredients transform into luxurious perfumes.

This year's line-up features renowned names such as Majid Oud, Junaid, Shaikh Saeed, Ahmed al Maghrabi, Abdul-samad al Qurashi, Safar and Lootah. New to the event are Thailand's Immortal Oud, and GGC brands Asateer Oud and Dkhoun Emirates marking their



first appearance in Oman.

Timed ahead of Eid al Adha, the show offers visitors the opportunity to explore and purchase a wide range of perfumes, incense, and frankincense products, making it the perfect pre-Eid destination.

Commenting on the event, Shanfari said, "Oman's land speaks through scent with famous natural ingredients like frankincense or our Damask rose becoming legendary perfumes. These natural treasures have always told a wider story of place and identity. This year's Oman Perfume Show captures this

journey from land to luxury, a celebration of our heritage, creativity, and craft. We are proud to welcome over 100 exhibitors to our 2025 edition, with many regional and local brands showcasing some of their latest collections in exclusivity to our audience."

A variety of activities will take place alongside the event, including live music performances and interviews with visitors, perfumers, and other participants. In addition, visitors will be able to enjoy seven local food and beverage outlets such as Historia Roastery & Cafe, Arte Roastery Cafe and Maani Cafe. The event also features a gift-wrapping service and a calligraphy corner, where personalised perfume bottles can be inscribed with names - ideal for gifting.

The exhibition will remain open from 12pm to 10pm on Monday in Exhibition Hall 1.

Kia PV5 WAV brings era of wheelchair accessible EVs

Kia Corporation showcased the PV5 WAV (Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle) model at the *Financial Times* Future of the Car Summit in London, in collaboration with UK-based Motability Operations Ltd.

Part of Kia's ongoing commitment and contribution to enhancing mobility for people with disabilities, the exhibition underscores the company's leadership as a Sustainable Mobility Solutions Provider.

"The PV5 WAV is more than just a vehicle; it's a gateway to independence and freedom for those with mobility challenges," an official from Kia Corporation shared. "By integrating cutting-edge Platform Beyond Vehicle (PBV) technology with thoughtful design, we are paving the way for a future where everyone can enjoy the benefits of sustainable mobility, and our partnership with Motability Operations is a testament to our commitment to making this vision a reality."

Kia's development of a competitive electric WAV (eWAV) has aligned with the evolution of its industry-leading PBV models and comes in response to increasing worldwide demand for accessible vehicles.

Factors such as increased life expectancy and growing elderly populations are leading to a greater requirement for WAVs, with transport operators expanding their WAV-related services and changes being made to WAV-related policies in certain markets. With the continued growth of the sector projected to



The PV5 WAV is a gateway to freedom for those with mobility challenges... We are paving the way for a future where everyone can enjoy the benefits of sustainable mobility

AN OFFICIAL FROM KIA

clash with the planned phasing out of ICE vehicles that would usually be converted into WAVs, the introduction of eWAV options is of vital importance.

Kia's PV5 WAV is designed to

provide freedom of movement not only for wheelchair users, but their families, caregivers and drivers as well. The vehicle will enable users to enjoy more convenient, comfortable and acces-

sible travel while seamlessly transitioning to electric mobility.

The PV5 WAV features a side-entry system that allows wheelchair users to board safely from the sidewalk. It also includes a third-row tip-up seat, enabling caregivers to assist wheelchair passengers from the side. The model will provide easy curb-side access to enhance safety and convenience. It will also feature a quick-use, 300kg-rated wheelchair entry ramp and a specially developed wheelchair

belt fastening system.

Beyond hardware innovations, the PV5 WAV will also integrate necessary applications for individuals with disabilities, based on the AAOS open software platform. Reliable International Automotive LLC (RIA), the official distributor of Kia in Oman, is committed to delivering an exceptional ownership experience. Kia has been ranked #1 in Sales Customer Satisfaction in 2024 across the Middle East and Africa.

RAM announces new global advisory board

The Royal Academy of Management (RAM) has announced the formation of its newly reconstituted International Advisory Board, comprising a distinguished group of global leaders and renowned experts in leadership, management, and innovation.

This strategic development marks a major milestone in RAM's ongoing efforts to elevate executive education and leadership development. The establishment of the Board reinforces the academy's unwavering commitment to excellence, international collaboration, and alignment with the national priorities outlined in Oman Vision 2040.

On this occasion, Dr Ali bin Qassim al Lawati, President of The Royal Academy of Management, stated, "We are proud to welcome this outstanding group of global thought leaders and experts to RAM's International Advisory Board. Their diverse insights, extensive experience, and international outlook will significantly contribute to shaping RAM's strategic direction."

The academy president pointed out that the board will play a vital role in enriching our programmes, offering forward-looking perspectives on leadership and innovation, and strengthening our global partnerships to enhance the academy's international standing.

Dr Lawati also extended his gratitude to the outgoing members of the previous



Dr Ali bin Qassim al Lawati

board, acknowledging their foundational role: "We are deeply grateful to our former Board members for their invaluable contributions. Their vision, insight, and dedication played a pivotal role in shaping the Academy's early direction and advancing the development of its flagship initiatives and programmes. Their support has helped lay a strong foundation for RAM's emergence as a national leader in executive education and a beacon of leadership excellence."

Reflecting on the board's importance, he added: "We are confident that the newly formed International Advisory Board will build on this legacy. It is worth noting that the former board had the distinguished honour of meeting His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik - may God protect him - during the Academy's official inauguration under the gracious Royal Patronage. That moment underscored the strategic importance of the advisory role in supporting RAM's national mission."

Port of Duqm wins 'Quality Choice 2025 - Diamond Award'

In a prestigious international ceremony held in the Swedish capital Stockholm, the Port of Duqm was awarded the 'Quality Choice 2025 - Diamond Category' by the European Society for Quality Research (ESQR).

This honour recognises the port's strong commitment to business ethics, pioneering initiatives in quality management and sustainability, and its exceptional success at a global institutional level.

A total of 48 institutions from 41 countries across Europe, Asia, the Americas, Africa, and Australia were selected to receive this year's award.

During the ceremony, Hashim Tahir al Ibrahim, Chief Business Support Officer at the Port of Duqm, gave a speech expressing the port's pride in this recognition.

"This award not only reflects the strength of our systems and procedures, but it also embodies the vision and commitment of every individual at Port of Duqm. We don't just provide logistics services - we play a strategic role in building a green economic future for the Sultanate of Oman."

Ibrahim highlighted that the Port of Duqm is more than a maritime port; it serves as a strategic gateway between the Middle East and Europe and is leading efforts to become a regional hub for green hydrogen, in alignment with Oman Vision 2040.

He emphasised that the concept of quality at the Port of Duqm goes beyond performance indicators. It encompasses customer satisfaction,



employee safety, operational efficiency, and a continuous drive for digital transformation and innovation.

He also shed light on current and future environmental sustainability projects, including the development of green infrastructure, the use of solar energy, bio-fuels, and equipment powered by electricity and hydrogen.

Ibrahim also reviewed the port's efforts to protect marine life, such as preserving Arabian Sea humpback whales, restoring coral reefs, and researching seaweed farming, in collaboration with partners and the local community.

He stressed that Port of

Duqm's philosophy of quality is rooted in social, economic, and environmental sustainability, aligning all initiatives with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and supporting youth empowerment and entrepreneurship in Al Wusta Governorate through social responsibility and training programmes.

He concluded by saying, "This recognition marks a new starting point toward achieving higher levels of excellence. We dedicate this achievement to our partners, stakeholders, and our community, and we look forward to a more sustainable, inclusive, and quality-driven future."

Knowledge Oman, Muscat College tie up

Knowledge Oman and Muscat College have embarked on an impactful collaboration through the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), reinforcing their shared commitment to educational and community development.

This strategic partnership was initiated by the Research Centre at Muscat College and formalized during a dedicated meeting held at the college campus. The MoU was signed by Dr Araby Madbouly, Assistant Dean of Academic Affairs at Muscat College, and Tariq al Barwani, Founder of Knowledge Oman, in the presence of Abdullah al Farsi, Assistant Dean for Administrative and Financial Affairs, Balqees al Hassani, President of Knowledge Oman, along with representatives from both organisations.

The collaboration aims to fos-



ter innovation, research, and impactful community initiatives.

The partnership emphasises a stronger commitment to community development, with a particular focus on empowering students in entrepreneurship.

As part of the collaboration, both institutions will work together to build a structured support system to foster the students' entrepreneurial skills through equipping students with

the necessary guidance and exposure to build sustainable and socially impactful business ventures.

Under the terms of the agreement, Knowledge Oman will form a dedicated team of experts to coach students, offering mentorship and startup guidance. The initiative is designed to accelerate the development of student-led startups and stimulate an entrepreneurial mindset

among the youth.

One of the key outcomes of the meeting was the decision to form a dedicated expert team from Knowledge Oman. This team will provide strategic support to students at Muscat College, including commercialisation advice and intellectual property guidance, to help transform their innovative ideas into viable business models that benefit the wider community.

Mitsubishi wins 'Best Customer Experience'

Mitsubishi Motors Oman, represented by General Automotive Company, has been awarded the Best Brand in Customer Experience - SUV Category at the Oman CX Awards 2025, reaffirming its leadership in the automotive sector and commitment to delivering an outstanding customer experience.

The recognition highlights Mitsubishi Motors Oman's strategic focus on fostering strong customer relationships through consistent service quality, responsive support, and a seamless ownership experience across its portfolio.

From showroom engagement to after-sales care, the brand continues to enhance touchpoints that matter most to vehicle owners in Oman.



Manoj Ranade, General Manager of General Automotive Company, expressed his gratitude for the recognition, stating: "This award is a testament to our dedication to customer satisfaction. At General Automotive

Company, we are committed to creating exceptional experiences at every step of the ownership journey. This achievement reflects the trust our customers place in us, and we remain devoted to exceeding their expect-

tations."

The Oman CX Awards, held as part of the Oman CX Forum 2025, celebrates organisations that demonstrate measurable excellence in customer experience across key sectors.

Mitsubishi Motors Oman's distinction in the AUTO-SUV category reflects its ongoing efforts to adapt to evolving customer needs and set new benchmarks for satisfaction and loyalty.

The awards recognised excellence across 35 sectors and service categories, with winners determined through nationwide consumer voting. The event underscored the critical role customer experience plays in brand reputation and long-term success.

China warns US ‘not to play with fire’ after its remarks on Taiwan

Beijing/Singapore - China warned the US on Sunday that it ‘should not play with fire’ concerning Taiwan and said it lodged ‘representations’ with Washington for remarks by Pentagon chief Pete Hegseth at an annual security summit in Singapore.

