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Oman Airports in talks to expand direct routes

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman Airports is in discussions with several international carriers to launch new direct routes to the sultanate as part of efforts to boost revenue and improve operational performance.

Ahmed bin Saeed al Amri, CEO of Oman Airports, said talks are underway with the Hungarian low-cost carrier Wizz Air to operate direct flights from European cities, including Budapest, to Oman. "The company is very serious about launching these routes soon," Amri told ONA.

Last week, Wizz Air announced that it was closing down its Abu Dhabi operations, allowing it to relocate capacity throughout Europe.

Oman Airports is also working with the Embassy of China in Muscat to attract China Eastern Airlines to operate direct flights to Muscat from Shanghai or Guangzhou. Amri said incentives and promotional packages are being offered to support the



Talks are underway with the Hungarian low-cost carrier Wizz Air to operate direct flights from European cities, including Budapest, to Oman

AHMED BIN SAEED AL AMRI



launch of the service.

He added that efforts are ongoing with LOT Polish Airlines to establish a direct connection between Muscat and Warsaw, with Civil Aviation Authority in contact with its Polish counterpart to formalise the route.

Oman Airports' commercial team is also assessing the Vietnamese market for potential direct services in coordination with

Oman Air.

In Salalah, Amri noted a rise in passenger traffic this year. Growth has been seen during the ongoing khareef season with increased domestic and regional flights, and during the winter season with charter services from Scandinavia and Belarus.

At Muscat International Airport, passenger numbers continue to rise compared to

pre-pandemic levels. However, Amri acknowledged a drop in transfer passengers, linked to Oman Air reducing its flight frequency and fleet size.

He informed that Oman Airports recently signed an agreement with Singapore's Changi Airports International to enhance commercial and aviation revenue streams at the country's airports. The partnership will include a review of key income sources such as aircraft parking and ground service equipment usage.

Earlier this month, a memorandum of understanding was signed with Malaysia's WCT Berhad to explore investment and development opportunities for land around Muscat International Airport.

Oman leads Arab support for Syria amid Israeli airstrikes

Muscat - Arab foreign ministers, including Oman's H E Sayyid Badr al Busaidi, have condemned Israel's recent air strikes on Syria, calling these a violation of international law and a threat to the its sovereignty and stability.

In a series of consultations over two days following the Israeli bombardment last week, H E Sayyid Badr spoke with counterparts from Jordan, the UAE, Bahrain, Türkiye, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Qatar, Kuwait, Lebanon and Egypt. The ministers issued a joint statement denouncing the attacks and expressed unified support for Syria's territorial integrity.

The statement reaffirmed rejection of any foreign interference in Syria's internal affairs and wel-



Sayyid Badr al Busaidi

comed recent efforts to defuse tensions in the southern Suwayda governorate. The ministers backed an agreement aimed at ending unrest in the area and commended Syrian President Ahmad al Shara's pledge to hold those responsible for violations against civilians accountable.

The ministers also voiced sup-

port for national efforts to restore security and uphold the rule of law across Syria, stressing the need to reject violence, sectarianism and hate speech. They warned that Israeli strikes not only violate Syria's sovereignty but also undermine efforts to stabilise the country and rebuild after more than a decade of conflict.

'Syria's security and stability are essential to regional security and represent a shared priority,' the statement said. The ministers called on the international community to support the Syrian government's reconstruction plans and urged the UN Security Council to take action to stop Israeli aggression and ensure full withdrawal from occupied Syrian territory.

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Experts say summer offers ideal time to build financial skills in children

Our Correspondent
Muscat

With schools closed for summer, financial education experts are encouraging families to use the time to introduce children to money management, savings and entrepreneurship. They believe developing these skills early fosters independence, self-discipline and responsibility.

Raja'a bint Abdullah al Said, a psychologist and behaviour modification specialist, said home is every child's first financial learning environment. "When children grow up observing parents managing household expenses and planning for specific goals, they begin to adopt the same behaviours through imitation."

She recommends families start with small steps, such as giving children a regular allowance and guiding them to divide it between saving, spending and sharing. Involving children in minor purchasing decisions can also help develop their critical thinking and budgeting abilities.

Considering the widespread use of digital tools, Raja'a noted that technology can make money management more engaging for children. Apps like Bankaroo and



Involving children in minor purchasing decisions can also help develop their critical thinking and budgeting abilities

RAJA'A BINT ABDULLAH AL SAID

PiggyBot allow children to track their savings and spending in an interactive way. She also suggested activities such as summer savings challenges - where children commit to saving a set amount each week in return for a reward - and maintaining a notebook to record goals and track progress.

"For younger children, even motivational stickers on piggy banks can help turn saving into a habit," she added.

Falah bin Hassan al Lawati, a family counsellor, stressed the



psychological and educational value of giving children pocket money. "This approach builds trust between parents and children, encourages self-reliance, and provides a safe space for children to make financial decisions and face their consequences."

Lawati said pocket money teaches children to delay gratification and develop patience - skills that remain relevant into adulthood, including in personal relationships. "It also teaches financial planning, decision-making and how to prioritise needs

over wants," he said.

He warned against over-involvement of parents in how children spend their allowance. "If the aim is to build independence, then children must be allowed to make mistakes and learn from them. Excessive interference undermines self-confidence," he said. Instead, parents should supervise from a distance and use tools such as educational games to teach financial concepts.

Yousef bin Rashid al Mufarji, a financial awareness and literacy trainer, agreed that summer is a

valuable period to teach financial life skills. "When children learn to manage their pocket money, they are more likely to make informed financial decisions later in life."

Mufarji encouraged parents to communicate with children in age-appropriate language, asking questions like, "What would you like to buy?" and "Are you saving for something?"

He emphasised the importance of developing tools tailored to a child's age. "At four years old, a coloured box system can work. At eight, children can begin writing



Pocket money also teaches financial planning, decision-making and how to prioritise needs over wants

FALAH BIN HASSAN AL LAWATI



Money shouldn't be seen as just a source of immediate pleasure. It should have purpose

YUSEF BIN RASHID AL MUFARJI

ing down goals. By 12, they can create monthly budgets and track how well they follow them."

Mufarji noted that teaching children to divide their allowance across categories - savings, donations and leisure - promotes values such as patience, generosity and balance. "Money shouldn't be seen as just a source of immediate pleasure. It should have purpose."

He also suggested encouraging simple entrepreneurial activities during the summer break. These could include running a

small stall selling sweets or toys during family events, or crafting and selling handmade items. "These activities teach the value of effort and the basics of buying, selling and accounting."

Mufarji added that even recycling materials into useful items - such as planting containers or decorated boxes - can be both fun and educational. A personal savings project over the summer, where children save part of their pocket money and earnings towards a goal, can reinforce the link between work and reward.

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Oman joins Arab-Asian audit talks in Baku



Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman took part in the first joint meeting between Arab Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions (ARABOSAI) and Asian Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions (ASOSAI) held in Baku, Azerbaijan from July 18 to 19.

The Omani delegation was led by Zahra bint Mohammed Redha al Lawati, Deputy Chairperson for Supervision of Institutions, Investments and Companies at State Audit Institution.

Presentations were made by several committees at the meeting, including those for Knowledge Building, Capacity Building, Financial and Administrative Affairs, and Institutional Develop-

ment. Each reviewed their assigned responsibilities and proposed ways to enhance cooperation between ARABOSAI and ASOSAI.

Participants also shared experiences of using audit practices to respond to climate change and explored the use of artificial intelligence in audit work. The discussions included initiatives related to green infrastructure.

Oman's participation reflects its ongoing commitment to supporting international efforts in strengthening oversight and accountability, while contributing to the exchange of expertise with peer institutions.

The engagement was in line with best practices promoted by International Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions.



Dhahirah signs RO1mn infrastructure deals to boost services

Our Correspondent
Ibbi

Dhahirah has signed several agreements with private sector companies to implement service and development projects worth more than RO1mn. The move is part of ongoing efforts to upgrade infrastructure and improve essential services in wilayats across the governorate.

The agreements were signed last week by Najib bin Ali al Rawas, Governor of Dhahirah, and representatives of companies tasked with carrying out the projects.

Rawas stated that the projects are guided by a prioritised plan focused on actual needs for road and lighting upgrades in residential, commercial and industrial areas aligned with available resources. He noted that road and

lighting projects play a vital role in supporting municipal development and contribute to building a safe and integrated urban environment for both residents and visitors.

Among the projects are maintenance works for internal roads in the wilayats of Ibbi, Dhank and Yanqul. These include re-planning and redesigning roads and speed breakers, installing new traffic calming measures, placing road signs and resurfacing roads. The aim is to improve infrastructure in populated areas, increase road efficiency, and enhance both traffic safety and visual appeal.

Another agreement involves a lighting project for the Kabara-Wadi al Ain road in Ibbi. It includes the supply and installation of 178 lighting poles with the goal of improving nighttime safety and visibility for road users.



Investments invited in logistics and recreation projects in Muscat

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Muscat Municipality has announced multiple investment opportunities in the wilayats of Bausher and Seeb, covering key logistics and recreational infrastructure projects. These include a dedicated truck parking facility and a modern slaughterhouse in Bausher, and two public parks in Al Khoudh.

Truck parking

A tender has been floated for development of a truck parking facility on a 120,000sqm site in Al Misafa, Bausher. The facility will be located on Plot Number 1578, Block M/3, with the condition that at least 80% of the land is used for parking. The proposed project includes service facilities such as a management office, rest areas, restrooms, maintenance and washing centre, tyre and spare parts sales outlets, and



a café. The contract duration is 20 years, with a 12-month grace period on rent.

Slaughterhouse

The municipality is also offering a 10,000sqm site on Plot Number 967, Phase 2, in Al Misafa, Bausher for construction, management and operations of a slaughterhouse. The facility will be designed to handle a daily capacity of 200 sheep/goats and 50 cattle. The project components include internal pens, com-

mercial shops, restaurants, cafés, a car and truck wash, warehouses and worker accommodation. The contract is for 50 years with a five-year grace period for rent payment.

Parks in Al Khoudh

In Al Khoudh, wilayat of Seeb, Muscat Municipality is inviting investment in two public park projects, both to be developed under a 20% commercial use framework.

Located on Plot Number 590,

Block M/1, the Al Khoudh Wadi Park spread over 16,279sqm lies behind Sheikh Mohammed bin Nasser al Rashdi Mosque and overlooks Al Khoudh wadi. The planned components include three padel courts and a football field, exploratory play area for children, open theatre and seating terraces, walking and cycling paths, cafés, restaurants and a dedicated food truck zone, besides 57 parking spaces.

The second park project is being offered on Plot Number 787, Block M/4, covering 80,000sqm. Also located behind the same mosque, this site is positioned to become a recreational landmark. The planned features include a BBQ area for families, children's play area and book camp, zip-line, walking and cycling paths, designated kiosk areas, and 57 parking spaces.

The contract duration is 20 years with a 24-month grace period for rent.

Mobile subscriptions cross 8.1mn

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Mobile service subscriptions in Oman have risen to 8,130,355, exceeding the country's population of 5,315,155. On average, each person in Oman now has 1.53 mobile subscriptions, according to the latest figures from National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The data indicates robust growth in the telecommunications sector, supported by expanding digital services and increased adoption of smart technologies.

Active postpaid mobile subscriptions rose 5.6% year-on-year to 1,239,509 by the end of



May 2025. Prepaid mobile subscriptions also grew, increasing 3.1% to 5,335,847. Subscriptions in the Internet of Things (IoT) category recorded the highest growth - 118.7% - to 1,554,999.

Overall, mobile service subscriptions increased 15.2% com-

pared to the same period in 2024. Active mobile broadband subscriptions totalled 5,414,124 by the end of May 2025.

Fixed broadband services saw a 2.6% rise to 588,015 subscriptions. Fibre optic connections grew 11.4% to 339,279, while fixed 5G subscriptions rose 2.1% to 215,850. In contrast, fixed 4G subscriptions dropped 38.1% to 19,654.

Digital subscriber line (DSL) subscriptions declined sharply - 50.8% - to 11,806. Satellite Internet subscriptions decreased 2.1% to 653. Other types of Internet services - including those delivered via power lines, Ethernet and leased lines - fell 12% to 773 subscriptions.

Real estate deals fall 10% to RO1.1bn

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The total value of real estate transactions in Oman this year was RO1.113bn by the end of May, reflecting a 10% decline compared to RO1.237bn during the same period in 2024, according to data released by National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

Despite the overall drop, fees collected from legal transactions rose 13.5% from RO27.2mn in 2024 to RO30.9mn.

The traded value of sales contracts grew 17.3% to RO536.3mn, compared to RO457.2mn in the same period last year. However, the number of sales contracts dropped 2.6% from 28,023 to 27,302.

