

# MUSCAT DAILY

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## Oman rejects normalisation with Israel

Our Correspondent  
Muscat

The 'barbaric war on Gaza' must stop immediately, H E Sheikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthy, Under-secretary for Political Affairs in the Foreign Ministry, has said. In the same breath, he confirmed that Oman has no intention of normalising relations with Israel.

In an interview with Russia's state-owned news agency Sputnik, H E Harthy stated that recent normalisation between Israel and several regional countries has failed to advance the Palestinian rights, instead enabled further abuses and delays. "The impor-



*The important issue now is not whether or not we normalise, but rather reaching a solution to the Palestinian issue and giving the Palestinians their rights*

H E KHALIFA AL HARTHY

tant issue now is not whether or not we normalise, but rather reaching a solution to the Palestinian issue and giving the Palestinians their rights."

He noted that Muscat is ac-

tively engaging with the international community and key regional players to de-escalate tensions and prevent further conflict, and clarified that "Oman is not directly communicating with

Tel Aviv or mediating between it and Iran".

H E Harthy highlighted His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik's commitment to Palestinian solidarity and support for ending attacks on civilians; urging the international community to uphold its responsibilities in granting Palestinians their right to an independent state with East Jerusalem as its capital.

H E Harthy reiterated Oman's call for Arab unity, achievable through strengthening the Arab League and regional organisations dedicated to joint Arab action. He acknowledged the Middle East's crucial role in inter-

national security due to its strategic location and historical challenges.

Despite ongoing provocations from Israel, H E Harthy stated that Oman does not anticipate a major regional war, citing the prudence and rationality of the regional countries.

"Oman is working with global partners to prevent conflict," he said, adding that it insists on an immediate ceasefire, attributing regional tensions primarily to Israel's actions in Palestine.

He also criticised the current UN mechanisms for addressing the Palestinian issue, suggesting that they have proven inad-

quate, particularly in light of the Ukrainian crisis. "The majority of countries in the world, especially the Third World countries, including Oman, demand a radical reform of the UN mechanisms."

On the status of Russia and China in international peace and security issues, H E Harthy asserted that these two countries "are pivotal global players and permanent members of the Security Council", and that they bear "significant responsibility for international peace and security".

"In Oman, we believe that achieving global peace and security necessitates cooperation and understanding among all major

countries, particularly the Security Council's permanent members, while considering the aspirations of other nations. We consistently advocate for global consensus to address contemporary challenges, including political issues and concerns related to the environment, climate, energy, and sustainable development."

On the resumption of diplomatic relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran, he remarked, "The reestablishment of diplomatic ties between Riyadh and Tehran has indeed contributed to regional stability. As two major regional powers, their mutual understanding is crucial."

## 10 opportunities worth RO166mn in manufacturing sector opened for FDI

Our Correspondent  
Muscat

Invest OMAN, the government's investment promotion body operating under the Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion, has unveiled ten promising investment opportunities in the manufacturing sector worth over RO166mn.

The move is part of the efforts to attract foreign direct investment (FDI) and provide investors with ready-made, feasibility-backed opportunities in high-growth sectors aligned with global investment trends. These sectors are renewable energy, technology, artificial intelligence, tourism, circular economy and food security.

The latest set of projects includes ventures in industrial technologies, building materials and advanced manufacturing.

Oman offers a range of in-



vestment incentives, including tax breaks and discounts on essential services, aimed at making the country a favourable destination for investors.

These incentives are designed not only to ease operational costs but also to develop local industries, enhance Oman's contribution to global

value chains, and support job creation, particularly benefiting SMEs.

To further ease access for global investors, Invest OMAN has developed a user-friendly digital platform that allows investors to explore all available opportunities. The platform includes an investment map, de-

tailed feasibility studies, and application tools, making it simpler for investors to engage directly with Invest OMAN and streamline their investment journey.

"Oman offers a wealth of resources that make it an attractive destination for foreign capital and high-value projects that can stimulate the national

economy and contribute to local employment," said Eng Alaa bint Said al Jardani, Director of Investment Opportunity Development at MoCIIP.

"We are committed to framing investment opportunities across all regions of Oman and in promising sectors within an integrated geographical framework," Jardani added.

Investors can explore these opportunities through Invest OMAN digital platform, which provides all the necessary services to start their projects, supported by a guided journey that offers personalised assistance at each stage - from identifying opportunities to securing the necessary incentives and support.

Since its establishment in 2023, Invest OMAN has been central to attracting international capital by facilitating access to high-potential sectors aligned with Oman Vision 2040.

### H M, Trudeau discuss ties

Muscat - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada, spoke over phone on Monday evening. During the call, aspects of bilateral cooperation between the two friendly countries were discussed and views were exchanged on the latest developments at the regional and international levels.

ONA

### Global experts to convene in support of Oman Climate Week

Muscat - In a bid to accelerate climate action, Environment Authority (EA), in cooperation with the United Nations Environment Programme, will organise the inaugural edition of Oman Climate Week from February 24-27, 2025 at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre.

The event is further supported by Sultan Qaboos University, the Ministry of Higher Education Research and Innovation, the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism and Omani events company Birba.

This announcement was made at a media briefing in Mus-

cat on Monday by Dr Abdullah bin Ali al Amri, Chairman of EA.

Amri highlighted how this landmark event will bring together global experts to address climate change and explore collaborative opportunities in Oman, a hub for sustainable innovation.

"Oman is actively addressing climate change through its commitments under the Paris Agreement, Oman Vision 2040, and a National Climate Strategy. Key efforts include emission reductions, energy efficiency, climate adaptation plans, and green hydrogen production."



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INTERVIEW: Dr Viswapurna Senguttuvan, Director, American Dental Center, Muscat

# Leader in Dental Care in Oman

'Our vision is to create a premier dental practice that combines advanced clinical expertise with exceptional patient care'

## Since assuming the reins of the management of the American Dental Center (ADC), what new initiatives have you introduced for patient care and clinic operations?

Over the past few years, we've introduced several key initiatives that have greatly improved both, patient care and clinic operations. One such initiative is the launch of a new staff training program focusing on enhancing clinical skills, building empathy, and creating a more caring and supportive environment for our patients. As a result of these efforts, we've seen higher patient satisfaction, shorter wait times, and a stronger, more unified team. These improvements are transforming the way we deliver dental care, making it more effective and patient-focused than ever before.

## How has American Dental Center evolved over the years to become a leader in dental care, and what milestones have defined its journey?

American Dental Center has experienced remarkable growth since its inception, evolving from a local practice into a leading name in dental care through a series of strategic milestones. Initially focused on providing essential dental services, we have expanded to offer a wide range of advanced treatments that address comprehensive dental needs.

Today, we proudly provide specialized services in prosthodontics, orthodontics, endodontics, periodontics, oral surgery, and preventive care, adapting to the increasing demand for more extensive and specialized care.

## What is the vision behind establishing American Dental Center, and how does it reflect in your approach to dental care in Oman?

Our vision is to create a premier dental practice that combines advanced clinical expertise with exceptional patient care. Our founders aimed to bring world-class dental services to Oman, reflecting a commitment to both innovation and compassion in healthcare.

The above is so deeply embedded in our approach to dental care, we meticulously hand-pick highly qualified and experienced clinicians who are not only skilled in their respective specialties but also dedicated to providing personalized, empathetic care.

## What distinguishes American Dental Center from other clinics in Oman, and what unique services do you offer?

American Dental Center stands out from other clinics in Oman due to our unwavering commitment to blending cutting-edge technology with personalized patient care. What sets ADC apart are the unique services we offer, including world-class expertise.

We pride ourselves on our team of highly qualified and experienced clinicians. Our professionals are selected for their advanced skills and dedication to ongoing education, ensuring that patients receive top-tier care across a wide range of specialties.

The Center also utilizes advanced dental technology from the latest advancements such as digital 3D X-rays, dental scanners and laser treatments which enhance our diagnostic accuracy and treatment efficacy, providing patients with the most precise and effective care available.

The Comprehensive Services offered at the Centre are beyond the standard dental care. We offer a full spectrum of specialized treatments, including prosthodontics, orthodontics, endodontics, periodontics, and oral surgery. This extensive range of services allows us to address a variety of dental needs, all under one roof.



## CONSULTANTS & SPECIALISTS



Prof Mohamed Al Ismaily  
Senior Consultant in Oral & Maxillofacial Surgery



Dr Ahmed Habib  
Consultant in Endodontics



Dr Nasser Al Khaldi  
Consultant in Prosthodontics



Dr Shaima al Harthi  
Specialist Periodontist



Dr Sara Ezzati  
General Dentist



Dr Maisan Al Farsi  
Hygienist

We also personalize care by tailoring treatment plans to each patient's unique needs and preferences. Our approach ensures that every patient receives the attention and care that is right for them. In general, our patient-centric approach, starting from our welcoming office atmosphere to our compassionate staff, we create a supportive and comfortable environment that makes dental visits as pleasant as possible.

Collectively, these elements define our distinct approach to dental care, setting American Dental Center as a leader in the field, and ensuring that our

patients receive the highest standard of care in Oman.

## How do you ensure patient safety at your center?

At American Dental Center, we are committed to upholding the highest standards of patient safety. To achieve this, we strictly adhere to industry standards and protocols, ensuring that every visit meets rigorous safety and quality benchmarks.

We employ robust sterilization methods to create a clean and secure environment. Our state-of-the-art equipment and meticulous hygiene

practices help minimize any risk and ensure the highest level of cleanliness.

Additionally, we regularly conduct audits and quality control measures to continually enhance our services. These routine checks help us maintain our high standards and prioritize patient safety throughout every aspect of our practice. Through these combined efforts, we ensure that our care is not only exceptional but also consistently safe and patient-focused. We also use advanced technology in 3D digital imaging which provide high resolution images with minimum radiation exposure to the patients.

## What role does cutting-edge technology play in your Center?

Cutting-edge technology plays a pivotal role in our diagnostic and treatment methodologies providing exceptional precision and planning treatments with greater confidence. By integrating advanced diagnostic and investigative tools, such as digital 3D X-rays, and intraoral cameras, we significantly enhance the accuracy, efficiency, and comfort of our dental care.

Intraoral cameras provide real-time, detailed views of the inside of

THE ONE AND ONLY  
**AMERICAN DENTAL CENTER**  
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restorations, such as veneers, crowns and bridges, in a single visit, significantly improving efficiency and patient convenience.

## Who are your key doctors, and what expertise do they bring to the clinic?

One of the key doctors at American Dental Center is Professor Mohamed Al Ismaily, a highly experienced and esteemed oral and maxillofacial surgeon. Prof Al Ismaily brings unparalleled expertise in complex surgical procedures involving the mouth, jaws, and face. With a distinguished career spanning over 40 years, of which 17 years has been at our clinic, he has been instrumental in shaping the high standards of care we offer.

In addition to his extensive clinical experience, Prof Al Ismaily serves as the Interim Dean of Oman Dental College. His dual role in academia and practice ensures that he remains at the forefront of advancements in dental and surgical techniques. His commitment to advancing dental practices, coupled with his personalized approach to treatment, significantly enhances the overall quality of care at our clinic.

## What future developments or improvements have been planned for American Dental Center?

At American Dental Center, we have exciting plans for the future which aim to enhance our services and elevate patient care.

Firstly, we are focused on incorporating cutting-edge dental technologies to further refine our treatment capabilities. This expansion will enable us to offer more effective and innovative treatments, ensuring that we remain at the forefront of advancements in dental care.

In addition to technological upgrades, we are committed to developing more comprehensive dental health programs tailored to the diverse needs of our community. Recognizing the importance of proactive community outreach, we plan to bolster our efforts in this area to promote better oral health across Oman.

Staff training is also a key component embedded in our current and future plans. We prioritize ongoing professional development to ensure that our team is adept at the latest techniques and practices. This commitment to continuous learning is essential for maintaining our high standards of care and enhancing the overall patient experience.

Through these strategic initiatives, we aim to significantly improve the quality of care we provide and reinforce our dedication to both, our patients and the community.

## How can prospective patients learn more about your services or schedule an appointment?

Prospective patients can explore the range of services offered by American Dental Center by visiting our official website, which provides comprehensive information about our treatments and practices.

For those interested in scheduling an appointment, the website offers an easy-to-use online booking system. Alternatively, you can call our office directly, where our friendly staff will be happy to assist with any questions and help you schedule your visit.

## What recent advancement or innovation in dental care is currently underway at American Dental Center?

At American Dental Center, we are thrilled about several recent advancements in dental care that are significantly enhancing patient experiences and outcomes.

One of the most exciting developments is CAD/CAM technology which allows the creation of precise dental



Vanessa Lacson (Practice Manager), Diana Diamoaden (Nurse), Maya Al Harthi, Hasna Al Sinawi (both Dental Assistants), Khadija Al Mabsali (Client Service)





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## Experts warn of social media's impact on societal values

Our Correspondent  
Muscat

Researchers and experts have raised concerns about the growing influence of social media platforms on social behaviour, relationships, and identity, particularly among the youth.

Dr Rajab bin Ali al Awaisi, a specialist in social and educational studies at the State Council, noted that social media is shaping the attitudes and future outlooks of young people. He highlighted how these platforms influence moral and social values, promoting consumerism and affecting intellectual ambitions.

"This influence extends to how young people perceive social reality and their personal needs," he said.

Awaisi also pointed out the rising power of social media celebrities and influencers, saying that the attention and promotional opportunities they receive have affected young people's views on education, work, and relationships. He expressed concern that the contents on these platforms often come in conflict with societal values, glorifying materialism and superficiality.

He called for a national policy to improve digital contents upholding Omani values, and urged the media, educational institutions, and families to promote re-



**Social media is shaping the attitudes and future outlooks of young people... This influence extends to how young people perceive social reality**

DR RAJAB BIN ALI AL AW AISI

sponsible use of social media. "The focus should be on maintaining a balance that upholds Omani morals while embracing digital opportunities."

Muammar bin Ali al Tubi, an academic specialising in artificial intelligence, echoed these concerns. He raised the issue of digital addiction and a disconnect from the real-life social and religious values due to social media.

"The emergence of a new societal mindset shaped by superficial digital interactions could easily be exploited by ideologues and contribute to a crisis of societal values," Tubi warned.

While acknowledging the potential of social media in encouraging digital economic activities, Tubi cautioned that it can also lead to intellectual triviality. He emphasised the need to address

these challenges through cultural frameworks that align with technological advancements.

Mubarak bin Khamis al Hamdani, a social researcher, identified three major changes, which social media has brought to family and societal structures. He said that social media has widened the cultural gap between generations, contributed to a shift in values, and reshaped family and social concepts.

Hamdani explained that social media has given each generation distinct characteristics, from the 'silent generation' to the 'technology generation'. He described how younger generations, influenced by social media, tend to embrace values of speed, virtual freedom, and a global identity, which can differ significantly from older generations' expectations and practices.

He added that while these characteristics are not inherently negative, their impact depends on how individuals engage with social media and the strength of the cultural mechanisms in place to manage these influences.

He also highlighted how social media has influenced family preferences and expectations, including attitudes towards marriage and other social practices.

Hamdani stressed that the impact of social media depends on the strength of a society's cultural and value systems.

## Sayyid Fahd, Sayyid Shihab receive Iraq's Deputy PM



Muscat - H H Sayyid Fahd Mahmud al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers, received Dr Fuad Hussein, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Iraq, on Monday.

The guest conveyed greetings and best wishes of success of the Iraqi leadership to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and the Omani government. He also conveyed their wishes of further development for Oman.

The two sides reviewed bilateral relations and means of enhancing them in various fields.