Hegseth told the Shangri-La Dialogue that China was ‘credibly preparing’ to use military force to upend the balance of power in Asia.

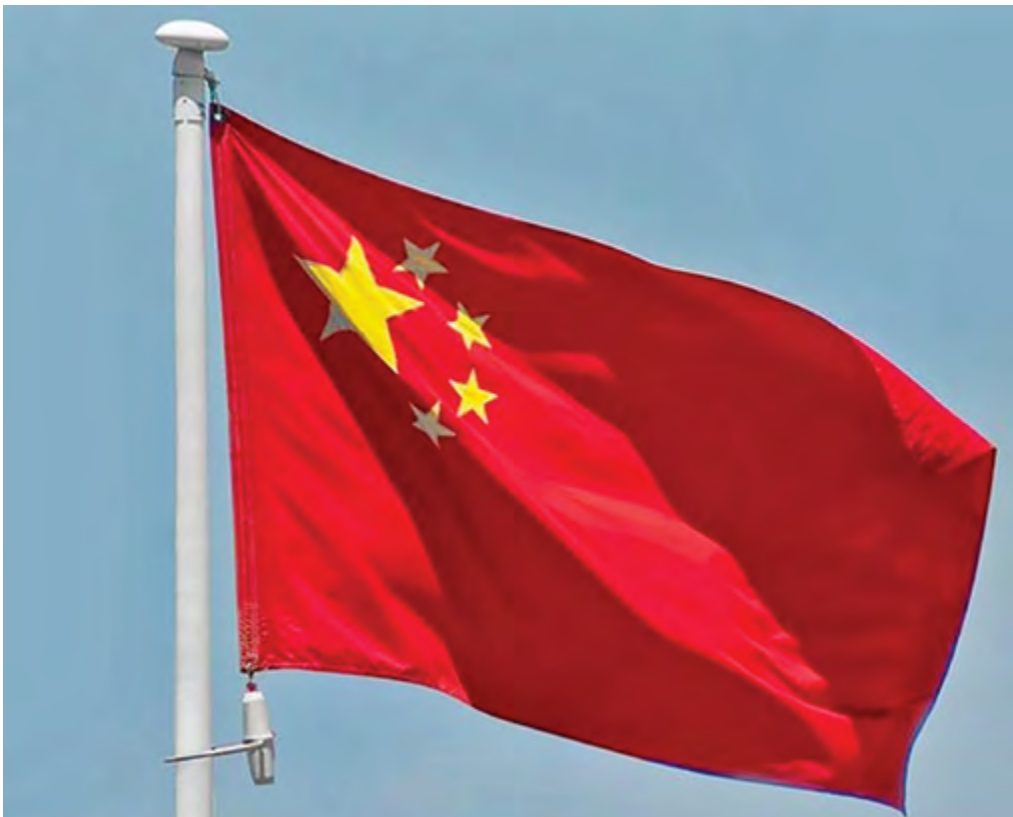
He also accused the Chinese military of building capabilities to invade Taiwan and ‘rehearsing for the real deal’.

“Hegseth deliberately ignored the call for peace and development by countries in the region, and instead touted the Cold War mentality for bloc confrontation, vilified China with defamatory allegations, and falsely called China a threat,” a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson said in a statement.

China is ‘strongly’ dissatisfied with and firmly opposed to Hegseth’s remarks and has made ‘solemn representations’ to the US, it said. “In fact, the US is the world’s true hegemonic power and the biggest factor undermining peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region.”

“In order to maintain its hegemony and advance the so-called ‘Indo-Pacific Strategy’, the US has deployed offensive weapons in the South China Sea, stoked tensions, and created instability - turning the region into a ‘powder keg’ and arousing deep concern among regional countries,” the Foreign Ministry added.

The Taiwan question is purely China’s internal affair, and no foreign country has the right to interfere, it maintained. “The US



The Taiwan question is purely China’s internal affair, a foreign ministry spokesperson said in a statement

Beijing, in a statement, urged Washington to genuinely respect efforts of regional countries to maintain peace and stability and stop deliberately undermining the region’s peaceful environment

should not entertain illusions about using the Taiwan question as a bargaining chip to contain China, nor should it play with fire.”

China considers Taiwan its breakaway province, whereas Taipei insists on its independence. Beijing said that there has ‘never’ been a problem with freedom of navigation or overflight in the South China Sea.

China has always insisted on

addressing differences with relevant countries through dialogue and consultation, and on safeguarding its territorial sovereignty and maritime rights and interests in accordance with law, according to the statement.

“The US is the biggest factor undermining peace and stability in the South China Sea,” the Foreign Ministry stated.

Beijing urged Washington to ‘genuinely’ respect the efforts of

regional countries to ‘maintain peace and stability, stop deliberately undermining the region’s peaceful environment, refrain from exaggerating conflicts and confrontation, and avoid further exacerbating tensions’.

Meanwhile, Singapore’s Defence Minister Chan Chun Sing said on Saturday that Chinese Defence Chief Dong Jun’s absence was noted at the key annual defence and security event in Singapore, and that he would have preferred to see him attend to avoid misunderstandings.

“I think it would be fair to say that most, if not everyone around the table, would have hoped for the presence of the Chinese delegation because the Shangri-La Dialogue has continued to grow

over all these years. The participation has continued to grow, and that’s because many people found it useful; a useful platform to exchange perspectives,” Chan said.

A delegation from the National Defence University of the Chinese army attended the 22nd Shangri-La Dialogue in place of Dong, who regularly participated in the dialogue between 2019 and 2024.

“It is only through dialogues that we can have this clarity of one another’s intention, and that is very useful,” Chan said while emphasising the platform’s importance for minimising any misinterpretations.

Singapore’s defence chief said that while he cannot speak for China, Beijing’s participation is up to their ‘own considerations’, however, they are welcome to participate in ‘future dialogues’.

Chan encouraged all defence ministers to ‘continue to reach out to China’.

“And I’m sure China, in its own time, will also want to reach out to the rest of the world because I think it’s important for all sides to try to reach out to one another to better understand one another so that we minimise the chances of misunderstanding or misreading each other’s intent,” Chan said.

Top defence chiefs such as Australian Defence Minister Richard Marles and US Secretary of Defence Pete Hegseth were among the attendees of the Shangri-La Dialogue summit, which is held annually in Singapore and serves as a significant platform for defence and security discussions in the Asia-Pacific region.

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Kamil Idris taking oath as Sudan’s new prime minister

Idris sworn in as Sudan’s new prime minister

Khartoum, Sudan - Kamil Idris was sworn in as Sudan’s new prime minister on Saturday in the presence of Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, the head of the Sovereignty Council.

On May 19, Al-Burhan issued a constitutional decree, appointing Idris as prime minister.

According to Sudanese news agency SUNA, Idris took the oath of office in front of Al-Burhan, accompanied by the Secretary-General of the Sovereign Council, Lieutenant General Mohamed Al-Ghali Ali Youssef, and the head of the judiciary in the Red Sea State, who represented the Chief Justice.

Idris is a politician with a PhD in international law from the Graduate Institute of International Studies at the University of Geneva in Switzerland. He was also a presidential candidate in the 2010 election.

Before Idris’ appointment, Sudan’s ambassador to Saudi

Arabia, Dafallah Al-Haj Youssef, held the positions of minister of Cabinet affairs and prime minister caretaker.

Burhan established a transitional government in April 2019, following a military coup that deposed President Omar al-Bashir. The Transitional Sovereignty Council succeeded the government in August of that year, and the Sovereign Council took over in November 2021.

Since April 15, 2023, the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) paramilitary group has been battling army forces for control of Sudan, resulting in thousands of deaths and one of the world’s worst humanitarian crises.

Over 20,000 people have been killed, with an additional 15mn displaced, according to the UN and local authorities.

Research from US scholars, however, estimates the death toll at around 130,000.

Anadolu Agency

7 dead after bridge collapses over passenger train in Russia



The incident took place on Saturday around 10.50pm close to the Ukrainian border

Moscow, Russia - Investigators are inspecting the site of the collapse of a road bridge and the subsequent derailment of a passenger train in the Bryansk region, Russian state media reported on Sunday.

At least seven people were killed when the road bridge collapsed on the Vygonichi-Pilshino section in the Bryansk region of western Russia late on Saturday, and the debris fell on a passenger train passing underneath. Railway authorities are blaming ‘illegal interference’, TASS news outlet said.

The incident took place on May 31, around 10.50pm (local time), close to the Ukrainian border when the train was travelling from the town of Klimov to the capital, Moscow.

According to the Governor of the Bryansk Region, Alexander

Bogomaz, 44 people were hospitalised, 22 are being examined as outpatients. An investigation has been launched, and a team is inspecting the site, state news

According to the Governor of the Bryansk Region, 44 people were hospitalised, 22 are being examined as outpatients. An investigation has been launched, and a team is inspecting the site

agency TASS reported.

Three victims, including an infant, are in serious condition,

Russian state media reported.

Passengers were evacuated from the wreckage and taken to a temporary accommodation centre at a nearby station, according to TASS.

Russian Railways (RZD), the country’s state-owned railway operator, said on Telegram on Sunday that restoration efforts are underway at the scene, with almost 200 railway workers, three restoration trains, and other rescue services being involved.

In a separate incident, a bridge also collapsed in Russia’s Kursk region as a freight train was passing over it, injuring one of the drivers, according to the acting governor of the Russian region that also borders Ukraine, Reuters reported. It was unclear early on Sunday whether the two incidents were connected.

ANI

Turkey experiencing sharp rise in obesity

Istanbul, Turkey - Worldwide, over one billion people are living with obesity. It’s become such a serious issue that the World Health Organization has called it an ‘epidemic’. According to a 2022 WHO report, Turkey ranks first in Europe for rates of overweight and obesity, with 66.8% of people affected.

Turkey is also one of the world’s high-income nations that is experiencing the sharpest rise in obesity. By 2030, it’s estimated that 27mn people in Turkey - or one in three - will be obese.

Health and social experts attribute this trend to insufficient nutrition, social inequality, unhealthy food supplies and a lack of coherent policy strategies. Studies indicate that one in five children in Turkey suffers from malnutrition, at least 10% of whom are overweight or obese.

‘Poverty is the problem’

For years, Turkey has faced high food price inflation, reducing citizens’ purchasing power. Hacer Foggo, a Turkish poverty researcher and activist, said the growing number of obese children can be linked to extreme poverty.

“Malnutrition can stunt growth and lead to obesity,” she said, pointing to a 2022 study by the Turkish Statistical Institute showing that 62.4% of children in Turkey predominantly eat bread and pasta. These findings, she added, have not been taken seriously enough.

Bulent Sik, a food researcher, sees a direct link between the rise in child obesity and the widespread consumption of highly processed foods with low nutritional value and a high sugar



Health experts have linked rising obesity to poverty and limited access to fresh, healthy foods

content.

