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Yorkshire

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ALPHA FEMALES

BPA Empowering Women Awards: 500 guests unite for one extraordinary night

Sensational awards night honours women from across business, healthcare, education, community and public service



Some evenings are remembered for who was in the room. Others are remembered for how they made people feel. The BPA Empowering Women Awards 2026 will undoubtedly be remembered for both.

On Thursday 25th June, 500 guests filled the Cedar Court Hotel in Bradford for what has become one of the UK's most inspiring celebrations of female achievement.

From the moment guests arrived, there was a palpable sense of anticipation. The Cedar Court Hotel ballroom quickly filled with business leaders, NHS clinicians, charity founders, academics, creatives, lawyers, councillors and campaigners, while families, friends and colleagues gathered to celebrate women whose dedication has often gone quietly unnoticed.

Continued on pages 2 & 3

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BPA Empowering Women Awards: 500 guests unite for one extraordinary night

Sensational awards night honours women from across business, healthcare, education, community and public service

Cover story continued

Hosted by broadcaster Tommy Sandhu, the evening balanced celebration with reflection, recognising not only professional success but the personal journeys behind it. As if the evening needed another unforgettable moment, guests were treated to a spectacular surprise.

Acclaimed British Asian music sensation Gubi Sandhu took to the stage for an exclusive live performance that completely



HOST: Tommy Sandhu

transformed the atmosphere. Within moments the ballroom erupted with cheers as guests sang every word back to him, and the celebrations reached another level.

Joining the celebrations was an outstanding line-up of distinguished guests, and a powerhouse of female speakers including, Rebecca Fitzgerald - Director Yorkshire Building Society & President Bradford Chamber of Commerce, Alison Lowe OBE - Deputy Mayor for Police and Crime at WYCA, MP Naz Shah, and Deputy Leader of Leeds City Council councillor Salma Arif.



The evening also provided a platform for some of the region's most influential male advocates for gender equality reinforcing the importance of championing female leadership; and included Dr Hanif Malik OBE - Equity Ambassador for the BPA Empowering Women Awards, Asif Khan - CEO & Managing Director of Janan, and Younis Chaudhry - CEO & Managing Director of Regal Foods Plc.

'The challenge wasn't finding talented women'

Long before the applause, the standing ovations and the celebrations, organisers faced the most difficult part of the process.

Hundreds of nominations arrived from across the country, each telling a story of resilience, innovation, compassion and

leadership.

Judges, Sarah Khan Bashir MBE, Dr Saira Ali FLI, Rifhat Malik MBE and Rizwana Mahmood-Ahmed MBE, described this year's standard as the strongest yet, with many categories decided by the narrowest of margins. Every finalist had demonstrated

exceptional commitment within their field, making the process of selecting

winners both rigorous and deeply rewarding.

For co-founder and Chair of BPA Empowering Women Awards, Andleeb Hanif, one message became impossible to ignore: "When the nominations began arriving, we expected to be inspired," she said.

"What we didn't expect was to be overwhelmed by the sheer depth of talent, leadership and determination behind every story. There is no shortage of talented women. The challenge wasn't finding them - it was deciding which extraordinary stories to recognise," she said.

"To every nominee, finalist and winner, thank you. Your stories have inspired us, challenged us and reminded us of what is possible. You have set a remarkable standard, and it has been our

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More than an awards ceremony

While trophies were presented to outstanding individuals, the evening carried a message that reached far beyond the winners’ stage.

Looking around the ballroom, guests saw women from different faiths, cultures, professions and generations celebrating one another’s achievements.

Entrepreneurs applauded teachers. Doctors stood to recognise community volunteers. Senior leaders celebrated young



achievers beginning their own journeys. It was a reminder that leadership comes in many forms, and that diversity was not presented as a talking point. It was simply the reality of the room.

Nadim Hanif, co-founder and CEO of the BPA Empowering Women Awards, said: “The success

of these awards is built on the commitment of many people who believe in recognising excellence.

“My sincere thanks go to our outstanding judging panel for the professionalism, integrity and care they brought to an incredibly difficult process. I would

also like to thank our headline sponsor, Janan, and every one of our valued event partners - your support enables us to shine a light on remarkable women whose achievements deserve to be recognised and celebrated.”

See pages 6 & 7 for the winners.



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Robot deliveries spark pavement safety debate

The sight of small autonomous delivery robots trundling along pavements has become increasingly common across, but their growing presence is now fuelling a national debate over pedestrian safety, accessibility and the future of Britain's streets.

The battery-powered robots,

operated largely by Starship Technologies, are now a familiar feature in areas including Leeds, Sheffield and Barnsley, delivering groceries and takeaway meals directly to customers' doors.

Since launching in the UK in 2018, the company says it has completed more than two million deliveries.

However, campaigners are warning that while the technology promises convenience, it should not come at the expense of public safety.

Walking charity Living Streets has launched a campaign urging the Government to introduce clear national regulations governing the use of delivery robots and to address what it describes as increasing "pavement overload".

Zak Viney, from Living Streets, said pavements should remain accessible for everyone, particularly wheelchair users, visually impaired people and parents with pushchairs.

"Our pavements are already cluttered," he said. "Delivery robots have been introduced without a national framework, and they can create additional obstacles for some of the most vulnerable people in society."

The charity has written to Transport Secretary Heidi Alexander calling for urgent clarification over the legal status

of autonomous delivery robots and for national rules governing where and how they operate.

Public opinion remains divided.

For some residents in Yorkshire, the robots are a welcome example of technology making everyday life easier. Others believe they are an unnecessary obstruction.

"They're in the way a lot of the time," said one resident. "You're the one who has to move."

Also questioned are the cameras mounted on the robots, expressing concerns about how footage and data might be collected and used.

"I don't understand why they're on the pavement," he added. "People say they're cute, but I think they feel quite sinister."

Starship Technologies maintains that safety and accessibility are central to its design.

The company says the cameras and sensors fitted to the robots are used

solely to help them navigate safely and avoid obstacles. It also says it works closely with disability organisations to improve both the robots' design and autonomous driving systems.

According to the company, around a quarter of its regular customers either have a disability themselves or live with someone who does, making autonomous deliveries an important service for those with limited mobility.

Starship has also indicated it would manufacture its delivery robots in Britain should legislation be updated to allow wider deployment across the country.

The Government has acknowledged that autonomous delivery technology has the potential to boost innovation and economic growth, but insists public safety must come first.

A government spokesperson said legislation would be updated following public consultation "as soon as parliamentary time allows".

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Outstanding Woman in Arts, Media & Culture

Eyarun Nessa - Content Creator/ Photographer

Eyarun Nessa is a creative practitioner, filmmaker, photographer and community artist working across arts, media and cultural storytelling. Through film, visual arts and creative engagement, Eyarun amplifies underrepresented voices, explores identity, belonging and heritage. Her work has delivered cultural projects, exhibitions and films that have engaged diverse audiences, through the power of arts and culture.



Businesswoman of the Year

Sofia Younis, COO & Co-Founder of Serenity Specialist Care; Practice Director of MADE Architecture

With over 30 years' experience in paediatric nursing, fostering, adoption and residential care, Sofia has dedicated her career to improving outcomes for vulnerable children and young people. As co-founder of a specialist care organisation, she's developed vital support services for those with autism, learning disabilities and complex needs. Her leadership, mentoring and community work continue to create lasting positive impact.



Professional of the Year

Farah Qureshi, CEO & Founder - Global Diversity Practice

A pioneering diversity and inclusion leader with over 30 years of corporate experience, she has spent the last 16 years building organisations that support clients across 188 countries through a global network of experts and partners. Her DEIB strategies have influenced businesses, governments and institutions worldwide, helping leaders create more inclusive workplaces and drive lasting cultural change.



WINNERS

Entrepreneur of the Year

Kiran Khan, CEO & Chocolatier of Chakelet



Originally from London, she's the first British woman luxury chocolatier in West Yorkshire, she transformed a passion into a thriving business. Through creativity, innovation and craftsmanship,

she has introduced handcrafted luxury chocolates to the region. Committed to inspiring others, she regularly hosts educational workshops for schoolchildren, sharing the history, science and artistry of chocolate.

Outstanding Woman in Education

Shaheen Myers, Founder & Director of Balance-ed

An education leader, author, keynote speaker with over 25 years' experience in the sector. Having held senior roles including Headteacher, Executive Leader and Deputy Director for Education at Leeds City Council, she now supports



leaders through coaching and development programmes. She is also the founder of the Race Equality Networking Dinner (REND), championing equity, inclusion and belonging.

Excellence in the Legal Sector

Eram Malik, Employment Solicitor, Islamophobia Response Unit (IRU)

Eram champions justice for victims of workplace discrimination, harassment, victimisation and unfair dismissal. The first in her family to qualify as a solicitor, she overcame cultural, gender and societal barriers while raising a young family. Eram also delivers legal awareness programmes, helping people understand their rights, challenge discrimination and access justice with confidence.



Healthcare Professional of the Year

Dr Farzana Khan, Doctor in Regenerative Medicine & Women's Health

Dr Farzana Khan is an internationally recognised physician and advocate for women's intimate health, with over 20 years of medical experience in the NHS. She works globally to break taboos surrounding women's health, recently delivering voluntary awareness workshops. As Medical Director of a women's health clinic, she champions education, empowerment and the message that women's intimate health should never be a taboo.



Outstanding Woman in Public Service

Sajda Shah MBE - Public Service and Communities Leader

Sajda Shah MBE is a nationally recognised public service leader with more than 30 years' experience across healthcare, local government, justice, community development and the voluntary sector. She is a respected Magistrate, Chair, Board member and mentor, known for championing social justice, inclusion and community empowerment through strategic leadership, governance and public service.



Empowerment Champion of the Year

Lucy Ndlovu, Founder of Progressive Talent C.I.C

Lucy is passionate about creating meaningful change, she brings together people, policy and lived experience to drive social impact. Holding an MA in Public Relations and Strategic Communications and currently pursuing a PhD in Sociology and Social Policy, she serves as a trustee for NOVA, sits on the West Yorkshire Police and Crime Panel Independent Advisory Group and is an Entrepreneur in Residence at Leeds Beckett University. Her work focuses on inclusive engagement, amplifying underrepresented voices and advancing equity.

Community Champion of Year
Hana Agha, Project Co-Ordinator, Give a Gift Charity

For over 20-years, Hana has dedicated herself to community service, and whose compassion and commitment have transformed lives locally and internationally. Through her work she supports vulnerable individuals through education, volunteering and humanitarian aid. She's delivered aid in Pakistan and Syria, and completed a non-stop 48-hour walk from Leeds to Birmingham to raise funds for Palestinian families.





Influential Woman of the Year

Aaliya Khan, Founder, Women of Fortitude CIC & Director, Pakistan Britain Business Council (PBBC)

Aaliya Khan is a social entrepreneur and women's empowerment advocate dedicated to advancing inclusion, enterprise and economic independence. As Founder of Anaqa Studios, Sew 2 Perfection Pvt Ltd and Women of Fortitude CIC, she supports women through skills development, entrepreneurship and employment opportunities, while creating jobs for women in Pakistan. A Director of Trade at PBBC, she has represented women internationally at UN CSW69 and CSW70, championing economic empowerment and global inclusion.



Sport Champion of the Year

Humera Khan, CEO of Happy Healthy You

Humera is the CEO of a multi award-winning organisation tackling health inequalities through physical activity, wellbeing and community engagement. Inspired by her own health journey, she's transformed a small class into a trusted organisation supporting thousands. She's earned regional and national recognition for empowering people to lead active lives.

Special Recognition Award (posthumous)

Bana Gora, Founder & CEO of the Muslim Women's Council

The late Bana Gora was the visionary founder and Chief Executive of the Muslim Women's Council, dedicating her life to empowering women, strengthening communities and promoting interfaith understanding. A passionate advocate for equality and inclusion, she created opportunities for those whose voices were too often unheard. Her leadership transformed countless lives across Bradford and beyond, leaving an enduring legacy that continues to inspire future generations.



Lifetime Achievement Award

Bushra Nasir CBE DL FCCT

Bushra Nasir CBE DL FCCT is one of the UK's most influential education leaders. Among the country's first Muslim female Headteachers and its first Muslim female Chief Executive of a Multi-Academy Trust, she has spent more than five decades championing excellence, inclusion and opportunity. A Deputy Lieutenant, mentor, author and charity leader, her pioneering career has inspired generations and left an enduring legacy across education and public life.



Trailblazer of the Year

Samaira Tanveer Yasin, Founder & Director of Rani's Foods & Noor Bakers

Samaira Tanveer Yasin is the founder and director of Rani's Foods and Noor Bakers, transforming a single venture launched in 2021 into a thriving food business with three retail stores and a successful manufacturing operation employing over 25 staff. Her products supply major retailers, caterers and leading halal food businesses across the UK. Driven by courage, innovation and family values, Samaira is inspiring a new generation of women to build bold businesses and create lasting impact. enduring legacy across education and public life.



Pioneering Woman in Business

Imtiaz Ishfaq Malik
Mrs Malik is the pioneering force behind one of the UK's most successful halal food businesses. From preparing every recipe by hand before dawn to making personal sacrifices to keep the business alive, her resilience and determination laid the foundations for the Mr T's and My Peshawar brands. Her passion for quality and authenticity has helped build a lasting family business, creating jobs, inspiring future generations and leaving an enduring entrepreneurial legacy.