Further, the two sides discussed several matters of mutual interest and exchanged views regarding developments on the regional and international arenas. They also highlighted the efforts exerted to



make security and stability prevail in the region in a bid to serve the interests of the region's peoples and augments international cooperation.

Both sides underscored the importance of activating the joint Oman-Iraqi Committee and boosting consultations between the two sides in matters of mutual interest.

H H Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, also received the Deputy Prime Minister of Iraq in his office at Al Murtafa'a Garrison.

During the meeting, the two sides reviewed bilateral relations and means of augmenting them. They also discussed several matters of mutual interest.

## Nesto Hypermarket to open 17th store in Oman

Our Correspondent  
Muscat

Nesto Hypermarket is set to open its 17th and the biggest outlet in Oman on Wednesday, in the heart of Mabella on Salam Street.

The new store, christened Bilad Mall, has come up in a state-of-the-art shopping complex spread over 215,000sqft area. The store - with 40 check-out counters and over 750 parking slots - offers a variety of home furnishings at Nesto Home.

"We are excited to bring this exceptional shopping destination to the people of Mabella," Haris Palollathil, regional director,



Nesto Hypermarket, told the media on Monday.

"Bilad Mall has been designed to be more than just a shopping centre - it's a community hub. This is the biggest Nesto in Oman," he stressed, while informing that this business model for a hypermarket is already a big success in Dubai, and "first of its kind in Oman in the hypermarket

category."

In addition to exciting shopping experiences, Bilad Mall will offer a kids' play centre, restaurants, and a multipurpose Sky Hall, ideal for gatherings and events. These facilities are expected to open in the coming weeks and further enhance the customer experience.

Mujeeb V T K, also a regional

director, highlighted Nesto's commitment to Oman. "This opening is a testament to our dedication to growth in Oman, with five more projects in the pipeline for the next two years."

The grand opening will be graced by H H Sayyid Faher Fatik al Said, marking a significant milestone in Nesto's regional expansion.

## Oman launches programme to foster diplomatic skills in youth

Our Correspondent  
Muscat

The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth (MCSY), in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), on Monday launched a national programme for young Omanis to develop or-

atorical skills.

The Youth Ambassadors Programme, which got underway at the Sultan Qaboos Higher Center for Culture and Science in Muscat, aims to develop young national leaders who can actively participate in regional and international forums, including the United Nations organisations.

The launch event was led by H

E Sheikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthy, Undersecretary for Political Affairs in the Foreign Ministry.

Hilal bin Saif al Siyabi, Director General of the Directorate of Youth at the MCSY, explained that the programme, which will run until September 19, has been designed to prepare young leaders for effective external representation. "This programme will

help participants enhance their ability to contribute to discussions on various global issues. The programme will provide essential knowledge and training to strengthen the presence of young people in international forums."

Over 100 'young leaders' from 14 Gulf and Arab countries, including 79 Omanis, are taking part in this programme.




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## MARKET WATCH

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## FOREX RATES

(RO1 equals)	
India	217.81
Pakistan	723.81
Bangladesh	310.59
Philippines	145.34
Sri Lanka	784.95

\*Rates as on September 16  
Source: xe.com

## BRIEFS

### Euro area posts international trade surplus of \$23.6B in July

The international trade surplus in the euro area was at \$23.6bn in July, Eurostat announced on Monday.

The euro area exports to the rest of the world totaled 252bn euro, up 10.2% year-on-year, while imports stood at 230.8bn euro, rising 4%, statistical authority stated.

In January to July 2024, the euro area posted a surplus of 127.7bn euro, up from 3.7bn euro in the same period last year, with exports worth 1.6tn euro and imports totalled 155tn euro.

Meanwhile, the EU showed a 19.1bn euro surplus in July, and 114.3bn in the first-seven-month period.

The EU's exports amounted to 230.2bn euro, up by 11.6%, and imports stood at 211.1bn euro, up by 4.8%, year-on-year in July.

From January to July 2024, extra-EU exports of goods were at 1.51tn euro, and imports totalled 1.39tn euro.

# Green hydrogen readiness lab launches 26 key initiatives

Our Correspondent  
Muscat

Hydrom, in collaboration with the Oman Vision 2040 unit and the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, successfully concluded the two-week Ecosystem Readiness Lab, outlining a total of 26 initiatives designed to deliver Oman's 2030 green hydrogen production targets.

The multi-sector initiatives, covering five key focus areas – Permits, Contractors, Workforce Development, Logistics, and Local Content – are set to be submitted for approval following final review from the overseeing steering committee in few weeks.

Once approved, the initiatives will play an instrumental role in propelling Oman's strategic objectives, driving increased private sector investment, fostering entrepreneurial innovation, and enhancing the national ecosystem's readiness for green hydrogen projects.

In a press release, Ahmed Ibrahim al Abri, Planning and Regulatory Manager at Hydrom, said, "The outcomes of the Ecosystem Readiness Lab are a major milestone in our journey to build a robust and sustainable green hydrogen ecosystem in Oman. Through the alignment of our public and private sectors, we are setting the stage for long-term success."

The first workstream, focusing



*The initiatives will play an instrumental role in enhancing the national ecosystem's readiness for green hydrogen projects*

on the construction and engineering sector, has outlined a six initiatives aimed at enhancing the readiness and capacity of local firms to engage in large-scale green hydrogen projects. These include developing a comprehensive tender information package, facilitating partnerships between local and international contractors within targeted supply chains, and launching a marketing campaign positioning Oman as a global leader in green hydrogen. Additionally, a platform will be created to connect developers

with local contractors.

The second workstream addressed the current and future needs of skilled labour, focusing on programmes to upskill the national workforce for green hydrogen projects. Among the eight proposed initiatives were efforts to align with labour market analysis in the clean energy sectors, establish skill incubators for flexible and seasonal workers, and develop dedicated labour housing communities.

The third workstream reviewed the current regulatory

framework, particularly in relation to permits, in an effort to simplify procedures to enable faster project execution. A central initiative proposed was the 'single permit' system, designed to streamline the approval process through a one-stop-shop model, ensuring smoother and more efficient operations for green hydrogen projects.

The fourth workstream examined the logistical requirements necessary to support green hydrogen production and export, focusing on the infrastructure and operational needs of Oman's ports, transportation networks, and supply chains. The three proposed initiatives included conducting a comprehensive logistics study that covers key roads, ports, and related facilities,

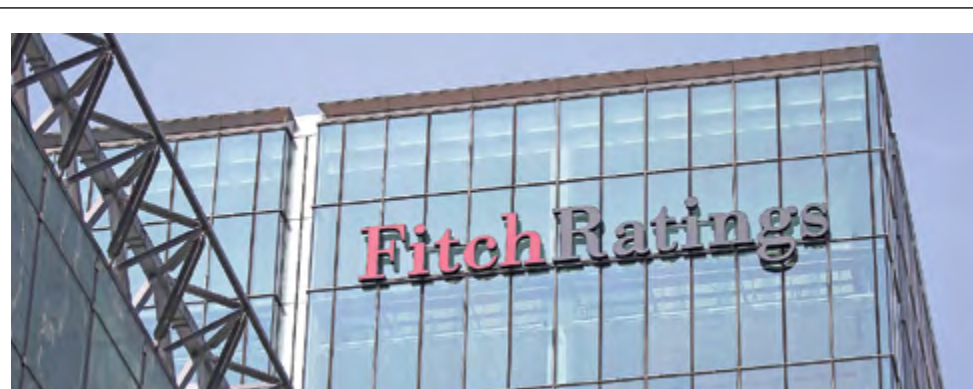
assigning Asyad Group the responsibility for developing and managing the integrated logistics system for the hydrogen sector, and establishing a monitoring platform to coordinate and regulate the smooth flow of supply chains for hydrogen projects.

The fifth workstream, focused on local content, sought to identify ways to enhance the participation of local businesses throughout the green hydrogen value chain, while promoting innovation and stimulating investment in the alternative energy sector. Eight key initiatives were proposed including the development of an enabling package for industries and services involved in green hydrogen projects, along with incentive programmes for public services linked to the sec-

tor.

The workstream also put forward the creation of a dedicated financing mechanism to support hydrogen-related industries, the establishment of an economic cluster for hydrogen-based industries, and the founding of the National Green Hydrogen Center for research, development, testing, and capacity building.

The implementation of the 26 initiatives will secure Oman's position as a leader in green hydrogen production and export, reaffirming the nation's deep commitment to sustainability and innovation. By advancing these efforts, Oman is on track to meet its 2030 green hydrogen targets, driving domestic growth and solidifying its role in the global clean energy transition.



## Fitch Ratings affirms Kuwait at AA- with stable outlook

New York, US - Fitch Ratings has affirmed Kuwait's long-term foreign currency issuer default rating at AA- with a stable outlook.

The rating agency said Kuwait's rating is supported by its strong fiscal and external balance sheets.

Those factors, however, are balanced against weaker governance compared to its peers, its heavy dependence on oil, its generous welfare system, and large public sector that could be challenging to sustain in the

long-term, said Fitch.

"We expect revenue to continue to decline, even as non-oil revenue rises modestly. Oil revenue loss from lower oil prices is partly mitigated by the potential unwinding of OPEC+ oil production quotas from 4Q24," it said in a statement.

Fitch warned that a significant deterioration in fiscal and external positions, due to a sustained period of low oil prices, could lead to a rating downgrade.

Kuwait's rating could be up-

graded if its institutions and political system are able to tackle long-term fiscal challenges through actions to implement a clear deficit reduction plan that is resilient to lower oil prices.

Fitch noted that Kuwait's external balance sheets remain the strongest of all Fitch-rated sovereigns. It forecasts Kuwait's sovereign net foreign assets will rise to 538% of GDP in 2024 and average 553% in 2025-2026, more than 10 times the 'AA' median.

## UK ministers visit GCC for FTA talks

Our Correspondent  
Muscat

UK Ministers are in the Gulf this week on a joint visit to boost trade and investment and hold talks for a possible free trade agreement (FTA) between the UK and GCC.

UK Trade Secretary Jonathan Reynolds and Trade Policy Minister Douglas Alexander were meeting counterparts in the GCC on Monday in Riyadh to discuss how to grow the UK economy by boosting trade with the region.

The UK government announced in July it plans to deliver a high-quality trade deal with the GCC bloc, along with other countries including India, Switzerland and South Korea.

A GCC trade deal could boost the UK economy in the long run, while allowing UK companies to take advantage of this booming market and giving British consumers access to more high-quality goods and services, the UK government said in a press statement.

As per the statement, the



*UK ministers will emphasise to GCC leaders that securing the trade deal is a top priority for the UK*

British ministers will emphasise to GCC leaders that securing the trade deal is a top priority for the UK.

Jonathan Reynolds said, "Economic growth is this (UK) government's driving mission and

boosting trade and investment with some of the world's biggest economies is crucial to that. I want to see a high-quality trade deal that supports jobs, helps UK companies sell their products to the region and increases choice for consumers – so it's great to be here to discuss exactly that."

The GCC has long been a valued investment partner for the UK. A new trade deal will boost that even further.

Following his visit to Riyadh, Minister Douglas Alexander will travel onto Oman to meet counterparts, including the Minister of Commerce, and some of the UK

businesses who are already enjoying great success in the country.

Douglas Alexander said, "We are excited about the opportunities this vibrant region has to offer UK business and consumers. We want our trading partners in the Gulf and around the world to know that the UK is open for business and keen to negotiate trade deals that help businesses across sectors and all parts of the UK to prosper."

The UK accounts for nearly half of the entire foreign direct investment in Oman creating jobs and opportunities on both sides. Oman is a valued investor in the UK in turn, signing major deals in areas like green energy with UK companies.

Adam Gagen, Global Head of Government Affairs at Revolut, said, "We see the UK-GCC FTA as a potential game changer for fintechs, enabling UK companies to expand into the fast-growing region whilst also making the UK the natural place for the innovative companies emerging across the Gulf to begin to go global."

## India's Jindal Steel & Power bets big on green hydrogen investment

New Delhi, India - India's Jindal Steel & Power Limited (JSPL) and Jindal Renewables (JRPL) have announced a landmark Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to implement India's biggest investment in green hydrogen by any Indian steelmaker till date. This collaboration underscores a major commitment by both companies towards decarbonisation and green energy leadership in India's steel industry.

The MoU outlines JSPL's plan to integrate green hydrogen into its Direct Reduced Iron (DRI) units in Angul, Odisha. This ini-

tiative represents a significant leap towards low emission steel production. In the first phase, Jindal Renewables will develop a green hydrogen generation capacity of up to 4,500 tonnes per annum set to commence by December 2025.

In addition, the project will also entail supply of 36,000 tonnes of oxygen per annum that will be used in the Angul steelworks. JRPL will also be supplying approximately 3GW of renewable energy to JSPL's facilities reducing the steelmaker's dependence on coal fired energy by 50% in the next 2-3 years.



This integration of green energy is expected to drastically lower the company's carbon footprint.

Sanjay Singh, Director of Strategy and Corporate Affairs at

JSPL, expressed his enthusiasm for the collaboration, stating, "This MoU marks a pivotal moment in our journey towards decarbonisation using green

hydrogen and green energy, accelerating our transition to lower emission steel. By integrating green energy and green hydrogen into our production processes, we are not only reducing our carbon footprint but also setting a new benchmark for the Indian steel industry. This collaboration is a testament to our unwavering commitment to sustainable development and innovation."

JSPL will provide essential infrastructure and support, while JRPL will handle the development and operation of the green hydrogen and renewable energy

facilities. This collaboration underscores a major commitment to decarbonisation and green energy leadership in India's steel industry. With innovative engineering, the MoU aims not only to significantly slash the cost of green hydrogen production but also to ensure sustainable long term business model by locking in offtake for the next 25 years.

Jindal Steel & Power Limited is an industrial powerhouse with a strong presence in the steel, mining, and infrastructure sectors. With a strategic investment of \$12bn worldwide, JSPL is consis-

tently enhancing its capacity utilisation and operational efficiencies.

Jindal Renewables aims to become a pioneer in renewable energy projects in India, currently developing close to 3GW of diverse renewable assets with power offtake completely locked in. It aims to develop around 12GW renewable energy assets by 2030 and aims to be one of the largest decarbonisation solution provider in the country along with, developing the capabilities of long duration storage as well as green hydrogen production.

ANI

# China, EU set for talks aimed at easing tensions over trade tariffs

Tina Teng

China and EU member states are preparing for talks amid escalating trade tensions. Over the weekend, China's Commerce Minister, Wang Wentao, met with Roberto Vavassori, President of the Italian Association of the Automotive Industry, in Turin.

According to a press release from China's Ministry of Commerce, the two parties exchanged views on the EU's anti-subsidy investigation into Chinese electric vehicles and discussed cooperation between the Chinese and Italian electric vehicle industries.

This meeting was ahead of a key event on September 19, when Wang is set to visit Europe to meet the European Commission trade commissioner, Valdis Dombrovskis, to discuss the rising trade tensions between China and the EU.

The European Commission (EC) has proposed additional tariffs of up to 35.3% on Chinese electric vehicle (EV) imports, citing concerns that Beijing's "unfair subsidies" for Chinese-made EVs could cause significant harm to local car manufacturers.

In response, China has intensified its investigation into European food and drink imports, including pork and brandy. However, recent developments suggest that both China and the EU have expressed a willingness to ease the growing trade conflict.



**European Commission has proposed additional tariffs of up to 35.3% on Chinese electric vehicle imports. In response, China has intensified its investigation into European food and drink imports**

The forthcoming discussions between Chinese and EU officials are of considerable significance in addressing tensions and seeking compromises from both sides.

In the latest developments, the EU has further reduced a series of proposed tariffs on Chinese-

made EVs, with Tesla being the biggest beneficiary. The levy on China-made Teslas has been reduced to 7.8% from 9%, following an earlier cut from 20.8% last month.

