

NINE KILLED IN MOSQUE ATTACK

ROP concludes operations following shooting in Wadi Kabir on Monday night in which officer loses life

Our Correspondent
Muscat

In an unprecedented turn of events in Oman, six people lost their lives while three perpetrators were killed in a standoff that took place in the Wadi Kabir area of Muscat on Monday night.

In a statement, Royal Oman Police said that working alongside military and security services, it had successfully completed operations in the vicinity of the Imam Ali bin Abi Talib Mosque.

‘The tragic incident resulted in the deaths of nine people, including five expatriates, a policeman and the three perpetrators.’

The Embassy of Pakistan in Oman said four of its nationals were killed and several injured in the attack.

Oman’s Foreign Ministry informed that one Indian national lost his life, while another was injured.

Twenty-eight people of various nationalities were injured, among them four officers - policemen and members of Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority - while performing their national duty, ROP stated.

The injured were transported to healthcare facilities for treatment, while investigations are ongoing into the circumstances of the attack, ROP added.



(Image for illustrative purpose)

It extended its condolences and sympathy to families of the deceased and wished a speedy recovery for the injured, while thanking for the efforts and the cooperation of citizens and residents, which were crucial in containing the situation.

The Indian Embassy offered its sincere condolences to the family of its national who lost his life in the attack and stated that it stood ready to offer all assistance to the families affected.

Ministry of Health activated the Emergency Management Centre and Medical Response and Public Health Sector following the attack. Khoula Hospital was designated to receive the injured and was supported by specialised medical teams from The Royal Hospital and University Medical City. More than 50 specialists were called into action.

No one has claimed responsibility for the attack and ROP stated no motive behind it.

4 Pakistan nationals killed; embassy condemns attack

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Embassy of Pakistan in Oman has condemned the attack on the Imam Ali bin Abi Talib Mosque in the Wadi Kabir area of Muscat, which resulted in deaths of four Pakistani nationals.

In a statement, the embassy confirmed the names of the deceased as Ghulam Abbas, Hasan Abbas, Sayyed Qaisar Abbas and Sulaiman Nawaz. Additionally, over 20 Pakistani nationals were receiving treatment in hospitals for injuries sustained during the attack, it added.

In a video message to the Pakistani community, H E Imran Ali, Ambassador, urged patience and assured that the embassy was working closely with Omani authorities to repatriate the mortal remains of the deceased.

It has established a helpline to assist the community and provide all necessary support.



H E Imran Ali

H E Ali also visited hospitals to meet the injured Pakistani nationals.

‘We are heartened that the Government of Oman has neutralised the attackers,’ the embassy stated. ‘Pakistan has offered all possible assistance to Omani authorities in the investigation and to bring to justice those responsible for the heinous attack.’

It reaffirmed its commitment to supporting the affected families and highlighted the importance of community solidarity during the difficult time.

► NEWS BRIEF

HM RECEIVES PHONE CALL FROM UK PM

Muscat - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq received a phone call from Keir Starmer, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom.

During the call, His Majesty congratulated Starmer on his appointment as the new UK PM and wished him success in his duties.

The two leaders also reviewed the strong relations between the two friendly countries and ways to develop and strengthen ties in various fields, in addition to exchanging views on several regional and international issues of common interest.

Starmer affirmed his personal commitment to the relations between the UK and Oman ties.



GDP grows 1.7% to RO9.537bn in Q1 2024

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman’s gross domestic product (GDP) at constant prices saw a 1.7% increase to RO9.537bn at the end of Q1 2024. This compares to RO9.373bn for the same period in 2023, according to the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

Preliminary data from NCSI indicates that crude oil activities decreased 3.3% to RO2.554bn, while natural gas increased 3% to

RO437.1mn. Non-oil activities showed a growth of 4.5%, reaching RO6.803bn, compared to RO6.511bn in Q1 2023.

Industrial activities increased to RO1.988bn, from RO1.882bn, while agricultural and fishing activities remained steady at RO219mn. Service sector activities were valued at RO4.596bn.

These figures underscore Oman’s diversified economic strategy, with non-oil sectors playing a significant role in driving overall economic growth.

Digital transformation on track to achieve UN SDGs: Saqri

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman’s digital transformation journey is on track to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, H E Dr Said al Saqri, Minister of Economy, stated during the UN Economic and Social Commission for West Asia session on SDG: Policies in the Arab Region.

Held at the headquarters of the Permanent Mission of Oman in New York on Monday, the session showcased the sultanate’s efforts to integrate advanced technologies and foster economic diversification.

H E Saqri, Chairman of Arab Forum for Sustainable Development 2024, stated that Oman is keeping pace with global developments in advanced technologies, including artificial intelligence. Oman’s National Digital



(Supplied photo)

Economy Programme aims to create a robust digital infrastructure supporting government, businesses and society.

Key initiatives include the National Digital Health Strategy, which employs technologies such as virtual medicine and big data to improve healthcare outcomes. Efforts are also underway to develop technology solutions to reduce emissions and enhance

energy efficiency.

The Oman Innovates platform provides intelligent services for innovation, optimises scientific research outputs and converts knowledge into economic returns. Investments in Fourth Industrial Revolution technologies and strategic agreements with companies like Oracle were also highlighted at the session.

The sultanate’s digital transformation aligns with Oman Vision 2040, with the aim of the digital economy contributing 10% of the GDP by the end of the vision period. Initiatives such as the Executive Programme for Artificial Intelligence in education, development of smart cities and comprehensive e-commerce cybersecurity programmes are crucial to this goal.

Oman’s ranking among the best countries in Internet speed in 2023 and the first-place ranking of Oman Technology Fund in the Middle East and North Africa for corporate venture capital funds are notable achievements.

H E Saqri reiterated Oman’s commitment to sustainable development and digital advancement, stressing that these efforts will enhance the quality of life, stimulate economic growth and position Oman as a leader in digital transformation in the region.

Mwasalat launches Oman’s first electric bus

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman National Transport Company (Mwasalat) launched the sultanate’s first electric bus on Tuesday, marking a significant step towards enhancing the sustainability of the nation’s public transportation system.

The announcement was made at the International Association of Public Transport (UITP) MENA Conference hosted by Mwasalat in Salalah.

Held under the patronage of H H Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said, Governor of Dhofar, in the presence of H E Said bin Hamood al Mawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Informa-



(Supplied photo)

tion Technology, and senior UITP executives, the event highlighted the introduction of the electric bus as an important initiative.

Badr bin Mohammed al Nadi,

CEO of Mwasalat, informed that the electric bus of 28-passenger capacity is optimised for urban travel and capable of speeds ranging from 70kmph to

130kmph. It is 8.94m in length, 2.42m in width and 3.3m in height.

The bus is equipped with an advanced propulsion system featuring a permanent magnet synchronous motor and a 211.43kWh lithium iron phosphate battery. This setup ensures high efficiency and adheres to safety standards set by United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and other international benchmarks.

The electric bus of 28-passenger capacity is optimised for urban travel and capable of speeds ranging from 70kmph to 130kmph

The conference included four main sessions addressing various aspects of enhancing urban sustainability through public transportation in the MENA region. Discussions covered the role of public transport in environmental sustainability, traffic reduction and pollution mitigation, with the aim of fostering green cities and healthier urban environments.

Additionally, Mwasalat signed two agreements during

the conference. Its collaboration with the American company Odys Aviation focuses on advancing sustainable, autonomous air transport technologies, aiming to innovate solutions across transportation, oil and gas, security, tourism and healthcare sectors.

The second partnership, with HICAP Middle East, aims to conduct a feasibility study to decarbonise Oman’s transportation fleet, exploring green fuel options, including hydrogen.

These initiatives underscore Mwasalat’s commitment to sustainability, translating plans into practical actions aimed at reducing carbon footprints and enhancing regional quality of life.



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Omani diplomat named UN special envoy for Iraq



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Cultural clinks: For the love for glass bangles

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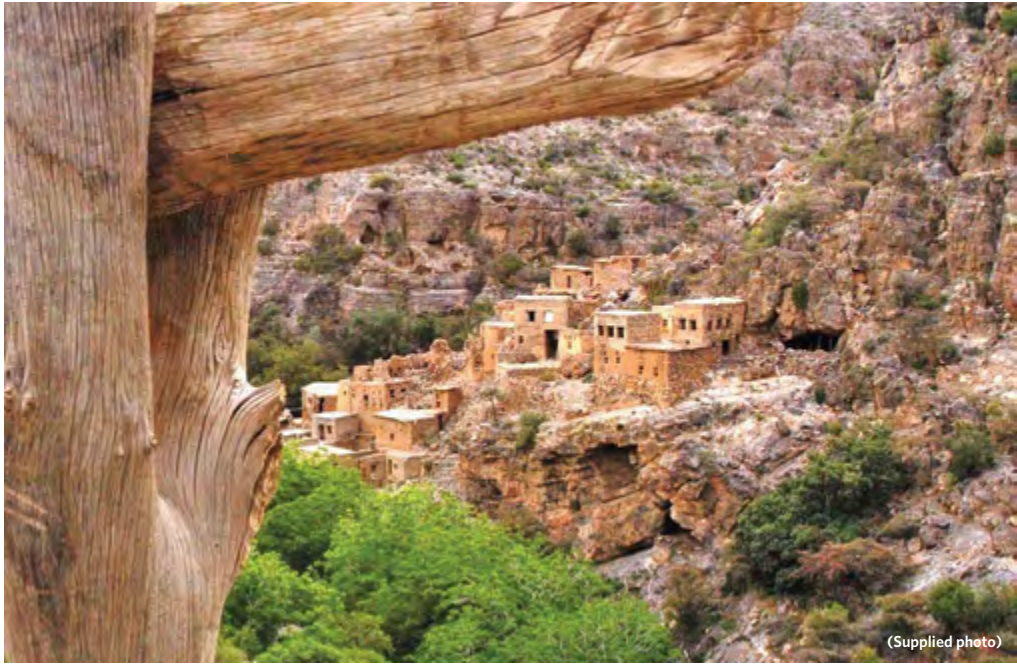
Jabal Akhdar Summer Activities from July 18

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Jabal Akhdar Summer Activities will be held from July 18 to September 14, according to a statement issued by Dakhliyah governorate on Tuesday.

This year's activities will be held at various locations, encompassing cultural, entertainment and sports events aimed at serving all segments of society. The event will see participation of numerous public and private sector entities.

Scheduled events include equestrian competitions, archery, a mountain running race, motorcycle rides, and an artificial intelligence competition. Additionally, there will be training workshops for entrepreneurs, a symposium focusing on water resources, a poetry forum, and traditional games.



In 2023, Jabal Akhdar saw a marginal drop of 1.1% in tourist arrivals to 205,992 from 208,423 in 2022. Released by

National Centre for Statistics and Information, the data reflects a diverse visitor demographic.

The breakdown of tourist numbers shows that 102,241 were Omanis, highlighting Jabal Akhdar's popularity among lo-

cal. Of the GCC visitors, Saudi tourists numbered 13,430, followed by Kuwaitis (1,218), Emiratis (951), Qataris (729) and Bahrainis (554).

Additionally, the wilayat received 6,784 visitors from other Arab and 80,085 from non-Arab countries, indicating its appeal to a broad spectrum of tourists.

Famous for its unique climate throughout the year, Jabal Akhdar continues to be a popular destination for both domestic and international tourists. It offers a blend of entertainment and adventure, besides heritage lodges, mountain camping facilities and farm trail walks, appealing to those seeking novel tourist experiences.

Jabal Akhdar has 20 licensed hotels ranging from 3- to 5-star properties, offering a total of 726 rooms of various sizes.



DRIVEWISE

JEREMY FOX IS A BRITISH DRIVING AND ROAD SAFETY EXPERT. SINCE 2009, HE HAS MANAGED THE DRIVER-TRAINING OPERATIONS OF TECHNICAL & ADMINISTRATIVE TRAINING INSTITUTE. HE CONSIDERS IT HIS PRIVILEGE TO HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO OMAN'S IMPROVED ROAD SAFETY.

Tyres are safety-critical components of our vehicle which, like all the others, require simple but regular care and attention so that they perform to their best.

Tyres in good condition hold our vehicle securely on the road, allowing it to stop, start and manoeuvre safely. Worn-out, under-inflated or otherwise unsuitable tyres will not.

Tyre failure is responsible for many deaths and injuries worldwide, which is why these should be checked at least once a week.

tyres are like 'ribs' at the bottom of the tread groove and indicate minimum safe tread depth. If the TWIs are flush with the surface of the tyre, instead of being recessed into the tread grooves, they indicate that the tread depth is critical and replacement tyres should be urgently considered.

Read the sidewall of your tyres

The coding on the tyre wall comprises a set of numbers and letters. As an example, let's take '205 R 80 16 82 T':

- **205:** This is the tyre section width in millimetres
- **R:** This denotes the tyre's construction type. In this case, a radial
- **80:** This is the aspect ratio in % (the height of the sidewall divided by the tyre's width)
- **16:** This is the rim diameter in inches
- **82:** This is the load index. In this case, 475kg
- **T:** This is the speed rating. In this case T = 190kmph maximum speed (R = 170kmph; Q = 160kmph; P = 150kmph)

Key points

- Tyres NOT suitable for the purpose or road type on which the vehicle will be used will develop faults such as the sidewall peeling and becoming detached – eg a tyre designed for blacktop but being used a lot on graded roads.
- Check with the approved vehicle and/or tyre dealer that the tyres fitted are suitable for use on your vehicle and the road type you intend to drive on.
- Under-inflation can result in tyre stress, irregular wear, loss of control and accidents caused by catastrophic failure. Check tyre pressure with a suitable gauge when tyres are COLD. If taken when warm or hot, an artificially high reading will be apparent which could lead the driver to let air out when not necessary. This will result in the said under-inflated and dangerous tyres.

It's recommended that tyres are changed after three to four years or 40,000km. This assumes, of course, that they have not become dangerously and/or illegally worn before this. Also keep in mind that the way we drive has a significant effect on how fast tyres wear and whether we are using hard- or soft-compound ones.

TYRE SAFETY

- **Alignment and balance:** Vehicle pulling to one side or shaking? A bad jolt against the kerb or driving into a pothole can damage tyres. Have the alignment checked at an approved workshop.
- **Rotation:** Assists in uniform tyre wear. Rotate your tyres in accordance with the advice in your vehicle manual. This is usually around every 8,000km. Remember to re-check correct pressure front and back. Again, consult your vehicle handbook for the recommended pressures when unladen/laden.
- **Tread:** Measure and inspect it. Tread wear reduces the ability of the tyre to grip the road and dispel surface water. Built-in tread wear indicators (TWIs) on modern

Remember

- Minimum legal tread depth in Oman is 1.6mm for at least the central 75% of the tyre's tread width and unbroken for the entire circumference.
- The mentioned TWI is usually a standard 2mm from the bottom of the tread, so this should be borne in mind when assessing the available tread depth.
- Look for cuts, bulges or other damage to the tyre wall and the presence of foreign objects which may be stuck in the wall or tread and potentially cause damage. Get to know your tyres and look after them – so that they can look after you and your family. Safe driving!

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 Media

Omani diplomat named UN special envoy for Iraq

Our Correspondent
Muscat

With the consent of the Security Council, United Nations (UN) has announced the appointment of H E Dr Mohammed bin Awadh al Hassan as Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI).

H E Hassan brings extensive experience in politics and diplomacy to the position. He earlier served as Permanent Represen-

tative of Oman to the UN and held key roles including Acting Undersecretary for Diplomatic Affairs in the Foreign Ministry. He also chaired the Special Political and Decolonization Committee of the UN and served as Co-facilitator of the UN Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

H E Hassan's appointment has been endorsed by the Government of Iraq, which expressed its support in a letter to the UN Secretary-General, highlighting its expectation for a renewed political mandate for UNAMI.



H E Dr Mohammed al Hassan

The mission's mandate prioritises providing advice, support and assistance to Iraq's government and people, focusing on advancing inclusive political

dialogue, national reconciliation at community levels, and implementing judicial and human rights reforms.

H E Hassan is expected to work closely with the Government of Iraq for progress on pending matters, including those that may pose threats to Iraqi peace and security.

His appointment is a reflection on Oman's foreign policy, known for its moderation, balance and impressive record in preventive diplomacy and mediation in the pursuit of peaceful settlement of

disputes between states.

