

Times

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Sayyid Theyazin patronises
opening of Arab Shooting
Championship 2025

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TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN
Over 12mn passengers travel via Oman's airports

1 Passenger traffic through Oman airports recorded a growth of 1.6% by the end of October 2025, reaching 12,353,007 passengers, compared to 12,153,212 passengers during the same period in 2024. >A2

OMAN
OMR15mn tourism
revenues from meets

2 Oman recorded notable achievements in meetings and conferences in tourism sector in 2025, with economic returns reaching around OMR15 million. >A3

WORLD
US launches strikes on
IS targets in Syria

3 The United States on Friday launched airstrikes against more than 70 IS targets in Syria in retaliation for an attack that killed two US soldiers and an interpreter in Palmyra. >B4

OMAN'S EXPORTS TO GET 97.4% PREFERENTIAL ACCESS TO INDIA

Opening to Asia's largest market strengthens Oman's position in global supply chains

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) stated that the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) between the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of India reflects the strength of the economic and trade relations between the two friendly countries and consolidates their long-standing historical partnership.

The Ministry affirmed that the agreement represents a new milestone in enhancing trade exchange, facilitating market access for goods and services, attracting quality investment, and expanding cooperation in priority sectors for both sides.

The Ministry noted that the signing of the agreement comes within the framework of the continued progress in bilateral rela-



tions and the direct follow-up to the outcomes of the visit of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to India.

The visit laid solid foundations for expanding economic cooperation and opening new opportunities for trade and investment partnerships.

Following the visit, Oman reactivated the negotiation track through a comprehensive and in-

tegrated approach that included economic, legal, and technical assessments to ensure the highest possible level of benefit from the agreement.

Negotiations and economic study

The Ministry confirmed that the negotiations were based on specialised studies, including an economic study commissioned by the

Ministry and prepared by Deloitte & Touche.

The study examined the expected impact of tariff liberalisation, export growth, and expanded investment, demonstrating the agreement's feasibility and its ability to maximise added value within the national economy and enhance the competitiveness of Omani exports in external markets. >A5

Luma Al Saleh Honoured as Agency Person of the Year with TOMI Gold 2025 Award



MUSCAT: Celebrating exceptional agency leadership, Luma Al Saleh, Partner at Identity, was awarded the prestigious 'TOMI Gold 2025 Award for Agency Person of the Year' at The Oman Marketing Impact Awards (TOMI).

With over 20 years of experience, Luma's career spans strategic communications, public relations, reputation management and community engagement across key sectors including aviation, tourism, finance, technology, energy and hospitality. Renowned for her bold leadership and boundary-pushing approach, she has introduced innovations that reshaped organisational mind-



sets, culture and impact across Oman.

A trusted advisor to Ministers and C-suite leaders, Luma is also deeply committed to

mentorship, inclusion, women's advancement and social responsibility. Her leadership journey includes senior roles at UNICEF Oman, the Ministry of Social Development, and the Ministry of Health. She holds two Master's degrees from Harvard University and Columbia University, and has served in leadership roles within the global Harvard alumni community.

The award was presented at TOMI 2025, held on 10th December at Crowne Plaza Qurum, Muscat, bringing together 200 marketing professionals from Oman and the MENA region in a celebration of creativity, strategy and impact.

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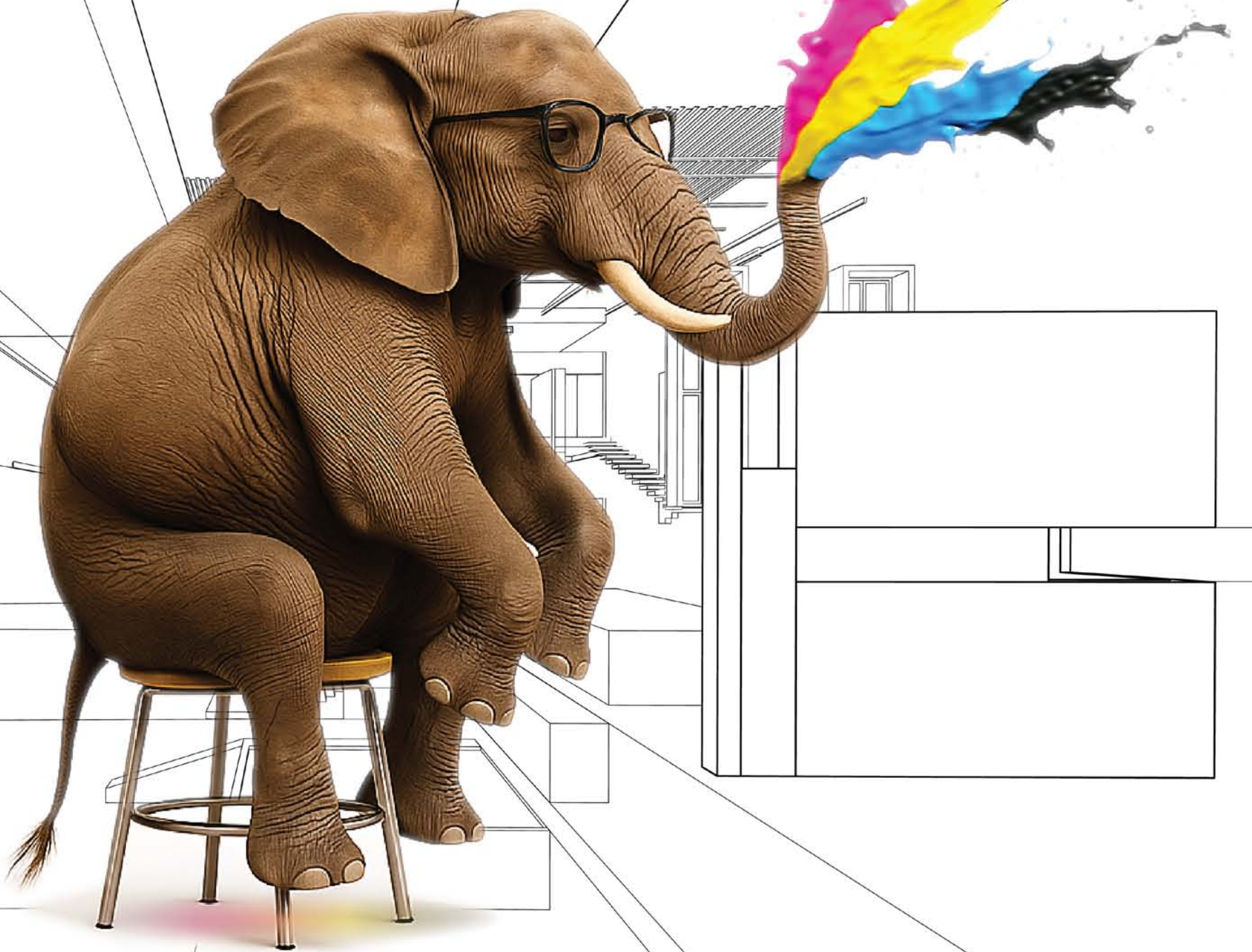
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Omani-Turkish joint panel meeting focuses on raising trade, investment

Discussions focused on trade and investment, including the current status of bilateral trade, mechanisms to diversify traded goods, and means to increase trade volumes

Times News Service

ANKARA; The Omani-Turkish Joint Committee, during its 13th session held in the Turkish capital, Ankara, reviewed ways to strengthen bilateral cooperation between the two friendly countries across a range of fields, with a focus on identifying practical priorities and translating them into joint programmes and projects in key economic and development sectors of mutual interest.

The Omani side was headed by Qais bin Mohammed Al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, while the Turkish side was chaired by



Mehmet Şimşek, Minister of Treasury and Finance of the Republic of Türkiye.

Discussions focused on trade and investment, including the current status of bilateral trade, mechanisms to diversify traded goods, and means to increase trade volumes.

The meeting also addressed activating the role of business councils, forums and exhibitions, and promoting joint investment opportunities, particularly in e-commerce solutions, shared platforms, and shipping and re-export services.

The committee examined pros-

pects for cooperation in industry and industrial zones, covering joint manufacturing, knowledge and technology transfer and localisation, linking innovation with manufacturing, and collaboration in industrial zones, special economic zones and free zones.

In the areas of specifications, standards and accreditation, the meeting discussed cooperation in training and the exchange of expertise in conformity assessment and accreditation, digital transformation in standardization activities, and cooperation in metrology.

The committee also reviewed opportunities for cooperation in

financial and banking services, small and medium enterprises, transport and logistics, energy and mining, within frameworks of technical cooperation, exchange of expertise, development of logistics corridors, and supply chain integration.

Other areas of focus included tourism, culture and sports, education and higher education, scientific research and innovation, as well as health, environment, urban planning, media and capacity building.

During the session, a memorandum of understanding was signed in the field of education, aimed

at enhancing educational cooperation between the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Türkiye.

The meeting was attended by Saif bin Rashid bin Saif Al Jahwari, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Republic of Türkiye; Engineer Hamoud bin Salem Al Saadi, Second Vice Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry; Sheikh Salem bin Abdullah Al Rawas, Chairman of the Omani side of the Omani-Turkish Joint Business Council; and a number of officials from both sides.

On the sidelines of the committee's work, the Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion met with Ömer Bolat, Minister of Trade of Türkiye, to discuss prospects for trade and investment cooperation, ways to increase trade volumes, and enhance private-sector partnerships, in addition to reviewing issues of mutual interest.

He also met with Mehmet Fatih Kacır Minister of Industry and Technology of the Republic of Türkiye, during which they reviewed opportunities for cooperation in industry, knowledge and technology transfer, joint manufacturing, and the formation of technical working groups to support industrial partnerships.

Separately, the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion organised a roundtable meeting with Turkish investors to promote investment partnerships and explore opportunities for economic cooperation.

The meeting, held as part of Oman's strategy to expand its international partnerships and strengthen ties with major industrial economies, brought together senior investors, CEOs and representatives of leading Turkish companies.

The meeting highlighted four priority sectors—industry, energy, tourism and health—showcasing promising investment opportunities in the Sultanate of Oman and strengthening bilateral cooperation in these areas.

The business dialogue provided a direct communication platform, presenting Oman's competitive advantages, including its strategic geographic location, political and economic stability, supportive legislative framework, government incentives, and major development projects, reinforcing its position as a regional investment hub.

This visit forms part of the Sultanate of Oman's efforts to expand its presence in promising markets and continue a series of business dialogues aimed at strengthening international economic relations and opening new investment opportunities.

Turkish investments in Oman have recorded notable growth, with the number of Turkish companies operating in the country increasing by 21% by the end of September this year, alongside an 18.7% rise in the volume of Turkish investments, reflecting strong investor confidence in Oman's investment environment.