The tariffs on Geely have been lowered to 18.8% from 19.3%,

while those on SAIC and companies that did not cooperate with the EU's investigations have been reduced to 35.3% from 36.3%.

However, the tariff on the best-selling Chinese brand, BYD, remains unchanged at 17%. These additional tariffs are on top

of the existing 10% duty applied to China's EV imports.

The new EU tariffs will need to be approved by a majority of the population, or 15 of the 27 EU member states, before October 31. If approved, the new tariffs will remain in effect for the next five years.

In response, a spokesperson for China's Ministry of Commerce stated, "China is willing to continue working closely with the EU to reach an early solution that serves the common interests of

both sides and conforms to World Trade Organisation rules, in order to promote the healthy and stable development of China-EU economic and trade relations."

The spokesperson added, "Although we do not agree with or accept the EU's disclosure of the final ruling, we remain committed to resolving the friction through dialogue and consultation, with the aim of finding a mutually acceptable solution," according to China's state media, Xinhua News Agency.

Last week, the European Commission rejected proposals by Chinese EV manufacturers to set a price floor as a way to offset government subsidies.

An EC spokesperson commented, "Our review focused on whether the proposals would eliminate the injurious effects of subsidies and whether they could be effectively monitored and enforced."

"The Commission has concluded that none of the proposals met these requirements," adding, "The Commission remains open to a negotiated solution, but it must fully comply with WTO rules and effectively address the injurious effects of the identified subsidies."

In June, China said it had launched an anti-dumping investigation into pork imports from the EU, with Spain a primary exporter in the single market.

(Source: Euronews.com)

## US consumer sentiment climbs to highest since May 2024

Washington, US - US consumer sentiment rose in September, climbing to its highest level since May 2024, according to preliminary results from the University of Michigan's consumer survey.

The index of consumer sentiment rose 1.1 points to 69.0 in September, from 67.9 in August.

The market expectation for the index was to come in at 68.3.

"The gain was led by an improvement in buying conditions for durables, driven by more favourable prices as perceived by consumers," Surveys of Consumers Director Joanne Hsu said in a statement.

"Year-ahead expectations for personal finances and the economy both improved as well, despite a modest weakening in views of labour markets."

Hsu said a growing share of both Republicans and Democrats now anticipate a win by Vice President Kamala Harris in the November election.

Year-ahead inflation expectations, meanwhile, fell for the fourth consecutive month to 2.7% in September - the lowest since December 2020.

Agencies

## 'India much ahead of its renewable energy targets'

New Delhi, India - India's Minister of New and Renewable Energy, Pralhad Joshi has said that the government has achieved renewable energy targets in 2021-22, much ahead of the targeted year of 2030. The minister further added that the country has been successful in reducing the emissions intensity of its GDP by 33% between 2005 and 2019.

Praising the Indian government's effort to develop the solar ecosystem, Joshi added, "India's solar energy capacity has increased 33-times in the last ten years. Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India's energy transition has been one of the largest economic opportunities in the last ten years."

"India has made significant strides in expanding its renewable energy sector. I am proud to recount that there has been a 76% decrease in tariffs for grid-connected solar power plants. Our installed renewable energy capacity has increased from 75.52GW in March 2014 to more than 207.7GW now. That is a phenomenal 175% increase in ten years," Joshi said.



Pralhad Joshi

"With PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana, our Prime Minister pioneered a monumental effort in what is one of the world's largest initiatives in renewable energy. So far, more than 330,000 have benefited from this scheme," he added.

The minister said that the union government is receiving overwhelming commitments from the states and union territories. He further added that the industry participants such as developers, manufacturers, and financial institutes will support the government's goal of 500GW by 2030.

"Developers have committed an additional 570GW, manufacturers have committed additional manufacturing capacities of 340GW in solar modules, 240GW in solar cells, 22GW in wind turbines, 10GW in electrolyzers, and banks and financial institutions have committed to an additional \$386bn of financing by 2030," the minister said.

Joshi further remarked that the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy is moving towards 500GW of installed electricity capacity from non-fossil sources by 2030.

ANI

## EU countries given three options to raise \$50bn financial aid for Ukraine

Brussels, Belgium - The European Commission has presented member states with three options to fulfill a G7 plan that will see Western allies raising a \$50bn loan to support Ukraine's army and economy in the battle against Russian forces.

The plan, provisionally sealed at the G7 summit in June, will use the immobilised assets of Russia's Central Bank as collateral. The majority of them (210bn euros) are held in the 27-country bloc.

While allies cannot confiscate the money, they can use the interests they generate to ensure the loan is gradually re-paid, without footing the bill themselves.

But the unprecedented idea carries multiple financial risks, chief among them the possibility that these assets will be unfrozen before repayments are satisfied and allies will be held liable for default.

Under EU law, sanctions have to be extended every six months by unanimity, which means one single country could block the renewal and send the G7 plan up in



**The European Commission's plan, provisionally sealed at the G7 summit in June, will use the immobilised assets of Russia's Central Bank as collateral**

flames. Hungary, in particular, has often derailed decisions in support of Ukraine and is currently preventing Brussels from releasing 6.5bn euros in military assistance.

To avoid this dreaded sce-

nario and guarantee long-term predictability, the Commission proposed three different options during an ambassadors meeting on Friday, several diplomats told Euronews.

Option one is: freeze the assets for five years but with an annual review. In this case, a qualified majority would be needed to unfreeze the assets. Option two is: renew the sanctions on the Russian assets every 36 months and the other sanctions on Russia every six months. And option three is: renew all sanctions on Russia every 36 months.

The second option gathered the broadest amount of support,

a diplomat said, even if member states are still awaiting specific details.

Friday's presentation was done orally by Bjoern Seibert, chief of staff of European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen. A formal proposal is expected to be presented to member states in the coming days to kick start the negotiations, which could stretch for weeks.

Seibert described the three options as acceptable for the United States, which is putting pressure on Brussels to move fast and ensure the \$50bn reaches Ukraine before the end of the year. The situation in the country is considered dire after more than two years of war and allies fear Russia could trigger a humanitarian crisis in the winter.

The rush, however, decreased in recent weeks after Vice President Kamala Harris replaced President Joe Biden as the Democratic nominee, raising hopes that Donald Trump, who has vowed to cut off American aid to Kyiv, will be kept away from the White House.

(Source: Euronews.com)

## Citizenship Invest acquired by BLS International, set for global expansion

Dubai, UAE - Citizenship Invest, a leading international advisory firm specialising in residency and citizenship by investment programmes, is poised to embark on a rapid international expansion following the recent acquisition by BLS International.

Citizenship Invest will leverage BLS's extensive global infrastructure, including offices in 66 countries worldwide, to enhance its global reach and service offerings. BLS holds a contract of exclusivity with the Spanish Government for global visa pro-

cessing and has agreements with 45 other governments, including Canada, Germany, Italy, and Hungary, to manage their visa processing across various countries.

As part of its strategic plan, Citizenship Invest will open offices across the globe, significantly expanding its presence in key global markets. This expansion will be accompanied by a large-scale recruitment drive for sales consultants and other critical functions to support the company's growth.



"We are planning a fast international expansion that will multiply our sales exponentially in the coming three years," said Iñigo de Luna, Citizenship Invest's CEO.

"Citizenship Invest's strong track record and expertise will be further enhanced by this acquisition, allowing us to serve a growing number of high-net-worth individuals seeking global residency and citizenship solutions as well as optimal tax structures."

BLS International's Joint Managing Director, Shikhar Aggarwal, also commented on the acquisi-

tion, highlighting the complementary strengths of both companies and the potential for future growth: "We are excited to announce the acquisition of Citizenship Invest, a leading expert in long-term visa applications, enhancing our capabilities in visa and consular services. This strategic move strengthens synergies, boosts EBITDA, and leverages CI's strong financial performance and high application success rate to drive growth and global market presence."

Awad Capital Ltd, a DFSA-

regulated company, served as the exclusive financial advisor to Citizenship Invest on the transaction. Ziad Awad, CEO of Awad Capital, remarked, "This transaction exemplifies the robust opportunities within the GCC entrepreneurship ecosystem. We are proud to have facilitated this union and to bring foreign direct investment into the UAE by helping a listed global company establish a hub in Dubai."

The sellers were also advised by Al Tamimi and Co. as their legal advisors.



## 17 MoUs support Oman Science Festival 2024

The Ministry of Education celebrated the signing of memoranda of understanding to support the activities of the Oman Science Festival 2024.

The signing ceremony of the memoranda of understanding was held under the auspices of H E Dr Madiha bint Ahmed al Shaibaniya, Minister of Education, in the presence of Dr Abdullah bin Khamis Ambosaidi, Undersecretary of the Ministry for Education, Majid bin Said al Bahri, Undersecretary of the Ministry for Administrative and Financial Affairs, and CEOs of companies and institutions contributing to supporting the Oman Science Festival 2024, a press release said.

Dr Ambosaidi said, "We live in a new era where science and technology are accelerating, in a way that improves the quality of life, expands the horizons of learning and education, develops the economy, simplifies operations, and enables easy and convenient access to information. Therefore, we must all join hands and cooperate so that we can catch up and benefit from these sciences and technologies. Our meeting today is a true translation of the fruitful cooperation between the institutions of the public and private sectors, and the support provided by the partners had a significant impact on the success of previous versions of this event."

"The previous successes of this prominent scientific event were based on two main topics - the generous support and backing of the private sector, and the firm belief of the young men and women of this dear nation, who had this festival in mind, so they planned it carefully and implemented it wonderfully."

The Ministry of Education signed 17 memoranda of understanding to support the activities of the Oman Science Festival 2024, where the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education

signed the first group with a number of companies and institutions that will provide support to the festival, namely OQ Company, Oman Petroleum Development Company, Oman Energy Association (OPAL), Liquefied Natural Gas Development Corporation, Duqm Refinery Company, Occidental Oman, Al Yusr Foundation, and Oman Telecommunications Company (Oman-Tel).

*We live in a new era where science and technology are accelerating, in a way that improves the quality of life, expands horizons of learning, and develops the economy*

The Undersecretary of the Ministry for Administrative and Financial Affairs signed the second group of companies and institutions, namely Shell Oman, Financial Services Regulatory Authority, Oman Environmental Services Holding Company (be'ah), Vodafone, Mazoon Dairy Company, Al Safa Foods, Ansar Technology Company, Al Waha Water Company, and Atyab Company.

The fourth edition of the Science Festival is considered the ideal platform for innovation, passion, and experimentation. It is a mirror that reflects the ambition in the goals of Oman Vision 2040 and the National Innovation Strategy; to make the Sultanate of Oman a model destination and the best among (20) countries in the innovation index by 2040.

The festival will be launched on November 4 in an area at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre.

# Rolls-Royce Motor Cars launches Apiary initiative

Rolls-Royce Motor Cars Middle East and Africa and Rolls-Royce Motor Cars Muscat announce the launch of 'The Rolls-Royce Apiary' in Oman, an initiative modelled on the highly successful Apiary established at the Home of Rolls-Royce at Goodwood in 2017.

Located 2,000m above sea level in Alila Jabal Akhdar, nestled within a peaceful sanctuary surrounded by breath-taking views, the Apiary in Oman is a kingdom abuzz, and the fourth project to be established in the region.

The Apiary comprises four beehives, each named after a current Rolls-Royce model, 'Phantom', 'Ghost', 'Spectre' and 'Cullinan'. Made from cedar and painted white to withstand the country's high temperatures, each honey-producing hive is headed by an 'Omani Queen' bee.

With each hive being carefully tended by Alila Jabal Akhdar, through the Apiary, Rolls-Royce Motor Cars Muscat aims to educate and raise awareness around the important role these



pollinators play, as well as contribute towards the population of bees in the country.

As part of this mission, an educational programme is set to be established at the Apiary which will invite students, media, and clients to immerse themselves in

*The Apiary comprises four beehives, each named after a current Rolls-Royce model, 'Phantom', 'Ghost', 'Spectre' and 'Cullinan', and made from cedar to withstand the country's high temperatures*

the wonderful world of bees. From Q&A sessions and Apiary tours, to having guests become beekeepers themselves, the programme will have invitees actively involved in helping to safeguard these essential and highly vulnerable creatures.

## OOC participates in Olympic Council of Asia meet

Taha al Kishri, secretary general of Oman Olympic Committee (OOC), participated in the 44th General Assembly meeting of Olympic Council of Asia, which was held on Sunday, in the Indian capital, New Delhi, in the presence of the heads and representatives of the 45 National Olympic Committees in the Asia.

The meeting witnessed the announcement of Randhir Singh as president of the Olympic Council of Asia, as he was the only nominated candidate for this position, a press release said.



The work of the General Assembly included the election of vice presidents of the Olympic Council of Asia for the five geographical regions - East Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia, Central Asia, and West Asia.

The reports and visual presentations were reviewed on the latest preparations of the organising committees for the upcoming Asian Games, represented by the Asian Indoor and Martial Arts Games (Riyadh 2025), the 9th Asian Winter Games in Harbin, China, and others.

## Omantel supports national team for FIFA Qualifiers

Omantel has joined the national campaign 'We Are All with You' as the technology partner, supporting the Omani national football team in the Asian qualifiers for the FIFA World Cup 2026.

The national team had kicked off its first match in the qualifiers earlier this month, facing Iraq at Basra International Stadium, a press release said.

Omantel is committed to supporting the national team throughout its journey, aiming to



provide an extra boost to the team and exciting fans along the way. Qualifying for the 2026 World Cup would be a proud moment for the nation.

The company believes in the power of sports to bring people together and inspire positive engagement in the community, while also motivating individuals to strive for their dreams and goals.

This support reflects Omantel's ongoing commitment to so-

cial and corporate partnerships that elevate Oman's name on the global stage.

Omantel's leadership in the telecommunications industry, both in Oman and beyond, is rooted in its innovative solutions and deep expertise in digital technology.

The company's cutting-edge approaches have enabled it to deliver the latest services to a wide range of subscribers and business sectors.

## MoE to float new projects to eradicate illiteracy

The Sultanate of Oman has guaranteed education as a basic right for every citizen since the beginning of the renaissance and has harnessed all potential and resources for this purpose.

The Ministry of Education, represented by the Directorate-General of Special Education and Continuous Education, is concerned with building educational programmes for some segments of society that do not fall under the umbrella of regular education, due to their different educational circumstances, such as elderly learners in literacy classes, elderly education, learners in care homes, correctional institutions (prisons), and people with disabilities (special education).

The Sultanate of Oman has stressed that illiteracy is a complex social and cultural problem;



therefore, its elimination can only be achieved through the combined efforts of all governmental, private, and civil sectors. The

Ministry of Education has worked to build bridges of cooperation with all relevant parties, whether internal or external parties,

believing in the importance of accelerating the elimination of illiteracy among all its citizens. The Ministry has also worked on

developing and modernising the field of elderly education, through which students who wish to continue their education to higher grades complete their studies to achieve their ambitions.

The Ministry has provided a set of facilities for students in literacy classes, including providing curricula (first, second, and third) prepared specifically for students in literacy classes, qualifying teaching staff from Omani graduates of the General Education Diploma or higher to teach in literacy classes, granting a certificate of freedom from illiteracy to students which qualifies them to join the study system in elderly education, opening classrooms, supervising their progress by specialised supervisors, and registering students electronically.

## ISM tops CBSE Oman Cluster Athletic Meet

The host institution, Indian School Muscat, emerged triumphant, claiming the coveted Overall Championship Trophy at the prestigious CBSE Oman Cluster Meet 2024-25.

The Overall Runner-up Trophy was bagged by Indian School Wadi Kabir and the third place was secured by Indian School Salalah, a press release said.