Young Achievers

WINNER: Young Achiever of the Year

Maryam Jazeem, Founder of Quran30Global, and King Charles III #iWill Youth Ambassador



Maryam Jazeem, 14, is a multi-award-winning Quran reciter, public speaker, social activist, and entrepreneur. Home-educated by her single father, she is the world's first child to master Tajweed and memorise the Holy Quran using STEM methodologies and AI. Crowned as the Best Quran Reciter in the UK at age nine, Maryam is a two-time MK STEM student Superstar and King Charles III #iWill Youth Ambassador who has raised £220,000 for charity, masterfully bridging faith, technology, and global social justice.

RUNNER UP: Young Achiever of the Year

Miran Almass, Air Cadet 168 Squadron Leeds

Miran Almass is a youth leader, advocate and change-maker dedicated to civic engagement, public leadership and community service. She has represented young people through the European Youth Parliament UK, NHS Youth Forum and as the youngest advocate on the Islamic Relief advocacy board. A Sutton Trust US Programme participant and Fulbright Scholar, she was recognised by the Lord Mayor of Leeds for fundraising efforts and became one of the first RAF Air Cadets in her cohort to fly solo.



COMMENDATIONS:



Ehliyya Naqvi



Hafsa Shahid



Rukhsar Jahangir



Sara Gajra

“There is clear evidence that public confidence in the force may have been seriously harmed by this incident, and that is a factor we must consider when assessing the evidence.”

Police watchdog investigates officers over handling of dying student Henry Nowak

Henry Nowak, 18, was fatally stabbed by Vickrum Digwa with a large blade



Misconduct investigation

Britain's police watchdog has launched a gross misconduct investigation into two police officers over their handling of the fatal stabbing of 18-year-old Henry Nowak, whose treatment by officers as he lay dying sparked national outrage and renewed debate about policing and racial bias.

The Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) confirmed the

officers are being investigated over concerns they may have breached professional standards after Henry was handcuffed and arrested instead of receiving immediate medical assistance following the attack in Southampton in December last year.

The case drew widespread condemnation after video footage emerged showing Henry, who had suffered fatal stab wounds, telling

officers he had been stabbed and could not breathe. One officer was reportedly heard responding: “Don’t think you have, mate.”

Henry later died from his injuries. The teenager’s killer, Vickrum Digwa, was sentenced to life imprisonment in June after being convicted of murder. During the incident, Digwa falsely accused Henry of racially abusing and assaulting him

– allegations that investigators later found to be entirely untrue.

The circumstances surrounding the police response triggered protests across Southampton, with campaigners and community leaders demanding accountability and questioning whether assumptions made at the scene influenced officers’ actions.

The IOPC said its investigation will examine whether the officers failed to recognise Henry’s urgent need for medical treatment, ignored his repeated pleas for help and made the decision to arrest and handcuff him rather than provide potentially life-saving first aid.

Investigators will also consider whether one officer failed to treat Henry with appropriate respect by appearing to dismiss his account of having been stabbed.

Derrick Campbell, Director of Engagement at the IOPC, said public confidence had been significantly affected by the incident.

“There is clear evidence that public confidence in the force may have been seriously harmed by this incident, and

that is a factor we must consider when assessing the evidence,” he said.

The investigation will focus on potential breaches relating to officers’ duties and responsibilities, use of force and conduct that could bring policing into disrepute.

The case has also reached the highest levels of government. Prime Minister Keir Starmer previously said there were “serious questions” to answer about the police response, including whether allegations of racism influenced operational decision-making before officers had established the facts.

The tragedy has become a flashpoint in wider discussions around policing, race and public trust, with campaigners calling for lessons to be learned to ensure emergency responses prioritise preserving life above all else.

The IOPC investigation remains ongoing, and no findings have yet been made against either officer. If evidence of misconduct is established, the watchdog can recommend disciplinary proceedings.

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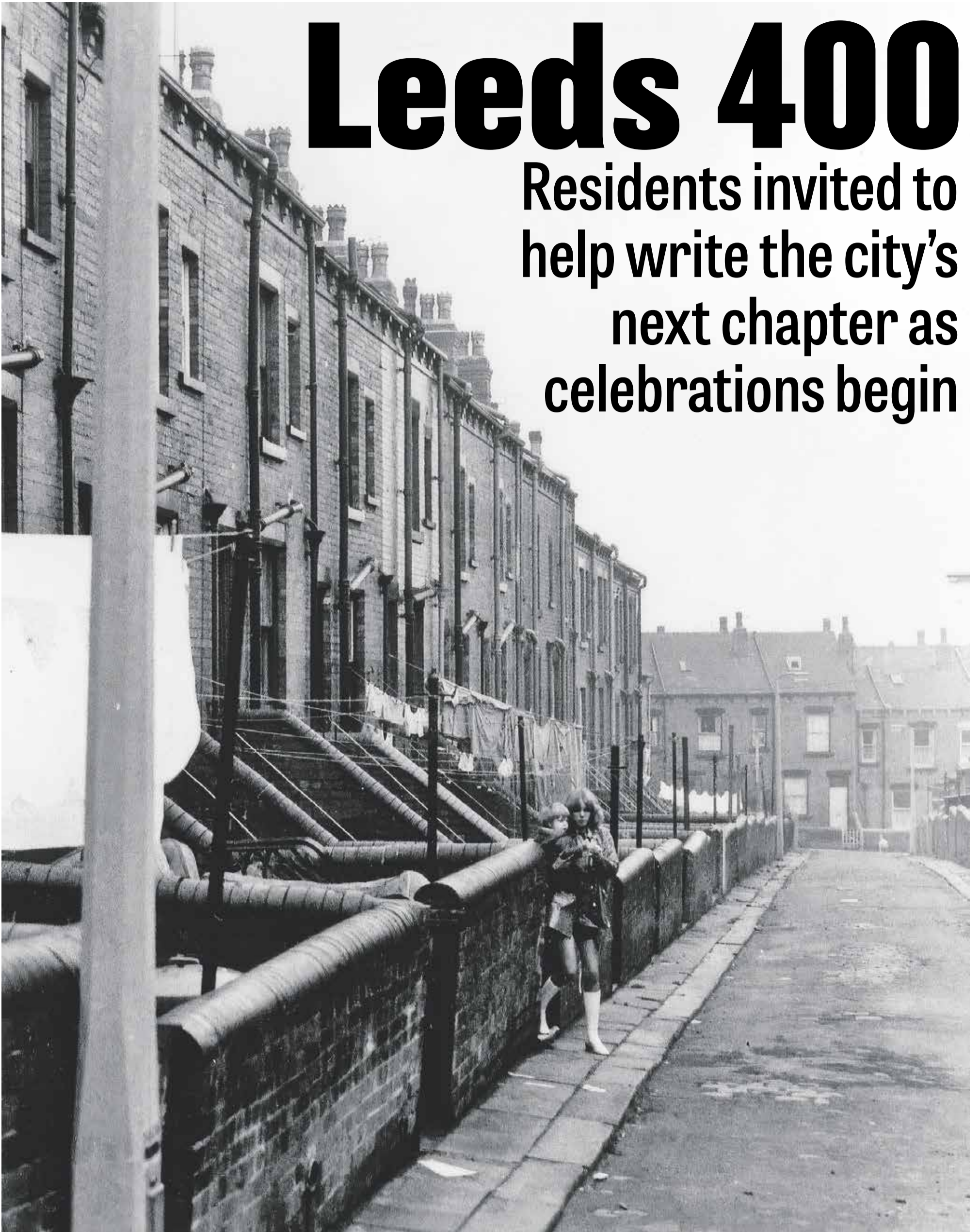
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Leeds 400

Residents invited to help write the city's next chapter as celebrations begin



“Leeds’ greatest strength has always been its people.” That’s the message from Councillor Asghar Khan –the council’s executive member for housing and hubs as the city launches an ambitious appeal for residents to help preserve the memories, stories and treasured possessions that have shaped Leeds over the last four centuries.

From faded family photographs and handwritten letters to treasured football memorabilia, artwork and keepsakes passed down through generations, local people are being invited to share the items that best capture what Leeds means to them.

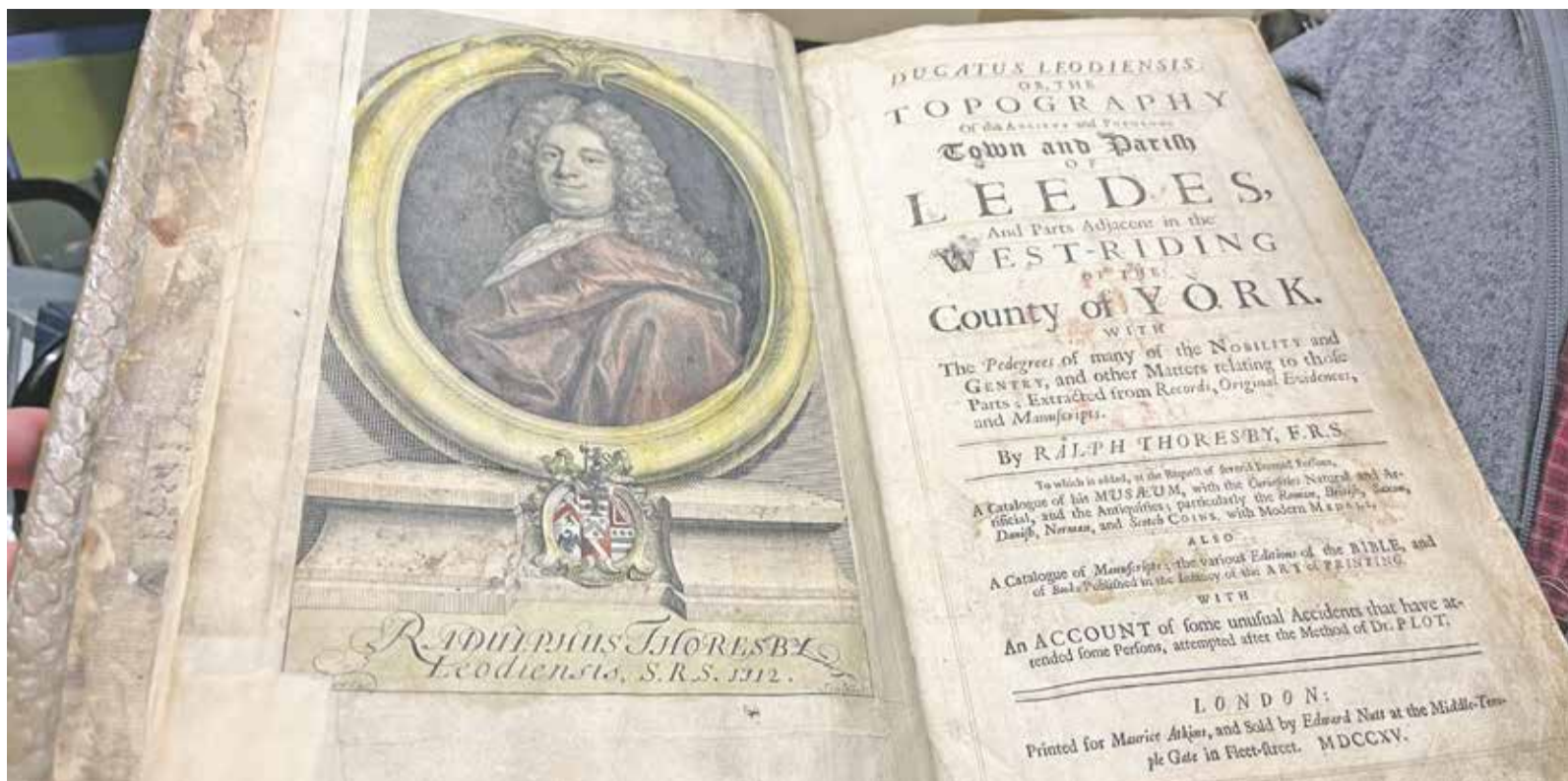
The community call-out forms part of Leeds 400, a year-long programme marking 400 years since the city was granted its first City Charter by King Charles I in 1626.

At the heart of the celebrations will be a landmark exhibition at Leeds Central Library, where personal memories from residents will sit alongside some of the city’s most treasured historical artefacts.

Councillor Khan said Leeds has always been built by the people who call it home. He believes the exhibition presents a rare opportunity to celebrate the city’s rich diversity by ensuring that the stories, traditions and memories of local communities become part of Leeds’ lasting legacy for generations to come.

Opening this September, the exhibition aims to tell not only the official history of Leeds but also the personal stories that have unfolded in its streets, neighbourhoods and homes.

Librarians are encouraging residents to delve into family albums, memory boxes and forgotten drawers in search of photographs, heirlooms, letters, concert tickets, artwork, football



fanzines or any other objects that hold special significance.

The goal is to create a powerful snapshot of Leeds through the eyes of the people who have lived, worked and grown up here, celebrating the everyday moments that often define a city’s character far more than its landmarks alone.

Among the images already selected for display is a striking 1970 photograph titled Butch and Mates, capturing a group of children playing outside rows of terraced houses on Servia Hill. Organisers hope nostalgic scenes such as this will encourage residents to uncover similar memories

from their own family collections.

Antony Ramm, Special Collections Librarian at Leeds Central Library, said the exhibition is about much more than marking an important historical milestone.

He said while Leeds 400 celebrates the granting of the city’s first charter, it is equally an opportunity to recognise the countless individuals, families and communities whose everyday lives have helped shape Leeds into the vibrant city it is today.

The exhibition will also showcase some of the library’s most remarkable treasures, including archive material documenting the life and work of

pioneering Leeds feminist Mary Gawthorpe and a rare copy of Ducatus Leodiensis by Ralph Thoresby, widely regarded as the first written history of Leeds.