— With ONA inputs

END OF OCTOBER 2025

Over 12mn people travel through Oman's airports



Times News Service

MUSCAT: Passenger traffic through the airports of the Sultanate of Oman recorded a growth of 1.6 percent by the end of October 2025, reaching 12,353,007 passengers, compared to 12,153,212 passengers during the same period in 2024.

Preliminary data released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) showed that Muscat International Airport handled 10,833,646 passengers by the end of October 2025, marking an increase of 1.1 percent compared to 10,714,055 passengers in the same period last year.

However, the number of flights declined by 4.7 percent, totaling 76,880 flights, down from 80,636 flights in 2024.

Salalah Airport witnessed notable growth, with passenger

numbers rising by 9.7 percent to 1,450,140 passengers, compared to 1,321,622 passengers in the same period of 2024. The number of flights also increased by 6.1 percent, reaching 9,438 flights, up from 8,894 flights.

In contrast, Sohar Airport experienced a significant decline in activity, as passenger traffic dropped by 72.3 percent to 18,557 passengers, compared to 66,879 passengers last year. Flights through the airport also fell by 62.4 percent, totaling 218 flights, down from 580 flights in 2024.

Meanwhile, Duqm Airport maintained stable performance, with passenger numbers reaching 50,664, nearly unchanged from 50,656 passengers during the same period last year. The number of flights slightly decreased by 1.5 percent to 512 flights, compared to 520 flights previously.

COMMENTARY

Beyond the sale: warranty obligations under Oman's consumer protection law

In Oman, warranty obligations are not optional business gestures; they are legal duties. The Consumer Protection Law, promulgated by Royal Decree 66/2014, imposes strict requirements that ensure consumers remain protected well beyond the point of purchase.

Speaking exclusively to the Times of Oman, Dr. Mohammed Ibrahim Al Zadjali, Founding Partner of Mohammed Ibrahim Law Firm, said that "warranties under the law are mandatory. If a product or service is defective or fails to meet agreed expectations, the consumer is legally entitled to a remedy. These rights cannot be waived under any agreement."

He explained that "suppliers are required to provide a warranty for goods covered by the law, and this warranty remains valid for the benefit of the end consumer, even if the product is later transferred to another owner, provided the consumer has proof of purchase and the defect is not caused by misuse. If a defect arises in a warranted product, the supplier must repair it, replace it, or refund its value at no cost."

He added that "the law obliges suppliers to ensure their goods and services meet all official standards for quality, health, and



DR. MOHAMMED IBRAHIM AL ZADJALI, Founding partner of Mohammed Ibrahim Law Firm

environmental safety. Where no official standard exists, they must follow a recognized industry benchmark. These rules apply equally to services, which must be performed properly and guaranteed for a period that matches their nature. Annex 2 of the Executive Regulation issued by PACP Decision 77/2017 as amended by CPA Decision 1/2023 specifies the categories of goods subject to warranty requirements, including various types of vehicles, electrical and electronic appliances, spare parts, and household equipment."

He further stated that "com-



mercial agents share the same warranty responsibilities as the manufacturer or supplier they represent. This includes providing necessary spare parts and repair services during the warranty period. If an agent delays fulfilling these obligations for more than 15 days, they must supply the consumer with a similar product to use free of charge until the repair is complete. Furthermore, if a product has no registered agent within the Sultanate, the primary supplier bears full responsibility for meeting all warranty requirements."

"With these provisions, the Consumer Protection Law strengthens trust in the market by ensuring clarity, accountability, and fairness through-

out the post-sale process," he concluded.

(Mohammed Ibrahim Law Firm (info@mohammedibrahim.net), (+968 244 87 600) was established 18 years ago and is serving clients through its offices in Muscat and Sohar, as well as operating on a request basis in other areas. It offers legal representation across a wide range of practice areas that include Labour Law, Corporate, Commercial, Contracts, Banking and Finance, International Trade, Foreign Investment, Insurance, Maritime Law, Construction and Engineering Contracts, International Arbitration, Intellectual Property and more).

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THE SHORTEST DAY

Oman to witness winter solstice today, marks astronomical beginning of winter in the Northern Hemisphere for 2025

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman will witness the winter solstice today, marking the astronomical beginning of winter in the Northern Hemisphere for the year 2025. The phenomenon will occur at 7:03 pm local time, making it the longest night and the shortest day of the year.

Speaking to the Oman News Agency (ONA), Ma'athir bint Khamis Al-Wahaibi, Chair of the Community Engagement Committee at the Oman Astronomical Society, explained that tomorrow will record the shortest daylight hours and the longest night of the year. In Muscat, the sun will rise at 6:44 am and set at 5:25 pm, resulting in a total day length of 10 hours



and 41 minutes.

She noted that the winter season will last for 88 days, 23 hours, and 42 minutes.

Al-Wahaibi clarified that the winter solstice is an astronomical phenomenon resulting from the

tilt of the Earth's axis and its orbit around the sun. The Earth's axial tilt of approximately 23.5 degrees causes the Northern and Southern Hemispheres to alternate in receiving direct sunlight throughout the year.

She stressed that the distance between the Earth and the sun is not responsible for the changing seasons, dismissing the common misconception that winter and summer occur due to proximity to the sun. In fact, the Earth reaches its closest point to the sun, known as perihelion, during the winter of the Northern Hemisphere, confirming that colder temperatures are due to the angle of sunlight rather than distance.

During the winter solstice, she explained, the sun reaches its southernmost position in the sky, while the North Pole tilts furthest away from the sun.

As a result, some regions of the Earth do not experience sunrise or sunset on this day.

In the Arctic Circle, the sun re-

mains below the horizon throughout the day, while in the Antarctic Circle, it stays above the horizon, a phenomenon known as the "midnight sun."

She added that one of the key features of the winter solstice is the sun rising from the far south-east and following a low apparent path across the sky. Shadows cast by objects are also at their longest during this period.

Al-Wahaibi noted that the winter solstice follows the autumnal equinox, which occurred in September, when the sun was directly overhead at the equator. Since then, the sun's apparent movement has gradually shifted southward, leading to decreasing daylight hours in the Northern Hemisphere until they reach their

minimum on the day of the winter solstice, while the opposite occurs in the Southern Hemisphere.

She concluded by explaining that the Earth has two primary motions: its rotation around its axis every 24 hours, resulting in day and night, and its revolution around the sun approximately every 365.25 days, giving rise to the four astronomical seasons.

"During the winter solstice, it appears as though the sun rises from the same southern point on the horizon for several days before beginning its apparent northward journey again due to Earth's orbital motion," she said. "After this period, daylight hours gradually increase until they equal nighttime during the spring equinox on March 20, 2026."

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Ford Oman – Arabian Car Marketing Co. wins Best Out-of-the-Box launch at TOMI 2025



MUSCAT: Ford Oman – Arabian Car Marketing Co. was recognised with the Best Out-of-the-Box Launch Award at The Oman Marketing Impact Awards (TOMI), celebrating innovation and creativity in automotive brand launches. Renowned for placing customer satisfaction at the core of its brand promise, Ford Oman combines expert service, advanced technology, and global best practices to deliver standout automotive experiences. With unrivalled access to the latest personal and commercial vehicles, the brand consistently delivers exciting and memorable launches that go beyond convention. During Khareef Salalah, Ford staged a high-energy, visually powerful reveal of the 2026 Expedition and Territory, blending adventure, lifestyle and entertainment into a viral celebration of innovation, strength and regional connection, managed by Manzana. From iconic models to innovative new offerings, each launch is designed to create immersive, high-impact brand moments, setting new benchmarks for creativity and engagement within the automotive industry.



technology, and global best practices to deliver standout automotive experiences. With unrivalled access to the latest personal and commercial vehicles, the brand consistently delivers exciting and memorable launches that go beyond convention. During Khareef Salalah, Ford staged a high-energy, visually powerful reveal of the 2026 Expedition and Territory, blending adventure, lifestyle and entertainment into a viral celebration of innovation, strength and regional connection, managed by Manzana. From iconic models to innovative new offerings, each launch is designed to create immersive, high-impact brand moments, setting new benchmarks for creativity and engagement within the automotive industry.

Oman gets OMR15mn revenues from tourism meetings in 2025

Regional and international conferences hosted by the Sultanate have also shown steady growth, with 24 conferences attracted since the beginning of 2025

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman recorded notable achievements in meetings and conferences in tourism sector in 2025, with economic returns reaching around OMR15 million. This growth was driven by an increase in corporate meetings and incentive programmes, with more than 100 groups attracted during the year. Regional and international conferences hosted by the Sultanate



have also shown steady growth, with 24 conferences attracted since the beginning of 2025, underscoring ongoing efforts to strengthen Oman's position as a preferred destination for events, meetings and incentive tourism. These results reflect the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism's commitment to developing business tourism as part of its broader strategy to enhance Oman's presence on the global tourism map and support the objectives of Oman Vision 2040. Khalid bin Walid Al Zadjali, Director of Oman Convention Bureau at the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, said the Ministry

successfully attracted and coordinated several major international and regional conferences in 2024. These included the International Conference of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, which drew 2,300 participants and generated an economic return of OMR1.86 million, and the Middle East and Africa Council of Ophthalmology Conference, which achieved returns of OMR1.2 million. In addition, several incentive groups were attracted from global markets, most notably a group of 1,600 visitors from Italy with an economic return of OMR2 million, as well as another group of 1,400

visitors generating OMR420,000. In a statement to the Oman News Agency, Al Zadjali noted that the economic impact of incentive and conference tourism is three to five times higher than that of other tourism products. He explained that business tourists typically opt for higher-value services, including premium accommodation and transportation, and require extensive logistical support such as conference venues, hospitality services and event management, thereby benefiting a wider range of economic sectors. He added that such events also contribute to knowledge exchange,

capacity building and the development of organisational and administrative expertise across various fields, including healthcare, energy and other sectors. He highlighted the integration of efforts between the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism and other entities to support the sector, including coordination with the Royal Oman Police, the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, academic and scientific institutions, and the private sector, to facilitate procedures and promote Oman as a destination for incentive and conference tourism. Al Zadjali explained that the Ministry is working to further develop the sector by building the capacities of tourism professionals, cooperating with partner institutions, and attracting international organizations to host their conferences in Oman. Promotion efforts target key markets through participation in specialised international exhibitions and events, as well as through workshops in markets such as Russia, Germany and Spain. Oman also regularly participates in the World Congress and Summit Association conference and hosts familiarization visits for conference organisers.