The inaugural ceremony of the CBSE Oman Cluster Athletic Meet 2024-25, took place in Indian School Muscat on September 6. It was a grand event involving 600 athletes from 15 Indian schools, competing in a wide

range of track and field events. Spanning across two days, the event featured 21 meticulously organised athletic events, transforming the venue into a vibrant arena of speed, skill, and endurance.

Syed Salman, vice-chairman, Board of Directors, Indian Schools in Oman, graced the inaugural function as the chief guest, accompanied Sherry Johny, vice-chairman, IT Subcommittee, Indian School Muscat Management Committee, as guest of honour. The Athletic Meet was formally declared open by the chief guest who also hoisted the CBSE Oman Cluster flag, heralding the commencement.

# Oman participates in St Petersburg Forum

The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the National Museum, participated in the 10th St Petersburg International Forum of United Cultures, held in St Petersburg in the Russian Federation until September 14.

The Museum was represented at the forum by Jamal bin Hassan al Moosawi, secretary-general of the National Museum, in the presence of H E Hamood bin Salim al Towaiya, the accredited ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Russian Federation.

Moosawi presented a working paper titled 'Rehabilitation of Muscat both Inside and Outside: Reviving the Historical Identity', which dealt with the efforts of the National Museum in rehab-



ilitating, preserving and conserving a number of museums and historical houses, with the aim of presenting a cultural conduct that reflects the political and social life in Muscat, and preserving the national identity and consolidating it in the memory of future generations.

The paper was part of a dialogue session in the 'Museums' axis, which discussed the museum as a social laboratory and the search for national identity, and models of cooperation that keep pace with the challenges of the modern era. Moosawi also participated in other sessions accompanying the forum on topics related to museums and international cultural cooperation.

This year's forum was titled

'Culture of the XXI Century: Sovereignty or Globalism?', focusing on discussing contemporary challenges facing cultural identity in the light of globalisation, in addition to topics such as artificial intelligence in culture, cultural heritage in a multipolar world, and international cooperation in areas such as museums, music, theatre and cinema.

The forum is a global platform that brings together experts and specialists in the field of culture and arts from around the world, providing opportunities for cooperation and cultural exchange between countries, and reflects the Sultanate of Oman's keenness to enhance its cultural presence on the international scene and enhance cooperation



## Bank Muscat feted for excellence in dollar transactions

Bank Muscat has been awarded the prestigious Excellence Award by Wells Fargo Bank for its outstanding application of the highest quality standards in US dollar fund transfers.

This accolade highlights Bank Muscat's exceptional performance in executing dollar payment transactions with a high level of accuracy and minimal error rates, given the substantial volume of transactions throughout the year. Most significantly, this award underscores the bank's steadfast commitment to delivering services that align with its customer-centric vision, a press release said.

Bank Muscat has consistently demonstrated operational excellence, resulting in enhanced efficiency and cost reduction. This achievement reflects the bank's response to the evolving needs of its customers, as it continuously strives to improve and elevate the quality of its international money transfer services. Consequently, Bank Muscat has

maintained a high rate of seamless financial transaction execution throughout the year.

Zuwaina Abdullah al Sharji, assistant general manager - Central Operations and Change Management at Bank Muscat, said, "We are honoured to receive this award once again, which reinforces our commitment to upholding the highest standards of quality in fund transfers. Through continuous development of our internal payment infrastructure, Bank Muscat ensures that cross-border payments are processed swiftly, efficiently, and reliably, which is a critical requirement in today's global economy. We prioritise cooperation with leading regional and global banks to further enhance these services."

He further said, "This award follows several other recognitions that reaffirm Bank Muscat's leadership in the banking sector, particularly in fund transfers and delivering exceptional services.

## Oman Sustainability Week 2025 in May

Oman Sustainability Week (OSW) Awards 2025, an esteemed event co-organised by Oman Environmental Services Holding Company - be'ah and CONNECT, is set to recognise and celebrate organisations with exceptional sustainability practices during the highly anticipated Oman Sustainability Week on 11 May 2025.

The OSW Awards utilises the Oman Sustainability Index framework to assess organisations' performance in environmental, social and governance (ESG) areas. The index serves a dual purpose. Firstly, it will aim to provide an assessment platform, allowing organisations to measure their sustainability performance and integrate ethical practices into their strategies. Secondly, it emphasises the enduring nature of economic, social and environmental responsibility



commitments.

The index framework is based on the internationally recognised Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) standard and is the result of collaborative efforts with be'ah's exclusive partner, the Center for

Sustainability and Excellence (CSE) in Chicago, Illinois. It will also help determine medium and long-term opportunities and risks for the participating organisations, encouraging them to remain dedicated to their

sustainability goals and improve measurable transparency and integrity within their sectors.

The OSW Awards is set to host an impressive gathering of senior dignitaries from multiple sectors, including the Ministry of

Energy and Minerals and the Ministry of Transport, Communications, and Information Technology. This event will also attract prominent C-suite executives and key stakeholders in the field of sustainability.

## BankDhofar provides banking services for women

BankDhofar has given clear attention to women as a key partner in the comprehensive development process by providing specialised banking services to them to achieve financial independence, and enable them to manage their financial affairs.

BankDhofar provides a convenient and secure banking experience for women by enabling them to manage their financial affairs anytime and anywhere through several channels such as ATMs, online banking services, and an easy-to-use mobile application, designed to help women save more time and spend on suitable terms, a press release said.



Women's banking services provide a vertical and purple direct debit card with unique ben-

efits, in addition to preferential rates on high returns of up to 4.15%, and a group of different

deposit accounts that help women plan for their future, whether it is planning for retirement or saving for their children's future.

BankDhofar has also recently launched a special credit card for them to meet their daily needs, offering a range of services such as exemption from annual fees for the first year, and benefiting from exclusive rewards through the reward points program that can be redeemed through the mobile banking application or website, in addition to the wide-ranging benefits of the Visa card for women, including access to airport lounges in Muscat and

Salalah, and global acceptance in millions of locations around the world.

BankDhofar is also keen to empower Omani women in various administrative units, qualify them and provide them with the necessary skills for leadership as an active member in the bank's successful journey. The bank recently organized the Omani Women Leadership Forum, which emphasised the need to empower women in the financial and business sector, develop their talents to transform them into projects on the ground, and the importance of using the media to promote the brand of their projects.

## Ministry of Education holds Financial Culture Symposium

Prof Abdullah bin Khamis Ambo-saidi, Undersecretary of Ministry of Education for Education, patronised the closing ceremony of a two-day symposium, also attended by Majid bin Said al Bahri, Undersecretary of Administrative and Financial Affairs and Chairman of the Main Committee for Khazna Project.

The closing ceremony of the symposium included a visual presentation of the symposium activities, a recommendation reading, and felicitation of the Khazna project partners, a press release said.

The Financial Culture Symposium recommended to build a strategy for school financial education in the Sultanate of Oman - aiming to empower students with financial planning, saving and investment skills, include the principles of financial culture and education in various curricula,



employ artificial intelligence tools, and digital financial technology to spread financial culture among students, create qualitative training programmes for

teachers and career guidance specialists in the field of financial education. It also aimed to strengthen partnerships with banking sector institutions within

the Sultanate of Oman and to adopt several initiatives that contribute to instilling financial dealing skills in various aspects of life. The symposium also recom-

mended in its closing statement the adoption of student companies and business incubators for school students by government and private sector institutions

and enabling the Khazna project to implement a group of various educational activities, programmes and events in order to raise the level of awareness.

## CCED 2024 nominations open

The 7th CCED Oman Student Awards for the Advancement of Postgraduate Education are now open for 2024 submissions.

Initiated by CC Energy Development (CCED), one of Oman's largest independent oil producers, these awards highlight the critical importance of postgraduate education in driving innovation through research and industry collaboration, a press release said.

The CCED Oman Student Awards have been pivotal in advancing winners into senior roles within Oman's leading industrial companies and influential positions in the public sector. This year, the awards continue to offer an exceptional opportunity for outstanding postgraduate students - paid internships at CCED.

## France's Breton quits European Commission amid dispute

Paris, France - France's Thierry Breton on Monday said he was leaving the European Commission with immediate effect, citing discord with the European Union commission's chief Ursula von der Leyen.

Breton said von der Leyen had asked Paris to withdraw his candidacy for the next executive.

French President Emmanuel Macron had proposed Breton for France's spot on the incoming commission.

That would have meant his reappointment to a major role reflecting France's weight within the 27-nation EU. Until

the latest development, this had been taken as a formality.

"A few days ago, in the very final stretch of negotiations on the composition of the future College, you asked France to withdraw my name," Breton, the bloc's internal market commissioner, wrote in a letter to von der Leyen.

"I am therefore resigning from my position as European Commissioner, effective immediately," he said in the letter, a copy of which he posted on X, formerly Twitter.

Breton is understood to have had a strained relationship with his EU boss, who oversees the

*In light of these developments, further testimony to questionable governance, I have to conclude that I can no longer exercise my duties*

THIERRY BRETON



27-member College of Commissioners, during her first five-year mandate.

He said von der Leyen's re-

quest to Paris was made 'for personal reasons that in no instance you have discussed directly with me'.

Thierry also alleged that von der Leyen had offered Paris an incentive to withdraw his name. He said she had 'offered,

as a political trade-off, an allegedly more influential portfolio for France in the future College'.

"You will now be proposed a different candidate," he said.

"In light of these latest developments - further testimony to questionable governance - I have to conclude that I can no longer exercise my duties in the College," Breton wrote.

Among the most influential figures on the Commission, the 69-year-old Breton has overseen the internal market brief since 2019 - taking a hard line against abuses by some of the world's biggest digital plat-

forms.

The portfolio also included space and defence, as well as marshalling COVID-19 vaccine production.

Paris is understood to see Breton as a counterweight to Berlin's influence in Brussels, von der Leyen coming from Germany's conservative opposition Christian Democrats.

"Over the past five years, I have relentlessly striven to uphold and advance the common European good, above national and party interests," Breton wrote in the letter 'It has been an honour'.

DW

## FBI probes assassination attempt on Trump at Florida golf course

Florida, US - Former US President and Republican nominee Donald Trump is 'safe' after an apparent assassination attempt against him on Sunday in Florida.

"President Trump is safe following gunshots in his vicinity. No further details at this time," his communications director, Steven Cheung, said in a statement.

The statement came right after reports that gunshots were heard outside Trump International Golf Club in West Palm Beach, with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) saying it is investigating the incident as a possible assassination attempt on Trump.

"The FBI has responded to West Palm Beach Florida and is investigating what appears to be an attempted assassination of former President Trump," it said in a statement.

The incident occurred nearly two months after Trump was wounded during an assassination attempt on July 13, when Thomas Matthew Crooks, a lone 20-year-old gunman, opened fire on Trump during a campaign rally in Butler County, Pennsylvania, grazing his right ear.

The Secret Service, in conjunction with the Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office, is investigating a 'protective incident' that occurred shortly before 2pm local time (1800GMT), the Chief of Communications for the US Secret Service, Anthony Guglielmi, said on X.

Law enforcement officials told reporters that they apprehended



*There were gunshots in my vicinity, but before rumours start spiralling out of control, I wanted you to hear this first: I am safe and well*

DONALD TRUMP

a suspect who was spotted by US Secret Service agents with an AK-47-style assault rifle outside Trump's golf club.

The US Secret Service personnel opened fire on the gunman located near the property line, said

a Secret Service official.

Palm Beach County Sheriff Ric Bradshaw said the gunman then dropped his rifle, two backpacks and a GoPro video camera and fled in a black SUV.

The sheriff said a witness saw

the gunman and managed to take photos of his car and license plate. "We have somebody in custody right now that is a potential suspect," said Bradshaw.

He said that Trump was between 400-500 yards (365 to 457 metres) away from the gunman, who pointed a rifle through the fence at Trump's golf course.

The suspect was identified as Ryan Wesley Routh, 58, of Hawaii, The New York Times and Fox News reported, citing unnamed law enforcement officials.

Previously, citing local law enforcement, Trump's son Donald Trump Jr said an AK-47 automatic weapon was discovered in the bushes.

"The Trump campaign has released a statement confirming former President Trump is safe. A suspect has reportedly been apprehended," he said on X.

Trump said in a statement that he is 'safe'.

"There were gunshots in my vicinity, but before rumours start spiralling out of control, I wanted

you to hear this first: I AM SAFE AND WELL!

"Nothing will slow me down. I will NEVER SURRENDER!"

President Joe Biden and Vice President and Democratic candidate Kamala Harris have been briefed on the security incident at Trump International Golf Club, where former President Trump was playing golf, the White House said.

"They are relieved to know that he is safe. They will be kept regularly updated by their team," it added.

Harris said she has been briefed on reports of gunshots fired near former President Trump and his property in Florida. "I am glad he is safe. Violence has no place in America," she said on X.

Trump's running mate, J D Vance, expressed similar sentiments. "I spoke to him before the news was public and he was, amazingly, in good spirits. Still much we don't know, but I'll be hugging my kids extra tight tonight and saying a prayer of gratitude," he said on X.

Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell said he is 'very grateful' that Trump is safe after another assassination attempt.

"There is no place for political violence in our country, and those responsible for it must be held to account. I hope and expect USSS (US Secret Service) and the FBI will conduct a thorough, swift, and transparent investigation," he said on X.

Anadolu Agency

## China: Typhoon Bebinca makes landfall in Shanghai

Shanghai, China - Typhoon Bebinca landed in Shanghai on Monday as a Category 1 storm, making it the strongest tropical cyclone to hit the Chinese financial centre in over 70 years.

Bebinca packed top wind speeds of 151km per hour (roughly 94 miles per hour) near its eye as it landed in the coastal Pudong district of Shanghai around 7:30am (1:30 am CET).

Reports said that more than 400,000 people had been evacuated by Monday from at-risk homes in Bebinca's path.

Nearly 60,000 emergency responders and firefighters were deployed to aid in Shanghai, as per state media.

State television shared visuals of avenues with uprooted trees as powerful winds felled over 10,000 of them across the city.

Meanwhile, at least 380 households were left without power. A red alert was issued and some coastal areas have been evacuated, city authorities reported.

The typhoon disrupted travel plans of people on the move during China's Mid-Autumn Festival, a three-day public holiday.

All flights at Shanghai's two main airports were grounded as the typhoon dumped torrential rains on the city.

All highways have been closed and a 40km per hour speed limit was put into place on roads inside the city.

DW

## Germany, Uzbekistan sign migration agreement

Berlin, Germany - Germany signed an agreement with Uzbekistan on migration on Sunday.

The German Interior Ministry said in a statement that the deal, signed during Chancellor Olaf Scholz's visit to Uzbekistan, aims to enhance cooperation between the two countries.

It focuses on enabling the migration of skilled labour from the Central Asian nation to Germany while also facilitating the return of immigrants who do not have the legal right to remain in Germany.

German Interior Minister Nancy Faeser emphasised the importance of implementing effective measures for returning those without legal stay rights, which plays a crucial role in controlling irregular migration.



Faeser noted that the agreement establishes solid regulations to address this issue. In addition, she highlighted that Germany offers opportunities in the job market as well as in education and higher education for qualified workers from Uzbekistan, acknowledging the urgent need for well-trained and skilled labour from abroad in many sectors.

During his visit to Uzbekistan, Scholz said the agreement serves as a model for similar agreements that Germany intends to pursue with other countries worldwide.

The agreement aims to simplify migration procedures for the workforce needed to support the growth of the German economy.

Anadolu Agency

## Eight dead as Central Europe battles flooding

Berlin, Germany - Wide regions in Austria, the Czech Republic, Poland and Romania have been inundated after days of heavy rainfall, while Slovakia and Hungary are possibly also facing flooding in the coming days.