Visitors will also discover more contemporary pieces reflecting the city’s cultural identity, including memorabilia from famous concerts, sporting events and a collection of football and sports fanzines created by passionate supporters across the region.

The exhibition forms one of the centrepieces of the Leeds 400 programme, which will feature cultural events, performances and community activities throughout the year to

commemorate four centuries of civic history while celebrating the city’s continuing evolution.

Organisers hope contributions from local people will ensure the exhibition reflects every corner of Leeds and every generation that has helped shape it.

Residents wishing to contribute photographs, stories or treasured objects are encouraged to contact Leeds Central Library ahead of the exhibition, offering a unique opportunity to ensure their family’s memories become part of the city’s shared story. Email: localandfamilyhistory@leeds.gov.uk.

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US Supreme Court blocks Trump's bid to end birthright citizenship in landmark ruling

President Donald Trump's attempt to end automatic birthright citizenship in the United States has been dealt a major blow after the US Supreme Court ruled that children born on American soil remain entitled to citizenship, regardless of their parents' immigration status.

In a landmark 6-3 decision, the nation's highest court struck down Trump's executive order, reaffirming a constitutional principle that has been embedded in American law for more than 150 years and affecting the future of hundreds of thousands of children born in the US each year.

The ruling is particularly significant for immigrant communities across the United States, including many South Asian families, as it preserves long-established protections under the 14th Amendment of the US Constitution.

Chief Justice John Roberts, writing for the majority, said the Constitution clearly guarantees citizenship to virtually everyone born in the United States, with only a handful of narrow exceptions. He rejected the argument that a president could

The ruling is particularly significant for immigrant communities across the United States, including many South Asian families

redefine citizenship through executive action, saying such a fundamental constitutional right cannot be altered by the White House alone.

The decision also reinforces the landmark 1898 case of *United States v. Wong Kim Ark*, which established that children born in the US are citizens regardless of their parents' nationality or immigration status. That precedent has shaped American immigration law for more than a century.

Trump's executive order, signed on his first day back in office, sought to deny citizenship to babies born in the United States if neither parent was an American citizen or lawful permanent resident. The proposal would also have affected many families legally living in the country on temporary visas, including international students, skilled workers and visitors. It was immediately challenged in the courts and never came into force.

Although six justices agreed the order could not stand, there were differences in their reasoning. Justice Brett Kavanaugh agreed that Trump's policy was unlawful but suggested Congress could, in future, debate whether citizenship rules should be changed through legislation rather than executive action.

In a lengthy dissent, Justice Clarence Thomas argued that the Citizenship Clause of the 14th Amendment was

originally intended to apply only to formerly enslaved people and their descendants. He was joined by Justices Samuel Alito and Neil Gorsuch, who said the Constitution does not require citizenship for children born to parents without permanent legal status.

The ruling marks one of the most significant legal setbacks of Trump's second presidency. While the Supreme Court has supported several elements of his immigration agenda in recent months, it concluded that ending birthright citizenship crosses a constitutional line that only Congress - or ultimately a constitutional amendment - could change.

For many immigrant families, the judgment offers certainty that children born in the United States will continue to enjoy the same constitutional rights that have existed since the adoption of the 14th Amendment in 1868.

While President Trump has vowed to continue pursuing restrictions through Congress, any attempt to overturn birthright citizenship is expected to face significant constitutional and political hurdles.



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Justice before crisis

Deputy Mayor unveils new joined-up approach to tackle trauma, abuse and poverty before lives spiral into offending

Leaders across West Yorkshire have launched an initiative to reduce the number of women entering the criminal justice system



West Yorkshire's Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime, Alison Lowe OBE, has pledged to transform support for vulnerable women across the region. She has unveiled an ambitious new strategy designed to stop women entering the criminal justice system in the first place.

Speaking at a regional summit at Leeds Beckett University, Alison brought together leaders from policing, probation, health services, local authorities and the voluntary sector. Together, they began shaping West Yorkshire's new Women's Whole System Approach – a partnership focused on identifying women at risk and offering support before they reach crisis point.

The strategy recognises that many

women caught up in the criminal justice system have experienced domestic abuse, trauma, poor mental health, addiction or poverty. Partners agreed that earlier intervention is key to preventing offending and helping women rebuild their lives.

Alison said the strategy represents a fundamental shift away from reacting to crime towards preventing it, and it aims to help more women stay out of the criminal justice system and rebuild their lives.

"By working together, we can step in earlier, offer the right support and stop problems turning into offending. This is about helping women build more stable, safer futures for themselves and their families," she said.

A central feature of the event was ensuring women with lived experience helped shape the plans from the outset. Delegates heard powerful testimonies from women who described years of missed opportunities for intervention before reaching crisis point.

One woman told the conference: "I think no one catches it early enough. There were so many warning signs, even at primary school, but no one took it seriously until I was at crisis point."

Another described trying to escape family abuse but finding no one willing to listen.

"I wasn't heard. I went through family abuse, and I reached out for help, but no one listened. I needed a

safe place where I could disclose."

A third participant, who has not reoffended since receiving support from Together Women, reminded professionals that offending often masks deeper issues.

"It's easy to say someone is a criminal, but when you look behind that there is often a story that led them there. Sometimes emotional grooming and abusive situations seem normal. You just don't know better."

The summit also brought together academics, probation leaders and frontline practitioners to explore evidence-based ways of improving outcomes for women through better coordination between agencies.

Researchers Sarah Waite and Alexandria Bradley said combining

research with professional expertise and lived experience would help create more effective, joined-up services.

Work will now continue to develop a detailed regional action plan, with a stronger focus on community support, women's centres and ensuring vulnerable women receive help before offending becomes inevitable.

The programme forms part of Mayor of West Yorkshire - Tracy Brabin's wider commitment to tackling violence against women and girls, but it is Lowe who is spearheading the criminal justice element of the agenda, championing a system that looks beyond offences to understand the circumstances that often lie behind them.



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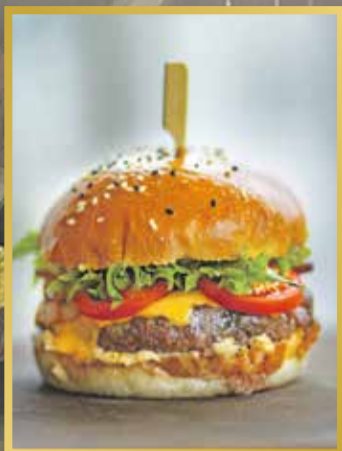
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NHS encourages South Asian communities to seek support through NHS Talking Therapies

Dr Nighat Arif



Looking after mental health is as important as caring for physical health, yet many people struggle to recognise when they need help or feel their symptoms are serious enough to seek support.

Around one in five adults in England, an estimated 9.4 million people are affected by a common mental health condition, millions are missing out on treatment that could help them.

An NHS campaign is encouraging people from South Asian communities to seek support for common anxiety-related mental health conditions, as many continue to struggle in silence or delay seeking help due to stigma, cultural

expectations or not recognising symptoms.

Mental health challenges can affect anyone yet in many South Asian families, people may minimise their symptoms, feel shame, or believe they should “just get on with it”.

Conditions such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD), Social Anxiety Disorder, Phobias, Body Dysmorphic Disorder (BDD) and Panic Disorder are treatable, and support is available through NHS Talking Therapies, with the option to self-refer online.

NHS Talking Therapies are free, confidential and effective, and can be delivered in person, over the phone or



online. Support is available in multiple South Asian languages through multilingual therapists or confidential interpreters, ensuring people can speak comfortably in the language that feels most natural.

As part of the campaign, Dr Nighat Arif and Harmeet Kaur recently joined the hosts of Two Chickpeas in a Pod podcast, a South Asian-led show known for opening up honest, culturally grounded conversations around identity, stigma and lived

experience.

In their episode, they explored the realities of anxiety conditions, the cultural pressures that often keep people silent, and the difference NHS Talking Therapies can make. They shared the following reflections: Dr Nighat Arif, said “Most people with mental health conditions just want to be believed and rightly so. These struggles often build over years, hidden by fear, shame, or the feeling of being ‘broken’. That’s why it’s so

“Most people with mental health conditions just want to be believed and rightly so. These struggles often build over years, hidden by fear, shame, or the feeling of being ‘broken’.”

important to seek help early, and why NHS Talking Therapies exist so people can self-refer online and be supported by trained professionals without long delays, regardless of background or circumstance.”

Harmeet Kaur said “I still experience anxiety every day, but Talking Therapies, including CBT through the NHS, has helped me learn how to cope with it. It’s allowed me to recognise my thought patterns and understand where they come from, instead of feeling

stuck in them. Talking Therapies helped me move from just surviving to actually thriving.”

Anyone who feels their mental health is affecting their daily life whether through anxiety in social situations, panic attacks, flashbacks, compulsions, phobias or distressing thoughts is encouraged to seek support.

Find out more or self-refer at nhs.uk/talk

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Summer Reading Challenge returns to inspire thousands of young readers

Thousands of children across Manchester are being encouraged to swap screen time for story time this summer as the city's much-loved Summer Reading Challenge returns with a fresh new theme designed to inspire a lifelong love of books.

Launched on 1st July, the annual initiative is inviting children aged four to 12 to discover the joy of reading during the school holidays, helping them maintain literacy skills while unlocking their imagination through books, music and creativity.

This year's theme, 'Read to the Beat', celebrates the connection between reading, rhythm and storytelling, with libraries across Manchester hosting a packed programme of interactive events and activities throughout the summer.

The celebrations got underway at Wythenshawe Forum Library, where more than 100 Year 1 and Year 2 pupils enjoyed a football-inspired storytelling performance, Footy Fairy Tales. Timed to coincide with the FIFA World Cup, the lively show combined music, storytelling and football-themed characters to demonstrate that books and sport can be the perfect winning team.

The Summer Reading Challenge has become a staple of Manchester's school holidays, running in the city's libraries for more than two decades. It aims to prevent the well-documented "summer slide" in literacy by encouraging children to continue reading while schools are closed.

Manchester Libraries is once again working closely with schools across the city to encourage pupils to sign up, borrow books from their local library and complete the challenge before returning to the classroom in September. The programme is also designed to support Year 6 pupils preparing for the transition to secondary school by helping maintain confidence in reading over the break.

Last year's figures highlighted the popularity of the initiative, with 4,079 children taking part

across Manchester. Of those, 1,995 completed the challenge by reading six or more books, and organisers are hoping even more young readers will get involved this summer.

Participation is free and designed to be accessible for all families. Children can set their own reading goals, although Manchester Libraries recommends reading at least four library books over the holidays. Those who complete four books will automatically be entered into a prize draw, while participants can collect stickers and rewards as they progress through the challenge.

Alongside the reading programme, libraries will host a variety of family-friendly events including drawing competitions, book reviews, creative workshops and lucky draw giveaways. One overall winner will also receive a £100 voucher.

Recognising that reading comes in many forms, the challenge also includes access to digital books and audiobooks through the free BorrowBox app, allowing children to enjoy stories wherever they are during the holidays.

The programme runs until 12 September and comes at a particularly significant time for the city, following Manchester's official recognition by UNICEF as a Child Friendly City. The award reflects the city's commitment to ensuring children have opportunities to learn, develop and thrive within their local communities, with libraries continuing to play an important role in supporting that ambition.

For many families, the Summer Reading Challenge has become a holiday tradition that extends beyond books, encouraging children to explore their local library, discover new interests and build confidence in a relaxed and welcoming environment.

With six weeks of school holidays stretching ahead, organisers hope thousands more young Mancunians will be inspired to pick up a book, discover new adventures and prove that some of the best journeys this summer can begin simply by turning the first page.

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Serving magistrate jailed after helping run £174,000 drugs empire

Purshotam Dhillon, 59, was sentenced to seven years in prison



From bench to bars



A serving magistrate who swore to uphold the law has instead been jailed for helping facilitate a major Class A drugs operation, following one of the Metropolitan Police's most significant organised crime investigations.

Purshotam Dhillon, 59, was sentenced to seven years in prison after detectives uncovered his role in a sophisticated west London network responsible for supplying heroin and crack cocaine worth around £174,000 across the capital.

His conviction has sent shockwaves through the justice system after it emerged the former magistrate allowed his home to be used as a base for storing, weighing and packaging drugs, while also permitting a van loaded with heroin to be parked outside his property.

The investigation also brought down the gang's alleged leader, Hardeep Thind, 48, also known as Harry Singh, who was jailed for 12 years and six months. Bikramjit Brar, 46, received three years and four months, while Leandra Lynch, 49, was handed a suspended prison sentence of two years and six months.

Together, the four were sentenced to more than 25 years behind bars.

Crime boss ran network from prison

Police revealed the operation was orchestrated by Thind, who astonishingly continued directing the drugs network while serving a 17-year prison sentence for previous offences involving heroin, cocaine and possession of a Skorpio submachine gun.

Using an illicit mobile phone inside an open prison, Thind allegedly controlled multiple drug lines before resuming full control of the operation after his release in October 2024.

Detectives say he quickly rebuilt the network across Hayes, Southall and surrounding areas, recruiting dealers and coordinating wholesale supplies of heroin and crack cocaine across west London.




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Months of surveillance

The investigation began after officers identified a highly active drugs line known as "Hadi", which supplied a large customer base throughout west London.

Specialist detectives spent months analysing phone records, forensic evidence, surveillance footage and digital downloads, identifying Thind as the central figure communicating with every member of the organisation.