H E Hassan is expected to benefit from the leadership, guidance and support of the UN Secy-Gen and the close working relations he enjoys with many officials from Iraq, Iran, GCC states, and the USA to make a qualitative shift in the UN Mission in Iraq.

Several international observers believe that the decision will contribute positively to helping Iraq, one of the founding members of UN, in its efforts towards peace, reconciliation, development and progress.

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Tourism thrives in Misfat al Abriyeen with 50,000 visitors

Our Correspondent
Muscat

More than 50,000 local and international visitors explored Misfat al Abriyeen in the first half of this year, according to Ministry of Heritage and Tourism.

Misfat al Abriyeen is a popular destination for its wealth of historical buildings and heritage landmarks. Among these are Rogan Castle, built over 1,000 years ago during the Persian presence in Oman; Bayt al Baytain, which has stood the test of time for half a millennium; and the village falaj, an exemplar of unique architecture nestled amidst farms.

The village is also home to six inns and guest houses, contributing to its distinction of being one of the best tourist villages as named by World Tourism Organization in 2021. This recognition is for villages dedicated to preserving cultural heritage and promoting sustainable development.

Sultan bin Jamil al Mukhmari, head of Tourism Experiences Development Department in Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, underscored the village's importance as an Omani oasis celebrated for its traditional architecture and agricultural practices. "Misfat al Abriyeen stands as a cohesive, self-sustaining community rooted in an ancient falaj irrigation system dating back at least 2,000 years.



(Supplied photo)

The tourism strategy for Misfat al Abriyeen aims to shape and manage visitor experiences while preserving the village's cultural heritage and natural beauty

HASSAN BIN MUBARAK AL ABRI

It plays a pivotal role in Oman Vision 2040's sustainable development goals through initiatives led by the ministry."

Mukhmari informed that introduction of tourism programmes, offering diverse activities and experiences, has

transformed the village into a favoured destination for tourists of various nationalities. This transformation is facilitated by heritage inns that provide accommodation and opportunities to immerse in a unique blend of past and present experiences. The village's picturesque setting, characterised by palm and lemon plantations, historic houses, gates and ancient pathways, alongside landmarks like the Misfat al Abriyeen Council and market, offers visitors a glimpse into rich traditions and customs.

Hassan bin Mubarak al Abri, Chairman of Board of Directors of Misfat al Abriyeen National Company, described the village as a 'global tourism icon'.

"The tourism strategy of Misfat focuses on fostering community collaboration and resilience, enhancing the community's capacity and adaptability for tourism management, and achieving a balance between the aspirations of residents and the expectations of visitors. This approach aims to shape and manage visitor experiences while preserving the village's cultural heritage and natural beauty," Abri informed.

The village exemplifies Oman's commitment to sustainable tourism development, blending cultural preservation with memorable visitor experiences in a picturesque and historically rich setting.

MoCIIP launches campaign to combat hidden trade

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) has initiated the first phase of its plan to combat hidden trade in the sultanate.

The initial phase will see inspection of commercial activities across Muscat, North Batinah and Dhofar. These inspections are designed to identify and address instances of hidden trade, ensuring a fair and transparent business environment.

Residents and business owners are encouraged to report any suspected cases of hidden trade by calling 80000070 or emailing info@tejarah.gov.om

Also called 'free visa' earlier, among other names, the practice involves registering multiple companies with employees who are brought into the country. Such employees don't work for the registered company but instead pay the owners a monthly fee.

In 2023, MoCIIP issued Ministerial Decision No 312/2023 to



tackle hidden trade, defined as any unauthorised commercial activity contrary to Omani laws and Royal Decrees, whether conducted individually or in collaboration with others.

This decision strictly prohibits engagement in hidden trade using false identities, unauthorised commercial registrations, or any other deceptive methods. The ministry empowers specialised personnel to monitor establishments continuously and conduct surprise inspections to

ensure compliance.

Violation of the decision incurs penalties such as cancellation of the business activity from the commercial register, administrative fine of RO5,000 for the first offence and RO10,000 for the second, alongside a three-month suspension of business activities. Subsequent violations incur fines of RO15,000 as well as permanent removal from the commercial register. Re-registration is only possible after one year from the date of removal.

Subscriptions surge, international call revenues decline

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Mobile phone subscriptions in Oman increased 3.10% to over 7mn in 2024 till April compared to the same period last year.

According to Telecommunications Regulatory Authority,

average usage per mobile phone subscription also rose 4.19% in the first four months of the year.

However, total mobile broadband subscriptions decreased 1.41%, while average usage per mobile broadband subscription fell 7.60%.

The data further showed that total fixed-line subscriptions increased 3.03% to 596,809, while average usage per fixed-line subscription decreased 11.16%.

Fixed broadband subscriptions increased 1.86%, but average usage per fixed broadband

subscription decreased 0.68%.

Additionally, total international call minutes increased 6.03%. Despite this increase, average revenue per minute for international calls via mobile phones decreased 7.76%, while international calls via fixed phone fell 10.32%.



(Photo for illustrative purpose)

16 missing as oil tanker capsizes off Duqm

Muscat – A search and rescue mission has been initiated for the 16-member crew of a Comoros-flagged oil tanker that capsized 25 nautical miles off Duqm on Monday.

After Maritime Security Centre received a distress signal from the tanker, identified as *Prestige Falcon*, a search and rescue mission was initiated in coordination with different departments and agencies.

Of the 16 missing, 13 have been identified as Indians and three Sri Lankans.



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The Investment & Revenue Department at Sultan Qaboos University would like to invite companies to submit their quotations for:

S/N	Type of Business	Location	Date of site visit	Tender #	The last date for collecting the Document	The last date for submission of the quotations
1	Renting and operating a business activity (Food related)	Shop No. (8) at the Commercial Center	28/7/2024 10:30 Am	SQU.IRD.1/24	15/8/2024	29/8/2024 before 11:00 a.m.
2	Renting and operating locations to provide vending machines for cold and hot drinks and snacks	In various locations at Sultan Qaboos University Campus	29/7/2024 9:30 Am	SQU.IRD.2/24		
3	Rent and operate ATM machine	Administration Building Extension	30/7/2024 9:30 Am	SQU.IRD.3/24		
4	Rent and operate ATM machine	Cultural Center	30/7/2024 10:00 Am	SQU.IRD.4/24		

- The priority will be for the Small and Medium Establishments (SME), which fulfils the quality requirements. All classes of companies can also apply for these tenders.
- Tenderers who wish to participate in this Tender may collect Tender Documents from The Section of Revenue and Expenditures at the Investment & Revenue Department, Sultan Qaboos University, during the working hours for an amount of OR.25 for each tender document (non-refundable). The last date for collecting the Document is on Thursday, 15 /8/202.
- The Site Visit for the selected shop is necessary. It will be on the above-mentioned date and the assembly point will be at the Investment & Revenue Department.
- The last date for submission of the quotations is on Thursday, 29 /8/2024. The quotations should be submitted in a sealed envelope addressed to the Director of The Investment & Revenue Department, located on the first floor of the commercial building at Sultan Qaboos University and deposited in the Tender Box kept in the Department, before 11:00 a.m.
- The exterior of the envelope should be marked with the name and number of the Tender being presented and should bear no identification or mark of the Tenderer.

The Investment & Revenue Department
P.O BOX 50, P.C. 123, ALKHOD, SULTANATE OF OMAN
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Abraj Energy begins operations in 2nd rig in Wafra ahead of schedule

Abraj Energy Services has commenced operations for its second drilling rig in Wafra Oil Field ahead of schedule. This achievement follows the final acceptance from multiple inspecting authorities, Abraj stated.

It marks a significant step forward in Abraj's strategic expansion into the Kuwaiti market, further cementing its position as a leading provider of oil and gas services in the region.

The new deployment is part of a comprehensive contract with Kuwait Gulf Oil Company (KGOC) and Saudi Chevron. It reflects Abraj's steadfast commitment to delivering top-notch, efficient drilling services.

The recent mobilisation of the first rig in March 2024 set a precedent for excellence, and this second rig's early commencement highlights Abraj's operational superiority and ability to meet the high standards required by its trusted partners.

The new rig, a 1500HP fast



moving drilling rig, is equipped with cutting-edge innovative solutions. With AI-drilling technology, it is one of the most advanced rigs in operation today.

Automated rig package and comprehensive for safe and optimal performance enable Abraj to provide efficient, reliable, and secure drilling operations, setting a new benchmark in the industry.

"We are excited to commence operations with our second rig in Wafra Oil Field ahead of schedule," said Saif al Hamhami, CEO of Abraj Energy Services.

"This milestone is a testament to our team's dedication and expertise in providing top-tier drilling services. Our collaboration with KGOC and Saudi Chevron underscores our commitment to operational excellence and our ability to support our clients in achieving their production goals."

The final acceptance of the second rig signifies the culmination

tion of rigorous preparation and collaboration between Abraj and its clients. The successful deployment enhances Abraj's operational footprint in Kuwait and demonstrates its capability to execute complex projects efficiently and safely. The second rig's commencement ahead of the plan mirrors the success of the first rig, highlighting the team's efficiency and dedication.

Abraj Energy Services prides itself in having a diverse client portfolio and market leadership across the Middle East. Abraj serves major clients such as Petroleum Development Oman (PDO), OQ, Petrogas Occidental Oman, BP Oman, Total Energies, and others, which consistently deliver high-performance drilling solutions.

Strategic partnerships and innovative approaches have positioned Abraj as a market leader, contributing to the energy sector's development in the Gulf region.

Abu Dhabi connects private sector with over 3mn global companies

Abu Dhabi, UAE - The Abu Dhabi Chamber of Commerce announced today the registration opening for the 'Abu Dhabi Business Connect Platform', inviting local companies to join and connect with over 3mn companies around the world.

It represents a unique way to conduct business, enhancing the competitiveness of Abu Dhabi's business ecosystem and attracting foreign direct investments to the emirate.

This pioneering platform will significantly expand growth opportunities for the private sector in Abu Dhabi by facilitating engagement with international economic entities and global markets. It also reflects the Chamber's commitment to expanding its global business network through the innovative 'Gateway to the World' initiative, launched recently to expand the Chamber's network of partnerships with chambers of commerce and business support offices worldwide.



On the launch of the new platform, Ahmed Khalifa al Qubaisi, CEO of the Abu Dhabi Chamber, remarked, "Through the Abu Dhabi Business Connect Platform, we aim to revolutionise communication between companies in Abu Dhabi by leveraging modern digital solutions while supporting the business ecosystem and enhancing its competitiveness. The new platform will allow businesses in Abu

Dhabi to connect with international investors and promote their products and services, solidifying Abu Dhabi's position as the premier destination for entrepreneurship in the region."

The initiative provides a dynamic platform for startups and SMEs in Abu Dhabi to showcase their projects to international investors, facilitating new partnerships and leveraging investment in Abu Dhabi.

US Fed getting 'more good' inflation data leading to rate cut: Jerome Powell

Istanbul, Türkiye - The US Federal Reserve is receiving 'more good' inflation data, paving the way for its first interest rate cut later this year, Jerome Powell said Monday.

Speaking at the Economic Club of Washington, DC, Powell reiterated his comments that the US central bank is looking for 'greater confidence' that inflation is returning to its 2% target.

"Lately we have been getting some of that," he said in re-



Jerome Powell

sponse to a question about what increases the Federal Open Market Committee's (FOMC) confidence.

Consumer price index (CPI), which measures changes in the prices of goods and services from a consumer's perspective, annually rose 3% in June, and came lower than market estimates of a 3.1% gain, while slowing down from a year-on-year increase of 3.3% recorded in May.

On a monthly basis, CPI showed a decline of 0.1% in June, and also came below the market expectation of a 0.1% increase, while it managed to post a slowdown from May when it showed no change.

Powell noted the Fed does not need to wait until inflation hits its 2% long-term target to begin lowering interest rates, because of the lagging effect of monetary tightening on inflation data.

Anadolu News

German Finance Minister urges EU-wide compliance of bloc's fiscal rules on deficits

Brussels, Belgium - Every EU member country is expected to abide by the bloc's fiscal rules, Germany's Finance Minister said on Monday.

Christian Lindner singled out France during an EU finance ministers' meeting in Brussels, where he said all future governments of the neighbouring country would have to be careful about comply-



Christian Lindner

ing with the fiscal rules, especially since it has not reduced its budget deficit as they require.

The EU imposes limits to national public deficits and debt of member states through fiscal rules. However, a significant number of EU nations do not abide by these rules, nor do they abide by fines and penalties exceeding these set limits.

In addition, Eurogroup President Paschal Donohoe stressed that they would also discuss the appropriate budgetary policy for 2025 in the eurozone.

"The future of the single market and the competitiveness of the EU will be discussed and Bulgaria's stage in the process of accession to the Eurozone will be assessed," he added.

FORESIGHT



SYED ADIL ABBAS

Abbas, an MBA graduate from Cardiff Metropolitan University (UK), is currently based in Muscat, and has over 20 years of international experience working with the public and private sectors in the Middle East, Far East, Africa and India.

In a significant shift, AI chatbots are increasingly becoming companions, partners, and even digital representations of deceased loved ones, fundamentally altering how people seek emotional support and social interaction. Platforms like Character.AI, which now boast 3.5 million daily users, have become particularly popular among teenagers who find solace in these judgment-free digital spaces. For instance, a teen using the 'Psychologist' AI found significant comfort and cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) advice, highlighting the potential therapeutic benefits of these interactions.

This burgeoning trend, while offering many advantages, also brings potential drawbacks. As users spend extensive hours interacting with AI companions, concerns about addiction and the deterioration of real-life social skills are becoming more pronounced. These interactions, while providing temporary relief, may not

foster the deep, meaningful connections that human relationships offer.

Moreover, the concept of digital ghosts - AI-generated avatars of deceased loved ones - has gained traction, especially in countries like China. Companies such as Silicon Intelligence offer services that recreate digital versions of the departed using photos and audio clips, allowing ongoing conversations with them. While some individuals find comfort in maintaining these connections, there are worries about prolonged grief and the potential blurring of reality and memory.

AI chatbots have also ventured

into romantic relationships. Platforms like Candy.ai and Kupid.ai provide AI-generated girlfriends, attracting users who seek constant positive feedback and personalised

tions.

Oman stands at the cusp of these advancements, with several opportunities and risks to consider.

Entrepreneurs in Oman can inno-

DIGITAL COMPANIONS

interactions. A notable case involves a US-based user who reportedly spent US\$10,000 a month on these virtual companions, underscoring the demand for such services among those experiencing loneliness or seeking emotional connec-

tions. By developing therapeutic robots equipped with AI chatbots to provide companionship and emotional support in settings such as elder care, hospitals, and mental health facilities. For instance, creating robotic pets that respond to

voice commands and offer calming conversations could significantly enhance patient comfort and reduce the need for constant human supervision.

Companies could integrate AI companions into their corporate wellness programmes, offering confidential, 24/7 support for stress management and mental health issues, potentially improving employee well-being and productivity. EdTech companies can deploy AI chatbots in remote learning environments, where AI tutors could provide individualised attention, help with challenging subjects, and moti-

vate students through gamified learning experiences.

However, the increasing reliance on AI chatbots for social interaction poses risks, including addiction and a decline in real-life social skills, particularly among young people. Ethical and data privacy issues also loom large, necessitating robust safeguards to protect user data and address potential psychological impacts. Furthermore, while AI companions can offer temporary emotional support, they may not adequately address deeper mental health issues, and a heavy dependence on AI for emotional support could lead to neglecting the need for professional human therapy and support.

By navigating these opportunities and risks thoughtfully, Oman can leverage AI chatbot technology to enhance emotional support and social interaction while safeguarding the well-being of its citizens.

How to use Ukraine's gas pipelines when Russia deal ends

Ukraine has thousands of kilometers of underground pipelines that bring Russian natural gas into Europe. Before Moscow launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine, nearly 150bn cubic metres (bcm) of natural gas flowed annually through the Soviet-built pipelines.

Since the war began, European Union states have cut their reliance on Russian fossil fuels, while Russia has slowed gas deliveries through Ukraine from 40 bcm, which the two sides agreed to in 2019, to nearly 15 bcm last year.

The 5-year agreement with Russian state energy firm Gazprom to continue Ukraine's role as a gas transit route expires at the end of this year. The deal is the only remaining trade and political agreement between Moscow and Kyiv.