Six people have died in Romania and one each in Austria and Poland as rivers broke their banks, putting streets and houses under water.

Tens of thousands of people have evacuated their homes, with the northeast of the Czech Republic and the northeastern Austrian state of Lower Austria particularly affected.

In the eastern German state of Saxony, authorities are also bracing for flooding, with the level of the Elbe river expected to peak on Tuesday afternoon at 7.5 metres (24.6 feet) in Schöna, near the border to the Czech Republic.

That measurement would trigger the highest alarm level in the area, and the state flood centre said dams could overflow or



break with catastrophic effect.

The state capital of Dresden, which also lies on the Elbe, is at risk of flooding as well. Authorities there will set up mobile barriers on Monday to protect the historic city centre.

Experts say that the Earth's hotter atmosphere as a result of human-caused climate change is making such extreme weather events more likely.

'Difficult hours' in Lower Austria

Authorities in Lower Austria, meanwhile, have declared the entire northeastern state a disaster zone, with more than 1,000 houses evacuated and dams beginning to burst.

"We are experiencing difficult and dramatic hours in Lower Austria. For many people in Lower Austria these will proba-

bly be the most difficult hours of their lives," said Johanna Mikl-Leitner, the governor of the state.

Experts say that there is a particularly dangerous situation on the Kamp River, a tributary of the Danube.

Austrian Chancellor Karl Nehammer said 2,400 soldiers were ready to help with rescue and relief work across the country, with 1,000 of them deploying to Lower Austria, which surrounds the capital, Vienna.

One firefighter is reported to have died in the state on Sunday while pumping out a flooded basement in the town of Tulln on the Danube.

'Dramatic' situations in Poland

Poland has also experienced extensive flooding, with Prime Minister Donald Tusk describing the situation around the town of Klodzko in the southwestern region of Lower Silesia as 'dramatic'.

DW



# Illegal Israeli settlers attack Palestinian school in West Bank; 10 killed in Gaza

Al-Awda Hospital in Nuseirat refugee camp confirmed fatalities resulting from an airstrike on Gaza camp

Ramallah, Palestine - Illegal Israeli settlers attacked a Palestinian school on Monday in the Mu'arrajat area, northwest of the West Bank city of Jericho, according to a local activist.

Students and teachers were assaulted by illegal settlers during the attack on the Arab al-Ka'abneh Primary School, injuring several people and besieging the school premises, Hassan Mleihat of the non-governmental Al-Baidar Organization for the Defence of Bedouin Rights said in a statement.

The Palestinian Red Crescent Society said three people were injured and treated by its medics after the attack.

The Palestinian Education Ministry denounced the settler attack, accusing the Israeli army and settlers of disrupting education and terrorising Palestinian children.

It called the attack a 'recurring violation that reveals the ugly face of the Israeli occupation and its disregard for children's rights'.

Tensions have been running high across the occupied West Bank amid Israel's devastating military offensive on Gaza since October 7 last year.

At least 704 people, including 159 children, have since been killed and more than 5,700 injured by Israeli fire in the West Bank, according to the Health Ministry.

The escalation followed a landmark opinion by the International Court of Justice on July 19, which declared Israel's decades-



Students and teachers were assaulted by illegal settlers during the attack on the Arab al-Ka'abneh Primary School, injuring several people

long occupation of Palestinian land unlawful and called for the evacuation of all settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

Meanwhile, a 27-year-old Palestinian man died early on Monday from injuries sustained

dren, and 13 others injured in an Israeli airstrike that struck a home in the central Gaza Strip on Monday, medical officials reported.

Al-Awda Hospital in the Nuseirat refugee camp confirmed the fatalities and the injuries resulting from the airstrike on a residential home in the camp.

Witnesses told Anadolu that rescue teams are actively searching for potential survivors beneath the debris of the house, which was completely destroyed in the attack.

Meanwhile, the Health Ministry in the enclave said on Monday that the overall death toll in Gaza Strip since last October 7 has surged to 41,226.

A ministry statement added that some 95,413 other people have been injured in the assault.

"Israeli forces killed 20 people and injured 76 others in three 'massacres' of families in the last 24 hours," the ministry said.

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

Israel has continued its brutal offensive on the Gaza Strip following an attack by the Palestinian group Hamas last Oct. 7, despite a UN Security Council resolution calling for an immediate ceasefire. The Israeli onslaught has displaced almost the entire population of the territory amid an ongoing blockade that has led to severe shortages of food, clean water and medicine. Anadolu Agency

*Rescue teams are actively searching for potential survivors beneath the debris of a house, which was completely destroyed in the attack in the central Gaza Strip on Monday*

in an Israeli drone strike on the city of Tubas in the northern West Bank, according to the official Palestinian news agency.

Saif Mithqal Abu Dawas succumbed to his injuries 10 days after the Israeli strike targeted a vehicle in Tubas on September 5, WAFA reported.

The attack resulted in the deaths of five Palestinians and injured several others. Abu Dawas had been receiving treatment at Tubas Turkish Hospital before his death.

In related developments, Israeli forces conducted a series of raids across the West Bank early on Monday, arresting several Palestinians.

Witnesses told Anadolu that the Israeli army carried out incursions in the cities of Nablus, Qalqilya, and Ramallah, as well as in the towns of Bethlehem and Hebron governorates.

At least ten Palestinians were killed, including women and chil-

## Israeli PM to dismiss defence minister

Jerusalem - Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is planning to dismiss Defence Minister Yoav Gallant and replace him with Gideon Sa'ar, leader of the National Right Party, according to Israeli media on Monday.

Disagreements between Netanyahu and Gallant have surfaced over the government's approach to the growing border escalation with Hezbollah in southern Lebanon as Gallant advocates exhausting diplomatic efforts to de-escalate tensions, while Netanyahu is pushing for a large-scale military campaign.

"Negotiations between Netanyahu's team and Sa'ar are ongoing to replace Gallant," the Israeli public broadcaster KAN said.

Sources in Netanyahu's Likud Party, however, denied that any formal agreement has been reached.

Sa'ar, a former Likud member,



founded his own party after splitting from Netanyahu in 2020 and has reemerged as a key figure in Israeli politics.

Gallant has been under fire from Netanyahu's right-wing allies, including far-right National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir.

"For many months, I have

been calling on Prime Minister Netanyahu to fire Gallant, and the time has come to do so immediately. A decision must be made in the north and Gallant is not the right man to lead it," Ben-Gvir posted on X.

The extremist minister argued that Gallant was not the right leader for military operations in

*Disagreements between Benjamin Netanyahu and Yoav Gallant have surfaced over the government's approach to the growing border escalation with Hezbollah*

Lebanon.

Sa'ar's potential entry into the Israeli government could signal new strategic approaches to both the Lebanon and Gaza conflicts.

**Lebanon buffer zone**

A top Israeli military commander, meanwhile, has suggested

the creation of an Israeli buffer zone in southern Lebanon to push back Hezbollah from the border.

Northern Command chief Major General Ori Gordin called during private meetings for authorisation to create a buffer zone in Lebanon under Israeli control, Israel Hayom newspaper reported on Monday.

"Gordin argued that current conditions are favourable for the IDF (army) to swiftly implement such a move," the daily said, citing the death of many Hezbollah fighters near the border over the past 11 months and the evacuation of civilians from southern Lebanon.

"This substantial decrease in civilian presence would allow the IDF (army) to execute the proposed manoeuvre (ground operation) more efficiently and rapidly," the newspaper said.

Anadolu Agency

## Jafar Hassan named new Jordan prime minister

Amman, Jordan - Jordan's King Abdullah II on Sunday appointed his chief-of-staff Jafar Hassan as the country's new prime minister.

Hassan is charged with forming a government after Jordan's parliamentary election, which was characterised by low turnout and major gains by the Islamist opposition. Hassan, 56, had served as planning minister before becoming King Abdullah II's chief of staff.

He replaces outgoing Prime Minister Bisher Khasawneh, who had headed the government since October 2020.

In a statement published by the royal palace, King Abdullah called on the newly appointed premier to 'mobilise all efforts to support the re-

silience of our Palestinian brothers' in the Gaza Strip, the occupied West Bank and Jerusalem.

He called on Hassan to 'work with all our energy through Arab and international movements to protect the Palestinian people, and stop the attacks and blatant violations of humanitarian principles and international law'.

In Jordan, the king has the final say on high-level appointments such as naming the prime minister, and can also make policy decisions, while the parliament's powers are limited. Israel has rejected claims of its forces committing war crimes in Gaza, insisting their campaign is directed against Hamas.

DW

## Germany begins expanded controls on land borders to control migration

Berlin, Germany - German police will be monitoring all of the country's land borders starting on Monday.

Until then, only travellers entering the country at the eastern and southern land borders were checked. Now, for at least the next six months, northern and western borders will also be monitored. This would include border crossings with Denmark, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg and France.

Germany is located in the centre of the Schengen Area, which comprises 29 European countries that have abolished internal border controls, with passports only required at external borders and airports.

The new border controls could lead to disruptions in the movement of people and goods. Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk has accused Germany of endangering the entire Schengen system with its comprehensive new controls.

As a rule, internal border controls in the Schengen Area are only carried out under certain conditions. However, the member states alone decide whether these conditions have been met, and they are then required only to notify the European Commission in Brussels.

The European Union can issue a reprimand for such border controls but has never yet done so. Rather, it generally confining it-



self to pointing out that border controls should remain the 'last resort', as EU Commission spokesperson Anitta Hipper re-

cently put it. Additionally, the controls should be temporary and only last for a maximum of three years, in accordance with

the recently amended Schengen Borders Code.

German Interior Minister Nancy Faeser has justified Ger-

many's decision by citing an overloaded asylum system and a high number of irregular migration. Germany isn't alone in extending its border controls in recent years. Eight other Schengen members currently check their internal borders.

Since 2006, there have been a total of 441 notifications of control measures in the Schengen states, with France as the front runner. Since the Islamist terrorist attacks of 2015 and 2016, the French government has reserved the right to permanently control all land borders. These controls have been repeatedly extended, with shifting justifications such as the threat of terrorism, migration pressure,

Russian espionage or major sporting events.

Germany has also been controlling its border with its southern neighbour Austria since 2015, saying that it wants to reduce the risk of terrorism and the number of asylum seekers entering the country. Austria uses the same justifications to control its borders with Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovenia.

Border controls reached their peak during the COVID-19 pandemic four years ago, when almost all Central European countries attempted to combat the spread of the virus by means of passport controls and partial border closures. DW

# Georgia elections: Will voters lean to the European Union or Russia?

Concerns mount as Georgia's election sparks fears of dictatorship, threatening EU aspirations

Tbilisi, Georgia - Fears are growing that next month's election in Georgia could bring the country to the brink of dictatorship, closing the door to accession to the European Union (EU) for the foreseeable future. The mountainous country in the South Caucasus region was formally granted EU candidate status in December, but Brussels quickly put the process on hold after Georgia passed a controversial 'foreign agents' law granting the state more power to go after non-governmental organisations and popular media outlets.

Critics have been deriding the legislation as 'the Russian law', as it resembles a foreign agent bill in Russia that allows the government to persecute opposition members.

Earlier this year on the campaign trail, former head of the governing Georgian Dream (GD) party and now prime minister, Irakli Kobakhidze, exacerbated fears when he announced that if he wins the October 26 election, he would ban leading opposition parties.

Kobakhidze was appointed prime minister by parliament in February, following a reshuffle of GD leadership that was criticised.

Now, he and other GD officials have spread fears of a 'global war party' that is allegedly conspiring to drag Georgia into a war with Russia. Observers have interpreted this as a rejection of the EU and the NATO military alliance, to which Georgia does not belong.

The Georgian opposition is distributed across five party al-

liances, all broadly liberal, conservative or social democratic, but united in their pro-European stance as well as rejection of President Vladimir Putin's regime in Russia.

Recently, these opposition parties agreed to set aside their differences during the election and unite to oppose the autocratic and anti-European threat they see in the GD party.

## Why Georgia changed tack?

Most believe billionaire Bidzina Ivanishvili is behind the change of course in Georgian foreign policy. The founder of the ruling GD party, Ivanishvili made his fortune in Russia and held the office of Georgian prime minister for a little over a year before departing from the limelight - if not from power - in 2013.

Now, he propagates an anti-Western credo at party rallies, promising that the 'violent attempts to externally enforce pseudo-liberal values' would soon be over.

Neither he nor staff at his party have responded to questions from foreign journalists. One GD supporter who also heads a large business close to the state told DW the GD party's critical remarks about the EU were 'just talk', and that Georgia was still on track to join the EU.

The manager, who wished to stay anonymous, added that the party was more interested in re-setting relations with Russia. Meanwhile, GD campaign posters show the EU flag and the party slogan: 'Towards Europe



only with peace, dignity and prosperity'.

## Ruling party faking it?

But overtures to Europe are a ruse, according to Shota Utashvili, senior fellow at the Geor-

gian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies.

"They want to blur the focus of the opposition voters," he said. "If both parties are for the EU, why bother going and voting for the opposition?"

The GD goal, he added, was to frame the campaign not as a choice between the EU and Russia but as one between war and peace.

Georgia's powerful northern neighbour dominated the Cauca-

sus region for centuries. In 2008, Moscow led a five-day-war against its independent southern neighbour and has since effectively turned two Georgian regions, Abkhazia and South Ossetia into Russian military bases.

Apart from Russia, only four UN member states that recognise Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states, while the overwhelming majority, including Germany, view them as territories of Georgia.

**The worst-case scenario is that GD falsifies the elections, leading to protests by young people. This could escalate into violent clashes, potentially resulting in casualties**

NODAR KHARSHILADZE

The loss of the two regions struck most Georgians as a national trauma - a 2020 survey conducted by Carnegie Europe and the Mikaladze Foundation found that 75%-80% of those questioned prioritised regaining control over Abkhazia and South Ossetia over gaining membership to NATO and the EU, while 9%-19% prioritised European and trans-Atlantic integration.

## Will Tbilisi become Minsk II?

While Western diplomats and

observers in Tbilisi fear that a two-thirds majority for the GD party would pave the way for a dictatorship, those active in civil society are more concerned with a buzzword currently making the rounds: 'Minsk II'. It sums up the fear many harbour that the capital could soon witness political repression similar to what has been seen in Belarus.

The fear of political violence, especially if the election becomes a tight race, does not appear unfounded.

"The worst-case scenario is that GD falsifies the elections, leading to protests by young people, especially students, who are not easily intimidated," said Nodar Kharshiladze, founder of the Georgian Analytical Center think tank. "This could escalate into violent clashes, potentially resulting in casualties."

George Melashvili from the pro-European think tank Europe Georgia Institute believes that GD party founder and honorary chair Ivanishvili has already sketched out what would happen in the worst case: "Total annihilation of the opposition, and consolidation of authoritarian power in a one-party state." Melashvili said he also fears violence in the streets following the election.

In late August, Sergey Narshkin, the head of Russia's Foreign Intelligence Service, made veiled threats of Russian intervention should the pro-Russian GD party not come out on top.

## PHASE-II OF AHMEDABAD OF METRO RAIL PROJECT LAUNCHED



Gandhinagar: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi accompanied by Gujarat Governor Acharya Devvrat and State Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel interacts with the youth during the inauguration of the Phase-II of Ahmedabad Metro Rail Project, in Gandhinagar on Monday (ANI)

## Mpox cases climb to 18 in Philippines, 5 recover

Manila, The Philippines - The number of mpox cases climbed to 18 in the Philippines, the Southeast Asian nation's health chief said on Monday.

Health Secretary Teodoro Herbosa said five of the 18 infected patients 'have recovered and released from isolation'.

The 11 other cases are undergoing home isolation.