He added that promotion is carried out in partnership with the private sector, including hotel groups operating in Oman, and that approved mechanisms are in place to measure economic returns based on the type of event, number of participants, length of stay and associated activities. On infrastructure readiness, Al Zadjali said ongoing expansion of tourism infrastructure will support rising demand and further development. He noted that incentive and conference tourism is a key pillar of Oman Vision 2040, with efforts underway to attract events to various governorates, including Dhofar outside the Khareef season and Al Dakhiliyah, which has become a popular destination for incentive tourism due to its distinctive attractions. He affirmed that Oman's diverse natural landscapes, stability, modern infrastructure—led by the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre and high-quality hotel facilities—along with its cultural authenticity, strategic location and ease of access, collectively position the Sultanate as an ideal destination for hosting international conferences and incentive programs seeking quality and distinction. -With ONA inputs

ON TUESDAY

OCCI to hold meeting with CEOs of startups to discuss their challenges

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) will organise on Tuesday the second meeting of CEOs of startups operating in the technology and communications sector, covering future technologies and the knowledge economy. The meeting will be held under the patronage of Abdulsalam bin Mohammed Al Murshidi, Chairman of Oman Investment Authority (OIA), as part of OCCI's efforts to strengthen connectivity and communication among CEOs, exchange expertise, discuss key challenges facing technology companies, and review solutions and initiatives that support growth and sustainability in local and regional markets. Eng. Ibrahim bin Abdullah Al Hosni, Board Member and Chairman of the OCCI Digital Economy and Artificial Intelligence Committee, said the meeting builds on the outcomes of the first edition, which saw the launch of the CEO Network to enhance strategic partnerships between companies, as well as the technology companies platform aimed at facilitating access to Omani firms active in



this vital sector and strengthening their presence within the digital economy ecosystem. In a statement to the Oman News Agency, Al Hosni explained that the meeting focuses on building cooperation between small and medium enterprises in the technology and communications sector and large companies through the CEO Network. This approach aims to establish quality partnerships that support digital transformation, enhance integration among stakeholders in Oman's technol-

ogy ecosystem, and serve private-sector aspirations for expansion and growth. He added that organising the meeting reflects the continued efforts of OCCI, through the Digital Economy and Artificial Intelligence Committee, to stimulate the digital business environment. The initiative represents an extension of the success achieved by the first meeting, which produced several key recommendations, and seeks to open channels of communication among CEOs, provide a national platform for ex-



changing perspectives and experiences, and unify efforts toward building a diversified and innovative digital economy aligned with the pillars of Oman Vision 2040. The meeting is expected to follow up on the outcomes of the previous edition, assess progress achieved, enhance networking among technology and communications CEOs, benefit from leading regional experiences in digital transformation and artificial intelligence, and discuss legislative and regulatory challenges related to the digital economy. It will also focus on empowering national talents and promoting innovation and emerging technologies, in support of strengthening the national digital economy and achieving the objectives of Oman Vision 2040.

THREE AND FIVE STARS

Revenues of Oman hotels rise by 19.4%

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Hotels rated between three and five stars in the Sultanate of Oman recorded a 10.3 percent increase in the number of guests by the end of October 2025, reaching 1,895,159 guests, compared to 1,717,538 guests during the same period in 2024. Data released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) indicated positive growth across key hotel performance indicators. Total hotel revenues rose by 19.4 percent, reaching OMR222.149 million by the end of October 2025, compared to OMR186.098 million during the same period last year. Occupancy rates in three- to five-star hotels also increased by 13.5 percent, reaching 53.6 percent by the end of October 2025, compared to 47.2 percent during the corresponding period in 2024. In terms of guest distribution by nationality, visitors from Oceania recorded the highest growth rate, increasing by 40.5 percent to 34,441 guests. This was followed by guests from the Americas, which rose by 31.5 percent to 62,083 guests, while the number of European guests increased by 23.1



percent, reaching 483,574 guests. Guests from African nationalities registered a growth of 18.7 percent, reaching 11,962 guests, while Asian nationalities saw a 9 percent increase, with guest numbers reaching 273,573. At the local and regional levels, the number of Omani guests increased by 6.9 percent to reach 714,128 guests by the end of October 2025. Meanwhile, the number of guests from Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries rose by 6.7 percent, totaling 181,610 guests. Conversely, statistics indicated a 1.8 percent decline in the number of guests from other Arab nationalities, with their total reaching 84,268 guests by the end of October 2025.

HM the Sultan and Indian Premier hold official talks

The meeting exchange of views on the most pressing regional and international developments

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of the Republic of India, convened an official session of talks at Al Barakah Palace on Thursday.

The high-level discussions focused on reviewing the extensive framework of bilateral cooperation between the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of India. The talks explored strategic avenues to expand this partnership and unlock new investment frontiers, with particular emphasis on the sectors of energy, technology, logistics, food security, manufacturing and agricultural production. Enhancing cultural and educational exchanges was also affirmed as a key priority. This collaborative approach is designed to advance the mutual strategic interests and long-term aspirations of both countries.

The meeting also featured a substantive exchange of views on the most pressing regional and international developments.

The official session of talks was attended from the Omani side by Gen. Sultan bin Mohammed Al Nu'amani, Minister of the Royal Office, Sayyid Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, Sultan bin Salim Al Habsi, Minister of Finance, Dr. Hamad bin Said Al Aufi, Head of the Private Office, Abdulsalam bin Mohammed Al Murshidi, Chairman of Oman Investment Authority, Qais bin Mohammed Al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, Pankaj Khimji, Advisor for Foreign Trade and International Cooperation at the



The high-level discussions focused on reviewing the extensive framework of bilateral cooperation between the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of India

Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, Issa bin Saleh Al Shaibani, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Republic of India.

Attending from the Indian side were Dr. S. Jaishankar, Minister of External Affairs, Piyush Goyal, Minister of Commerce and Industry, Ajit Doval, National Security Advisor, Godavarthi Venkata Srinivas, Ambassador of the Republic of India to the Sultanate of Oman and senior officials from the Indian government. -ONA



HM the Sultan, Indian Premier grace signing of Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of the Republic of India, graced at Al Barakah Palace on Thursday the signing of the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) between the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of India.

The pact is designed to significantly enhance bilateral trade and investment cooperation, streamline the movement of goods and services, and expand the framework for collaboration in key strategic sectors covering energy, technology and manufacturing.

Qais bin Mohammed Al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, signed the pact on behalf of the Government of the Sultanate of Oman whereas Piyush Goyal, Minister of Commerce and Industry of the Republic of India, signed on behalf of the Government of India. -ONA



His Majesty confers Order of Oman upon Indian PM Modi



MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik conferred the Order of Oman upon Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of the Republic of India, in recognition from His Majesty of the advanced bilateral relations between the two countries. His Majesty the Sultan and the guest also exchanged commemorative gifts. -ONA

Experts hail Oman-India CEPA, pact to enhance trade exchange

They noted that the agreement is expected to enhance trade exchange, open new markets for Omani exports, and stimulate joint investments

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Economists, business leaders, and experts have affirmed that the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) between the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of India marks a



strategic turning point in bilateral economic relations, opening broad horizons for trade expansion, investment growth, and economic diversification. They noted that the agreement is expected to enhance trade exchange, open new markets for Omani exports, and stimulate joint investments in vital sectors beyond traditional cooperation frameworks.

It also supports the competitiveness of the national economy, enables Omani companies—particularly small and medium-sized enterprises—to access one of the world's largest markets, strengthens food and pharmaceutical security, and reinforces Oman's position as a regional hub for trade and supply chains in line with Oman Vision 2040. Dr. Said Mubarak Said Al Mu-

harrami, Member of the Board of Directors of the Central Bank of Oman and Professor of Finance at Sultan Qaboos University, described the partnership as a strategic step that will increase trade volumes through tariff reductions, facilitate the flow of goods and services, and stimulate direct investment. He highlighted expected growth in sectors such as petrochemicals, industry, renewable energy, information technology, fisheries, minerals, and light manufacturing, alongside technology transfer, job creation, and GDP growth. Dr. Hilal bin Abdullah Al Hinai, Chairman of the Oman Manufacturers Association, said the agreement opens wide opportunities for Omani industries—particularly manufacturing, petrochemicals, building materials, food processing, metals, and pharmaceuticals—to access Asian markets. He emphasised the role of the association in supporting industrialists, clarifying market access

mechanisms, and strengthening cooperation with the Indian private sector. He also stressed that maintaining Omanisation controls and negative lists ensures a balance between attracting investment and protecting the national labor market. Mustafa bin Ahmed Salman, CEO of United Securities LLC, stated that bilateral trade already stands at approximately USD 10.61 billion in FY 2024–2025 and is expected to grow significantly with the agreement's implementation. He noted that CEPA will help diversify Omani exports beyond oil and gas, expand non-oil sectors, enhance logistics and re-export capabilities, attract technology expertise, and create new employment opportunities. Legal advisor and economic expert Dr. Qais bin Dawood Al-Sabi'i described the agreement as a qualitative leap and a foundation for pioneering joint economic cooperation.

He highlighted India's position as a major global industrial power and its vast consumer market, stressing the agreement's role in diversifying exports, strengthening supply chains, supporting SMEs, and advancing sustainable development, clean energy, and green industries. He also emphasised the need for balanced implementation to protect national industries and ensure fair competition. Engineer Saeed bin Nasser Al Rashdi is the CEO of Insurance House Company (Bima Oman), affirmed that the agreement enhances Oman's attractiveness as an investment and trade hub, particularly for manufacturing, metals, petrochemicals, and food products. He stressed the importance of readiness in production and logistics to convert preferential access into sustainable export growth, while maintaining Omanisation policies to safeguard long-term economic and social benefits.

COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

Tariff liberalisation to boost competitiveness of Omani goods

< FROM A1 The Ministry explained that the negotiations were conducted over five main rounds between 2023 and 2025. These rounds covered the general framework of the agreement, legal and regulatory chapters, technical reviews of rules of origin, sanitary and technical measures, trade facilitation, trade in goods and services, trade remedies, as well as chapters on co-operation, intellectual property, and dispute settlement. The negotiations concluded with a balanced final text that safeguards the interests of both parties while preserving Oman's GCC and international commitments.

Trade exchange The Ministry stated that trade exchange between the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of India reached approximately \$7 billion in 2024, positioning India as one of Oman's key trading partners, particularly in non-oil exports. These include polyethylene, urea, gypsum, ethylene, and a range of industrial products linked to the petrochemicals and metals sectors, which are expected to expand further under the agreement's advanced preferential access to the Indian market.