Mortgage activity saw a sharp decline, with the total value of mortgage contracts falling 26.1% to RO572.7mn across 9,140 contracts. This compares to



Traded value of sales contracts grew 17.3% from RO457.2mn in 2024 to RO536.3mn

Swap transactions also declined, with 538 contracts worth RO4.6mn registered by the end of May 2025, compared to 583 contracts valued at RO5.2mn in the same period last year.

The number of real estate title deeds issued saw a marginal increase of 0.2% from 94,194 in 2024 to 94,414 this year. Deeds issued to Gulf Cooperation Council nationals rose notably by 24.4% from 528 in 2024 to 657 in the same period this year.



Oman engages with Africa, EU, G77 on environment ahead of UNEA-7

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman took part in the 20th African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) held in Nairobi from July 14 to 18. The delegation was led by Dr Abdullah bin Ali al Amri, Chairman of Environment Authority and President of the seventh session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-7).

Oman's participation was part of the preparatory plan as UNEA-7 president focusing on partnership with all stakeholders to ensure a successful session. This edition of AMCEN also marked the 40th anniversary of the conference, which was founded in 1985 and has contributed to progress in sustainable development, biodiversity protection, climate action and pollution control.

In his address, Amri commended AMCEN and the African Union for their long-standing contributions to joint environ-



mental action across the continent. He traced the conference's journey since its inception in Cairo and acknowledged its role in shaping a unified African environmental agenda and strengthening the continent's voice in global negotiations.

He underlined the collaboration between AMCEN and UNEA as a model for regional-global partnerships, noting its significance in advancing the 2030 Sustainable Development

Goals and Africa's Agenda 2063.

Amri also outlined a vision to strengthen AMCEN's role through science-based policymaking, climate-sensitive financing, the use of digital and AI tools for environmental monitoring, and integrated approaches linking energy, minerals and the environment. He emphasised the need for inclusive and just green transitions in future development.

On the sidelines of the conference, Amri held a series of meetings with key stakeholders. He met representatives of the Group of 77 and China to exchange views on the draft Ministerial Declaration and agenda topics. Discussions on similar themes were also held with EU representatives, including the European Commissioner for Environment and Circular Economy.

Amri also met the Deputy Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation in Nairobi, with talks focusing on UNEA-7 preparations. He held a separate meeting with Dr Yasmine Fouad, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, to explore areas of collaboration with the Convention Secretariat.

Additionally, Amri held consultations with several African environment ministers, reviewing the state of preparations for UNEA-7 and gathering inputs on the draft Ministerial Declaration.

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Asyad Drydock exceeds 2,000 total projects with record year

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Asyad Drydock, a subsidiary of the Asyad Group, achieved a remarkable milestone in 2024 by successfully completing a record 232 projects, the highest number in a single year since the company's establishment in 2011.

With this achievement, the total number of projects delivered by Asyad Drydock has now surpassed 2,000.

In a statement to the Oman News Agency, Ahmed bin Ali al Balushi, CEO of Asyad Drydock and Infrastructure Services, said that the drydock has served over 800 clients from 70 countries. This reflects growing international confidence in the company's technical expertise and operational capabilities.

Balushi confirmed that Asyad Drydock continues to reinforce its economic impact within the Special Economic Zone at Duqm by attracting ship maintenance and repair projects from major global shipping lines. This has resulted in job creation, strengthened supply chains, and the development of support services.

The drydock's contributions are stimulating economic activity, encouraging industrial and logistics investment, and reinforcing Duqm's position as a regional hub for integrated maritime industries and services.

As part of its commitment to



Asyad Drydock has served over 800 clients from 70 countries. This reflects growing international confidence in the company's technical expertise and operational capabilities

AHMED BIN ALI AL BALUSHI

enhancing in-country value (ICV), Asyad Drydock awarded contracts and purchase orders worth RO8.4mn to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and approximately RO11.1mn to local companies in 2024, representing 82% of total contracts awarded over the year.

Local procurement spending included around RO14mn on im-

ports, RO5.8mn on services, and RO2.3mn on Omani-manufactured goods, underscoring the company's dedication to supporting domestic content and strengthening national supply chains.

Balushi also noted that the company managed to convert more than RO414,000 worth of procurement from international

to local suppliers. This was achieved through its supplier development programme, which includes services such as industrial diving and the supply of specialised technical materials, further reinforcing Oman's supply chain ecosystem.

In 2024, Asyad Drydock also placed significant emphasis on improving quality and sustain-

ability standards. The company received certification from the American Bureau of Shipping for the repair of propeller blades on mega vessels, adopted eco-friendly painting techniques, and deployed robotic hull-cleaning systems for ships.

Balushi highlighted that the company's revenues grew by 15% in the first half of 2024 compared to the same period last year, indicating a continued improvement in financial performance and operational efficiency.

He added that Asyad Drydock is moving forward with clear expansion plans, focusing on efficiency, accelerating digital transformation, developing national talent, and forging new international partnerships - further solidifying its position as a key player in the global maritime industry.

As part of its strategy to diversify its business portfolio, the company is also expanding into new sectors, particularly oil and gas, by offering specialised services for offshore platforms.

"This will enhance the integration of our services and widen our target markets, such as Africa, Japan, and the United States. These regions represent significant growth opportunities, enabling us to increase the number of vessels calling at the drydock and improve overall customer satisfaction," Balushi said.



OQBI reports over RO22mn profit for first half of 2024

Our Correspondent
Muscat

OQ Base Industries Company (OQBI), a subsidiary of OQ Group, recorded a sharp increase in its profits for the first half of this year, with consolidated net profit rising to RO22.748mn, compared to RO4.109mn in the same period in 2024.

The company's preliminary, unaudited results showed strong performance across all key indicators, reflecting robust financial performance and operational efficiency, demonstrated by reduced expenses and controlled spending aimed at achieving sustainable growth.

OQBI's financial results indicated that the company's revenues for the first six months of 2025 amounted to approximately RO112.371mn, an increase of 7.7% compared to RO104.296mn in the same period of 2024.

Total expenses for the first half of this year amounted to RO89.622mn, a decrease of 10.5% compared to RO100.186mn in the first half of last year.

In a statement to Oman News Agency, Ahmed bin Saeed al Barami, Chief Financial Officer of OQ Basic Industries, explained that the growth in the company's profits during the first half of this year reflects the strength of its operations and its efficiency in managing costs and addressing market challenges.

He noted that rescheduling financing at more favourable interest rates contributed to achieving record profits, which were positively reflected in net profit. Barami added that these strong results confirm the company's distinguished strategic position to continue achieving sustainable growth during the second half of this year and beyond.

Moody's assigns Baa3 rating to OPWP; outlook stable

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Moody's Ratings has assigned a Baa3 long-term issuer rating to Oman Power and Water Procurement Company (OPWP), the sole procurer of the sultanate's power and desalinated water production capacities. At the same time, Moody's has withdrawn OPWP's Ba1 long-term corporate family rating. The rating agency has revised its outlook on OPWP to stable from positive.

Moody's rating action on OPWP follows its upgrade of the Government of Oman's rating to Baa3 from Ba1 on July 10, 2025, with the outlook also revised to stable from positive. 'OPWP's Baa3 rating reflects its close linkage to the sovereign rating, as a provider of essential electricity services, and its significant exposure to the Omani government through subsidies (with OPWP being indirectly exposed). The stable outlook for OPWP aligns with the stable outlook for the Government of Oman,' Moody's said in a statement.

Moody's classifies OPWP as a government-related issuer (GRI) and applies a top-down approach in assigning OPWP's rating under the Government-Related Issuers methodology.

'We directly align OPWP's rating with that of the government, without providing an assessment of OPWP's standalone credit strength, given the company's very close integration into the public sector,' the agency said.

According to Moody's, OPWP is intrinsically linked to the government, acting as the sole buyer and seller of



OPWP's Baa3 rating reflects its close linkage to the sovereign rating, as a provider of essential electricity services, and its significant exposure to the Omani government through subsidies

MOODY'S RATINGS

electricity and water between licensed production facilities and licensed electricity suppliers and water companies in Oman. The company also performs a government agency-like function in areas such as long-term electricity planning.

The agency noted that OPWP's rating is strongly interconnected with the sovereign due to its indirect exposure to the Omani government through subsidies. In particular, its seasonal revenue profile and delays in payments by electricity distribution and water companies have in-

creased OPWP's working capital requirements. The company's heavy reliance on a 12-month short-term working capital facility negatively affects its liquidity position.

Moody's noted that OPWP's rating continues to be supported by: a stable and transparent regulatory framework for the electricity sector and the independence of the regulator; cost-recovery mechanisms within the regulatory framework; a low business risk profile and the strict regulation of its activities; and its strategic role in Oman's expanding power and water sector.

Moody's added that OPWP's rating could be upgraded if Oman's sovereign rating is upgraded, provided there is no material deterioration in the company's operational and financial performance or its liquidity profile.

Conversely, OPWP's rating could be downgraded in the event of a downgrade of Oman's sovereign rating. A downgrade could also occur if Moody's revises its assumption of timely and extraordinary government support, or if the nature of government support changes.

G20 finance ministers express concerns over Trump's high trade tariffs: Report

Istanbul, Turkey - Top financial officials from the G20 major economies expressed worries about the effects of US President Donald Trump's high tariffs on a meeting in South Africa, Japanese news agency Jiji Press reported Friday.

Japanese Finance Minister Katsunobu Kato told reporters on Thursday, day one of a two-day gathering of G-20 finance ministers and central bank governors, that he was worried about how the economy and financial markets will be affected by the uncertainty around US tariffs.

Additionally, Kato said tariffs are not a suitable means of re-



US President Donald Trump

solving trade imbalances.

On the sidelines of the G-20 session, the finance ministers and central bank heads of the main industrialised countries of the G7 were expected to meet to discuss a range of issues, includ-

ing aid for Ukraine.

Global trade and markets have been in great uncertainty since Trump unveiled his "reciprocal" tariffs back on April. He imposed blanket tariffs ranging between 10% to 50% on most countries, later suspending those tariffs for 90 days, except for China, on April 9.

With China, after a back-and-forth tariff standoff, Washington agreed to a trade deal after meeting in London last month as the two sides agreed to set back some punitive tariffs, as well as other restrictive measures.

Meanwhile, many countries have been trying to negotiate a better trade agreement which in-

cludes lower tariff rates than what was introduced in April by the US.

Other countries which the US announced a trade deal with are the UK, Vietnam, and Indonesia.

Additionally, the US president has sent letters to numerous countries informing them of the tariff rate they will be paying as of Aug. 1.

Those included the EU countries, and Mexico with a 30% tariff rate, Canada with 35%, and Japan with 25%.

Trump also introduced new sectoral tariffs, which included a 25% tariff rate for all automotive imports in April.

Anadolu Agency

Trump signs GENIUS Act into law, in major milestone for crypto industry

Nisha Gopalan

US President Donald Trump on Friday signed the GENIUS Act into law, in a major milestone for the crypto industry and the president's stated goal of reshaping American crypto policy.

"I pledged that we would bring back American liberty and leadership and make the United States the crypto capital of the world, and that's what we've done," said Trump at the signing ceremony Friday.

The GENIUS Act establishes a framework for private companies to issue stablecoins, cryptocurrencies with a value pegged to another currency or financial asset such as the US dollar, paving the way for their use to become more widespread.

The new framework is meant to help "unleash" the potential of



stablecoins, Trump said, adding, "this could be perhaps the greatest revolution in financial technology since the birth of the internet itself."

Securities and Exchange Commission Chair Paul Atkins, who was appointed by President Trump and is known for his support of crypto, called the GENIUS Act's passage into law "a monumental step forward for crypto

assets, financial markets, and our country."

"The GENIUS Act provides necessary guidance for a crucial element of the emerging crypto asset ecosystem," Atkins said.

The price of Ether, the second-largest cryptocurrency after Bitcoin, continued to climb Friday and was recently up about 2% at over \$3,500 amid optimism the crypto-friendly legislation could

give digital assets increased legitimacy. The price of Bitcoin was slightly lower, trading near \$118,000 after topping \$120,000 recently.

Shares of Circle Internet Group (CRCL), the largest US stablecoin issuer after Tether, were little-changed in after-hours trading, as were shares of several other crypto-related companies including Strategy (MSTR), crypto miner MARA Holdings (MARA), and Coinbase Global (COIN), the largest cryptocurrency exchange in the US.

Two other bills that were passed in a hectic week for voting on crypto, dubbed "Crypto Week" by the House of Representatives, still require Senate approval before they can move to Trump's desk.

Investopedia

Bank Muscat, Omantel activate web payment solutions for corporates



In a move to advance Oman's digital financial ecosystem, Bank Muscat and Oman Telecommunication Company (Omantel) have announced the activation of a state-of-the-art Web Payment API solution, marking a strategic step in delivering seamless enterprise payment experiences.

On this occasion, the two organisations signed the partnership agreement in the presence of Ahmed bin Faqir al Balushi, deputy CEO, Banking, at Bank Muscat, and Aladdin Bait Fadhil, chief commercial officer at Omantel, a press release said.