Investigators also uncovered voice notes referring to him as "the plug" - street slang for a high-level drugs supplier.

Co-ordinated dawn raids across west London led to the arrests of all four suspects. Officers recovered significant quantities of heroin and crack cocaine, cash, mobile phones, digital scales, packaging equipment and detailed "tick lists" recording drug transactions.

'Abused a position of trust'

Detective Inspector Mark Gavin, from the Met's Specialist Crime Command, said Dhillon's actions represented a serious betrayal of public confidence.

"As a serving magistrate, Dhillon abused a position of trust in the most serious way. This case demonstrates that no one is above the law, and those who engage in criminality will be held accountable.

"County lines are far more than drug dealing - they exploit the vulnerable and fuel violence. We remain committed to relentlessly pursuing those responsible."

Police say the investigation dismantled a well-established organised crime group responsible for causing significant harm across London.

The Metropolitan Police added that tackling organised drug supply remains a priority, with officers disrupting more than 21,000 serious organised crime groups and criminal networks last year - a 63 per cent increase on the previous year.

Hardeep Thind aka Harry Singh was the gang's alleged leader, who continued directing the drugs network while serving a 17-year prison sentence



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SMOOTH TAKE-OFF

Leeds Bradford Airport among UK's least stressful gateways for summer travellers

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See page 27

Holidaymakers flying from Leeds Bradford Airport can look forward to a smoother start to their summer getaway after the Yorkshire airport was ranked among the least stressful in the UK.

New research analysing three years of summer flight performance has placed Leeds Bradford fifth in the national rankings, outperforming many of Britain's busiest airports for punctuality and reliability.

The study examined flight data from the summer holiday months of June, July and August between 2023 and 2025, comparing 25 major UK airports using average departure delays and cancellation rates to determine which offered passengers the most hassle-free travel experience.

Continued on page 26



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You won't benefit from ill gotten gains

Unjust enrichment involves a situation where a Defendant is enriched at the expense of the Claimant in circumstances where the law recognises it as being unjust. The doctrine has been established and developed through case law for centuries in English law.

The purpose of an unjust enrichment claim is to reverse a situation where one party unfairly benefits at another's expense. It ensures basic fairness by compelling the enriched party to return the wrongfully obtained benefit, correcting a financial imbalance when no valid legal basis exists to retain it.

To succeed with an unjust enrichment claim, the Claimant has to establish:

- that the Defendant has been enriched;
- the enrichment was at the expense of the Claimant; and
- the enrichment was unjust.

Enrichment can be defined as something which a reasonable person would consider to be of value. Money is an obvious example of enrichment. However, enrichment can also take the form of non-monetary benefits, such as goods, land, services and even the discharge of a liability.

The requirement that the Defendant's enrichment must be at the Claimant's expense means that the Defendant has received the benefit from a Claimant who has suffered a loss through the provision of that benefit.

A loss means that the Claimant has given up something of economic value. An enrichment at the Claimant's expense usually arises where the parties have dealt directly with one and other, though direct dealing is not essential.

As to whether the Defendant's enrichment was unjust, factors include where there has been a mistake by the Claimant or where

there has been duress and undue influence exercised by the Defendant. The Claimant must prove an unjust factor for any claim to succeed.

There are a number of defences that a Defendant may be able to raise to defeat a claim for unjust enrichment. One of these is a change of position. This involves the situation where the Defendant's position has detrimentally changed as a result of receiving the unjust enrichment, so that it would be inequitable for the Defendant to be required to make restitution in full.

Another possible defence the Defendant can raise is Estoppel. If the Claimant makes a representation to the Defendant that the Defendant is entitled to the benefit and the Defendant relies on that representation to their detriment, then the Claimant may be estopped from asserting that the Defendant has been unjustly enriched.

The remedy for unjust enrichment is restitution. Restitution reverses the unjust enrichment by requiring the Defendant to return the enrichment to the Claimant, typically by way of a monetary award reflecting the value of the enrichment.

If you are involved in any civil or commercial dispute, then Blacks Solicitors can assist. Please contact Luke Patel on 0113 227 9316 or by email at "LPatel@LawBlacks.com"



Smooth take-off

Leeds Bradford Airport among UK's least stressful gateways for summer travellers



Continued from page 25

Leeds Bradford achieved an overall stress score of 29.55, recording an average cancellation rate of just 0.92 per cent and average departure delays of 19 minutes and six seconds. While delays increased slightly during 2024, performance improved again in 2025, reinforcing the airport's reputation as one of the country's more dependable departure points.

The findings will come as welcome news for the thousands of Yorkshire families expected to pass through the airport during the busy summer season, when demand traditionally reaches its highest levels.

At the top of the rankings was East Midlands Airport, which claimed the title of Britain's least stressful airport thanks to an exceptionally low cancellation rate of just 0.32 per cent.

Liverpool John Lennon Airport and Cardiff Airport completed the top three, followed by Belfast International Airport in fourth place.

Leeds Bradford's strong performance stands in stark contrast to several of the UK's larger aviation hubs. Gatwick Airport was named Britain's most stressful airport for summer travel, with average departure delays exceeding 31 minutes and cancellation rates more than double those experienced at Leeds Bradford.

Manchester Airport ranked third most stressful, while Edinburgh Airport and Birmingham Airport also featured among the least favourable performers.

Researchers said the findings highlight that passenger stress is influenced not only by delays but also by the likelihood of cancellations, both of which can significantly disrupt carefully

planned holidays.

A spokesperson for the study's authors explained that summer remains the busiest period for UK airports, with families travelling during school holidays, passengers carrying extra luggage and many working to tight schedules for cruises, tours and connecting flights.

They noted that while delays can be frustrating, cancellations often have an even greater impact, making airport reliability increasingly important when planning a holiday.

The report also offers practical advice for travellers, encouraging passengers to choose earlier flights where possible, allow extra time for connections and keep essential items such as medication, travel documents, chargers and a change of clothes in their hand luggage.

The rankings were compiled using official flight punctuality statistics from the UK's Civil Aviation Authority, analysing departure performance over three consecutive summer seasons. Airports were scored using six equally weighted measures covering cancellation rates and average delays across 2023, 2024 and 2025, producing an overall comparative "stress score".

For Yorkshire travellers, the results reinforce Leeds Bradford Airport's growing reputation as a reliable regional gateway at a time when demand for international travel continues to rise.

As schools prepare to break up for the holidays and thousands head overseas for a well-earned escape, the latest figures suggest passengers departing from Leeds may spend less time worrying about delays—and more time looking forward to their destination.

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Manchester powers ahead as jobs boom cements growth status

Manchester has strengthened its position as one of the UK's best-performing regional economies after recording job growth well above the national average, according to a new report from the Centre for Cities.

The think tank's latest Big Cities Outlook identifies Manchester as one of Britain's standout success stories for economic growth and productivity, with the city consistently outperforming many of its rivals both before and after the global financial crisis.

Over the past decade, employment in Manchester has grown by 19.7%, comfortably ahead of the UK average of 13.9%, driven by sustained investment in commercial developments and the expansion of high-value industries.

The city is now home to around 244,000 knowledge-intensive business services (KIBS) jobs, making it the UK's second-largest hub for sectors such as digital technology, fintech and research after London. These roles now account for 17.6% of all employment in Manchester, compared with a national average of 14.5%.

The report also highlights the city's thriving business community, with the number of registered businesses rising by 30% since 2015.

Over the past decade, employment in Manchester has grown by 19.7%, comfortably ahead of the UK average of 13.9%, driven by sustained investment in commercial developments and the expansion of high-value industries.

Around 900 new businesses were established during 2024/25 alone, reflecting continued investor confidence.

Manchester City Council says its 2023 Investing in Success economic strategy has helped boost employment, with the city's employment rate rising above 75% since its launch. The strategy focuses on creating quality jobs while ensuring economic growth benefits local communities.

Despite the positive outlook, the report warns that housing remains one of the biggest

challenges facing growing cities. It calls for greater housing density and improved transport links to support continued economic expansion.

Manchester is responding through plans to build at least 36,000 new homes by 2032, including 10,000 affordable properties. The council says the past year saw a record number of affordable and social homes completed, with almost 1,000 delivered, helping ease pressure on waiting lists.

Investment in transport infrastructure is also seen as critical to sustaining growth. Projects such as the proposed new Metrolink stop at Sandhills, serving the wider Victoria North regeneration programme, are expected to improve access to employment opportunities while supporting further development.

Gavin White said the findings reinforced Manchester's role as an economic engine for both the North and the wider UK.

He said continued investment in high-quality office space, housing and transport would help attract global businesses and skilled workers, while stressing that the city's long-term ambition remains ensuring economic success translates into higher living standards and greater opportunities for local residents.

Reward offered after repeated cable thefts

The independent charity Crimestoppers and Openreach, the UK's largest phone and broadband network, are appealing for information following a series of recent cable thefts in and around Doncaster, the Humber and parts of north Nottinghamshire.

A reward of up to £1,000 is being offered by Openreach through Crimestoppers for anonymous information on the thefts, which left emergency services, residential premises and businesses without the use of their phones, broadband or TV services. Large sections of live cable were dragged from the underground communications network using 4x4 vehicles.

Significant damage was also caused to street furniture and farmland.

Openreach has a partnership with Crimestoppers that offers rewards for information given anonymously to the charity about cable thefts that leads to the arrest and conviction of those responsible.

If you have any information on these incidents or know who was involved, please contact Crimestoppers 100% anonymously on 0800 555 111 or use the anonymous online form at www.crimestoppers-uk.org. You must mention your interest in receiving the reward on your initial contact.

Gemma Gibbs, Regional Manager for Yorkshire and the Humber at the charity Crimestoppers, said: "Never underestimate the damage caused by cable theft. This is not a victimless crime as the impact can be substantial.

"The people responsible may be known locally, and even a small piece of information could help. Crimestoppers guarantees complete anonymity, a promise that we have kept since we were established back in the 1980s."

An Openreach spokesperson said: "We're deeply disappointed that some communities in the South Yorkshire and the Humber areas are once again facing disruption due to criminals targeting our network.

"We're working closely with local police forces to prevent further incidents and bring those responsible to justice. Our engineers are working around the clock to restore services and get everyone back online as quickly as possible.

"These attacks cause serious disruption to daily life, pose risks to vulnerable individuals, and create significant inconvenience for residents and local businesses.

"We urge anyone who sees suspicious activity near our network to report it to the police by calling 101. If a crime appears to be in progress, please dial 999 immediately. Alternatively, if you wish to remain anonymous or be eligible for the reward, please contact the charity Crimestoppers."

If you have any information about these incidents, please contact Crimestoppers via their online form at Crimestoppers-uk.org or speak to one of the charity's specially trained call handlers at the UK Contact Centre on 0800 555 111 at any time. You will stay 100% anonymous. Always.





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5 DIY security upgrades every homeowner should tackle

From replacing an old cylinder lock to securing a side gate, simple DIY upgrades can help improve everyday home security – and many can be completed without calling in a professional.

Home security doesn't always require expensive alarm systems or major renovations. In many cases, a few practical upgrades can make a noticeable difference to everyday peace of mind, while giving homeowners greater confidence in the security of their property. Smith & Locke has

highlighted five straightforward DIY security improvements that can typically be completed over the course of a weekend using readily available hardware and basic tools.

Many of these improvements require only basic DIY skills and can often be completed in under an hour, making them accessible projects for homeowners looking to improve security without taking on a major renovation.

Smith & Locke products are available from Screwfix, offering practical, durable and affordable security solutions designed to help homeowners tackle everyday security upgrades with confidence.

Continued on page 30

5 DIY security upgrades every homeowner should tackle

1. Replace an older cylinder lock

If your door lock has become worn, difficult to operate or you've recently moved home, replacing the cylinder is one of the simplest security upgrades you can make. Smith & Locke's 3 Star Euro Profile Cylinder Locks are designed for straightforward installation, making them an ideal choice for confident DIYers looking to upgrade front or back door security without the cost of a locksmith.



2. Install a key safe

A wall-mounted key safe provides a secure place to store a spare key for trusted family members, neighbours, carers or house sitters. It offers convenient access when needed while helping to avoid hiding spare keys in less secure locations.



3. Fit a door chain

A door chain adds an extra layer of reassurance by allowing homeowners to partially open the door before speaking with visitors. It's a simple addition that can be fitted to many existing timber doors using only basic hand tools.



5. Secure your side gate

Side gates are often one of the main access points to a garden or rear entrance. Fitting a sturdy hasp and staple with a weather-resistant padlock is a straightforward way to help deter opportunistic access while protecting sheds, garages and outdoor spaces beyond.

4. Fit a window restrictor

Window restrictors help improve both security and safety by allowing windows to remain partially open for ventilation while limiting how far they can be opened. They're particularly useful in family homes and on upper floors.



Expert reveals how to beat travel stress once and for all



With summer in full swing, many people will be packing and getting ready to jet off on their summer holiday. However, as much as everyone enjoys a holiday, it can be a stressful process in getting there, and the part that travellers dread most.

Mike Rollins, stress expert and COO at Olofly, further commented: "Travelling is often assumed to be the most stressful part of a holiday, but what actually drives that anxiety is usually anticipation rather than the journey itself.

"People tend to build up worst-case scenarios in their minds long before they arrive at the airport, which can make the experience feel far more overwhelming than it is. Once the process begins, most of it follows familiar, predictable steps that are easier to manage than expected.