“The increasing consumption of cheap, easily accessible snacks and sugary soft drinks is directly tied to the rise in obesity,” he said. As long as the manufacturing of these products is not regulated, he added, most political measures remain merely symbolic.

Sik also warned of another risk: the use of toxic chemicals in food production, such as pesticides and certain additives that are related to hormonal imbalances and weight gain.

“Some of these toxic substances have a negative impact on hormone systems,” he explained, ‘which poses a serious threat, especially for growing children’.

He cited a study by Greenpeace Turkey showing that one-third of produce sold in Istanbul contained pesticide residues that can disrupt hormones, impede neurological development and potentially cause cancer.

Despite these findings, Sik said, government food oversight policies still focus primarily on calorie counting.

National campaign

Turkey’s Health Ministry has launched a national public health campaign to combat obesity, setting up stations in busy public areas and at event venues to measure citizens’ height, weight and body mass index, or BMI. The aim is to identify overweight individuals and refer them to health centres or general practitioners, where they can receive support from nutritional advisers.

The ministry hopes its campaign, launched in mid-May, will reach 10mn citizens within two months and help raise awareness about the dangers of obesity while promoting a healthy lifestyle.

But the effort has drawn criticism for stigmatising overweight individuals and overlooking the country’s broader economic struggles.

Healthy foods often expensive

Experts say the state has not issued adequate guidelines for healthy eating or restricted the marketing of unhealthy foods. This lack of regulation is putting

children and low-income communities at particular risk.

“Political decision-makers are responsible for creating solutions,” said Sik.

Healthy and fresh foods are often more expensive and largely inaccessible to low-income households, leading to a nutritional imbalance. This contributes to obesity, growth disorders and iron deficiency in children.

Both Sik and Foggo support a nationwide free school meal programme. Foggo criticised the government for failing to act, despite repeated calls. “In the parliament’s protocols, you can see that the Health Ministry has recognised the problem and sees that school meals are the solution. But not a single step has been taken,” she said.

Turkey is also facing a shortage of professionals in the field. According to the health and social workers’ union Saglik Sen, the number of dietitians working in public hospitals has dropped by nearly 20% over the past five years. DW

Nearly 50 killed, 200 injured as Israeli forces open fire on aid seekers in Gaza

Gaza City/Ankara - Nearly 50 Palestinians were killed and more than 200 others wounded on Sunday when Israeli forces opened fire on civilians seeking humanitarian aid in Al-Mawasi, west of Rafah in southern Gaza, the Health Ministry said.

A ministry statement said that the bodies of 28 people were transferred to Nasser Hospital in Khan Younis city and 21 others to the Red Cross Field Hospital, while over 200 people were injured by Israeli live fire.

According to eyewitnesses, large crowds had assembled early in the morning at an aid distribution centre run by the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, an American organisation backed by Israel.

As people approached the site, Israeli military vehicles opened fire, and drones dropped explosives, resulting in mass casualties, they added.

A medical official described the situation around the distribution centre as 'extremely dangerous', noting that ambulances had difficulty reaching the wounded due to ongoing gunfire. Some victims were evacuated using carts.

Simultaneously, Israeli forces also opened fire on civilians approaching another American aid centre near the Netzarim Corridor in central Gaza, witnesses said.

According to medical sources at Al-Awda Hospital in the Nusseirat refugee camp, at least one Palestinian was killed and 20 others were injured when Israeli forces fired on crowds near the Bureij refugee camp.



A ministry statement said that the bodies of 28 people were transferred to Nasser Hospital in Khan Younis city and 21 others to the Red Cross Field Hospital

Israeli army spokesman Avichay Adraee claimed that there was no information about injuries from army fire at the aid distribution centre. He said that the issue is being investigated.

Gaza's government media office accused Israel of 'using humanitarian aid systematically and maliciously as a weapon of war to blackmail starving civilians and forcibly gather them in exposed killing zones'.

Israel has crafted a plan to establish four aid distribution points in southern and central Gaza, which Israeli media say aim to

Hamas denies rejecting US proposal for truce

Istanbul, Turkey - The Palestinian resistance group Hamas on Sunday denied rejecting US envoy Steve Witkoff's proposal for a Gaza ceasefire, accusing Israel of undermining negotiations to end the war in the enclave.

"We agreed with Mr Witkov last week on a proposal that he considered acceptable as a proposal for negotiation. We

received the other party's response, which did not agree with any of the items we agreed upon and did not meet the minimum requirements of our people," senior Hamas member Basem Naim said in a statement.

He said Hamas responded 'positively and responsibly' to Witkoff's proposal to ensure Israel's respect for a 60-day

ceasefire and the entry of humanitarian aid.

"We also sought to ensure that the negotiations would lead to an end to the war and withdrawal of Israeli forces," Naim added.

The Hamas leader said Israel has refused to give guarantees to ensure respect for the 60-day ceasefire and access to humanitarian aid.

Naim said Israel 'wants to negotiate the withdrawal maps agreed upon on January 19 based on the occupation's new military presence'.

"(Israel refuses) to give guarantees that the war will cease and that enemy forces will withdraw at the end of the negotiations," the Hamas leader added.

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evacuate Palestinians from northern Gaza into the south.

According to Israel's Army Radio, Israel's aid distribution plan aims to turn the territory's north into a 'completely depopulated area'. The US-backed aid plan has faced widespread criticism and rejection from Palestinians and international humanitarian organisations.

Since March 2, Israel has kept all border crossings shut, cutting off the entry of food, medicine, fuel, and other essential supplies for Gaza's 2.4mn residents.

Meanwhile, the Palestinian father who lost nine of his children in an Israeli airstrike on the southern Gaza city of Khan Younis died from wounds sustained in the same attack, local health officials said.

Hamdi Al-Najjar was critically injured when Israeli forces bombed his home on May 24, according to the sources.

Palestinian paediatrician Alaa Al-Najjar was devastated to receive the charred bodies of her nine children at Nasser Medical Complex while she was on duty there.

They were killed in the Israeli airstrike that struck their home. Her only surviving child, Adam, and her husband, Dr Hamdi Al-Najjar, were both injured.

The Israeli military claimed it would investigate the drone strike that hit the Al-Najjar family home. At least 54,418 Palestinians have been killed in Israel's genocidal war since October 2023, the Health Ministry said on Sunday.

Anadolu Agency

Ukraine says 12 killed, over 60 injured in Russian strike on a training centre

Kyiv, Ukraine - Ukraine on Sunday said that at least 12 of its servicemen were killed and more than 60 injured in a Russian missile strike on a training centre in the war-torn country.

A statement from the Land Forces of Ukraine's Armed Forces (AFU) on Telegram said that Russia launched a missile 'on the location of one of the training units' of the AFU, without providing further details on where the strike took place.

"As of 12:50pm (0950GMT), 12 people have been killed and over 60 injured," the statement further said.

"We emphasise that no for-



mations or mass gatherings of personnel were held," it further said, noting that those injured are being provided with all necessary medical assistance.

The statement also said a commission has been created to clarify the details behind the attack, indicating that an investigation has also been launched.

"If it is established that the actions or inaction of officials led to the death and injury of servicemen, the guilty will be held strictly liable," the statement went on to say, adding that additional security measures are being taken to safeguard Ukrainian servicemen.

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Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi

Iran cautions IAEA against being used for political purposes

Tehran, Iran - Iran's foreign minister called on the UN nuclear watchdog to present what he described as an accurate picture of Tehran's compliance and warned against the agency being used for political purposes.

This came in a phone call between Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director General Rafael Grossi on Saturday, according to a statement from Tehran. The call addressed ongoing nuclear negotiations and the IAEA's recent report on the country's nuclear activities.

Araghchi reaffirmed Iran's cooperation with the agency and said its nuclear activities remain within the framework of the IAEA's safeguards agreement. According to him, there had been 'no deviation' in the country's nuclear materials or activities.

Abbas Araghchi reaffirmed Iran's cooperation with the agency and said its activities remain within the framework of IAEA's safeguards agreement

He also called on Grossi to clarify Iran's cooperation at next week's IAEA Board of Governors meeting.

Araghchi said Tehran would respond 'appropriately to any improper moves by European parties' and warned that parties misusing the IAEA to pursue political agendas against Iran would be held responsible for the consequences.

India: Severe flooding in several parts of Tripura

Agartala, India - Around 1,300 families have taken shelter in government-run relief camps across West Tripura district following incessant rainfall over the past two days that has triggered severe flooding in several parts of the region.

"Incessant rainfall over the past two days has led to severe flooding across various parts of West Tripura district. As a result, nearly 1,300 families have been shifted to government shelter homes for safety. The state government is closely monitoring the flood-affected areas," Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha said in a Facebook post on Sunday.

The Chief Minister added that the district administration has deployed teams from the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), State Disaster Response Force (SDRF), civil volunteers,



People waded through a waterlogged road amid floods following incessant rainfall, in Agartala, India on Sunday (ANI)

and other agencies to assist in rescue and relief operations.

"Several localities in Agartala have also experienced heavy waterlogging, prompting authorities to activate water pumps to drain out the accumulated water. Officials are urging residents in flood-hit areas to follow govern-

ment advisories and relocate to designated safe zones," the CM said.

Meanwhile, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) has issued an alert for heavy to very heavy rainfall and thunderstorms across Tripura between June 1 and June 5.

The forecast also warns of extremely heavy rainfall in isolated pockets, particularly in Dhalai and West Tripura districts. Thunderstorms accompanied by lightning and gusty winds (40-50kmph) are also likely in some areas.

The IMD has advised residents to take precautions, including avoiding areas prone to waterlogging and landslides, refraining from unnecessary travel, and adhering to traffic and weather advisories.

According to officials, arrangements for food, shelter, medical care, and drinking water have been made at nearly 25 to 30 government shelters across the state. "Food, drinking water, medical assistance, and all necessary amenities are being provided at the shelters," they said.

Tripura CM Manik Saha also

visited flood-affected areas in Agartala and relief camps to review the ongoing relief efforts.

"According to eyewitnesses, teams comprising SDRF, NDRF, and Aapda Mitra volunteers are working tirelessly to ensure the safety and well-being of the affected population. Temporary shelters have been set up in schools across the district to accommodate those displaced by the floods," the Chief Minister said.

He added that Agartala Municipal Corporation Mayor Mani-pal is coordinating closely with the district authorities to expedite relief measures. "We're doing everything possible to ensure everyone's safety and to provide the necessary aid," he said during a visit to the affected areas.

ANI

Trump withdraws NASA nomination of Musk associate

Washington, D.C., US - President Donald Trump has withdrawn the NASA nomination of Jared Isaacman, a billionaire tech entrepreneur and private astronaut who has commanded and funded two SpaceX missions to Earth orbit, the White House has confirmed.

