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Summer airfares go up 100-300% on some routes

DUBAI
BY DHANUSHA GOKULAN
Chief Reporter

Starting this week, the full weight of high summer airfares will be felt by travellers from the UAE, whether it's a short trip to a sought-after holiday destination or for a longer stay back to their home country.

According to travel agents, last-minute airfares for summer travel from the UAE have shot up by 100 per cent (to the US) and a little over 300 per cent to the UK, India, Thailand, the Philippines, and European cities amid delays in aircraft deliveries and soaring travel demand.

Extended vacations

Rikant Pittie, Co-Founder of EaseMyTrip, said, "We are seeing a trend among UAE travellers combining their Eid break with the two-month summer holiday for extended vacations."

According to Pittie, international holiday bookings have risen by approximately 20 per cent, with destinations like Thailand, Kenya, Turkey, Singapore, the USA, Hong Kong, Bali, and Mauritius becoming particularly popular.

SEE ALSO P5



TRAIN CRASH IN INDIA LEAVES 9 DEAD, 50 INJURED

People gather near the site of a collision between a passenger and a goods train in Nirmaljote, near Rangapani station in India's West Bengal state, yesterday. At least nine people were killed and 50 hurt when the driver of the goods train missed a signal and slammed into the passenger train from behind. Three passenger carriages were derailed and flipped on their side, while one carriage was thrust into the air, precariously balanced on another. **SEE ALSO P10**

NATION

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Netanyahu dissolves inner war cabinet

MOVE AIMS TO COUNTER PRESSURE
FROM FAR-RIGHT POLITICIANS

JERUSALEM

Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has dissolved the six-member inner war cabinet following the resignation earlier this month of centrist leader Benny Gantz, said a senior Israeli official said yesterday.

The official said that the wider "security cabinet will continue to decide on matters regarding the war" between Israel and Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

Israeli media said the move was meant to counter pressure from far-right politicians seeking a greater say in decision-making.

How the cabinet was formed

The war cabinet was formed after Gantz had left the opposition to join Netanyahu's government following Hamas's October 7 attack. Gantz and another member of his party, Gadi Eisenkot, both former military chiefs, had agreed to join the government on condition that a war cabinet be formed, said another Israeli official.

With Gantz and Eisenkot out of the government, "there is no longer a need for" the war cabinet, said the official. "It means that the security cabinet will meet more often. The security cabinet is the body responsible for making decisions (related to the war) anyway."

Defence Minister Yoav Gallant, National Security Adviser Tzachi Hanegbi and Strategic Affairs Minister Ron Dermer, who were all part of the war cabinet, also sit on the security cabinet — the key forum ratifying decisions regarding the war including truce and hostage release negotiations.

Gantz announced his resignation on June 9 after failing to get Netanyahu to approve a post-war plan for Gaza. Israel's military campaign in Gaza has killed at least 37,347 people, also mostly civilians, according to the Hamas-run territory's health ministry. — AFP

The war cabinet was formed after Gantz had left the opposition to join Netanyahu's government following Hamas's October 7 attack.

Meaty rice? Scientists aim to revolutionise how the world eats

Pink grain could become an eco-friendly, ethical source of protein

SEOUL

In a small laboratory in Seoul, a team of South Korean scientists are injecting cultured beef cells into individual grains of rice, in a process they hope could revolutionise how the world eats.

From helping prevent famines to feeding astronauts in space, team leader and professor Hong Jin-kee believes his new so-called "meaty rice" could become an eco-friendly, ethical way for people to get their protein.

No animals were harmed in the creation of the dish, which looks like a regular bowl of rice — albeit pink — but it gives off a faint buttery aroma, the result of being packed with beef muscle and fat cell culture.

Using cultured meat, "we can obtain



Hong Jin-kee with a bowl of pink 'meaty rice'.

animal protein without the slaughter of livestock," Hong, of Seoul's Yonsei University, told AFP.

Ethical issues

Companies worldwide have sought to commercialise meat alternatives, such as plant-based or cultured meat, due to ethical issues surrounding industrial livestock rearing, as well as environmental concerns linked to the greenhouse gas emissions from animal farming.

Hong, who has a background in organoids and biomedical sciences, chose rice for his research as the grain was already the top source of protein for people in Asia. Hong's "meaty" rice contains eight per cent more protein and seven per cent more fat than regular rice. — AFP



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SPORT

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HETEROTOPIC PREGNANCY:

For 31 weeks, woman was unaware she was pregnant

DOCTORS DEAL WITH RISKY ECTOPIC PREGNANCY TO SAVE BABY IN HER UTERUS

SHARJAH

BY SAJILA SASEENDRAN
Senior Reporter

A 34-year-old expat woman in the UAE remained clueless about a pregnancy outside her uterus for 31 weeks, which, her doctors say, is likely the longest time an ectopic pregnancy has stayed undetected, based on international medical literature.

However, Tunisian expat Dalel Khalfaoui and the unborn baby growing inside her uterus were saved by doctors at Medcare Hospital in Sharjah, who removed her twisted fallopian tube through a risky procedure.

What Dalel experienced is called a heterotopic pregnancy, an extremely rare condition.

Painful journey

Dalel and her husband, Achraf Amdouni, had been trying to conceive for five years, using medication. Their long wait was over when the couple found out about Dalel's pregnancy last year.

However, a nagging pain kept disturbing the mother-to-be.

Though she consulted doctors at another facility where she was going for antenatal care earlier, nothing wrong was detected even after multiple tests.

But Dalel started feeling intense pain at 31 weeks of gestation. "When I was into my eighth month of pregnancy, the pain became sharper which was when I had to go into the emergency at Medcare Hospital in Sharjah."

Dr Hala Al Khalidy, specialist in Obstetrics and Gynaecology at Medcare Hospital in Sharjah, said many tests were conducted in vain to determine the underlying reason for Dalel's severe abdominal pain.

"We involved our doctors of multiple specialities to make a differential diagnosis [which involves making a list of possible conditions that could be causing a person's symptoms]. But, nobody could give a conclusion and her pain was not responding to rest and painkillers," said Dr Hala.

"Despite the difficulties of performing an MRI scan at this late stage of pregnancy, due to the urgency of the situation and the need for an accurate diagnosis, we even allowed the mother to undergo an MRI scan twice. But, the reports said there were only small ovarian cysts which are not complicated."

Diagnostic laparoscopy

It was then that Dr Hala decided to do a diagnostic laparoscopy on the patient and got her colleague Dr Mona Mohammad Saad, Consultant, Gynaecology, on board for the procedure.

Since Dalel was in her third trimester, it was difficult to follow the conventional method of laparoscopy through the umbilical region. So, it was decided to enter through a higher point of the abdominal area, Dr Hala said.

"I counselled the patient to make her understand the need for this diagnostic surgery to see why there is such a pain and how we can treat it," she said.

Though fraught with risks, the surgery was successful. The doctors found Dalel's right fallopian tube was twisted a few



■ Tunisian expat Dalel Khalfaoui with her husband Achraf Amdouni and daughter Melissa. Dalel gave birth naturally to the baby girl weighing 3kg.

RARE CONDITION

A **heterotopic pregnancy** occurs when a woman has both a normal intrauterine (inside the uterus) pregnancy and an ectopic (outside the uterus) pregnancy occurring simultaneously.

In this form of ectopic pregnancy, embryo implantation occurs in the narrowest portion of the fallopian tube. This accounts for 1-2 per cent of all ectopic pregnancies, which make up just 2 per cent of all normal pregnancies, illustrating the rarity of this diagnosis.

The doctors who treated Dalel said that in cases of heterotopic pregnancy where there is an ectopic pregnancy typically in the fallopian tube, a twisted fallopian tube can exacerbate the danger posed to the mother and baby.

Acute twisting of the fallopian tube like in Dalel's case is a rare event. The doctors said they discovered from international medical literature that Dalel's undiagnosed ectopic pregnancy is also a very rare case, likely the rarest globally.

— S.S.

“When I was into my eighth month of pregnancy, the pain became sharper which was when I had to go into the emergency at Medcare Hospital in Sharjah.”

Dalel Khalfaoui |
34-year-old Tunisian expat



“Despite the difficulties of performing an MRI scan at this late stage of pregnancy, we even allowed the mother to undergo an MRI scan twice. But, the reports said there were only small ovarian cysts which are not complicated.”

Dr Hala Al Khalidy | Specialist in Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Medcare Hospital in Sharjah

times and had become swollen and gangrenous due to lack of blood supply, contributing to her abdominal pain. The twisted fallopian tube with a mass inside was removed through laparoscopically and sent for histopathology. The result showed that it was an ectopic pregnancy and the foetus had stopped growing after two months of conception, said Dr Mona.

'Bravest decision'

Though they have treated heterotopic pregnancies earlier, the doctors said they were all diagnosed in early stages.

"Such chronic ectopic pregnancies have been diagnosed the latest by the 24th week. There have been only three or four such cases worldwide. No case had reached 31 weeks. Also, after the diagnosis, the patients underwent open surgery, which is even riskier. It was a challenge for us to conduct the laparoscopic surgery to remove the fallopian tube with a torsion and keep the baby in the uterus and the mother safe," explained Dr Mona.

Dr Hala said opting for the risky laparoscopy was the



“Such chronic ectopic pregnancies have been diagnosed the latest by the 24th week. No case had reached 31 weeks. Also, after the diagnosis, the patients in those cases underwent open surgery, which is even riskier.”

Dr Mona Mohammad Saad | Consultant, Gynaecology, Medcare Hospital in Sharjah

"bravest decision" that she had ever taken in her career.

Dalel was relieved of her chronic abdominal pain after the surgery. The doctors allowed her to go home and she eventually completed her full term, unlike in most cases of heterotopic pregnancies.

Two months ago, she gave birth naturally to a baby girl weighing 3kg. The doctors said they were proud that they managed to keep her safe till she completed her term.

Dalel and Achraf named their daughter Melissa. "She is growing normally and achieving all the milestones required for her age. I would like to thank all the staff and the medical team, especially Dr Hala, who took my concerns seriously and investigated it with responsibility to provide me with the right medical advice and Dr Mona who helped her with the risky procedure so efficiently," said Dalel.

Dr Hala said patients with high risk of heterotopic pregnancies can explore options such as in vitro fertilisation and intrauterine insemination procedures to conceive.

New parking rules take effect in Al Ain starting tomorrow

Vehicles found to be violating Mawaqif system will be immediately towed

ABU DHABI

BY ABDULLA RASHEED
Abu Dhabi Editor

The Department of Municipalities and Transport (DMT), represented by Abu Dhabi Mobility (AD Mobility), has announced the launch of the vehicle-towing service for those violating the Mawaqif system in Al Ain city, starting from tomorrow.

This initiative is part of the enforcement of the Mawaqif Regulation Law, designed to regulate public parking usage and improve traffic flow across the city's areas.

AD Mobility confirmed that the process of towing vehicles will be according to the type of violation. In the event of vehicles being found without number plates in the parking area, the violating vehicle will be towed away immediately to the impoundment yard in Al Ain Industrial City.

Vehicles will be towed away if they are offered for sale, or are used for commercial, advertising or promotional purposes, as well as if the parking lot is reserved without a permit or with an expired permit.

AD Mobility has called on the public in Al Ain to adhere to the "parking" system to avoid towing away of vehicles. It has also noted the necessity of adhering to the laws regarding the organisation and management of public parking at all times, stopping vehicles correctly and regularly in the places designated for parking, and not in prohibited places or obstructing the movement of vehicles.

Additionally, work teams are conducting educational workshops to raise public



■ Vehicles will be towed if they are parked in a lot without a permit or with an expired permit.

CHECK FOR FINES

Here's how you can check traffic fines in Al Ain. This also covers rental cars:

- Go to the website of the traffic police in Al Ain.
- Look for the section related to traffic fines, typically labelled 'Traffic Violations'.
- Enter your vehicle details.
- The system will generate a comprehensive list of any outstanding fines associated with your vehicle.

awareness about the public parking management system. AD Mobility has also launched an awareness campaign aimed at increasing awareness among business owners and the general public about Mawaqif services, their operational procedures, and their positive effects on traffic flow, service sectors, community well-being, the economy, and the environment.

Avail traffic services at Dubai petrol stations

Dubai Police launch On-the-Go initiative to benefit motorists

DUBAI

Gulf News Report

Dubai Police have announced a new initiative to provide traffic services at petrol stations.

Called On-the-Go, the first-of-its-kind initiative is dedicated to elevating customer experience by providing traffic services at petrol stations across the emirate.

Close to You drive

In another initiative, Maj Gen Ali Ahmad Ghanem, Assistant Commander-in-Chief for Community Happiness and Logistics Support, and Maj Gen Dr Saleh Abdullah Murad, Director of the General Department of Human Resources, met with employees of the General Department of Organisation Protective Security and Emergencies as part of the 'Close to You' drive that aims to understand the needs of employees and achieve advanced levels of sustainable happiness among Dubai Police personnel.