This step represents a continuation of the bank's commitment to facilitating seamless integration of top-notch digital solutions for institutions. Further to the launch of API Banking last year, the bank strengthened its partnership with various institutions and companies by implementing several ERP API services.

Besides, this integration enables Omantel's corporate customers with accounts at Bank Muscat to settle payments directly through Omantel's Business Self-Service Portal,



This partnership serves as an extension to our efforts to offer seamless, secure services that simplify the banking experience for corporate customers

AHMED BIN FAQIR AL BALUSHI

streamlining the process, improving reconciliation, and enhancing overall user experience. The initiative reflects a shared commitment to digitising Oman's enterprise landscape and creating secure, efficient, and future-ready services. The collaboration leverages Bank

Muscat's advanced API capabilities and Omantel's powerful digital infrastructure to deliver tangible value to customers.

Balushi said, "We are thrilled to announce the activation of our Web Payment API with Omantel, our first telecom partner to integrate this advanced solution.

This partnership serves as an extension to our efforts to offer seamless, secure services that simplify the banking experience for corporate customers. Through such strategic collaborations, we will continue to deliver customer-focused digital solutions tailored to evolving business needs."

Fadhil added, "We are proud to be the first telecom to integrate Bank Muscat's Web Payment API, a step that aligns with our strategy to elevate digital engagement for our enterprise customers. This solution improves the way our customers manage payments and enhances the accuracy and speed of our internal reconciliation processes. Real-time updates and immediate confirmations offer a smoother, more reliable experience for corporate customers. This partnership reinforces our role in delivering innovative, customer-focused digital services in the telecom space."

Bank Muscat and Omantel are redefining the future of enterprise services by offering integrated, intelligent digital solutions.

Sohar Islamic offers unified Transaction Banking Platform

In alignment with Oman Vision 2040 and its commitment to promoting financial inclusion, Sohar Islamic - Sohar International Islamic Window - has announced the launch of its online Unified Transaction Banking Platform for its Wholesale Banking Clients.

This platform offers Cash Management and Trade Finance solutions, serving as a comprehensive solution for corporate and institutional clients' everyday banking needs. It provides convenient features such as auto reconciliation, supply chain finance, liquidity management, receivables management, digital trade finance, and payment processing.

Incorporating global technology trends, these online unified transaction banking services align with the bank's ongoing digitalisation strategy.

Fahad Akbar al Zadjali, head of Sohar Islamic at Sohar International, emphasises the bank's dedication to innovation and staying ahead of the curve: "The demand for 24x7, easily accessible, and on-the-go banking solutions is crucial in today's ever-changing world. With the support of the Omani government, which has acted as a significant catalyst for change, we have witnessed enhanced business and industry collaborations, secure channels establishment, and more effective governance.

"At Sohar Islamic, we recognise the importance of leading industry transformation. Our agility, disruptive technologies, and commitment

to innovation set us apart. By embracing digitalisation, we provide exceptional customer service to wholesale banking clients while contributing to the broader goal of a paperless world."

Sajeel Bashiruddin, chief technology and digital officer at Sohar International, stated, "Our digital strategy is centred around building intelligent systems that are resilient, interoperable, and built for scale. In a fast-evolving financial environment, it is essential to design platforms that are not only secure but also adaptable to the complexities of modern business. Through a modular architecture, design and advanced integration capabilities, we are laying the foundation for a future where banking services become embedded within our clients' operational ecosystems. This approach supports long-term digital transformation while reinforcing our role as an innovation-led institution shaping the next era of banking in Oman."

Sohar Islamic's robust digital capabilities empower clients with reliable cash and liquidity management solutions, as well as efficient trade finance services, through a secure and seamless channel. Government and corporate clients benefit from the convenience of various payment options, automated reconciliation, digitised trade finance transactions, and a supply chain ecosystem connecting vendors and customers.

The platform also facilitates easy balance management across group companies and optimisation of interest costs.



Oman Air celebrates 30 years service to Mumbai

Oman Air, the national carrier of the Sultanate of Oman, proudly marks 30 years of operations between Muscat and Mumbai.

The second Indian destination to be introduced after Thiruvananthapuram in 1993, Mumbai has since grown into a cornerstone of the airline's network with 12 flights per week, a press release said.

Over the last three decades Oman Air has significantly expanded its footprint across India, strengthening air links that support business, tourism, and community ties between the two countries. Currently, the airline operates 168 flights per week between Muscat and 10 cities including Mumbai, Delhi, Lucknow, Chennai, Hyderabad, Bengaluru, Thiruvananthapuram, Kochi, Calicut and Goa.

Speaking on the occasion, Sunil V A, regional vice president for the Indian subcontinent at Oman Air, said, "This anniversary is more than a celebration of flights, it's a celebration of friendship and trust. India has been one of our most important markets, and Mumbai holds a special place in our network. As we continue to evolve as a premium global carrier and a proud Oneworld member, we remain committed to elevating our relationship with India and offering exceptional, world-class travel experiences to our guests."

The milestone comes at an exciting time for Oman Air with its recent entry into the One-world alliance. With access to a network of over 900 destinations worldwide, the airline is now better positioned than ever to offer its Indian guests' greater global connectivity, streamlined travel benefits, and enhanced service. Meanwhile, Oman Air continues to deliver a guest-centric journey that blends Omani hospitality with world-class service standards.



Malabar Gold & Diamonds unveils Mojawhraty by Malabar

Malabar Gold and Diamonds, the 5th largest jewellery retailer globally with over 400 showrooms across 13 countries and a name synonymous with trust, quality, and timeless craftsmanship, has unveiled Mojawhraty by Malabar, the brand's latest retail concept dedicated exclusively to Arabic jewellery.

In the GCC region, Mojawhraty by Malabar has launched six showrooms, two showrooms in the UAE at Dalma Mall and Ajman City Centre, two showrooms in Bahrain at Bahrain City Centre and Bab al Bahrain and one showroom each in the KSA and Oman at Nakheel Mall, Dammam and Muthra Souq respectively, a press release said.

The second showroom of Mojawhraty by Malabar in the UAE at Dalma Mall was inaugurated by chairman of Malabar Group, M P Ahammad, in the

presence of vice chairman, Abdul Salam K P, MD-International Operations, Shamal Ahmed, senior director of Malabar Group, Mayankutty C, director of Finance and Admin, Ameer CMC, head of Manufacturing, Faisal A K, business head of Arabic Value Chain, Sherif Abdelmonem Meligy Hassanin, other senior management team members from Malabar Gold and Diamonds, customers and well-wishers.

"It is with great pride and pleasure that we unveil Mojawhraty by Malabar to the discerning lovers of Arabic jewellery. As part of Malabar Gold and Diamonds' vision to become the world's No 1 jewellery retailer, expanding our design portfolio across diverse cultural and value chains is a key focus. The launch of Mojawhraty by Malabar marks a significant step

in establishing a distinct presence in the traditional and contemporary Arab jewellery space. With six showrooms across the GCC and more on the horizon, we are confident that Mojawhraty by Malabar will be welcomed with open arms by jewellery lovers in the region", said Ahammad.

At Mojawhraty by Malabar, each piece of jewellery is meticulously crafted by master artisans and is available in responsibly sourced 18K, 21K and 22K gold, alongside an exclusive range of ornaments featuring certified natural diamonds. The curated brand portfolio showcases several in-house collections reflective of Arabic artistry and the evolving tastes of modern Arab consumers. Every purchase is also covered under the 'Mojawhraty Promise', which includes 100% value on diamonds.



Tender Announcement

Oman National Engineering and Investment Company S.A.O.G would like to Announce the Following Tender

CONSTRUCTION OF LABOR HOUSING COMPLEX WITH FACILITIES FOR ONEIC WORKERS IN DHOFAR GOVERNORATE, SALALAH.

Tender No.	Tender Title	Tender Document Fee	Deadline for obtaining the documents	Last date to submit tender queries	Last date to submit the offers
41091-2025	Construction of Labor Housing Complex With Facilities for ONEIC Workers in Dhofar Governorate Salalah (Ground & First Floor)	RO 100/- Non refundable	30/07/2025	10/08/2025	20/08/2025
Bank Name and Account			Bank Muscat (0423011147900013)		

Condition:

- Tender Collection:** Companies and institutions classified as Grade One or above, with proven experience in the field and a valid commercial registration, are invited to participate in this tender. Eligible bidders may obtain the tender documents from the Procurement Department by sending a copy of the bank payment receipt to yousuf.alfulaiti@oneic.com.om, starting from the date of this announcement and during official working hours from **08:00 AM to 05:00 PM**.
- Bank Guarantee:** All participating companies are required to produced bid bond with their offers form a licensed and approved bank operating in the Sultanate of Oman, with a value equivalent to (1%) of the total bid amount. The guarantee must be addressed to Oman National Engineering & Investment Co. SAOG and must be valid for a minimum of (120) days from the final closing date for bid submission
- Submitting Offers:** Offers must be submitted as per the indicated procedure in prime documents at tender box in **ONEIC's Head office, 2nd Floor procurement department, AL-Khuwair.**
- Deadline for Submission of Offers:** The final deadline for receiving offers is before **1:00 PM** on the last date for bid submission.
- Offers submitted after the specified deadline or those that do not meet the required conditions will not be considered.
- The documents must be signed and stamped by the authorized person only.
- Oman National Engineering & Investment Co. SAOG reserves the right to accept or reject any offer, as well as the right to cancel the tender without providing any reasons.
- Oman National Engineering & Investment Co. SAOG reserves the right to add or omit certain works included in the tender if deemed necessary.
- Oman National Engineering & Investment Co. SAOG is not obligated to accept the lowest or any other offer without providing reasons.
- For inquiries and clarifications regarding the tender, you can contact via email at yousuf.alfulaiti@oneic.com.om or contact at phone number **24396435**.

UAE, Hungarian Presidents discuss ways to strengthen cooperation

Budapest, Hungary - UAE President H H Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed al Nahyan and Tamás Sulyok, President of Hungary, held talks in Budapest on ways to strengthen cooperation between the UAE and Hungary across various sectors, with a particular focus on the economy, renewable energy, trade, investment, and culture.

The talks took place at the Hungarian Parliament Building, where President Tamás Sulyok welcomed Sheikh Mohamed during his official visit to Hungary.

The Hungarian President expressed his hope that the visit would contribute to further advancing bilateral ties and expanding avenues of cooperation in areas that serve the mutual interests of both nations.

Sheikh Mohamed affirmed that the UAE and Hungary share a friendship and cooperative relationship based on mutual respect and a joint commitment to progress. He noted that these growing bilateral ties aim to support the aspirations of both nations and their peoples for development and prosperity. Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening UAE-Hungary relations and exploring new opportunities for mutually beneficial cooperation across a range of sectors.

WAM

Israel-Syria agree to ceasefire

Druze, Bedouin clans continue to clash in Sweida for which special forces will be deployed

New York, US - The agreement comes after intense clashes displaced tens of thousands of people and contributed to a worsening humanitarian crisis in a region still recovering from over a decade of brutal civil war.

US Ambassador to Turkey and Special Envoy for Syria, Tom Barrack, announced early on Saturday that Syria and Israel had agreed to a ceasefire.

It comes after Israeli forces carried out several attacks against Syria, including in the capital, Damascus, in what it called “military interventions” to protect the Druze minority.

It also comes on the heels of renewed clashes between Druze armed groups and Bedouin clans, in what Syria’s President Ahmed al-Sharaa warned he’ll send troops back in to quell the fighting that has so far displaced tens of thousands of people.

Barrack announced the truce in a post on X, formerly Twitter, noting that the US-led peace initiative is supported by multiple countries in the region.

“Israeli Prime Minister [Benjamin] Netanyahu and Syrian President Ahmed al Sharaa supported by the USA, [State Secretary Marco] Rubio have agreed to a ceasefire embraced by Türkiye, Jordan and its neighbours,” wrote Barrack.

Though he did not disclose any details of the arrangement, Barrack called on all parties to disengage and seek peace.

“We call upon Druze, Bedouins, and Sunnis to put down their weapons and together with other minorities build a new and united Syrian identity in peace and prosperity with its neighbours.”

Clashes began on Sunday between Druze militias and local



The Druze form a substantial community in Israel, where they are seen as a loyal minority and often serve in the Israeli military. Israel intervened in defence of the Druze, launching dozens of airstrikes on convoys of government fighters

Sunni Muslim Bedouin tribes in Syria’s southern Sweida province. Government forces intervened, nominally to restore order, but ended up taking the Bedouins’ side against the Druze.

Israel intervened in defence of the Druze, launching dozens of

airstrikes on convoys of government fighters and even striking the Syrian Defence Ministry headquarters in central Damascus. The Druze form a substantial community in Israel, where they are seen as a loyal minority and often serve in the Israeli military.

On Wednesday, Sharaa’s government reached a truce with Druze groups, mediate by Washington, Turkey and other Arab countries, and began withdrawing their troops from the Sweida province.