Isaacman's removal comes just days after Elon Musk's official departure from the White House, where the SpaceX CEO was serving in the role of a 'special government employee' leading the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE). Trump said he would announce a new candidate soon.

"After a thorough review of prior associations, I am hereby withdrawing the nomination of Jared Isaacman to head NASA," the US president posted on his Truth Social platform on Saturday.

"I will soon announce a new nominee who will be mission aligned and put America first in space," he said. The move came just days before the Senate was scheduled to vote on his confirmation, where he was widely expected to be approved.

According to *The New York Times*, President Donald Trump had concerns about Isaacman's



US President Donald Trump

political loyalty. The news outlet reported that Trump was informed of Isaacman's donations to Democrats in the past two campaign cycles.

"The Administrator of NASA will help lead humanity into space and execute President Trump's bold mission of planting the American flag on the planet Mars," White House Assistant Press Secretary Liz Huston told Fox News Digital on Saturday.

Isaacman, 42, said he was 'incredibly grateful' to Trump and 'all those who supported me throughout this journey'.

"I have gained a much deeper appreciation for the complexities of government and the weight our political leaders carry," he posted on X. "It may not always be obvious through the discourse and turbulence, but there are many competent, dedicated people who love this country and care deeply about the mission." Meanwhile, Musk also took to X to post: "It is rare to find someone so competent and good-hearted."

Trump announced his choice of Jared Isaacman in December, before the president's inauguration, and the nominee seemed poised to be confirmed by the

US Congress.

A US Congress Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation voted this April to advance his nomination to the full Senate for confirmation.

Isaacman had, in September last year, become the first private astronaut to perform a spacewalk after launching on a SpaceX rocket.

Meanwhile, on May 30, the White House released its NASA budget request for the 2026 fiscal year. The documents propose a US\$6bn budget cut for the agency.

ANI

Bangladesh's former PM Sheikh Hasina charged with 'crimes against humanity'

Hasina and two others were charged for their alleged roles in violent crackdowns on mass protests in July last year

Dhaka, Bangladesh - Bangladeshi prosecutors on Sunday charged former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina with 'crimes against humanity' for her alleged role in violent crackdowns on mass protests in July last year.

In a livestreamed court session, the first of its kind in Bangladesh, Dhaka-based International Crimes Tribunal Chief Prosecutor Mohammad Tajul Islam presented the charge sheet to a three-member tribunal led by Justice Md Golam Mortuza Mozumder.

The prosecution also filed the same five charges of crimes against humanity against former Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan and then-police chief Chowdhury Abdullah Al-



Bangladesh's former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was ousted in a popular uprising last year and she fled to India

Mamun. "This proceeding marks a significant milestone in the pursuit of justice for crimes against humanity under applicable legal frameworks," the tribunal said during the proceedings.

The tribunal accepted the charges and issued arrest war-

rants for Hasina and the other two officials, directing authorities to produce the three accused on June 16. On May 12, the tribunal's investigation agency submitted a report accusing Hasina of crimes against humanity.

During the student-led

protests, Bangladesh's former Awami League government, security, and intelligence services committed several serious human rights violations, raising concerns about crimes against humanity that require immediate criminal investigation, according

to the report.

The tribunal, formed in 2010 during Hasina's administration to try war crimes, has been reformed to try Hasina and her allies and her Awami League party.

Earlier, the UN human rights office in a report estimated that

up to 1,400 people were killed between July and August of last year, 12% of whom were children, and more than 22,000 were injured during the uprising against Hasina's government.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh's Supreme Court on Sunday reinstated the registration of the opposition Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami party, overturning a decade-old High Court ruling and clearing the way for the party to contest in the upcoming

Hasina. Hasina, who was ousted in a popular uprising last year and fled to India, had also issued an executive order banning the party in August 2023.

However, the transitional government led by Muhammad Yunus, which took office after Hasina's departure, dismissed the executive ban, paving the way for legal restoration efforts.

"With the verdict, a multiparty democracy and inclusive election has been acknowledged," said Ja-

In a livestreamed court session, Dhaka-based International Crimes Tribunal Chief Prosecutor Mohammad Tajul Islam presented the charge sheet to the tribunal led by Justice Md Golam Mozumder

parliamentary elections.

The decision was handed down by a four-member Appellate Division bench led by Chief Justice Syed Refaat Ahmed, who directed the Election Commission (EC) to immediately restore the party's registration and resolve related pending issues, including the allocation of its election symbol.

Jamaat lost its registration in 2013 under a court ruling issued during the tenure of Sheikh

maat's lawyer Mohammad Shishir Manir, speaking to reporters outside the court. He said the previous High Court order was politically motivated and that the justice has been served with Sunday's ruling.

The ruling marks the end of a lengthy legal battle and enables Jamaat-e-Islami to participate in the country's 13th parliamentary elections, scheduled in the coming months.

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Canada wildfires: Over 26,000 evacuated

Ottawa, Canada - Wildfires in western and central Canada have forced more than 26,000 people to evacuate, including communities in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta, according to officials and media reports.

The Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre reports that 187 fires were burning across Canada as of Sunday, with 97 categorised as 'out of control'.

Citing local officials, local media reported that more than 17,000 people have been evacuated in Manitoba, 8,000 people in Saskatchewan and 1,300 in Alberta. In a post on X, Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney said he convened the federal Incident Response Group as wildfires intensify across the country,

prompting evacuations and military assistance.

Carney said Canadian Armed Forces personnel have been deployed to assist with air evacuations in Manitoba, including in the Mathias Colomb Cree Nation community.

He said the federal government will match donations made to the Red Cross for wildfire-affected areas and is working with provinces and Indigenous leaders to ensure the safety of residents.

"The scale and complexity of these air evacuations cannot be overstated," Carney wrote on X.

Evacuation centres have opened across Manitoba, including one in Winkler, just 12 miles from the US border.

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Parenthood in Europe: Less satisfaction in life, but more meaningful, fascinating

Berlin, Germany - I once heard someone say: "Having a child is like outsourcing a vital organ that runs around outside all by itself and climbs trees." Having a child is as fascinating and meaningful as it can also be worrying and exhausting.

A new study on parental satisfaction confirms this apparent contradiction. Compared to people who are childfree, parents feel their lives are more fulfilled. However, parents are not more satisfied with their lives than non-parents. On the contrary: they are often more dissatisfied.

These are the findings of the sociologists Marita Jacob and Ansgar Hudde from the University of Cologne, published this month in the specialist Journal of Marriage and Family. The researchers based their study on data from the European Social Survey, which had more than 43,000 respondents from 30 countries.

Jacob and Hudde determined that, regardless of nationality or social status, both mothers and fathers felt that their lives had a deeper meaning.



But the same was not true of their satisfaction with their lives. This depended to a large extent not only on the respondent's living situation, but also on family policy in their country. And the difference was gendered: Mothers' life satisfaction levels were lower than those of fathers.

"Parents in challenging life situations are less satisfied," says Marita Jacob, a sociology professor at the University of Cologne. Challenging might mean, for example, that they are a single parent, young, with low educational qualifications. Hardly surprising, you might think, that they are

The price that parents pay is lower life satisfaction, especially for mothers - but some countries fare better than others

less satisfied.

But Jacob says it is not inevitable. "In Scandinavian countries, the differences between social groups are far less pronounced," she says. In these countries, the difference in life

satisfaction between parents and child-free people is also far less than, for example, in central and eastern Europe.

Childcare, financial support for parents, parental leave - these family policy measures work very well in the Scandinavian countries, says Jacob. "My speculation is that these measures impact on society as a whole, meaning that children are not seen solely as their parents' problem, but as a responsibility for the community as a whole."

This attitude is also reflected in Scandinavian business culture, Jacob says. She explains that it is

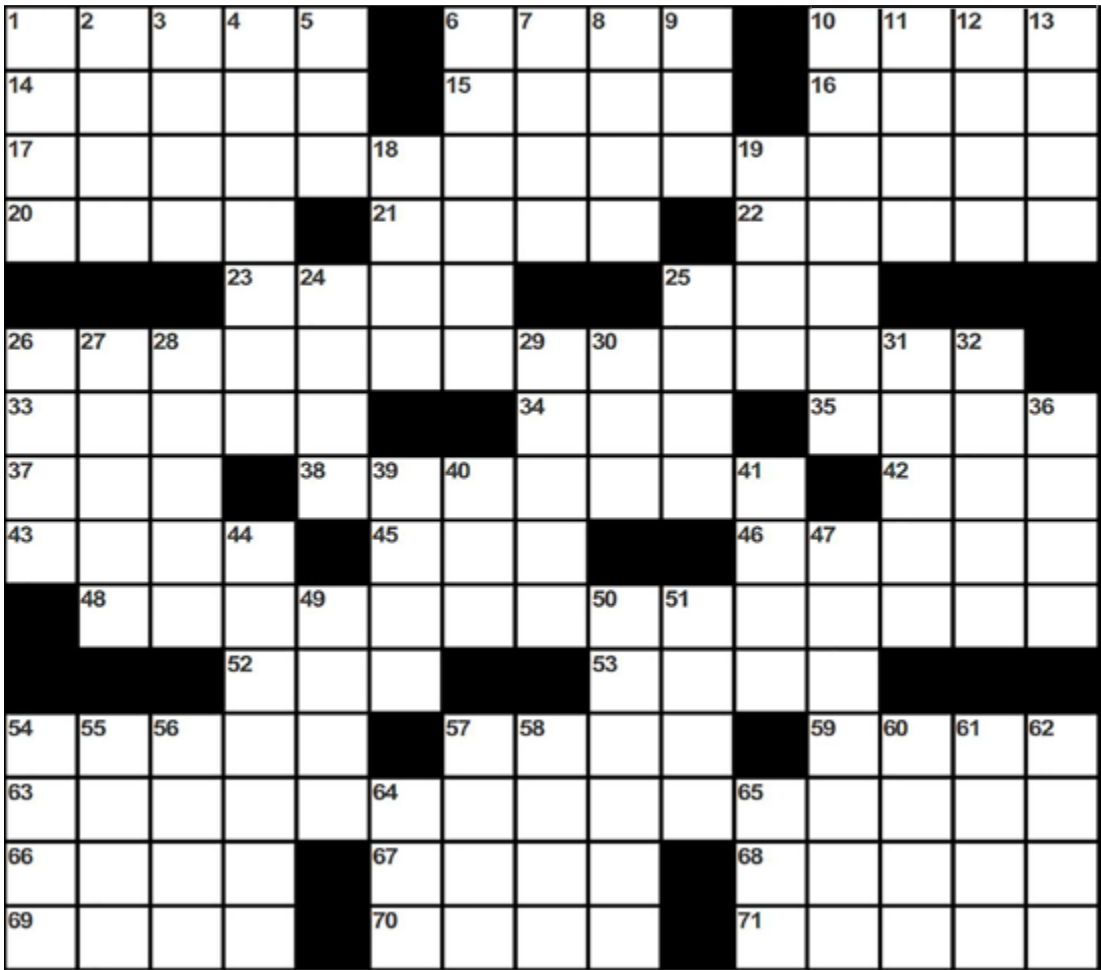
more normal there for parents to start and leave work early, as well as for important meetings to be scheduled around the rhythm of family life.