"What's good is, that all the 18 cases we picked up have not yet spread the virus to others," Herbosa said.

He added the archipelago nation also saw dengue cases increase by 68% this year.

There are some 208,000 cases in the country.

The World Health Organization (WHO) declared mpox a

public health emergency of international concern on August 14, after the new variant that appears to spread more easily be-



tween people, was identified, emphasising that mpox is 'not the new COVID'.

According to the WHO, the African region is now experiencing an increase in cases, with 14 countries affected.

Almost all reported cases across Africa are in DR Congo, where the majority of the over 500 mpox deaths have been recorded.

Mpox infections cause flu-like symptoms and pus-filled lesions, and they spread through close physical contact. It can also be spread by touching virus-infected objects like bedding, clothing, and towels. The disease is usually mild, but it can be fatal.

Vaccines, which are thought to be an important measure in preventing the spread, arrived in DR Congo recently.

Anadolu Agency

## Rising interest in dinosaurs prompts expansion of studies in Japan

Tokyo, Japan - The interest among students and academics in dinosaur studies is growing in Japan and a university has decided to establish a full department to specialise in the subject.

Okayama University of Science in western Japan has had already one course on dinosaur studies but will now expand it to a full department, Tokyo-based Kyodo News reported on Monday.

Dinosaurs first appeared dur-

ing the Triassic period, between 243 and 233.23mn years ago, although the exact origin and timing of the evolution of dinosaurs is a subject of active research.

It will increase the number of lectures, opportunities for field work, as well as widening research to include areas such as biosciences, in addition to geology and palaeontology, it added.

"We aim to make it a new educational and research hub in western Japan for studying di-

nosours, and hope to use our strength as a comprehensive science university to advance research," said Mototaka Saneyoshi, an associate professor, who studies dinosaurs at the university.

It was in 2014 when the university's Department of Biosphere-Geosphere Science established a course on dinosaurs and palaeontology.

When the new department opens next spring, the university



will offer seats for 45 students, which is around 50% increase from the original course while the number of professors will be increased to eight, up from current four.

The dinosaur studies began when the department took over a fossil dig project in the Gobi Desert in Mongolia.

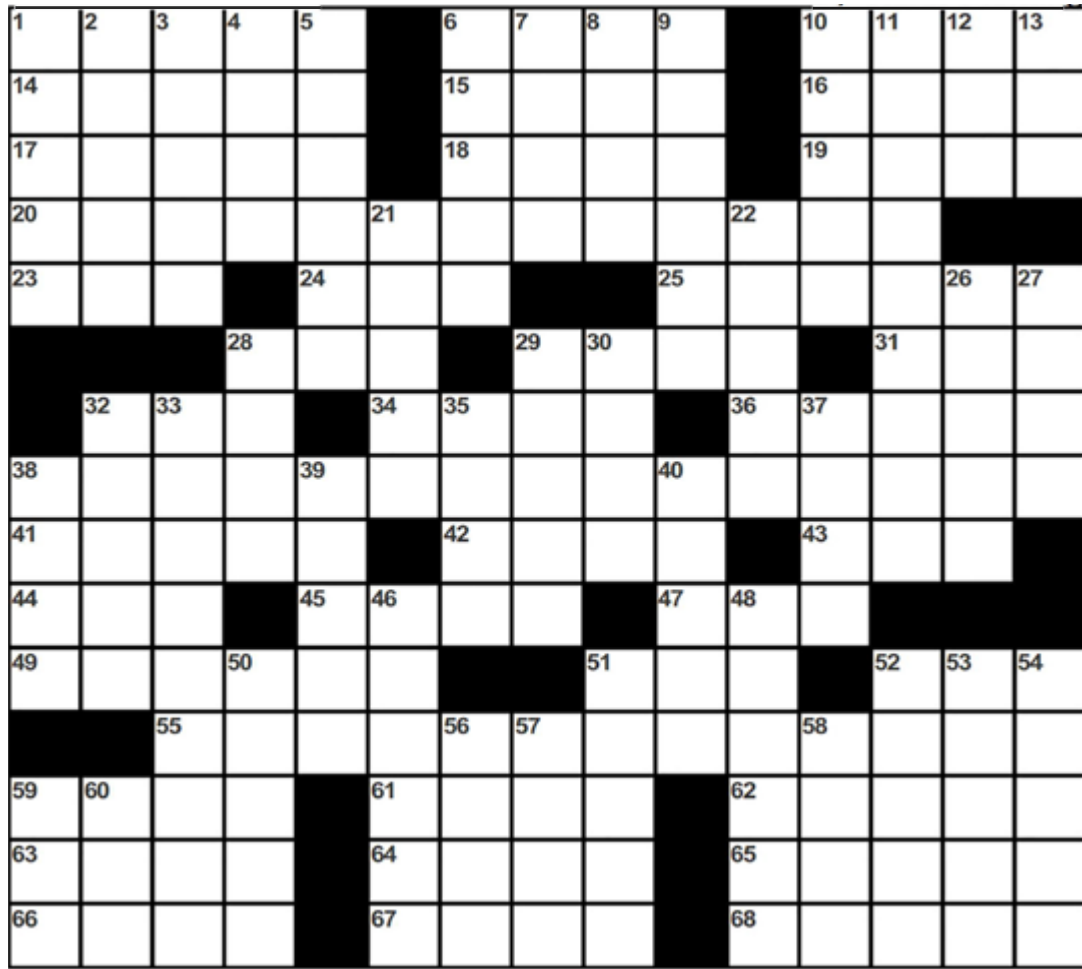
Its work discovered 'one of the world's largest dinosaur footprints and developed new age-determination methods'.

The university decided to upgrade the course as the number of people applying in recent years has increased to around two to three times the number of places available.

"We hope to discover new aspects of dinosaur ecology that we would not have been able to discover under the previous course," Saneyoshi said, as the university project in Gobi Desert makes majority of participants thus far.

Anadolu Agency

DAILY CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 1) Washroom vessel
- 6) "Back in Black" rock band
- 10) Guffaw syllables
- 14) Where you live
- 15) Aesopian also-ran
- 16) In a bit, in poems
- 17) Allots, with "out"
- 18) Israeli airline
- 19) "Fancy" artist Azalea
- 20) "America's Dead Sea"
- 23) Sci-fi visitors
- 24) Long in the tooth
- 25) Cosigners for minors
- 28) Sign of a full house
- 29) Fling the horsehide
- 31) Airline-regulating org.
- 32) "J. Edgar" org.
- 34) River through Poland
- 36) Larger-than-life sorts
- 38) Literature in 16-point type, say
- 41) O. Henry literary device
- 42) \_ Minor (northern constellation)
- 43) Takes too much, for short
- 44) Sty female
- 45) Pet food brand
- 47) Op... (footnote abbr.)

- 49) Flat occupant
  - 51) Intended goal
  - 52) Wimbledon do-over
  - 55) Origin-of-the-universe premise
  - 59) Meets with Turing
  - 62) Alternative to "bottled"
  - 63) Like some surgery
  - 64) Hefty volume
  - 65) Cursor controller
  - 66) In the altogether
  - 67) One-dish meal
  - 68) Features of winding roads
- DOWN**
- 1) Cub Scout's award
  - 2) Scrap, as a mission
  - 3) Does a cobbler's job
  - 4) Creative spark
  - 5) Trojan War sage
  - 6) In the future
  - 7) Match a bet
  - 8) "Oh, fudge!"
  - 9) Last place, in baseball lingo
  - 10) 17-syllable poem
  - 11) Spongy kind of cake
  - 12) One who won't share
  - 13) Your choice

- 21) Fore-and-aft-rigged vessel
- 22) Wing it
- 26) Aquarium array
- 27) Talk fresh to
- 28) Capricorn, e.g.
- 29) Will figures
- 30) Starbucks array
- 32) \_ Islands (autonomous part of Denmark)
- 33) Kodiak, for one
- 35) Conga or bongo
- 37) Old geezer
- 38) Letter to Santa
- 39) Looking over
- 40) Not said explicitly
- 46) Box score entries
- 48) Returnee's declaration
- 50) Flight seating option
- 51) Nixon's first No. 2
- 52) Yoga position
- 53) Demagnetize, perhaps
- 54) Does data entry
- 56) Oodles
- 57) "Hello" tag datum
- 58) Mireille of "The Killing"
- 59) Cry aloud
- 60) Newsworthy time

NOTE PAD



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

Take a long, hard look around before you take any action. If you've been feeling like it's time to resolve a problem in your personal life, you could well be right. You're at your most critical, analytical and insightful right now. But don't rush into it. It's important that you really understand the situation before you start in on changing it. This is as true for your finances as it is for your love life.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

Make a real effort. Sweat, sweat, sweat! Then sweat a little more. If you're doing this work literally, you'll be building important muscle groups in your body. If you're doing this work metaphorically, you'll be building important aspects in your character. You'll be a tough customer by the end of the day, and that is exactly what you need to handle your business.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

You're a curious one, all right. You want to know how this works and how that works. This curiosity about the world around you is one of your most valuable assets. It guarantees that you'll stay interested and engaged (and thereby fulfilled) your whole life long. So get out there and find answers to some of your questions today!



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

Some days you're so darned analytical it seems as if you could take any old problem and analyze it down to its most important component parts, figure out how to fix it, and then just do it. That's great. Whether it's a work problem or a domestic issue, you're going to bring these analytical skills to bear today. Thank goodness for you!



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

Circumstances beyond your control could cause you to feel stressed today, so you'll have to get some perspective. Think about it this way: if these things are beyond your control, then what can you really do about it anyway? Accept what you can't change and stop beating your head against the wall. Your attitude about the day and your attitude about what happens today will be mismatched. There is some disappointment in the air.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

If work were a camping trip, you'd be in charge of the grill. Why? For one thing, everybody trusts you when it comes to handling fire. You can light it, you can keep it burning, you can make sure it doesn't get so big that it sets the paper plates and tablecloths on fire. Further, people trust you to distribute the hot dogs fairly, equitably, and fully cooked. Yep, it's no wonder you're the office equivalent of the grill chef. Who else is as trustworthy as you?



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

If you're painting your bedroom, don't go back to the drawing board. You've spent weeks picking out the right colors, and now the furniture is standing in the hallway and the base coat is dry. Do the second coat and get to work on the detailing. It may take more time than you expect. And yes, you picked the right shade of orange to match that royal blue! It looks good! So finish the project already.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

Nobody ever said it was going to be easy. Okay, maybe somebody did say that, but they were wrong, and if you believed them, you could be in for a little wake-up call. But don't worry. If things were easy, life would be so boring! It's much better this way. You'll be much more energized and engaged, and that will make the whole prospect more interesting.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

You have never been particularly immature, but lately you've been noticing a certain shift in yourself. This change could really crystallize when you see yourself behaving in an unfamiliar way in a familiar situation. Maybe you're calmer. Maybe you don't take things as personally. Maybe you stay objective. Maybe you're seeing what it's like to be an adult.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

Make a real effort. Sweat, sweat, sweat! Then sweat a little more. If you're doing this work literally, you'll be building important muscle groups in your body. If you're doing this work metaphorically, you'll be building important aspects in your character. You'll be a tough customer by the end of the day, and that is exactly what you need to handle your business.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

What is it you want? Today is a very good day to ask yourself this question, because it is very likely you're going to get whatever you want. On the other hand, if you don't feel like posing that question, you can just sit back and see what you get. Chances are good that it is what you wanted, whether you knew it or not. So be open to what comes your way and enjoy!



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

You have never been particularly immature, but lately you've been noticing a certain shift in yourself. This change could really crystallize when you see yourself behaving in an unfamiliar way in a familiar situation. Maybe you're calmer. Maybe you don't take things as personally. Maybe you stay objective. Maybe you're seeing what it's like to be an adult.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

01. Swahili is NOT one of the two official languages of which of these countries?  
 A. Ethiopia  
 B. Kenya  
 C. Tanzania  
 D. Uganda

02. Which of these wedding anniversaries is the earliest?  
 A. Cotton  
 B. Tin  
 C. Sapphire  
 D. Pearl

03. Leonardo di Caprio played multi-millionaire Howard Hughes in which film?  
 A. Money, Money  
 B. The Firm  
 C. The Aviator  
 D. Gimme, Gimme, Gimme

Answers: 1.A 2.A 3.C

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

E	Y	R	E
O	P	O	H
A	L	O	T
H	U	S	S

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 Boggler Classic game uses a 4 x 4 matrix. Words are valued at one point for each letter in excess of two letters. A three letter word is worth one point, a four letter word is worth two points, and so on. Valid words must be at least three letters long.

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

DO YOU SUDOKU?

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

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

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

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

# LONG RANGERS SILENCE WOLVES

Goals from Schar and Barnes propel Newcastle to comeback victory at Molineux

Wolverhampton, England - Newcastle United fought back from a halftime deficit with two long-range strikes in the space of five minutes to beat Wolverhampton Wanderers 2-1 at Molineux on Sunday and move into third place in the Premier League.

Fabian Schar's speculative effort took a deflection to draw Newcastle level after Wolves captain Mario Lemina's 36th-minute goal had put the hosts ahead at the break as they chased a first league success of the season.

But while there might have been an element of fortune about Schar's 75th-minute goal, there was no luck involved as Harvey Barnes thrashed home a spectacular winner five minutes later.

Both efforts came from outside the penalty area and dramatically turned around the outcome after struggling Wolves had dominated most of the encounter.

Wolves remain in the bottom three with a single point from their opening four fixtures of the



Newcastle United's Harvey Barnes (front) celebrates with Bruno Guimaraes and Fabian Schar (R) after scoring against Wolves on Sunday

*While there might have been an element of fortune about Fabian Schar's 75th-minute goal, there was no luck involved as Harvey Barnes thrashed home a spectacular winner five minutes later*

campaign.

Newcastle advanced to 10 points, behind second-placed Arsenal on goal difference and two behind Manchester City.

The visitors began the encounter strongly and saw Anthony Gordon speed down the left flank before hitting the upright with an effort from a tight

angle in the 24th minute.

But it proved the catalyst for Wolves to wrestle control of the game and go ahead after Jorgen Strand Larsen had broken on the counter attack, hit a square ball across the Newcastle goalmouth that Joao Gomes generously dummied to allow Lemina a simple tap-in. Strand Larsen sees inches away from doubling the hosts' lead eight minutes into the second half but hit the bottom of the upright with his effort, while Newcastle's goalkeeper Nick

Pope made two important saves before the match turned on its head.

Schar hit his shot from well outside the box, but it caught the top of the head of Wolves defender Craig Dawson and flew past Sam Johnstone and into the top corner for the equaliser.

Barnes, who struggled last season with a foot injury, then made room for himself by accelerating inside from the left before firing off a driving effort to score a sumptuous winner.

## We lack a bit of belief in the final third: Postecoglou

London, - It was perhaps hardly surprising that a tight north London derby would be settled by a set piece, even less so that it was Arsenal who profited from what is becoming an Achilles heel for Tottenham Hotspur under Ange Postecoglou.

When Bukayo Saka delivered a corner in the 64th minute, Arsenal defender Gabriel was left unopposed to thump a header into the Tottenham net and it proved enough to earn Mikel Arteta's side a 1-0 victory.

Three of Arsenal's last four Premier League goals against Tottenham have come following the beginning of last season Tottenham have conceded 18 goals from set piece excluding penalties, a tally only exceeded by Nottingham Forest.

So it was no wonder Postecoglou was asked again about the weakness that is undermining his work since taking over.

"I know, for some reason, people think I don't care about set pieces, and it's a narrative that you can keep going on for ages and ages," the Australian told reporters on Sunday following a defeat that left his side on four points from four games.