Druze groups were tasked, according to the details of the deal revealed by the Syrian interim president on Thursday, to oversee internal security as government forces pulled out.

By late Thursday however, clashes were flaring up again between Bedouin and Druze

groups. State media reported that Druze militias had carried out revenge attacks against Bedouin communities, leading to a new wave of displacements.

The governor of the neighbouring Daraa province said in a statement that more than 1,000 families were displaced to his province as a result of “attacks on Bedouin tribes by outlaw groups”. Sharaa said special forces will be deployed to Sweida to “break up clashes and resolve the conflict on the ground”.

Euronews

US body says media reports on Air India crash ‘premature’

New York, US - The United States National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) said on Friday that media reports on the reasons behind the Air India Boeing Dreamliner crash which killed 270 were speculative and premature.

India’s Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB), which is investigating the accident, had released a preliminary report last week which raised questions about the engine fuel cutoff switches.

Since the report came out, there have been several media reports speculating over the cause of the crash in Indian and Western media, pointing to a possible pilot error. The report it-



self has been condemned for not providing enough information.

The NTSB is an investigative agency that investigates civil transportation accidents.

“Recent media reports on the

Air India 171 crash are premature and speculative. India’s Aircraft

Accident Investigation Bureau just released its preliminary report. Investigations of this magnitude take time,” NTSB Chair

Jennifer Homendy said in a statement shared on X.

According to the AAIB report, in the blackbox voice recording, “one of the pilots is heard asking the other why did he cutoff,” and the other pilot “responded that he did not do so.”

First officer Clive Kunder was believed to be flying the plane while Captain Sumeet Sabharwal was monitoring, hence it has been assumed that his hands were free to toggle with the fuel switch. The switches were restored 10 seconds later but the plane crashed, having already lost thrust.

The report did not clarify what caused the engine fuel to cut off.

DW News



Israelis fires on Palestinians en route to food site, kills 32

Jerusalem - The latest attacks come as US, Qatar-led ceasefire efforts between Israel and Hamas appear to stall due to disagreements over Israel’s continued presence and Hamas’ future in the Strip.

Israeli troops opened fire on Saturday towards crowds of Palestinians seeking food at a distribution point run by an Israeli-backed US company in southern Gaza, killing at least 32 Palestinians, according to witnesses and local health officials.

In a separate incident, at least 18 more Palestinians were killed in an Israeli air strikes on Gaza City in the north of the enclave. The attacks occurred near hubs operated by the Gaza Humanitarian Fund (GHF).

The Israeli military did not immediately react to reports of the two incidents. The GHF launched operations in late May with backing from the US and Israel. The two governments launched the initiative in a bid to replace the traditional UN-led aid distri-

bution system in Gaza, after repeated accusations of Hamas militants stealing supplies.

The Delaware-based GHF says it has distributed millions of meals to hungry Palestinians in its just over two months of operations. Local health officials and witnesses say hundreds of Palestinians were killed by Israeli troops as they attempted to reach the distribution points.

The Israeli army, as per an agreement with Washington, is not permitted physical presence at the GHF sites, but does work to secure the facilities from a distance. Israel says it only fires ‘warning shots’ if Palestinians get too close to their forces. The GHF, which employs private armed guards to secure its sites, says there have been no deadly shootings on their campuses.

Earlier this week, 20 Palestinians were killed at a GHF site near Khan Younis, most of them in a stampede, in what was the first public recognition of fatalities at the US-led operation.

Witnesses say the stampede occurred after security forces deployed tear gas and stun grenades on the crowds of people lined up, inciting panic.

Most of Saturday’s deaths occurred as Palestinians massed in the Teina area, around three kilometres from the GHF aid site east of the city of Khan Younis.

Mahmoud Mokeimar, an eye-witness, said he was walking with masses of people - mostly young men - towards the food hub. Troops fired warning shots as the crowds advanced, before opening fire toward the marching people, he said.

“It was a massacre, the occupation opened fire at us indiscriminately,” Mokeimar noted that he managed to flee but saw at least three motionless bodies lying on the ground, and many others fleeing who’ve been wounded.

Akram Aker, another witness, said troops fired machine guns mounted on tanks and drones.

Euronews

Congo, M23 sign ceasefire deal

Doha, Qatar - Congo and Rwanda-backed M23 rebels have signed a preliminary ceasefire aimed at facilitating a peace agreement to be signed in August. The African Union called the signing a ‘significant development’.

Representatives from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and the Rwanda-backed M23 militia signed a provisional ceasefire in Qatar on Saturday, committing both sides to signing a permanent truce and a comprehensive peace agreement no later than August 18.

“This marks a major milestone in the ongoing efforts to achieve lasting peace, security



and stability in eastern DRC and the wider Great Lakes region,” said African Union (AU) Chair Mahmoud Ali Youssouf in a statement.

Saturday’s ‘agreement to principles’ deal aligns with a peace deal that both sides signed in Washington on June 27.

Congo’s mineral-rich east has

seen decades of fighting with M23 emerging as the most prominent of some 100 or so armed groups operating in the region.

At the moment, it is unclear what the specific terms of the final deal will encompass and what concessions have been agreed to. M23 has pushed for the release of captured fighters, whereas Congo has demanded the withdrawal of M23 troops from territories the group has seized. Saturday’s statement said the two sides would refrain from ‘hate propaganda’ and ‘any attempt to seize by force new positions’.

DW News

RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR

One person killed in Odesa as Russia launches 300 drones

Russia’s Defence Ministry said it shot down 71 Ukrainian drones overnight

Kiev, Ukraine - Russian air strikes on Ukraine overnight into Saturday have killed one person in Odesa. The strikes come as Russia has intensified its military offensive in Ukraine, with analysts warning of potential further escalation.

Russia launched more than 300 drones and over 30 missiles towards different cities in Ukraine overnight into Saturday morning, killing at least one person and injuring several others, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has said.

“Rescue operations are underway following the attack: The Donetsk, Kirovohrad, Dnipro, Sumy, Kherson, Volyn, Zaporizhzhia, Mykolaiv, Odesa, and Zhytomyr regions were affected,” he wrote on X.

The Black Sea port city of Odesa came under fire by 20 drones and a missile, the city’s mayor Hennadii Trukhanov, said Saturday on Telegram.

The strike sparked a fire in an apartment block. Five people were rescued from their burning apartments, including one woman who died after she was rescued. At least six other people,



Following the attack, the Donetsk, Kirovohrad, Dnipro, Sumy, Kherson, Volyn, Zaporizhzhia, Mykolaiv, Odesa, and Zhytomyr regions were affected

VOLODYMYR ZELENSKYY

ple, including a child, were injured.

Meanwhile in Sumy, critical infrastructure was damaged and thousands of families were left without electricity, according to Zelenskyy.

Russia also launched a barrage of drones at Pavlohrad, damaging critical infrastructure and a residential building. According to the head of the Dnipro regional military administration, it was the largest at-

tack on the city since Russia’s full-scale invasion.

The Ukrainian President thanked international leaders “who understand how crucial it is to promptly implement our agreements” aimed at boosting Ukraine’s defence capabilities, including joint weapons production, investment in drone manufacturing and the supply of air defence systems.

In recent weeks, Russia has been intensifying its long-range attacks on Ukraine, often firing more drones in a single night

than it did during some months in 2024. Analysts have warned the attacks are likely to escalate further.

On 8 July, Russia fired a record-breaking number of more than 741 drones and missiles.

Meanwhile, Russia’s Defence Ministry said it shot down 71 Ukrainian drones overnight, of which 13 drones were shot down as they approached Moscow, according to the city’s mayor Sergei Sobyanyin.

Euronews



UK sanctions Russian spies over deadly Ukraine theatre strike

London, UK - The British Foreign Office also linked Russia’s intelligence agency to a cyber-sabotage campaign across Europe and the US, targeting institutions, elections and public health programmes.

The UK sanctioned 18 officers and three units from Russia’s military intelligence agency (GRU) on Friday over their role in a 2022 air strike on a theatre in Ukraine that killed hundreds of civilians.

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) said the targeted GRU personnel were responsible for preparations leading to the bombing of the Mariupol Drama Theatre, where civilians had taken refuge and painted the word ‘children’ outside in large letters hoping to deter attacks.

The strike on 16 March 2022 is believed to have killed around 600 people, including many children, according to an investigation by the Associated Press.

Western officials have blamed Russia for over 70 attacks since 2022, aimed at destabilising Europe and weakening support for Ukraine. “GRU spies are running a campaign to destabilise Europe, undermine Ukraine’s sovereignty and threaten the safety of British citizens,” said Foreign Secretary David Lammy.

The UK alleges that GRU Unit 26165 conducted online reconnaissance of civilian bomb shelters in Mariupol and Kharkiv in the days leading up to the attack.

In addition to their role in Ukraine, the officers are accused of past operations including targeting the family of former Russian spy Sergei Skripal, who was poisoned alongside his daughter with the nerve agent Novichok in Salisbury in 2018.

The same GRU unit is believed to have used malware in 2013 to spy on the email account of Skripal’s daughter, Yulia.

Euronews

5 planes were shot down in India-Pakistan conflict: Trump

Washington, DC, US - US President Donald Trump said at least five planes were shot down during the latest hostilities between India and Pakistan in May, insisting it was the US which ‘stopped the war’ between the two nuclear-armed nations.

“Planes were being shot out of the air ... I think five jets were shot down, actually,” Trump told a dinner meeting with Republican lawmakers at the White House Friday night.

Trump did not specify whose planes were shot down.

It is the first time that any head of a third state has con-



firmed shooting down of planes in the four-day conflict.

Pakistan claims it downed six Indian planes, including three

French-made Rafales, in air-to-air combat when India launched overnight cross-border airstrikes on May 7.

Gen Anil Chauhan, India’s Chief of Defence Staff, later confirmed that some Indian air planes were shot down without specifying the numbers.

Trump said the hostilities were ‘getting bigger and bigger’, which were ‘solved through trade’. “We said, we’re not making a trade deal if you’re going to be throwing around weapons, and maybe nuclear weapons, both very powerful nuclear states,” he said.

At least 30 injured as vehicle drives into crowd in Los Angeles

Los Angeles, US - Dozens of people were injured after a car drove into a crowd in Santa Monica Boulevard as they waited in line to enter a nightclub.

A vehicle rammed into a crowd of people waiting to enter a nightclub on a busy boulevard in Los Angeles’ East Hollywood area, injuring 30 people.

Local officials say the victims were transported to local hospitals and trauma centres to receive medical attention. At least three people sustained critical injuries while eight to ten others were in serious condition.

Adam Van Gerpen, public in-



formation officer for the Los Angeles City Fire Department, said medical personnel discovered that one of the patients had a gunshot wound.

The car, a compact civilian vehicle, drove into a line of people - mostly women - before slamming into a taco truck and valet stand.

“They were all standing in line going into a nightclub. There was a taco cart out there, so they were... getting some food, waiting to go in. And there’s also a valet line there,” said Van Gerpen.

Euronews

Myanmar’s military leader appears at event honouring Suu Kyi’s father

Yangon, Myanmar - The country’s deposed leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, was absent from the event for a fifth consecutive year since her arrest in February 2021 following a coup d’état.

The head of Myanmar’s military junta made a rare appearance at a ceremony on Saturday honouring General Aung San, an independence hero and father of jailed former leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

It was the first time the 69-year-old Senior General Min Aung Hlaing attended the Martyr’s Day wreath-laying ceremony since the army deposed Suu Kyi and seized power in February 2021.

His appearance comes as his embattled government is preparing to hold elections while fighting armed opposition groups

across the country.

Martyr’s Day was an important event in Myanmar’s calendar for decades, but the military has downplayed the holiday in recent years.

It commemorates the assassination of Aung San, a former Prime Minister who was killed at the age of 32 along with six cabinet colleagues and two other officials in 1947, just months before the country - then called Burma - achieved freedom from British colonial rule.

Political rival and former Prime Minister U Saw, was tried and hanged for plotting the attack.

Suu Kyi, who was detained when the army took over in 2021, was absent from the event for a fifth consecutive year. She is currently serving a 27-year prison



sentence on what are widely regarded as politically motivated charges meant to keep her from political activity.

Ye Aung Than, a son of Suu

Kyi’s estranged older brother, laid a wreath in front of his grandfather’s tomb during the main ceremony at the Martyr’s Mausoleum near the foot of the

towering Shwedagon Pagoda in the southern city of Yangon.

With Myanmar flags flying at half-staff, members of the ruling military council, and cabinet, as

well as high-ranking military generals joined Min Aung Hlaing in placing a basket of flowers in front of the tombs of the nine martyrs.

People in Yangon also paid tribute to independence leaders by blaring car horns and sirens at 10:37am local time, the exact time of the 1947 attack. Democracy supporters also held rallies in parts of the country that are not under military control.

The event comes just five months before elections that the military has promised to hold by the end of this year. The poll is widely seen as an attempt to legitimise their seizure of power through ballot boxes and is expected to deliver a result that ensures the junta retain control.