Maj Gen Ali Ghanem emphasised Dubai Police's keen-



ness to encourage and honour outstanding employees, commend their efforts, and provide health, housing, education, and financial benefits.

He indicated that such communication with them results in identifying areas for improvement in the services offered, which enhances loyalty values, achieving harmony and cohesion in performing various job tasks.

He clarified that Dubai Police values the effort of every employee who works diligently to achieve crime-fighting indicators, maintain security and safety, and ensure the happiness of the public dealing with Dubai Police.

The initiative includes visits to general departments, police stations, and especially field departments that contribute to achieving vital indicators.



DUBAI
BY HUDA TABREZ
Living in UAE Editor

As the summer heat rises, here's how you can make sure your water and electricity bill doesn't rise with it. While you may rely a lot more on your air conditioner (AC) and fridge to stay cool, and shower more frequently, there are ways in which you can optimise usage to keep the monthly bill within budget.

Monitor your usage

The first step in controlling your energy and water usage is to know what your current consumption pattern is.

The Dubai Electricity and Water Authority (Dewa) provides you with a Consumption Assessment Tool, which you can easily access online by visiting their website — dewa.gov.ae. Login using your UAE pass and you will be redirected to your 'Smart living dashboard', which will allow you to look at your monthly consumption, with the option to compare your usage over the years.

Air-conditioning

When it comes to your AC thermostat, aim for a cool, but not chilly, 24 degrees Celsius. Remember, every time you reduce the thermostat by one degree, your energy consumption increases by five per cent. If you are stepping out for a few hours, Dewa recommends that you either switch the AC off, or set it to 27°C. This is why if you don't have a programmable thermostat, you should try to get one as soon as possible.

Tiny gaps around windows and doors also let cool air escape, forcing your AC to work harder. Seal them with weather stripping for an easy and cost-effective fix. Also, remember — fans are your friends. They use

Don't sweat the bills: Simple hacks to cut summer utility costs



Living in UAE: All your queries related to living and working in UAE answered

minimal energy and help circulate cool air, making your AC feel more effective. Additionally, keep curtains, blinds, and shades closed during the hottest part of the day to prevent heat from entering your home.

Use appliances wisely

Do you tend to leave your TV, microwave or washing machine on standby mode? If so, you may be pushing your total energy consumption by up to 10 per cent. This is because on standby mode, appliances continue to use electricity, whether it is your

dishwasher or phone charger. "While it might not seem much at any given time, collectively this can account for up to 10 per cent of your household's electricity consumption. The solution to this problem is to simply switch off devices at the main plug when not in use," Dewa states on its website.

Run dishwashers and washing machines only with full loads and consider cooler water settings. If you have been using the same AC for over 10 years, it may be time to buy a new one. While this may seem like an ad-

FROM LED LIGHTS TO AERATORS ... DISCOVER PRACTICAL WAYS TO CONSERVE ENERGY AND WATER WHILE KEEPING COOL IN THESE MONTHS

ditional cost, investing in appliances that have a high Emirates Authority for Standardisation and Metrology (Esma) rating can help you reduce your energy consumption costs. For example, replacing an old AC with a new energy-efficient model with up to four- or five-star Esma ratings can save you up to 25 per cent on cooling costs.

Replacing your old incandescent bulbs with energy-efficient LEDs is also helpful, as they use up to 80 per cent less energy and last much longer.

Fix those drips

When it comes to water consumption, check for leaks and get them fixed immediately. Also, pick a water-efficient showerhead with a flow rate of less than eight litres per minute. Aerators on faucets can reduce water use by up to 40 per cent.

Finally, turn off the tap while brushing your teeth or shaving.

Wash vegetables and fruit in a bowl instead of under running water and use that to water plants. Every drop saved adds up.

Reschedule your chores

During peak hours (typically from 12 to 6pm), avoid using major appliances like washing machines and dishwashers. Try to run them earlier in the morning or later in the evening. This helps reduce the load on power plants and has a positive environmental impact.

Short takes

4,950 sacrifices in Abu Dhabi on first day of Eid

Slaughterhouses in Abu Dhabi saw 4,950 sacrifices made on the first day of Eid Al Adha on Sunday, of which 1,500 sacrifices were requested through smart applications, according to Abu Dhabi Municipality.

Khalfan Al Muhairbi, Head of Veterinary Services at the Public Health Department, said the automated slaughterhouse located in the Zayed Port area recorded 1,300 sacrifices as of Saturday afternoon, Baniyas slaughterhouse recorded 2,000, Shahama Slaughterhouse 1,200, and Al Wathba slaughterhouse 450 sacrifices.

Legalise buildings in two years

The Department of Municipalities and Transport has a grace period for legalising existing buildings constructed without permits in Abu Dhabi. This initiative aims to enhance safety standards across all buildings in the emirate.

The two-year grace period, starting this June, allows property owners to legalise their buildings and facilities by obtaining the necessary permits as long as they have not incurred any violations. These measures aim to ensure the structural safety of buildings.

— Gulf News Reports

Four Dubai students empower artists of determination globally

Online platform enables artists with special needs to sell their creations

DUBAI
BY SHARMILA DHAL
UAE Editor

Thanks to four Dubai students, artists of determination from all over the world now have a unique platform to promote their works.

Sixteen-year-old Dev Vohra told *Gulf News* that he developed the online platform, Empower U, with three of his childhood friends Jaiditya Malik, Zahaan Anand and Akshaj Harihar.

Dev had earlier volunteered with Al Noor Training Centre for Persons with Disabilities in Dubai where he met a student named Srishti and her mother.

"Through multiple interactions with Srishti, who is non-verbal, I realised that art was not only her primary mode of communication, but also a profound medium for her to express her feelings. Despite being about nine years old, Srishti's art vividly captured her life experiences," he said.

How it all started

Motivated to help Srishti, Dev launched Srishti's Tokens, an online NFT platform to promote her art. "The website quickly attracted attention and we partnered with United Voice, a self-advocacy society for persons with learning disabilities based in Malaysia. This collaboration introduced artwork from their 10 artists on our platform, leading to the inception of Em-



■ **Top:** An acrylic on canvas created by a special needs artist up for sale on Empower U. **From left:** Akshaj Harihar, Jaiditya Malik, Zahaan Anand and Dev Vohra, who developed Empower U.

power U," said Dev, who oversees the platform's operations.

Zahaan, who looks after outreach, said: "We focused on practical strategies, ensuring the platform showcased underprivileged artists effectively."

Overcoming hurdles

Jaiditya, who oversees logistics, said: "There were logistical hurdles in coordinating with NGOs and artists worldwide, technical complexities and financial constraint. Additionally, ensuring fair compensation for artists while keeping

the platform financially viable was initially an issue too."

The platform, which currently features 10 of United Voice's artists, provides their profiles and lists their works, whose prices start from Dh95.

The four friends do not take any share of the profits. "As our platform is a non-profit, we aim to maximise what best we can do for our artists. We only mediate between the artists and the buyers. This ensures that the artists still retain maximum possible profits," said Akshaj, who is in charge of marketing.

GULF NEWS

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■ **Left:** Residents enjoy the Eid Al Adha fireworks at Riverland Dubai. Laser shows are happening every night of Eid at 7.30pm, 8.20pm, and 9.30pm.

■ **Above:** A fireworks display at Abu Dhabi Corniche. A host of shows and performances have been lined up this Eid Al Adha.



Residents spend quality time in parks and malls

Spectacular fireworks displays and a variety of shows over the Eid holidays ensure that families and friends have plenty of options to be entertained. Public parks and malls are filled with residents enjoying picnics or grabbing the exciting shopping deals on offer. There are also plenty of dining options to suit all tastes



■ **Above & left:** Families and friends gather at a park in Sharjah. The pleasant weather is an opportunity for residents to spend quality time with loved ones in public parks.

Devadasan K P/Gulf News

■ **Below:** Visitors at Dubai's Mall of the Emirates on the first day of the Eid holidays. Malls across the UAE are filled with shoppers and visitors taking advantage of the deals and entertainment options.

Devansh Vyas/Special to Gulf News

■ **Above:** A group of Bangladeshi expats dressed in kandouras take a selfie in a Sharjah park.

Devadasan K P/Gulf News

■ **Top:** Residents are flocking to Dubai's beaches, turning their vacation into a cool and memorable escape.

Devansh Vyas/Special to Gulf News

■ **Right:** Abu Dhabi's Corniche Street wears a festive look with special Eid Al Adha lighting and decorations greeting motorists.

Ahmad Alotbi/Gulf News



Fireworks, raffles and deals: How you can make the most of the Eid break in Dubai



Peak summer airfares come early for UAE travellers



STARTING WITH EID HOLIDAY TRIPS, TICKET RATES SHOOT UP 100-300% ON HIGH DEMAND ROUTES

DUBAI
BY DHANUSHA GOKULAN
Chief Reporter

Starting this week, the full weight of high summer airfares will be felt by travellers from the UAE, whether it's a short trip to a sought-after holiday destination, or for a longer stay back to their home country.

The spikes will prove particularly painful for those making last-minute travel plans, with ticket rates to from the UAE to the US having shot up by 100 per cent — and even by up to 300 per cent to the UK, India, Thailand, the Philippines, and major European cities.

"We are seeing a trend among UAE travellers combining their Eid break with the two-month summer holiday for extended vacations," said Rikant Pittie, co-founder of EaseMyTrip.

Where residents are going

If it's a short holiday, then destinations like Thailand, Kenya, Turkey, Singapore, Hong Kong, Bali and Mauritius are quite popular, with demand up by 20 per cent or so. Airfares to most of these destinations have risen considerably compared to April-May 2024 levels.

More residents are booking their tickets up to two- to four

HOW TICKET RATES ARE FARING

- **Dubai to London:** Dh8,970 (direct), Dh3,243 (connecting flights)
- **Dubai to New Delhi:** Dh2,200
- **Dubai to New York:** Dh5,620 (direct), Dh4,395 (connecting flights)
- **Abu Dhabi to New York:** Dh7,760 for direct and Dh4,520 for connecting flights
- **Dubai to Los Angeles:** Dh7,560 for direct and Dh4,590 for connecting flights
- **Dubai to Paris:** Dh6,690 (direct), Dh2,920 (connecting flights)
- **Dubai to Bangkok:** Dh5,060 (direct), Dh2,430 (connecting flights)

—D. G.

Dh3,240
average cost of Dubai to London flights with layovers

18%
of Mena travellers booked one- to two months before travel

64.08%
rise in average airfares to Jordan. They are up 32.10% on India route



UAE residents booking in advance better off as airfares surge 100% and more

months earlier. Those making last-minute travel plans choose connecting flights to short-, medium- and long-haul destinations to make their ticket spend come down further.

Connecting flights

Connecting flights to medium and long-haul destinations are the best solution. For example, Economy class airfare from Dubai to London (June 15-30) is Dh8,970 on British Airways.

Flights to the US East Coast are up by 90 per cent, and US West Coast flights are seeing a 100 per cent increase in fares compared to Q1-2024 rates.

"Those waiting to book their flights for the very last minute are opting to fly Wizz Air Abu Dhabi or flydubai for affordable fares," said Afi Ahmed, Chairman of Smart Travels. "They don't mind the 11-hour to 30-hour journeys to the US using connecting flights."

Dubai to London flights average Dh3,240, with a layover in Prague (flydubai, Wizz Air) or in Riyadh (Saudia). Fares from Abu Dhabi are 15-20 per cent cheaper (Etihad Airways).

According to Mamoun Hmedan, Chief Business Officer, Wego, "Average flight prices are now 42.72 per cent more expensive for flights to Egypt, up 64.08 per cent to Jordan, and up 32.10 per cent to India compared to the last quarter."

According to Wego's data, up to 18 per cent of Mena travellers booked one- to two months before their travel date, while 22 per cent chose to book closer to their departure dates.

"In most instances, airfares surpass inflation rates," said Pluto Travels' Sapna Aidasani. "Travellers are more price-conscious than ever, avoiding last-minute bookings, particularly for long-haul trips. They prefer allocating their budgets towards destination indulgences like luxury accommodations and bespoke travel experiences."

The International Air Transport Association raised its 2024 passenger traffic growth forecast to 12 per cent globally and 7 per cent in the Middle East, signalling growing demand.

Special holiday packages

Travel agents have introduced special holiday packages to Azerbaijan, Georgia, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Singapore.

Emerging destinations like Latvia, Slovenia, and Eastern Europe are also popular.

"Where most are travelling to the popular Schengen countries, 20-25 per cent are excited about exploring the newer territories gaining popularity," said Musafir.com's COO Raheesh Babu.

The UK, Germany, and Italy top Wego's list of European summer destinations for Mena travellers.