Trade and tariff liberalisation The Ministry indicated that, under the agreement, the Sultanate of Oman secured an advanced level of trade liberalisation covering 97.4% of total Omani goods based on existing export volumes, while overall market access to India reached approximately 77.8%, with special liberalisation granted to a number of strategically important products for national industries. In return, the Sultanate of Oman granted India gradual tariff liberalisation according to clear implementation schedules, reaching 99.22%, in line with national eco-

nomical goals and policies to protect local industries. **16 main chapters** The Ministry explained that the agreement comprises 16 main chapters and a set of technical annexes, covering trade in goods, national treatment, tariff elimination or reduction, import and export procedures, rules of origin, trade remedies, sanitary and technical measures, trade facilitation, intellectual property, movement of natural persons, SMEs, and economic and technical cooperation. It also includes a dedicated chapter on trade in services, regulating mar-

ket access, preferential treatment, and transparency requirements. **Protection of national industries** The Ministry affirmed that the agreement places strong emphasis on protecting national industries through provisions related to anti-dumping measures, countervailing measures, safeguard measures, and balance-of-payments protection mechanisms. It also confirms the continued application of national Omanisation regulations, including negative lists and professions restricted to Omani nationals. **Mutual investment** Regarding mutual investment, the Ministry noted that India ranks among the top 10 investing countries in the Sultanate of Oman, with foreign direct investment reaching approximately OMR 286 million in Q1 2025. Investments span the iron and steel, fertilisers, clean energy, healthcare, and petrochemicals sectors, contributing to industrial value chains, increased production capacity, and job creation. The Ministry added that the agreement is expected to enhance food and pharmaceutical security and support cooperation in agriculture, healthcare, and biotechnology, in addition to digital trade, logistics services, mining indus-

tries, innovation, space, and tourism, in line with the goals of Oman Vision 2040. **Private-sector participation** The Ministry highlighted the active participation of the Omani private sector throughout the negotiation stages, with contributions from several major industrial companies. This engagement helped shape a negotiating position that reflects market realities and the opportunities available to national companies in the Indian market. The Ministry further clarified that the agreement does not conflict with unified GCC commitments and does not affect the smooth flow of trade among GCC states. It noted that the government procurement chapter was excluded to preserve national legislative sovereignty, and that legal reviews confirmed the agreement's compatibility with the Basic Law of the State and relevant national laws and international agreements. **Tariff reduction impact** Economic estimates indicate that tariff liberalisation between the two sides will enhance the competitiveness of Omani goods in the Indian market, which previously applied an average tariff rate of approximately 17%.

These tariffs had constituted a trade barrier limiting the flow of certain Omani products. Once the agreement enters into force, it will open access for national companies to a market exceeding \$17 trillion in value, with a consumer base of more than 400 million people, thereby supporting industrial growth and increased production capacity. The reduction of tariffs on raw materials imported from India will also provide opportunities to lower production costs in Oman, strengthen supply chains for downstream industries, and reinforce the Sultanate's role as a trade and logistics hub linking the GCC, the Middle East, and the Far East. **Legislative and legal procedures** The MoCIIP confirmed that a national rapid-response team will be formed to monitor the implementation of the agreement and address any challenges faced by affected sectors or companies. The Ministry expressed its aspiration to complete the necessary legislative and legal procedures for ratification in preparation for the agreement's entry into force, reinforcing Oman's position within the global trading system and supporting efforts to build a diversified economy based on added value, competitiveness, and sustainable investment.

SULTAN QABOOS UNIVERSITY

SQU Council holds its first meeting for 2025-2026 academic year

MUSCAT: The Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) Council on Thursday held its first meeting in Academic Year 2025-2026 to re-

view the latest developments in the university's workflow, as well as the progress made in the implementation of decisions and rec-

ommendations endorsed earlier by the SQU Council. The meeting approved the SQU's bylaw governing the ap-

pointment of Omanis and non-Omanis in academic jobs and looked into updates to the academic promotion policy. — OMA

AL SAWADI BEACH

3 Chinese nationals rescued

Times News Service

MUSCAT: A coordinated rescue operation led by the Coast Guard Unit of the South Al Batinah Governorate Police, the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority's team and local citizens, helped save 3 Chinese nationals stranded in the Daymaniyat Islands off Al Sawadi Beach. They were kayaking when they became trapped due to adverse weather conditions. The challenging maritime conditions made it difficult for them to return to shore safely. Previously, the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism issued an official advisory urging all adventure tourism companies and individuals to monitor weather bulletins from the Civil Aviation Authority. The ministry emphasised that due to unstable weather conditions affecting several governorates over the coming days, no adventure tourism activities should be held.



Royal Oman Police

STATEMENT

With reference to the circular issued by the Ministry of Labour regarding the extension of the grace period granted for rectifying statuses and settling fines and financial obligations recorded against individuals and employers until 31 December 2025.

The Royal Oman Police calls upon all concerned categories to take advantage of this final additional grace period and to regularize their status in accordance with the applicable laws and regulations, as follows:

First:

Foreign nationals wishing to regularize their status by renewing their residence permits or transferring their employment within the Sultanate of Oman shall be exempted from all fines resulting from the expiry of their entry or residence permits (for holders of work residence permits), after verification of their status correction by the Ministry of Labour.

Second:

Foreign nationals wishing to leave the Sultanate of Oman permanently shall be exempted from all fines resulting from the termination of all types of non-work-related visas.



BANGLADESH SCHOOL MUSCAT

CAREER OPPORTUNITY

ADMIN STAFF / NON-TEACHING STAFF

Overall Supervisor	Administrative Officer	Nurse
Academic Coordinator	IT & Web Development Officer	
ECA & Cultural Coordinator	Librarian	

CRITERIA: For Admin / Non-Teaching Staff

- Relevant degree or diploma in respective fields
- Minimum 2 years experience in a similar role
- Strong organisational and communication skills
- Proficiency in MS Office and basic digital tools

CRITERIA: For IT & Web Development Officer

- Proven experience in website development and management
- Basic graphic and layout skills for web content (e.g. Illustrator, Adobe tools, or similar)
- Ability to troubleshoot common IT and web-related issues

TEACHING STAFF (Section Heads)

Primary School	Middle School	O-Level
A-Level (Science)		A-Level (Commerce)

Heads of Department (HODs) & Subject Teachers for:

English	Math	Bangla	Urdu	ICT	Art	Music
Chemistry	Biology	Physics	Economics	Accounting	Arabic	
General Science		Social Studies		Business Studies		Dance (Female)
Physical Education (Female)			Islamic Studies		Moral Values	

Class Teachers / Homeroom Teachers

Kindergarten (KG) levels	Primary levels
--------------------------	----------------

CRITERIA: For Teaching Staff / HODs / Class Teachers

- Bachelor's or Master's degree in the relevant subject (Master's degree required for HODs and Section Heads.)
- Minimum 2 years teaching experience - experience in British curriculum mandatory (Edexcel preferred)
- HODs: Minimum 5 years teaching experience in their subject, Master's degree required
- Section Heads: Minimum 10 years experience in a school setting with leadership and management experience, Master's degree required
- Strong classroom management and communication skills
- Ability to work collaboratively with colleagues and students
- Language requirement: IELTS mandatory, overall band 7 minimum, with band 7 minimum in Speaking and Writing
- For Physical Education and Dance teachers: relevant certification in sports/dance education

APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

- CV and cover letter in English must be sent to: flora.launay.bsm@gmail.com
- Include:
 - Certificates of degrees and diplomas
 - Two recommendation letters
 - Two references
- Subject of the email should be: **Application – Name of the Position – Name of the Candidate**

Sayyid Theyazin presides over inauguration of Arab Shooting Championship

The competitions will be held at the National Olympic Shooting Complex in Muscat, which is equipped with the latest global equipment

MUSCAT: HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham Al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, today inaugurated the Arab Shooting and Airgun Championship, hosted by the Sultanate of Oman and organized by Oman Shooting Association.

The opening was attended by Maj. Gen Mattar bin Salim Al Balushi, First Deputy Chairman of Oman Shooting Association.

The opening ceremony, held at the Al Shafaq Club of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF), began with the salute to His Highness the Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth. Then, the opening segments commenced, blending heritage and modernity, including a visual presentation about the ancient history of the shooting sport.

Brigadier General Khalid bin Ali Al Mugbali, Secretary-General of Oman Shooting Association, delivered a speech in which he affirmed that this championship aims to enhance bonds of brotherhood and cooperation, as such sporting gatherings represent a means to unify and strengthen common ties within the framework of fraternal values and principles.

For his part, Eng. Du'aj Khalaf Al Atibi, President of the Arab Shooting Federation, highlighted in his speech the Arab Federation's vision in supporting, developing this sport, and enhancing cooperation between Arab national federations.

On his turn, Luciano Rossi, President of the International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF), highlighted in his speech the importance and stature of the championship on the international level. He announced granting the Sultanate of Oman the organization of a new championship under the name "Sultan of Oman International Open Shooting Cup," following the ISSF's approval and official support for this new international event. This will be a prominent platform to enhance sporting excellence, entrench international cooperation, and embody the sustainable partnership between the ISSF and the Sultanate of Oman, reflecting the advanced standing Oman enjoys on the global sports map.

The ceremony included a wel-



coming poem expressing the warm reception for Oman's guests, alongside a performance art piece embodying the championship's symbolism, and a heritage segment showcasing the beauty of authentic Omani heritage.

The Royal Navy of Oman Band performed the Anthem of Arab Nations in a scene that embodied the spirit of belonging and solidarity among participating countries.

The ceremony concluded with an announcement by HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham Al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, Patron of the occasion, marking the start of its competitions.

As many as 141 male and female shooters representing 14 Arab countries are participating in the championship, which runs until 25 December 2025. They will compete in 17 events in a sporting occasion that confirms Oman's readiness to host Arab championships and reinforces bonds of cooperation and integration among brethren.

The competitions will be held at the National Olympic Shooting Complex in Muscat, which is equipped with the latest global equipment, amidst comprehensive preparations supported and supervised by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, with technical support from the Arab and International Shooting Federations. This provides athletes with optimal conditions to deliver outstanding performances.

The opening ceremony was attended by a number of Their Highnesses and Excellencies, commanders of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF), military and security agencies, retired commanders, undersecretaries, some ambassadors of Arab countries, alongside senior officers, and a gathering of invitees.



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INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE

Rohingya genocide case against Myanmar to be heard in January



THE HAGUE: The International Court of Justice (ICJ), the principal judicial organ of the United Nations, will hold public hearings in the case concerning allegations of genocide against Myanmar over its treatment of the Rohingya community in January 2026.

In a press release issued on Friday, the ICJ said the hearings in the case titled 'Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (The Gambia v. Myanmar)', with the intervention of 11 States', will take place from Monday, January 12, to Thursday, January 29, 2026, at the Peace Palace in The Hague.

The case was instituted on November 11, 2019, when The Gambia filed an application before the Court accusing Myanmar of violating the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. The application relates to alleged acts committed against members of the Rohingya group.