Russia open to renew gas transit deal

Ukraine and the EU have downplayed the prospect of a new deal, as diplomatic ties have been severed due to the conflict.

Brussels said EU states that rely most heavily on Russian gas via Ukraine - Austria, Slovakia, Hungary and Italy - can boost imports of liquified natural gas (LNG) or source gas via other pipelines into Europe. Moscow, on the other hand, said last week it was open to renewing the agreement.

"Transit through its territory depends on Ukraine. They have their own established rules. It depends on their desire. Russia is



ready to supply," Russian state news agencies cited Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak as saying. The EU has instead started negotiating with Azerbaijan to import more of the country's natural gas, which could potentially run through Ukraine's pipelines and help maintain the war-torn country's role as an energy transit country.

Azerbaijan increased gas exports to Europe by 56% in the first year of the war and aims to double them by 2027. If exports continue to rise as they have in the first six months of the year, deliveries to Europe are expected to reach 12.8 bcm by the end of 2024.

Brussels said EU states that rely most heavily on Russian gas via Ukraine - Austria, Slovakia, Hungary and Italy - can boost imports of LNG or source gas via other pipelines into Europe

Hikmat Hajiye, an Azerbaijani presidential advisor, told Reuters news agency last month that both the EU and Kyiv have asked Azerbaijan to facilitate talks with Russia. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy confirmed last week in an interview with Bloomberg News that negotiations were underway.

Energy experts think Azerbaijan, which will hold the COP29

climate talks in November, doesn't have the available gas in the short term to increase supplies to Europe further.

How feasible is a deal with Azerbaijan?

"Azerbaijan's gas production isn't that big. The country has large domestic gas supply needs and already exports gas to Georgia, Turkey and Europe," Aura

security and critical infrastructure protection at the National Institute for Strategic Studies of Ukraine, told DW.

Sabadus, meanwhile, thinks the Azerbaijani gas would likely need to be imported via Russia's southern pipeline infrastructure through Turkey, Moldova and Romania, as Azerbaijan doesn't have a border with Ukraine. Sabadus told DW that transit costs on the southern pipelines are 'exorbitant', which may make that route unfeasible.

How else could a deal between Azerbaijan and Ukraine work?

One option would be for Azerbaijani gas suppliers to sell their gas via Russia, allowing state energy monopoly Gazprom and other Russian firms to earn transit revenues.

Earlier this year, Gazprom announced its first loss since 1999, as the firm struggled to make up for lost European exports through deals with China and Turkey.

Ukraine has Europe's largest underground gas storage facilities, mostly located in the west of the country. Kyiv had asked Moscow before the war to allow it to transit gas from Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan to Europe. But the Kremlin refused, so this route is in doubt. "It's highly unlikely that the Russians would open up their borders [to gas from neighbouring countries] because it would mean losing control over their transmission system, which is seen as a strategic asset," said Sabadus.

DW

US business inventories rise 0.5%

Istanbul, Türkiye - US business inventories increased 0.5% to US\$2,558.5bn in May, according to Commerce Department figures.

The figure came in higher than expectations of a 0.4% increase. The figure for April was revised up from US\$2,545.2bn to US\$2,546.2bn for a monthly gain of 0.3%.

Business inventories, which measure the change in value of unsold goods held by manufacturers, wholesalers and retailers, were up 1.6% in May, compared to the same month in 2023. The annual increase in inventories indicates that consumer demand is weakening in the US.

Morgan Stanley's income surges

Istanbul, Türkiye - US-based multinational investment bank and financial services company Morgan Stanley increased its income and revenue in the second quarter of this year, according to its financial results statement.

The multinational investment bank and financial services corporation posted a net income of US\$3.1bn in the April-June period, up 41% from US\$2.2bn in the same period last year. Total revenue, meanwhile, came in at US\$15bn, up nearly 12% from US\$13.4bn, during that period.

UAE hosts APAC annual meetings with 65 accreditation bodies

Dubai, UAE - The Ministry of Industry and Advanced Technology (MoIAT), through its Emirates National Accreditation System (ENAS), has partnered with the Gulf Accreditation Center (GAC) and the Emirates International Accreditation Center (EIAC), to host the 2024 Asia-Pacific Accreditation Cooperation (APAC) Annual Meetings in Dubai under the theme "Accreditation: Empowering Tomorrow and Shaping the Future".

The meetings, which run until July 18, are attended by representatives from 65 national accreditation bodies in the Asia-Pacific region, along with international experts in accreditation and conformity assessment.

By hosting the meetings in the UAE, the country is reinforcing its position as a leading destination for major regional and international organisations in the field of quality infrastructure, a key pillar of Operation 300bn.



The initiative contributes to boosting the attractiveness of the industrial ecosystem, innovation, and regional and global competitiveness, while also enhancing product quality and facilitating trade exchange through unified processes and standards and mutual recognition of conformity assessments.

At the event, the entities will work to boost recognition of conformity assessments between markets, with the aim of facilitating trade and increasing confidence in products among APAC members.

The event features the participation of Omar al Suwaidi, Undersecretary of MoIAT; Jennifer

Evans, Chair of the Asia-Pacific Accreditation Cooperation (APAC); Dr Waleed Alhosani, Head of Economic Affairs at the Secretariat General of the Gulf Cooperation Council; Amina Ahmed Mohammed, CEO of EIAC; and Eng. Moteb al Mezani, Director General of GAC.

WAM

flydubai to get 7 new aircraft in 2024

Dubai, UAE - flydubai announced that it will receive seven aircraft before the end of 2024 and is on track to hire more than 130 new pilots by the end of this year.

In a statement on Tuesday, the airline said the new aircraft will further support the network's expansion by adding Basel, Riga, Tallinn, and Vilnius.

Ghaith al Ghaith, Chief Executive Officer of flydubai, said, "Today, flydubai has grown its workforce to more than 5,800 skilled professionals represented by 140 nationalities, more than



1,200 of whom are pilots. We are on track to hire more than 130 new pilots by the end of this year."

Ghaith added that the airline

employed more than 440 employees this year, a growth of 6% over last year. He stated that there is an ongoing recruitment campaign to add more qualified

personnel and talents to the team and support the company's growth. "From our home in Dubai, flydubai has built a network of more than 125 destinations across 58 countries served by a young and efficient fleet of 88 Boeing 737 aircraft," he noted.

He highlighted that flydubai continues to attract young Emirati talents, emphasising their commitment to employing local youth and enhancing Emiratisation efforts by placing them in suitable roles across various company departments.



Invitation to the Extraordinary General Meeting of Al Kamil Power Company SAOG (under liquidation)

BDO LLC, being the liquidator of Al Kamil Power Company SAOG (under liquidation) (Company), is pleased to invite the shareholders of the Company to the extraordinary general meeting (EGM) to be held in accordance with Article 54 of the Commercial Companies Law promulgated by Royal Decree 18/2019 (CCL) at 3:00 pm on Wednesday, 31 July 2024 through the electronic platform for holding general meetings, which you can login through the website of Muscat Clearing and Depository Company SAOC (www.mcd.gov.om) to discuss the following agenda items:

1. To update the shareholders on the liquidation works for the second liquidation year that ended on 26 March 2024.
2. To consider and approve the audited financial statements of the Company for the financial year ended 31 December 2023.
3. To consider and approve the extension of the liquidation period by one year until 26 March 2025.
4. To consider and approve the liquidator's fees for the third year beginning 27 March 2024 until the completion of the Company's liquidation works for a total amount of RO 9,500.

As per the regulations for convening general meetings through electronic platforms issued by the Capital Market Authority (CMA), we bring to your attention the following:

1. Only a juristic person has the right to authorise a natural person to attend the general meeting and vote on their behalf through the electronic platform, provided that this natural person has an investor number at Muscat Clearing and Depository Company SAOC.
2. Voting on the agenda items starts three (3) days before and ends on the day of the EGM. If a shareholder's shareholding is increased or decreased, the voting process will be cancelled and the shareholder will have to vote again on the day of the EGM.

If the quorum for holding the EGM is not achieved, then a second EGM will be held at 3:00 pm on Thursday, 1 August 2024 at the same address above.

For any queries please contact **Malaak Al Balushi** on 93892854 or e-mail at: malaak.albalushi@dentons.com.

MHD Automobiles unveils exclusive summer offers



MHD Automobiles, the esteemed distributor of iconic Stellantis brands including Jeep, RAM, Dodge, and Alfa Romeo, has unveiled its exclusive summer offers.

This limited-time promotion provides customers with exceptional benefits on a wide range of vehicles, making it the perfect season to drive home in a new car, a press release said.

MHD Automobiles' summer offers include a variety of incen-

tives designed to deliver outstanding value to customers. The offers vary by model and include free service up to 5 Years or 100,000km.

The Jeep Wrangler and Dodge Charger are eligible for 3 years or 60,000km free service, and the Jeep Grand Cherokee, Grand Wagoneer, Dodge Durango, and the RAM 1500 range are eligible for 5 years or 100,000km free service.

All models come with 5

years or 100,000km warranty, whichever comes first, besides roadside assistance for 5 years or 100,000km, free first year insurance for Oman and UAE and first year registration

Customers can also benefit from a trade-in bonus of up to RO500, based on the evaluation of their current vehicle by the MHD Used Car Team.

Mohsin Hani Bahrani, CEO, MHD Automobiles, said, "We

are delighted to offer our customers these exceptional summer deals. At MHD Automobiles, we are committed to delivering unparalleled value and service excellence. These offers reflect our dedication to ensuring that our customers enjoy the best ownership experience possible with our iconic Jeep, Dodge, and RAM vehicles. There has never been a better time to join the MHD family and drive home

in a vehicle that stands for quality, performance, and reliability."

These unparalleled offers ensure that customers can enjoy peace of mind and significant savings with their new vehicle purchase. The comprehensive service warranty packages provide long-term value and reliability, while the free insurance and registration for the first year reduce the initial cost of ownership.



Liva's Hanaa al Hinai 'Most Inspirational Woman CEO'

A moment of pride for the Sultanate of Oman and a milestone for women in leadership, Liva Insurance CEO, Hanaa al Hinai, has been named the 'Most Inspirational Woman CEO' in the Insurance Sector at the 2024 Women's Tabloid Awards.

This prestigious accolade highlights her relentless diligence in transforming paradigms in the sector and aligning with the development pillars set under Oman Vision 2040, a press release said.

A distinguished event that celebrates the extraordinary accomplishments of women worldwide, the Women's Tabloid Awards - centred in London, UK, recognises various professional fields, focusing on women leaders, CXOs, entrepreneurs, and women-led businesses. The event comprises a wide range of industries, including finance, banking, insurance, technology, healthcare, education,

hospitality, retail, among many others.

It must be noted that this year's nominees demonstrated exceptional leadership, innovation, and impact across their respective fields. The awards were then judged based on achievements, management qualities, and contributions to industry advancements.

Hinai's dedication has been pivotal in driving Liva Insurance towards excellence. At the helm, she expertly guides the company's overall strategy, skillfully balancing institutional goals with the development of the team's core competencies. Her exceptional efforts in overseeing the merger process has also enabled Liva to emerge as one of the trailblazers in Oman's insurance sector.

Hinai said, "I am truly humbled to receive this award, which reflects the tenacity and hard work of our entire team."

Food Fund International launches internship programme

Food Fund International (FFI) announced a strategic partnership with the Dubai College of Tourism (DCT) to launch an innovative internship programme designed to provide hands-on experience for hospitality students.

This collaboration aligns with FFI's commitment to fostering talent and contributing to the professional growth of future leaders in the culinary and hospitality industries, a press release said.

The internship programme is tailored for DCT students pursuing careers in hospitality, culinary arts, and F&B service. This partnership offers a unique opportunity for students to gain practical experience at FFI's esteemed venues, including SAN, Taverna, Meat Co, and Tribes. The inaugural batch of the program includes five students: three female culinary students and two male F&B service students.

Interns have the opportunity to rotate through various FFI venues, experiencing both fine dining and casual dining environments. Over a span of six weeks, they will work alongside FFI's expert restaurant and kitchen teams, gaining invaluable industry insights and practical skills.

The intake for a longer internship programme will begin in September with the term of the internship being between the months of December to April, targeting graduated students. This four-month programme offers the possibility of permanent employment with FFI upon successful completion.

Bank Muscat clinches Best Digital Bank Award

Bank Muscat has recently been awarded the Best Digital Bank in Oman at the coveted MEED Global Excellence Awards.

These awards recognise the leading banking institutions for their excellence in the digital banking sphere across the region and which stand out in terms of providing customers with innovative banking solutions that aim to enhance customer experience and facilitate their access to various services and facilities, a press release said.

Bank Muscat's selection came after a robust evaluation process and discussions with experts in the field worldwide. At a grand ceremony held in Dubai, Mohammed bin Sultan al Habsi, the representative of Bank Muscat's office in UAE, received the award on behalf of the bank. The event was attended by officials representing major institutions and companies across the Middle East and the world.

Abdulnasir al Raisi, general



manager, Personal Banking, Bank Muscat, said, "This recognition underscores the Bank's commitment to satisfying the current needs of customers. We would like to extend our sincere gratitude and appreciation to MEED for honouring Bank Muscat with this prestigious award. Highlighting the Bank's pioneering role in

digital banking, Bank Muscat has set and developed a strategic plan to implement modern technological advancements and global digital trends aiming to foster a digital society and better serve customers through the launch of innovative projects and initiatives."

Raisi added, "Currently, cus-

tomers rely on the bank's digital platforms, including its Mobile Banking App, that enable seamless, smooth, and rapid access to banking services. Bank Muscat will continue to exert more effort to improve its offerings and facilities to enhance the banking experience of customers, thus, meeting their aspirations and

needs. We would like to deliver our thanks to Bank Muscat's customers for their continuous trust in the digital services and solutions provided to them."

Abdullah Hamood al Jufaili, assistant general manager, Digital Banking, Bank Muscat, commented, "Recognising Bank Muscat with this coveted global

award reflects its commitment to strategically implementing technological advancements to serve customers throughout the bank's digital evolution journey. The bank continuously strives to enhance its suite of banking services and facilities through its digital platforms as well as branch network.

"Today, the bank has 184 branches and over 870 ATMs, CDMs, and self-service kiosks distributed across the sultanate and that offer round-the-clock services. In alignment with Oman Vision 2040, Bank Muscat is consistently dedicated to implementing digital transformation which has been evident through the continuous launch of banking services and solutions that serve various customer segments."

Digital transformation has had great impact on the banking services provided to customers. In addition, the bank seeks to enhance the quality of its services.

New 7-Seater Audi Q7 with a sporty look arrives in Middle East

Audi Middle East has announced the arrival of the new Audi Q7, a vehicle that redefines luxury comfort, cutting-edge design, and powerful performance in the luxury SUV segment.

Building on Audi's legacy of excellence, the Q7 combines advanced technology with sophisticated design elements to deliver a personalised and unparalleled driving experience, a press release said.

The interior of the Audi Q7 has been meticulously crafted to offer luxurious comfort and versatility. Featuring a variable interior concept, the Q7 provides ample space for up to seven passengers, making it ideal for family



outing, business trips, or leisurely drives.

Customers can personalise their Q7 with a range of interior options, including decorative inlays, seat designs with contrasting stitching, and advanced driver assistance systems for added convenience and safety. The updated infotainment system now supports third-party applications, providing seamless integration and enhanced connectivity for a more responsive and user-friendly experience.

The Audi Q7 will be available with two engine options - the 45 TFSI, featuring a four-cylinder petrol engine delivering 252 HP, and the 55 TFSI, which boasts a

robust six-cylinder petrol engine producing 340 HP. This performance is supported by advanced suspension systems, including electronically controlled air suspension with adaptive damping and optional all-wheel steering, ensuring a dynamic, controlled, and comfortable driving experience. Additionally, the Q7 is equipped with advanced driver assistance systems, such as adaptive cruise control and lane assist, which work together to ensure a safe and comfortable driving experience.

The Audi SQ7 TFSI combines sportiness with high performance, featuring a V8 TFSI petrol engine.