Tourism returns to Europe, but popular spots are crowded

Foreigners account for 45% of overnight stays in first quarter

BRUSSELS

After the Covid-19 slump, Europe's tourism industry has recovered in 2023 and 2024, according to the data released by the European Commission (EC).

There were 452.6 million overnight stays in tourist accommodations across the European Union in the first quarter of 2024, up 7 per cent compared with Q1 2023.

Foreign visitors accounted for 45 per cent of all overnight stays in the quarter. The biggest share of foreign visitors staying was recorded in Malta (91 per cent), Cyprus (87 per cent), Luxembourg (82 per cent) and Austria (78 per cent). Germany, Romania and Poland all had a share of 20 per cent.

Derided as 'Club Med' nations during the European debt crisis 15 years ago, the economies of Spain, Greece and Portugal are now outperforming their northern peers thanks to a rebound in tourism.

Record results

Slovenian tourism also posted record results last year, welcoming 6.2 million tourists, up 5.5 per cent compared to 2022 and only 0.6 per cent less than in 2019, before the pandemic.

In North Macedonia, the number of tourists in January-April rose by 15.3 per cent

452.6m
overnight stays in tourist lodgings across EU in first quarter



Reuters

■ Most foreign visitors travelling across Europe chose to stay overnight in Malta, Cyprus, Luxembourg and Austria.

Derided as 'Club Med' nations during the European debt crisis 15 years ago, the economies of Spain, Greece and Portugal are now outperforming their northern peers thanks to a rebound in tourism.

compared to the same time in 2023, and overnight stays increased by 15.2 per cent.

A majority of visitors came from Turkey, Germany, Serbia, Greece, Bulgaria, Croatia and Slovenia.

About 974,000 foreign tourists visited Albania during May alone, bringing the total number of incoming tourists to more than 3.3 million in the first five months of the year.

Challenges for residents

Rising tourism may be good for the economy, but overcrowding is causing growing resentment among the residents of popular hot-spots across the continent.

Websites such as Airbnb add to the problem with illegal rentals. In Italian destinations such as Venice, Rome and parts of Tuscany, residents are calling for the flow of visitors to be controlled. Venice recently introduced an entrance fee for day trips.

In Palma on the Spanish island of Mallorca, the most sweeping proposal is a ban on creating any more rental space for tourists.

In March, EU ministers gave their final approval to a regulation requiring platforms to share data on landlords with municipalities. This will allow local officials to take stricter action.

— WAM

Global rate-cut juggernaut is struggling to gain momentum



Reuters

■ The Frankfurt stock exchange. Policymakers from the UK to Australia are not confident enough to lower borrowing costs.

Central banks wary of following Fed on monetary easing

NEW YORK

Central banks cagey about joining the global interest-rate cutting cycle may reveal themselves this week with a quartet of decisions in advanced economies.

Days after the Federal Reserve pared back projections for US monetary easing this year, policymakers from the UK to Australia are likely to signal that they're still not convinced enough about disinflation to

At the Bank of England meeting on Thursday, a looming election and some lingering price pressures are adding to the case to wait at least until August before cutting rates.

start lowering borrowing costs themselves. Such outcomes would reaffirm how June, originally pencilled in as a month-long opening ceremony to a series of global rate cuts, may increasingly turn out to be a widespread display of hesitancy.

At the Bank of England (BoE) meeting on Thursday, a looming election and some lingering price pressures are adding

to the case to wait at least until August before cutting rates. Consumer-price numbers could show inflation reaching the 2 per cent target for the first time in almost three years.

Peers in Australia and Norway, also meeting this week, are in no rush to do so either, while half of economists surveyed reckon the Swiss National Bank (SNB) may avoid a

second reduction for now following its bold move in March to ease before its neighbours.

Brazil and Paraguay are expected to keep borrowing costs on hold, and Chile anticipated to slow rate cuts.

The Reserve Bank of Australia is expected to hold its cash rate target at 4.35 per cent, with focus on the inflation trajectory after consumer price growth unexpectedly picked up in April. Japan's key price gauge is expected to show consumer inflation accelerated to 2.6 per cent in May, keeping the Bank of Japan on track for a rate hike as early as next month.

— Bloomberg



Worldly Wise

BY YOUSIF AL ALI
Special to Gulf News

UAE's 'smart' focus with its EV charging networks

In the UAE, transportation is undergoing a transformation that reflects the country's wider ambition to become a leader in sustainability.

Amid this shift, the number of electric vehicles on the roads has increased significantly, surpassing over 40,000, with more than 870 charging stations powering their journeys.

'UAEV', launched in May by Etihad Water and Electricity in partnership with the UAE Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure, is at the forefront of this transformation. Its overarching mission to catalyse the use of sustainable transportation supports the country's environmental goals and urban development plans.

The first thing that we know is that infrastructure is essential in ensuring that the transition to EVs is smooth, efficient, and fully aligned with national sustainability objectives. That is why our initial focus is on expanding national EV charging infrastructure, with a series of new stations across the UAE that accommodate current demand and anticipate future needs.

Ahead of the curve on UAE EV demand build up

The roll-out of these stations is not solely designed to improve convenience — it reflects a global shift towards greener modes of transport. The international EV market is projected to reach 40 million units by 2030, and regions leading in adoption — like Norway, with an EV market penetration rate of 79.5 per cent in 2022 — demonstrate the potential heights the UAE could reach with the right infrastructure.

A robust EV network, after all, presents a multitude of benefits — from emission reduction to air quality, and from boosting the economy with job creation to integrating smarter grids for smarter cities.

Yet beyond providing the energy to power these vehicles, utilities operators have a critical role to play along the entire value chain of this emerging ecosystem. Increased usage is not predicted to lead to large increases in total energy demand — a study from McKinsey suggests that EVs will account for less than 5 per cent of energy consumption by 2030, despite making up as much as 15 per cent of the global fleet.

Their use will significantly alter the load curve, as drivers coming home from work plug in their EVs during the evening hours. Peak circuit load at residential levels, for example, could increase by 30 per cent above current demand levels at an EV penetration of just 25 per cent, yet during late-night hours the grid's capacity will be underutilised.

EVs can 'feed' the grid too

To manage this, we are exploring the potential of grid technologies that enable what we call 'smart charging'. This transforms EVs into mobile energy storage units that can feed energy back into the grid when it's needed most.

Through Vehicle-to-Grid (V2G) technologies, EV batteries are used as temporary energy storage to alleviate peak loads, enhancing our grid's responsiveness and reliability.

By implementing time-of-use tariffs and offering incentives for off-peak charging, utility providers can further encourage consumers to charge their EVs at times that support grid stability and efficiency.

The growing EV fleet brings substantial upside potential, through additional revenue from the sale of electricity and connection charges for the integration of new infrastructure. We also envisage the charging network as a stimulus for job creation across sectors — from the manufacturing of charging units to the innovative minds engineering them, and those that will build and maintain this new grid.

This reflects the wider global trend, with research from the International Labour Organisation revealing that the EV industry is set to create up to 10 million new jobs globally by 2030. Robust infrastructure is the groundwork for this burgeoning economic sector.

By expanding EV infrastructure, we are setting the stage for a future where electric vehicles are the preferred mode of transport. The expertise of the utilities sector will be vital in ensuring that every new charging station enhances the grid's resilience and operational efficiency.

With every charging station we install, we pave the way for cleaner air, a reduction in urban noise, and a substantial decrease in our carbon footprint. This journey, supported by a proactive government and a community eager for change, underscores our mission at UAEV — to drive not just vehicles, but a national agenda towards a sustainable, electrified future.

■ The writer is CEO, Etihad Water & Electricity (EtihadWE).

ON GULFNEWS.COM



■ Car subscription services are an increasingly popular alternative to leasing now, for an all-inclusive monthly fee.



Changing your car every 30 days: Is that financially prudent?

Subscribe to a new car every 30 days: Sensible or not?

Wouldn't it be great if your car insurance, car repairs, roadside assistance, and fees were all included in one convenient monthly payment? Car subscriptions are widely debated as an alternative to leasing one, but only if costs are overlooked. It is an increasingly popular alternative to leasing now, providing the use of a car for an all-inclusive monthly fee.

— Justin Varghese, Your Money Editor

Starting July, UAE car owners can get hit with 20–50% insurance premium hikes



EVEN NEW VEHICLE OWNERS ARE GETTING INSURANCE RENEWALS WITH NO AGENCY REPAIR OPTION

DUBAI
BY MANOJ NAIR
Business Editor

Vehicle owners in the UAE are finding that they will have to pay a steep increase on their motor insurance renewals — and also in the way that insurers are calculating those premiums. The effect of this is already being felt on those vehicles that sustained damages during the April rains and have now come up for their annual insurance cover renewals.

For instance, insurance industry sources say that a handful of insurers are bringing in 'dynamic' pricing in fixing the new motor premiums. "This is based on how a particular model performed during the rains and floods," said an insurer. "Based on this data, the technical pricing will be adjusted and the premiums will reflect that."

Expect more insurers to follow this strategy as the full extent of the claims from the rains

HOW WILL CAR DEALERSHIPS RESPOND?

For dealerships, having their customers bring back their vehicles for service and repair even after the standard 3- to 5-year warranty periods represent a significant income generation. If insurers now are insisting that they will offer motor insurance renewals with no-agency repair option, this will end up impacting dealers.

In the coming weeks, dealers are expected to come up with new incentives to soothe car buyer concerns over their insurance premiums and after-sale repair options.

—M.N.

55%

rise in comprehensive insurance rates (excluding agency repair) in second-hand car market

become clear through the coming weeks.

As such, individual car owners and fleet operators are seeing double-digit hikes on their new premiums. Some policies will only be renewed only with 'no-agency' repair option, even in instances where the vehicles are relatively new and have not had any major claims associated with it previously.

Reinsurance pressure

Adding to the pressure on UAE insurers is the imminent July 1 deadline when many will have their reinsurance contracts renewed. Given the sizeable claims on their motor insurance portfolio, these reinsurance contracts will definitely end up hurting insurer margins. (Reinsurance support is critical because that decides the extent of what insurers are able to offer by way of cover to their clients each year. For instance, based on the claims, an insurer in the UAE might not get enough 'capacity' support from reinsurers to underwrite motor insurance beyond a limit during that 12-month time frame.)

"Some insurers anticipate average premium increases of 20-25 per cent due to pressure from reinsurers," said Avinash Babur, CEO of InsuranceMarket.ae. "This increase is expected to affect all top-selling car models, including SUVs, during the next renewals."

Some insurers anticipate average premium increases of 20-25 per cent due to pressure from reinsurers."

Avinash Babur
CEO of InsuranceMarket.ae

Fleet operators face the brunt

Whether it's a 20 car fleet operator or one with hundreds, their next premiums will be adding to their costs significantly.

"Fleet insurance rates have already risen by 40-50 per cent and more in some cases, and do not provide for agency cover any more," said an official at a leading insurance brokerage firm.

"Even for individual owned cars, rates have risen by more than 35-40 per cent for policies with agency repair — and by more than 25 per cent without agency cover.

"This is in direct response to the recent floods that ended up damaging a lot of vehicles.

"This rise has been more dramatic in the second-hand car market, where in many cases comprehensive insurance rates (excluding agency repair) has risen by more than 55 per cent."

CUPERTINO

Apple Inc. investors finally have a road map for how it will use artificial intelligence — and they’ve responded by pushing the stock to a record high this week.

Wall Street is betting that new iPhone AI features — including Apple’s agreement with OpenAI to integrate ChatGPT — will spur a massive upgrade cycle among users who have been holding on to older devices.

Investors have “more confidence that Apple is back in the game, that it has caught up competitively, and that it will see a re-acceleration of growth, given the installed base of phones that will need to upgrade to take advantage of this new tech,” said Jim Awad, senior managing director at Clearstead Advisors. “Apple will be a major beneficiary of AI, and the stock is catching up.”

The iPhone maker’s shares fell on Friday but still managed to close the week with a nearly 8 per cent advance, the stock’s best since May. The rally added about \$239 billion in market value and pushed Apple back into record territory for the first time since December.

While seen as short on surprises, Apple’s event eased concerns that have weighed on the stock this year. Wall Street had fretted that the firm lacked an AI strategy, especially since its growth has been wanting compared with other megacaps, and its valuation is elevated. That has kept a lid on share-price gains; among the Magnificent Seven, only Tesla Inc. — down 28 per cent — has seen a weaker performance.

Revenue fall

Revenue fell 4.3 per cent in Apple’s fiscal second quarter, the fifth contraction in the past six quarters. Despite that, it trades at about 30 times estimated earnings, above its long-term average and the roughly 27 times multiple of the Nasdaq 100 Index.

The iPhone is by far Apple’s biggest business, accounting for more than half its fiscal 2023 revenue, according to data compiled by Bloomberg.

