

Bahrain reinforces commitment to sustainable tourism on World Tourism Day

Fatima bint Jaafar Al Sairafi, Minister of Tourism, highlighted Bahrain's dedication to developing the tourism sector in line with sustainable development goals.

The minister noted that hotels, tourism facilities, and transport services are increasingly investing in environmental sustainability, aiming to balance sector growth with the protection of natural, cultural, and historical heritage.

"Bahrain continues to boost tourism investment and expand regional and international co-operation with leading organisations in the sector, supporting global efforts to achieve sustainable development goals," she said, marking World Tourism Day in line with this year's theme, "Tourism and Sustainable Transformation."

Under the leadership of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa and the directives of His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Crown Prince and Prime Minister, Bahrain is steadily consolidating its position as a key regional and international tourism destination.

The minister also highlighted the importance of tourism as a bridge for human communication, a tool for fostering understanding and peace, and a significant contributor to the national economy.

She emphasised that the Tourism Sector Strategy (2022-2026) provides a roadmap to advance the sector, diversify tourism products, increase its contribution to GDP, and create quality opportunities for Bahraini talent through innovative initiatives in partnership with the private sector.

Trump announces steep new tariffs, EU claims pharmaceutical immunity

- 100% levy on pharmaceuticals
- Trump wrote of a 25% tariff on "all 'Heavy (Big) Trucks' made in other parts of the world"
- The real-estate tycoon also targeted home renovation materials

AFP | Washington, United States

US President Donald Trump's announcement of steep new tariffs on medicines and other goods drew pushback from some allies yesterday, with the EU claiming immunity for its pharmaceutical industry under an earlier trade deal.

The announcement late on Thursday evening, which included a 100% levy on pharmaceuticals, is the harshest trade policy by the president since last April's shock unveiling of "reciprocal" tariffs on virtually every US trading partner across the globe.

Starting October 1, "we will be imposing a 100% Tariff on any branded or patented Pharmaceutical



(FILES) Trucks carrying shipping containers are seen at the Port of Miami in Miami, Florida

Product, unless a Company IS BUILDING their Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Plant in America," the Republican wrote on his Truth Social platform.

The European Union said yesterday a July deal with Washington shielded the bloc from tariffs higher than 15% on its drug exports.

"This clear all-inclusive 15% tariff ceiling for EU exports represents an insurance policy that no higher tariffs will emerge for European economic operators," EU trade spokesman Olof Gill said.

A European pharmaceutical industry group also warned that tariffs on medicines would "create the worst of all worlds."

"Tariffs increase costs, disrupt supply chains and prevent patients from getting life-saving treatments," Nathalie Moll, director general of the European Federation of Pharmaceutical Industries and Associations, said on Friday.

Trump's latest move was also criticized by US ally Australia, which exported pharmaceutical products worth an estimated \$1.35 billion to the United States in 2024, according to the UN's Comtrade Database.

Australian Health Minister Mark Butler said on Friday that the higher rates were "not in the American consumers' interest... particularly given the degree to which their exporters to Australia benefit from that free trade as well."

Big rigs

In a separate post, Trump wrote of a 25% tariff on "all 'Heavy (Big) Trucks' made in other parts of the world" to support US manufacturers such as

"Peterbilt, Kenworth, Freightliner, Mack Trucks and others."

Foreign companies that compete with these manufacturers in the US market include Sweden's Volvo and Germany's Daimler, which includes the Freightliner and Western Star brands.

Shares in both companies were sharply lower in after-hours trading in Europe, although Volvo recovered when trading resumed.

Trump said the truck tariffs were "for many reasons, but above all else, for National Security purposes!"

The Trump administration launched a so-called Section 232 probe this year into imports of trucks to "determine the effects of national security," setting the stage for Thursday's announcement.

The real-estate tycoon also targeted home renovation materials, writing "We will be imposing a 50% Tariff on all Kitchen Cabinets, Bathroom Vanities and associated products," from October 1.

"Additionally, we will be charging a 30% Tariff on Upholstered Furniture," he added.

According to the United States International Trade Commission, imports in 2022, mainly from Asia, represented 60 percent of all furniture sold, including 86 percent of all wood furniture and 42% of all upholstered furniture.

Shares in home furniture retailers Wayfair and Williams Sonoma, which depend on these imported goods, tumbled in after-hours trading following the announcement.