Zubair EDC facilitates feasibility study agreement for sustainable fish feed

The Zubair Enterprises Development Centre (Zubair EDC), the SME empowerment initiative of the Zubair Corporation, proudly announces the facilitation of a significant agreement between Tuhlub, a member of its Direct Support Programme (DSP), and the Leaders Consultancies and Development Centre. This partnership aims to conduct a unique feasibility study on using Azolla as raw material for fish feeding in Oman. If proven feasible, this study has the potential to greatly impact food security in the Sultanate of Oman.

This initiative aligns with the Zubair Corporation's strategic direction towards promoting sustainability. With the Zubair EDC establishing new criteria for its DSP initiative, the entity rewards members who demonstrate exceptional commitment to success and dedication in applying the recommendations provided by the Zubair EDC team.

Projects and businesses must reflect strategic planning and accurate feasibility studies, showcasing their eagerness to implement best business administration practices with the assistance of Zubair EDC.

Ali Shaker, Head of Business Dev & Partnerships at Zubair



EDC, noted, "The agreement facilitated by Zubair EDC for this feasibility study is a testament to our dedication to supporting our DSP members in exploring innovative solutions that can enhance food security in the sultanate. We are excited to see the potential outcomes of this study and wish all the success for the Tuhlub project, setting an example for sustainable projects

Zubair EDC has been actively working with Tuhlub to develop various areas of business with the most recent assistance given to study the use of Azolla

and inspiring the younger generation towards more sustainable, innovative business models aligned with Oman's 2040 vision. I would also like to extend my gratitude to OMINVEST for

their continuous efforts in supporting young entrepreneurs and sustainable entrepreneurship in Oman."

Zubair EDC has been actively working with Tuhlub to develop

various areas of business with the most recent assistance in identifying and securing several research bodies to conduct a comprehensive feasibility study on the use of Azolla in fish feeding.

Zaher al Alawi, CEO of Tuhlub Almustadama, expressed, "This feasibility study is a crucial step towards innovating sustainable practices within the fish feed in-

dustry. With the support of Zubair EDC and the expertise of Leaders Consultancies and Development Centre, we are optimistic about discovering new methods to enhance food security in the Sultanate."

OMINVEST, the sponsor of the DSP's Tuhlub project, has a longstanding history of supporting youth and Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and is stead-

fastly committed to empowering and fostering entrepreneurship and business growth. This initiative is interwoven within their efforts towards achieving UN Sustainability Development Goals (SDGs).

Speaking on the occasion, Waleed Nasser al Yarubi, Chief People, Corporate Communication and Sustainability Officer said, "We at OMINVEST believe in the potential of our youth and the importance of supporting SMEs to drive innovation and economic growth. This feasibility study on Azolla-based fish feeding exemplifies our commitment to fostering sustainable and impactful business ventures."

The agreement to conduct the feasibility study has been signed with Leaders Consultancies and Development Centre. Renowned for providing extensive agricultural services, including plant and animal production, farm management using greenhouses, irrigation systems, hydroponics, and aquaponics systems, Leaders Consultancies and Development Centre is ideally positioned to execute this critical study. Their expertise extends to agricultural extension, field consultation, and comprehensive fertiliser, pesticide, and seed programme services.

Alizz Islamic marks world youth skills day

On the occasion of World Youth Skills Day, Alizz Islamic Bank welcomed Dr Wail al Harrasi, founder & CEO of Wabas Enterprises & Investments for an insightful session with the bank staff and students from various colleges and universities to discuss about various important topics including self-discovery, building core values, mastering cutting-edge technologies like Chat GPT, and harnessing the power of Artificial Intelligence in today's rapidly evolving world.

Throughout the event, attendees had the opportunity to engage in insightful interactive discussions, and thought-provoking presentations that encouraged them to explore their own skills and potentials, and to understand the significance of continuous learning and personal growth. World Youth Skills Day, observed annually on July 15, promotes youth skills development to tackle unemployment and underemployment. It encourages investment in training and education, aiming to better



integrate youth into the workforce. This initiative, declared by the United Nations General Assembly in November 2014, emphasises the significance of equipping youth with necessary skills to empower them.

Alizz Islamic Bank underlines the importance of the critical role that skill development plays in overcoming challenges and promoting economic growth and aims to bridge the gap between

education and employment, promoting economic growth and social inclusion. The bank strives to develop the future leaders of Oman; placing great importance on education, training and development, empowering future generations and equipping them with the skills and capabilities needed to contribute their creative potential towards serving their communities.

Dr Harrasi is the founder &

CEO of Wabas Enterprises & Investments, a firm focusing on strategy consultancy in technology with an investment arm in technology and innovation.

He is a retired Undersecretary of the Ministry of Endowment and Religious Affairs and a Board member of the Imam Jabir bin Zaid Endowment Foundation. He is also a Member of the Sharia'a Committee of Al Madina Takaful.

Dhofar Islamic empowers young with new account

Dhofar Islamic, the Islamic banking window of BankDhofar, has introduced its latest offering, the Youth Account, designed to cater to the unique financial needs and aspirations of Oman's young generation.

Dhofar Islamic encourages young Omanis to embrace Youth Account as a stepping-stone to financial literacy and financial independence. With this account, Dhofar Islamic aims to inspire a generation of confident and responsible financial leaders.

The Youth Account is a sharia'a compliant savings account (based on Mudarabah principles) specially crafted to cater to the unique needs of youth aged between 18 and 23 years. It comes with no minimum balance requirement and allows free fund transfers through mobile payment service ensuring that young account holders can enjoy their banking experience without any extra fees.



This innovative youth-centric account is a testament to Dhofar Islamic's commitment to empowering the youth with convenient and flexible banking solutions that enable financial independence from an early age.

Commenting on the launch of the Youth Account, Amor Said al Amri, DGM and Head of Retail Banking - Dhofar Islamic said, "Our Youth Account is designed to empower the young generation to learn essential

money management skills, take control of their finances and build a strong financial foundation for their future. We are committed to providing them with the tools they need to start their career and achieve their financial goals."

Dhofar Islamic is one of the leading Islamic windows in Oman setting the standard for the best customer experience within the banking industry in the Sultanate of Oman by adopting best international banking practices.

It continues to demonstrate its strong commitment towards community development and contribution to the growth of the national economy by offering innovative sharia'a compliant financial solutions that cater to the needs of its retail and corporate customers.

The Youth Account is available now at all Dhofar Islamic branches.



KSrelief distributes 517 food baskets in Yemen

The King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Center (KSrelief) delivered 517 food baskets to the needy families in Aden on Thursday, benefiting 3,619 individuals as part of the food aid distribution project in Yemen.

This aid is part of the relief efforts provided by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia through KSrelief to alleviate the suffering of the Yemeni people due to the ongoing humanitarian crisis.

KSrelief also presented 50 tons of dates as a gift from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the Republic of Senegal on Friday.

The dates were delivered by the Saudi Ambassador to the Republic of Senegal, Saad bin Abdullah Al-Nafaie, during a ceremony at the Saudi Embassy's headquarters in Dakar.

The gift of dates is part of the humanitarian role played by Saudi Arabia through KSrelief.

National Finance ties up with leading brands to offer financing

Committed to being a trusted Partner for Growth to all, National Finance - the Sultanate of Oman's leading finance company - has proudly partnered with renowned retail brands ARINA Home, Danube Home, Abraj Muscat Electronics, ALMA Kitchens, to offer Consumer Durables Finance (CDF) on a wide range of products including furniture finance, electronics, home appliances finance and various equipment finance.

These partnerships aim to empower customers with convenient and flexible financing options, enabling them to realise their lifestyle aspirations.

Enhancing accessibility to high-quality products, National Finance enables customers to procure stylish home décor and furnishings at ARINA Home and Danube Home to transform their living spaces; while at Abraj Mus-



cat Electronics, customers can purchase electronics, household appliances, central air conditioners, Turkish interior and exterior doors, and natural marble. ALMA Kitchens extends the opportunity to manifest dream kitchens.

Commenting on these collab-

orations, Tariq Sulaiman al Farsi, Chief Executive Officer, National Finance said, "It is our endeavour at National Finance to bring ease and financial flexibility to our valued customers, so that they may enjoy enhanced accessibility to a myriad of durable, stylish and on-

trend lifestyle products.

"We understand the ever-evolving needs of our customers, and through our Consumer Durables Finance offering, we aim to alleviate any financial constraints they may encounter during their purchases."

National Finance's Consumer Durables Finance offering is distinguished by its swift, streamlined and flexible processes. Finances can be directly availed from the partner stores

National Finance's Consumer Durables Finance offering is distinguished by its swift, streamlined, and flexible processes. Customers can apply for financing directly from the partner stores, eliminating the need for multiple visits.

‘Nothing known about’: Rare whale washes ashore in New Zealand

Wellington, New Zealand - A rare type of whale has washed ashore in New Zealand, with officials saying ‘nothing is known about’ such a specie.

The whale was found last week along a beach near Taiari Mouth in the South Island region of Otago when locals notified the Department of Conservation (DoC).

Around 5-metre long, the DoC said in a statement: “It appears the creature was a male spade-toothed whale - a species so rare next to nothing is known about them.”

DoC official Gabe Davies said: “If confirmed, this will be a very significant scientific find.”

“Spade-toothed whales are one of the most poorly known large mammalian species of modern times. Since the 1800s, only six samples have ever been documented worldwide, and all but one of these was from New Zealand. From a scientific and conservation point of view, this is huge,” said Davies, who is



The whale was found last week along a beach near Taiari Mouth in the South Island region of Otago

DoC Coastal Otago Operations Manager.

The DoC is working on next steps to make a plan for the whale’s remains.

“A specimen this fresh offers the first opportunity ever for a spade-toothed whale to be dissected,” it said.

The DoC has sent genetic samples to the University of Auckland as curators of the New Zealand Cetacean Tissue Archive.

It may take several weeks or months for the DNA to be processed and a final species ID to be confirmed, the statement added.

Anadolu Agency

S Korea’s alliance with US elevated to ‘nuclear-based’

Seoul, South Korea - South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol said on Tuesday his country’s alliance with the US has been elevated to a ‘nuclear-based’ one capable of deterring the North Korea’s nuclear threats following their signing of joint nuclear deterrence guidelines.

The United States and South Korea last week signed a milestone document laying out nuclear deterrence principles and warned that a doomsday attack on the South ‘will be met with a swift, overwhelming and decisive response’.

The protocols’ signing on the margins of the NATO leaders summit comes after Washington and Seoul established in April 2023 the joint Nuclear Consultative Group, which has been



S Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol said during a Cabinet meeting, reported Yonhap News.

“We have established a posture to respond swiftly and effectively to any kind of North Korean nuclear threat,” he added.

The signing of the guidelines was a culmination of the bilateral Nuclear Consultative Group’s efforts to ensure the credibility of Washington’s ‘extended deterrence’ commitment to South Korea in an integrated way that includes South Korea’s conventional support for US nuclear operations in a contingency.

Extended deterrence refers to a pledge from Washington to mobilise the full range of its military capabilities, including nuclear arms, to defend Seoul.

Anadolu Agency

J D Vance confirmed as Trump's running mate in upcoming US election

Washington, D.C., US - The Republican party confirmed on Monday former US President Donald Trump as its candidate for the upcoming US election and Ohio Senator J D Vance as his running mate.

Vance was greeted at the first day of the Republican National Convention (RNC) with a standing ovation, while Trump made his first public appearance since he survived an assassination attempt days earlier. “Just overwhelmed with gratitude. What an honour it is to run alongside President Donald J Trump. He delivered peace and prosperity once, and with your help, he’ll do it again,” Vance said on social media after his nomination.

Trump’s rival, US President Joe Biden, condemned the Republicans’ choice of vice presidential candidate.

“He’s a clone of Trump on the issues,” Biden told reporters. “I don’t see any difference.”



Ohio Senator J D Vance

Once he was elected as a senator for Ohio in 2023, Vance fiercely defended Trump’s policies and behaviour, which he said resonated with voters who felt forgotten by the party.

In recent days, Vance attracted controversy for his comments on the assassination attempt against Trump. “The central premise of the Biden campaign is that President Donald Trump is an authoritarian fascist who must be stopped at all costs,” Vance wrote on social media. “That rhetoric led directly to President Trump’s attempted assassination.”

Biden said on Monday he had made a mistake by saying Trump

should be put in the ‘bullseye’ last week but added that Trump has frequently employed violent rhetoric on the campaign trail.

What are JD Vance’s views?

Ideologically, Vance has been described by the president of the Heritage Foundation as a leading conservative voice on key issues including free market economics, a less interventionist foreign policy and ‘American culture writ large’. Democrats have called Vance an extremist on issues like abortion. He signalled support for a nationwide 15-week abortion ban during his senate campaign,

but he softened his stance after Ohio voters overwhelmingly backed a 2023 abortion rights amendment.

On foreign policy, Vance has followed the so-called America first narrative against Ukraine aid and calling on Europe to step up its defence capabilities.

Earlier this year at the Munich Security Conference, Vance argued that the main problem in Ukraine was ‘that there’s no clear end point’, adding that the US doesn’t manufacture enough weapons and ammunition to back wartime efforts in Europe and the Middle East .

DW

PICKING PRICKLY PEARS



A farmer picks prickly pears at a farm in Mit Kanana, Qalyubia Governorate, Egypt, on Monday (Xinhua)

European Commission to partly boycott Hungary’s presidency

Brussels, Belgium - The executive arm of the EU in Brussels is partially boycotting Hungary’s six-month stint holding the bloc’s rotating presidency, in response to Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban’s self-styled ‘peace mission’ that he embarked on after taking up the position at the start of the month.

In the first days of Hungary’s presidency, Orban visited Kyiv, Moscow, Beijing, and Washington for a NATO summit, and then Donald Trump in Florida.

The trip to Kyiv was Orban’s first since Russia’s invasion, despite Hungary bordering Ukraine.

He called the trip a peace mission and tried to portray himself as one of the ‘very few’ EU and NATO heads of government still able to hold productive talks in Moscow and negotiate with all sides.

Sharp criticism rapidly followed from other EU member states and Hungary’s NATO allies. The European Commission said on Monday that it would carry out a partial boycott of

Hungary’s six months holding the European Council presidency.

The EU’s executive arm said it would only send high-ranking officials to informal meetings, not any of the EU’s 27 Commissioners - meaning Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and her various subordinates.

“In light of recent developments marking the start of the Hungarian Presidency, (Ursula von der Leyen) has decided that the European Commission will be represented at senior civil servant level only during the informal meetings of the Council,” von der Leyen’s spokesman Eric Mamer said.

“The College visit to the Presidency will not take place,” Mamer added, referring to a six-monthly meeting that usually brings all or most of the 27 Commissioners together in the capital of the country holding the rotating role.

Typically this visit takes place early in the 6-month period, in the hope of the talks leading to subsequent planning and action.



Russian President Vladimir Putin shakes hands with Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban, during a meeting at the Kremlin, in Moscow, Russia on July 5 (DW)

Several member states close to Russia have already taken this step. The EU’s decision on Monday follows in the footsteps of a series of EU member states, many of them positioned close to Russia’s borders.

Sweden’s government last week announced that it, Finland,

Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland would not be sending ministers to government meetings linked to Hungary’s EU presidency during July in protest at Orban’s talks with Putin in Moscow.

Swedish Minister for EU Affairs Jessika Roswall said at the

time that the countries would only be represented by civil servants and that other EU members were considering similar steps.

EU cannot ‘cherry pick’

Hungary responded critically to Monday’s announcement, argu-

ing that Brussels was effectively playing favourites when the point of the rotating presidency is for all members to have a stint at the helm.

“The EU is an international organisation constituted by its member states. The European Commission is an institution of the EU,” Hungarian Minister for European Affairs Janos Boka wrote on social media.

“The European Commission cannot cherry-pick institutions and member states it wants to cooperate with. Are all Commission decisions now based on political considerations?” he said.

Three political institutions underpin the EU.

The European Commission is the executive and drafts most legislation and holds much of the technocratic power. Its 27 Commissioners are appointed, albeit somewhat based on the results of European Parliament elections, at least in theory and where possible.

The European Parliament, with elected members from all mem-

ber states, must sign off by majority voting on all Commission proposals, and can also recommend steps to the Commission for consideration.

But almost everything the EU does needs final approval from the European Council.

Counterintuitively, this organisation does not really include ‘EU’ officials. Instead, it is made up of the 27 elected governments from each member state.