Apple investors cheer road map for how iPhone maker will use AI

NEW IPHONE AI FEATURES TO SPUR USERS TO UPGRADE DEVICES, PUSH STOCK BY \$230B LAST WEEK

People who weren’t excited about the initial announcement are fast becoming believers that AI is the innovation that will spur the next cycle of iPhone sales.”

Robert Pavlik
| Senior portfolio manager at Dakota Wealth Management

32.6% of overall benchmark index represented by S&P 500’s tech sector



However, iPhone revenue fell 2 per cent last year, a reflection of how millions are holding onto their phones for longer. AI, bulls argue, represents the kind of must-have features that will prompt them to trade up.

“People who weren’t excited about the initial announcement are fast becoming believers that AI is the innovation that will spur the next cycle of iPhone sales,” said Robert Pavlik, senior portfolio manager at Dakota Wealth Management. “We have to be realistic, and it will take time to see confirmation in the numbers, but AI has the potential to create the kind of growth that will make the stock look cheap.”

The pool of users who might be in the market for an upgrade is potentially massive. According to Bloomberg Intelligence,

over 40 per cent of Apple’s 800 million-plus smartphone devices are iPhone 12 or older, with another 27 per cent of users on an iPhone 13. Fewer than 10 per cent of current users have phones that can be upgraded to the AI software.

‘Super Cycle thesis’

“Older stuff will be obsolete if you want AI,” wrote Melius Research analyst Ben Reitzes. Given the allure of AI, “we now have more conviction in our Super Cycle thesis that could even result in iPhone revenue growth of about 20 per cent for up to 2 years.”

The prospect of an iPhone refresh cycle has also lifted Apple suppliers. Skyworks Solutions Inc. is up 15 per cent this week, its biggest one-week percentage gain in four years, while Cirrus Logic Inc. hit a record Thursday. Qorvo Inc. is seeing its best week since 2020.

The integration of features

TECH CHART OF THE DAY

Wall Street’s top stocks have quickly reshuffled on AI optimism. Apple on Thursday overtook Microsoft Corp. as the biggest company by market capitalisation.

Apple was third-largest as recently as last Monday, trailing behind \$3.2 trillion Nvidia Corp. and Microsoft, which held pole position since January.

The massive size of Apple, Microsoft, and Nvidia are a key reason why tech has become so dominant in equity indexes. The S&P 500’s tech sector represents a staggering 32.6 per cent of the overall benchmark index.

That’s the highest ratio since 2000, around the dot-com era, and up from a recent low of less than 29 per cent from April.

The trio of \$3 trillion stocks together account for about 21 per cent of the S&P 500.

— Bloomberg

The prospect of an iPhone refresh cycle has also lifted Apple suppliers. Skyworks Solutions Inc. is up 15% this week, its biggest one-week percentage gain in four years, while Cirrus Logic Inc. hit a record Thursday. Qorvo Inc. is seeing its best week since 2020.

such as enhanced search, enhanced photo editing and text generation “will drive much broader adoption of AI than we have seen to date,” wrote D.A. Davidson analyst Gil Luria, who raised his rating to buy. “Apple is uniquely positioned to offer these capabilities, and may be the only one capable of doing so any time soon.”

— Bloomberg

Global concerns grow on use of AI in misinformation

Report by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism finds fresh challenges

NEW YORK

Global concerns about the use of AI in news production and misinformation are growing, a report published by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism found, posing fresh challenges to newsrooms already struggling to engage audiences.

The institute’s annual *Digital News Report* published yesterday, which this year is based on surveys of nearly 100,000 people across 47 countries, offers a picture of the hurdles news media faces in lifting revenue and sustaining business.

Newsrooms globally are working to address a new challenge with generative artificial intelligence, as tech giants and start-ups like Google and OpenAI build tools that can offer summaries of information and siphon traffic from news websites.

But the report found that consumers are suspicious about the use of AI to create news content, particularly for sensitive subjects such as politics.

According to the survey, 52 per cent of US respondents and 63 per cent of UK respondents said they would be uncomfortable



The Reuters report found that consumers are suspicious about the use of AI to create news content, particularly for sensitive subjects such as politics.

able with news produced mostly with AI. The report surveyed 2,000 people in each country, noting that respondents were more comfortable with behind-the-scenes uses of AI to make journalists’ work more efficient.

High level of suspicion

“It was surprising to see the level of suspicion,” said Nic Newman, senior research associate at the Reuters Institute and lead author of the *Digital*

News Report. “People broadly had fears about what might happen to content reliability and trust.” Concerns about false news content online rose by three percentage points from last year, with 59 per cent of survey respondents saying they were worried. This figure was higher in South Africa and the US at 81 per cent and 72 per cent, respectively, as both countries hold elections this year, the report said. Another

challenge facing news organisations is the general unwillingness of audiences to pay for news subscriptions.

Following some growth during the pandemic, 17 per cent of respondents across 20 countries said they paid for online news, a figure that has been unchanged for the past three years, the report said.

A significant proportion of news subscribers in the US were also likely to be paying

47 countries where survey was done, involving nearly 100,000 people

59% of respondents said they were worried by false news content online

17% of respondents across 20 countries said they paid for online news

discounted rates due to trials or promotions, with 46 per cent paying less than the full price for their subscriptions.

Many turn to alternatives

News influencers are playing a bigger role than mainstream media organisations in delivering the news to users of popular online platforms like TikTok.

In a survey of more than 5,600 TikTok users who said they used the app for news, 57 per cent said they mostly paid attention to individual personalities, versus 34 per cent who said they mainly followed journalists or news brands.

The findings show that newsrooms need to build a direct relationship with their audiences while also “strategically using the platforms to connect with people who are trickier to reach, like younger audiences,” Newman said. “We see that these influencers have a bigger role on the platforms.”

Vitus “V” Spehar, a TikTok creator with 3.1 million followers, was one news personality cited by some of the survey respondents. Spehar has become known for their unique style of delivering the top headlines of the day while laying on the floor under their desk, which they previously told Reuters is intended to offer a more gentle perspective on current events and contrast with a traditional news anchor who sits at a desk.

— Reuters



UAE'S SOFT POWER SHINES GLOBALLY

By integrating smart power and reputational security into its foreign policy, the UAE has effectively enhanced its influence on the world stage, complementing the traditional metrics of the Soft Power Index

BY KRISTIAN ALEXANDER | Special to Gulf News

The UAE ranked 10th in the world in the 2023 Soft Power Index, the country's highest ranking ever and the highest in the Middle East for the fourth year running.

The index, which assesses countries based on culture, diplomacy, education, business and trade, governance and digital engagement, is based on the concept of 'soft power', which refers to the ability of a country to shape the preferences of others through appeal and attraction. The UAE has emerged as a significant player in this realm, integrating its economic capabilities and diplomatic charm to foster relationships and influence international affairs.

While the index is a valuable tool for measuring the UAE's global influence, to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the UAE's appeal the metric should be merged with an analysis of the country's multifaceted foreign policy strategy, which combines elements of 'smart power' and reputational security.

Smart power is a combination of soft power and 'hard power', the medium of foreign policy that pertains to tools such as military force and economic sanctions. The UAE's move to become a global aviation hub is an example of leadership employing smart power. Through airlines such as Emirates and Etihad, the UAE has connected more than 150 destinations globally, enhancing its geopolitical significance. To these ends, the country leveraged its economic influence (hard power) but also promoted cultural exchange, tourism and connectivity (soft power). The country has also invested significantly in infrastructure to support their aviation industry.

Heritage and humanitarian initiatives

The UAE tries to attract admiration from other nations through different initiatives. It promotes Emirati heritage and values on the global stage through investments in the culture sector, as exemplified in the Louvre Abu Dhabi and the Dubai Opera. In the humanitarian realm, the UAE provides medical aid and relief supplies to countries in need, enhancing its reputation as a compassionate and responsible global actor. In 2022, the UAE disbursed approximately \$3.45 billion in foreign aid to various developmental, humanitarian, and charitable projects across 155 countries.

The UAE is also a progressive and tolerant society. It has significantly advanced gender equality and judicial reforms, ensuring equal pay across genders and revising personal status laws to allow non-Muslims to handle marriage and divorce affairs based on civil law and personal status laws. Additionally, the UAE promotes interfaith dialogue, highlighted by the Abrahamic Family House in



Abu Dhabi, which symbolises tolerance and understanding among diverse religious communities. These efforts are not merely internal changes but strategic moves to bolster the country's international image.

The UAE stands as a beacon of security in a region that has often been troubled by instability. Its low crime rates and the absence of domestic terrorism highlight its status as one of the safest destinations. The UAE ranks highly in terms of safety and security according to various global indices. Numbeo's Safety Index for 2024 ranks Abu Dhabi as the world's safest city, with Dubai also placing high at fourth. According to a 2024 Gitnux Market-data Report, the country is considered the third-safest in the world.

Smart-power strategies

To achieve this security, the UAE has pursued smart-power strategies that showcase technological prowess and societal unity in defence preparedness. In 2014, the government introduced mandatory military service for adult males to bolster the country's reserve troops. To further ensure localised innovative defence solutions, the EDGE Group, a conglomerate of 25 companies, was founded

in 2019. The company has grown to become one of the world's top-25 weapons manufacturers. The UAE has also acquired advanced systems such as the THAAD missile defence and F-35 jets, underlining its state-of-the-art military capabilities.

Beyond defending its own interests, the UAE wants to be known as a strong, capable country that can contribute to international security. The army regularly participates in military drills with global powers and regional allies, which not only bolsters its defence readiness but also strengthens diplomatic ties. This robust approach is integral to the UAE's reputational security.

By integrating smart power and reputational security into its foreign policy, the UAE has effectively enhanced its influence on the global stage, complementing the traditional metrics of the Soft Power Index. This approach has not only projected a positive international image but also fostered strong global partnerships, establishing the UAE as a respected and influential entity in the international arena.

■ Dr Kristian Alexander is a Senior Fellow and Lead Researcher at the Rabdan Security and Defence Institute (RSDI), Abu Dhabi.

APPLE'S BOLD INTEGRATION WITH OPENAI

While the potential for enhanced user experiences is significant, the challenges related to privacy cannot be overlooked

BY AHMAD NAZIR | Special to Gulf News

Apple's announcement at its Worldwide Developers Conference about integrating artificial intelligence into its products and partnering with ChatGPT-maker OpenAI has generated excitement and a fair share of questions.

This dual approach — launching its proprietary AI suite while also incorporating ChatGPT — raises important issues regarding privacy, security and the future of AI in Apple's ecosystem. The partnership with OpenAI, which brings ChatGPT to Apple's devices and software, presents a unique blend of opportunities and challenges.

Apple's AI capabilities promise significant improvements in user interactions. AI-driven transcription for phone calls, photo retouching, and more natural conversation flows with Siri are just a few examples of how AI can enhance everyday tasks. Generative AI will also help summarise notifications, text messages, articles, documents, and web pages, making information more accessible and manageable.

This collaboration sets a new standard for what users can expect from their devices, potentially revolutionising how we interact with technology.

By incorporating OpenAI's technology, Apple can maintain its competitive edge in the rapidly evolving AI landscape. This partnership could position Apple as a leader in AI integration within consumer products, attracting tech-savvy consumers and AI enthusiasts.

However, one of the primary concerns is the handling of personal data. Apple's reputation for privacy is on the line as it navigates the complexities of integrating AI that relies on vast amounts of user data. Critics like Elon Musk have raised alarms about the potential security risks, arguing that Apple may not fully understand the implications of handing over user data to OpenAI.

The partnership also raises questions about the economic viability and long-term benefits for both companies. Without financial transactions between Apple and OpenAI for user queries and distribution, the mutual benefits of this collaboration remain unclear. Additionally, any misstep in data handling or AI performance could damage Apple's hard-earned reputation for security and privacy.

As highlighted by Apple co-founder Steve Wozniak, the ultimate test of AI's success lies in its real-world application and user satisfaction. There is a risk that the technology might not meet user expectations, leading to disillusionment and resistance.

Apple's bold move to integrate AI into its ecosystem through a partnership with OpenAI represents both a thrilling advancement and a considerable gamble. While the potential for enhanced user experiences and technological leadership is significant, the challenges related to privacy, security, and economic viability cannot be overlooked.

As Apple ventures into this new frontier, the tech behemoth must carefully navigate these issues to maintain trust and deliver on its promise of innovation.

■ Ahmad Nazir is a UAE based freelance writer.

HOW AKHILESH WRESTED UP FROM MODI

The churn in India's largest state is a reminder that it is caste groups that use political parties as proxies in their quest for social power

BY SHIVAM VIJ | Special to Gulf News

In 2017, when Akhilesh Yadav was completing his term as chief minister of Uttar Pradesh (UP), he hoped that voters would reward development and welfare work undertaken by him.

