

Business

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Troubled German IAA auto show opens under climate, COVID cloud

Biennial event to spotlight electric cars, scooters and even bicycles

MUNICH: Germany's revamped IAA auto show, one of the world's largest, opens in Munich tomorrow for a celebration of all things car-related, but climate concerns and pandemic woes threaten to spoil the party. After a disappointing edition in 2019, marred by environmental protests, poor visitor numbers and no-shows from major automakers, the biennial event has reinvented itself as a "mobility fair" with a spotlight on electric cars, scooters and even bicycles.

Historically held in Frankfurt, the IAA will for the first time take place in the Bavarian city of Munich as part of efforts to revive the event. The six-day fair will be one of the biggest exhibitions since the start of the coronavirus pandemic, coming just as Germany grapples with a fourth wave.

To reduce the infection risk, daily visitor numbers are capped at 80,000 and guests must show proof of vaccination, recovery or a recent negative test before entering. Confirming a trend seen at auto shows around the world, many well-known brands will again skip the showcase, chief among them the Stellantis group (Peugeot-Fiat Chrysler) and Japan's Toyota.

Also absent will be leading electric car-maker Tesla, leaving IAA organizers to hope that this year's more than 70 bicycle exhibitors will keep audiences satisfied—and attract new ones. Chancellor Angela Merkel, who is bowing out of politics after a general election on September 26, will give a speech tomorrow when the fair opens to trade visitors.

Once known as the "car chancellor" for her efforts to shield German carmakers from tougher EU pollution rules, the veteran leader is likely to touch on the industry's costly transition towards greener engines, even if critics say change isn't happening fast enough.

Climate litigation

Climate campaigners have vowed to disrupt the IAA by staging protests on Friday and Saturday, when the general public is invited. Similar "civil disobedience" rallies at times blocked access to the IAA in Frankfurt in 2019, leaving visitors waiting outside for hours.

The threat of legal action against polluters will also hang over the fair, after Greenpeace and Germany's DUH environmental group threatened Friday to file lawsuits against Volkswagen, BMW and Daimler if they do not speed up efforts to reduce carbon emissions.

The plaintiffs want the German car giants to stop producing diesel or petrol cars by 2030, arguing that their current pledges for electrification are vague and non-binding. The plaintiffs are emboldened by landmark recent court decisions in favor of climate protection, including a German verdict that forced Merkel's government to commit to faster CO2 reduction so as not to place an unfair burden on future generations.

Chip shortage

The health crisis has meanwhile left its mark on the industry in other ways. While carmakers initially recovered quickly from last year's showroom and factory shutdowns, a pandemic-fueled surge in demand for home electronics has led to a global shortage in computer chips that threatens to slow the auto industry's recovery.

The semiconductor crunch has forced automakers worldwide to trim production, including at General Motors, VW and Stellantis. As a result, car sales are expected to remain below pre-pandemic levels for a while longer.

In Europe's top economy Germany, new car registrations were down 23 percent year-on-year



FRANKFURT: Visitors are pictured at the booth of German car maker Volkswagen at the International Auto Show (IAA) in Frankfurt am Main, on September 11, 2019. The German IAA motor show opens tomorrow in Munich.—AFP

in August. In France, they were 15 percent lower. In China, the world's biggest car market, sales have "clearly lost momentum", according to auto industry analyst Ferdinand Dudenhoeffer.

Electric surprises

Although car manufacturers are increasingly unveiling new models online, exhibitors are saving a few surprises for the IAA. VW will debut a plug-in hybrid T7 multivan, while its Audi sub-

sidary is to offer a fully electric sedan with semi-autonomous driving functions.