Myanmar has consistently denied the genocide allegation of instigating a violent crackdown carried out by its military and Buddhist militias against the Rohingya community in 2017.

According to the release, Gambia, in its submission, has asked the Court to declare that Myanmar breached its obligations under the Genocide Convention, to order it to immediately cease any internationally wrongful acts, to fulfil obligations of reparation in the interest of Rohingya victims, and to provide assurances and guarantees of non-repetition.

The Gambia has invoked Article IX of the Genocide Convention to establish the Court's jurisdiction. A request for provisional measures accompanied the application.

On January 23, 2020, the ICJ issued an order containing several provisional measures directed at Myanmar, including measures to prevent acts within the scope of the Genocide Convention and to preserve evidence related to the allegations.

Following the order, both parties submitted their written pleadings on the merits of the case in two rounds.

"The hearings will be devoted to the merits of the case and will include the examination of witnesses and an expert called by the Parties," the ICJ said in a statement.

According to Al Jazeera, the hearings are expected to have broader implications, as they could influence South Africa's case against Israel over the war in Gaza. Notably, this will be the first time in more than a decade that the ICJ hears a genocide case on its merits. — ANI



STUDENTS AND RESEARCHERS

Chinese scholarship awarded to Ethiopians

ADDIS ABABA: The 2025 China-Ethiopia Friendship Award ceremony was held on Friday in Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia, honouring more than 40 Ethiopian students and researchers dedicated to the study and promotion of Chinese language and China-Ethiopia friendship.

Enhancing the capacity and skills

Speaking at the event, Samuel Kifle, president of the Addis Ababa University (AAU), said the award is a testament to a continued commitment of the Chinese government to improving the quality of education in Ethiopia through enhancing the capacity and skills of local researchers and Chinese language learners.

"With this support, we have had our students dispatched to China to study in various levels, and also our researchers get the necessary support to pursue their PhD as well as conduct their research. But above all, this support has helped Addis Ababa University strengthen its initial capacity to improve the quality of education in many aspects," Kifle said.

Recalling that Ethiopia and China have witnessed growing political, diplomatic, cultural, trade, investment, and social col-

laborations, the president said strengthening friendship with China is not a "matter of choice but a wise decision."

Noting that China and Ethiopia have already established all-weather strategic partnership, Sun Mingxi, charge d'affaires at the Chinese Embassy in Ethiopia, said the China-Ethiopia Friendship Award is meant to help Ethiopians gain a deeper understanding of China and study China-Ethiopia relations.

"Learning Chinese, and studying China and China-Ethiopia relations help better understand China's distinctive major-country diplomacy and better promote our cooperation, in a bid to safeguard the common interests of the Global South," he said.

Ekram Ahmed, one of the award recipients, said the scholarship provides him and his fellow students with an opportunity to delve deep into China, a country they had previously only known through television, movies and social media.

"Now we have developed a deeper understanding of China's beautiful culture, advanced technology and impressive developmental achievements," said Ahmed, who is also a Chinese language student at the Confucius Institute of the AAU. — XINHUA

Investment Opportunity

Samail Industrial City



The Public Establishment for Industrial Estates "Madaayn" is pleased to announce the following investment opportunity in Samail Industrial City:

Opportunity Number	Project Name	Deadline for Documents Purchase	Field Visit Date	Proposal Submission Deadline	Fee (RO)
1/2025	Equipping, Managing, and Operating the Medical Fitness Examination Centre in Samail Industrial City	18/01/2026	14/01/2026	01/02/2026	25

Equipping and operating the medical fitness examination center aims to provide an examination service for physical fitness for employees expatriate workers and provide the highest levels of quality in the aspect of health benefits, which are provide to all employees who work within Small Industrial City; in addition, the center serves local residents living near the Industrial city. The center's distinguished location enables its visitors to reach it easily due to its proximity to the gate and the highway. It is worth noting that the center extends over an area of 1100 square meters and includes many facilities, such as laboratories, clinics, cold rooms, X-ray rooms, and a number of other offices. The total are of land used is 3500 square meters.

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madayn.om

@madaynoman





UN SECURITY COUNCIL

Drone attacks on UN peacekeepers in Sudan condemned

UNITED NATIONS: The UN Security Council on Friday strongly condemned last week's drone attacks against a UN logistics base in Sudan, which killed six Bangladeshi peacekeepers and injured nine others.

In a press statement, members of the Security Council expressed deep condolences to the families of the fallen peacekeepers and to the government and people of Bangladesh, and wished a swift and full recovery to those injured.

The drone attacks occurred in Kadugli, South Kordofan state of Sudan, on Saturday.

The council members expressed grave concern that this deliberate assault on a UN logistics base and UN Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) peacekeepers represents an egregious disregard for international law, and poses serious threats to international peace and security.

They denounced in the strongest terms the targeting of UN peacekeepers and all attacks and provocations against UNISFA, and called for those responsible for such attacks to be held accountable without delay.

The council members reiterated that attacks against peacekeepers may constitute war crimes under international law and reminded all parties of their obligations under international humanitarian law. They called on the United Nations to swiftly investigate these attacks with the support of UNISFA, and keep the relevant troop-contributing country informed of the progress.

They called on host authorities to take all appropriate steps to support the safety and security of all UN premises, personnel and peacekeepers, and urged Sudan and South Sudan to provide full support to UNISFA and its operations. — Xinhua

European Commission dilutes 2035 zero-emission car goal

The plan announced would maintain Europe's electrification course through a balanced mix of incentives and penalties, describing the proposal as a "win-win" for consumers and industry



BRUSSELS: The European Commission has proposed easing the EU's 2035 zero-emissions target for new cars and vans, bowing to mounting pressure from key member states and parts of the auto industry.

Wopke Hoekstra, European Commissioner for Climate, Net Zero and Clean Growth, said the plan announced on Tuesday would maintain Europe's electrification course through a balanced mix of incentives and penalties, describing the proposal as a "win-win" for consumers and industry.

However, the move has split industry groups and environmental organisations, with critics warning against the dangerous uncertainties it creates for both the EU's climate goals and the automotive sector's investment roadmap.

Significant policy shift
Under the EU's draft, automakers would be required to cut tailpipe emissions from new vehicles by 90 percent by 2035

from the 2021 levels, rather than meeting the de facto ban on sales of new internal combustion engine vehicles implied by the current zero-emissions rule.

The Commission's plan allows for the continued sale of certain non-electric models, such as plug-in hybrids and range-extenders. To qualify, manufacturers should offset the remaining 10 percent of emissions through industrial measures, including the use of EU-produced low-carbon steel as well as e-fuels and biofuels.

The proposal also introduces flexibility for intermediate targets, notably lowering the 2030 emissions reduction target for vans from 50 percent to 40 percent.

If approved by EU member states and the European Parliament, the plan would mark the bloc's most significant retreat from the green policies enacted in the last five years.

"It is the wrong time for Europe to take the wind out of its own sails," said Chris Heron, secretary general of the trade association

E-Mobility Europe. He added that the only way for the EU industry to remain competitive is to reinforce policy, not "pull off course."

Terry Reintke, co-president of the Greens/EFA Group in the European Parliament, called the Commission's U-turn a disaster, warning that clinging to yesterday's technology gambles away the EU's future as a manufacturing hub.

However, some of Europe's automotive giants have welcomed the proposal, signaling relief at the regulatory thaw. Volkswagen hailed the draft as "pragmatic and economically sound overall." BMW called the measures "an important first step" away from rigid technology bans, noting that the changes recognise "the future viability of the combustion engine" alongside electrification.

Mercedes-Benz also threw its weight behind the shift, viewing it as "a step in the right direction towards more flexibility ... and the necessary technological neutrality," a direct response to the stagnation of electric vehicle (EV)

adoption across the continent.

Industrial headwinds
The policy shift follows sustained lobbying from major auto-producing nations, including Germany and Italy, and leading European carmakers.

They argue that a single-track focus on EVs risks eroding industrial resilience due to high costs, uneven charging infrastructure, and fierce competition from American and Chinese rivals.

Ahead of the announcement, Sigrid de Vries, director general of the European Automobile Manufacturers' Association (ACEA), regards "flexibility" for manufacturers as "urgent."

"2030 is around the corner, and market demand is too low to avoid the risk of multi-billion-euro penalties for manufacturers," she said in a LinkedIn post.

"It will take time to build the charging points and introduce fiscal and purchase incentives to get the market on track. Policy makers must provide breathing space to manufacturers to sustain jobs,

innovation and investments," de Vries said.

The proposal comes as Europe's EV transition shows clear signs of slowing. Battery-electric vehicles accounted for just 16.4 percent of new passenger car registrations in the EU between January and October, falling short of transition targets, as high prices and model scarcity continue to constrain demand, according to the ACEA.

Europe's domestic battery ambitions have also faced major setbacks. Northvolt, once the EU's flagship challenger in battery cell production, filed for bankruptcy in Sweden in March after struggling to secure financing and ramp up output.

The downturn has hit the labor market hard. According to a report by consultancy EY published in August, Germany's car manufacturing sector has cut approximately 51,500 jobs in a single year. This broad industrial decline has piled political pressure on Berlin and other capitals to shield major employers from mounting transition costs.

Market uncertainties
The Commission's 2035 proposal is part of a wider package aimed at shoring up the auto sector and accelerating EV uptake.

The proposal highlighted corporate fleets, which account for roughly 60 percent of new car sales in Europe, as a key lever to boost demand. It also introduces support for a new category of small electric cars.

According to the proposal, EU-manufactured vehicles under 4.2 meters in length and priced between 15,000 and 20,000 euros (between 17,560 and 23,420 U.S. dollars) would qualify for reduced road tolls and charging discounts. Manufacturers would also receive bonus credits for factory-level carbon reductions. — DW

Full story @ timesofoman.com/world

THE 77 PERCENT STREET DEBATE

Young politicians question Uganda's political system

KAMPALA: Uganda is a country defined by its youth. A majority of its population is under 35, yet political power remains concentrated among leaders who have governed for decades.

That contradiction took center stage during The 77 Percent Street Debate, where young politicians, activists and analysts questioned whether Uganda's political system allows meaningful youth participation.

Uganda's parliament has more than 550 members, but only five seats are reserved for youth representatives, a fraction that panelists said does not reflect the country's demographics.

While the constitution recognises the youth as a "special interest group," critics argue that the acknowledgement limits their influence rather than expands it.

"We are under a military regime that has intentionally structured the young people into a corner," one participant said, reflecting a view shared by several speakers who described the political environment as restrictive.

Uganda's January election faces systemic hurdles

Uganda is a constitutional republic that regularly holds elections and the next general election is scheduled for January 15, 2026. President Yoweri Museveni, who has been in power since 1986, is running for reelection.