The Council must sign off on almost all EU policy - unanimously for the most sensitive issues and by complicated qualified majority voting processes otherwise - before it can be enacted.

There is a European Council President, currently Charles Michel, whose job it is to help coordinate and reach consensus in these talks, and also to liaise and negotiate with the other EU institutions. But it’s European governments who take turns to hold the Council reins for six months each, with that period referred to as their presidency.

DW

'Gaza pier remains in Israel's Ashdod Port'

The pier built by US military to bring humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip has not been re-anchored

Washington, D.C./Gaza - The temporary pier built by the US military to bring humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip has not been re-anchored, the Pentagon said on Monday.

"The temporary pier still remains at (Israel's Port of) Ashdod. There were not conditions that allowed the pier to be re-anchored over the weekend, so the pier remains there," Deputy Pentagon Press Secretary Sabrina Singh told reporters.

"The commander is still assessing when and if it can be re-anchored," she added.

"And while we didn't set a timeline or a date on when operations would end, we know that, going into later summer, the weather conditions, the sea states were just not going to allow for the pier to continue to remain operable," Singh said.

Asked whether there is any 'political issue' preventing the pier from being re-anchored,



Since the pier became operational on May 17, more than 8,100 metric tonnes of humanitarian aid has been delivered to the marshalling area for onward delivery and distribution

We're working on seeing whether we can re-anchor the pier...But this is not a political decision so much as it has to do with the environmental factors that impact the pier

SABRINA SINGH

she said: "We're working on seeing whether we can re-anchor the pier...But this is not a

political decision so much as it has to do with the environmental factors that impact the pier

and operability."

No matter what, she said the aid that is in Cyprus or on US ships right now will get to the people of Gaza 'in some way, via either the temporary pier and that being re-anchored or through Ashdod in some way'.

Since the pier became operational May 17, more than 8,100 metric tonnes, or approximately 20mn pounds, of humanitarian

aid has been delivered from the pier to the marshalling area where it can be collected by humanitarian organisations for onward delivery and distribution.

The US\$230mn pier, meant to boost deliveries of desperately needed humanitarian assistance to Gaza, has paused operations several times.

US President Joe Biden ordered the establishment of the

sea route to deliver food and aid to Palestinians on March 8 amid Israeli restrictions and months of conflict in the enclave.

Israel strikes 'humanitarian zone'

At least 13 people were killed and 26 others injured on Tuesday in an Israeli strike on a 'humanitarian zone' for displaced Palestinians in the southern Gaza Strip,

the Health Ministry said.

The attack targeted Al-Mawasi area, west of Khan Younis, according to witnesses.

Al-Mawasi was designated by the Israeli army as a 'humanitarian zone' for displaced Palestinians amid Tel Aviv's deadly offensive on the Gaza Strip.

There was no comment from the Israeli army on the attack.

The health ministry also said that at least 49 more Palestinians were killed in Israeli attacks in the Gaza Strip, pushing up the overall death toll to 38,713 since last October 7.

A ministry statement added that some 89,166 other people have been injured in the onslaught.

"Israeli forces killed 49 people and injured 69 others in two 'massacres' against families in the last 24 hours," the ministry said.

"Many people are still trapped under rubble and on the roads as rescuers are unable to reach them," it added.

Flouting a UN Security Council resolution demanding an immediate ceasefire, Israel has faced international condemnation amid its continued brutal offensive on Gaza since an October 7, 2023 attack by Palestinian group Hamas.

Over nine months into the Israeli war, vast tracts of Gaza lie in ruins amid a crippling blockade of food, clean water, and medicine.

Anadolu Agency

Welsh first minister resigns after four ministers quit job

Birmingham, UK - Welsh First Minister Vaughan Gething announced on Tuesday that he is resigning after just four months in the position.

His decision came hours after four ministers in his government resigned amid the ongoing row over donations to his Labour leadership campaign. Gething had previously ruled out resignation calls after losing a vote of no confidence in the Welsh parliament Senedd, in June. In a statement, he said: "Having been elected as leader of my party in March, I had hoped that over the summer a period of reflection, rebuilding and renewal could take place under my leadership.

"I recognise now that this is not possible. It has been the honour of my life to do this job even for a few short months."

Gething has been embroiled in controversy since he took over, and dogged by questions over a £200,000 campaign donation from a businessman convicted of



Vaughan Gething

environmental offences. In his resignation statement, Gething says claims of wrongdoing are 'politically motivated' and he did not compromise his integrity.

The Welsh Conservative leader Andrew RT Davies said Gething's resignation is 'long overdue'. "But there can be no doubt that his Labour colleagues, from those who resigned today all the way up to (UK Prime Minister) Keir Starmer, have stood by his side, and are culpable for the breakdown in governance in Wales," he added.

Anadolu Agency

Hamas, Fatah groups to meet in Beijing on July 20

Ramallah, Palestine - The Palestinian Hamas and Fatah groups are scheduled to meet in the Chinese capital Beijing on July 20 to discuss intra-Palestinian reconciliation.

"China hosts a meeting that includes all Palestinian groups as part of the exerted efforts to end the internal division, and will be preceded by a meeting between Hamas and Fatah groups," Abdel Fattah Dawla, a Fatah senior leader, told Anadolu.

He added that the meetings will start on July 20, and will extend over three days.

"We in the Fatah Movement are open to solve and dismantle all obstacles in the way of reconciliation under the difficult conditions the Palestinian cause is going through along with the genocidal war on Gaza," Dawla added. For his part, Azzam Al-Ahmad, a member of Fatah's Central Committee, stressed that his movement will participate in the Beijing meeting with openness aimed at ending the state of division.

The Hamas group is yet to comment on the upcoming meeting. In Beijing, Foreign Min-



istry spokesman Lin Jian on Tuesday said China has 'consistently supported Palestinian factions in achieving reconciliation and unity through dialogue and consultation'. "China provides a platform and creates opportunities for

Palestinian factions to engage in a dialogue of reconciliation," Lin said, reacting to the possible meeting in China between the Palestinian factions.

In April, China's Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian said rep-

resentatives of Fatah and Hamas held 'consultations on advancing intra-Palestinian reconciliation and for in-depth and candid dialogue' in Beijing.

Before the Beijing talks in April, the groups also held talks in

Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian said China is supporting Palestinian groups in achieving reconciliation and unity through dialogue and consultation

Moscow in February.

Similar rounds of talks took place in the past years in Turkey, Algeria, and Egypt, but all failed to bring a breakthrough in the Palestinian reconciliation file.

The Palestinian Territories of the West Bank and Gaza Strip have been politically divided since June 2007 due to sharp disagreements between the Fatah and Hamas movements.

Hamas won a majority in the legislative elections of 2006. Since then, it has controlled the Gaza Strip, and Fatah has governed the West Bank.

Anadolu Agency

Germany debates extending Euro 2024 special stationary border controls

Berlin, Germany - Germany's centre-right parties have called for the special stationary border controls introduced for the Euro 2024 men's football tournament to be extended, citing what they see as successes in stemming illegal immigration and fighting crime.

However, the government says that, though those successes are real, stationary border checks are costly and less effective than mobile controls. Many critics say they are also damaging to the economy in the long term.

Christian Dürr, parliamentary party leader for the neoliberal Free Democratic Party (FDP), the smallest party in Chancellor Olaf Scholz's coalition government, spoke out in favour of ex-



Policewoman stopping a car at the border between Germany and Belgium (DW)

tending the controls. These would 'enable us to catch those who want to enter the country illegally very effectively', Dürr

told the Funke Media Group newspapers.

Similarly, Martin Huber, secretary general of the conserva-

tive Christian Social Union (CSU), told the DPA news agency that the new stationary controls are 'indispensable' for

internal security and stopping illegal immigration.

Interior Minister Nancy Faeser of the centre-left Social Democrats (SPD) deployed some 22,000 police officers throughout Euro 2024, both at the games and to impose extra static controls at all of Germany's borders - they were introduced a week before the football tournament began on June 14 and will remain in place until July 19. Faeser also said she wanted to keep the controls in place on Germany's border with France throughout the Paris Olympics, which run from July 26 to August 11.

The Interior Ministry recently released figures for temporary border controls for the period from June 7 to 27, which showed

that around 600 outstanding arrest warrants were executed and around 150 people smugglers arrested. In around 3,200 cases, people were prevented from entering the country.

Not enough police

However, according to Andreas Rosskopf, chairman of Germany's largest police union, the GdP, extending these controls beyond this week is unsustainable in the long run.

"We only managed that because we suspended vacations and our colleagues worked overtime," he told DW. "That means in terms of staffing, we are not ready to carry out border controls permanently."

In any case, Rosskopf added: "These static border controls

don't have the same effect as when you have flexible, modern, and intelligent border control." This means border checks that move around daily, random police checks on roads and trains, use surveillance drones and can react quickly to the situation on the ground. "I think then our border control is much better," he said.

Such controls have already been in place since 2015 along Germany's borders with Switzerland, Austria, the Czech Republic, and Poland - which amount to around 2,500km (1,500 miles) - and have proved effective, according to Rosskopf, precisely because mobile checks are not as predictable as stationary borders.

DW

India: 4 soldiers killed in gunfight with ‘militants’ in Kashmir region

New Delhi, India - At least four Indian soldiers, including an officer, were killed in a gunfight with suspected rebels in an Indian-administered district in the disputed Kashmir region, the army said on Tuesday.

The shooting took place in the forests of the Doda district in the Jammu Division.

Another police officer also died later due to his wounds, the French AFP news agency cited an anonymous security source as saying.

The attack comes a day after the Indian army said it killed three suspected militants as they tried to cross from the Pakistan-controlled side of the highly-militarised dividing line.

What do we know about the attack?

Security forces had launched an operation some 135km (85 miles) southeast of the territory’s capital Srinagar in the Jammu area on Monday evening. Militants ambushed the patrolling team, military officials said, with a firefight ensuing.

The soldiers ‘laid down their lives in the line of duty, while undertaking a counter terrorist operation in Doda in order to ensure peace in the region’, the Indian military said in a statement posted on the social media platform X, formerly Twitter.



Army personnel stand guard near the site where the encounter took place between security forces and terrorists, in Doda on Tuesday (ANI)

No group immediately claimed responsibility for the attack. Minister of Defence Rajnath Singh said he was ‘angushed to learn about the cowardly attack’ on the soldiers and police who had made the ‘supreme sacri-

fice’. Additional security personnel were deployed in the area to track the shooters in the forested mountains. Kashmir’s top political official Manoj Sinha said forces would ‘avenge (the) death

of our soldiers’.

J&K sees uptick in militancy

This is the latest in a series of insurgent attacks in the region. It has brought the death toll of In-

dian security personnel killed in such attacks to over 10 this year.

Officials say the militants have made a ‘tactical shift’ in attacks.

Militants have moved their operations from the Muslim-majority Kashmir valley to the

The attack comes a day after the Indian army said it killed three suspected militants as they tried to cross from the side controlled by Pakistan across highly-militarised dividing line

Hindu-dominated southern Jammu region, where ‘counterinsurgency measures are not as strong’, AFP quoted an unnamed official as saying.

“They have found a gap for sure,” the region’s chief of police, R R Swain, told reporters on Monday, referring to the infiltration of militants into the region. “We will deal with it.”

Last week, five soldiers were killed in the nearby Kathua district. Insurgency has bogged down the region since 1989, with rebels demanding an independent Kashmir or its merger with Pakistan. Both India and Pakistan administer parts of the Kashmir region but both claim it in its entirety. India alleges that Pakistan sponsors militancy in the Indian-administered parts of Kashmir. DW

40 killed as storms lash eastern Afghanistan

Kabul, Afghanistan - At least 40 people had been killed and hundreds injured in eastern Afghanistan as of Tuesday, local officials said as heavy rains continued to pelt the region.

Saifullah Khalid, head of Nangarhar province’s disaster management authority, said that 350 people were wounded and some 400 homes had also been demolished by the torrent.

Many of the injured were brought to the regional hospital in Nangarhar from Jalalabad, the capital of the province which was suffering from electricity blackouts and impassable roads due to the storms.

The latest tragedy comes after flash floods in May killed hundreds of people and destroyed huge areas of agricultural land where 80 per cent of the population relies on farming to sustain themselves.

Compounding the issues in Afghanistan is the lack of foreign aid agencies’ presence on the ground. Many organisations left the country due to the instability that has arisen since the Taliban violently took back control in 2021. DW

UN concerned over conflict in Myanmar

Washington, D.C., US - Several UN member states including Turkey released a joint statement on Monday expressing concern over the situation in Myanmar.

“We are deeply concerned by the escalation of violence and conflict and credible reports of violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law across Myanmar that are deepening the humanitarian crisis,” US Deputy Permanent Representative to the UN Robert Wood told reporters, reading the statement.

Wood said recent reports indicate that the Myanmar regime has taken ‘deliberate steps’ in Rakhine State to use internally displaced persons, many of whom are Rohingya, ‘as human shields amid the conflict’.

Since the military coup in 2021, he added, the number of people in humanitarian need has risen from one million to 18.6mn.



“More than 2.9mn have been newly displaced, including 66,000 people who have sought protection in neighbouring countries, adding to the more than one million Rohingya refugees who fled before the coup,” he said, urging the Myanmar Armed Forces and all parties concerned

in Myanmar to de-escalate violence, respect international humanitarian law and human rights law, and to protect civilians.

“We reiterate calls to engage in constructive and inclusive dialogue to find a peaceful solution to the situation in Myanmar,” Wood said.

In 2017, Myanmar’s military launched violent operations against the Rohingya population in northern Rakhine State, which rights groups have since called a genocide. Nearly 1.2mn Rohingya were forced into neighbouring Bangladesh.

Anadolu Agency

Italy: Mount Etna erupts again, releases ash, lava

Rome, Italy - Mount Etna, located on the island of Sicily in Italy and positioned south of the Alps, erupted once more, releasing clouds of ash and streams of molten lava into the sky and down its slopes.

According to the Etna Observatory of the Italian National Institute of Geophysics and Volcanology (INGV), the volcano’s recently active crater, Voragine, began erupting ash and lava again on Monday night.

The INGV reported, Lava flows were observed on the slopes of the volcano due to the lava emitted from the Voragine crater, and the ash reached a height of approximately 6km (approximately 3.7 miles).

Local news reports also mentioned that ash fell on nearby settlements like Viagrande and Aci



Castello. Additionally, due to the volcanic activity at the Voragine crater, tour activities to points at and above 2,500 metres (approximately 8,200 feet) on Mount Etna have been temporarily suspended.

Earlier, the INGV reported that the height of the Voragine crater, which has frequently

erupted ash and lava in recent days, reached 3,369 metres (approximately 11,000 ft) due to accumulated lava, making it the highest point of the volcano.

Mount Etna, standing around 3,300 metres (10,800 ft) high, has shown frequent volcanic activity since the beginning of July.

Anadolu Agency

Roberta Metsola reelected as European Parliament president

Strasbourg, France - Roberta Metsola has been reelected as President of the European Parliament in a decisive vote on Tuesday, demonstrating a strong endorsement of her leadership and vision for the EU.

Following the EU countries’ elections on June 6-9, the EU Parliament Plenary Session met in Strasbourg, France, which is the formal seat of the European Parliament and is close to the German border. The president was elected in the first session by 720 MEPs, who will serve for five years in the 10th legislative term.

Metsola, the European People’s Party (EPP) candidate, won with an absolute majority and was reelected as European Parliament president after voting against Spanish MEP Irene Montero of the Left Group. Metsola secured 562 votes out of 699 and



Roberta Metsola

Montero received 61 votes in the closed envelope voting, demonstrating widespread support for her across the EU.

During her victory speech, she spoke about creating a more equal Europe by remembering past struggles and promoting inclusivity. She emphasised the importance of creating a ‘safer, fairer, more just, and equal’ Europe. She pledged to improve the continent’s security, competitive-

ness and social welfare throughout her speech

The laws passed by the EU Parliament should benefit everyone in Europe, she underlined, adding: “We share the responsibility to leave Europe a better place than the one we found.”

To accomplish this, Metsola emphasised the importance of ‘creating a new security and defence framework that keeps people safe and pushes against the expansionist dreams of dictators’.

“We will leave Europe a better place by giving real solutions on climate,” she said, adding: “We will leave Europe a better place if we are able to reinforce Europe’s social pillar.”