Mercedes-Benz maker Daimler will launch a battery-powered luxury Maybach concept car. The group's Smart brand will show off a small electric SUV. BMW plans to present a hydrogen-powered SUV, as well as its vision for a fully recyclable electric car made entirely from recycled material and renewable resources.—AFP

Nespresso adds two new limited-edition coffees to its Ispirazione Italiana range

KUWAIT: Nespresso is adding two new limited-edition coffees to its Ispirazione Italiana range for Original system inspired by the art of Italian master roasters and the tastes they so skillfully craft. Over the centuries, just as new artistic movements have emerged and grown, coffee roasting styles have also evolved. Indeed, despite Italy's long coffee history, the specialty coffee scene in the country is flourishing. Nespresso has captured the tastes and aromas of both the traditional and modern with Ispirazione Novocento and Ispirazione Millennio, each of them a true masterpiece of Italian roasting history.

Take a trip back in time with Ispirazione Novocento

New Limited Edition Ispirazione Novocento has been inspired by the classic Italian espressos of the 1940s. It is a smoky dark cup that paints a picture of the country's early stand-up coffee bars, in an era when roasting was slower and often wood-fired, and blends were dictated by the beans available in wartime Europe. Anchored in Brazil, Ispirazione Novocento is embellished with heirloom Arabicas and West African Robustas to give an intense espresso with raw spicy, nutty brown flavors and a dense, dark crema.

Step into the modern with Ispirazione Millennio

Nespresso's Limited Edition Ispirazione Millennio,

meanwhile, takes its aromatic cues from new trends of artisanal roasting sweeping the country, alongside growing preferences for brighter, fruitier flavors. To achieve this fresh, modern taste, lighter and shorter roasted Brazilian and Colombian Arabicas have been blended with beans from the Indian subcontinent. The result is a well-rounded and pleasantly intense coffee with spicy notes, fine acidity and hint of fruit.

Art comes in many roasts

Nespresso's Ispirazione Italiana is more than a range of Italian-inspired coffee, it's a skillfully crafted masterpiece, balancing varied aromas, tastes, and geographical influences. The permanent range of seven coffee capsules offers a broad variety of espressos and ristrettos, each capturing the roasting essence of an Italian city or region, from the spicy North African influences in Palermo to the rich depth of history of Rome. The range is available in Original with certain coffees also lending themselves to being prepared as longer coffees with milk.

Almond Lemon Brulee - with Ispirazione Novocento

1. Pour 100ml of semi-skimmed milk into the Nespresso Barista device. Close the lid, select "Cappuccino" and press start.
2. Extract 25ml of Ispirazione Novocento into an espresso glass.

'Screwed over'

The expansion of the unemployment safety net occurred in March 2020, when Congress rushed to blunt the emerging pandemic with \$2.2 trillion in spending through the CARES Act rescue package. While never meant to be permanent, the benefits were reauthorized twice, most recently in the \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan enacted by President Joe Biden and his Democratic allies in Congress last March. While many in the Republican Party at first backed the programs, by this year their lawmakers were arguing against them, and 26 states, most with Republican governors, moved to end them early in whole or in part.

A study published last month by researchers from American and Canadian universities found only modest improvements in hiring and earnings in some of those states that ended the aid early, while spending fell 20 percent. Meanwhile, the economy is far from healed, with 5.3 million jobs lost to the pandemic yet to be restored and employers adding a mere 235,000 positions in August, according to government data released Friday.

In Delaware, Ohio, Karen Coldwell says she sends out about 10 job applications weekly but has yet to be hired. All other openings she sees are for low-wage work, the kind of jobs she held when she was younger. At age 64 she is not yet ready to



3. Spoon the hot milk foam onto the coffee.
 4. Sprinkle 3g brown sugar over the milk and caramelize it using a blow torch.
 5. Sprinkle some flakes of grilled almond over the top and finish with lemon zest.
- Padova Style Mint Cocoa - with Ispirazione Millennio
1. Pour 100ml of skimmed milk into the Nespresso Barista device. Add 5ml of mint syrup. Close the lid, select "Café Viennois" and press start.
 2. Extract 40ml of Ispirazione Millennio into an espresso glass.
 3. Spoon the milk foam onto the coffee.
 4. Sprinkle some fresh mint leaves over the foam and dust with cocoa powder.