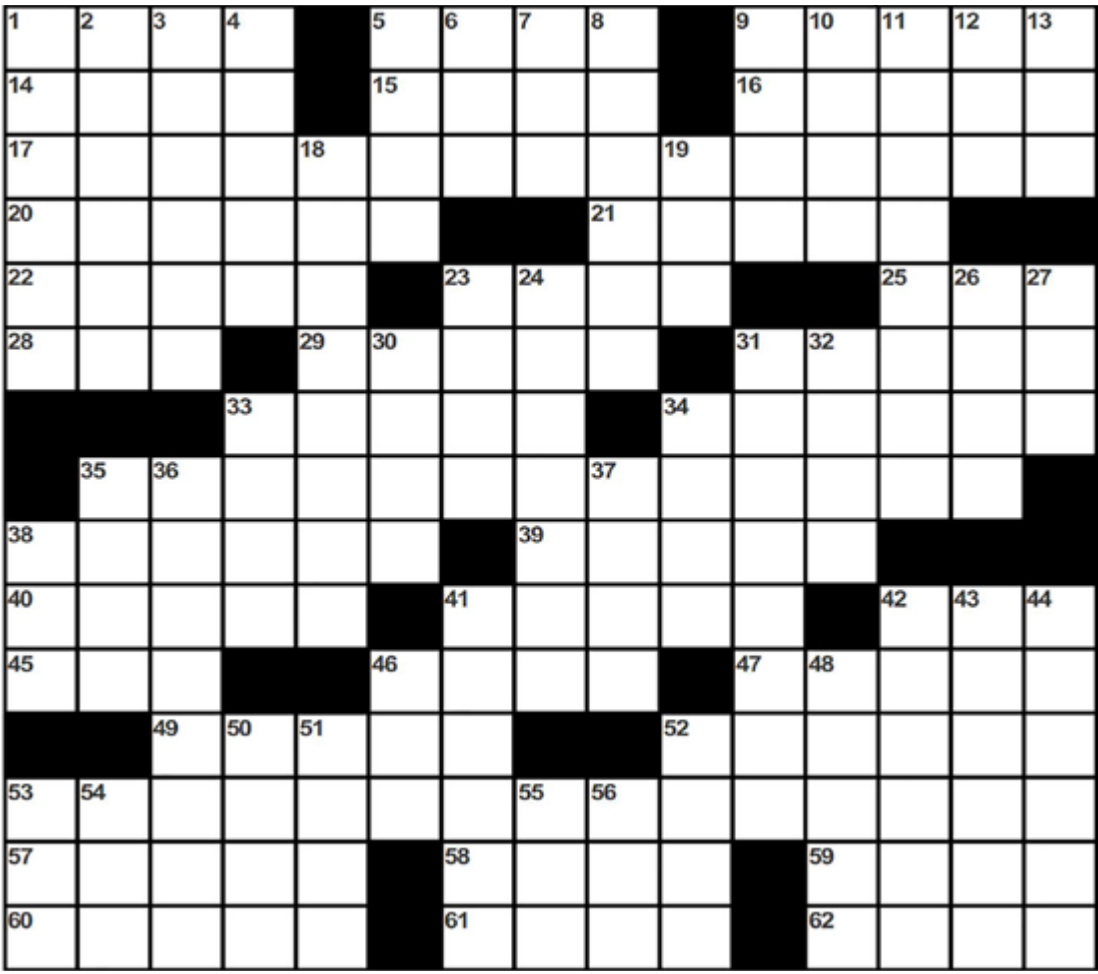
The 2021 military takeover was met with widespread nonvi-

olent protests, but after peaceful demonstrations were met with lethal resistance, many opponents of military rule took up arms, and large parts of the country are now embroiled in conflict.

Humanitarian organisations estimate that close to 7,000 people were killed since the army seized control, including poets, activists, politicians. Almost 30,000 people are also believed to have been arrested in what groups such as Amnesty International call “bogus charges”.

The military says the figures are highly exaggerated, inflated and do not reflect reality. They’re estimated to now control less than half of Myanmar, but have recently accelerated counteroffensives to retake areas controlled by opposition groups ahead of the election.

DAILY CROSSWORD



- ACROSS
- 1) "And another thing ... "
- 5) Clay pigeon tosser
- 9) Drive forward
- 14) Pro Football Hall of Farnar Warren
- 15) Aboriginal Japanese
- 16) Oniony breakfast roll
- 17) First Mickey Mouse cartoon
- 20) Imprints, as in memory
- 21) Cowboy carnival
- 22) It might rock your world
- 23) The Buckeye State
- 25) "Welcome" bearer
- 28) Toronto-to-D.C. heading
- 29) _ one's time (waited)
- 31) Volleyball smash
- 33) Baseball miscue
- 34) Kid in a 1985 Donner flick
- 35) Flying vehicle
- 38) Backless sofas
- 39) Arab prince (Var.)
- 40) British pop star
- 41) Old French money
- 42) Andy Capp's missus
- 45) Female pronoun
- 46) This one and that one
- 47) Marooned, in a way
- 49) Animated Simpson
- 52) Clever
- 53) Spirited debates
- 57) Small needle-and-scissor cases
- 58) First or second, on a car
- 59)_ out a living
- 60) Joe of the Eagles
- 6 J) Icelandic epic
- 62) Vega's constellation
- DOWN
- 1) Impose, as a tax
- 2) Cappuccinos' cousins
- 3) Coins, collectively
- 4) Moonfish
- 5) Keep _ on (monitor)
- 6) _ de Janeiro
- 7) Santa _ winds
- 8) Foul-smelling
- 9) "What am _?" (auction query)
- 10) 5,280 feet
- 11) Type of horse
- 12) Connecticut collegian
- 13) Caustic cleaning chemical
- 18) Eardrum, e.g.
- 19) Try to date
- 23) "Phew!" inducer
- 24) President Hoover
- 26) Related
- 27) Driving range peg
- 30) Colored eye part
- 31) Bit of nonstandard grammar
- 32) Far from rich
- 33) And others, for short
- 34) "Glengarry _ Ross"
- 35) Try not to be found
- 36) Completely redo
- 37) Maidservant
- 38) Morse code dash
- 4 J) Search for provisions
- 42) Lackey
- 43) Scrabble unit
- 44) City on the Black Sea
- 46) Night spot
- 48) Girder material
- 50) Name on many elevators
- 51) Go well together
- 52) A psychic may sense it
- 53) Go chop-chop
- 54) Airport info, initially
- 55) Like many roses
- 56) _ about (roam)

NOTE PAD



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19
You're in a lovely mood, and the Universe is more than willing to help. In fact, it's turning up the heat in your love life! If you're already attached, try a long lunch together at your favorite place. If you're single, on the other hand, you're sure to be amazed by what could happen. You aren't truly alone unless you truly want to be, and that probably isn't the case.

LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22
Today's energy is casting a spell over everyone you meet, urging them all (and you) to compromise, work together, and keep calm. You may be prompted to speak out, but you can pull off stunning feats of diplomacy. In fact, no matter what you say, you don't need to worry about causing rifts. You know exactly what to say to calm the masses.

SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21
You're in the mood to hang out with unique individuals, or at least those interesting enough to present some kind of mental challenge. If you meet up with anyone who fits that description, the Universe sets the right friendly tone for your conversation and any other activities. Whether it's romantic or simply platonic is totally up in the air, but it shouldn't be boring.

TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20
There's a fantastic schedule of events working for you right now, and it's definitely set to help bring out your skill at smoothing rough edges. In the process, you should find that you and someone special come closer than before. Of course, you also need to make sure your priorities are firm before getting started, so put off serious decisions for a while.

VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22
Today's energy is soft and gentle, and it's set to cast a spell on you, the kind that makes it hard to keep your routines alive. You may be staring out the window for most of the day, and grinning like a maniac while you're at it. The good news is that the person who got you all riled up is doing the same thing. This could be long-term relationship material.

CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19
There may be some fireworks coming, but you can tamp your flashier emotions down quickly. You're dealing with long-term passions, so if you're already partnered, use your energy to have an intimate chat. You're undoubtedly pleased by the outcome, and you should feel even closer afterward. If you're currently single, let someone know you're interested.

GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21
Expect a sweet surprise later today, possibly quite a romantic surprise! You're all set for emotional communication of the nicest, most enduring kind, so if you and someone close got in a fight recently, you shouldn't worry about it, and if you've been at odds with a family member, that should work out just fine. Your energy has arranged nothing but happy endings.

LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22
You're in the mood for romance, so you're making sweet connections that could be long lasting. No matter whom you meet, don't dismiss them until some time has passed. You don't want to miss out on a possible long-term friendship or something more. If you're single, that could change soon, so keep your eyes open all day long.

AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18
You're definitely in the mood for whispering, not shouting, which means that social situations tire you out. This doesn't mean you can't get out there, but you do want to choose your people thoughtfully and keep your guest list tidy. Don't spend any time with anyone who drains you even on good days. You seriously need to take care of yourself.

CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22
There's quite a bit of activity going on in the heavens above you today, but it's all going to be good, with the possible exception of some leftover feelings about an argument, maybe. Still, you'll have a soft, sentimental touch to carry you through the rough spots. Agree to disagree and get over it. There's permanence in the air. Don't let petty problems interfere with what could be a lovely forever.

SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21
You're in a dreamy state of mind and, more importantly, emotional state. This is potent and magnetic stuff, so someone special might be in the mood to spend time with you at your house. Don't claim you're too busy, and definitely don't run away from intense conversations. You've got to spend your time and energy to build something that's really long lasting.

PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20
All your feelings are on the surface today as soon as they pop up, but you may want to hide them instead of sharing them with your people. There's nothing wrong with that, though you don't do it all that often. (In fact, you may want to choose your confidants more carefully.) Get ready to hibernate, but if you feel yourself getting a bit heated, it's best to hold off finishing your little chat.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

01. What is the longest known non-stop, non-eating migration flight south for the winter?
A. About 11,000 km (6,835 mi)
B. Up to 37,000 km (23,000 mi)
C. About 4,800 km (3,000 mi)
D. 2,400 km (1,500 mil)
02. What is the word for the requirements demanded by celebrities before they will appear on a TV show or at a performance?
A. Mandatory
B. Rider
C. Preper agreement
D. Road rules
03. Anna Wintour is famous in what field?
A. Fashion
B. Photography
C. Yachting
D. Music
- Answers: 1. A 2. B 3. A

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

E	L	T	I
T	B	I	S
H	E	S	R
E	E	D	B

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.

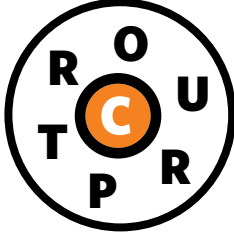
SOLUTION
20-25 words: Excellent,
15-20 words: Very good,
10-15 words: Good,
5-10 words: Average

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

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

WORD BUILDER



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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

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

ARSENAL SIGN MADUEKE

England winger says he is happy to join ‘a great team with a clear identity’

London, England - Arsenal have signed England winger Noni Madueke from Chelsea on a long-term deal, the north London club announced on Friday.

Financial terms were not disclosed, but British media reported the deal between the London rivals to be worth 48 million pounds (\$64.5 million), with a further 4 million in add-ons, with the player signing a five-year contract.

The 23-year-old Madueke joined Chelsea from Dutch side PSV Eindhoven in January 2023

mum misses me in the house,” Madueke said in a statement.

“It’s already a great team with a clear identity and I can’t wait to bring my style to the team and try and help the boys as much as possible to take that next step.”

Madueke, known for his direct dribbling and speed, has featured predominantly on the right wing for Chelsea but is capable of playing on both flanks.

His arrival could give Mikel Arteta the flexibility to rotate more frequently, easing the workload on right winger Bukayo

I’ve just been relaxed, waiting for the green light and when I came in today, it all felt real. I’m really happy and really proud, so it’s a great moment for me

NONI MADUEKE

and made 92 appearances in all competitions, scoring 20 goals and providing nine assists.

Born in the north London suburb of Barnet, Madueke trained in the academies of Crystal Palace and then Tottenham Hotspur before making the switch abroad to PSV Eindhoven at the age of 16.

“I’ve just been relaxed, waiting for the green light and when I came in today, it all felt real. I’m really happy and really proud, so it’s a great moment for me. It’s great to go back home, be with my mum, my dad. I know my

Saka and left winger Gabriel Martinelli, both of whom were sidelined with hamstring injuries at the same time in February last season.

“Noni joins our group with familiar England teammates and other players he knows... His arrival will really improve our squad,” Arteta said.

“At just 23, Noni already brings experience of club and international football, and he knows the Premier League very well. Having seen the quality of Noni’s performances up close in recent seasons, we’re really ex-



Noni Madueke signed a five-year contract with Arsenal

cited he is joining us.”

Earlier, Madueke bid farewell to Chelsea on Instagram and thanked manager Enzo Maresca.