"Once at the airport and on the plane, the key shift is less about 'coping' and more about occupying the mind in a way that prevents anxiety from taking hold. Staying engaged with distractions, following normal travel procedures, and recognising that things like security checks and turbulence are routine can all help ground the experience and keep nerves in check.

"In many cases, the biggest difference comes from mindset. When travellers stop viewing the journey as something to endure and instead see it as a gradual transition into holiday mode, the whole experience becomes noticeably lighter. The focus shifts away from what might go wrong and towards what's waiting at the destination, which is often where excitement naturally takes over."

Mike's step-by-step travel guide to help those who get overwhelmed by the travelling process:

Prep before you travel

If you're a nervous flyer, the best way to put your mind at ease is to consider the journey as the start of the holiday itself. Create some small travel traditions to get you excited, but also stay distracted and not overthink the situation.

Make yourself a holiday playlist or put on your favourite tunes to keep your mind at ease, take a new book you've been wanting to read, or even download your favourite show or movie before the flight to create a sense of familiarity in a different environment.

Having some home comforts or parts of your normal day-to-day routine can help shift your attention away from the anxiety of flying and towards the excitement of your destination.

Another essential prep is checking all the essential documents in advance. Make sure your passport is not due to expire within six months of your travel dates, that you have the correct and valid travel insurance, your bags are not overweight, and triple-check your flight times to ensure you are at the airport at least 2 hours before your flight to allow for potential delays you could encounter.

Arriving at the airport

The airport can often be the most stressful part of the travel experience, especially when it comes to security and timing. To reduce the stress of getting your bag pulled for a search or setting off the metal detectors, ensure all products, appliances or clothing items such as belts and jackets, are removed before entering the security queue so you can pop your items straight into the trays and go through.

It's important to note that many airports have different policies regarding what needs to be removed and what can stay in your bags. Many airports in recent years have allowed you to keep electrical appliances and liquids in your bag and put it through the scanners as it is. Make sure

to read up on the requirements of the specific airport you are departing from in advance, as this will help reduce stress on the day.

The waiting around once through security is also a major trigger for anxiety. Constantly checking the screens to see if your gate is open, has changed, is delayed, etc., can be nerve-racking, and therefore, it's important to remain vigilant about potential changes and delays, but also find a way to distract yourself. Treat yourself to a coffee or meal, browse the bookshops, walk around the terminal, or sit by the windows and watch aircraft take off and land. Some people find it reassuring to observe the normal rhythm of airport operations, while others enjoy people-watching or making a list of everything they are looking forward to once they arrive. By focusing on the holiday ahead, the airport becomes part of the experience rather than simply a place to wait.

During the flight

Creating a sense of comfort and routine on board can make flying feel less overwhelming. Staying occupied is the main way to keep your mind busy and focus less on the fact that you are 30,000 feet in the air.

During the flight, travellers can use the time as a rare opportunity to disconnect from everyday life and embrace the slower pace of being in the air.

Whether it's cloud spotting from the window, watching a favourite film, journaling, or simply appreciating a few hours free from work and responsibilities, the flight can become a chance to unwind rather than something to fear.

Nervous flyers may also find comfort in reminding themselves that turbulence and unfamiliar noises are a routine part of flying, helping to reframe the experience as a normal and safe part of the journey.

Managing flying anxiety

It can also be helpful to remember that many sensations experienced during a flight are completely normal.

Turbulence, although uncomfortable, is not dangerous, and some people find it useful to think of it as similar to driving over bumps in the road.

The cabin crew are a key source of reassurance to travellers when struggling with flight anxiety. If they aren't worried, you shouldn't be either, as they encounter such issues daily and know what to do in the rare case of an emergency.

If you are particularly anxious, especially if you are solo travelling, it may be worth telling a member of the crew that you are a nervous flyer so they can provide additional support and reassurance throughout the journey.

Making the journey part of the holiday

Ultimately, you are going on holiday to relax and enjoy yourself, so getting over the obstacle of the process of getting there is key to relaxation. If you consider the journey as part of the holiday, it can create a feeling of excitement as opposed to stress.

This could include setting a simple "travel theme" for the day. You could focus on refining your itinerary for the holiday, including activities, restaurants or day trips you plan on doing when you are there. This should help divert your attention away from the travelling process and heighten all the things to look forward to once you arrive.

By seeing the journey as a transition into holiday mode rather than time to get through, even the in-between moments can feel calmer, more intentional, and part of the overall experience.

BEWARE!



Holidaymakers are being urged not to rely solely on AI-generated hotel review summaries after a Which? investigation found that some of TripAdvisor's automated overviews appeared to downplay serious health and safety concerns raised by guests.

The consumer watchdog examined TripAdvisor's AI-generated review summaries, introduced in 2023 to provide travellers with a quick snapshot of guest feedback, and found several cases where overwhelmingly positive descriptions failed to reflect repeated reports of food poisoning, poor hygiene and other serious complaints.

Food poisoning reports buried beneath positive reviews

One of the most striking examples involved the Hotel Riu Palace Santa Maria in Cape Verde. While TripAdvisor's AI summary described the five-star resort as having spacious rooms, diverse restaurants and excellent cleanliness, Which? uncovered 102 guest reviews mentioning food poisoning.

It also found 14 reviews posted

Glowing Tripadvisor AI reviews 'overlook food poisoning warnings'

between December 2025 and April 2026 in which at least one member of a travelling party reportedly became seriously ill after staying at the hotel.

Hotel Riu Palace Santa Maria in Sal Guest reviews cited by Which? described raw chicken being served, poor hygiene standards and reports of flies and birds around buffet food. Several guests said they had cut their holidays short after becoming unwell, while others claimed entire families were affected.

The resort is currently the subject of

legal action involving more than 400 holidaymakers who allege they became ill after staying there.

The allegations have not been proven in court. Riu Hotels & Resorts has denied the claims, stating that its Cape Verde hotels operate under strict international health and hygiene standards, with regular external inspections and food safety checks.

Which? also identified similar concerns elsewhere. At a resort in Cancun, Mexico, TripAdvisor's AI highlighted "immaculate cleanliness"

despite multiple guests reporting illness.

Another hotel in the Dominican Republic received glowing AI praise for its facilities even though reviewers described major sanitation issues and widespread sickness among guests. In Turkey, the AI summarised staff as "friendly" despite reviews alleging repeated sexual harassment by employees.

AI convenience shouldn't replace common sense

The investigation also tested

TripAdvisor's AI travel assistant, Ollie. When asked directly about the Cape Verde resort, the chatbot reportedly told researchers that food poisoning was "quite unlikely" and that the hotel had a "strong reputation for high hygiene standards".

TripAdvisor said its AI summaries are designed to help users digest large volumes of reviews by highlighting the broad balance of positive and negative feedback rather than replacing individual guest comments.

The company added that reviews remain fully visible on the platform and said it is actively refining its AI tools after being alerted to examples where summaries did not accurately reflect guest experiences.

Consumer experts say the findings serve as a timely reminder that artificial intelligence should be treated as a starting point rather than the final authority when planning a holiday. Reading recent one-star reviews, comparing feedback across multiple travel platforms and looking for recurring complaints can provide a much clearer picture of a hotel's standards before booking.

AI summary of Hotel Riu Palace Santa Maria in Sal failed to mention numerous cases of illness and food poisoning (Pic: First Choice Holidays)



G L I T Entertainment

THE LATEST ENTERTAINMENT AND CELEBRITY NEWS FROM BOLLYWOOD & HOLLYWOOD

Bollywood's spy universe gets its biggest shake-up

Aditya Chopra rewrites the spy rulebook with YRF's biggest female-led blockbuster

For more than a decade, Aditya Chopra's Yash Raj Films has dominated the box office with larger-than-life male action heroes, from Tiger and Pathaan to Kabir.

Now, the architect of Bollywood's most successful cinematic universe is handing the reins to two women.

Alpha, the latest instalment in the blockbuster YRF Spy Universe, marks a watershed moment for Indian cinema as the franchise's first female-led action spectacle.

Headlined by Alia Bhatt and Sharvari, the film promises to deliver high-octane thrills while challenging long-held conventions about who gets to lead a blockbuster spy franchise.

Directed by Shiv Rawail and produced by Aditya Chopra, Alpha is being billed by YRF as a "true blue popcorn entertainer" that celebrates the fearless "Alpha attitude" of two women in what the studio describes as a never-before-seen female-fronted action film.

Continued on page 34



ALPHA FEMALES



ALPHA FEMALES

Bollywood's spy universe gets its biggest shake-up

Continued from page 45

The studio says the film is designed to be an adrenaline-fuelled cinematic ride – “thrilling, emotional, funny, unpredictable and unapologetically entertaining” – as it expands the ever-growing YRF Spy Universe into bold new territory.

The recently released teaser has given audiences their first glimpse into Alia Bhatt's mysterious character, Sita.

Rather than introducing a conventional spy, the film explores the origin story of a deadly assassin raised from childhood by Bobby Deol's enigmatic character.

Flashbacks reveal years of brutal training before Sita is sent on her first mission on her 18th birthday, setting the stage for what appears to be one of the darkest entries in the YRF franchise.

YRF has deliberately kept Sharvati's role under wraps, confirming that her character will be unveiled separately as part of the film's carefully planned marketing campaign.

Alongside Bhatt, Sharvati, Bobby Deol and Anil Kapoor, the film is expected to weave fresh characters into the wider Spy Universe, creating new storylines that could intersect with established heroes in future instalments.

A new era for Bollywood action

The decision to place two women at the heart of one of India's biggest commercial franchises represents a significant shift for Bollywood.

While female action stars have enjoyed success in standalone films, Alpha is the first time a major shared cinematic universe has been built around women rather than established male superstars.

The teaser has already generated enormous excitement online, with Bollywood heavyweights including Shah Rukh Khan, Katrina Kaif, Priyanka Chopra and Vicky Kaushal praising Alia Bhatt's fierce new action avatar.

Bhatt herself has embraced the physically demanding role, recently sharing glimpses of her intense training regime as anticipation builds ahead of the film's release.

Industry interest continues to grow, with advance ticket sales showing encouraging early momentum as the film prepares to arrive in cinemas. Analysts believe Alpha could become one of YRF's most significant releases in recent years, not only commercially but also for what it represents within the evolution of the Spy Universe.

With its combination of globe-trotting espionage, emotional backstory, explosive action and two formidable female leads, Alpha is shaping up to be much more than another franchise instalment.

For Aditya Chopra and Yash Raj Films, it is a calculated gamble that audiences are ready for a different kind of action hero. If Alpha delivers on its promise, it could redefine not only the future of the YRF Spy Universe, but the role of women in Bollywood's biggest commercial blockbusters.

Directed by Shiv Rawail, Alpha stars Alia Bhatt, Sharvati, Bobby Deol and Anil Kapoor, and releases worldwide in cinemas on 3rd July 2026.

Treasure, trouble and total mayhem as Dhamaal 4 drops riotous new trailer

The countdown is on for one of Bollywood's biggest comedy releases of the year after the makers of Dhamaal 4 unveiled an action-packed new trailer, promising the franchise's wildest adventure yet.

In a unique promotional move, the trailer was launched at Imagicaa, where the theme park was transformed into an immersive Dhamaal experience, giving fans a taste of the larger-than-life madness awaiting them on the big screen.

The latest instalment reunites the much-loved Dhamaal gang for what looks to be their most outrageous mission yet – a high-stakes treasure hunt packed with hilarious mishaps, larger-than-life action and plenty of unexpected twists.

But getting their hands on a mountain

of gold proves far from easy, as the group battles rivals, obstacles and their own chaotic decision-making in a race to claim the ultimate prize.

True to the franchise's winning formula, the trailer delivers slapstick humour, comic confusion and laugh-out-loud moments, leaving audiences guessing who will outsmart the rest when the film arrives in cinemas on 10 July.

Returning favourites include Ajay Devgn, Arshad Warsi, Riteish Deshmukh, Jaaved Jaaferi and Sanjay Mishra, joined by Esha Gupta, Sanjeeda Shaikh, Anjali Anand, Upendra Limaye, Vijay Patkar and Ravi Kishan. The star-studded ensemble promises the fast-paced comedy and colourful characters that have made the Dhamaal series a family favourite for nearly two

decades.

Directed by Indra Kumar, Dhamaal 4 looks set to raise the stakes with bigger action sequences, grander visuals and even more outrageous comic set pieces, while retaining the light-hearted charm that has defined the franchise since its debut.