Lawyer and former presidential aspirant Yvonne Mpambara described her failed attempt to contest the presidency as an example of systemic barriers faced by young leaders without deep financial or political networks.

"We feel the system was not transparent in terms of what the clear criteria for determining who gets nominated is," Mpambara said, adding that her campaign struggled to meet nomination requirements, including collecting signatures from supporters nationwide amid a heavy security presence.

"There was a lot of security on the ground that was sabotaging



efforts in terms of stealing supporter forms, in terms of stealing files," Mpambara explained. After losing thousands of signatures, she said the Electoral Commission dismissed her complaint.

"They still frustrated us and didn't give us a clear criteria for why they're not endorsing us."

Youth need more than political ambition

Youth leader Churchill Santamu said ambition alone is not enough to survive Uganda's political process. "You have the ambition, you have the zeal, you have the knowledge, you have the support, but you don't have the technical help to continue," Santamu said.

Political researcher and commentator Yusuf Serunkuma argued that Uganda's governance system prioritises political continuity over openness. "We live under modern autocracy," he said. "What you're witnessing is efforts geared towards sustaining the status quo, not meant to open up for young people."

Serunkuma said election laws, including costly nomination processes and organisational requirements, tend to favour long-established politicians. "The criterion is designed for those who have been active for the last five years," he said.

The role of money and violence

Several speakers said money and violence further narrow political space. They argued that campaigns are costly and that young

people are often mobilised during elections without gaining real decision-making power.

"Young people have been weaponised in this political landscape," one participant said.

Claims that youth lack the maturity to govern were widely rejected, with Santamu arguing that leadership ability is not age-dependent. "Maturity is entirely bestowed upon the person," he said. "The system itself is crippled in its own mandate."

Young women face additional challenges. Despite affirmative-action seats for women in parliament, panelists said younger women rarely rise to national prominence. "When they see a gap above and they try to rise up, the system is set up such that they never break through," one speaker said.

President Museveni's dominance in Uganda

Panelists also discussed how decades of leadership under President Museveni have shaped public perceptions of authority.

"If you ask any particular random Ugandan you meet on the street and you ask them who our leader is," Mpambara said, "you'll be sure the majority are describing Museveni." As the debate turned to solutions, views diverged. Some called for reforms to campaign financing, stronger institutions and civic education. Others argued that bigger political change is needed. — DW

Full story @ timesofoman.com/world



MUSCAT GOVERNORATE

MUSCAT MUNICIPALITY

Advertisement No.(50/2025)

Muscat Municipality invites Companies specialized in the field and registered with Projects, Tenders & Local Content Authority, to participate and obtain tender documents from the website via the following link: (https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om starting from the date of this announcement and until the end of deadline stipulated below.

Tender Number	Description of Tender	Last date to collect the tender	Tender return date
PRE-24-109 (Re Call 2)	Design and Construction of Internal Roads in Boshier and Muttrah	04/01/2026	11/01/2026
PRE-25-161	Leveraging Satellite Services	10/01/2026	01/02/2026
PRE-25-162	Maintenance of Road Gantry Signs in Muscat Governorate	10/01/2026	01/02/2026
PRE-25-163	Renewal of AutoDesk Software licenses	10/01/2026	01/02/2026
PRE-25-164	Supply of Pesticides	10/01/2026	01/02/2026
PRE-25-165	Consultancy Services for Supervision for Construction of Asphalt Road in Wadi Al Arbeen	10/01/2026	01/02/2026
PRE-25-166	Supply & Laying of Asphalt in Muscat Governorate	04/01/2026	11/01/2026
PRE-25-167	Consultancy Services for Outdoor Advertising and Commercial Signboards	10/01/2026	01/02/2026
PRE-25-128	Renewal of AMC for computers & their Accessories	29/12/2025	04/01/2026
PRE-25-168	Renting a tanker to pump sewage water from the workers' accommodation in Al Maabillah area, Seeb Governorate	10/01/2026	01/02/2026
PRE-25-169	MAINTENANCE WORKS FOR LABOURS BARRACK AT MUSCAT GOVERNORATE	10/01/2026	01/02/2026
PRE-25-170	Supply of Road Safety Barriers	10/01/2026	01/02/2026
PRE-25-171	CONSULTANCY SERVICES FOR DESIGN OF INTERNAL ROADS IN BUSHIER PHASE-1	10/01/2026	01/02/2026
PRE-25-172	CONSTRUCTION OF STORM WATER CHANNEL IN AL EHSAN STREET AT AL AMERAT	10/01/2026	01/02/2026

1.

Bidders shall submit their offers electronically.

2.

Clarification and Support:

- For any inquiries regarding tenders, please visit e-tendering website: (https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om) .
- For technical support of e-tendering system please send an email to (etenderhd@gstb.gov.om) or call (+96824402200).

Website: www.mm.gov.om

SPORTS

INDIA VS SA T20I SERIES

SA coach Conrad happy with learnings in India



AHMEDABAD: South Africa's recce for the next year's T20 World Cup is done and they're adopting the you either win or you learn mentality after a 3-1 series defeat to India on Friday. The five-match T20Is came at the end of ten weeks on the road for South Africa, in which they played in both India and Pakistan and began their World Test Championship title defence with three wins and a loss.

"It's been a wonderful tour," Shukri Conrad, South Africa's coach, said on their last stop in Ahmedabad.

"You learn a lot about yourself and the game and conditions. This last bit has been wonderful for us in terms of conditions that we're going to experience in a few months' time when we come here for the World Cup. I'm really happy with the outcomes. Obviously, you want to win every series you play, but India are the world champions in this format for a reason and we've got to make sure that we come back in a few months' time and try and topple them."

All of South Africa's squad, and those on the fringes, will now be involved in the month-long SA20, which starts on Boxing Day. The tournament will provide players with a final opportunity to make their case to be selected for the World Cup squad, which will be named in the first half of January. South Africa also host West Indies for three T20Is

just before the World Cup starts on February 7.

Hardik, Tilak shine

India took their series-winning streak to ten as they survived a scare when defending 231 in the deciding T20I on Friday.

Quinton de Kock and Dewald Brevis were dominant in taking South Africa to 118 for 1 in ten overs in the dew, but with a changed drier ball India took four wickets for 15 to scuttle the chase. Jasprit Bumrah was the main difference between the two sides with figures of 4-0-17-2 on a night that 432 runs were scored.

Marco Jansen gave India one final scare on a breakout tour with successive sixes in the 16th over, but the fact that India could be assured of winning only after they had taken their eighth wicket underlines how difficult it is to defend totals in the night in India.

Which is what makes the assault from Hardik Pandya - second-quickest T20I fifty for India off 16 balls - and Tilak Varma - 73 off 42 - all the more important as they turned around an innings that had begun to plateau.

Four India batters, including Hardik and Tilak, hit a boundary first ball; Hardik was the most dangerous of them all, scoring 31 off his first seven balls and ending up with 63 off 25.

Brief scores: India 231/5 (Tilak 73, Hardik 63, Bosch 2-44) beat South Africa 201/8 (De Kock 65, Varun 4-53, Bumrah 2-17).

Gill axed from India's T20 World Cup squad

Rinku Singh and Ishan Kishan return; Axar Patel named vice-captain

MUMBAI: India have left out vice-captain Shubman Gill from their squad for the 2026 T20 World Cup as the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) announced the squad on Saturday.

Wicketkeeper-batter Ishan Kishan, who topped the charts in the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy with 517 runs at nearly two a ball, replaced Gill in the top order, allowing India to squeeze in Rinku Singh, who has not been part of recent T20I squads. The late change in strategy meant Jitesh Sharma, the No.1 wicketkeeper in the recent series, had to miss out.

In Gill's absence, Axar Patel was named the vice-captain of the 15-man squad. The rest of the selection went along expected lines. Jasprit Bumrah, Arshdeep Singh and Harshit Rana were the three frontline fast bowlers with two of them expected to make it to the final XI.

Varun Chakravarthy and Kuldeep Yadav were the two frontline spinners, joined by Axar and Washington Sundar as the spin all-rounders.

Hardik Pandya and Shivam Dube were the seam-bowling all-rounders to go with a power-packed middle order of captain Suryakumar Yadav, Tilak Varma and Rinku. Opener Abhishek Sharma, Sanju Samson and Kishan rounded up the 15.

The same squad will play the five-match T20I series against New Zealand.

Ajit Agarkar, chair of the selection committee, attributed the late pivot from Gill to the team management's preference for a wicketkeeper to open the innings.

"It's more to do with the combination that we want to play, or what the team management is comfortable with playing," Agarkar said.

"Their thoughts are... who's going to bat at the top? Abhishek, obviously, has done what he has done over the last year. And we felt the keeper at the top at this point gives us a lot more solidity than anywhere else in the team to play different combinations. There are only 15 that we could have picked. Someone has to miss out. It's him. It's not because he's not a good player. Again, Jitesh hasn't done too much wrong. These are the combinations that the team management is looking for."

Gill, who replaced Samson in the XI when named the vice-captain of the side, has not scored a single half-century in the 15 innings at



the top. He has scored 291 runs at a strike rate of 137.26.

He missed the last T20i against South Africa with a foot injury; Samson scored 37 off 22 in his absence. Suryakumar, who has himself gone the whole year without a half-century, said Gill's form was not the issue here.

"It's not about his form or anything," Suryakumar said. "It's just about the combination right now. We wanted to have a keeper at the top. We wanted to have someone like Rinku Singh or maybe a Washington Sundar later on, to have a different combination. So that's why we brought in that extra

wicketkeeper at the top.

"And he's a terrific player. And there's no question about that. The only thing is that the situation is such that we need a keeper at the top of the order to have two-three good combinations which can win us the World Cup."

India's squad for NZ T20Is and T20 World Cup: Suryakumar Yadav (capt), Abhishek Sharma, Sanju Samson (wk), Tilak Varma, Hardik Pandya, Shivam Dube, Axar Patel (vice-capt), Rinku Singh, Jasprit Bumrah, Harshit Rana, Arshdeep Singh, Kuldeep Yadav, Varun Chakravarthy, Washington Sundar, Ishan Kishan (wk). - Agencies

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FITCH UPGRADES OMANTEL
Omantel announced that Fitch Ratings has upgraded its Long-Term Issuer Default Rating (IDR) to 'BBB-' with a Stable Outlook, marking a significant milestone in the company's journey as a national and regional digital leader.

MARKET

BUSINESS & FINANCE



MSX-LISTED INDUSTRIAL FIRMS
Industrial companies listed on the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) strengthened their gains in the week, benefiting from the positive atmosphere following the signing of the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) with the Republic of India.