His ruling Samajwadi Party ensures that ambulances reached remote villages for the first time, students got free laptops, poor women got cash transfers, and a high speed highway was built from Agra to Lucknow on which fighter jets could land.

But it was too little, too late. Workers of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) convinced other backward caste (OBC) swing voters that all the government jobs had been taken away by

Yadavs. Top BJP leaders said all the welfare benefits had gone to one caste and one community — referring to SP's core vote base, Yadavs and Muslims.

For Akhilesh this was devastating. It was as if his father and uncle had been right. Caste won, development lost. In 2023, Akhilesh announced a new caste formula called PDA — targeting Pichada (backward), Dalit (oppressed), and Alpsankhyak (minority) communities.

There are many reasons why the SP has beaten all expectations and won 37 seats in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections in UP. The 'PDA' approach is certainly one of them.

In 2017, the BSP had made

history by winning a single-party majority in the UP assembly for the first time in two decades. It did so by announcing a 'Brahmin-Dalit' alliance formula. Whenever the SP or the BSP have done well in UP, it has been possible only by going beyond their core votes through what is loosely called 'social engineering'.

Every party thus has to decide whose votes they DON'T want. Some parties decide they don't want Yadav votes, some decide they don't want Jatav votes.

Who you are not keen to help makes it clear who you are keen to help. Just like the BJP impressed lower OBCs by appearing to not be keen on getting

Muslim and Yadav votes, the SP also needed clarity on whose votes they did NOT want.

The answer was obvious: Upper castes. For many years Akhilesh didn't want to do this, but he has learnt the hard way. Note that 'PDA' includes everyone except upper castes. The SP is trying to pay the BJP back in the same coin.

While the SP campaign was loudly around PDA, acronyms are what acronyms do. The PDA formula was seen in not just words, but action. The SP gave only five tickets to Yadav candidates, all from the Akhilesh Yadav family, and only four to Muslims. This enabled it to give a lot of tickets to non-Yadav

OBCs, including nine Kurmis. On general seats like Meerut and Faizabad (where Ayodhya is located), the SP gave tickets to Dalit candidates. It lost Meerut by a small margin and won a historic victory in Faizabad months after the inauguration of the Ram temple. Mandal (caste politics) won this round.

The churn in Uttar Pradesh is a reminder that political parties don't practice caste politics. It is caste groups that use political parties as their proxies in their negotiation of when they negotiate for social power.

■ Shivam Vij is a journalist and political commentator based in New Delhi.

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Everest traffic: A tourist trap or a mountain's call?



Expatriate legal issues highlight challenges in Saudi Arabia



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■ The Haj is increasingly affected by climate change. A Saudi study published last month said that regional temperatures were rising 0.4C each decade. Pilgrims in Mina poured bottles of water over their heads yesterday as authorities handed out cold drinks and fast-melting chocolate ice cream.

HAJ ENDS AMID DEADLY SAUDI HEAT SPIKE

Pilgrims welcome unexpected rains following 2,764 cases of ‘heat exhaustion’

MINA, SAUDI ARABIA

Saudi Arabia warned of a temperature spike in Makkah yesterday as Muslim pilgrims wrapped up the Haj in searing conditions, with more than a dozen heat-related deaths confirmed.

One of the world’s largest religious gatherings unfolded during the oven-like Saudi summer again this year, and authorities recorded more than 2,700 cases of “heat exhaustion” on Sunday alone, the Saudi health ministry said.

According to the Saudi weather service, temperatures reached 51.8 degrees Celsius yesterday at Makkah’s Grand Mosque, where pilgrims were circling the Kaaba, the large black cubic structure towards which all Muslims pray.

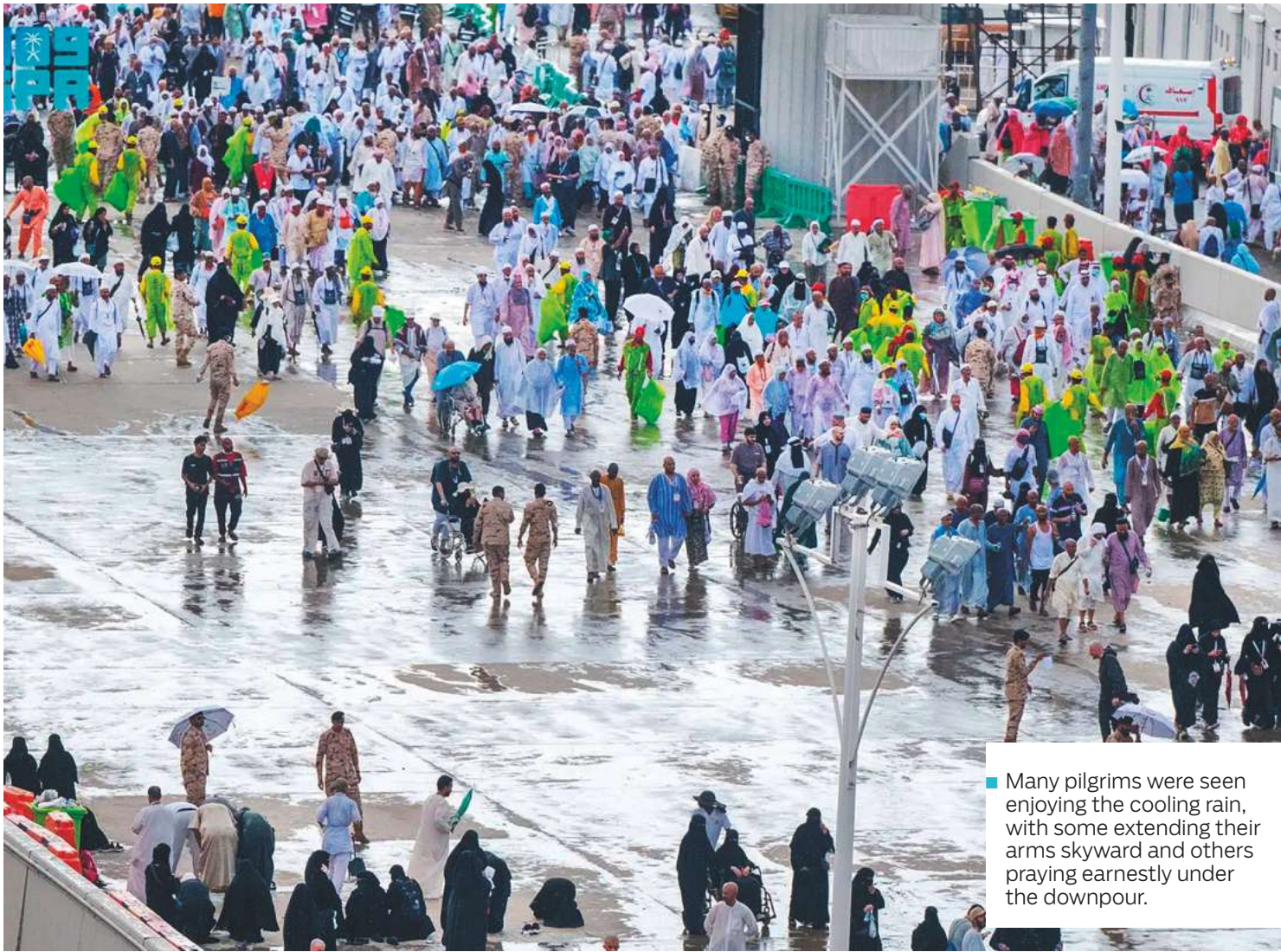
In nearby Mina, where a spokesman for the national meteorology service said the temperature was 46C, other pilgrims were throwing stones at three concrete walls – a ritual known as “stoning the devil” that is the last major step of the Haj, while struggling under the burning sun.

Relief and blessings

Later in the evening, unexpected rains brought relief and blessings on the first day of Tashreeq. Many were seen enjoying the cooling rain, with some extending their arms skyward and others praying earnestly under the downpour. The rain, seen as a sign of divine blessing during the intense ritual of Haj, added a layer of spiritual significance.

Jordan’s foreign ministry said on Sunday that 14 Jordanian pilgrims had died “after suffering sun stroke due to the extreme heat wave”, and that 17 others were “missing”.

Iran reported the deaths of five pilgrims but did not specify the cause, while Senegal’s foreign ministry said that three others had died.



■ Many pilgrims were seen enjoying the cooling rain, with some extending their arms skyward and others praying earnestly under the downpour.

An Indonesian health ministry official in Saudi Arabia said 136 Indonesian pilgrims had died during the Haj including at least three of heat stroke.

“The holy sites today record the highest temperatures since the beginning of Haj ... that may reach 49 degrees Celsius, and we advise the guests of God not to be exposed to the sun,” the health ministry said.

The Saudi health ministry announced that 2,764 cases of heat exhaustion on Sunday due to sun exposure and “non-compliance with guidelines”, which include taking shelter from the sun during the afternoon.

51.8

degrees Celsius was the temperature at the Grand Mosque yesterday

25

pilgrims died of heat stroke following record temperatures

“Prevention is the most important, and the commitment of pilgrims not to go out at peak times except when necessary, or to use an umbrella, would reduce the incidence of heat exhaustion,” the statement said.

“Our health guidelines for the coming days are clear and easy: carry an umbrella, drink water regularly, and avoid exposure to the sun.”

The Haj is increasingly affected by climate change, according to a Saudi study published last month that said regional temperatures were rising 0.4C each decade. Pilgrims in Mina poured bot-

les of water over their heads yesterday as authorities handed out cold drinks and fast-melting chocolate ice cream.

Azza Hamid Brahim, a 61-year-old pilgrim from Egypt, described seeing motionless bodies on the roadside as she made her way to and from the three concrete walls.

“It was a really hard day. We said to ourselves: ‘That’s it, we’re going to die’ because of the heatwave.”

Haj this year drew around 1.8 million pilgrims this year and of them, 1.6 million came from abroad, according to Saudi authorities. — AFP

COOLING DOWN

Next year will be last summer Haj, next 17 years to be cool

DUBAI

BY KHITAM AL AMIR
Chief News Editor

Muslim pilgrims from across the world will experience the last summer Haj next year before a 17-year hiatus from the hotter months.

The transition will see the Haj moving to spring and winter months, impacting the traditional pilgrimage experience, according to Hussain Al Qahtani, the official spokesman for the National Meteorological Centre.

Al Qahtani said that the significant shift in seasonal timing is due to the Islamic lunar calendar, which causes the Haj dates to move backward approximately 10 days each year.

This change will provide relief from the extreme heat experienced during the pilgrimage, with this year’s temperatures ranging between 45 to 47 degrees Celsius.

The upcoming change promises milder weather conditions for one of the largest annual religious gatherings in the world, improving the experience for millions of pilgrims visiting the country.

During this year’s summer Haj, there were significant health concerns due to the extreme heat.

Saudi Arabia recommended organisers to guide and educate pilgrims to adhere to safety guidelines.



■ Children play in a camp for Palestinian refugees in Gaza Strip yesterday, amid the conflict between Israel and Hamas.

Lull in Gaza fighting despite blasts in south

10 deaths in over 24 hours was one of the lowest daily tolls

GAZA STRIP

Israel struck Gaza yesterday and witnesses reported blasts in the besieged territory’s south, but fighting has largely subsided after a day of relative calm and as Muslims marked Eid Al Adha.

A daytime “pause” for aid deliveries around a southern Gaza route, announced at the week-

end by Israel’s military, appeared to be holding yesterday.

But witnesses told AFP they could hear blasts in the centre and west of the southernmost city of Rafah yesterday morning.

Elsewhere in the Palestinian territory, an AFP correspondent said shelling have decreased.

In Gaza City, medics at Al Ahli hospital said at least five people were killed in two separate air strikes, and witnesses reported tank shelling in the southern neighbourhood of Zeitun.

At least one strike hit Bureij refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip, residents said.

Palestinian officials in Rafah reported tank shelling early yesterday, before the start of the “local, tactical pause of military activity” announced by the army.

It said the pause “for humanitarian purposes will take place from 8am until 7pm every day until further notice along the road that leads from the Kerem Shalom crossing to the Salah al-Din road and then northwards”.

Earlier, an Israeli official told AFP “there was no change” in the military’s policy and stressed fighting “continues as planned”. — AFP

● In Gaza City, medics at Al Ahli hospital said at least five people were killed in two separate air strikes, and witnesses reported tank shelling in the southern neighbourhood of Zeitun.

US health official: Put tobacco-style warnings on social media

DOCTOR SAYS MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS IS AN EMERGENCY — AND SOCIAL MEDIA IS AN IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTOR

DUBAI
Gulf News Report

The threat social media poses to children requires urgent action, US Surgeon General Dr Vivek Murthy said, and demanded Congress to put a label on the apps as it does with cigarettes and alcohol.

“The mental health crisis among young people is an emergency — and social media has emerged as an important contributor,” Murthy said in an op-ed in the *New York Times* yesterday.