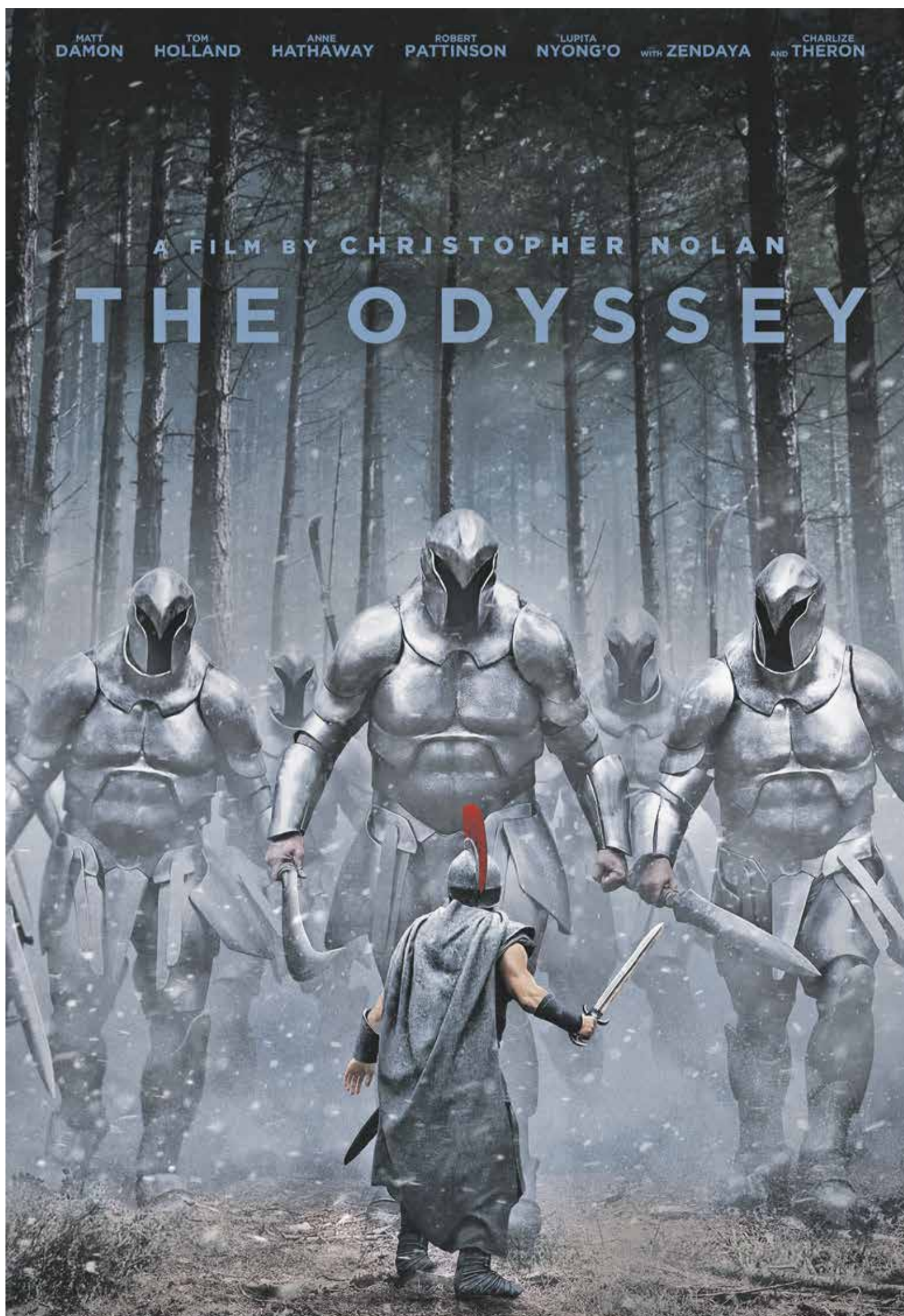
Presented by T-Series and Devgn Films, in association with Maruti International and Panorama Studios, the film is produced by Ajay Devgn, Bhushan Kumar, Krishan Kumar, Ashok Thakeria, Indra Kumar, Anand Pandit and Kumar Mangat Pathak.

With anticipation building and the trailer already generating excitement among fans, Dhamaal 4 is shaping up to be one of the summer's biggest family entertainers when it hits cinemas worldwide on 10 July 2026.



WHAT'S ON

in cinemas this month



The Odyssey

Starring:

**Matt Damon,
Tom Holland,
Anne Hathaway,
Robert Pattinson,
Lupita Nyong'o,
Zendaya,
Charlize Theron**

Director:

Christopher Nolan

**Genre: Epic Drama/
Adventure/Fantasy**

Cert: TBC

Release Date:

17/7/2026

Christopher Nolan turns one of the greatest stories ever told into one of the year's most anticipated cinematic events.

The Odyssey reimagines Homer's timeless epic on an enormous scale, combining breathtaking practical filmmaking with Nolan's trademark emotional depth and spectacular storytelling.

Following the devastating Trojan War, the legendary Greek king Odysseus (Matt Damon) begins the long and perilous journey home to Ithaca.

What should be a straightforward voyage becomes a decade-long battle for survival as he encounters terrifying mythical creatures, vengeful gods, deadly temptresses and impossible trials that test both his courage and humanity.

Meanwhile, back home, his devoted wife Penelope (Anne Hathaway) struggles to hold the kingdom together while raising their son, Telemachus (Tom Holland), as rival suitors threaten to seize the throne.

As Odysseus fights to return to the family he left behind, father and son embark on parallel journeys that ultimately shape the fate of an entire kingdom.

Shot across breathtaking locations including Greece, Sicily, Morocco and Iceland using cutting-edge IMAX technology, The Odyssey marks Nolan's first venture into full-scale mythological storytelling. The all-star ensemble also features Zendaya, Robert Pattinson, Lupita Nyong'o, Charlize Theron, Jon Bernthal, Benny Safdie and Mia Goth, with each taking on key figures from Greek mythology. Nolan has promised a faithful yet cinematic adaptation that balances intimate human drama with awe-inspiring spectacle. (variety.com)

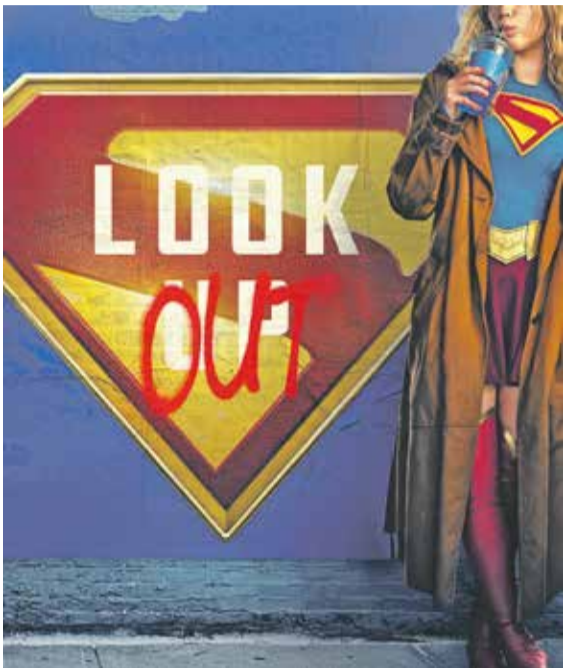
Although reviews remain under embargo ahead of release, anticipation is already sky-high following Nolan's Oscar-winning success with Oppenheimer.

Industry insiders are predicting another awards contender, praising the film's ambitious scope, practical effects and the director's determination to bring Homer's ancient masterpiece to modern audiences without relying heavily on CGI.

Verdict: ★★★★★ – Monumental in ambition and staggering in scale, The Odyssey looks set to be one of 2026's defining cinematic experiences.

WHAT'S ON

in cinemas this month



Supergirl

Starring: Milly Alcock, Matthias Schoenaerts, Eve Ridley, David Krumholtz, Emily Beecham, Jason Momoa

Director: Craig Gillespie
Genre: Action/Adventure/Fantasy

Cert: 12A

Release Date: 25/6/2026

The Girl of Steel finally gets the standalone film fans have long awaited, but don't expect another Superman story. Supergirl introduces a grittier, more emotionally scarred Kara Zor-El, delivering a cosmic revenge epic that reimagines one of DC's iconic heroines.

Inspired by the acclaimed Supergirl: Woman of Tomorrow comic series, the film follows Kara as she drifts across the galaxy with her loyal superdog, Krypto, still haunted by witnessing Krypton's destruction.

Her solitary existence changes when she meets Ruthye, a young girl desperate to avenge the murder of her father at the hands of the ruthless warlord Krem.

Reluctantly agreeing to help, Kara embarks on a dangerous journey across alien worlds where justice, vengeance and survival become increasingly blurred. Along the way she crosses paths with the foul-mouthed bounty hunter Lobo, played with scene-stealing swagger by Jason Momoa, while confronting her own painful past.

Milly Alcock (House of the Dragon) makes an impressive DC debut, portraying a Supergirl who is tougher, more vulnerable and far less polished than her famous cousin.

Director Craig Gillespie (Cruella, I, Tonya) brings a stylish, space-western feel to the film, favouring character-driven storytelling over non-stop spectacle. The result is a superhero adventure that feels fresh within the newly rebooted DC Universe.

Early reviews have been divided over the screenplay, but critics are almost unanimous in praising Alcock's commanding performance, breathtaking visuals and the film's willingness to take the character in a darker direction. Fans have also embraced its blend of action, humour and emotional depth, with Krypto providing plenty of scene-stealing comic relief.

Verdict: ★★★★★ - Bold, emotional and visually spectacular, Supergirl gives DC's newest leading hero the powerful launch she deserves.

Minions & Monsters

Starring: Allison Janney, Christoph Waltz, Jeff Bridges, Jesse Eisenberg, Zoey Deutch, Bobby Moynihan, Phil LaMarr, Trey Parker, Pierre Coffin

Director: Pierre Coffin **Genre:** Animation/Comedy

Cert: U **Release Date:** 1/7/2026



The world's favourite yellow troublemakers are back, and this time they've swapped villainy for the bright lights of Hollywood in Illumination's latest animated adventure, Minions & Monsters.

Set largely in the glamour of 1920s Hollywood, the film follows two ambitious Minions, James and Henry, whose dream isn't to serve an evil mastermind but to become filmmakers.

Hoping to create the greatest monster movie ever made, the pair borrow a magical spellbook and accidentally unleash an army of terrifying creatures into the real world. What begins as a quest for movie stardom quickly spirals into a globe-trotting race to save humanity from the very monsters they summoned.

Along the way, audiences are treated to Illumination's trademark slapstick humour, outrageous sight gags and plenty of Minion mayhem. The film also pays affectionate tribute to the golden age of cinema, with nods to silent movie legends including Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keaton and Harold Lloyd, making it just as enjoyable for adults as it is for younger viewers.

Voice talent includes Allison Janney, Christoph Waltz, Jeff Bridges, Jesse Eisenberg, Zoey Deutch and franchise favourite Pierre Coffin, who once again provides the iconic Minion voices.

Critics have praised the film's dazzling animation, inventive love letter to classic Hollywood and laugh-out-loud comedy, although some note the frenetic finale can become a little overstuffed. Even so, Minions & Monsters delivers exactly what fans expect: colourful chaos, family-friendly laughs and enough banana-fuelled antics to keep audiences smiling from start to finish.

Verdict: ★★★★★ -

A wildly entertaining family adventure bursting with heart, humour and wonderfully ridiculous Minion madness.



The Invite

Starring: Olivia Wilde, Seth Rogen, Penélope Cruz, Edward Norton

Director: Olivia Wilde **Cert:** 15 **Release Date:** 3/7/2026

What begins as an awkward dinner party quickly becomes one of the year's smartest and funniest adult comedies. *The Invite* sees Olivia Wilde step behind the camera once again, delivering a witty, emotionally charged relationship drama wrapped in razor-sharp humour.

Joe (Seth Rogen) and Angela (Olivia Wilde) are a married couple whose relationship has quietly unravelled beneath the pressures of routine and resentment.

Hoping to smooth over tensions with their glamorous upstairs neighbours, Hawk (Edward

Norton) and Piña (Penélope Cruz), they invite them over for dinner.

But the evening takes a wildly unexpected turn when the charismatic couple reveal their unconventional views on love, marriage and monogamy, forcing Joe and Angela to confront uncomfortable truths about themselves and their relationship.

Adapted from the acclaimed Spanish comedy *The People Upstairs*, the film unfolds almost entirely within one San Francisco apartment, using its intimate setting to blend laugh-out-loud comedy with surprisingly poignant observations

about modern relationships.

Critics have praised its intelligent screenplay, fearless performances and refreshingly grown-up approach to relationships, with many describing it as one of the best comedies of 2026. Although its provocative premise won't be for everyone, beneath the laughs lies a thoughtful exploration of intimacy, honesty and the risks we take to keep love alive.

Verdict: ★★★★★ - Clever, bold and wickedly funny, *The Invite* is a sophisticated comedy that proves the most explosive dramas can unfold around the dinner table.

Evil Dead Burn

Starring: Souheila Yacoub, Luciane Buchanan, Hunter Doohan, Tandi Wright

Director: Sébastien Vanichek

Genre: Horror

Cert: TBC

Release Date: 9/7/2026

The blood-soaked *Evil Dead* franchise returns with another terrifying chapter, promising bigger scares, more gruesome practical effects and enough chainsaw-fuelled carnage to satisfy horror fans.

Evil Dead Burn moves the action from city apartments and woodland cabins to an isolated family estate, where grief quickly descends into unimaginable horror.

Following the death of her husband, a grieving widow (Souheila Yacoub) retreats to her late husband's secluded family home, hoping to find comfort among her in-laws. Instead, an ancient evil is awakened when the cursed Necronomicon unleashes a fresh wave of demonic possession.

As family members are transformed into grotesque Deadites one by one, the reunion becomes a brutal fight for survival.

Trapped with no escape, she must confront unimaginable horrors while discovering that the promises of love and loyalty extend far beyond death itself. What follows is a relentless descent into terror, where trust disappears, bodies become weapons and every room

hides a new nightmare.

French filmmaker Sébastien Vanichek, whose breakout horror film *Infested* earned widespread acclaim, brings a fresh visual style while remaining faithful to the franchise's signature blend of extreme gore, relentless tension and pitch-black humour.

Producer Sam Raimi returns alongside long-time franchise collaborators, ensuring the latest instalment retains the anarchic spirit that made *The Evil Dead* a cult phenomenon.