“We cannot move forward if our youth are unable to rent, let alone buy a place they can call home,” she criticised.

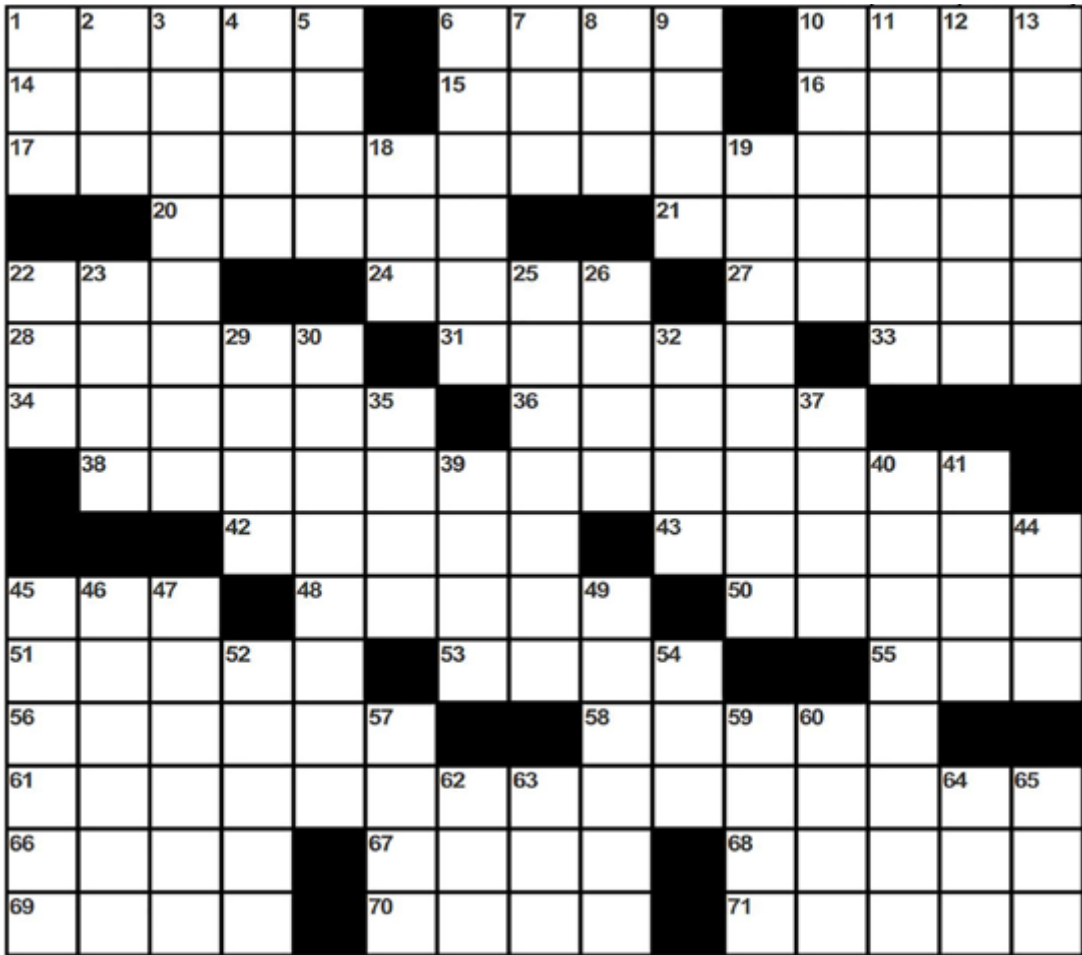
Anadolu Agency

ELEPHANTS' DAY OUT



Priests feed elephants as part of the ritual ‘Maha Ganapati Homam’ on the first day of Ramayana Masam, a month-long celebration observed in the Malayalam month of Karikadakam, in the southern state of Kerala, India, on Tuesday (ANI)

DAILY CROSSWORD



- ACROSS**
- 1) Botch
 - 6) Mountain passes
 - 10) Drizzly day phenomenon
 - 14) "He's_ nowhere man ..." (Beatles lyric)
 - 15) "Once_ a time"
 - 16) _ Spumante (sparkling wine)
 - 17) Source of a fonnal written request
 - 20) Depth charge target
 - 21) Person who holds property in trust
 - 22) That lady
 - 24) Gesture of greeting
 - 27) Air traffic control device
 - 28) Kind of pasta
 - 31) Harder to find
 - 33) Letters on an ambulance
 - 34) Knowledge of the mysterious
 - 36) Like Brutus or Caesar
 - 38) Pry or snoop
 - 42) Adult nit
 - 43) Copier fluids
 - 45) Fraternity characters
 - 48) Moisten, as a roast

- 50) Target practice place
 - 51) Built-out window
 - 53) All-time strikeout king Nolan
 - 55) Boston clock setting
 - 56) It may keep you on your toes
 - 58) Come up with, as money
 - 61) Friendly with each other
 - 66) Weight-loss plan
 - 67) Ireland, to locals
 - 68) Soft, crinkled fabric
 - 69) Maneuverable, as a yacht
 - 70) Breed, as animals
 - 71) Green fence?
- DOWN**
- 1) Damage
 - 2) Fury
 - 3) Succession
 - 4) Smear, as paint
 - 5) Mingle-mangle
 - 6) Musical "ax"
 - 7) Suitable
 - 8) Baked Hawaiian dish
 - 9) Self-styled superior
 - 10) Puzo subject
 - 11) King Mark's bride
 - 12) Small waterway
 - 13) Stopwatches, e.g.
 - 18) Carpenter's cutter
 - 19) One who does accounts?
 - 22) Mineral baths
 - 23) Rosemary or basil
 - 25) The spice of life
 - 26) Winged god of love
 - 29) Catch, as a criminal
 - 30) Dignifies
 - 32) Give off
 - 35) Blue-green shade
 - 37) Ship of Columbus
 - 39) Russia, once
 - 40) Like most modern furniture
 - 41) Dynes at work
 - 44) Matching collection
 - 45) Not a single person
 - 46) Astronomy Muse
 - 47) Lone Ranger's horse
 - 49) One making money
 - 52) Glitterati, e.g.
 - 54) Pester
 - 57) Stadium level
 - 59) Thing to scratch
 - 60) Desperately dry, as land
 - 62) Make a bow
 - 63) Savings vehicle
 - 64) Hybrid's selling pt.
 - 65) Take in visually

NOTE PAD



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

Do not jump and run at the sound of someone else's alarm today. Your sense of urgency is different from the next guy's. Base your actions on what you think is most important, not on what you think other people think is most important! It's not about being selfish. It's about not letting the agendas of others influence your life. Now more than ever you need to maintain the sense that you are in full control of your life.

LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

Your confidence is an important tool in life, and today it's vital for you to appreciate the value you bring to the world. Cherish who you are, because there is no one else on earth who has your unique blend of intelligence, compassion, and humor. If you don't start patting yourself on the back more, you could become easy prey for people who like to manipulate or con others into doing the work that they should be doing.

SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

Your luck should be very good today, and you are getting used to having things go your way. This feeling of confidence is a huge boon to your creativity, so make sure you find some time to work on some of your brilliant ideas. Write down your thoughts, record your latest song, finish knitting that sweater, or just whip up that fantastic cake recipe you've been saving for so long. Once you start exercising your creativity, your happiness will skyrocket even more



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. Blue Mountain Coffee, noted for its mild flavour and lack of bitterness (the beans of which are the flavour base of Tia Maria coffee liqueur), is grown in which country?

A. Spain
B. Cuba
C. Brazil
D. Jamaica

TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

Your ability to accept differing opinions and ideas is strong, but it could be stronger. Luckily, there will be no shortage of opposing viewpoints around you today. Listen to them and be tolerant. Don't debate ideas. Rather, pay attention to what other people are saying and then figure out whether you are in the majority or minority. Where you fit will dictate how much power you have to make changes in your work or school environment.

VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 23

Your confidence is an important tool in life, and today it's vital for you to appreciate the value you bring to the world. Cherish who you are, because there is no one else on earth who has your unique blend of intelligence, compassion, and humor. If you don't start patting yourself on the back more, you could become easy prey for people who like to manipulate or con others into doing the work that they should be doing.

CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

You could witness an ugly exchange between two people you respect today. One of them feels more deserving of the praise the other one received. You know what it's like to feel overlooked, so you could be useful in helping heal the bruised ego in this situation. Make a subtle overture of support, but don't step right in and start telling people what's what. Offering your help is all you can do. You can't make people accept it.

GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

Pluck the nuttiest idea out of the back corner of your mind, knock off the dust and cobwebs, and mull it over today. Chances are if you turn it over in your mind enough times, you'll see a new possibility you never noticed before. As soon as you do, you can put this idea into action. Don't wait for someone to give you permission to move forward. When you're hot, you're hot, and today your mind is more active than an electrical storm!

LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

Sure, a lot of the small details of an upcoming event are still up in the air, but the stars say that those details won't really matter in the end. Everything will work out well, so your job is done here! Let go of all that planning and organizing, and move on to more enjoyable tasks or projects. You have a new person in your life. It's a great day to spend some time with them. You share many things, not the least of which is a curiosity about each other.

AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

If you spend too much time performing too many experiments, you aren't going to end up learning very much. Too many contradictory conclusions will be formed, and you'll be further behind than when you started. Today, spend your time thoroughly exploring just one idea. Test your theory out, and then go over all the findings a few times. You'll enjoy the single-mindedness of such focused work and, more importantly, you'll quickly see what the next steps should be.

CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

Today, you will see how successful many of the people in your life are. Unfortunately, this might awaken the green-eyed monster lurking deep inside of you. Their new homes, fancy cars, and designer wardrobes are all things you could have, but are those things really going to make you happy? Don't focus on material goods now. Instead, work toward attaining more fulfilling goals in your life.

SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

You definitely have the energy and strength to go the distance today. So don't shy away from any type of challenge, no matter how out of your element you may feel or how high the stakes may be. It's time to just go for it. This is a form of self-education and a wonderful way to show people what a good sport you are. You don't need to prove anything to anyone, so just roll with it and see what happens.

PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

It might feel as though you're not quite living in reality today. The Universe is sending you lots of fantastic energy, which will definitely be a welcome (and entertaining) notion. However, whenever your daily routine is put on its ear, you have to expect a period of mild discomfort. Luckily, by the middle of the day you should be well into the groove of the whimsical nature of the day and at ease with the unusual (if not downright odd) activities going on all around you.

2. The French word "toque" is the name given to which of these?

A. Horse-drawn taxi
B. Marijuana cigarette
C. A type of small hat
D. Cooked lobster

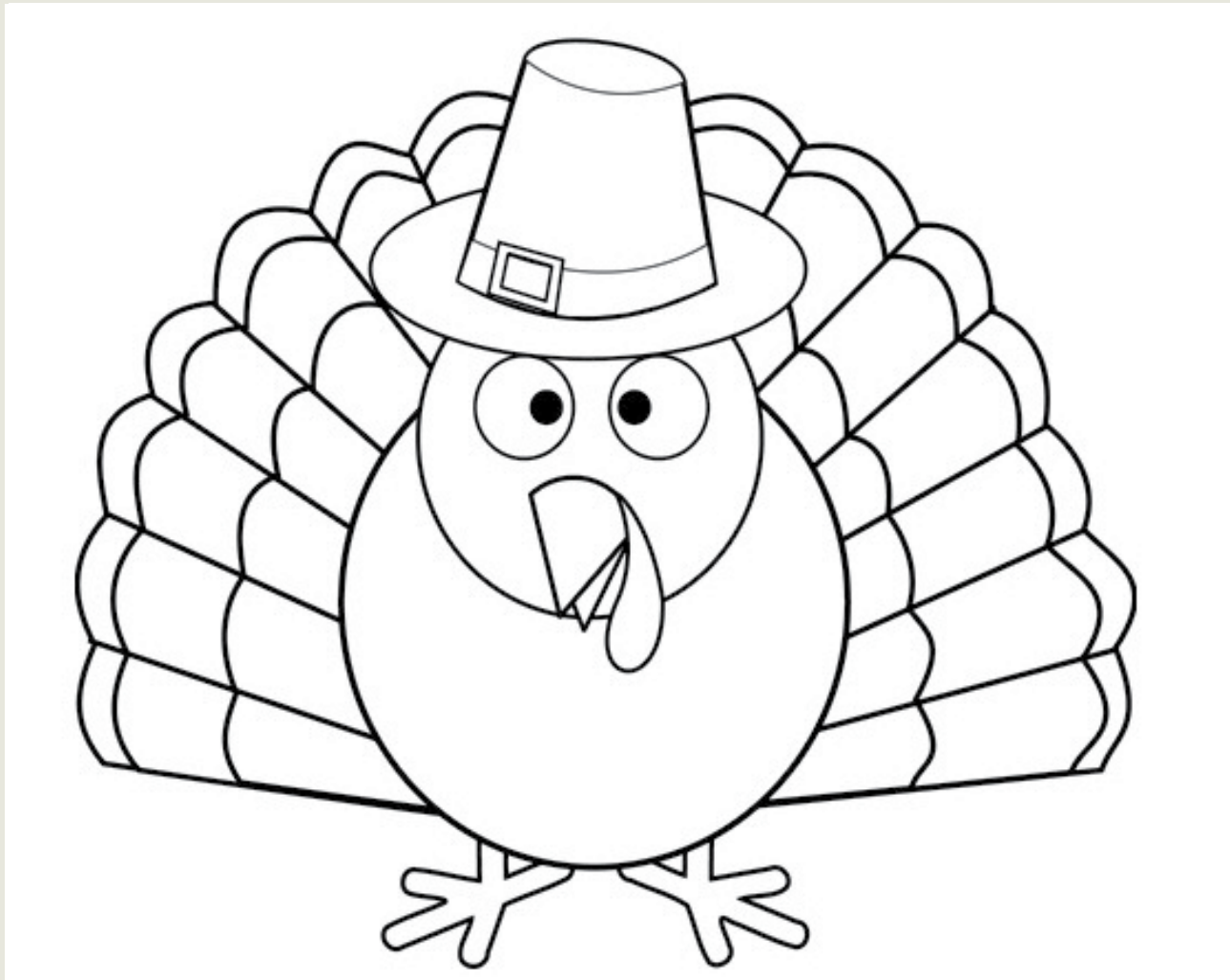
Correct Answer: A type of small hat

3. Swedish physician, global health expert, data visionary and public speaker Dr. Hans Rosling is associated with extensive research into the cause of what paralytic disease?

A. Bell's palsy
B. Konzo
C. Sickle cell disease
D. Lyme disease

Answers: 1. D 2. C 3. B

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

A	C	D	B
R	S	I	O
D	R	A	N
A	N	I	E

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

SOLUTION

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

DO YOU SUDOKU?

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

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

WORD BUILDER



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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

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

SOUTHGATE SAGA ENDS

England manager resigns from his post after painful defeat to Spain in the final of Euro 2024

Gareth Southgate resigned from his role as England manager on Tuesday after yet another heart-breaking final loss at the European Championship, their second straight failure in the title decider of the continental tournament.

England lost 2-1 to Spain in Sunday's showpiece in Berlin and the 53-year-old Englishman said after the game that he would discuss his future in charge of the national team.

"As a proud Englishman, it has been the honour of my life to play for England and to manage England. It has meant everything to me, and I have given it my all," Southgate said in a statement.

"But it's time for change and for a new chapter. Sunday's final in Berlin against Spain was my final game as England manager.

"I have had the privilege of leading a large group of players in 102 games. Every one of them has been proud to wear the three lions on their shirts, and they have been a credit to their country in so many ways."

Britain's Prince William, who is also the president of the FA, thanked Southgate for his service.

"Thank you for creating a team that stands shoulder to shoulder with the world's finest in 2024," he said.

"Thank you for showing humility, compassion, and true leadership under the most intense pressure and scrutiny. And thank you for being an all-round class act.

"You should be incredibly proud of what you've achieved." Having coached the England



Gareth Southgate failed to end England's agonising wait for glory

youth side for several years, Southgate took the senior job when Sam Allardyce resigned after one match in charge when he sought a lucrative sideline role while talking to undercover reporters.

A former international with 57 caps, Southgate took over an Eng-

land side that had seen its "golden generation" of players fail to impress at major tournaments.