He said his vision of the warning includes language that would alert users to the potential mental health harms of the websites and apps, CNN and NBC reported.



Evidence from tobacco labels shows that surgeon general’s warnings can increase awareness and change behaviour.”

Dr Vivek Murthy
US Surgeon General

ease, Congress mandated unprecedented warning labels on packs of cigarettes, the first of which stated, “Caution: Cigarette Smoking May Be Hazardous to Your Health.”

Labels on tobacco led to a steady decline in cigarette smoking in America, US reports said.

“Evidence from tobacco labels shows that surgeon general’s warnings can increase awareness and change behaviour,” Murthy said in the op-ed. But he acknowledged the limitations and said a label alone wouldn’t make social media safe.

Steps can be taken by Congress, social media companies, parents and others to mitigate the risks, ensure a safer experience online and protect children from harm, he wrote.

Risk of depression

Murthy pointed to several studies, including a 2019 American Medical Association study published in JAMA that showed teens who spend three hours a day on social media double their risk of depression.

Teens spend nearly five hours a day on social media apps, according to a Gallup poll.

Murthy said it’s time for Congress to get serious about curbing children’s use of social media.



■ People gather at the site where a goods train rammed into the Kanchenjunga Express train, in Darjeeling, West Bengal, yesterday.

9 killed in India train crash after driver misses signal

Two parcel carriages took the brunt of the crash, protecting the other carriages

KOLKATA

At least nine people were killed in India yesterday when a goods train driver missed a signal and slammed into an express passenger train from behind, police and railway officials said.

Three passenger carriages were derailed and flipped on their side, while one carriage was thrust into the air, precariously balanced on another.

The incident in the state of West Bengal is the latest to hit India’s creaking rail network, which carries millions of passengers each day — and the most recent reported failure of drivers missing basic signals.

Around 50 people were injured and taken to hospital, Jaya Varma Sinha, chairman of India’s Railway Board said in a statement.

Driver among dead

The dead included the driver and his co-driver, who missed the signal, as well as a train guard and six passengers, she added. Sinha said the casualties could have been worse, but a guard wagon and two others carrying post that were attached to the back of the passenger train, took the brunt of the crash.

“There were two parcel carriages attached ... which protected other carriages from extensive damage,” she said, but added that the guard wagon “was badly damaged”.

The crash took place in the Phansidewa area of Darjeeling district, when the Kanchenjunga Express train was hit by the goods train.

Prime Minister Narendra

MAJOR TRAIN DISASTERS OVER THE YEARS

- India has one of the world’s largest rail networks and has seen several disasters over the years, the worst in 1981 when a train derailed while crossing a bridge in Bihar state, killing an estimated 800 people.
- In June last year, a three-train collision killed nearly 300 people in Odisha state. In that crash, a packed passenger train was mistakenly diverted onto a loop line and slammed into a stationary goods train loaded with iron ore. Three railway employees were later charged with culpable homicide and destruction of evidence.
- In October, at least 14 people died when two passenger trains collided after one overshot a signal in Andhra Pradesh state. The railways ministry said that drivers had been distracted because they were watching cricket on a phone, as hosts India played England during the one-day World Cup. In March, Minister of Railways Ashwini Vaishnaw said the train board was “installing systems which can detect any such distraction” to make sure drivers were “fully focused on running the train”.

—AFP

50

injured people were taken to hospital

359

height, in metres, of the world’s highest railway bridge that was used for the first time on Sunday

Modi offered his condolences to “those who lost their loved ones”, on social media.

West Bengal’s Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee called the crash “tragic”.

Moments after the collision, she said “ambulances and disaster teams” were rushed to the site, giving orders for “action on war footing” to be initiated.

Local police officer Iftikar-ul-Hassan told AFP he saw several badly injured people pulled out of the wreckage.

“The toll could rise further, as four people are admitted in a serious condition,” he said.

World’s highest rail bridge

In recent years, India has been investing huge sums of money to upgrade its network with modern stations and electronic signalling systems.

On Sunday, a train crossed for the first time the world’s highest railway bridge — 359 metres above a river — in India’s Himalayan region, Minister of Railways Ashwini Vaishnaw said.

— AFP

Short takes

11 migrants dead in shipwrecks

Eleven migrants died and dozens were reported missing yesterday, following two shipwrecks off the southern coasts of Italy.

German aid group Resqship said it picked up 51 people from a sinking boat. The Italian coast guard said it was looking for an unspecified number of migrants following the shipwreck of a boat near Calabria.



Air India passenger finds metal blade in meal

NEW DELHI

A passenger, who was on an Air India flight from Bengaluru to San Francisco, shared a horrifying experience of allegedly finding a metal blade in his flight meal.

Taking to ‘X’ yesterday, the passenger wrote, “Air India food can cut like a knife. Hiding in its roasted sweet potato and fig chaat was a metal piece that looked like a blade. I got a feel of it only after chewing the grub for a few seconds.”

“Thankfully, no harm was done. Of course, the blame squarely lies with Air India’s catering service but the incident doesn’t help the image I have of Air India. What if the metal piece was in the food served to a child,” he asked.

Meanwhile, the airline, in its response, claimed that the foreign object came from the vegetable processing machine.



Priyanka to make electoral debut

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi will keep his Raebareilly seat while his sister and party General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra will make her electoral debut from Wayanad, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge announced yesterday.

“Rahul Gandhi won two Lok Sabha seats but as per the law, he has to vacate one seat. Rahul Gandhi will keep the Raebareilly seat and vacate the Wayanad Lok Sabha seat,” Kharge said, addressing the media outside his residence.

The decision came after top party leaders met yesterday.

—Agencies

ON GULFNEWS.COM



Putin to visit North Korea for first time in 24 years

Russian President Vladimir Putin will visit North Korea this week for the first time in 24 years, on June 18-19, the two countries said, a rare trip that underscores Moscow’s burgeoning partnership with the nuclear-armed state. North Korean leader Kim Jong Un extended an invitation to Putin during a visit to Russia’s Far East last September. Putin last visited Pyongyang in July 2000. — Reuters



Read what Putin’s visit to North Korea means to geopolitics in the region



Agencies

■ Bryson DeChambeau celebrates with trophy.

Shot of my life, US Open winner DeChambeau says

PINEHURST

Bryson DeChambeau, needing to get up and down from a bunker at 18 to win, delivered one of his greatest shots on Sunday and sank a tension-packed putt to win the US Open.

DeChambeau, having already escaped disaster once at Pinehurst's final hole, blasted a 55-yard bunker shot to four feet and rolled in the clutch putt to capture his second US Open crown.

"That bunker shot was the shot of my life," DeChambeau said. "I'm so happy I got that shot up-and-down on 18. It's a dream come true."

Playing partner Matthieu Pavon, who finished fifth, was even more impressed as he watched DeChambeau's shot hold firm on a lightning-fast sloped green that had sent balls rolling away from the hole all week. "He just played like unbelievable," Pavon said. "At that time with the pressure he had at that moment, it is just one of the best shots in golf history."

Squandered lead

DeChambeau, who also won the 2020 US Open, had everything on the line after Rory McIlroy squandered a two-stroke lead with three bogeys in the last four holes, the last on a four-foot par putt miss at 18.

DeChambeau didn't want to be denied again.

"Oh, man, I didn't want to finish second again. PGA really stung," he said. "I wanted to get this one done."

"As much as it is heart-breaking for some people, it was heartbreak for me at the PGA. I really wanted this one." He got it thanks to patience and perseverance, with some boost from his caddie, Gregory Bodine, in a moment DeChambeau said he would always remember.

"My caddie telling me you can do it on 18 out of that bunker. Greg telling me, You got this shot. I've seen way harder shots pulled off from you," DeChambeau said.

— AFP

● **DeChambeau, having already escaped disaster once at Pinehurst's final hole, blasted a 55-yard bunker shot to four feet and rolled in the clutch putt to capture his second US Open crown.**



DUBAI

BY A.K.S. SATISH
Sports Editor

The first stage of the Twenty20 World Cup is about to conclude with an inconsequential fixture between the West Indies and Afghanistan yesterday (today morning UAE), with both teams already securing their spots in the Super Eight.

The first round, featuring a significant number of Associate Teams, was anything but predictable. There was pessimism that the gulf in standards between the elite and the underdogs would result in one-sided games, but that was not the case. The bowler-friendly pitches and larger outfields narrowed the gap, making the first round compelling to watch.

Major upsets

Several surprises and close matches added to the excitement. The biggest upsets were the eliminations of Pakistan and New Zealand in the first round. Pakistan, runners-up in the 2022 edition in Australia, were shocked by co-hosts USA in a Super Over. Any chance of a fightback, for which Pakistan is famously known, was thwarted by rain when the USA secured a crucial point against Ireland. Pakistan's absence in the Super Eight is a significant loss for fans, who will miss another contest between the Asian giants.

New Zealand, traditionally strong contenders, saw a steep decline in their performance. Their jerseys changed from black to aquamarine, and their game standards also dropped significantly. Inconsistent play and elementary errors allowed Afghanistan and the West Indies to advance at their expense.

Lucky escapes and final spots

South Africa had a couple of lucky escapes against Bangladesh and Nepal, topping Group D with eight points. Bangladesh won their last match against Nepal to secure the final spot in the Super Eight. The stage is set for the next round, beginning tomorrow with a match between the USA and South Africa.

Nepal and the Netherlands can hold their heads high, having run their illustrious rivals close. The Dutch narrowly missed a hat-trick against South Africa, losing by four wickets with just seven balls to spare.

Transition to West Indies

The teams will now be relieved as all matches shift to the West Indies, where pitches are more traditional, unlike the USA's drop-in pitches that troubled batters and favoured bowlers. Antigua, Barbados, St Lucia, and St Vincent will host the 12 games in this round.

India, Afghanistan, Australia and Bangladesh are in Group 1, while England, South Africa, USA, and West Indies are in Group 2. Each team plays three matches within their groups, with the top two advancing to the semi-finals.

ICC seedings and fan convenience

The International Cricket Council (ICC) assigned seedings before the tournament to facilitate fans' travel plans. Since the USA, Bangladesh and Afghanistan replaced Pakistan, Sri Lanka and New Zealand in their respective groups, these teams retain the same seedings regardless of their group stage positions. For

POWERHOUSES FALL, UNDERDOGS RISE AS SUPER 8 SET TO BEGIN

India, Australia start favourites as Windies eye home advantage to book a place in semis



AFP

■ Papua New Guinea's players congratulate Afghanistan's Gulbadin Naib (left) and Mohammad Nabi after Afghanistan's win at Brian Lara Cricket Academy Stadium in Tarouba last week.

FIXTURES (ALL TIMES UAE)

June 19:	USA v South Africa, North Sound, Antigua,	6.30pm
June 20:	England v West Indies, Gros Islet, St Lucia,	4.30am
June 20:	Afghanistan v India, Bridgetown, Barbados,	6.30pm
June 21:	Australia v Bangladesh, North Sound, Antigua,	4.30am
June 21:	England v South Africa, Gros Islet, St Lucia,	6.30pm
June 22:	USA v West Indies, Bridgetown, Barbados,	4.30pm
June 22:	India v Bangladesh, North Sound, Antigua,	6.30pm
June 23:	Afghanistan v Australia, Arnos Vale, St Vincent,	4.30am
June 23:	USA v England, Bridgetown, Barbados,	6.30pm
June 24:	West Indies v South Africa, North Sound, Antigua,	4.30am
June 24:	Australia v India, Gros Islet, St Lucia,	6.30pm
June 25:	Afghanistan v Bangladesh, Arnos Vale, St Vincent,	4.30am

SEMI-FINALS

June 27:	4.30am (First semi-finals)	(Second semi-finals) 6.30pm
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FINAL: JUNE 29: 6.30PM



ANI

■ India's coach Rahul Dravid chats with players and staff.

instance, if the West Indies top Group C, they will still take the C2 spot in the seedings.

Team overviews for the Super Eight

India: The Men in Blue are gradually hitting their stride but have not yet been at their best. Close wins are helping the team understand the situation better and iron out shortcomings. The team's main concern is the lack of runs from ace batter Virat Kohli, who has yet to make a significant impact after moving to the opening slot. However, India's batting and bowling depth gives them a strong chance to avenge their 50-over World Cup final loss to Australia when they meet on June 24 at Gros Islet.

Australia: As the current 50-over and Test champions, Australia aim to add the Twenty20 World Cup title to their collection. They maintained a perfect record in the Group games, with their biggest win against defending champions England. While

they are strong contenders for the semi-finals, they need to be cautious of Afghanistan, who play spin well. Key players Travis Head and Marcus Stoinis lead the batting, and Adam Zampa has been their best bowler so far.