"I understand that, like I said, we work on them all the time, like we do with every other team, you know that (Arsenal) are a threat. For the most part, we handled them really well today, but we switched off for one.

"It's my burden to carry mate, and I'm happy to do that. Like I've always said, for me there's a bigger picture, there's a play here that's much more important than the finer details of us getting to where we want to."

Before the derby, Postecoglou claimed, with some justification, that his side's haul of four points from three games could just as easily have been nine after good

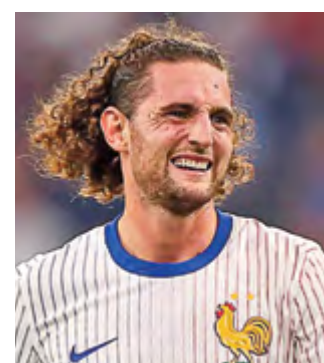
performances against Leicester City, Everton and Newcastle United. Initially against Arsenal, Tottenham were fluent again, but they ran out of ideas and looked vulnerable to the kind of sucker-punch Gabriel eventually delivered.

Worryingly, after some early endeavour, Tottenham's attack was easily handled by Arsenal's street-wise team despite the Gunners missing Declan Rice and captain Martin Odegaard.

Son Heung-min faded and new 65 million pounds signing Dominic Solanke cut a frustrated figure in attack.



Ange Postecoglou



Adrien Rabiot

## France midfielder Rabiot set to join Marseille

Paris, France - France midfielder Adrien Rabiot looked set to join Olympique de Marseille as a free agent after the Ligue 1 club said both parties had reached an agreement.

"Olympique de Marseille announce that they have reached an agreement with Adrien Rabiot to sign the French international midfielder," OM said in a statement overnight. "The player will sign for OM subject to a medical."

The 29-year-old, who has 48 caps for France, spent five years in Turin after leaving Paris St-Germain in 2019.

Rabiot, who has reportedly been a transfer target for Premier League clubs, including Manchester United, had a brief spell at Manchester City's academy before he joined PSG where he made his senior debut.

He won a Serie A title, two Italian Cups and one Italian Super Cup at Juventus. Rabiot played five times at the Euro 2024 in Germany - where France were knocked out by eventual winners Spain in the semi-finals.

Marseille are second in Ligue 1 under new manager Roberto de Zerbi and Rabiot will join summer signings including Mason Greenwood, Neal Maupay and Pierre-Emile Hojbjerg.

## We looked better organised and gave very, very little away

London, England - Arsenal's growing capacity to win without being at their best, as they did in a hard-fought derby at Tottenham Hotspur on Sunday, could prove the difference as they attempt to finally overhaul Premier League champions Manchester City.

Manager Mikel Arteta said his side were rewarded for doing "ugly things" to triumph thanks to yet another goal conceded from a corner by their bitter local rivals.

Gabriel Magalhaes' second-half header was enough to secure a crucial 1-0 win over Spurs, marking their third straight north London derby victory away from home. And, having nearly blown a 3-0 lead before clinging on for a 3-2 win in their last meeting in April, Arteta said he saw signs of progress in how the Gunners managed the closing stages.

The Arsenal manager said he was far calmer on Sunday "because after 0-3 to 2-3 (in the last game) you say, this cannot happen".

He told reporters: "They threw everything at it, they tried today but I think we looked more composed, better organised and gave very, very little away."

Having lost captain Martin Odegaard to injury and Declan



Mikel Arteta with Arsenal's set-piece coach Nicolas Jover

Rice through suspension, with new signing Mikel Merino yet to make his debut due to a fractured shoulder, Arsenal's makeshift midfield was largely assured against a wasteful Spurs side.

Arteta hailed the depth of the team and their ability to grind out results, a quality that was arguably lacking at times in their recent title challenges.

"In order to love the game and win, you have to do a lot of things that sometimes people call them ugly and enjoying doing those ugly things is a big compliment for this team," he said.

A north London derby will always feel like a must-win game, but victory felt almost essential for Arsenal who before kickoff trailed Manchester City by five points.

## Arsenal will be a big test for us, says Atalanta's Gasperini

Bergamo, Italy - Atalanta manager Gian Piero Gasperini acknowledged that the Champions League match against Arsenal will be a difficult challenge on Thursday, noting that his team had not yet reached peak form.

Despite a mediocre start to the season for the Europa League champions, Gasperini's side secured a 3-2 victory against Fiorentina at home in Serie A on Sunday, coming from behind twice during the match.

However, the 66-year-old is not optimistic despite the result, as they are set to face last season's Premier League runners-up at home in the new Champions League format on Thursday.

"It's not just their aerial power, the way they run, move the ball and have fantastic dynamism," Gasperini told DAZN.

"Arsenal are a great reference point in England, they dominated the Premier League last season along with Manchester City and Liverpool.

"We have never played against them and I think they will be a big test for us because of their intensity, quality and pace. We're not used to teams with those characteristics, this could be a problem for us."

Gasperini expressed frustra-



Gian Piero Gasperini

*Arsenal are a great reference point in England, they dominated the Premier League last season along with Manchester City and Liverpool*

tion with the recent international break, noting that it had complicated efforts to prepare the team.

"Having the break for international duty was not helpful, as so many of them left again straight away," he said.

"I think first of all this team needs to find solidity, get those mechanisms running smoothly," said Gasperini

## PSG condemn racism aimed at Mendes

Paris, France - Paris St-Germain said Nuno Mendes had their full support after the defender was subjected to racist and abusive messages and comments on social media following a 3-1 home win over Brest in Ligue 1.

Ousmane Dembele's double and Fabian Ruiz's strike earned PSG a comeback win on Satur-

day. Brest had taken the lead just before the half hour mark after a foul by Mendes on Ludovic Ajorque resulted in a penalty which was converted by Romain del Castillo.

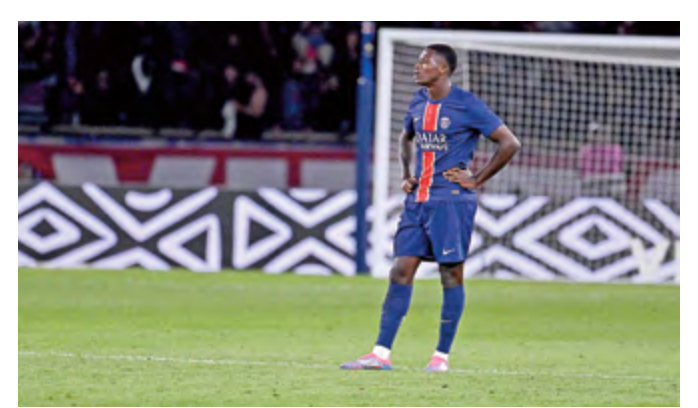
Portuguese left-back Mendes, who is Black, posted a screenshot of a racist message sent to him on social media and the club

said they are working with authorities to hold those responsible accountable.

"Paris St-Germain doesn't tolerate racism, anti-Semitism or any other form of discrimination," the club said in a statement late on Sunday. "The racial insults directed at Nuno Mendes are totally unacceptable.

"We stand firmly by Nuno and all those affected and we are working with the relevant authorities and associations to ensure those responsible are held accountable for their actions."

PSG face Girona in the Champions League on Wednesday and travel to Stade de Reims on Saturday in the French League.



Nuno Mendes

# YAMAL INSPIRES BARCA

Youngster's double leads Catalan giants to big win against Girona

Girona, Spain - Barcelona's Lamine Yamal struck twice in the first half to help deliver a commanding 4-1 win at Girona on Sunday that extended their perfect start to the LaLiga season with a fifth consecutive win.

Yamal gave Barca a two-goal lead with strikes in the 30th and 37th minutes while Dani Olmo extended their advantage right after the break with a first-time effort from close range.

Pedri scored the fourth with a tap-in in the 64th minute while Girona substitute Cristhian Stuani netted a consolation goal in the 80th, six minutes before Barca were reduced to 10 men when forward Ferran Torres was given a straight red card for a nasty studs-up challenge on Yaser Asprilla.

Hansi Flick's Barcelona top the LaLiga standings with 15 points, four ahead of Real Madrid and Villarreal. Girona are seventh on seven points.

"It was clear for us that we had to start the season well," Pedri told Movistar Plus. "Coach Flick insisted with us about that in the close season, that from the very first moment we had to push hard because that's how you win leagues, distancing ourselves from our rivals from the start."

It was another dominant performance by Flick's impressive Barcelona who outplayed Girona throughout the match and could have won by a wider margin.

Girona looked overwhelmed in the face of Barca's relentless high-press which caused the home side's defenders to make several mistakes, gifting Barca opportuni-



Barcelona's Lamine Yamal celebrates after scoring against Girona on Sunday

ties. David Lopez made a school-boy error when he was pressured by teenager Yamal who stole the ball on the edge of the box before firing an unstoppable strike.

Barca kept pushing and Yamal extended their lead, slotting home a rebound from a free kick just inside the post.

Barca were commanding and working like a well oiled machine, frustrating almost every Girona effort to counter and not allowing the opposition to break the lines with forward passes into pockets of space. They extended their lead a minute after the break when Jules Kounde delivered a long pass through that Olmo took in his

*Coach Flick insisted with us in the close season that from the very first moment we had to push hard because that's how you win leagues, distancing ourselves from our rivals*

PEDRI

stride, bursting into the box before unleashing a bullet strike past the goalkeeper.

Girona goalkeeper Paulo Gazzaniga made a string of saves to deny efforts by Robert Lewandowski and Yamal but there was little he could do to stop Pedri from scoring the fourth.

Substitute Marc Casado fired a pass through the middle that found Pedri unmarked as he ghosted behind the defence before running past the goalkeeper and tapping the ball into the empty net.

## Canada beat Britain to reach Davis Cup quarters

Manchester, Britain - Canada powered into the quarterfinals of the Davis Cup for the third straight year with a victory over Britain on Sunday, while the Netherlands advanced despite a narrow defeat by defending champions Italy.

Needing only one match win in Manchester to eliminate the hosts and top Group D, Canada got the job done in double quick time as Denis Shapovalov dismissed Dan Evans 6-0 7-5 before celebrating by eating ice cream on court.

"It definitely wasn't easy to play against so many Britons," said Shapovalov, who kept his cool in front of a partisan crowd of around 15,000 fans.

"I've experienced it in the past as well... I just tried to stay focused, tried to stay in my bubble and tried to stay ahead as much as I could because I could feel Dan getting pumped up and the crowd getting pumped up."

Felix Auger-Aliassime gave the 2022 winners an unassailable 2-0 lead by outlasting British number one Jack Draper 7-6(8) 7-5 in a high-quality clash.

Britain then ensured the crowd had something to cheer about as Henry Paten and Neal Skupski cruised past Gabriel Diallo and Alexis Galarneau 7-5 6-4.



Atletico Madrid's Julian Alvarez celebrates after scoring against Valencia

## Gallagher, Alvarez strike as Atletico blank struggling Valencia

Madrid, Spain - Atletico Madrid cruised to a convincing 3-0 home win over bottom side Valencia on Sunday in LaLiga thanks to goals from Conor Gallagher, Antoine Griezmann and Julian Alvarez.

Marcos Llorente and Samuel Lino went close in the first half before Atletico took the lead in the 39th minute when new signing Gallagher finished into the bottom corner after latching on to a delightful pass from Rodrigo De Paul that was slipped through the legs of defender Cristhian Mosquera.

Alexander Sorloth, another summer signing for Diego Simeone's revamped side, also created a couple of dangerous chances only to be denied by goalkeeper Giorgi Mamardashvili.

Valencia fought hard for an equaliser, with Javi Guerra's long-range effort going wide, but they were unable to prevent Griezmann from finding the net after Lino's header fell into his path nine minutes after the break.

Another new recruit, Alvarez, put the icing on the cake with his first goal in the Spanish top flight after joining from Manchester City, when he slotted home Ro-



Conor Gallagher

drigo Riquelme's cross in the 93rd minute.

"I didn't feel any pressure (to score), I simply say that the goal happens as a result of the game and you have to be prepared for when the opportunity comes," Alvarez told Spanish TV.

"We're doing well as a group, we're getting off to a good start. Now we have Champions League games coming up and we have to keep working to keep this momentum going," he added.

Atletico, who are unbeaten this season, moved into second place, level on 11 points with Real Madrid and four behind leaders Barcelona. They face RB Leipzig in the Champions League on Thursday.

## Dumfries strike helps champions Inter escape with draw at Monza

Monza, Italy - Champions Inter Milan were knocked off the Serie A summit on Sunday after they came from behind to play out a surprise 1-1 draw at lowly Monza.

Monza took the lead in the 81st minute through substitute forward Dany Mota, who headed the ball into the top corner before Denzel Dumfries levelled for Inter in the 88th from close range.

Inter, who drew at Genoa in their season opener followed by wins against Lecce and Atalanta, dropped to second in the table with eight points after four games.

They are one point behind Napoli, who beat Cagliari 4-0.

Simone Inzaghi's men next travel to Manchester City on Wednesday to kick off their Champions League campaign before they host AC Milan in the league next Sunday.

There were no early signs of trouble for Inter, who were pa-



Inter Milan's Denzel Dumfries celebrates after scoring against Monza on Sunday

tiently building play from the back, controlling the pace of the game.

Lautaro Martinez should have put them in front inside the opening 10 minutes, when he received a perfect cross from Federico Dimarco.

His header from the centre of the box, however, sailed slightly above bar before Dimarco and Davide Frattesi also had their chances early on.

## Napoli move to top of Serie A with win against Cagliari

Cagliari, Italy - Napoli went top of Serie A with 4-0 victory at Cagliari on Sunday, thanks to goals from Giovanni Di Lorenzo, Khvicha Kvaratskhelia, Romelu Lukaku and Alessandro Buongiorno.

After beginning the season with a shock loss to Hellas Verona, Antonio Conte's side have secured three consecutive wins. Napoli took the lead with a fortuitous shot from Di Lorenzo, whose attempt from outside the box deflected off Cagliari defender Yerry Mina and rolled into the far corner after 18 minutes.

The match was suspended for several minutes in the first half after fans from both sides threw objects at each other and fireworks onto the field.

Cagliari launched several attacks in the early part of the second half, but Napoli goalkeeper Alex Meret made several impressive saves to maintain his side's lead.

In the 66th minute, Lukaku's through ball set up Kvaratskhelia



Romelu Lukaku and Khvicha Kvaratskhelia were both on target for Napoli

for a second goal, and the Belgian striker added a third four minutes later following a defensive error.

Deep into stoppage time, Buongiorno headed in the fourth goal from a corner.

### Conte hails Lukaku

Napoli coach Antonio Conte heaped praise on Lukaku for his

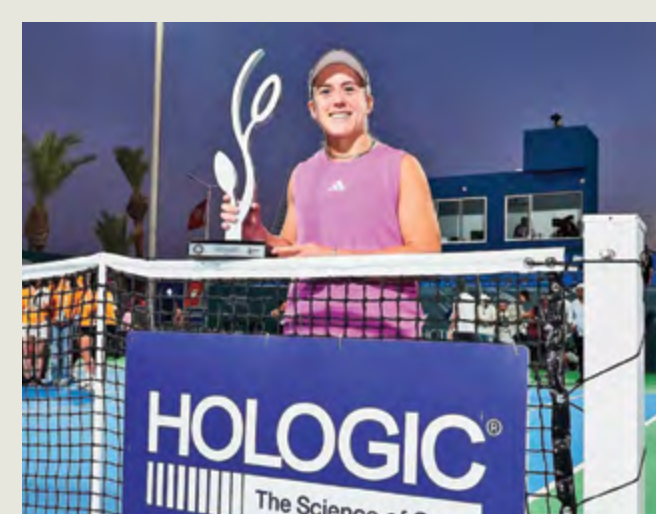
performance in the victory and said the striker was essential to the club's hopes of success this season. "I have always said that I wanted Romelu at Inter Milan, had also requested him at Chelsea before he went to Manchester United, because he is an atypical striker," Conte told Sky Sport Italia.