With a young core of players, Southgate's England captured the imagination of a country starved of success on the international stage as they became a force to reckon with in tournaments.

England reached the 2018 World Cup semi-finals while their run to the final at Euro 2020 was also remarkable.

With most of their games being played on home soil, the country began to dream of lifting their first trophy since the 1966 World Cup.

But that dream was shattered at Wembley when Italy beat England on penalties while Southgate's side crashed out of the quarter-finals at World Cup the following year in Qatar. Although they reached the Euro 2024 final, the road to Berlin was not easy as England struggled to find the net

and topped the group after scoring just two goals.

Furious supporters hurled beer cups and insults at Southgate and as his team selection was also questioned, he implored the fans to get behind the squad.

Although they beat Switzerland on penalties and the Nether-

lands with a last-gasp goal, getting the better of Spain proved to be a step too far and Southgate was gracious in defeat, saying the Iberian side were deserved champions.

However, Southgate's record of taking his teams deep into tournaments is unrivalled among England's other managers.

FA CEO Mark Bullingham said England would be "forever grateful" to Southgate and his assistant

Thank you for showing humility, compassion, and true leadership under the most intense pressure and scrutiny. And thank you for being an all-round class act.

PRINCE WILLIAM

Steve Holland for everything they had achieved.

"In the 25 tournaments post 1966 before Gareth took charge, we had won seven knockout games," Bullingham said.

"In his four tournaments we have won nine. So, in his eight years, he has won more games that really matter than in the previous 50 years. Before Gareth, our longest time ranked in the top five in the world was seven months. In his tenure we have been ranked there for six years."

Bullingham said the search for a successor is under way and the FA have an "interim solution" in place if they do not find a permanent replacement before their Nations League campaign kicks off in September.

Spanish football deserves a Ballon d'Or winner, says Rodri

Euro 2024 champions Spain deserve to have one of their players win the Ballon d'Or, player of the tournament Rodri said after Sunday's 2-1 victory over England.

While the prestigious award has been dominated by Spanish league players, no Spaniard has won the prize for best player in the world since Barcelona great Luis Suarez in 1960, despite Spain's "golden generation" that won the 2010 World Cup, the 2008 and 2012 Euros.

While England had most of the star power with the likes of Jude Bellingham and their all-time highest goalscorer Harry Kane, it was Spanish talent that showcased brilliantly in Berlin as young player of the tournament Lamine Yamal, 17, set up Nico Williams for the opening goal two minutes into the second half.

Substitute Cole Palmer helped England equalise in the 73rd minute, but it was substitute Mikel Oyarzabal's 86th-minute winner that secured Spain's record fourth title.

Not only did Spain play a



Rodri celebrates Spain's triumph

perfect European Championship by winning all seven games in Germany, but they also scored 15 goals, the most by any team in a Euros.

"Spanish football deserves a Ballon d'Or winner," the Manchester City player said after the final. "I'm going to be honest, I would like for a Spaniard to win it, I don't care

who. It would be great."

Asked about his chances of winning the award, Rodri said, "I've heard that (Champions League winners Real Madrid's) Dani Carvajal also deserves it. From an individual standpoint, I'm very proud of what I am doing and the recognition I'm getting. But someone else has to make that assessment."

How La Roja's midfield superiority made the difference in Euro final

Spain's midfield superiority in the second half proved the difference as Luis de la Fuente's men captured their fourth European Championship title at the expense of England in Berlin.

That was the verdict of UEFA's technical observer panel as they reflected on England's efforts to contain Spain centrally in the goalless first period of the final - and the response of the eventual champions after the interval.

The wing play of Spain was another major factor - underlined by the opening goal made by Lamine Yamal and converted by Nico Williams, of which more below - but, as this analysis will show, it was Spain's improved thrust from midfield that was most telling. As the observers reflected, England took a player-to-player approach to marking Spain's midfielders in the first half.

As a result of this, Spain struggled to progress the ball centrally in the first period with Rodri producing just three line-breaking passes. Spain looked more to the left side of Marc Cucurella and Williams with 13 of their 18 line-breaking passes coming from



Martin Zubimendi (C), slotted seamlessly into Spain's midfield pivot role after Rodri got injured in the final

lanes one and two on that side.

"We actually defended well in the first half in particular and limited their possibilities," said England manager Gareth Southgate and to underline the point, Spain had five shots but an xG of only 0.29. The second period proved a different story, despite Spain's half-time loss of Rodri, the Player of the Tournament, owing to injury. Martin Zubimendi took his

place as their midfield pivot and had Fabian Ruiz dropping to join him deeper. Together, the pair received the ball in positions which created spaces that allowed Spain to find more penetrating passes, with England's midfielders unable to press both at the same time without leaving space in the pockets.

The opening goal on 47 minutes illustrates this point as we

see Spain circulate the ball over to their left and then back to the right, seeking to find spaces via the switch in play.

Ruiz played the line-breaking pass to Dani Carvajal on the wing and, on a general note, the Spain right-back got into more advanced positions in the second half which had the effect of enabling Yamal to move inside, seeking space between the lines.

Spaniards welcome home 'kings of Europe'

Madrid, Spain - Waving flags and dressed in Spain's red and yellow colours, tens of thousands of people jubilantly greeted the country's triumphant Euro 2024 men's football team on Monday during a parade in Madrid.

"Champions, champions!" fans shouted out to the players and coach, who celebrated the win in an open-top double-decker bus, with the trophy placed on the front and the message "It's only the beginning"

emblazoned.

Spain beat England 2-1 in Sunday's final in Berlin.

Spanish authorities praised the players' victory and style of play, while some fans said they were fostering unity in a country with a history of territorial tensions and political polarisation.

"We are a great country. In days like today it's important to remember that this flag represents all of us," a young fan

Spanish authorities praised the players' victory and style of play, while some fans said they were fostering unity

named Borja told national broadcaster TVE.

He praised Spain's 17-year-old rising star Lamine Yamal, who is

Black, with his father hailing from Morocco while his mother was born in Equatorial Guinea.

"We are seeing the (ongoing) problems with racism. Lamine Yamal will define an era because people in Spain are of all colours," Borja added.

Standing on balconies and crowded sidewalks, excited fans, many of them kids and some who had travelled from distant parts of Spain, waved at the players who were wearing white t-

shirts reading "Kings of Europe" accompanied by a big number four to mark Spain's fourth continental title.

"I want to thank you for your efforts and for the way you played, with the joy you do it," Spain's King Felipe VI told the team in a ceremony at his palace, accompanied by Queen Letizia and his two daughters dressed in national jerseys.

"A joy like this one was good for us," he added.



Spain players celebrate on board an open-top double-decker bus

PASSING THE TORCH?

Nadal says Wimbledon champion Alcaraz ‘is going to be one of the best in history’

Spaniard Carlos Alcaraz won his fourth major title on Sunday at Wimbledon and one day later, countryman Rafael Nadal gave the 21-year-old a ringing endorsement.

“My impression is we are talking about a player that is going to be one of the best [in] history. That’s my feeling,” Nadal said after partnering Casper Ruud to a first-round doubles victory at the Nordea Open in Bastad. “[He is] a player with huge potential. Life can change quick, that’s the truth. You never know what can happen in the future. But today if we have to predict what’s going on in his career, we predict amazing things.”

This is not the first time Nadal, a 22-time major champion, has praised Alcaraz. The Spaniards are set to compete together in doubles at the upcoming Paris Olympics. But on Monday in Sweden Nadal dove deeper into why he believes so strongly in the two-time Wimbledon champion, who swept this year’s Roland Garros-Wimbledon double.

“His level of tennis is super high,” Nadal said. “If he is able to



Carlos Alcaraz

stay away from injuries, of course Sinner is there. But I see him with Sinner over the rest today without a doubt. I don’t see a lot of players that can stop him on Tour and I think the best thing that he has today is in every tournament that he plays, doesn’t matter the surface, he is going to be the favourite.”

Nadal explained that in his

generation, he was normally the favourite on clay, while early in his career grass was the domain of Roger Federer and Novak Djokovic, according to the lefty.

“But no one player was the favourite before every tournament and today I feel that he has that that aura, that feeling,” Nadal said of Alcaraz. “That’s a

big advantage because I think he feels that [if] he’s playing at his level [that it] is difficult that somebody’s going to beat him.”

‘We played quite well’

Nadal warmed up for his bid for another Olympic medal at the Paris Games with a doubles win at the Swedish Open in Bastad



Rafael Nadal (R) and Casper Ruud

No player was the favourite before every tournament and today I feel that he (Carlos Alcaraz) has that that aura, that feeling

RAFAEL NADAL

on Monday as the Spaniard returned to competition for the first time since May.

The 22-times Grand Slam champion teamed up with Norwegian Casper Ruud to record a 6-1 6-4 win over second seeds Guido Andreozzi and Miguel Reyes-Varela on the Swedish clay.

It was Nadal’s first appear-

ance at the ATP 250 event since winning the singles as a 19-year-old in 2005. Nadal elected to skip Wimbledon to prepare for the Olympics on the clay courts of Roland Garros where he has won a record 14 French Open singles titles.

“Personally, I am happy and I think it was a good match. We played quite well in the first time we played together and I’m happy to be back here after almost 20 years,” the 38-year-old said on court.

“I have great memories from this place from 2003, 2004 and 2005, so I am enjoying this week and hopefully can keep going.”

Nadal is also entered in the singles at Bastad and is drawn to play Leo Borg, the son of Swedish great Bjorn Borg, in the first round.



Ramon Jesurun

Colombia football federation head and son arrested after Copa final

Bogota, Colombia - The 71-year-old head of Colombia’s football federation and his son were arrested in Miami, accused of fighting security guards after the Copa America final that saw chaotic scenes around the stadium, Miami-Dade police confirmed on Monday.

Sunday’s final, which Colombia lost to Argentina, started over an hour late after police initiated a lockdown that left hundreds of fans stuck outside Florida’s Hard Rock Stadium. Videos on social media showed security scuffling with fans attempting to breach the gates.

Both Ramon Jesurun, the federation president, and his 43-year-old son Ramon Jamil were arrested after an altercation at the stadium shortly after midnight, according to arrest reports by Miami police, which charged both men with battery.

Jesurun and his son were charged after fighting security guards in a tunnel where media were gathering in the aftermath of the match, according to the police reports.

This included a uniformed security guard tasked with holding back the crowd.

According to police, Jesurun’s son grabbed the guard by the neck and pulled him to the ground, where he punched him and kicked him in the head.

The Colombian football federation declined to comment.

More than two dozen fans were arrested at Sunday’s Copa America final and over 50 people were kicked out from the venue, at which over 800 law enforcement officers were present.

Spain dominate Euro 2024 team of the tournament

Spain midfielder Rodri and 17-year-old Lamine Yamal were among six Spain players named in UEFA’s team of the tournament for Euro 2024 on Tuesday.

UEFA’s technical observers chose a 4-3-3 formation, which was one of the most frequently used during the tournament, with defender Kyle Walker earning his second successive appearance in it. He was England’s only player named in the team.

Spain defeated England 2-1 in the final for their fourth European Championship title.

The team was chosen by UEFA technical observers - Fabio Capello, Ioan Lupescu, Michael O’Neill, David Moyes, Aljoša



Lamine Yamal (L) and Nico Williams

Defender Kyle Walker was England’s only player named in the team

Asanovi, Rafael Benítez, Avram Grant, Packie Bonner, Frank de Boer, Ole Gunnar Solskjær, Aitor Karanka and Jean-Francois Domergue - who were present at every match in Germany. They analysed proceedings from a coaching perspective and selected the Player of the Match for each game. Team of the Tournament features a recognisable formation that reflects the

prominent tactical trends throughout the tournament, with an outstanding player chosen for each position. A player’s individual performances and impact on their team are considered by the technical observers when making their decision.

TEAM OF THE TOURNAMENT:

Mike Maignan (France); Manuel Akanji (Switzerland), William Saliba (France), Kyle Walker (England) Marc Cucurella (Spain); Daniel Olmo (Spain), Rodri (Spain); Fabian Ruiz (Spain); Lamine Yamal (Spain); Jamal Musiala (Germany), and Nico Williams (Spain).

Wolves to file complaint after alleged racist remark about Korea’s Hwang



Hwang Hee-chan of Wolves with manager Gary O’Neil

Wolverhampton Wanderers said they will file a complaint with UEFA after their South Korean forward Hwang Hee-chan was the target of an alleged racial remark during Monday’s pre-season match against Italian side Como 1907.

Hwang reported the incident midway through the second half, which led to an angry response from his teammates and saw Daniel Podence sent off for

punching a Como player, the midlands club said.

Como did not respond immediately to a request for comment outside normal business hours.

Wolves manager Gary O’Neil said he had asked Hwang if he wanted the match to be abandoned or to be substituted but the 28-year-old wanted the game to continue.

Wolves won 1-0 at their training camp in Marbella, Spain.

Miami-Dade to review security for 2026 World Cup after mayhem at Copa America final

New York, US - Miami-Dade County in Florida will review security protocol for the 2026 World Cup after more than two dozen fans were arrested at Sunday’s Copa America final, capping a tournament rife with discord.

Fans without tickets rushed security and tried to force their way into the Hard Rock Stadium, organisers said, leading to a chaotic scene at the future World Cup venue.

Police initiated a lockdown and hundreds of fans were stuck outside in sweltering heat as South American football’s governing body CONMEBOL repeatedly delayed the match between Argentina and Colombia. The match finally kicked off over an hour late.

“Last night our law enforcement teams responded swiftly to handle an extremely challenging, dangerous situation,” James Reyes, the chief of public safety



Ticketless fans rushed security and tried to force their way into the Hard Rock Stadium which resulted in chaos

for Miami-Dade County, said in a statement. “We are working with the event organizers to conduct a comprehensive review of all safety and security protocols, as we continue to prepare for the World Cup in 2026.”

Colombian federation presi-

dent Ramon Jesurun and his son were among 27 people arrested. The pair were accused of fighting security personnel after the match ended.

They face three felony counts of battery, according to a criminal complaint reviewed by

Reuters. The Colombian federation did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

More than 800 law enforcement officers were present at the stadium, which is the home of the National Football League’s Miami Dolphins and is used to

welcoming massive crowds at sport’s biggest events, including the Super Bowl four years ago.

A source with knowledge of the security plans told Reuters that security was more lax for the Copa final than for the 2020 NFL championship game, where fans could not get anywhere near stadium entrances without showing a pass at an outside perimeter.

Hard Rock Stadium did not immediately respond to a request for comment on its security plans but said in a prior statement that it had “more than double” the personnel on Sunday than at a typical capacity event. The stadium has a capacity of over 65,000.

“We understand there are disappointed ticket holders who were not able to enter the stadium after the perimeter was closed, and we will work in partnership with CONMEBOL to address those individual concerns,” it said.

GETTING READY FOR NEW CHALLENGES

Oman Sail National Team Summer Training Camp prepares 20 sailors for future competitions

Muscat - The twenty members of Oman Sail's National Sailing Team are taking part in a month-long summer training camp in Ras al Hadd as they prepare for a busy winter season on the water. Training focuses on three classes - Optimist, ILCA 4 and ILCA 6 - with expert coaches on-site to guide the young sailors to the next level of their development.

Oman Sail aims to maximise the impact of the specialised training and give sailors in each class the opportunity to new tactical and technical elements of sailing ahead of their next regatta. Training began in Ras al Hadd on Tuesday and runs through until 15 August under the guidance of Sultan al Zadjali, Oman Sail's Assistant Youth Head Coach.

Abdulaziz al Shidi, Oman Sail's Acting Director of Sailing, said, "Regular training camps are the ideal way to ensure sailors ap-



The training in Ras al Hadd is under the guidance of Sultan al Zadjali, Oman Sail's assistant youth head coach



Abdulaziz al Shidi

proach competition in the best physical and mental condition. We are always looking for continuous improvement and this is also a chance to teach new skills, work on any areas of weakness and test their abilities in new conditions - such as those found in Ras al Hadd. There is a busy winter season ahead, with the Oman National Sailing Championships and Mussanah Race Week, so we are looking forward to making

progress as a team ahead of these important events."

Sultan al Zadjali, Oman Sail's Assistant Youth Head Coach, added, "Specialised training camps with access to our highly-qualified group of coaches allows the young sailors to focus on preparing for the upcoming regattas. We have a strong squad of sailors and a busy season approaching, so being able to head to Ras Al Hadd ahead of these

events is part of our efforts to perform at our very best."