Bangladesh: The Tigers must be heaving a sigh of relief after reaching the Super Eight. They have a mix of young talent and experience, but their close loss to South Africa by four runs must still sting. Captain Najmul Hossain Shanto's team must avoid such pitfalls, especially against top-ranked teams and the batters need to put up a better performance. The return of Shakib Al Hassan and Mustafizur Rahman is a significant boost.

Afghanistan: The youngest Test-playing nation has improved significantly under coach Jonathan Trott. After defeating three former champions in the 2023 50-over World Cup, they narrowly lost to Australia despite having them on the ropes. Afghanistan have a potent bowling attack,

but their batting relies heavily on Rahmanullah Gurbaz and Ibrahim Zadran.

England: The defending champions narrowly made it to the Super Eight despite the external factors working against them. After a washout against Scotland and a loss to Australia, England bounced back with strong wins over Namibia and Oman. They are now back in form and among the favourites for the semi-finals alongside India and Australia.

South Africa: Despite inconsistent batting and bowling, the Proteas won all four of their matches. They cannot afford such inconsistency against stronger Super Eight opponents. The form of their batters is a concern, with David Miller being the only one to score a half-century so far.

West Indies: The Caribbean team is well-suited to T20 cricket and is hungry for success after disappointing performances in recent World Cups. With multiple match-winners in their batting lineup and a strong bowling attack, they are formidable at home and are expected to reach the semi-finals.

USA: The co-hosts surprised many with their performances

FERGUSON BOWLS FOUR MAIDENS

New Zealand's Lockie Ferguson finished with the remarkable figures of three wickets for no runs in his maximum four overs to help his side defeat Papua New Guinea by seven wickets in a T20 World Cup match yesterday.

The 33-year-old fast bowler's return in Tarouba was the most economical in any T20 World Cup match, surpassing Nuwan Kulasekara's 1-2 in two overs for Sri Lanka against the Netherlands in Chattogram in 2014.

Sri Lanka spinner Ajantha Mendis's 6-8 against Zimbabwe at Hambantota in 2012 remain the best bowling figures in T20 World Cup history.

Papua New Guinea, a non-Test nation, were 14-1 from four overs after losing the toss in this Group C fixture when Ferguson came on to bowl.

Ferguson then promptly struck with his first ball, having PNG captain Assad Vala (six) caught at a wide first slip by Daryl Mitchell.

He followed that over with a maiden to Sese Bau and was then taken out of the attack.

Ferguson returned for the 12th over and, two balls in, had Charles Amini lbw for 17 — the top score of the innings — on review.

All the while PNG could not get him away for even a single, with Ferguson taking his third wicket when he clean bowled Chad Soper for one in the 14th over to leave PNG 43-5.

The next ball went for two leg byes, but those runs do not count against a bowler, with Kiplin Doriga blocking Ferguson's last delivery of the game back to the express quick.

Chasing a paltry 79 to win, New Zealand over hauled the target in just 12.2 overs.

Devon Conway top scored with 35 from 32 deliveries, while Kane Williamson (18) and Daryl Mitchell (19) remained unbeaten till the end to guide their team home.

— AFP



AFP

■ New Zealand's players congratulate Lockie Ferguson.

BRIEF SCORES

Papua New Guinea 78 all out in 19.4 overs (Charles Amini 17; Lockie Ferguson 3/0, Trent Boult 2/14, Tim Southee 2/11, Ish Sodhi 2/29) **lost to New Zealand 79-3 in 12.2 overs** (Devon Conway 35, Kane Williamson 18 n.o., Daryl Mitchell 19 n.o.; Kabua Morea 2/4) **by 7 wickets.**

in the first stage. They defeated Pakistan and gave India a tough fight. However, playing in the West Indies will be a different challenge. The wickets there will not offer the same assistance to bowlers as the drop-in pitches in the USA did. Despite this, the experience will benefit USA cricket, and a win in this stage would be a significant achievement.

FRANKFURT

Slovakia caused the first upset at Euro 2024 as Ivan Schranz fired the underdogs to a 1-0 win against Belgium yesterday.

Francesco Calzona's side are 45 spots below third-placed Belgium in Fifa's world rankings.

But they made a mockery of the supposed quality gap between the teams with a courageous performance in Frankfurt.

Calzona, who also served as Napoli's interim boss in the second half of last season, had admitted he would be "delighted" with a draw.

The Italian got more than he could have dreamed of as Schranz left Belgium reeling after ending his nine-game international goal drought.

Romelu Lukaku missed a host of chances for Belgium and had a late equaliser controversially disallowed by VAR.

Slovakia's unexpected victory blew Group E wide open, just hours after Romania beat Ukraine 3-0 in yesterday's other match in that pool.

It was a bitter loss for Belgium, who are in danger of once again failing to fulfil their potential at a major tournament.

Belgium's golden generation has lost much of its lustre since they crashed out of the 2022 World Cup in the group stage.

The Red Devils fell at the quarter-finals in the last two editions of the European Championship, making a third-place finish at the 2018 World Cup the high water mark of a talented but underachieving team once hailed as a potential dynasty.

Dominic Tedesco was appointed to replace Roberto Martinez in February 2023 and led Belgium on a 14-match unbeaten run heading into the Euros.

Before what was billed as a last hurrah for Belgium's veteran stars, Kevin De Bruyne had insisted they were ready to do "something good" in Germany.

But instead they reverted to type with a spluttering display that puts them under intense pressure to beat Romania in their second group game on Saturday.

Dismal Lukaku

Playing in a Belgian record 11th game at major tournaments, Lukaku should have bagged his 86th goal for his country in the second minute.

Jeremy Doku turned adroitly on the halfway line and accelerated menacingly into the Slovakia penalty area, where his cross was poked toward Lukaku by De Bruyne.

Lukaku looked certain to score but his close-range effort was straight at Slovakia keeper Martin Dubravka.

He threatened again moments later, only to let Doku's pass run away from him after bearing down on goal.



SCHRANZ STARS AS SLOVAKIA STUN BELGIUM

Ranked 45 places below the Red Devils, Calzona's side cause first big upset

- Slovakia forward Ivan Schranz celebrates with teammates after scoring against Belgium in Frankfurt.
- Romania's Nicolae Stanciu scores the first goal against Ukraine in Munich.

RESULTS/FIXTURES

Yesterday's matches			
Romania	3	Ukraine	0
Belgium	0	Slovakia	1
Playing later			
Austria v France			
Today's matches			
Turkey v Georgia (8pm UAE)			
Portugal v Czechia (11pm UAE)			

3

Belgium's Fifa ranking behind Argentina and France



Slovakia punished Lukaku's profligacy to take the lead in the seventh minute.

Doku was culpable with a wayward pass as he tried to clear, allowing Robert Bozenick to cleverly back-heel the ball to Juraj Kucka.

Koen Casteels saved Kucka's strike but could do nothing about the rebound as Schranz fired home from an acute angle.

Best goal

Earlier, Romania captain Nicolae Stanciu said his goal in a 3-0 win over Ukraine in their opening game at Euro 2024 on

Stanciu smashed in an unstoppable 20-metre drive to set Romania on their way to their first victory.

yesterday was the best of his career. Stanciu smashed in an unstoppable 20-metre drive to set Romania on their way to their first victory at a major tournament in 24 years.

"It is the goal of my career," said the 31-year-old Stanciu, who plays his club football in Saudi Arabia.

"I've said before this shirt means everything to me and to score at the Euros, you can't do more than that. And then to also win in the manner we did, that's just incredible."

Razvan Marin fired in a second from distance early in the second half and Denis Dragus turned home a third for Romania before the hour.

— AFP

Footballer's gift to fellow visually impaired Iraqis

Othman Al Kinani's persistence has led him to set up country's first team for visually impaired in Baghdad

BAGHDAD

When football fanatic Othman Al Kinani lost his sight in 2008, it hit him hard, not least because he thought he'd have to hang up his boots for good.

Now aged 51, Kinani described his struggle to rebuild his life. "I even forgot how to walk," he told AFP.

"I had to rely on my hearing for everything," he explained, after losing his sight to glaucoma, itself according to him the result of using incorrect medicines to treat allergies.

What made the situation worse "was being separated from football," the Arabic lan-

guage teacher added. But years later Kinani's persistence has led him to set up the country's first national football team for the visually impaired.

"It became my life," Kinani said at a training session in Baghdad as he described how the five-a-side sport — the format most popular with visually impaired football players — had reignited his passion.

Kinani returned to ball sports playing goalball, a game designed for disabled athletes, through a local NGO he helped create for the visually impaired in 2016.

But goalball, in which players shoot a ball from a prone position across a court, served



only to whet his appetite for a return to football. The new Iraqi team for the visually impaired — though unofficial — was born in 2018. Kinani, from Karbala in central Iraq, shelved all other

sports practice to manage the team and secure formal recognition.

He said the process brought him out of his isolation and the sport allowed his "reintegration among friends".

With the help of his daughter, who would write his emails, Kinani gained important support from the International Blind Football Foundation (IBF). In 2022 the Tokyo-based body agreed to send crucial equipment to the Iraqi team.

The official recognition Kinani sought finally came this year and Iraq's 20-member squad is now preparing for a tournament in Morocco later this month.

— AFP

Short takes

Estonia's Chauhan clobbers fastest ton

Sahil Chauhan smashed the T20 international record for fastest 100 when he brought up his century off the 27th ball he faced to help Estonia beat hosts Cyprus yesterday.

The 32-year-old broke both the international century record of 33 balls, set by Namibia's Jan Nicol Loftie-Eaton and the 30-ball record in T20s, set by Chris Gayle.

Sabalenka to skip Paris Olympics

World No 3 Aryna Sabalenka said yesterday she will miss the tennis event at the Paris Olympics "to take care of her health".

Belarus' Sabalenka, 26, lost to Russian teenager Mirra Andreeva in the French Open quarter-finals earlier this month.

The tennis events at this summer's Games take place on clay between July 27 and August 4.



India sacks head coach Stimac

India's head coach Igor Stimac has been sacked after the team's poor performance in World Cup qualifiers, the football federation said yesterday.

India's 2-1 defeat to Qatar earlier this month dashed their dreams of reaching the third round of the Asian qualifiers for the World Cup for the first time.

India ended third in the group, behind Kuwait and Qatar.

Sergio Ramos quits Sevilla

Veteran Spanish defender Sergio Ramos has told hometown club Sevilla his second stint with them is over after just one season, the La Liga outfit said yesterday.

In a career spanning over 20 years, Ramos carved himself a place in football history, winning the 2010 World Cup and two European championships with Spain as well as four Champions League titles with Real Madrid.

Thompson knocks Rune out

Australia's Jordan Thompson caused an early upset at the Queen's Club tournament in London with a first-round win over seventh-seed Holger Rune yesterday.

Thompson defeated Rune, a semi-finalist at the grass-court warm-up event for Wimbledon last year, 4-6, 7-6 (7/4), 6-3 in a match lasting more than two hours.

PROPERTIES & CLASSIFIEDS

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NOTICE

Wisewell Technologies Ltd, a private company with registered
offices at office 102, Burj Daman, Dubai International Financial
Centre (DIFC) and holding Commercial License number 4836
hereby gives notice that it shall be wound-up on 01/July/2024.
Any queries, claims or objections regarding the proposed
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requested to be forwarded to Mr. Jerom Najem, Operations
Director by telephone at 045577095 and in writing to
jerome@wisewell.com within Fifteen (15) days from the date
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Job Description:

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- * Selecting and sourcing plant species suitable for varying light,
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- * Providing ongoing care and maintenance, including watering, pruning,
fertilizing, and pest control.

Requirements:

- * Proven experience as a Horticulturist focusing on residential and hotel
environments with local UAE experience.
- * Deep knowledge of plant species, care techniques, and design principles.
- * Flexibility to work on-site at various locations as needed.

Perks:

- * Opportunity to work with a dynamic team passionate about horticulture
and design.
- * Competitive salary commensurate with experience.

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Facility Manager for Residential Villa Complex

Position Overview: The Facility Manager oversees a residential villa
complex's daily operations, maintenance, and management. This role
ensures the complex is safe, well-maintained, and operating efficiently to
provide a high-quality living environment for residents.

Key Responsibilities:

- **Maintenance Management:** Supervise and coordinate maintenance staff
and contractors to ensure all facilities are in good working order.
- **Budget Management:** Develop and manage the annual maintenance
budget, implementing cost-effective solutions.
- **Resident Relations:** Address and resolve resident complaints and issues
promptly and efficiently.
- **Safety and Compliance:** Ensure all facilities comply with health, safety,
and environmental regulations.
- **Vendor Management:** Negotiate contracts and manage relationships with
service providers and suppliers.
- **Property Inspections:** Conduct regular inspections of the property to
identify and address maintenance needs.
- **Administrative Tasks:** Maintain records of maintenance activities,
budgets, and other relevant documentation.
- **Emergency Response:** Develop and implement emergency response
plans for the complex.