Family life is still primarily taken care of by women. In Germany, one in two women reduces her working hours in order to be able to look after her children. Just under 6% of German men who work part-time do so for family reasons. The majority of parental leave in Germany is also taken by mothers.

Another factor that may help to explain why parents in Finland are more satisfied than parents in Germany is gender equality. Equal pay in the Scandinavian countries, and a smaller gender pay gap as a result, means women there are more satisfied, says Jacob. She adds that this also has positive effects on the partnership, and thus also on the family. Children are important - not only to counterbalance our ageing society, which won't be able to look after all its senior citizens without a young generation, Marita Jacob stresses.

DW

DAILY CROSSWORD



ACROSS
1) " ... all that you_" (Anny slogan)
6) A void deliberately
10) Warning on a golf course
14)_ fours (crawling)
15) Fox's prey
16) "Crazy" bird
17) Play's precursor
20) French holy women (Abbr.)
21) Perturbs
22) Multiple-choice choice, sometimes
23) Weak, as on crime
25) Super ending?
26) Profitable play
33) Pan attachment?
34) French "a"
35) Slapstick props
3 7) Massachusetts cape
38) They can get restless
42) CPR expert
43) Sondheim's Sweeney
45) Gene sharers
46) Ancient Greek colony
48) Portable play
52) Dads and uncles
53) Ill at_(uncomfortable)
54) Name on some hotels
57) Penny

59) Branch structure
63) Peoria playhouse, e.g.
66) Palindromic magazine title
67) "Hard.!" (ship command)
68) React to a pun
69) Many Christmas presents
70) Big piece of cake
71) Clear, as a disk
DOWN
1) Pigeon sounds
2) "Sometimes you feel like_" (candy bar jingle)
3) Archibald of NBA fame
4) Come into one's own
5) Little help for the holidays?
6) "Six" has one
7) "Black Down"
8) Large coffee containers
9) Part of a tennis court
10) Plant that sometimes closes
11) Cry of delight
12) Dissolute fellow
13)_acte (intermission)
18) Minor argument
19) Hotel offering
24) End_era
25) Words from a psychi-

atrist
26) Vessel on the water
27) Words before and after "to be"
28) Tic-tac-toe sides
29) Giving one lines
30) Part of SASE
31) City in Italy
32) Cut off from escape
36) Remain here
39) Quite similar
40) Material for some cups
41) Computer avatars
44) They work for ventri- oquists
4 7) Like some markets
49) Auction auto, often
50) Middle
51) Boy Scouts take one
54) Allowance for weight
55) Move, in real estate lingo
56) Like a storied duckling
57) Colombian city
58) Robert of the CSA
60) Volcano in Italy
61) Parts of a min.
62) Beech, for one
64) Washington baseball player, briefly
65) Mom in wool

NOTE PAD



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19
The ball is totally in your court, and you could be nearing the end of the game. Give it your all. Holding back now just confuses your teammates and might give your opponents just the opening they're waiting for. You don't want to do that, especially when the prize is just within your reach. Most of all, you deserve it. A fact that competitors have to acknowledge. Keep up the good work.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22
Missing information proves vital to your whole day, so don't jump into any new situation before you know everything you need. It may be hard because everything looks so good at first glance so enlist a friend or colleague to help you wait things out until you can make an informed decision. Exercise patience for the time being and it should grow stronger, like a muscle.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21
Your plans are finally falling neatly into place, so now is the perfect time to pack up all your troubles and drop them off at the landfill. Making decisions often confounds you, and that leads to procrastination, but to resolve this problem, all you have to do is stop doubting yourself. You're on the precipice of a brand-new chapter of your life. Big fun is just ahead, exotic locales beckon, and your plans are on an upward swing.



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20
Mind games get you nowhere today, especially when the rules are so complicated that no one knows what's going on. You're not doing it on purpose, of course. You're just so muddled about what it is you want that things have become extremely complicated. Take a big step back and try to figure out what it is you really want to achieve. After that, you can approach the situation with a new sense of clarity.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22
Take a hard look at your finances and professional life before you decide to tackle someone else's plans. Is that what you really want? Are you sure that it's even possible at this time? These are all big questions you need to ask yourself before you make a move, no matter how much you want to act on the spur of the moment. Your mental energy can help you get your fiscal situation shipshape, so do what you can to make it so.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19
You've got a lot to think about right now! An offer to upgrade to a larger home might be out of your immediate financial capability, but opportunities like this allow you to grow. That is even more true for work challenges that you're sure you're not ready for yet. Your energy is just right, though, so release those doubts. Think things through, ask for advice from a knowledgeable person, and you should be pleasantly surprised.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21
Your ideas and advice, usually top-notch, are generally welcomed by your people. A more argumentative energy is flowing through you right now, so make sure you can back up those opinions that you're suddenly handing out so generously. It's even more important to make sure that people actually want to hear your suggestions, and that you're not just lecturing them to hear the sound of your own voice!



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22
Just because someone close has a problem, that doesn't automatically mean that you have to fix it. The temptation to be nice is constant, but it might be kinder to everyone if you just let people deal with their own problems and try your best not to interfere. This teaches them responsibility, but it also means that you can breathe more deeply and get on with living your life.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18
You may find yourself in the middle of a tense moment with a loved one today. A standoff does no one any good (and just raises your blood pressure), so find a way to talk things over with the relevant party before it's too late. If you make a serious effort toward increasing the peace, your social energy should do all the rest. Owning up to your part, even if you feel justified, should go a long way. A little extra charm doesn't hurt either!



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22
Shifting universal energies lead to corresponding changes in your life. They affect you, your friends, your family, and, most importantly, how you and all your people relate to one another. Keep cool, don't overreact, and remember that your faith that things will work out all right leads to positive end results for you. Hold on tight and enjoy the ride!



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21
Don't stop looking for love just because you're feeling a little cranky, or you may find yourself losing ground really quickly. There's a time and place for the big discussion, so make sure things absolutely need to be discussed before you announce it's time for a negotiation session. Your current aggressive energies could trigger a full-scale war out of almost nothing, so you might want to save it for later.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20
You're sick and tired of feeling so sick and tired! If you're fed up with an old situation, it's time to take steps so it doesn't keep cropping up in your life over and over again. The key to breaking this cycle is to pay attention to everything you do, including how you speak to those around you and the consequences of your actions. A little extra concentration shows you the exit ramp.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

01 Which of these is not one of the Seven Dwarfs?

- A. Bashful
- B. Spacey
- C. Grumpy
- D. Sleepy

02.Which sport, practised since at least the 8th century BC, is still current and was celebrated on the special €10 Greek coin minted in 2003?

- A. Wrestling
- B. Javelin throwing
- C. Discus throwing
- D. Sword fighting

03.Which of these historical figures is most associated with the year 1865?

- A. Guy Fawkes
- B. George Washington
- C. Joan of Arc
- D. Abraham Lincoln

Answers: 1.B 2.D 3.D

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

S	R	U	S
E	R	E	B
N	O	V	I
R	E	I	Y

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.

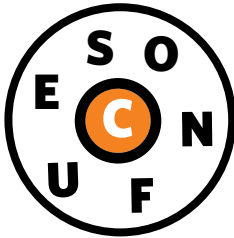
SOLUTION
20-25 words: Excellent,
15-20 words: Very good,
10-15 words: Good,
5-10 words: Average

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

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

WORD BUILDER



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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

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

DREAM COMES TRUE

Doue stars as PSG humiliate Inter to win first European Cup



Paris St Germain players celebrate with the Champions League trophy on Saturday

Munich, Germany - Teenager Desire Doue scored twice to inspire Paris St Germain to their first European Cup triumph with a crushing 5-0 victory over Inter Milan on Saturday, the biggest winning margin in the final of the continent's premier club competition.

After losing the 2020 final to Bayern Munich, Luis Enrique's PSG side, who teetered on the brink of elimination in the league phase, finally claimed the trophy their Qatari owners have craved since taking over the French capital club in 2011.

PSG's young team achieved what the likes of Lionel Messi, Neymar and Kylian Mbappe could not do in their colours as they became only the second French side to win the trophy after Olympique de Marseille in 1993.

"Making history was a goal from the start of last season," Luis Enrique said.

PSG put on a masterclass which the more experienced Inter team had no answer to, scoring twice in the opening 20 minutes through former Inter defender Achraf Hakimi and

Doue. The 19-year-old Doue was on target again in the 63rd minute, Khvicha Kvaratskhelia scored 10 minutes later and substitute Senny Mayulu netted three minutes from time to complete the rout in Munich.

Before kickoff the Italian fans sang "There's Only Inter", the club's anthem, but on the pitch their side went missing and PSG ran riot to secure a richly deserved win.

PSG bossed the game from the start, maintaining possession with their slick passing, every player constantly searching for

I have no words. That was just incredible for me, simply incredible. I have no words, sorry. He's (Luis Enrique) been here for two years and he has made history for the club

DESIRE DOUE, PSG

an opening, which they found in the 12th minute when Vitinha played a pass into Doue in the box. Inter defenders appealed for offside but Federico Dimarco played the PSG man onside and the youngster kept his cool to roll the ball across goal and hand Hakimi the simplest of tap-ins.

The second came eight minutes later from a quick PSG counter which found Ousmane Dembele on the left wing.

Dembele drove forward before floating the ball to the far side and Doue had time to control the ball on his chest and his shot took a deflection off Dimarco to beat the wrong-footed Yann Sommer. Inter had to attack in the second half but PSG killed off the game with a third goal when Vitinha slid the ball through to Doue in the area and the 19-year-old coolly slipped the ball past Sommer.

It didn't feel like my Inter, says Inzaghi

Munich, Germany - Inter Milan manager Simone Inzaghi said he barely recognised his side as they fell to a deserved 5-0 defeat at the hands of Paris St Germain in the Champions League final on Saturday.

PSG captured their first Champions League title in devastating style, recording the largest winning margin in the competition's history.

The defeat marked a bitter end to a frustrating season for three-times European champions Inter, who fell short in three major competitions and finished without silverware.