Total credit granted by Oman's banking sector rises by 8.6%

Total investments of conventional commercial banks in securities witnessed an increase of 5.9 percent, reaching approximately OMR6.5 billion by the end of October 2025

MUSCAT: The total credit granted by conventional commercial banks in the Sultanate of Oman at the end of October 2025 recorded an increase of 8.6 percent, while credit granted to the private sector increased by 4.4 percent to reach OMR21.6 billion. Regarding the investment item,



the total investments of conventional commercial banks in securities witnessed an increase of 5.9 percent, reaching approximately OMR6.5 billion by the end of October 2025. Within this, investment in

government development bonds (GDBs) recorded an increase of 10.6 percent to reach OMR2.1 billion compared to the same period last year. As for the investments of these banks in foreign securities,

they decreased by 3.9 percent to reach OMR2.4 billion by the end of October 2025. On the other liabilities side, total deposits with conventional commercial banks increased by 1.4

percent to reach OMR25.7 billion by the end of October 2025. Within total deposits, government deposits with commercial banks recorded an increase of 9.8 percent to reach approximately

OMR5.9 billion, while deposits of public sector institutions decreased by 44.7 percent to reach approximately OMR1.5 billion during the same period. Private sector deposits recorded an increase of 8.4 percent to reach OMR17.4 billion in October 2025, constituting 67.5 percent of total deposits with conventional commercial banks.

Assets of Islamic banks rise
Meanwhile, the total assets of Islamic banks and windows in Oman combined rose to about OMR9.2 billion, or 19.5 percent of the total assets of the banking sector in the Sultanate of Oman by the end of October 2025. This is an increase of 10.8 percent compared to the same period last year. As for the total balance of financing granted by the units that carry out this activity, it recorded an increase of 10.4 percent to reach approximately OMR7.4 billion. Deposits at Islamic banks and windows also recorded an increase of 11.9 percent, reaching approximately OMR7.3 billion by the end of October 2025. -ONA

FINANCE MINISTRY



Ministry launches first phase of transition to Unified Government Financial System

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Finance launched the first phase of transition to the Unified Government Financial System code-named "Maliya". The step is in pursuance of a national scheme to modernize and facilitate financial procedures, ushering in a process of comprehensive digital transition that supports connectivity among government institutions. The ceremony marking the start of the first phase of "Maliya" was held under the auspices of Sultan bin Salim Al Habsi, Minister of Finance. Abdullah bin Salim Al Harthy, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Finance (Chairman of the Supervisory Committee for the Transition to the Unified Financial System "Maliya"), said that the first phase of operating the Unified Government Financial System "Maliya", was the outcome of cooperation between the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Economy, the Tax Authority and Royal Hospital. For his part, Dr. Ali bin Amer Al Shidhani, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology for Communications and Information Technology, said that digital transition constitutes one of the main pillars of Oman Vision 2040 and the National Digital Economy Programme. Al Shidhani pointed out that the government digital transition programme comprises a large number of initiatives, the most important of which is the Unified Government Financial System "Maliya". Al Shidhani explained that "Maliya" system, once fully implemented by all government units, will facilitate connectivity

among different government systems, as well as payment procedures and government decision-making—based on accurate data. Ali bin Abdullah Al Hinai, Director General of Financial Systems, said, "The launch of this phase comes within the context of the Finance Ministry's efforts to streamline public finance management operations, keep pace with the developments of the digital climate and build a new financial scheme that contributes to raising the efficiency of public finance management, besides connecting different government systems." The event saw an overview of developments of the financial system in the Sultanate of Oman—right from the establishment of the first computer department in the Sultanate of Oman way back in 1976, in the Ministry of Finance. This was followed, in 1986, by the introduction of the Comprehensive Government Financial System, which is still operating. Then, the Unified Government Financial System's portal was reviewed, along with the features of the new financial system "Maliya", which is planned to be operated gradually in parallel with the financial system (IFS) in other government units until 2028. The Unified Government Financial System, "Maliya", is a modern electronic scheme that provides integrated financial solutions and a better user-friendly interface. The system leverages government capabilities for the sake of applying more advanced financial planning and faster decision-making based on comprehensive information. The rest of government units will gradually move to the Unified Government Financial System until 2028. -ONA

CBO ANNUAL MEETING

Significant progress in digital and fintech advancements highlighted

MUSCAT: The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) hosted its annual meeting with financial institutions, uniting industry leaders under the theme "Reimagining Tomorrow". Chaired by Ahmed bin Jaafar Al Musalami, Governor of the CBO, the event drew CEOs and senior officials from licensed banks, Finance Leasing Companies (FLCs), Payment Service Providers (PSPs), and the Oman Banks Association (OBA) with Executive management of CBO. The gathering served as a platform to discuss major reforms, strategic initiatives, and the future direction of Oman's financial sector in line with Oman Vision 2040. The CBO Governor keynote address reaffirmed the country's unwavering commitment to building a resilient, sustainable, and forward-looking financial sector. He highlighted the government's comprehensive reforms and disciplined fiscal management, designed to underpin long-term economic stability, growth, and prosperity for future generations. Central to these efforts is the implementation of the new Banking Law, which introduces robust governance standards, enhanced risk management frameworks, and improved depositor protection, while encouraging innovation and aligning with international best practices. The launch of a new symbol for the Omani Rial was presented as a milestone, reinforcing the currency's identity and global recognition, and supporting financial innovation and visibility both domestically and internationally. The CBO Governor detailed significant progress in digital and Fintech advancements, including the



rollout of open and digital banking frameworks to enable secure data sharing and foster new financial products. These initiatives collectively aim to position Oman at the forefront of digital transformation in banking, resulting in a robust, resilient, and customer-centric financial ecosystem. Notably, the CBO Governor highlighted the launch of an electronic system for Sharia-compliant liquidity management instruments, enhancing efficiency and transparency within Oman's Islamic finance sector. Further, the meeting outlined major enhancements to national

payment infrastructure, including an upgraded GCC-RTGS system for instantaneous and secure cross-border transfers within the GCC, significant improvements to ACH enabling banks and customers to adopt E-mandate as an alternative to cheques, and the introduction of IBAN to simplify transactions and strengthen anti-fraud measures. The CBO's launch of electronic cheque clearing offers faster processing and improved liquidity management, benefiting both banks and their customers. The introduction of the domestic "Maal" card system reflects the CBO's commitment to modernising payments, driving innovation, and promoting financial inclusion. The CBO Governor also highlighted the importance of strategic credit allocation toward targeted sectors for banks in alignment with Oman Vision 2040. These steps are intended to foster economic diversification, create employment opportunities for Omani citizens, and position the financial system as a catalyst for innovation, entrepreneurship, and inclusive prosperity. Ongoing regulatory

revisions for both conventional and Islamic banking, as well as upgrades to the national payment system, were also highlighted, with a strong focus on the digital transformation agenda. The meeting featured a series of dedicated topics addressing macroeconomic indicators, financial landscape, threats, trends and actions 2025, and the digitalisation of financial services. The importance of industry-wide cooperation to safeguard Oman's financial ecosystem was strongly emphasised throughout. Additionally, an awareness programme for university students was organised, introducing them to the evolving financial landscape, the regulatory functions of the CBO, and the significance of responsible financing and sound market structure. Further, launching of "Financial Awareness Competition for students of Schools, Colleges, and Universities" aiming to enhance the financial literacy among them was also announced, highlighting the CBO's dedication to nurturing national talent and preparing future generations for careers in banking and finance. -ONA

GOVERNMENT EYES NEXT PHASE

India's new semiconductor plants begin commercial chip production

NEW DELHI: India's newly established semiconductor manufacturing units have begun producing commercial chips, marking a major milestone in the country's efforts to build a domestic electronics and manufacturing ecosystem. S Krishnan, Secretary, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, said, "All the 10 units that have been set up will manufacture commercial chips. Already the production of commercial chips is started," Krishnan told media on the sidelines

of the A(I)NDIA Conclave-2025 held in the national capital. Krishnan said India's semiconductor programme was moving steadily towards full commitment under its first phase. "As you know 10 projects are grounded, and another 2 and 3 will get approved, and then ISM 1.0 will be fully committed," he said. He added that the government was nearing completion of infrastructure upgrades. "We are at the final stages of HCL modernisation as well, so with that, ISM 1.0 will

be done, and we will be working on ISM 2.0, and the work is on." Alongside chip manufacturing, the government is seeking to build momentum around artificial intelligence adoption through extensive stakeholder engagement. "See, I think we are doing a number of Pre-events to create a momentum for extensive participation for the range of agencies and also from industries and other stakeholders and expectations what the AI Summit holds," Krishnan said. He said the decision to frame

the upcoming global gathering as an India AI Impact Summit 2026 was intentional. "This is a kind of mobilisation that we are trying to achieve. It's intended as AI Impact Summit, then that is a deliberate choice the idea is to emphasise the kind of impact that AI can have on economies and societies across the world," he said, adding that the difference it can make for economic development and the positive dimension on how AI can significantly accelerate the India's growth path as well. -ANI

MARKET

MSX-listed industrial companies shine following signing of Oman-India CEPA

The crucial agreement is expected to contribute to increasing trade exchange between the two countries and creating many opportunities for Omani industrial companies to export their products to Indian markets and benefit from the reduction of trade barriers

MUSCAT: Industrial companies listed on the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) strengthened their gains in the week, benefiting from the positive atmosphere following the signing of the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) with the Republic of India. The crucial agreement is expected to contribute to increasing trade exchange between the two countries and creating many opportunities for Omani industrial companies to export their products to Indian markets and benefit from the reduction of trade barriers. The gains made by industrial companies pushed the industrial sector index above the 7,700 point level after it added 76 points and closed at 7,772 points. These gains came after the rise



in shares of Al Safa Foods, Voltamp Energy, Oman Cables Industry, Gulf Mushroom Production, and a number of other industrial companies included in the sector index sample. The week also witnessed a wave of profit-taking that put pressure on the shares of many leading companies, which reduced their gains. The Muscat Stock Exchange saw the prices of 39 securities decline, compared to 36 securities whose prices rose and 20 securities that remained unchanged at their previous levels. The declines witnessed by leading companies affected the main index, which fell by 8 points and closed at 5,941 points, although it is still at its highest level in 9 years. The financial sector index recorded the largest losses, declining by 70 points, after it lost support from banks and investment companies, with the shares of Bank Muscat, Bank Sohar International, Oman Arab Bank, Bank Nizwa, and Ominvest declining. The Sharia index recorded an increase of two points and closed at 524 points. The market capitalisation of se-

curities listed on the Muscat Stock Exchange recorded losses estimated at OMR55.9 million during the week, falling to OMR32.14 billion by the end of trading session. The week also saw a rise in trading value, driven by increased purchases from local investment funds and companies, as well as individual Omani investors. Trading value reached OMR210.8 million, compared to OMR199.4 million the previous week, marking a 5.7% increase. However, the number of transactions executed declined from over 25,000 to 19,300. Investors focused on shares of companies with high market capitalisations, such as Bank Muscat, which saw trading worth OMR54.6 million, representing 25.9% of the total trading value, with its share price closing at 338 baisa. Bank Sohar shares saw trading worth OMR37.7 million, representing 17.9% of the total trading value and closed at 164 baisa. OQ Basic Industries reported trading of OMR29.7 million, representing 14.1% of the total trading value, and closed at