“Dear Chelsea Football Club, I want to thank you for the last 3 or so years... To my teammates thank you for everything, I leave

with only love and admiration for you guys,” Madueke wrote.

“To Enzo Maresca, it was a privilege to play under you, thank you for trying to better me as a player and as a person. Lastly thank you to every single Chelsea fan. Thank you for the

love, the praise and also the criticism, I appreciate it all. I leave here with nothing but fond memories.”

Arsenal begin their 2025-26 Premier League campaign on August 17 with a trip to Manchester United.



Graham Arnold

We will fight to make the dream of Iraqis come true, says new coach Arnold

Iraq coach Graham Arnold is confident he can lead the country to a first World Cup in 40 years after his team were drawn to face Saudi Arabia and Indonesia in the next phase of Asian qualifying for the 2026 tournament in North America.

I have extensive experience working against both the Saudi and Indonesia. I know their strengths and weaknesses

GRAHAM ARNOLD

“I have extensive experience working against both the Saudi and Indonesian national teams. I know their strengths, but I also know their weaknesses,” Arnold said.

“But we are Iraq, an extremely proud nation with a higher FIFA ranking than both Saudi and Indonesia and we need to prove that.”

Arnold’s finest coaching achievement to date came at the 2022 World Cup when he led Australia to the last 16, with the Socceroos eliminated by eventual champions Argentina. He resigned as Australia coach in September last year following a 0-0 draw with Indonesia in Jakarta.

The 61-year-old last faced Saudi Arabia in March 2022, when his Australia team lost 1-0 in World Cup qualifier at the same King Abdullah Sports City Stadium where his Iraq team will face the Green Falcons on Oct. 14.

“Having the belief in the players as I do, when we reach the crucial playoff matches in October, they will be in peak form, both physically and mentally ready to win,” he said.

The three teams will play each other in Jeddah in October, with the winner of the group advancing directly to the World Cup in the United States, Canada and Mexico.

Former Australia boss Arnold, who replaced Jesus Casas in May, will be attempting to steer Iraq to the World Cup for the second time after they made their debut at Mexico 1986.



Thomas Frank during a team training session

New manager Frank wants Spurs to live team motto

London, England - Tottenham Hotspur manager Thomas Frank said he wants his team to embody the club’s motto “to dare is to do” by playing brave, aggressive, attacking football, as he laid out his vision at his first press conference on Friday.

Speaking ahead of Saturday’s friendly against Reading, Frank, who succeeded Ange Postecoglou last month, underlined his commitment to a high-

intensity style rooted in courage and ambition.

“I’m very clear in my principles. I want to see the team be brave, aggressive and attack. Brave is linked to ‘dare is to do’,” Frank told reporters. “If you are not brave, it is very difficult to achieve anything. Being aggressive is very important and, of course, we need to attack.”

Frank made a strong impression during his seven-year tenure

at Brentford, where he built an attacking side that consistently exceeded expectations after earning promotion to the Premier League through the 2021 playoffs.

In their four Premier League seasons under Frank, Brentford finished 13th, 9th, 16th and 10th and last term only four teams scored more than their 66 goals.

“It was very difficult (to leave Brentford) and also very easy.

I’m a person that goes all in. I got attached and had great relationships there,” he said. “I also felt maybe it was time to challenge myself and when a club with the magnitude of Tottenham come, I wanted to be a part of it.”

The Dane had empathetic words for his Australian predecessor Postecoglou, who was dismissed by the club despite leading them to their first major trophy in 17 years with victory in

the Europa League final.

“First and foremost, Ange will forever be a legend here at Tottenham. One of only three who have won a European trophy here and the first in 41 years,” he added.

“I think it was extremely positive that they won (Europa League). The first aim is that we need to be able to compete in all four competitions. That has to be the aim.”

Inter Kashi crowned India’s I league champions after CAS ruling

Bengaluru, India - Inter Kashi have been named champions of India’s I-League after the Court of Arbitration for Sport ruled in favour of the club in their dispute with the All India Football Federation.

In May, the AIFF named Churchill Brothers winners of the country’s second division, after the governing body’s appeals committee ruled against Inter Kashi for fielding an ‘ineligible player’ in Mario Barco.

According to reports in Indian media, Inter Kashi registered Barco twice, signing the Spaniard before the season and then replacing him when he suffered an injury, only to bring him back into their squad two months later.

The AIFF’s appeals committee said all matches played by Barco since his return from injury would be forfeited by Inter Kashi, leaving Churchill Brothers at the top of the standings.

Inter Kashi, which was estab-



Inter Kashi can now celebrate after the Court of Arbitration for Sport ruled in favour of them in their dispute with the Indian football federation

lished in 2023 in collaboration with Spanish giants Atletico Madrid and Andorran club Inter Escaldes, filed an appeal with CAS last month.

“I still don’t understand what is the mistake we have made,” Inter Kashi president Prithijit Das said.

“A player got injured, the club spent money, looked after his rehabilitation, he became fit and then his right to play football

(was) not being allowed... what is his fault?”

“We are all grateful that truth has won.”

In its statement on Friday, sport’s highest court CAS said it had “ruled that the AIFF shall declare Inter Kashi FC as winner of the I-League 2024-25.”

Following the ruling, the AIFF congratulated Inter Kashi on becoming champions.



Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang

Aubameyang leaves Saudi side Al Qadsiah

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia - Gabon striker Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang has left Saudi Pro League side Al Qadsiah after one season, the club said.

“Thank you, Oba. All the best,” the club posted on X.

The former Arsenal player joined Al-Qadsiah last year, after they were promoted to the top-tier league. During his one-season spell, the 36-year-old scored 21 goals and made three assists in 36 matches in all competitions, helping the team finish fourth in the league and reach the King’s Cup final.

Australia’s Irankunda completes Watford switch from Bayern

Watford, England - Australia international Nestory Irankunda has joined Watford on a five-year deal from Bundesliga champions Bayern Munich, the English Championship club announced on Friday.

The highly-rated 19-year-old, who made his debut for the Socceroos last June, made the switch for an undisclosed transfer fee.

“Nestory can be a very special player and we believe he can realise his potential here, with us,” said Watford sporting director Gian Luca Nani.

“Nestory was extremely sought-after and thanks to our established scouting network and connections we were able to be ahead of others in the race to sign players of this potential.”

Irankunda made his professional debut as a 15-year-old for Adelaide United during the 2021/22 season and came to



Nestory Irankunda

prominence with an eye-catching performance playing for an A-League select side against Barcelona.

Born in Tanzania to parents from Burundi who moved to Australia when he was three months old, Irankunda chose to represent Australia at international level and was given his first cap by former coach Graham Arnold in June 2024.

He scored his first goal for the

country later that month against Palestine in his second appearance for the Socceroos before completing a move to Bayern Munich in an A-League record deal.

He made his fifth appearance for Australia in a 3-1 win over China in October last year during Asia’s World Cup preliminaries but has not been selected since by current coach Tony Popovic.

'NO FLIGHTS OF FANCY'

Serie A champions Napoli must learn from old mistakes, says manager Conte



Napoli's Kevin De Bruyne (L) trains with his new teammates

Dimaro, Italy - Serie A champions Napoli must be humble and learn from the mistakes they made during their disastrous title defence in the 2023-24 campaign, manager Antonio Conte has warned.

Napoli endured a turbulent 2023-24 campaign, finishing 10th and going through three managers after coach Luciano Spalletti left the club. Spalletti had led them to their first Scudetto in 33 years in the 2022-23 season.

Conte, who won three Serie A titles as manager of Juventus and one at Inter Milan along with a Premier League trophy with Chelsea, was handed the responsibility of reviving Napoli in June last year and promptly won them the Scudetto in the recently concluded season.

"By definition, those who have the Scudetto on their jersey are favourites or among the favourites. We must not shy away or hide out of fear," Conte

told reporters on Friday.

"We have worked hard to tailor ourselves. It is inevitable that this year will be very challenging. "But there is a very recent past that we must never forget. We must learn lessons even from negative things. What happened two years ago must be a lesson, especially to the environment. We are on the field and we work, there will never be any flights of fancy. We will be very humble."

Napoli have strengthened

It is inevitable that this year will be very challenging. But there is a very recent past that we must never forget. We must learn lessons even from negative things

ANTONIO CONTE

their title-winning squad with the addition of Belgian playmaker Kevin De Bruyne, Dutch winger Noa Lang and Italian centre back Luca Marianucci, among others.

De Bruyne, regarded as one of the greatest midfielders in Premier League history, lifted 19 trophies at Manchester City since his 2015 move from German side VfL Wolfsburg — a haul that in-

cludes six Premier League titles and one Champions League crown. Conte hopes the 34-year-old can help Napoli take that extra step.

"He comes to us to take on a new challenge, it is a different situation for him too: he has already reached very high levels in his career and has a lot more to give to football," Conte added.



Esme Morgan

England's Morgan still buzzing after thrilling shootout victory

Zurich, Switzerland - England defender Esme Morgan said on Saturday it had been difficult to sleep since her team's "ridiculous" come-from-behind quarter-final victory over Sweden with its wild penalty shootout that will not be soon forgotten.

With the defending champions facing Italy in the semi-finals on Tuesday, the 24-year-old was still buzzing from Thursday's chaotic night in Zurich that featured injuries, a bloody nose, a mysterious note, and a wacky shootout that will go down as one of the worst but one of the most memorable ever.

"Obviously that was ridiculous really, to sum it up in one word," Morgan said.

The one negative on the night was captain Leah Williamson limping off with an ankle injury, but Morgan said the team were optimistic she would be available to face Italy.

"She seemed in very high spirits this morning," she said.

Morgan was one of coach Sarina Wiegman's 70th-minute substitutes in the Sweden game. "Apparently my mom was sobbing when I came on, bless her," she said.

The television camera spotted Morgan handing a note to fellow defender Lucy Bronze. Morgan joked later on Instagram that the note said "Save us GOAT."

The 33-year-old Bronze was huge in England's victory, scoring in the 79th minute and then hastily unwrapping her taped hamstring to smash home the winning penalty in the shootout.

"We are all inspired by her mentality, she's a freak really in that she just has so much passion, energy, fight and she infects everyone else with it," Morgan said.

"That note might as well have said that because that's apparently what she read on it. She put her shoulders back and played like: 'I'm not letting us go home'."



Remco Evenepoel

Evenepoel quits Tour de France

Bagneres-De-Luchon, France - Belgian Remco Evenepoel abandoned the Tour de France on Saturday during the 14th stage, a 182.6-km mountain trek from Pau to Superbagneres.

The Soudal-Quick Step rider, who was third overall, stepped off his bike and entered his team car midway through the ascent of the Col du Tourmalet, the first of four climbs on the day's menu.

Evenepoel had struggled in recent days, losing time in the first Pyrenean stage and in Friday's uphill individual time trial.

"Yesterday was bad, today was worse," the Olympic champion, who won the stage 5 individual time trial, said on Friday.

It got even worse on Saturday as the 25-year-old could not sustain the pace in the gruelling ascent to the Tourmalet (19km at 7.4%) as dozens of riders whizzed past him.

Spain cruise past Swiss to reach women's Euros semis

Bern, Switzerland - Spain forward Athenea del Castillo came off the bench to open the scoring and Claudia Pina added a superb second as they beat hosts Switzerland 2-0 on Friday to reach the women's Euro semi-finals, where they will face France or Germany.

For the best part of an hour, the hosts defended doggedly and attacked on the break, but once Spain found their groove they were able to quickly kill the game off with two expertly-taken goals.

Spain looked to have made the perfect start when Mariona Caldentey was upended by a rash challenge by Nadine Riesen, but having opted to take the spot-kick herself the forward rolled it wide of the post.

Pina had several chances for Spain but stout defending by the hosts saw them go in level at the



Spain's Claudia Pina celebrates after scoring against Switzerland in their women's Euro last-eight match on Friday

break, much to the delight of the raucous crowd.

It took a moment of brilliance from Aitana Bonmati to break the deadlock for the world champions in the 66th minute, teeing up Athenea with an instinctive backheel for the substitute to guide the ball past Swiss keeper

We are very happy, and very happy to have reached the semi-finals. The team gave it their all. The atmosphere was spectacular, and hopefully it can be repeated

ATHENEA DEL CASTILLO

Livia Peng.

Five minutes later, Pina doubled her side's advantage as Switzerland captain Lia Waelti was dispossessed just outside her own penalty area, and Pina curled a superb shot into the top

corner before wheeling away in celebration.

The drama continued right to the end, with Spain's Alexia Putellas missing a late penalty and Switzerland's Noelle Maritz shown a straight red card for a stoppage-time challenge.

As the Spaniards danced in a

circle to celebrate advancing to the last four, the Swiss fans sang loudly in appreciation of the team, and the players bounced together in unison as the hosts exited the tournament with their heads held high having made the

knockout stages for the first time.