"It absolutely didn't feel like my Inter out there - and the players are the first to know it," said Inzaghi, whose side had reached the final with a thrilling 7-6 aggregate victory over Barcelona.

For Inzaghi, the loss was particularly painful, coming

two years after his team suffered a narrow defeat against Manchester City in the 2023 final in Istanbul.

"I think PSG deserved to win," Inzaghi, whose side were last crowned European champions under Jose Mourinho in 2010, told reporters in a brief press conference.

"There is great disappointment and bitterness because the boys have had a great run this season, and it's hard to end with no titles. As a coach, I'm still proud. We're not satisfied with tonight's game. We approached it badly... We didn't play the final in the best way, but I thanked the boys."



Simone Inzaghi

CHAMPIONS TALK

It's a mix of joy, of all the emotions we've spent together. I've suffered but I've grown up with this team. I think of all the players who have come through and not succeeded. My idol Thiago, Lucas, Zlatan, Cavani, Di Maria. So many players who have come through here who deserved this and didn't succeed. Now we're here and we're bringing it home

MARQUINHOS, PSG CAPTAIN

It means everything. The fans are the main reason we wanted to win this trophy but we wanted it for a lot of reasons. It's our dream, it's my dream and I'm glad we made it

VITINHA, PSG

We have made history, we have written our names in the history of this club. For a long time this club deserved it, we are very happy. We have created a great family

ACHRAF HAKIMI, PSG

It's pride. It's exceptional. Playing in a Champions League final and winning in style. Winning 5-0 against a team like Inter Milan is difficult. Our confidence grew from match to match

OUSMANE DEMBELE, PSG

No Mbappe, no mercy: Luis Enrique's PSG conquers Europe

Paris, France - When Luis Enrique claimed in early 2024 that Paris St Germain would be better without Kylian Mbappe, many dismissed it as arrogance or deflection.

Fifteen months later, after PSG's first Champions League triumph - a jaw-dropping 5-0 steamrolling of Inter Milan in Saturday's final in Munich - the Spanish coach's bold prediction looks less like provocation and more like prophecy.

The victory marked the culmination of a profound transformation, from a club defined by star power to one shaped by structure, tactical clarity and collective belief.

Luis Enrique's second season at the helm has delivered what eluded his predecessors - not just a European title, but a new



Paris St Germain's Desire Doue celebrates after scoring against Inter Milan on Saturday

The win marked the culmination of a profound transformation, from a club defined by star power to one shaped by structure, tactical clarity and collective belief

identity for PSG with the youngest squad in the last 16 of the competition, featuring French teenager Desire Doue, who made a decisive impact in Saturday's final.

Mbappe's departure to Real Madrid in the summer of 2024 was expected to leave a void as

the striker had been the club's leading scorer for six consecutive seasons and a global face of their ambition.

Without him, pundits questioned whether PSG could remain relevant at the highest level of European competition. Early results this season seemed to confirm those doubts. Behind the scenes, Luis Enrique stayed resolute.

The coach demanded an immediate improvement in their intensity, even threatening to resign if the standard in training didn't improve.

In January, PSG hosted Manchester City in a must-win clash and found themselves 2-0 down. What followed was a stunning 4-2 comeback in 30 minutes that transformed the club's season.

Luis Enrique pays tribute to late daughter after win

Munich, Germany - Paris St Germain coach Luis Enrique paid tribute to his team's supporters who he described as like a 12th man as they roared the French club to a long-awaited Champions League title and paid an emotional tribute to his late daughter Xana.

Desire Doue scored twice to lead PSG to their first European Cup triumph with a crushing 5-0 victory over Inter Milan on Saturday.

Enrique, visibly emotional after the final whistle and wearing a T-shirt with a tribute to Xana who died of cancer aged nine in 2019, thanked the supporters who unveiled huge banners featuring images of his

daughter.

When the match finished he went to the stands to change into a T-shirt that showed an illustration of Xana planting a PSG flag into the ground.

"I'm very happy," Enrique said. "It was very emotional at the end with the banner from the fans for my family. But I always think about my daughter."

The French side completely overwhelmed Inter from the opening whistle, drawing praise from Enrique for playing with high intensity, and he singled out Ousmane Dembele for putting in a tireless performance.

Enrique also said he remained calm despite the emo-



Luis Enrique with his late daughter Xana after Barcelona's Champions League triumph in 2015

tions, confident his young side had put in the preparations needed to handle the pressure that comes with playing in such a high-stakes final.

"A coach needs to control their emotions - you need to deal with the pressure in order to help the players," he said. "We prepared the final with the necessary calm to put the excitement in the right place. Now we can enjoy it; we can take the trophy back to Paris."

PSG's young team achieved what the likes of Lionel Messi, Neymar and Kylian Mbappe could not do in their colours as they became only the second French side to win the trophy after Olympique de Marseille in

1993.

The victory made Enrique the second manager, after his former Barcelona teammate Pep Guardiola, to win the continental treble of League, Cup and Champions League in one season twice, both winning their first with Barca and their second by beating Inter.

Enrique also thanked the Inter players for their sportsmanship for staying on the pitch after the final whistle.

"I want to congratulate Inter - all the players and staff," Luis Enrique said.

"They showed us respect at the end; it's a lesson for everyone - you have to know how to lose."

Oman Sail’s high-performance team head to Greece for 49er European Championship

Muscat – Oman Sail’s high-performance 49er team will join 56 crews from 25 nations in Thessaloniki, Greece, for the 2025 49er European Championships, organised by the Hellenic Sailing Federation and International 49er and Nacra Class Association. The event, which also features 49erFX and Nacra 17 competition, begins on 3 June and runs through until 8 June,

with a practice race on 2 June. Representing Oman will be Musab al Hadi and Waleed al Kindi, with three races scheduled for each day of qualifying, culminating in a final series and medal race on the last day. Hashim al Rashdi, Oman Sail’s head performance coach, said, “This is a prestigious event where we will line up against some of the most accomplished



Musab al Hadi and Waleed al Kindi

49er sailors in the world. The qualification campaign for the Asian Games 2026 and Los Angeles 2028 Olympic Games will begin soon and events like this in the build up are valuable experience to make sure our preparations are on track and our sailors realise the levels they need to reach. We are looking forward to testing ourselves against such a diverse fleet in Greece and pro-

gressing throughout the year.” Musab al Hadi added, “We are incredibly focused and determined to achieve our ultimate goal of qualifying for the Olympic Games and representing the nation in the sailing competition. Together with Waleed al Kindi, we have been working on our tactical and technical approach to racing, and we are both looking ahead to improving

on the water this season. The 49er European Championship is the first step on what we hope will be a successful journey.” The team will be coached by experienced Polish coach Jacek Nowak. A former Polish national 49er team sailor himself, Nowak was also on board the Poland team in the Star Sailors League 2023 and the victorious Cape31 Team ‘Aspire’.

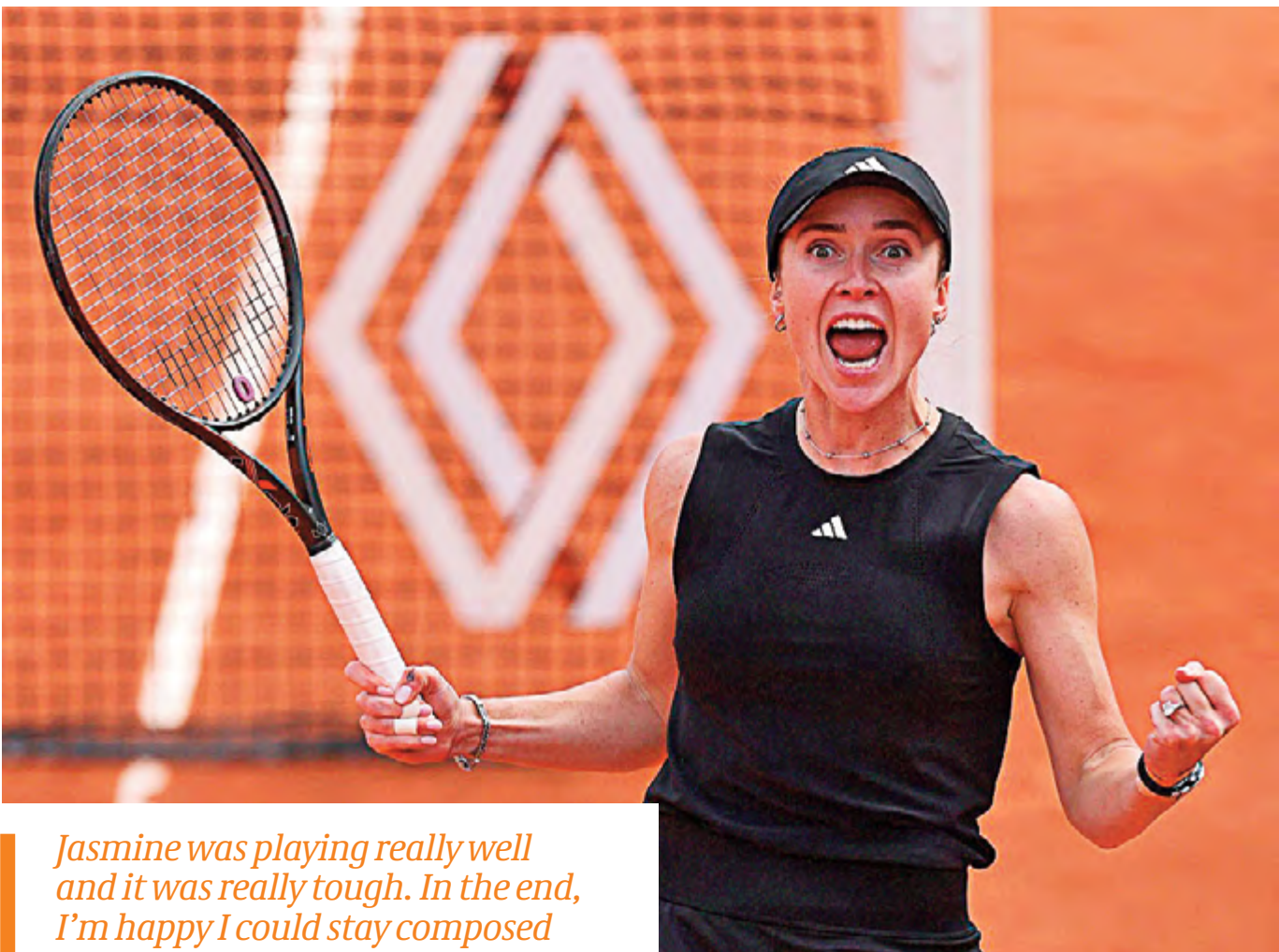
Djokovic cruises past qualifier for 99th French Open victory