## Sonay Kartal wins Jasmin Open title in Monastir

Monastir, Tunisia - British qualifier Sonay Kartal captured her first WTA Tour title on Sunday, defeating Rebecca Sramkova of Slovakia 6-3, 7-5 at the Jasmin Open Tunisia in Monastir, Tunisia.

It was the first WTA singles final for both Kartal, ranked No. 151 in the world, and Sramkova, No. 136.

Each player converted 50 percent of her break-point opportunities, with Kartal going 7 of 14 and Sramkova 5 of 10. Sramkova committed 39 unforced errors to 18 for Kartal.



Sonay Kartal celebrates with the trophy

The match lasted a minute under two hours.

Kartal, 22, had never advanced past the quarterfinals at the tour level until this week. She did not drop a set after losing the first set in the main draw to fifth-seeded Jaqueline Cristian. Kartal reached the third round at Wimbledon, losing to Coco Gauff 6-4, 6-0.

### Frech champion

Meanwhile in Guadalajara Open Akron final, Poland's Magdalena Frech, the No. 5 seed, had little trouble getting

past qualifier Olivia Gadecki of Australia, coming away with a 7-6(5), 6-4 victory.

Frech won 30 of 44 first-serve points and converted 3 of 5 break points en route to her first career singles title on the WTA Tour.

She trailed 5-4 in the first-set tiebreaker before winning three points in a row to head into the second set on a high note.

Gadecki was in unfamiliar territory, as she was playing in her first career final. The 22-year-old finished with two aces against four double faults.



McLaren's Oscar Piastri (R) won the Azerbaijan GP on Sunday while teammate Lando Norris finished fourth

## Ferrari are our closest competition at the minute, says Norris

London, England - Lando Norris pointed to Ferrari as a bigger threat than Red Bull after his McLaren team roared to the top of the Formula One constructors' standings for the first time in more than a decade.

Oscar Piastri's impressive victory and Norris' fine fourth place with fastest lap, from 15th on the grid, in Azerbaijan on Sunday catapulted McLaren 20 points clear of faltering champions Red Bull.

Ferrari, who had Carlos Sainz crash out with Red Bull's Sergio Perez on the penultimate lap while fighting for third, were the second highest scorers with Charles Leclerc runner-up from pole. The Italian team, whose last constructors' title was in 2008, are third overall and now only 31 points adrift of the reigning champions.

"Coming into these three races we've got now -- Monza, here and Singapore - we knew our main contenders would be Ferrari," said Norris, second overall and now 59 points behind Red Bull's Max Verstappen with seven races remaining. "They've been our strongest competition

lately... between Carlos and Charles, they've been two guys who've been performing well and putting us under pressure."

Leclerc won in Monza, after McLaren had locked out the

*Ferrari have been our strongest competition lately... between Carlos and Charles, they've been two guys who've been performing well*

LANDO NORRIS

front row of the grid, and then secured pole position in Baku for the fourth year in a row. Singapore is next up and Sainz won there last year, with Norris second.

"They are performing well and they seem like our closest competition at the minute. So from a constructors' point of view, we're probably more worried about Ferrari than we are about Red Bull," the Briton told Sky Sports television.

# FABULOUS AT FUJI

Al Harthy, Rossi and Martin secure sensational FIA WEC podium finish in Japan

Muscat - Ahmad al Harthy, Valentino Rossi and Maxime Martin celebrated a joyous return to the FIA World Endurance Championship podium at Fuji Speedway in Japan on Sunday with an outstanding performance to climb through the order to third place in LMGT3.

Taking their maiden FIA WEC silverware together back in April at Imola in Italy, the Team WRT trio has been striving hard to return to the LMGT3 podium ever since and during the weekend's 6 Hours of Fuji they delivered in style.

Oman's Al Harthy qualified the No.46 car 12th on the class grid, the track not suiting the strengths of the BMW M4 in qualifying trim, but a fabulous race from all three drivers and an excellent strategy enabled the squad to finish the race only three seconds shy of second place, and just seven seconds adrift of the LMGT3 winner.

Al Harthy took the start of the race from the sixth row of the LMGT3 grid and after a terrific opening he quickly gained four places, scything into the top eight. He then took seventh prior to the appearance of the Safety Car due to an incident among the Hypercar class at the start of lap two.

During the opening hour of the race the Omani performed superbly and he concluded the first 60 minutes of racing in a very competitive fifth position, within 16 seconds of the LMGT3 lead. After the first round of pit-stops Al Harthy stayed aboard the No.46 BMW M4 and the progress continued.

Making no mistakes, and look-



Oman's Ahmad al Harthy (C) celebrates with Valentino Rossi (L) and Maxime Martin on the podium

ing after the Goodyear tyres well, the OQ, Oman Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, Omantel, Experience Oman and BMW Oman supported driver made his way into the podium placings and by the end of hour two he was an incredibly strong third, before then moving into second - a remarkable double stint.

Martin took over behind the wheel next and continued the podium challenge, closing on the race leading No.92 Porsche 911 and holding second place as the race reached the halfway point. After the third round of stops was complete, he was third and the

*I'm really, really over the moon! This was one of the hardest races we had to do to achieve this result, by far it was a very, very challenging race but everybody drove extremely well*

AHMAD AL HARTHY

bid for silverware began to be solidified. Hour four provided the first mileage of the race for Rossi and he delivered some exceptional driving too. Running in eighth when initially taking the car over, he passed two rivals in one corner and took sixth be-

fore soon progressing back into the podium placings - ending hour four in third.

The Italian pushed on but as the penultimate hour of action neared its conclusion, Rossi was edged back to fourth by the No.54 Ferrari 296 of compatriot

Davide Rigon. Pitting inside the final hour, Martin got back behind the wheel of the BMW and with 50 minutes to run he emerged in seventh before moving back into the top four as rivals started to take their last stops.

With 40 minutes to go, Martin was within 15 seconds of the podium, the top three actually running nose-to-tail, and the hope was the lead trio would slow each other up defending, enabling Martin to make up chunks of time.

Lapping more than a second faster than the cars ahead at that point, with half an hour to go the gap had reduced to around eight seconds. Not putting a wheel wrong, Martin caught the third placed No.59 McLaren with just under 20 minutes remaining on the clock and on lap 184 he was alongside his rival - sealing the move to take third.

Just under five seconds shy of second position with a quarter of an hour to go, anything more looked unlikely with the pace of the new top three then pretty evenly matched. Martin did close some more before taking the flag in third - a fantastic return to the podium for the No.46 BMW M4.

"What an unbelievable result - I'm really, really over the moon! This was one of the hardest races we had to do to achieve this result, by far it was a very, very challenging race but everybody drove extremely well. I'm delighted with the way I started the race and was able to overtake all those cars, that was crucial to being able to make our strategy work," said Al Harthy.

"Some of the Safety Cars and Full Course Yellows did work somewhat towards our direction, but others went against us. More importantly, everybody didn't put a single foot wrong. It's great to be back on the podium and celebrate with all of the sponsors and partners from Oman who attended the race, including the Ambassador to Japan, His Excellency Dr Mohammed Said Al Busaidi."

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# SLIM IS IN

THE SECRET TO A TONED, SLENDER WAIST MIGHT BE RIGHT IN YOUR LIVING ROOM – YOU DON'T NEED TO VISIT A GYM TO ATTAIN AN HOUR-GLASS FIGURE

A sculpted waistline isn't just the result of workouts, it's also heavily influenced by what's on your plate. Nutrition and exercise go hand in hand, and when combined right, they become a powerful duo that can accelerate your journey to achieving a slimmer waist.

By choosing whole foods, minimising processed products, and maintaining a balanced diet, you not only fuel your body for effective workouts but also help reduce the fat layers that cover your mid-section.

Opt for fresh fruits, vegetables, lean proteins, and whole grains. These provide essential nutrients and fibre that help keep you full and energised. At the same time, stay hydrated, limit sugar and salt intake, avoid sugary drinks, consume healthy fats and proteins and take up mindful eating.

The following waist exercises

can be helpful to combine your diet with exercise towards achieving a slimmer waistline:

### Hip Bridge Abduction

Hip bridge abduction targets the gluteal muscles, which are the muscles that make up your buttocks. It also helps tone inner and outer thigh muscles. You can also place a resistance band above

your knees for extra pressure.

#### Steps:

- On a mat, bend knees with feet flat.
- Arms at sides, palms down.
- Lift hips slightly, aligning knees with ankles.
- Hold for two seconds, then lower hips.
- Do three sets of 15 reps with 30-second rests.



### Side Lying Oblique Crunches

Side lying oblique crunches are an effective bodyweight exercise that targets the oblique muscles on the sides of your abdomen. This exercise helps tone waist, contributing to a more defined and sculpted core.

#### Steps:

- Lie on your right side, legs stacked, right forearm supporting your head.
- Engage your core, and lift your left leg and upper body, bringing your left elbow to your left knee.
- Lower back to the starting position, repeat for desired reps, then switch sides

### V-Up

The V-Up is a challenging waist slimmer workout that targets your entire core. It helps build strength, stability, and endurance in your core while improving balance and coordination.

#### Steps:



- Lie flat on your back, arms extended above your head, legs straight.
- Simultaneously lift your upper body and legs, reaching your hands toward your toes.
- Lower back to the starting position and repeat for 20 reps.

### Bicycle Crunches

It is one of the best middle body exercises to improve your core strength and work your oblique muscles. Remaining stable

through the hips during the rotation and drawing in the belly will help create a toned waist.

#### Steps:

- Lie on your back with shins parallel to the floor.
- Place hands behind the head, elbows open.
- Extend your right leg at a 45-degree angle.
- Cross your right elbow to your left knee, exhaling.
- Alternate sides continuously for 1 minute.



VANDANA CHAWLA  
**NUTRITION YOU**

## SUNSHINE VITAMIN

When it comes to nutrients for growing kids, we often overlook, the sunshine vitamin - Vitamin D. It gets less importance, due to the known fact, that it's a sun-shine vitamin, and exposure to sunlight will provide good amount of Vitamin D.

Children, 10 years and above, experience growth spurts, wherein, there is rapid increase in height, weight, along with hormonal changes. This increases the need for certain nutrients, and vitamin D plays a crucial role.

### Good for growing kids

Vitamin D, along with calcium, helps build bones and keep bones strong and healthy. It also prevents the

bones from becoming thin and brittle. In addition, it plays an important role in muscle function and the immune system.

Research has indicated that Vitamin D deficiency during the early years of life, causes growth retardation, resulting in an inability to achieve peak bone mineral density. Also, this deficiency early in life increases risk for upper respiratory tract infections and wheezing disorders, including asthma.

Rickets is a severe form of Vitamin D deficiency and manifests as bone deformities, bone pain and weakness.

There are three ways in which growing kids can get their Vitamin D:

### Sun exposure

Well known as the 'sunshine vitamin', our body can produce this vitamin when exposed to sunlight. But if a child's body is covered with clothing or sunscreen it will block sun rays, thereby causing hindrance in its production.

Factors, like seasons (less sunshine in winter months), time of day



(the Sun's rays are most powerful between 10am and 3pm), amount of cloud cover, air pollution, all cause obstacles in Vitamin D production by the skin.

Moreover, most kids who spend a lot of time indoors, at school and home, hardly get sunshine exposure,

particularly at times when it is most important for vitamin formation.

Talking about sun rays, there is a word of caution - exposure to the Sun in extreme summer can cause sun burn and over exposure to UV radiation also increases the risk of skin cancer. Hence, it is advised to look

out for other ways of getting the vitamin.

### Vitamin D rich foods

The best way to get enough vitamin D every day is to eat a variety of healthy foods from all food groups. Some of the richest sources of this nutrient are:

**FATTY FISH** - Salmon is a great source of B vitamins, omega-3 fatty acids, in addition to being a good source of Vitamin D. Tuna is also high in vitamin D, plus it is rich in B vitamins and minerals, like selenium, phosphorus, and potassium. One can mask the fishy taste and make it more appealing by sneaking these into kids favourite foods.

**EGGS** - Egg yolk is rich in fat, vitamins and minerals. Be it scrambled, omelet, French toast, poached, boiled or egg curry, this food is so versatile that it can be cooked and served in multiple ways.

**MUSHROOMS** - These are the only plant source of vitamin D. Like humans, mushrooms can synthesise this vitamin when exposed to UV light. Kids may find it a little difficult to relish mushrooms at the beginning, so sneak it into their pasta, rice, curry or grilled items after marinating in some dip, or simply make tasty de-

licious soups.

**FORTIFIED FOODS** - Natural sources of vitamin D are limited, especially if a child is vegetarian or does not like fish, eggs or mushrooms. Hence some food companies have started adding this nutrient to food products that are naturally devoid of it.

Vitamin D fortified foods include milk, cheese, yogurt, cereals and also some oils. These can give some amount but may not be sufficient to meet the daily needs.

**SUPPLEMENTS** - Since there is a limited number of foods that contain vitamin D, inclusion of vitamin D supplements may be needed. Cod liver oil is a popular supplement. However, whenever you start with supplements, please consult your doctor about the type, dosage, and duration of supplementation.

To conclude, spending time out in the sun, when the weather is good, is one of the ways to get vitamin D. Getting enough from diet alone may be difficult, but not impossible. Regular inclusion of vitamin-D-rich foods is a great way to make sure children get enough of this important nutrient.

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



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## WHO APPROVES MPOX JAB

The World Health Organization authorised an mpox vaccine for the first time, calling it an important step toward fighting a rapidly growing outbreak in Africa

The approval of Danish vaccine maker Bavarian Nordic's jab means that donors, such as UNICEF and the vaccines alliance Gavi, can buy doses and send them to Africa, where an outbreak centred in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has led to thousands of cases. However, supplies of the vaccine are limited because there's only a single manufacturer.

"This first [authorisation] of a vaccine against mpox is an important step in our fight against the disease, both in the context of the current outbreaks in Africa, and in future," WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said.

He called for 'urgent' scale-up of procurement, donations, and rollout to get the vaccine where it is needed most, along with other response measures.

Wealthy countries in Europe and North America authorised Bavarian Nordic's mpox vaccine during the global mpox outbreak in 2022. Under the WHO authorisation, the vaccine can be administered to people aged 18 or above in a

two-dose regimen.

There is limited evidence of how it works in children, but the approval says the vaccine may be used in infants, children, and adolescents 'in outbreak settings where the benefits of vaccination outweigh the potential risks'.

Officials at the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Preven-

tion (Africa CDC) said last month that nearly 70 per cent of cases in Congo - the country hardest hit by mpox - are in children younger than 15, who also accounted for 85 per cent of deaths.

Overall, WHO said over 120 countries have confirmed more than 103,000 cases of mpox since the outbreak began two

years ago. Its latest tally, as of Sunday, showed that 723 people in more than a dozen countries in Africa have died of the disease.

African experts have estimated they might need about 10 million vaccines to stop the ongoing outbreaks on the continent.

The European Union and several member countries, along with the United States and Bavarian Nordic, plan to donate 620,000 doses of the Bavarian Nordic vaccine, according to the WHO. Meanwhile, Japan plans to send 3 million doses of the LC16 vaccine.

But as of last week, Congo, the most affected country, had received only about 250,000 shots.

On Thursday, the Africa CDC said 107 new deaths and 3,160 new cases had been recorded in the past week, a level that agency chief Dr Jean Kaseya described as 'not acceptable'.

Mpox belongs to the same family of viruses as smallpox but causes milder symptoms like fever, chills, and body aches. (euronews.com)

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