"We are very happy, and very happy to have reached the semi-finals. The team gave it their all. The atmosphere was spectacular, and hopefully it can be repeated," Athenea said after the final whistle.

"The team created many chances but we didn't convert them, we got a bit stuck, but in the end we managed to get the win."

After losing 1-0 to Germany in the bronze medal game at the 2024 Paris Olympics, Athenea said her team had some unfinished business with the Germans, who face France in the last quarter-final in Basel on Saturday. "They are two great teams. Maybe we'd prefer to face Germany again because of what happened at the Olympics, but whoever we play, we'll give it our all," she said.

Pogacar wins 13th stage to extend Tour de France lead

Loudenvielle, France - Tadej Pogacar continued his charge towards an anticipated fourth Tour de France title when he stretched his overall lead to over four minutes by winning the 13th stage, a lung-busting 10.9-km uphill time trial on Friday.

The defending champion dominated the eight-kilometre climb at 7.9% to clock 23 minutes and beat Denmark's Jonas Vingegaard by a massive 36 seconds, a day after dealing a significant blow to his closest rival in the first major mountain stage in the Pyrenees.

Fellow Slovenian Primož Roglic took third place, 1:40 off the pace, while Belgian Remco Evenepoel hung on to third place overall by the skin of his teeth following a disappointing effort that saw him finish 2:39 behind



Tadej Pogacar celebrates after winning the 13th stage of Tour de France on Friday

Pogacar. After his fourth stage win in this year's race, UAE Team Emirates - XRG rider Pogacar leads Vingegaard by 4:07 and Evenepoel by 7:24.

German Florian Lipowitz showed great form again and trails Evenepoel by six seconds.

Pogacar picked a regular road bike for the solo effort against the clock while Evenepoel and Vingegaard opted for a time trial bike - heavier but with better aerodynamics.

It was quickly clear that regardless of those calculations, Pogacar was again the strongest rider as he posted the best time on the brief flat portion ahead of the main ascent before further extending his advantage.

"I'm super happy. This time trial was a question mark for me back in December. I wanted ev-

everything to be perfect, and the team delivered - everything was on point," he told reporters.

"I was targeting to go all out from start to finish. I almost blew up at the end, but when I saw I was going to win at the finish, it gave me an extra push."

The 26-year-old said it had been a close call between the road and the TT bike, but in the end he chose the most comfortable ride.

"The biggest decision was which bike to ride today. Obviously, we ride road bikes all year round, but we did the calculations and the time ended up about the same. So I decided to go with what I felt more confident on."

Pogacar went full gas from the start. "My tactic was simple: go all out from the bottom to the top," he said.



Ons Jabeur

Tunisia's Jabeur announces break from tennis

Three-time Grand Slam finalist Ons Jabeur is taking a break from competitive tennis, the 30-year-old said in a social media post on Thursday.

Tunisia's Jabeur, the first Arab woman to reach a Grand Slam final, has struggled with her form in recent months, failing to get past the third round of a major this year. The two-time Wimbledon finalist's campaign came to a disappointing end at the All England Club last month as she retired from her first-round clash against Viktoriya Tomova, unable to continue after a long medical timeout.

The former world number two suffers from asthma and experienced breathing difficulties at this year's Australian Open.

Jabeur, often called the 'minis-

ter of happiness' for her cheerful personality, said she was not feeling truly happy on the court.

"For the past two years, I've been pushing myself so hard, fighting through injuries and facing many other challenges. But deep down, I haven't truly felt happy on the court for some time now," she said. "Tennis is such a beautiful sport. But right now, I feel it's time to take a step back and finally put myself first: to breathe, to heal, and to rediscover the joy of simply living."

Jabeur, married to former fencer Karim Kamoun, has also been open about her wish to start a family. "Thank you to all my fans for understanding. Your support and love mean the world to me. I carry it with me always," she added.

WAITING IN THE WINGS

India weigh up intriguing option of Jurel as keeper and Pant as batter in fourth Test

Beckenham, England - The ball was flying out of the far net at the Kent County Cricket ground in Beckenham during India's training on Thursday morning. Tuck, tuck, tuck, the comforting noise of ball hitting bat echoed around the empty ground as ball after ball landed on the green plastic seats behind long-on and in the small grassy mound shaded by trees beyond cow corner. A few lofted drives landed around wide long-off too.

Clad in a tight, short-sleeved white T-shirt under a blue India vest, Dhruv Jurel launched smartly into effervescent stroke-play.

Jurel would soon be tested by India bowling coach Morne Morkel, the former South Africa quick delivering from 20 yards and testing his stumps as well as his outside edge. Jurel did not flinch or stutter in his defence and was firm in his stride. Part of why Jurel has been a success ever since his Test debut last year against England at home is that he has a solid and fluent technique that allows him defend and attack. It makes his batting looked assured.

The son of a former army man, Jurel's body language is chest-out, chin-up, smile, and a walk with a confident stride. The clarity and commitment in his batting have helped him play match-winning innings like the 90 in the first innings of the Ranchi Test against England.

On a low, turning pitch where a horizontal bat was often fatal, Jurel negotiated Shoaib Bashir and Tom Hartley admirably despite playing in the company of India's tail. Jurel charged at anything remotely in his arc to hit over mid-on, mid-wicket and mid-off, and swept confidently when the line was outside leg stump. He brought India back into the match from a dire position, and duly earned the Player-of-the-Match award.

Just as he had impressed with bold knocks of 80 and 68 in testing conditions in the warm-up match preceding the Border-



Dhruv Jurel was mighty impressive when he came in to replace the injured Rishabh Pant at Lord's

Gavaskar Trophy late last year in Australia, Jurel put himself in the shop window once again upon arriving in England, with three half-centuries against England Lions in the two unofficial Tests in June. If the Canterbury pitch in the first match was dead flat, overcast conditions posed a good challenge and Jurel showed skill and patience while constructing a healthy partnership with KL Rahul.

All that, unfortunately for him, did not earn him a spot in the first three Tests mainly because Rishabh Pant remains indispens-

able even with an injured finger and India prefer batting depth and bowling options in the form of Nitish Kumar Reddy and Washington Sundar. On Thursday, though, India assistant coach Ryan ten Doeschate said Jurel remained a viable option for the Old Trafford Test next week in case Pant, who hurt his left index finger while intercepting a leg-side delivery from Jasprit Bumrah during the first innings at Lord's, was not fit to keep wickets.

Even as a wicketkeeper, Jurel is rated highly. On Thursday, Jurel did keeping drills under the

guidance of India's fielding coach T Dilip who stressed the importance of taking the ball in the line of the body.

So if Jurel does play and Pant takes on a specialist batting role, who goes out of the XI that played the third Test? The likely options are Karun Nair, Reddy and Washington. Nair has failed to convert several starts in the first three Tests, but India might persist with him given that No. 3 might be too high a slot for either the keeper or the allrounders, and that Shubman Gill and Pant are settled at Nos. 4 and 5. Washing-

Ryan ten Doeschate said Jurel remained a viable option for the Old Trafford Test next week in case Pant was not fit to keep wickets

ton will be optimistic about retaining his spot not only because he found ample drift and picked up vital wickets in both innings at Lord's, but also because Old Trafford is known to offer bounce to spinners. That leaves Reddy, who picked up important top-order wickets in both innings at Lord's, but hasn't yet found the batting form that made him such a find during his debut series in Australia.

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As summer draws to a close, the golden ripeness of dates signals the end of a season that has sustained generations of Omani farmers. This year's date harvest, a vital part of Oman's agricultural identity, is entering its final stages, with the rich bounty of the palm trees now reaching markets both local and international.

Dates have long been a cornerstone of Omani life, with the date palm serving as the heart of both the economy and culture. Before the oil boom, dates were the primary source of income for many in the Gulf, including Oman. The harvest, which spans from June to September, is celebrated not only as an agricultural event but as a social gathering steeped in tradition and pride.

In Oman, date harvesting is done in two key methods - Al Tabseel (boiling dates and sun-drying them) and Al Jidab (laying dates in the sun to dry) each with its own distinctive process and cultural significance.

Al Tabseel: Art of cooking dates

One of the more iconic methods is Al Tabseel, which focuses on the harvesting of the yellow Al Tabseel variety. After picking the dates, they are carefully placed in a large pot called a marjal, which is set atop a clay oven and heated with firewood. This slow-cooking process, which lasts around 30 minutes, is followed by a period of sun-drying that can last anywhere from four to five days. The final product, al faghur (processed dates), is a sought-after delicacy that is exported to markets in East Asia, including India, where it is used to make chocolates and other sweets.

DATE HARVEST CONCLUDES

Sweet salut

OMAN'S DATE HARVEST SEASON REACHES ITS FINAL STAGES AS DATE FARMERS GET INTO THEIR CONCLUDING ANNUAL ACT – A TIME-TESTED TRADITION AS WELL AS A FORMIDABLE ECONOMIC ACTIVITY THAT ONCE WAS THEIR LIFELINE

Al Jidab: Traditional harvest

In contrast, Al Jidab is a more widespread and labor-intensive process. The harvest begins by cutting the fruit clusters from the palm trees, after which the dates are picked and left to dry under the sun for two to three days. Over the next two weeks, farmers carefully sort the best dates, which are then packed into large palm-fibre bags known as jonia. Some of the dates are set aside for making honey, particularly a local variety called Qunaisi, which holds a special place in the hearts of Omani farmers. Known for its distinctive sweet-sour taste, Qunaisi dates are said to have medicinal properties, with locals swearing by their ability to

treat digestive ailments.

The harvest is a family affair, with extended relatives and neighbours coming together to help. It is as much a celebration as it is a vital economic event, and the importance of dates is woven into Omani culture with sayings like, 'Nothing is happier than Qunaisi'.

Major agricultural export

Oman boasts over 250 varieties of dates, each known for its unique quality, taste, and medicinal benefits. Among the most popular varieties are Al Ratab (semi-ripe dates), often found in markets throughout the country, and the yellow and red dates that are prized for their distinct textures and flavours. The growing demand for these varieties is evident, with increasing exports each year.

With its robust agricultural system and strategic focus on enhancing productivity, Oman has worked diligently to elevate its date industry. Farmers across the country are excited about the continued potential of the sector, with government initiatives helping to increase both, the quantity and quality of production.

Boost for Omani tourism

The date harvest season has also become a key attraction for tourists, offering an immersive look into the agricultural heritage of

Oman. In many governorates, the harvest is organised as a public event, with the Ministry of Tourism overseeing harvest festivals and events that allow foreign visitors to witness this age-old tradition firsthand. With more and more travellers visiting the country each year, the date harvest season has become a vital part of Oman's tourism strategy, providing economic benefits while preserving cultural practices.

Bountiful harvest despite challenges

The 2025 harvest has been particularly successful, with the intense summer heat benefiting farmers by ensuring that the dates ripened on time. Thankfully, the weather has remained favourable, and there were no significant disruptions to the crops, which is often a concern during the summer months.

As this year's harvest comes to an end, the sweet, sticky fruit of the date palm remains a symbol of Omani resilience and cultural pride. The harvest not only provides sustenance but serves as a reminder of the bond between the land and its people — a relationship that has flourished for centuries and shows no signs of waning.

For the farmers and workers who have spent long days under the sun, the completion of this year's harvest is a time for celebration. As the dates are packed, sorted, and sent off to markets around the world, they take with them a piece of Omani history and heritage, sweetening the global demand for a truly unique fruit.

As the last dates are harvested and packed away, the fields of date palms remain full of promise, and the people of Oman look forward to another fruitful season.

(Inputs (text and photos): V K Shafeer)



Oman's air conditioner market expected to reach \$748mn by 2033

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman's air conditioner market was valued at \$447.55mn in 2024 and is projected to reach \$747.95mn by 2033, growing at an average annual rate of 5.98% during the forecast period (2025–2033), according to the latest research by Astute Analytica.

Oman has witnessed significant climatic changes in recent years, with temperatures reaching unprecedented levels. In 2023, the country recorded its hottest summer on record, with temperatures in Muscat peaking at 49.6°C — surpassing the previous high by 1.2°C. This extreme heat has fuelled a surge in the demand for air conditioning, with the average Omani household now operating AC units for 18 hours a day during peak summer months, up from 14 hours in 2020. The frequency of heatwaves has also intensified, with Oman experiencing 37 days of temperatures above 45°C in 2023, compared to an average of 23 days annually in the previous decade.

Demand for cooling solutions has extended beyond residential use. Commercial and industrial sectors reported a 15% year-on-year increase in AC installations in 2023, according to the Astute Analytica report. Meanwhile, the healthcare sector recorded a 30% rise in heat-related illnesses over the past five years, highlighting the crucial role of air conditioning in safeguarding public health.

The market is expected to sustain this growth trajectory, with unit sales projected to rise by 7.5% annually through 2028.