Paris, France - Novak Djokovic notched his 99th career French Open win with a clinical 6-3 6-4 6-2 defeat of Austrian qualifier Filip Misolic to reach the fourth round on a memorable Saturday night in Paris. As 40,000 fans watched Paris St Germain’s Champions League final on video screens across the road at the Parc des Princes, the 38-year-old Serbian turned on the style on Court Philippe Chatrier. Three-times champion Djokovic, bidding for an historic 25th Grand Slam title, was given a thorough workout at times by his 23-year-old opponent but more than matched Misolic’s power and always looked in complete control. Djokovic failed to convert nine break points early on but made the breakthrough for a 4-2 lead after showing incredible defensive skills to retrieve a barrage of smashes. The Serb saved a break point at 1-2 in the second set and earned applause from the fans as he sportingly dusted his opponent down after Misolic tumbled over and got his sweat-soaked shirt coated in clay. He soon showed his ruthless side, however, to break serve with a backhand winner as he raced into a two-set lead. The sixth seed was in no mood for a late night as exploding fireworks and roars rang out

from across the road and the third set followed the same pattern as he cruised through to a last-16 clash against Britain’s Cameron Norrie. Having won his 100th title in Geneva in the build-up to Roland Garros, Djokovic is yet to drop a set in three rounds and is looking in the mood for a deep run. “I’m just hoping to carry on. Every time I step onto this court I’m playing for history,” Djokovic, who showed no sign of the blisters that troubled him in the previous round, said. Novak Djokovic

Svitolina saves match points against Paolini to reach French Open quarterfinals

Paris, France - A determined Elina Svitolina battled from the brink of defeat to overcome last year’s runner-up Jasmine Paolini 4-6 7-6(6) 6-1 and reach the French Open quarter-finals after a thoroughly entertaining battle on Sunday. Victory came the hard way for Svitolina, who saved three match points in the second set to force a decider. She raised her level from there to earn a last-eight encounter with either 12th seed Elena Rybakina or defending champion Iga Swiatek. “I still can’t believe this match finished my way, my head is still in it, in a big battle,” said 30-year-old Ukrainian Svitolina, who shed tears of joy after the win. “Jasmine was playing really well and it was really tough. In the end, I’m happy I could stay composed and fight till the very end. Here I am in the next round. “I had to be aggressive, stay focused on my gameplan and take small opportunities to



Elina Svitolina celebrates after defeating Jasmine Paolini in their French Open fourth-round match on Sunday

Jasmine was playing really well and it was really tough. In the end, I’m happy I could stay composed and fight till the very end. Here I am in the next round

ELINA SVITOLINA

win the second set. It was one or two points that decided it. In the third set I played really well to close the match.” Fourth-seeded Paolini twice swapped breaks with Svitolina before holding to love in the ninth game of the match and pouncing to claim the opening set with a scorching forehand winner in the next game. The diminutive Italian

grabbed a 3-1 lead in the second set but 13th seed Svitolina did not let her challenge fade on Court Philippe Chatrier as she recovered two breaks and saved two match points to make it 5-5 before forcing a tiebreak. The 29-year-old Paolini responded bravely after going 4-1 down and wasted another match point as Svitolina went on to level

the contest and pump her fists to loud cheers, before using the momentum to get her nose in front. Svitolina pulled away by winning four games in a row before her opponent got on the board and she promptly completed the victory with a searing backhand winner to reach the quarter-finals of Roland Garros for a fifth time. On Saturday, Madison Keys overcame a sluggish start to save three matchpoints and battle

past Sofia Kenin 4-6 6-3 7-5 in an all-American meeting between Grand Slam champions to reach the fourth round. Victory meant the 30-year-old Australian Open champion became the oldest woman to win 10 straight Grand Slam singles matches since Serena Williams’ 16 match-winning streak between the Australian Open in 2017 and Wimbledon the following year.

Piastri leads McLaren one-two in Spain; Verstappen demoted

Barcelona, Spain - Formula One championship leader Oscar Piastri won the Spanish Grand Prix from pole position in a McLaren one-two on Sunday to forge 10 points clear of teammate Lando Norris in the title battle. The Australian’s win, by 2.4 seconds, was his fifth in nine races this season and McLaren’s seventh. Ferrari’s Charles Leclerc completed the podium after passing Max Verstappen’s Red Bull six laps from the end following a safety car period that triggered the main talking point of the afternoon with the champion demoted from fifth to 10th. “It’s a nice way to bounce back from Monaco. A superb weekend,” said Piastri, who finished third last weekend in a race won from pole by Norris. Verstappen, who made four stops in total and ended up on the slower hard tyres against rivals on softs, collided with Leclerc and twice with Mercedes’ George Russell after the safety car restart. The angry Dutch driver was given a 10-second penalty added to his overall time for the second Russell collision that was clearly his fault.



Oscar Piastri celebrates after winning the Spanish Grand Prix on Sunday

He and Leclerc also faced a post-race investigation for their clash that could lead to further sanctions. “I tried to push him to the left, there was a bit of contact but fortunately no consequences,” said Leclerc. Verstappen claimed the Monegasque had rammed into him and should have given back the place. Russell finished fourth after eventually being let through by Verstappen, who reluctantly did as his team told him. Sauber’s Nico Hulkenberg finished a surprising and morale-boosting fifth for the future Audi team after passing Ferrari’s

seven-times world champion Lewis Hamilton on the penultimate lap. Hamilton was a disappointing sixth, Isack Hadjar seventh for Racing Bulls and Pierre Gasly eighth for Renault-owned Alpine. Home hero Fernando Alonso scored his first points of the season with Aston Martin, who had only one car on the grid due to Lance Stroll’s withdrawal through injury after Saturday’s qualifying. Piastri led away cleanly at the start with Verstappen seizing second from Norris while Hamilton and Leclerc moved up to fourth and fifth as Russell lost out.

Gauff overcomes second set blip to get the better of Bouzkova

Paris, France - World number two Coco Gauff came through a shaky second set against Czech Marie Bouzkova to earn a 6-1 7-6(3) victory on Saturday and advance to the French Open last 16. A semi-finalist in Paris last year, Gauff, who had lost both previous matches against the world number 47, powered into a 3-0 lead, attacking every first serve from her opponent. The 21-year-old was in complete control and gave Bouzkova no chance in the opening set, firing a superb backhand down the line to earn another break to love and move 5-1 up. On a sun-drenched afternoon with temperatures hovering around 30 degrees Celsius, Gauff wasted little time, wrapping up the set on her serve when she thundered another stinging backhand winner on her first set point. In the first set, Gauff won 100% of her first serve points but that was about to change. The Czech earned consecutive breaks to charge into a 5-3 lead when the 21-year-old American sent the simplest of smashes wide. The 26-year-old Bouzkova, who worked hard to keep Gauff



Coco Gauff

She was playing well, putting a lot of balls back in the court. It was difficult but overall happy I how I was able to stay in that

COCO GAUFF

pinned to the baseline, was 30-0 up on her serve in the next game - two points from landing the second set - before Gauff recovered just in time. The American, who has now won the most claycourt matches this season (14) along with Ukraine’s Elina Svitolina, levelled to force a tiebreak which she dominated. “She was playing well, putting a lot of balls back in the court (in the second set),” Gauff told a press conference. “It was difficult but overall happy I how I was able to stay in that. “In the first set I was playing good. In the second I missed some balls. She put a lot of balls back. Every opponent that plays her struggles with that.”

IN A LEAGUE OF HIS OWN

Bumrah’s IPL season could be the greatest for a bowler

Mumbai, India - People on X have been calling him Josh Hazlewood since Ashes 2017-18, but it is Mumbai Indians (MI) that have got the closest to a religious experience. You can almost always neatly divide any given match of MI, any given campaign, or their entire IPL history into Before Bumrah and Anno Domini.

In hindsight, MI made a mistake at the toss in the Eliminator against Gujarat Titans (GT), had to fight heavy dew and were being carted all around; GT’s run rate at the end of the 14th over was higher than the asking rate, and they had eight wickets in hand. And then appeared the lord, Jasprit Bumrah. The miracle of Bumrah created what might yet be the image of IPL 2025: Washington Sundar in a variation of the spreadeagle having failed to negate a yorker, and his stumps all over the place.

In this year’s IPL, Bumrah missed the first four matches. MI won only one of those. Since Bumrah’s introduction to this year’s IPL, they have won eight out of 11 matches. Basically, that is the same number of losses in the four matches before Bumrah and 11 matches after his return.

Overall, MI had zero titles in five years before Bumrah; they



Jasprit Bumrah basks in glory as Washington Sundar walks back to the pavilion after falling to a yorker during their playoff match

In this year’s IPL, Bumrah missed the first four matches. MI won only one of those. Since Bumrah’s introduction to this year’s IPL, they have won eight out of 11

are now gunning for the sixth one in 13 seasons with him in the side. There is no mistaking correlation with causation here. Even in a format with as limited agency

for bowlers as T20, Bumrah creates a massive impact. The overall economy rate and average in all T20 matches involving Bumrah are 8.12 and 27.7, respectively. Bumrah, though, has gone at 6.86 and 20.09. When you are that much better than what the average bowler is doing in the same conditions, you can create a massive impact even in T20. Bumrah’s teams have to be really

ordinary for him not to have an impact on the result. They usually aren’t.

This year has been extra special for Bumrah. Bear in mind, it has been the year with the most 200-plus totals and the highest economy rate, and will end up with the most sixes. Among those who have bowled at least 25 balls in this IPL, Bumrah holds the best economy rate: 6.36 per

over as against the overall 9.61. To turn in his most economical IPL ever in the big 2025 is phenomenal. Only three bowlers with as many or more wickets than him are still alive in the tournament.

T20 is a format where batters hit you regardless, making it difficult to define what a good ball is, or to ascertain cause and effect. That’s not the case with

Bumrah, though. Just one look at his pitch map, and you know why he has done well. A total of 43.41% of Bumrah’s deliveries have been full tosses, yorkers, or in the 2-4m bin. These can safely be assumed to be attempted yorkers. His unique action gives Bumrah the opposite of dip - the lift, which makes it difficult to line up any error in attempted yorkers.



Sai Sudharsan
‘County stints reminded me of the importance of basics’

Mullanpur, India - A couple of brief stints in county cricket convinced Sai Sudharsan that “basics” are the most important part of batting, giving him immense confidence ahead of his maiden Test tour of England.

Sudharsan batted like a dream in the IPL, racking up 759 runs at an average of 54.21 for Gujarat Titans.

With his team losing the Eliminator to Mumbai Indians on Friday night, his focus shifts to red-ball cricket.

“I think I have played seven games in county cricket, so it gave me a great experience to be honest, it improved my batting multiple folds in terms of technique and in terms of basics to, it told me basics is the most important thing in batting,” said the left-hander, who played for Surrey over the past couple of seasons.