Limited editions Ispirazione Novocento and Ispirazione Millennio will be available online and at Nespresso boutiques. For further information on the Ispirazione Italiana range, please visit kw.buynespresso.com



TORRANCE, US: In this file photo taken on June 23, 2021 an employer holds flyers for hospitality employment during a Zisis Group job fair at The Brew Hall in Torrance, California.—AFP

retire, but worries she'll have to start dipping into her retirement savings once the long-term unemployment program ends.

"There's just nothing out there. There's jobs, but the money's not there anymore," Coldwell said. Others can't return to the workforce, even though they know the benefits that make up their only income are ending. Brooke Ganieany of The Dalles, Oregon, said she has no one to care for her toddler son if she were to find employment.

"I feel kind of screwed over," the 21-year-old told AFP. "I feel like they're doing this to make us have a plan and get back to reality, which is not exactly the slogan they should be using."—AFP

'Silent crisis' looms as US to end COVID aid for millions of jobless

WASHINGTON: Spending less on food. Drawing down on retirement savings. Dropping out of the workforce altogether. Last year, the United States massively expanded unemployment aid as COVID-19 broke out. But in the coming days those benefits will end, forcing millions of jobless Americans—some of whom haven't worked for the entire pandemic—to make hard choices about how they will get by in an economy newly menaced by the Delta variant.

"I have no idea how we would survive, just on my daughter's income," said Deborah Lee, an unemployed phlebotomist in Arizona who is recovering from a COVID outbreak that affected her daughter and two of her three granddaughters.

The government-funded programs that increased weekly payments and gave aid to the long-term unemployed and freelancers were credited with keeping the United States from an even worse economic collapse last year. In recent months they have become controversial, with some states ending them early and arguing they encouraged people not to return to jobs that COVID-19 vaccines made safe, though studies have disputed that contention.

From September 6 they will end nationwide, and while economists don't expect them to meaningfully dent the US economy's recovery from its 2020 debacle, they'll undoubtedly up the pressure on the unem-

TotalEnergies signs \$27 billion oil, gas, solar deal in Iraq

BAGHDAD: French energy giant TotalEnergies has signed a \$27-billion contract to invest in oil, gas and solar energy production in Iraq, the country's oil minister said yesterday. The announcement of the deal, supposed in part to reduce Iraq's reliance on fossil fuels, came as minister Ihsan Ismail signed the contract at a Baghdad ceremony with TotalEnergies chief Patrick Pouyanné. TotalEnergies has not directly confirmed to AFP the value of the contract. "This is the largest investment in Iraq by a Western company," Ismail said. "Implementing these projects is the challenge we face now."

Iraq has immense reserves of oil and gas. But despite being the number two producer in the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, it is experiencing an acute energy crisis and chronic blackouts that fuel social discontent. Officials justify the lack of investment and the dilapidated state of its energy network by citing falling oil prices, which represent more than 90 percent of state revenue.

The country is highly dependent on neighboring Iran, which supplies it with a third of its gas and electricity needs. However, Baghdad currently owes Tehran six billion dollars for energy already supplied. The contract inked yesterday with TotalEnergies covers four projects, an Iraqi oil ministry source said ahead of the signing ceremony.

One of these aims to pipe seawater from the Gulf to southern Iraqi oilfields. Water is used to extract oil from subterranean deposits. Two projects focus on extracting and exploiting gas in southern Iraq, which is rich in fossil fuel deposits. The fourth project will see the installation of a solar farm in Artawi, near the southern port of Basra. The Iraqi source said that ultimately, the solar panels should produce "1,000 megawatts" of electricity, the equivalent of the energy produced by a nuclear reactor.

"Iraq will not pay anything," the source added. France's former Total, which has renamed itself TotalEnergies to symbolize a diversification into cleaner sources of power, is one of the world's top five energy companies. While still focused on oil and gas, the company has indicated that this year it will devote 20 percent of its growth investments to electricity and renewable energies.—AFP