Technological advancements and consumer trends

The Omani AC market is undergoing a significant transformation driven by technological advancement and changing consumer preferences. Smart air conditioning systems have gained considerable traction, with 42% of new installations in 2023 featuring IoT connectivity — up from just 18% in 2021. This trend is supported by Oman's high internet penetration, which reached 95.2% in 2023, creating a strong foundation for connected

home solutions. The adoption of AI-powered AC units has also shown promising results, with users reporting average energy savings of 23% compared to conventional models.

Integration with renewable energy is another emerging trend. Sales of solar-powered AC units grew by 35% year-on-year, supported by government incentives and increasing environmental awareness. These systems are particularly popular in rural areas, where 28% of new AC installations in 2023 were solar-powered, compared to just 7% in urban centres.

The market has also seen innovation in cooling technology with the introduction of magnetic cooling systems, which are up to 30% more energy-efficient than traditional vapour compression models. This technology is expected to account for 5% of the Omani AC market by 2026.

Regulatory landscape

The Omani government has implemented key measures to regulate the air conditioning sector, focusing on energy efficiency and sustainability. In 2023, the Authority for Electricity Reg-

ulation (AER) introduced new Minimum Energy Performance Standards (MEPS), requiring all air conditioning units sold in the country to have an Energy Efficiency Ratio (EER) of at least 11.5 — a 15% increase from the previous standard. As a result, 78% of AC models now meet or exceed these criteria, compared to just 45% in 2021.

The introduction of mandatory en-

result, 62% of AC units sold in 2023 used environmentally friendly refrigerants — more than double the 30% recorded in 2020.

Changing consumer behaviour

According to Astute Analytica, Omani consumer behaviour in the air conditioning market has shifted significantly in recent years. A 2023 survey found that 72% of households now prioritise energy efficiency when purchasing an AC unit, compared to 53% in 2020.

This shift has been accompanied by a greater willingness to invest in quality systems, with average household spending on AC units rising by 18% in 2023. Demand for multi-split systems has surged, particularly in urban areas, with sales increasing by 25% year-on-year as consumers seek more flexible and efficient solutions.

Future outlook

As Oman's AC market continues to evolve, it faces both challenges and opportunities. A key concern is the increasing strain on the nation's electricity infrastructure, with air conditioning accounting for up to 70% of peak demand during summers.

To mitigate this, the government has set ambitious energy targets, aiming to reduce per capita energy consumption by 30% by 2030 compared to 2020 levels. This opens new opportunities for the industry to innovate, particularly in the development of ultra-efficient cooling technologies.

The market for integrated energy management systems is projected to grow by 25% annually through 2028.

Smart air conditioning systems in Oman have gained considerable traction, with 42% of new installations in 2023 featuring IoT connectivity — up from just 18% in 2021

ergy labelling has further increased consumer awareness. By 2023, 85% of Omani consumers recognised and understood energy efficiency labels, a significant increase from 60% in 2020.

To further promote efficiency, the National Energy Efficiency Programme (NEEP), launched in 2022, offers rebates of up to 25% on high-efficiency units with an EER above 13. This initiative led to a 40% increase in sales of qualifying models in 2023.

In parallel, the government has committed to phasing out hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs) by 2030. As a

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Fulfilling its commitment to Energy Efficiency solutions "General" offers range of ACs with high Energy Efficiency Ratio (EER) complying to Oman's prescribed Minimum Energy Performance Standards (MEPS). These machines are designed to offer great durability, performance and value for money. Characterized by a unique blend of environment friendliness and robust performance the ACs ushers in a new experience of comfort to customers.

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Founded in China, GREE Electric Appliances Inc. has grown into a global industrial powerhouse, exporting products to over 160 countries and regions. With more than 90,000 employees, including 15,000 R&D professionals, GREE is committed to innovation and sustainability. The company operates 14 production bases across China and internationally, including facilities in Brazil and Pakistan, and maintains 6 renewable resource bases to support its green, circular development model. GREE's dedication to research is evident in its 96 research institutes, 929 laboratories, and over 72,000 patent applications.

Rise of Inverter ACs

Inverter air conditioners are rapidly becoming the standard in energy-efficient cooling. Unlike traditional ACs that turn on and off repeatedly, inverter models adjust compressor speed to maintain a consistent temperature. This results in up to 60% energy savings, longer equipment life, and quieter operation—benefits that are especially valuable in Oman's hot climate. The inverter models have been well received in the market and the contribution of inverter editions have been more than 50% and it is increasing every year. GREE's inverter models are equipped with advanced sensors, Wi-Fi connectivity, and AI-driven diagnostics, offering users an intelligent cooling experience.

G-Boost Inverter Technology: A Game-Changer

GREE recently introduced the

world's first G-Boost Inverter AC, a revolutionary advancement in air conditioning technology. This innovation optimizes compressor performance, enabling faster cooling, quieter operation, and significant energy savings. The G-Boost system also features smart energy management and precise temperature control, making it ideal for Oman's climate where efficient cooling is essential. This technology not only enhances user comfort but also contributes to lower electricity bills and a reduced carbon footprint, aligning with global

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GREE Celebrates Global No.1 Spot with Oman Customers Through Exciting Offers

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in cutting-edge technology and energy efficiency. Our inverter ACs are playing an increasingly vital role in reducing energy consumption, and our innovative G-Boost technology ensures powerful performance with maximum savings.

GENETCO and GREE: A 20-Year Legacy in Oman

GENETCO, with over 53 years of legacy and business prowess, has been GREE's trusted partner in Oman for over two decades. With a diverse portfolio span-

ning consumer durables to turnkey projects, GENETCO has played a pivotal role in making GREE a household name in the Sultanate. The company boasts a nationwide network of over 225+ selling points, including major hypermarkets and power retailers, and operates seven service centers to ensure prompt and professional after-sales support.

Speaking about the long-standing partnership, Dr. Ambuj Khare, COO - Trade, GENETCO, said: "GENETCO's association with GREE over the past two decades has been a journey of shared growth and innovation. Together, we have consistently delivered high-quality air conditioning solutions to the people of Oman. This partnership stands as a testament to our commitment to excellence and cus-

GREE's World-Class Manufacturing Power

tomers satisfaction across the Sultanate."

With over 30 years of professional experience, GREE has established itself as a global manufacturing powerhouse in the home appliances sector. GREE's manufacturing ecosystem is fully integrated—combining research, design, production, and sales under one roof. This vertical integration allows for greater quality control, faster innovation cycles, and cost efficiencies that are passed on to customers. Each of GREE's production bases is equipped with state-of-the-art automation, robotics, and AI-driven systems, embodying the principles of Industry 4.0. These "smart factories" are capable of lights-out manufacturing, where production continues 24/7 with minimal human intervention. This not only boosts productivity but also ensures precision engineering and near-zero defects in every unit produced. In addition to its scale, GREE is deeply committed to sustainability. Its facilities incorporate green manufacturing practices, including energy-efficient processes, waste reduction systems, and recyclable materials. The company also operates six renewable resource bases, reinforcing its commitment to a circular economy and environmental stewardship. With a production capacity of over 60 million residential air conditioners and 5.5 million commercial units annually, GREE is well-positioned to maintain its leadership in the global HVAC market.

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GCC AC market to grow 5% annually until 2030

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Air conditioners are a necessity in the GCC countries due to consistently above-average temperatures. Demand for air conditioners has increased across the region as living standards have improved and consumers are spending more on luxury goods to enhance their comfort and lifestyle. Furthermore, ongoing infrastructure development has driven the need for efficient cooling solutions.

According to a research report by MarkNtel Advisors, the GCC air conditioner market was valued at approximately \$3.9bn in 2023 and is projected to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of around 5.0% during the forecast period from 2024 to 2030.

The harsh climatic conditions across the GCC—where temperatures frequently soar—are the primary driver



behind the market's growth. However, rising temperatures are not the sole factor. According to the report, countries in the GCC have undertaken various initiatives aimed at diversifying and rapidly expanding their economies.

'Economic growth across the region has led to increased per capita income. As a result, disposable incomes have risen and standards of living have im-

proved, altering consumer purchasing behaviour. Expenditure on luxury consumer durables has increased, subsequently boosting demand for air conditioners,' the report stated.

In addition, rising urbanisation and governmental plans for economic diversification have led to a surge in the construction of homes, commercial buildings, metros, and public infras-

tructure. This has further raised demand for air conditioners that can provide efficient and reliable cooling for these new developments.

Environmental concerns have also come to the fore. The GCC countries' commitment to reducing carbon emissions has fuelled demand for newer, more energy-efficient and environmentally friendly air conditioning units.

Many older systems are being phased out, especially those using refrigerants harmful to the ozone layer. Furthermore, increasing awareness around indoor air quality and health has led to greater interest in advanced air conditioners equipped with air purifiers.

The GCC countries have initiated several large-scale 'mega projects' which will require a variety of advanced cooling solutions. These include hotels, resorts, theatres, stadiums, skyscrapers, museums, art galleries, and more. Designed to host large crowds, these venues will need powerful and efficient air conditioning systems, thus significantly driving up demand.

Governments in the region have also invested heavily in national infrastructure—including metro systems, major power plants, and new gas and oil fields—which will further boost the need for cooling systems and increase both the size and scope of the regional

air conditioning market.

Moreover, under strategic housing initiatives, more than 700,000 homes are expected to be built across the six GCC countries. These projects aim to address housing shortages and increase home ownership. Each newly built home will contribute to increased demand within the AC industry. As these projects are set to roll out in phases, they will ensure consistent, long-term demand for air conditioning suppliers and manufacturers.

Mega projects aligned with these strategies include the UAE's Dubai Creek Tower, anticipated to become the world's tallest building upon completion, and Saudi Arabia's NEOM, a vast urban development that will include cutting-edge research labs, high-end residential spaces, hotels, resorts, and commercial zones. These developments will attract global tourists, investment, and multinational corporations.

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For enquiries please contact:

1. Madhu Karmakar
Mobile: 99328203
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2. Azzan Al Amri
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3. Shyam Prakash
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The need for energy-efficient air conditioners

As the world's population continues to grow, so does the demand for energy. Using air conditioners and electric fans to stay cool accounts for accounts for nearly 20% of the total electricity used in buildings around the world today, according to the International Energy Agency. This is a major problem, as it contributes to climate change and rising energy bills.

There are a number of reasons why it is important to have energy-efficient air conditioners. First, they can help to reduce your energy bills. In fact, the U.S. Department of Energy estimates that one can save up to \$500 per year on energy bills by upgrading to an energy-efficient air conditioner.

Second, energy-efficient air conditioners can help to reduce carbon footprint. Air conditioners that are not energy-efficient can emit large amounts of greenhouse gases, which contribute to climate change. By upgrading to an energy-efficient air conditioner, you can help to reduce your impact on the environment.

Third, energy-efficient ACs can improve your indoor air quality. ACs that are not energy-efficient can recirculate dirty air back into your home, which can lead to health problems such as asthma and allergies. Energy-efficient ACs have filters that help to remove pollutants from the air, which can improve your indoor air quality.

There are a number of things you can do to choose an energy-efficient air conditioner. First, look for the ENERGY STAR label. This label indicates that the air conditioner meets certain energy efficiency standards.

Second, consider the size of the air conditioner. An AC that is too large or too small for your home will not be as energy efficient. You can use an online calculator to determine the right size air conditioner for your home.



By choosing an energy-efficient AC, you can save money on your energy bills, reduce your carbon footprint, and improve your indoor air quality

Third, consider the features of the air conditioner. Some air conditioners have features such as programmable thermostats and timers that can help to improve energy efficiency.

Fourth, compare prices from different retailers. Energy-efficient air con-

ditioners can be more expensive than non-energy-efficient air conditioners, but they can save you money in the long run on your energy bills.

By choosing an energy-efficient air conditioner, you can save money on your energy bills, reduce your carbon footprint, and improve your indoor air quality. These are all important reasons to make the switch to an energy-efficient air conditioner today.

Energy-efficient air conditioners can also help to extend the lifespan of your unit. This is because they are less likely to overheat and break down. As a result, you may save money on repairs and maintenance costs in the long run.

AC cooling tips for energy efficiency

- Keep your thermostat set at 24°C, or higher. Each degree increase in set point temperature can save up to 5% on AC consumption.
- The optimal lifetime of an AC is ten years. If yours are older, consider replacing them with new energy-efficient ACs with 4 or 5 stars. This will help you save up to 25% of cooling consumption.
- Clogged or dirty AC filters can block the normal air flow and reduce the system's efficiency significantly. It is recommended to clean your AC filters periodically or at least once a month during summer. This helps extending the life of the devices, and reduce energy consumption.
- During the winter season, utilise the pleasant weather and low temperature to cool & ventilate your home instead of ACs to conserve electrical energy.
- During the summer season, use curtains, drapes, shades, awnings and reflective materials to reduce the heat entering through your glass or windows.
- Apply weather stripping and caulking around all doors and windows to keep the cooled air inside your house and to prevent hot air from entering into your home.
- Use a programmable thermostat (Smart Thermostat) to better control the room temperature and AC operation duration.

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