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Module 3: Pedestal & Mobile Cranes
Module 4: Overhead Travelling Cranes, Runway Beams & Swing Jibs
Module 5: Forklift Trucks & Stackers
Module 6: Containers, Baskets & Other Cargo Carrying Units

Bolt-On 1: Lorry Loaders (HIAB)
Bolt-On 2: MEWPS

For more information regarding course fees, training schedule, and registration, please reach out to:

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Interview: H E Raul Hernandez

Cordial collaboration

Ambassador of Philippines to Oman, **H E Raul Hernandez** sees a bright future for the vibrant relationship between Oman and the Philippines. “Oman is fast becoming my second home. At last year’s National Day celebration, we proudly served Philippine mangoes - known for being among the sweetest in the world. We plan to continue this tradition,” he tells **Anirban Ray** in an exclusive chat



(Photo: V K Shafer)

Oman and Philippines have shared a long-standing relationship that is cordial, economically beneficial, culturally vibrant, and politically deep-rooted in mutual trust. Taking over as the new ambassador of Philippines to Oman, H E Raul Hernandez has a series of cultural, business-related, and people-to-people contact events lined up. This in view of the fact that the two countries have a long-standing relationship based on mutual respect, cultural exchanges and economic ties, he said. Both nations have a history of trade and co-operation dating back to centuries. In recent times, Philippines and Oman have continued to strengthen their relationship through diplomatic

The people-to-people connection between our two nations is warm, dynamic, and growing. Filipinos and Omanis have built meaningful friendships over the years, evident not just during embassy events but also through community initiatives

dialogue and collaboration in various fields, such as energy, infrastructure and art. The appointment of a new ambassador signals a commitment to further strengthening these ties and exploring new avenues for collaboration. Excerpts from an interview with H E Hernandez:

What is your immediate focus as Ambassador of the Philippines to Oman?

Since assuming office in September 2023, my focus has been clear and multifaceted. First, I am committed to strengthening economic diplomacy between the Philippines and Oman. Oman is currently our 65th largest trading partner, and in 2024,

we saw key trade items exchanged such as electrical machinery, mineral fuels, and edible preparations from the Philippines, while Oman’s exports included ores, cereals, and similar machinery components.

We also aim to introduce more of our agricultural products into the Omani market - bananas, pineapples, tuna, and desiccated coconuts, among them. On the investment front, we are working to finalise agreements related to reciprocal protection of investments, double taxation avoidance, and agricultural and fisheries cooperation. A proposed MoU between the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI) and the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) is also in the pipeline.

Moreover, we are promoting the Philippines as an ideal investment and tourism destination. I’m pleased to hear from Omanis who have already visited the Philippines and enjoyed their stay. We hope to see more such visits through planned familiarisation tours.

Secondly, connecting with our Filipino community in Oman is a key priority. With more than 48,000 Filipinos residing here, spread across various professions - from healthcare and engineering to hospitality and household services - I’ve been keen to listen to their experiences and extend embassy services where needed. Their stories of success and gratitude for the opportunities Oman has given them are truly inspiring.

Lastly, I’ve dedicated efforts to deepening ties with the Omani community. We’re celebrating 45 years of diplomatic relations with Oman this year, and I see this as an opportunity to express our gratitude for the friendship and support the Sultanate has shown. Oman is fast becoming my second home. At last year’s National Day celebration, we proudly served Philippine mangoes - known for being among the sweetest in the world - and we plan to continue this tradition.

How many visas were issued to Omanis who travelled to the Philippines last year?

Technically, Omanis don’t require a visa for visits to the Philippines of up to 30 days. In 2024, over 4,000 Omanis visited the Philippines, a number that doesn’t include expatriates residing in Oman who also travelled to our country. Most of them visited for tourism, to enjoy our famous Filipino hospitality, food, and beautiful coastlines.

Destinations like Boracay and Palawan remain top choices. We’re also seeing increased interest in wellness tourism, thanks to our world-class health centers offering excellent diagnostics and care.

Yes, we are working on a familiarisation tour for Omanis and expatriates in Oman. Also, Oman Air’s direct daily flights to the Philippines make travel convenient and position our country as an ideal leisure and wellness destination.

Are there any new initiatives/projects to be undertaken by the Embassy of Philippines in Oman this year?

Yes, several memoranda of understanding between the Philippines and Oman are under discussion in fields of mutual interest. We’re also excited about celebrating the 45th anniversary of diplomatic relations with cultural and business initiatives, possibly featuring performances from Filipino talent. We aim to strengthen our visibility in Oman through participation in local government-led programmes that showcase Filipino products, talents, and culture.

Are there plans for new Filipino schools in Muscat?

Currently, the Philippine School in Oman has over 900 students and enjoys strong support from both, Filipino and expatriate, families. While there are no formal expansion plans yet from the school administration, we remain open to opportunities. We are also hopeful that the Omani government may one day provide land for a new and larger campus. Education is a key pillar of our commitment to Oman’s future.

What’s the latest on investments, trade, and business exchanges in Oman?

Today, there are over sixty Filipino-owned micro and small enterprises in Oman, primarily in food and retail - industries that reflect our culture’s love for shared meals. These businesses not only serve our community but introduce Filipino cuisine to other cultures here. Oman’s investor-friendly policies have helped our entrepreneurs thrive.

Additionally, we are promoting the Philippines’ sovereign wealth fund and are exploring potential investment collaborations in Oman. Progress in this area has been encouraging.

How would you describe the people-to-people relationship between Oman and the Philippines?

The people-to-people connection between our two nations is warm, dynamic, and growing. Filipinos and Omanis have built meaningful friendships over the years, evident not just during embassy events but also through community initiatives.

A recent vaccine drive, where many of the nurses assisting Filipino clients were Omani, was a touching example of cooperation and solidarity. Filipino professionals - doctors, nurses, engineers, teachers - are respected contributors to Omani society. We continue to empower them, ensuring they feel supported in their roles, and proud of the impact they make here. These human connections are the foundation of our enduring partnership with Oman.

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Borgo dei Borghi



RURAL SPLENDOUR

Italy's countryside is peppered with villages rich in architectural marvels, gastronomic delights and arcane cultural traditions. Each year, these little-known treasures compete for national recognition through 'Borgo dei Borghi' (Village of Villages), a beloved television contest that has become a cultural phenomenon.

Organised by RAI, Italy's national public broadcasting company, the annual competition is broadcast in weekly episodes that turn the spotlight on each of the 20 selected villages.

The programme has become a form of travel inspiration as it recounts legends, curiosities and rituals that make each village one-of-a-kind.

Here are this year's winners - chosen by viewers and an expert jury of historians and tourism professionals - and why you should add them to your next Italy trip itinerary.

Militello in Val di Catania, Sicily

Lying on the northern slopes of the Iblei Mountains, winner Militello in Val di Catania is an exemplar of Sicilian baroque artistry and urban planning. The village of just under 7,000 inhabitants is included in UNESCO's designation of late Baroque towns of the Val di Noto.

Following the devastating earthquake of 1693 that destroyed much of southeastern Sicily, Militello was rebuilt according to the baroque aesthetic principles of the era, resulting in an urban landscape that feels like an open-air museum of 18th-century design.

The village is home to more than 20 churches with elaborate stone facades crowded with cherubs, saints, and intricate floral motifs.

Militello is also home to numerous aristocratic villas and palaces that once housed the noble families who shaped the village's development.

The village's cultural life is also abundant, with saints' day festivals involving processions, traditional music performances,

An annual contest to showcase the beauty of Italy's most fascinating villages has inspired these to dress up and put their best forward for tourists



and communal meals. Militello's victory marks Sicily's fifth triumph in the Borgo dei Borghi competition, following previous wins by Gangi, Montalbano Elicona, Sambuca di Sicilia, and Petralia Soprana.

Agliè, Piedmont

Heading up to the northern province of Turin, runner-up Agliè is characterised by both aristocratic grandeur and quotidian village life.

The centrepiece is the

Castello di Agliè, a palatial complex that forms part of UNESCO's Savoy Residences designation.

The magnificent structure of imposing facades, elaborate gardens, and richly decorated interiors served as one of the primary residences of the House of Savoy, the royal family that ruled the Kingdom of Sardinia and later the unified Kingdom of Italy.

The castle forms the heart of the village, surrounded by historic piazzas that are still the

setting for weekly markets, seasonal festivals, and daily social interactions.

The village gained additional fame as the primary filming location for 'Elisa di Rivombrosa', a popular Italian historical drama series.

Vignanello, Lazio

Third spot went to Vignanello which exemplifies the sophisticated architectural and agricultural traditions of northern Lazio.

The village's claim to fame rests primarily on the Castello Ruspoli, a Renaissance masterpiece whose gardens represent some of the finest examples of Italian landscape design from the 16th and 17th centuries.

Vignanello is also renowned for its time-honoured brewing traditions. The volcanic soils of the region, enriched by centuries of natural mineral deposits, provide ideal conditions for viticulture.

The annual grape harvest festival is a grand celebration for the village, featuring wine tastings and food pairings as well as historical reenactments.

Aieta, Calabria

High in the mountains of Calabria, Aieta lies in the untamed wilderness of the Pollino National Park. At over 500m of elevation, the medieval village commands lofty views over the Tyrrhenian Sea - its name is appropriately derived from the Greek word for eagle.

Aieta's medieval character remains remarkably intact, with narrow stone streets winding between houses built from local stone. The village's 16th-century Renaissance palace stands as a testament to the wealth and cultural sophistication that even small mountain communities could achieve during Italy's golden age of art and architecture.

The location within Pollino National Park makes Aieta an ideal base for exploring its ancient forests, deep gorges carved by rushing streams, and mountain peaks that provide habitat for rare wildlife, including wolves, eagles, and endemic plants.

Maiori, Campania

While the Amalfi Coast attracts millions of visitors annually to its famous destinations like Positano and Amalfi, Maiori offers a more tranquil alternative. The village has an expansive beach, unusual along a coastline typically characterised by small coves and dramatic cliffs.

Behind the sweep of sand rise the village's colourful buildings and lemon groves that climb the steep hillsides threaded through with hiking routes.

Visit the Abbey of Santa Maria de Olearia, a remarkable religious complex carved directly into the coastal rock face. Inside are frescoed chapels and meditation spaces hewn directly from the cliff.

Maiori's lemon groves represent not just agricultural activity but a cultural tradition that has shaped the landscape and economy of the Amalfi Coast for centuries.

These terraced gardens, supported by stone walls built without mortar, are an extraordinary example of sustainable agriculture that maximises productivity while preserving the natural beauty of the steep coastal terrain. [euronews.com](#)



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