Early footage shown to audiences has already generated excitement among horror fans, with many praising its unsettling atmosphere, gruesome practical effects and uncompromising violence.

Rather than relying on cheap jump scares, *Evil Dead Burn* appears to embrace slow-building dread before unleashing the franchise's trademark blood-soaked chaos.

Verdict: ★★★★★ - Brutal, relentless and dripping with gore, *Evil Dead Burn* looks set to reignite one of horror's most enduring franchises in terrifying fashion.



WHAT'S ON

in cinemas this month



Moana

Starring: Rena Owen, Dwayne Johnson, Frankie Adams, John Tui,

Catherine Laga'aia

Director: Thomas Kail

Genre: Family/
Adventure/Fantasy

Cert: PG

Release Date:
10/7/2026

Disney brings one of its most beloved modern classics to life in a breathtaking live-action adaptation of Moana, combining spectacular visuals, stirring music and an inspiring coming-of-age story that honours Polynesian culture while introducing a new generation to the fearless wayfinder.

Newcomer Catherine Laga'aia takes on the iconic role of Moana, the spirited daughter of a village chief who is chosen by the Ocean to embark on a perilous voyage beyond the reef.

When a mysterious darkness threatens her island and its people, she sets sail in search of the legendary demigod Maui, played once again by Dwayne Johnson. Together, the unlikely duo battle fearsome sea

monsters, navigate treacherous waters and uncover ancient secrets as Moana discovers the courage and leadership needed to fulfil her destiny.

While remaining faithful to the much-loved 2016 animated film, the live-action version expands several characters and deepens the emotional bond between Moana, her family and her ancestors.

Directed by Tony Award-winning filmmaker Thomas Kail (Hamilton), the film blends sweeping ocean cinematography with cutting-edge visual effects to recreate the magic of the Pacific islands.

Dwayne Johnson effortlessly slips back into the role that became a fan favourite, while Catherine Laga'aia delivers

a confident and heartfelt performance that captures Moana's warmth, determination and adventurous spirit.

Early reactions have praised the film's stunning visuals, authentic cultural representation and emotional storytelling, with critics highlighting its family appeal and spectacular musical sequences. Although comparisons with the animated original are inevitable, Moana succeeds by offering a fresh interpretation rather than a scene-for-scene remake.

Verdict: ★★★★★ - Visually magnificent and emotionally uplifting, Moana is a joyous family adventure that proves Disney's live-action remakes can still find new horizons.

Spider-Man: Brand New Day

Starring: Tom Holland, Zendaya, Jon Bernthal, Mark Ruffalo, Sadie Sink, Jacob Batalon, Michael Mando, Tramell Tillman

Director: Destin Daniel Cretton

Genre: Action/Adventure/Sci-Fi

Cert: TBC

Release Date: 29/7/2026

Your friendly neighbourhood Spider-Man swings back onto the big screen in what promises to be the most personal chapter of Tom Holland's web-slinging journey.

Spider-Man: Brand New Day picks up after the emotional ending of Spider-Man: No Way Home, where the world has forgotten Peter Parker's existence, leaving him to rebuild his life from scratch.

Living alone in New York and fighting crime without the support of his closest friends, Peter embraces life as a full-time, street-level superhero. But isolation comes at a cost.

As MJ (Zendaya) and Ned (Jacob Batalon) move on with lives they no longer remember sharing with him, Peter struggles with loneliness while confronting a mysterious new enemy whose terrifying abilities make them virtually impossible to detect.

Forced to question everything he believes about heroism and identity, Spider-Man finds unlikely allies in Frank Castle, better known as the Punisher (Jon Bernthal), and Bruce Banner (Mark Ruffalo), as an invisible threat begins tearing the city apart from within.

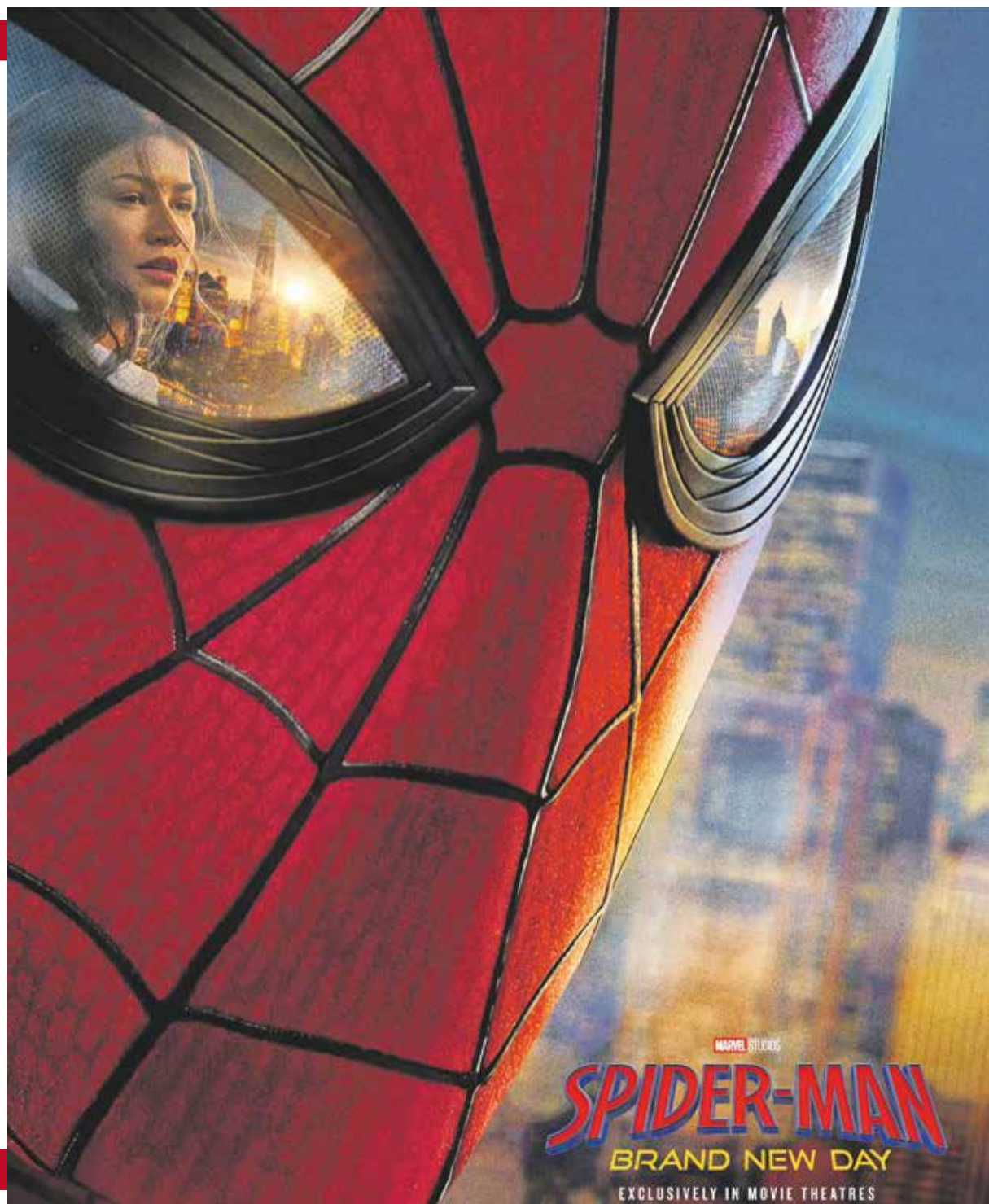
Directed by Destin Daniel Cretton

(Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings), the film returns Spider-Man to his comic book roots, placing greater emphasis on neighbourhood crime-fighting while blending emotional storytelling with Marvel's trademark blockbuster action.

Newcomer Sadie Sink joins the cast in a closely guarded role that has already sparked widespread fan speculation, while Michael Mando reprises his role as Mac Gargan, fuelling rumours of another iconic Spider-Man villain making their long-awaited debut.

Although plot details remain tightly under wraps, expectations are sky-high following the record-breaking success of No Way Home. Fans are eagerly anticipating a fresh start for Peter Parker, one that promises a more grounded, emotionally mature superhero story while setting the stage for Spider-Man's next era in the Marvel Cinematic Universe.

Verdict: ★★★★★ - A fresh beginning packed with heart, mystery and spectacular action, Spider-Man: Brand New Day looks destined to become one of Marvel's biggest events of the year.



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GTI Still Rules

Volkswagen's hot hatch icon proves 50 years on, nobody does it quite like the Golf



Half a century after it invented the hot hatch, the Volkswagen Golf GTI is still showing the pretenders how it's done.

The legendary GTI has been crowned Hot Hatch of the Year at the 2026 Auto Express New Car Awards, adding yet another trophy to a cabinet that's been filling up since the original car burst onto the scene in 1976. Fittingly, the latest honour arrives as Volkswagen celebrates 50 years of the badge that rewrote the performance car rulebook.

And if you thought age had

mellowed it, think again.

The anniversary special Golf GTI EDITION 50 is the most potent GTI ever built, packing 325PS and enough engineering wizardry to smash the front-wheel-drive production car record around Germany's fearsome Nürburgring Nordschleife. Clocking just over 7 minutes 44 seconds, it's proof the old dog has learned plenty of new tricks.

Auto Express Editor-at-Large Phil McNamara summed it up perfectly: "The Golf GTI is 50 this year and its brilliance feels eternal.

No other hot hatch quite matches its bandwidth: comfort and class at one end of the spectrum, performance and downright fun at the other. Roll on the next 50 years."

That ability to be a civilised commuter during the week and a back-road hero at the weekend is exactly why the GTI has become an automotive icon. It isn't the fastest hot hatch on paper, nor the loudest or most outrageous. It's simply the one that gets the balance right, every single time.

The EDITION 50 turns the dial even further with a sharpened

DCC sports chassis, revised front differential, progressive steering and an optional GTI Performance Pack featuring lightweight 19-inch alloys, semi-slick tyres and an Akrapovič titanium exhaust.

Volkswagen's celebrations didn't end there.

The Volkswagen Tayron and Volkswagen T-Roc both picked up highly commended honours in their SUV categories, while the Volkswagen Transporter from Volkswagen Commercial Vehicles was also recognised in the mid-size van class.

The awards cap another impressive year for Volkswagen, which has already scooped accolades across its electric, hybrid and SUV range. It's also a reminder that while the industry races towards electrification, there's still something irresistibly special about a perfectly executed petrol-powered hot hatch.

After 50 years, the GTI isn't living on nostalgia. It's still setting the benchmark.

Continued on page 40

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Volkswagen Golf GTI questions and answers

When and how did the Volkswagen Golf GTI story begin?

The Golf GTI originated in the early 1970s as a 'Sport Golf' project, led by a small team of Volkswagen employees in Germany. The car made its debut in 1975 at the IAA motor show and launched in 1976 with 110 PS, combining performance with everyday usability.

How successful has the GTI been globally?

The Mk1 GTI effectively defined the hot hatch formula, offering sports-car performance in an affordable, practical compact car. Demand for the first-generation model far exceeded expectations: 5,000 units were planned for initially, to at least recoup development costs, but in the end 461,700 first-generation Golf GTI models were sold worldwide. More than 2.5 million units have been produced in total – a continuous lineage across eight generations.

What defining features are the hallmarks of a Golf GTI?

Traditional hallmarks of the Golf GTI include:

- Front-wheel drive
- Red grille stripe and sporty detailing
- Tartan seats and driver-focused interiors
- A philosophy of combining sporty performance with everyday practicalities

How powerful is the anniversary-special Volkswagen Golf GTI EDITION 50?

The Volkswagen Golf GTI EDITION 50 produces 325 PS (239 kW) and 420 Nm, making it the most powerful production Golf GTI built to date. In May this year – with racing and Volkswagen development driver Benjamin Leuchter at the wheel – it set a new record for front-wheel drive production vehicles on the Nürburgring Nordschleife. The 325 PS anniversary model underscored its exceptional

position in the Volkswagen model range after completing the legendary 20.83-kilometre circuit in just over 7 mins 44 secs.

What makes the Volkswagen Golf GTI EDITION 50 so dynamic to drive?

The car features enhanced driving dynamics via a newly tuned DCC sports chassis, optimised front differential lock and high-precision progressive steering. These upgrades make it more track focused and performance oriented than standard GTI models.

Is there an optional performance upgrade for the Volkswagen Golf GTI EDITION 50?

Yes – an optional GTI Performance package adds:

- Performance chassis set-up
- 19-inch alloy wheels with semi-slick tyres
- Akrapovič titanium exhaust system



GTI Still Rules

Volkswagen's hot hatch icon proves 50 years on, nobody does it quite like the Golf

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X Marks the Spot



BMW reinvents its SUV icon with a 525-mile electric X5, hydrogen tech and enough computing power to make your laptop nervous



The BMW X5 has never been short on ambition. It invented the luxury SUV game back in 1999 and spent the next quarter of a century making rivals play catch-up. Now, BMW has torn up the rulebook again.

Meet the all-new, fifth-generation BMW X5 – a machine that doesn't just move with the times, it tries to cover every possible future. Diesel? Tick. Plug-in hybrid? Tick. Pure electric? Absolutely. Petrol in selected markets? Yep. And, perhaps most intriguingly of all, hydrogen.

In an era where most manufacturers are betting everything on a single powertrain, BMW is refusing to put all its eggs in one battery basket.

Let's be honest. The version everyone will be talking about is the first-ever all-electric BMW iX5.

Its numbers are enough to make even Tesla owners raise an eyebrow.