Qualifications:

- Bachelor's degree in Engineering
- UAE Experience in Facility Management, Engineering, or a related field.
- Proven experience of 10-plus years as a Facility Manager or in a similar role.
- Strong knowledge of maintenance systems and procedures.
- Excellent organizational and leadership skills.
- Strong communication and interpersonal abilities.
- Proficiency in Microsoft Office and facility management software.

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By **Manjusha Radhakrishnan**
Entertainment Editor

Everybody loves a good underdog tale, and actor Kartik Aaryan-led *Chandu Champion* is all about milking that sentiment. Does it get exploitative? Yes. But do you mind being manipulated? No.

Perhaps, it's because the lead actor gives it his all in breathing life into India's obscure, but heroic real-life Paralympic champion, Murlikant Petkar, who made his country proud by bringing home an Olympic gold medal in the 500-metre swimming event.

Plus, Petkar was the first Indian to win an individual gold medal in the 1972 Summer Paralympics with all odds stacked against him, and director Kabir Khan is careful about corraling together nuggets from his life that are designed to endear him to us.

OVERDRAMATIC

The movie opens with scenes that are overdramatic, featuring an ageing Petkar with a questionable silver wig at a police station, reminiscing about his troubled childhood and his remarkable life.

The first few scenes take us back to his childhood, where he's bullied by his father and his nasty peers who mock him for his dreams of winning an Olympic gold for his country. He's called a loser and is pushed to the fringes by a system that's designed to ridicule anything that's ambitious or unfamiliar.

Encouraged by his elder brother, he joins a wrestling camp in his village, but finds himself driven out of it because he dared to win against a fellow wrestler/nepo kid of a village chieftain.

He then joins the army, hoping to follow the likes of India's famous sprinter Milkha Singh and get his foot into the Olympic race.

PREDICTABLE AT FIRST

The first hour of the film is likely to make you restless as you feel that the film is putting you through the same paces as oft-made Bollywood biopics. Sad childhood with a strict dad to boot, zero support system, but a steely spine and iron will to see the subjects through to the finish line. But what adds grit to this guts and glory biopic is when Petkar gets critically injured while on the battlefield, riddled with nine bullets.

The movie picks up pace and traction from that point. Till then, it's all about setting the field in a syrupy, benign manner. Just like how the audience may take time to warm up to Petkar's magnificently brave life, Aaryan comes into his own after he takes a near-fatal hit while on army duty.

Credit is due to actor Vijay Raaz, who plays his tough mentor and life coach with conviction and gravitas. The scene in which Raaz tells a

MOVIE REVIEW

CHANDU CHAMPION: KARTIK AARYAN HITS GOLD, BUT FILM FALTERS

Strong performances from the lead actor as well as by Vijay Raaz make the biopic watchable, yet exploitative



Photos: AFP, IMDb

disillusioned and paraplegic Petkar that he can still compete in the Paralympics, and Aaryan looking understandably exasperated at his suggestion, strikes a chord. But such scenes come far too late into the film.

The scenes where he is undergoing a traumatic phase after learning that he may be permanently disabled and resorting to self-harm seemed hurried.

Just as we were about to see conflict and complex emotions in an ex-army man, we are hurriedly shoved towards his redemption. But

what makes the film compelling is the realisation that Petkar's life was eventful, extraordinary, and rocky.

SHINING STAR

Here's a man who survived nine bullets (with one still lodged in his spine), a terror attack, and a skimpy support system to bring home Olympic glory. When it comes to acting and transforming into an athlete who's often lost and desperate, Kartik Aaryan shines.

The emotionally-charged scenes like the one where he surges ahead despite a pos-

sible head injury are wonderfully acted and rendered. The movie soars when you see a bunch of the world's best specially-abled swimmers giving it their all. Those laps are swiftly handled, but drive home the urgency and evoke incredible euphoria.

But the scenes where they try to add mirth and levity to his life, think Rajpal Yadav as this buffoonish hustler, seem forced. But that isn't a deal breaker.

The extraordinary life of Petkar has enough meat for a compelling biopic, despite the rocky start.

Spielberg celebrates 50 years of 'Sugarland Express'

Celebrated filmmaker Steven Spielberg commemorated the 50th anniversary of his debut major studio release, *Sugarland Express*, with a special screening and discussion at the Tribeca Festival, highlighting the film's significance in his illustrious career.

Addressing a captivated audience at the BMCC screening in Manhattan's lower West side, Spielberg, a three-time Oscar winner, humorously acknowledged, "You're the first audience to ever see *Sugarland Express* in 50 years," reported *Deadline*.

He recounted the movie's initial reception, noting that Universal Studios withdrew it from theatres after a brief two-week run despite positive reviews.

Sugarland Express, inspired by a real-life incident involving a Texas couple's dramatic pursuit to reclaim their child from welfare authorities, marked Spielberg's transition from television to the big screen following his success with the TV movie, *Duel*. — ANI



Mumbai police arrest Rajasthan man who planned to kill Salman Khan

The Mumbai Crime Branch on Sunday arrested Banwarilal Laturlal Gujar from Borda village in Rajasthan for allegedly planning to kill Bollywood actor Salman Khan.

Police said that Gujar (25) in a video posted on YouTube channel, *Are Chhodo Yar*, mentioned that the Bishnoi Gang had planned to kill the actor.

The Mumbai Crime Branch arrested the accused from Borda village in Rajasthan. He is being brought to Mumbai for further investigation, they said.

The offence was registered at South Cyber Police Station in

Mumbai vide under Sections 506(2), 504, 34 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and Section 66(d) of the Information Technology (IT) Act.

Considering the seriousness of the case, a team was dispatched to Rajasthan to investigate, following which the accused was apprehended.

On June 4, the Mumbai Crime Branch recorded the statement of Salman and his brother Arbaaz Khan in connection with the firing outside their Bandra residence in April.

As per a Mumbai Police official, Salman's statement was recorded for nearly four hours. — ANI



'Superman' star asks fans for parenting tips

Henry Cavill and Natalie Viscuso confirmed rumours back in April that they were expecting a child

Superman star Henry Cavill, who is set to embark on a new role, one of fatherhood, asked fans for tips on parenting. Taking to Instagram on Sunday, Cavill shared a selfie while sitting in a nursery. He wrote, "Oh yeah.....and Happy Father's Day ye dads out there. Turns out I shall be joining your hallowed ranks soon! Any tips?? And don't worry, pillows won't be in the crib when the wee one arrives, just glue and scapels so he or she can build Warhammer miniatures."

Cavill was referring to the *Warhammer* 40,000 adaptation that he and Viscuso were working on together.

The news broke after Cavill and his girlfriend, Natalie Viscuso, were spotted in New York City, with Viscuso sporting what appeared to be a baby bump, as per TMZ.

Cavill confirmed in April that he and Viscuso were expecting a child.

During Access Hollywood at the *The Ministry of Ungentlemanly Warfare*'s New York City premiere, he said "Natalie and I are both very excited about it. I'm sure you'll see much more of that," People quoted.

While this will be Cavill's first foray into fatherhood, he and Viscuso have been navigating their relationship publicly since 2021, showcasing a strong bond that has now culminated in the joy of impending parenthood.

Cavill and Viscuso officially



Henry Cavill in the nursery and (above) with Natalie Viscuso.

announced their relationship in April 2021, posing while playing a game of chess. They made their red carpet debut as a couple in October 2022 at the *Enola Holmes 2* premiere. Two months later, they announced their project, adapting the *Warhammer* 40,000 game together, as per *People*. —ANI

Ramsay 'lucky to be here' after mishap

Celebrity chef Gordon Ramsay recently met with a serious cycling accident. Taking to Instagram, *The MasterChef* star revealed in a post that the accident happened earlier this week while he had been biking in Connecticut, USA, *People* reported.

Noting that the incident "really shook me" and he had been admitted to a hospital for care, Ramsay said, "Honestly, I'm lucky to be here."

"I'm in pain. It's been a brutal week," he added, while lifting up his chef's jacket to reveal his heavily bruised ribs. "And I'm sort of getting through it. But I cannot tell you the importance of wearing a helmet."

In his caption, Ramsay explained that though he did not "break any bones or suffer any major injuries," he was "a bit bruised up, looking like a purple potato." —ANI



'Inside Out 2' sets opening record

Inside Out 2, an animated film from Walt Disney Co.'s Pixar, grossed \$155 million at the box office in the US and Canada, besting *Dune: Part Two* as the movie with the biggest opening weekend of the year.

In a reprieve for theatre chains which have suffered from a dearth of Hollywood films in the first half due to last year's strikes, *Inside Out 2* scored the biggest opening weekend since *Barbie*. That Warner Bros. Discovery Inc. release grossed \$162 million on its debut.

Globally, *Inside Out 2*'s \$295 million haul is the biggest opening weekend for an animated film. In the US and Canada, it's the second-biggest, behind *The Incredibles 2* in 2018.

"If it was ever in doubt, people continue and are still willing to go to the cinema to see great movies," Tony Chambers, Disney's executive vice president, said. —Bloomberg



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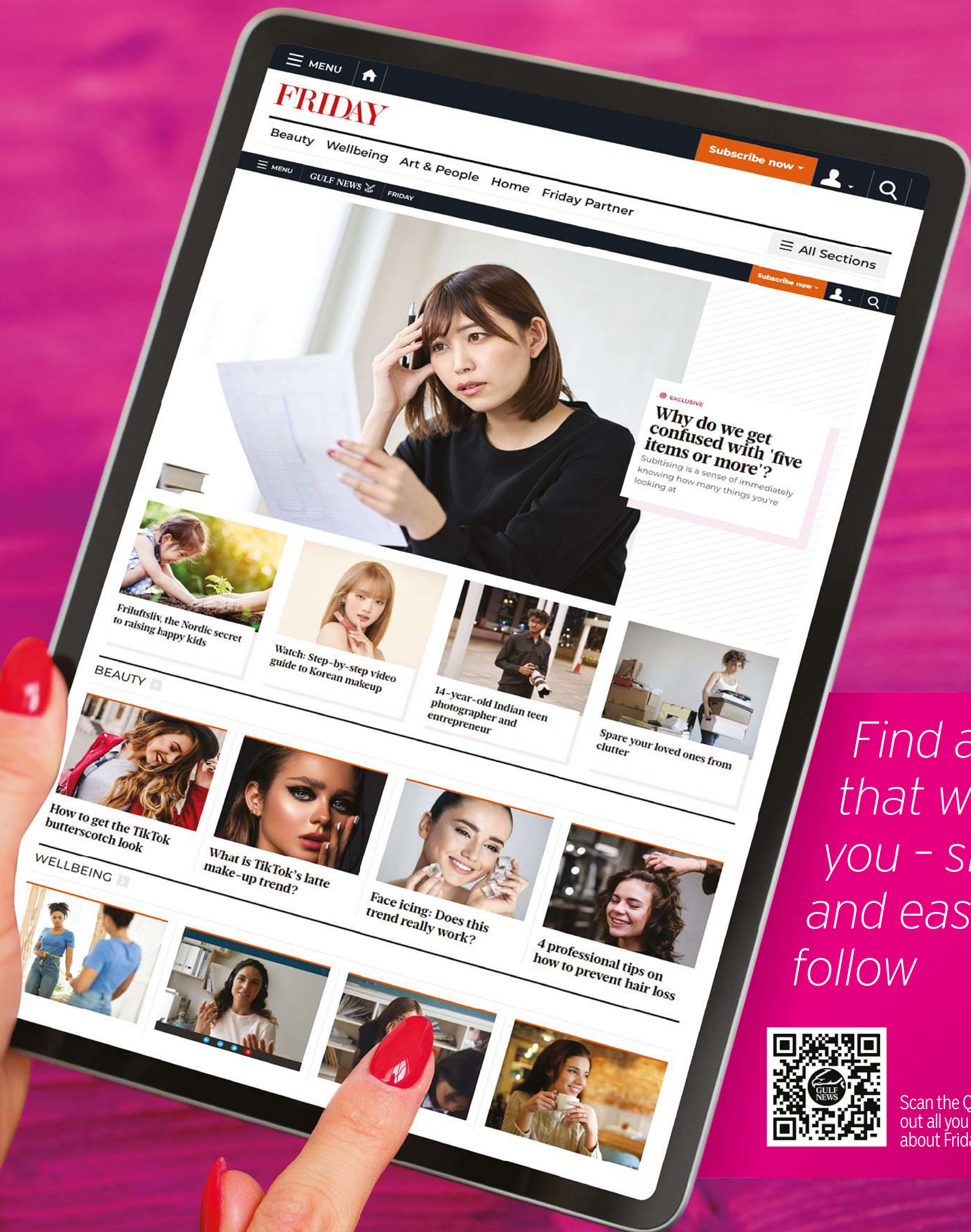
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