Facebook, Instagram to offer paid ad-free UK subscriptions

London, United Kingdom

Meta announced yesterday that Facebook and Instagram users in the UK will be able to buy ad-free subscriptions, extending a model already in place in Europe, to comply with regulation.

Starting in the coming weeks, UK-based users can opt out of personalised ads by paying a monthly fee of £2.99 (\$4) on the web, or £3.99 via iOS and Android apps.

The US tech giant said the move comes "in response to recent UK regulatory guidance," noting that the subscription model gives users a choice over whether to allow personalised ads.

The UK price will be lower than what is offered in the European Union, where ad-free subscriptions start at 5.99 euros (\$7) per month.

Meta first announced its ad-free option in the EU at the end of 2023 to comply with tougher regulation intended to rein in big tech.

The company has long prof-



ited from selling user data to advertisers but this business model has led to multiple battles with regulators over data privacy.

The European data regulator last year told Meta it must not force users to pay for the right to data protection, pushing the company to tweak its model.

Meta on Friday criticised the "overreach" of regulators in the EU, where it must provide a version of its platforms with "less personalised" ads.

It meanwhile welcomed the "constructive approach" of the British privacy watchdog, the Information Commissioner's Office.

The ICO said the subscription option would allow Meta to comply with UK law.

Tehran, Moscow sign \$25 bn deal to build nuclear plants in Iran

Tehran, Iran

Iran and Russia signed a \$25 billion deal to build nuclear power plants in the Islamic republic, Iranian state media reported Friday, just hours ahead of the likely return of sweeping UN sanctions on Iran.

"A deal for the construction of four nuclear power plants with a value of \$25 billion in Sirik, Hormozgan was signed between the Iran Hormoz company and Rosatom," state television said. Iran has just one operational nuclear power plant in Bushehr in the south, with a capacity of 1,000 megawatts -- just a fraction of the country's energy needs.

According to state news agency IRNA, each plant will have a capacity of 1,255 megawatts, though no details were provided on the timeline.

The move comes as so-called snapback sanctions triggered by the European parties to a landmark 2015 nuclear deal with Iran are set to return by the end of Saturday.

Britain, France and Germany triggered the sanctions last month, accusing of Iran of failing to adhere to its commitments under the agreement.

At a Security Council session on Friday, China and Russia

put forward a draft resolution to allow another half year for talks, but it is unlikely to garner enough support to pass.

Western countries have long accused Iran of seeking an atomic bomb -- a charge Tehran vehemently denies, defending its right to a civilian nuclear programme.

The United States in 2018 unilaterally pulled out of the nuclear accord with Iran, prompting Tehran to begin walking back its commitments.

Talks between Washington and Tehran to strike a new deal were underway, before being derailed by unprecedented Israeli strikes on Iran in June that began a 12-day war briefly joined by the United States.



Iran had previously signed with Russia a nuclear energy deal in 1993 allowing for the construction of the Bushehr plant, after Germany had abandoned it in the wake of the Islamic revolution of 1979.

India retires Soviet fighter jet after six decades

AFP | India

India's Russian-built MiG-21s flew for the final time Friday, marking the end of an era for the country's first supersonic fighter jet -- lauded for its valour but tarnished by a legacy of some 400 crashes.

Crowds cheered as officials staged a grand farewell for the final two MiG-

21 squadrons, totalling around 36 aircraft, at an air force base in the northern city of Chandigarh.

The send-off came a day after New Delhi signed a \$7-billion deal to acquire 97 domestically designed and built Tejas jets as it seeks to modernise its Soviet-era fleet.

The farewell ceremony included a mock dogfight

between Russian MiGs and a colourful display by the Surya Kiran aerobatic team.

The retired jets will likely be put up for public display, though the government has yet to announce any plans.

Defence minister Rajnath Singh, senior air force officials, including veterans who piloted the MiG-21,

watched as the storied aircraft made their last pass.

First inducted in the 1960s, India operated a staggering 874 MiG-21s.

Plans to retire them in the 1990s were repeatedly delayed amid local production setbacks, bureaucratic obstacles and corruption scandals.



A firefighter gives a water cannon salute to India's MiG-21 fighter jets during their farewell ceremony at the Chandigarh Air Force Station in Chandigarh