A claimed WLTP range of up to 525 miles. Ultra-fast 460kW DC charging. An advanced 800-volt electrical architecture. Twin electric motors delivering 578hp. And 0-62mph in just 4.6 seconds.

Those figures don't just make it quick- they make it one of the most technically advanced electric SUVs yet revealed

BMW says its sixth-generation eDrive technology, featuring new cylindrical battery cells and a massive 141kWh battery pack, pushes efficiency to new heights while dramatically reducing charging times.

And then there's hydrogen...

Just when you think you've got the X5 figured out, BMW throws another curveball.

The production-ready hydrogen-powered X5 will join the line-up as the brand's first fuel-cell production model, pairing BMW's third-generation hydrogen fuel-cell system with a small high-voltage battery to deliver up to 466 miles of range.

Neue Klasse, new attitude

Visually, the X5 has had a complete rethink.

Gone are the overly fussy lines. In comes BMW's minimalist Neue Klasse design language with a cleaner, more muscular stance.

The front is dominated by illuminated kidney grilles and striking new double-X daytime running lights, while the profile gains flush Winglet door handles, optional powered soft-close doors and enormous wheels measuring up to 23 inches.

Inside, it's less traditional cockpit and more luxury tech lounge.

BMW's new Panoramic iDrive stretches information across the windscreen, backed up by a floating central display, head-up display and even an optional passenger touchscreen. Slate trim makes its automotive debut, while ambient lighting, massage seats and a premium Bowers & Wilkins sound system underline the premium credentials.

And power is only half the story.

The electric iX5 debuts BMW's intriguingly named Heart of Joy – essentially a supercomputer that controls braking, handling, steering and power delivery as one integrated system.

Combustion and hybrid models receive a similar tenth-generation dynamics management system, while adaptive suspension comes as standard across the range.

There's also Level 2 hands-free motorway driving, AI-assisted parking and remote parking via smartphone, because apparently reversing your own car is becoming old-fashioned.

For all the digital wizardry, BMW insists this remains a driver's SUV.

The flagship plug-in hybrid X5 M60e xDrive produces 612hp, 800Nm of torque and storms from 0-62mph in just 4.5 seconds, while the diesel 40d xDrive continues for those who rack up serious motorway miles.

Every model gets adaptive suspension and BMW's trademark near-perfect 50:50 weight distribution, with optional rear-wheel steering and air suspension available on higher-spec versions.

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Round up of all your local, national and international sporting news

Home is where the shirt is

Every FIFA World Cup throws up unforgettable stories, but few are as powerful as the one unfolding around Bosnia and Herzegovina's national team. On paper, they are simply another nation chasing football's greatest prize. In reality, they have become one of the tournament's most remarkable symbols of identity, resilience and belonging.

While supporters across the globe unite behind their nations every four years, Bosnia's squad represents something far deeper. Of the country's 26-man World Cup squad, 17 players were born outside Bosnia and Herzegovina, with birthplaces spanning Germany, Austria, Sweden, Denmark, Switzerland, Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia and the United States.

They wear the same colours despite growing up thousands of miles apart.

Continued on page 46



Football offers a visible reminder that home is not always where life begins, but also where memory, emotion and choice lead us back. (Photo: Bosnia and Herzegovina Football Federation)

Bosnia's World Cup team unites a nation across continents

Asian Express

SPORT

Round up of all your local, national and international sporting news



Home is where the shirt is

Bosnia's World Cup team unites a nation across continents



Stjepan Radeljić, a Bosnian professional footballer, celebrates Bosnia and Herzegovina's victory during the FIFA World Cup 2026 with his baby. Photo: Bosnia and Herzegovina Football Federation

Continued from page 45

Their story traces back to the Bosnian War of the 1990s, when conflict forced hundreds of thousands of families to flee their homes. Many settled across Europe and beyond, building new lives while preserving their language, traditions and cultural identity.

Now, decades later, their children are giving something back on football's biggest stage.

Stars including Sead Kolašinac, Benjamin Tahirović, Tarik Muharemović and Esmir Bajraktarević may have learned their football abroad, but each has chosen to represent the land their families once called home.

Rather than seeing the diaspora as distant, Bosnia's football authorities view it as an extension of the nation itself.

Head coach Sergej Barbarez has rallied supporters behind the simple but powerful slogan: "Dream big. Dream BiH."

National team director Emir Spahić echoed that philosophy, insisting the federation is not recruiting foreign talent but reconnecting with its own people.

"We are not taking anyone away from another country. We are simply bringing our children home."

The emotional connection

extends well beyond the dressing room.

Thanks to one of Europe's largest diasporas relative to its population, Bosnia rarely feels outnumbered when playing overseas. Whether in Vienna, Stockholm or Los Angeles, seas of blue-and-yellow shirts transform away fixtures into virtual home games, with generations of Bosnians gathering to support the nation many still call home.

For families displaced by war, football has become far more than a sport. It is a shared language that bridges continents, generations and memories.

In a World Cup featuring hundreds of players representing countries different from those in which they were born, Bosnia and Herzegovina's story stands apart.

It is not simply about migration producing talented footballers.

It is about proving that identity can survive borders, distance and time.

Every pass, tackle and goal serves as a reminder that while people may leave home, home never truly leaves them. On football's biggest stage, Bosnia and Herzegovina are showing the world that a national team can be far more than 11 players on a pitch—it can become the heartbeat of a people scattered across the globe.

Up to five autonomous Dallara Super Formula SF23 cars will tackle the demanding Autodromo Enzo e Dino Ferrari, better known simply as Imola – a circuit famous for its unforgiving nature, narrow racing lines, dramatic elevation changes and technical corners that leave little room for error.

Among those lining up will be reigning champions Technical University of Munich (TUM), alongside Italy's PoliMOVE and Unimore Racing, who secured their places through last season's performances. UAE-based Kinetix and Germany's Constructor Racing will battle through qualifying for the remaining grid positions.

Technology under pressure

Unlike conventional racing, victory at Imola will depend not on driver bravery but on the precision of artificial intelligence.

Teams must rely entirely on autonomous systems capable of interpreting vast amounts of sensor data in real time, making split-second decisions on braking, overtaking, grip levels and race strategy while travelling at speeds exceeding 250km/h.

The challenge is expected to provide one of the toughest examinations yet of autonomous racing technology.

H.E. Faisal Al Bannai, Secretary General of the Advanced Technology Research Council, said the move to Europe reflected Abu Dhabi's ambition to transform cutting-edge research into globally relevant technology.

"A2RL began in Abu Dhabi with a clear conviction: the future of mobility must be tested openly, rigorously and at the limits of performance," he said.

"Its international debut at Imola demonstrates how the UAE is translating bold R&D ambition into globally relevant technology platforms that can accelerate progress in autonomous mobility."

Closing the gap between AI and humans

The series has made remarkable strides since launching in 2024.

What began as a four-car demonstration has developed into six-car wheel-to-wheel racing at speeds exceeding 250km/h, while the gap between autonomous systems and professional racing drivers has narrowed dramatically.

In just one year, AI cars reduced their performance deficit against human drivers from around 10 seconds per lap to just 1.58 seconds, underlining the rapid pace of development.

Stephane Timpano, CEO of ASPIRE, described Imola as the ideal venue for A2RL's global breakthrough.

"Taking A2RL to Imola is a major milestone in our ambition to build the world's first international championship for fully autonomous racecars," he said.

"Few circuits carry the heritage and global standing of Imola, making it a powerful stage for our first international race."

Preparing in the virtual world

Before arriving in Italy, teams have spent months refining their AI through A2RL's Sim Sprint championship – a virtual racing programme using digital replicas of circuits including Yas Marina, Suzuka and Imola.

RACE

Autonomous Racing League takes its biggest step yet with first international event at one of motorsport's most iconic circuits.





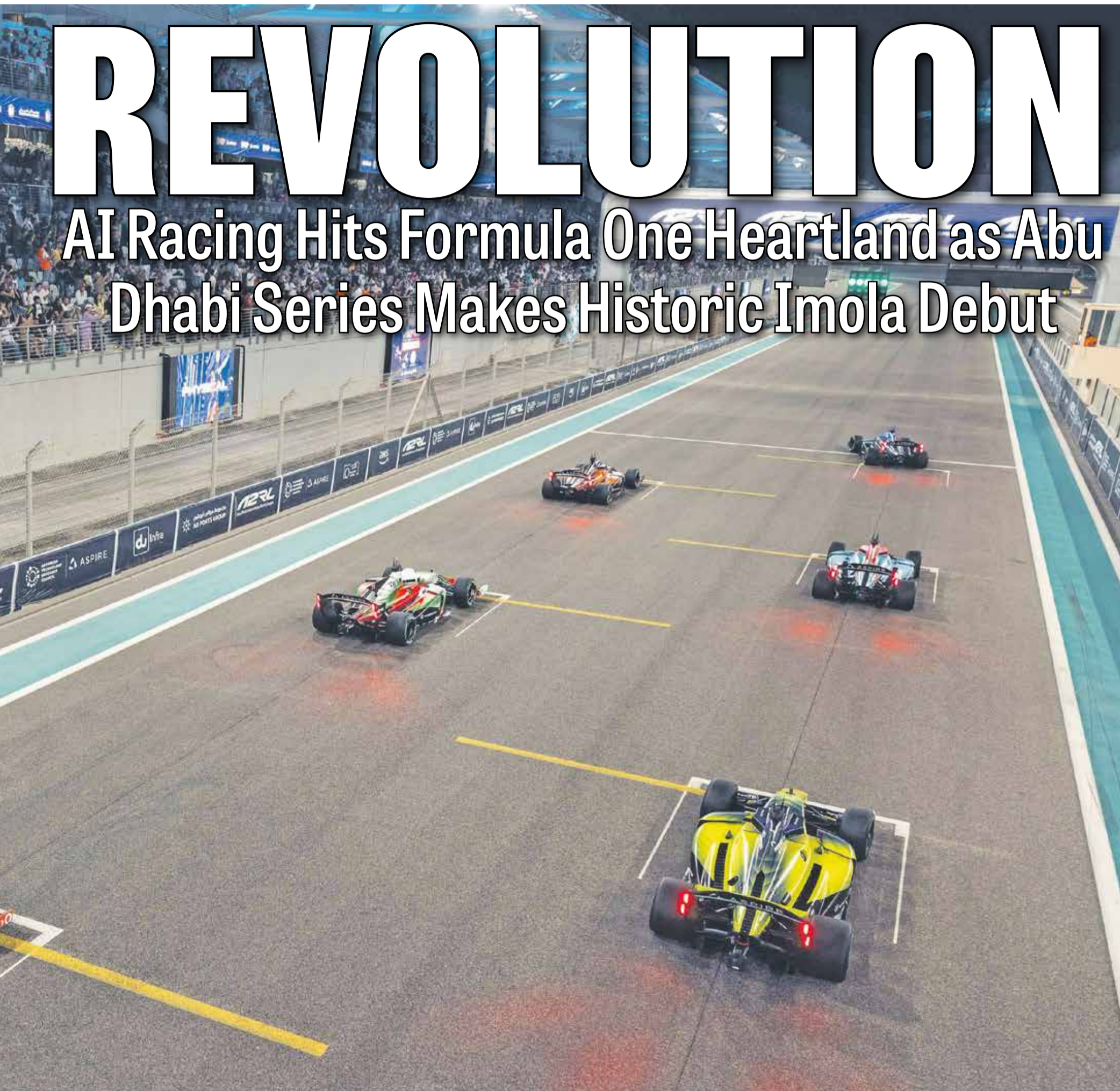
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SPORT

REVOLUTION

AI Racing Hits Formula One Heartland as Abu Dhabi Series Makes Historic Imola Debut



Last season alone, competitors completed more than 5,000 hours of simulation testing, allowing engineers to train AI systems for overtaking, incident management and multi-car racing before they ever reach a real circuit.

The virtual programme has

become a crucial development tool, enabling teams to push algorithms to their limits without the risks associated with live track testing.

Inspiring the next generation

Ahead of its European debut, A2RL has also strengthened ties with Italy's renowned engineering

and motorsport community.

The championship featured at the prestigious Motor Valley Fest in Modena and embarked on a university roadshow visiting the University of Bologna, the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia, and Politecnico di Milano,

introducing students to careers in autonomous racing, AI engineering and software development.

Following the Imola event, the championship will return to Yas Marina Circuit later this year for the 2026 season finale, completing a journey that began in Abu Dhabi

before taking its first major step onto the international motorsport stage.

With autonomous racing gathering momentum, Imola could prove to be the moment AI competition moves from technological curiosity to mainstream motorsport.

Asian Express

SPORT

Round up of all your local, national and international sporting news



The future of motorsport is heading to one of its most revered venues.

After establishing itself at Abu Dhabi's Yas Marina Circuit, the Abu Dhabi Autonomous Racing League (A2RL) is set to make history this September when it stages Europe's first multi-car autonomous race at the legendary Imola circuit in Italy.

The landmark event on 5 September represents the championship's first race outside the UAE and a significant milestone in A2RL's ambition to become the world's first international championship for fully autonomous race cars.

Developed by ASPIRE, the grand challenges arm of Abu Dhabi's Advanced Technology Research Council (ATRC), A2RL has rapidly evolved from an ambitious AI research programme into one of the most technically advanced racing series in the world, where software, sensors and artificial intelligence replace the driver behind the wheel.

Continued on pages 46 & 47

AI Racing Hits Formula One Heartland as Abu Dhabi Series Makes Historic Imola Debut



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