The Oman National Sailing Championships gets underway from 18-22 September. This is followed by Mussanah Race Week from 1-8 October 2024 where Optimist, ILCA 4, ILCA 6, ILCA 7, and the para inclusive RS Venture Connect class sailors from around the world head to Oman for the 13th edition of the event.



Kylian Mbappe at Real Madrid dressing room

'I knew my destiny was to play for Real Madrid'

Madrid, Spain - France forward Kylian Mbappe said on Tuesday he was so convinced he would one day play for Real Madrid that he began taking Spanish classes at school.

"Since I was a child, I knew my destiny was to play for Real Madrid," Mbappe said at a Bernabeu stadium packed with fans, many of them wearing replica shirts with his name.

The 2018 World Cup winner arrived at a press conference later clutching a model of the Bernabeu stadium he said he'd been given as an eight-year-old.

He surprised journalists by speaking in near flawless Spanish, which he said he had begun learning at school and then continued to practise with Spanish-speaking managers such as Luis Enrique and Mauricio Pochettino at Paris St Germain because he knew he would need to speak it one day at his dream club.

"I wasn't the best at school but I had this dream of playing for Real Madrid and I knew that speaking the language would help me adapt," he said.

Real Madrid announced in June that Mbappe was joining the LaLiga side as a free agent on a five-year contract, ending a transfer saga that had rumbled on for several years. The club had courted Mbappe in the past but failed to land the player, who signed a contract extension with PSG in May 2022 when the Spanish club had a bid rejected.

Mbappe was met on stage at the unveiling ceremony by compatriot and former Real Madrid player and manager Zinedine Zidane, who in 2012 had invited Mbappe to visit the club when he was 13-years-old, a visit that he described as an important moment in his life.

He won six Ligue 1 titles, four French cups and became PSG's record goal scorer with 256 goals during seven years in Paris but failed to win the Champions League or the Ballon d'Or.

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8	Cup Lock Ledger 1.8 Mtr	1800
9	Cup Lock Ledger 1.6 Mtr	1500
10	Cup Lock Ledger 1.2 Mtr	7500
11	Cup Lock Standard 1.8 Mtr	130
12	Adjustable Props 2.4 - 3.9 Mtr	2200
13	Universal Jack 75 Cm	3500
14	Cup Lock Standard 0.80 Mtr	750
15	Adjustable U Head 760 Mm	3500
16	Cup Lock Ledger 1 Mtr	6200
17	Cup Lock Ledger 1.5 Mtr	1200
18	Cup Lock Standard 2.5 Mtr	1600
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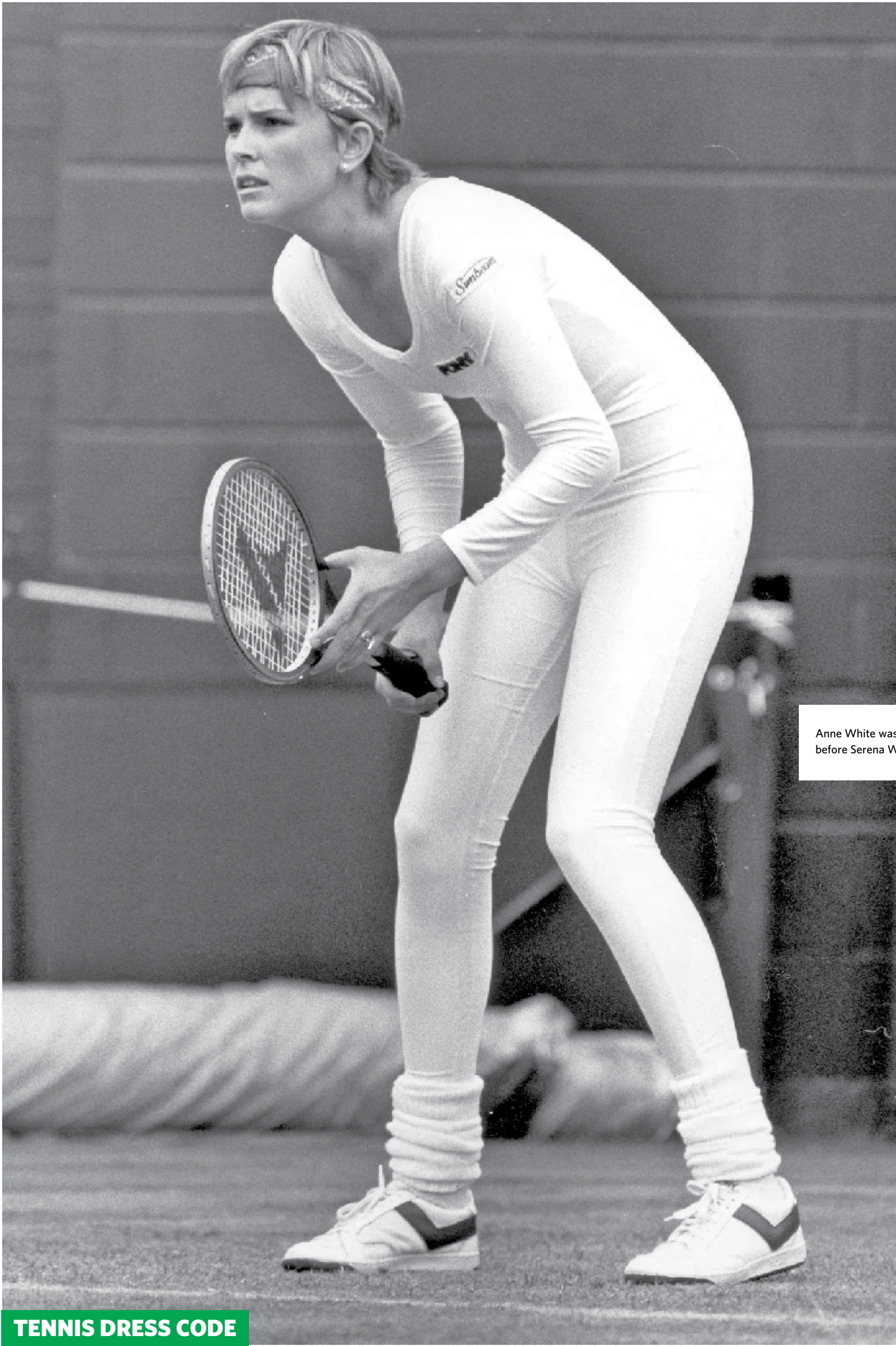


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Pristine, crisp and all-white - tennis whites have been a tradition dating back centuries. The distinctive look has not only made the racquet sport stand out, it has also become a sartorial mainstay off the courts, too.

And even though most of the major tournaments have done away with the hueless uniformity, Wimbledon, the very first of them, has remained strict in its policy (as have many private clubs around the world). The prestigious championship even clamped down on the rule a decade ago, prohibiting colourful accents that had become increasingly common - the year after Roger Federer's now-infamous pair of orange-soled sneakers were banned after his first round in 2013.

The rules once called for 'predominantly white' outfits, allowing some competitors to play with colour combinations, such as Serena Williams' tribute to Wimbledon treat strawberries and cream in 2010. But the crackdown changed the wording to 'almost entirely white', as per the organisers - no off-white, no panels of colour, no varying colourways on sneakers.

The only recent loosening of rules was in 2023, to allow women to wear dark-coloured shorts on the court following criticisms that the rules weren't accommodating for menstruation leaks.

Anne White was banned from wearing a white catsuit at Wimbledon four decades before Serena Williams caused a stir with a similar cut at the French Open

Naomi Osaka wore a flouncy take on the tennis dress at Wimbledon 2024, adhering to tournaments all-white, minimal logo rule - with an exception for dark-coloured shorts, which is a new allowance for women.

But why did tennis whites become the standard? The reasons often cited are practical ones, from heat reflection to sweat-masking. But senior curator Kevin Jones of the ASU Fashion Institute of Design & Merchandising (ASU FIDM) Museum in Los Angeles, who organised the recent travelling exhibition 'Sporting Fashion: Outdoor Girls 1800 - 1960', said it really comes down to a long history of clubs enforcing social status, starting when lawn tennis skyrocketed in popularity in Victorian-era England as a leisure sport - and a rare one that allowed women, too.

"It's completely elitist because white clothes are difficult to maintain," he said. "And the types of materials that these dresses were made of, which were cottons and linens, creased easily, so to keep them nice and freshly starched was also an aspect of that care."

Challenging the rules

Of course, tennis style has drastically changed in a century-and-a-half since it first became a recreational sensation for the upper class, hot off the heels of croquet (and utilising the same neatly trimmed lawns). Early tennis attire was more akin to 19th-century leisurewear - women wore striped and patterned garments with long skirts, corseting and wide-brimmed hats, men donned wool pants, button-downs or sweaters.

Because spectators and players have often adhered to similar styles, fashion and tennis have had a "mutual exchange over time, where various tennis trends have seeped into wider culture as well," said sports journalist Ben Rothenberg, author of 'Tennis: The Stylish Life' as well as a recent biography on Naomi Osaka.

Dress codes in tennis have often changed after an initial scandal. The French player Suzanne Lenglen was one of the earliest and most memorable cases, when she did away with layered, long dresses and wore an airy, calf-length skirt and shorter sleeves at Wimbledon in 1919. A muse to the designer Jean Patou, Lenglen became tennis' first fashion icon with her signature headscarf and then-provocative shorter hems.

Anne White was banned from wearing a white catsuit at Wimbledon four decades before Serena Williams caused a stir with a similar cut at the French Open.

Strawberries and cream is a traditional court-side treat at Wimbledon, but Williams' homage in 2010 wouldn't be allowed today, since off-white fabrics are banned, in addition to bright shorts or colour-accented sneakers.

At the US, French and Australian Open, players have challenged definitions of what tennis clothes can be thanks to looser rules (subject to referee opinion). None have done so more than the Williams sisters, with Serena wearing a denim mini, tutus and cape-like silhouettes and Venus's lacy black-and-red ensemble that drew comparisons to lingerie.

More recently, Serena Williams' Nike kit became the topic of conversation at the 2018 French Open when she opted for a black compression catsuit that didn't feature the compulsory tennis skirt. Though she cited its circulation benefits following a severe blood-clot scare with the birth of her child, the French Open said it would bar the style in the future.

Most of the Grand Slam tournaments dropped the all-white rules decades ago, likely in a bid to attract more television viewers and advertisers in an age of increased visibility for the sport.

"Colour is vital to draw the eye and especially for those sports companies to be able to advertise their logos and their colours," Jones explained.

(Courtesy: cnn.com)

STRIKING white

Why do tennis players wear white? The reasons often cited are practical ones, from heat reflection to sweat-masking, but Grand Slam tournaments have dropped the all-white rules decades ago





Photos: V K Shafeer

GLASS BANGLES

Anirban Ray

Adjusting their heavily embellished attire and intrinsically styled hair, a group of young women come together to share a common passion... but what holds centerstage amid the melee was the clinking of glass bangles adorning many an arm – the cynosure of their chat!

An essential part of bridal trousseau in the Indian sub-continent wherein it is considered a treasured symbol of marital bliss, good health, fortune, and success, glass bangles are also a 21st century ethnic style statement... Ask these damsels residing in Oman, who simply don't feel complete for any occasion without decking their arms with fanciful bangles, and they cannot stop lauding this cultural icon.

Those who wear these colourful, affordable yet prized, ornaments, say it has a unique power and bearing over their personalities, besides signifying not just their status but also their moods and aspirations. And there are a large number of women in Oman, hailing from the Indian subcontinent, south east Asia and Africa who are madly in love with this fashion accessory, a dearth of which does exist in the sultanate.

For Sushmita, the jingle of bangles reminds her of her unending love for her husband, for Imrana, they bring back nostalgic memories of age old traditions, Selvi is reminded of the time of her pregnancy when she was showered with love and affection, and for yet a few others, bangles stand out as a universal symbol of femininity and fertility.

Bangles originated in parts of southern Asia and Africa and over the centuries these ornaments went around the globe to decorate the wrists of women of varied cultures. Romantic poets as well as traders

have transported them through ships, planes as well as verses that have transcended all forms of creativity. Though once a clear sign of a married woman, they are now sported by girls and ladies of all ages and cultures irrespective of their marital status.

Here's what a few expatriate ladies in Muscat described their eternal love for bangles:

Sushmita Kumari from Hazaribag (Jharkhand, India) said, "Wearing bangles has been part of our history and culture in the state. For different festivals we have different colours - in the present month of Shraavan (monsoon), women sport green bangles symbolising the season of bloom. I have been wearing them even before marriage, but after marriage I wear red bangles, besides the 'Sakha Pola' gifted by my in-laws, as a sign of good luck."

Aarzo Bhokal from Rajkot (Gujarat, India) added that glass bangles render external and internal beauty for a woman and indicate her marital status. "In my state, it is said that the sound that the glass bangles make bring along a positive energy at home



A batch of culturally-bound expatriate women in Muscat share their love for glass bangles which they bring in from their hometowns

and wards off evil. Some of the best bangles are found in Bangdi Bazar and Charminar (in Hyderabad) while in Oman, I go to Muttrah Souq and Ruwi to buy them."

Glass bangles are most affordable to women on all rungs of society. Easily found in markets lanes, flea markets, malls and fairs, these jewellery are fashioned in a myriad forms, every single one of which is attractive in its own way.

Manisha Joshi from Jaipur (Rajasthan, India) touched upon the economical aspect

saying that glass bangles are cheap all over the world. "Unlike gold bangles or those studded with diamonds and precious stones (which are costly), glass bangles can be worn to complement them. Whenever I am in India, I make sure to go to Firozabad where the best bangles are manufactured. Often, the craftsmen customise the designs to suit specific tastes of buyers."

Imrana Khan from Aligarh (Uttar Pradesh, India) vouched for bangles from her state as the best available in varied colours and styles. "The more I go around the world, the more I feel attached to my culture in India. The practice of wearing glass bangles is predominantly found in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Burma."

Most young women, like Pooja Nair, recall being gifted glass bangles by their aunts and grandmothers during hometown visits on vacations – these were sold in street markets on carts. "In South India, glass bangles are often gifted to would be mothers," she said.

Selvi Reddy from Chennai, (Tamil Nadu India) disclosed, "During the ninth month of one's pregnancy, women are adorned

with gifts, of which colourful bangles stand out as a sign of not just good luck and well-being but also blessings from senior family members.

On the flip side, a lot of superstitions are also attached with bangles. Broken bangles signify bad luck, while some women do not remove all their bangles before first putting on a new set. Some believe in purchasing bangles only on some days of the week. It is also a practice by some to deck themselves with glass bangles for the last time when bidding goodbye to a deceased spouse and then never wearing them again.

While modern women focus on the fashion aspect rather than superstitious beliefs, all agree that a women's attire is incomplete without an appropriate set of bangles to go with it.

Raha Akther from Bangladesh is of the opinion that bangles always elevate the look of a woman. "I not so much culturally bound but I wear them to beatify myself. In olden days, the sound of the bangles and the payals (anklets) would alert male members in the family of their presence."

Zoha Manzoor from Pakistan added, "I prefer to wear them during festive occasions like Eid or weddings. It's a cultural tradition in Pakistan and signifies celebration and happiness. They are integral to Pakistani culture, worn by women during important events as well as daily. Bangles symbolise culture, femininity, and celebration. The best places to buy glass bangles are the bazaars and local fairs."

Glass bangles have often raised brows when they are worn with Western outfits like skirts and trousers. Though they do make a unique style statement, most women believe, they go very well only with ethnic outfits.

Location, attire and jewellery provided by: **Glam by Maoosam**



Bangles are part of our history
SUSHMITA KUMARI



Bangles bring in positive energy
AARZO BHOKAL



The best bangles are made in Firozabad
MANISHA JOSHI



Bangles keep me attached to my culture
IMRANA KHAN



Bangles are a symbol of good luck
SELVI REDDY



Bangles tell male members of our presence
RAHA AKTHER



Bangles are a symbol of femininity
ZOHA MANZOOR



Bangles are a gift for would-be mothers
POOJA NAIR

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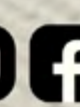
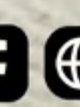
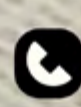
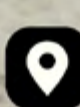


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