MSX pauses near multi-year highs in weekly trading

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Omani stock market experienced a pause this week, closing relatively flat with a marginal decline of 0.14%. This slight dip follows a solid positive uptrend that has been active since the second quarter of the year, a momentum that remains very much alive, said an industry watcher. “Despite the weekly pause, the market continues to show healthy progress and underlying strength, currently trading near a multi-year high,” said Ahmed Negm, Head of Market Research MENA at XS.com. The week’s hesitation reflected a broader cautious stance across regional markets, driven partially by the release of key US economic data during the week. Investors were particularly focused on labour and inflation figures, given their critical importance to the Federal Reserve’s monetary policy outlook and the potential for further rate cuts in 2026. Simultaneously, oil prices became a headwind once again, sliding to multi-year lows and



testing important support levels. Oversupply risks and a potential for a peace deal in Eastern Europe continued to pressure crude, creating a negative outlook that is likely to continue weighing on regional and the Omani markets. However, the country continued to see positive economic developments. “Oman and India moved forward with a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA). Explicitly aimed at strengthening trade, the agreement can boost sentiment and growth in logistics, manufacturing, and industrial sectors, which are poised to benefit from zero-duty access to the Indian mar-

ket and could contribute to the country’s diversification efforts,” he added. On the performance level, the financial sector faced downward pressure, ending the week negatively by 0.72%. The decline was weighted by the banking segment, where major stocks retreated; Bank Muscat dropped by 0.88%, Sohar International Bank fell by 0.61%, and Bank Dhofar traded lower by 0.67%. The services sector also closed in negative territory, down by 0.26%. This sector saw declines across key equities, with Abraj Energy Services falling by 2.86%, Oman Telecom dipping slightly by 0.37%, and OQ Exploration and Production ending the week lower by 1.32%. Conversely, the Industrial sector bucked the negative trend, rising by 1.00%. The sector’s liquidity was dominated by the heavyweight OQ Base Industries, which climbed by 1.61%. The sector also saw strong performances from other constituents, such as Asaffa Foods, which posted a gain of 4.17%.

SIGNIFICANT MILESTONE

Omantel secures Fitch upgrade to ‘BBB’ with Stable Outlook reflecting strong financial position and digital growth

MUSCAT: Omantel announced that Fitch Ratings has upgraded its Long-Term Issuer Default Rating (IDR) to ‘BBB-’ with a Stable Outlook, marking a significant milestone in the company’s journey as a national and regional digital leader. The upgrade follows Fitch’s decision to raise the Sultanate of Oman’s Long-Term Foreign-Currency IDR to ‘BBB-’ with a Stable Outlook on 8 December 2025. The rating upgrade reflects Omantel’s strong financial fundamentals, strategic importance to the national economy, and its expanding role as a regional technology enabler. It underscores the company’s resilience, operational excellence, and disciplined execution of a long-term strategy focused on sustainable value creation. At a national level, the upgrade underscores Omantel’s contribution to Oman Vision 2040, particularly in advancing digital inclusion, supporting economic diversification, and enhancing quality of life across the Sultanate through future-ready digital infrastructure and services. Fitch views Omantel’s Standalone Credit Profile (SCP) as commensurate with ‘bbb’ peers in Western Europe, citing the company’s strong domestic presence in both post-paid and pre-paid mobile segments, as well as its leading market share across Oman’s fixed and mobile markets. While Omantel operates in a competitive environment alongside other national incumbents, Fitch notes that the company benefits from lower foreign exchange risk compared to many regional peers. Omantel is rapidly transforming into a regional technology leader. Through strategic investments in next-generation infrastructure, cloud computing, artificial intelligence, Internet of Things, and cybersecurity, the company is ena-



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bling innovation and cross-border connectivity - positioning Oman as a hub for digital excellence and reinforcing its role in shaping the future of regional communications. On this occasion, Eng. Aladdin Baitfadhil Chief Executive Officer of Omantel, stated “This upgrade

to investment-grade status is a landmark moment for Omantel and for Oman. It validates our strategic vision and our commitment to customers, shareholders, and society. More importantly, it strengthens our ability to invest in cutting-edge technologies that

touch people’s lives every day - from education and healthcare to business and entertainment. “As Oman’s leading technology Group, we are proud to contribute to the nation’s prosperity while positioning Omantel as a regional leader in digital innovation and sustainable growth”. Omantel remains steadfast in its strategy of innovation, sustainability, and customer empowerment. The company’s leadership is built on a foundation of trust, resilience, and forward-looking investments that ensure Oman and the wider region are ready for the opportunities of the digital future. This rating upgrade is both a recognition of past achievements and a catalyst for continued growth - reinforcing Omantel’s role as the backbone of Oman’s digital transformation and a regional champion of technological progress.

TRADE



EU delays signing Mercosur free trade deal, again

BRUSSELS: EU leaders at a Brussels summit decided on Thursday to postpone the signing of a trade deal with four Mercosur countries until January. That means that despite 25 years of negotiations, the sides are closer, yet they still have no agreement. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen on Friday said she is confident the delay will give negotiators the time to find compromise. “We have reached out to our Mercosur partners and agreed to postpone slightly the signature,” von der Leyen said, signalling the deal, “crucially important for Europe — economically, diplomatically, and geopolitically.” **What is the Mercosur deal and why is there resistance to it?** The free trade deal aims to increase trade between the South American and European economic blocs, but is viewed critically by some major EU countries. Proponents of the agreement include Germany, Spain and Nordic countries. They argue it will increase exports suffering under US tariffs and reduce reliance on Beijing. However, critics including France, Italy and Poland are wary of an influx of cheap commodities and its impact on European farmers. Negotiations were also accom-

panied by large protests, primarily from European farmers. “We are working to postpone the Mercosur summit, which will give us more weeks to try to provide the answers our farmers are demanding and the safeguards needed for our products,” Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni said Friday. “This will allow us to approve the Mercosur agreement when, as we have said, we have all the guarantees required by a sector that could otherwise be affected.” French President Emmanuel Macron said he was not yet prepared to sign the deal with Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay, despite efforts to incorporate new safeguards for European farmers. “Much has been improved,” Macron said, noting the safeguards had not been finalized or coordinated with the Latin American countries. The safeguards would give the EU powers to temporarily reimpose tariffs or restrictions on certain agricultural products if it deemed them harmful to EU producers. Those include a sharp dip in prices or increase in overall import levels. Macron said France demands work continue, “so that things are taken seriously, our agriculture is respected, and the food security of our citizens throughout Europe is guaranteed.” -DW



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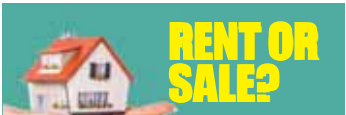
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Sri Lankan Accountant, reading CA. 3+yrs of experience. Expertise in accounting, audit, bookkeeping, VAT, finalization. Contact: +968 76297279

B.Com, CA Articleship completed 28yrs experience in Muscat Oman. Expert in book keeping, vendor & bank reconciliation, seeking job. Contact . 99072361

14 yrs GCC exprienced Senior Accountant, looking for suitable position (Oman D/L). Contact : 93150057

ACCOUNTS/FINANCE

Indian Male, Sr. Accountant (M.com & MBA finance), having 10 years of Oman experience up to finalization. valid D/L. Mob : 97524285, BobbyKkj@gmail.com

Indian Male B.Com graduate with 2+yrs experience as an accountant, Contact-9071 2090-Email-mohdnaifi4@gmail.com

Indian male with 9 yrs (3yrs in Oman & 6yrs in India) experience in accounts,account receiveables,payables,GL,tally prime,bank reconciliation seeks placement.Contact 94120095.Email shaikmunawar.ac@gmail.com

Indian male, M.com (Finance) 12 years accounting experience in Oman. Handling accounts up to finalization independently & Business development. Noc & D/L available Contact: 99859141,

Accountant looking for job. Contact: 75024166

Highly skilled chief accountant looking for suitable position. Contact: 79888153

Indian Male, MBA, 17 years experienced in key accounts, project sales, business development looking for suitable opportunities. Contact: 92790532

MBA Finance Senior accountant, 13-yrs GCC experience looking for a job upto finalization. Contact: 98869499

Accounts cum supervisor with 8yrs experience & D/L looking job. Contact: 95273377

Indian male, B.com, MBA Finance, 14 yrs of Oman and Indian experience, seeking suitable jobs in accounts. Have valid Oman D/L. Contact: 97436925. Email : sasdrk@gmail.com

Accountant available immediate joiner, Indian male, B.Com, 10+ yrs exp (4 yrs Oman) Expert in Tally & Accounts Contact: 91417133

Indian Male MBA, Senior accountant, admin having 10 yrs experience. Contact: 95416322, Email: aabynarayan@gmail.com

MBA Finance & B com Computer with experience of 2yrs as an accountant in Muscat Oman, having Oman D/L. Presently in Oman. Contact: 93965857

ADMINISTRATION

Indian (M) 29 yrs, MBA graduate with 4 yrs experience in operations, stores management, office administration, yard management, accounts, finance and graphic designing. Looking for suitable job. Contact: 78439875

Sri Lankan Management Executive, 13 yrs operations and business development experience in distribution, manufacturing, service industries. Contact: 9329 7579

Indian Male, Arabic Diploma with 8 yrs of experience in UAE as a Typist, Data Entry, PRO and Admin looking for job in above position. Contact : +96890411524.Email Jabirvadinoor@gmail.com

Indian Male, 29 yrs, MBA with NEBOSH certified with 2+ yrs experience in administration looking for safety or administration jobs. Contact: +968 74105832, Email : ashikthahir@gmail.com

Indian Female, M.Sc. (Computer Science), overall 13+ yrs of experience in different administrative as well as project roles looking for suitable placement. Contact: 79166904/97498882

Highly skilled accounting and administrative professional with diverse experience in technical and office administration roles Contact: 90473476. Email: kpsanjay202@gmail.com

ARCHITECT

Architect, Interior Designer having more than 8+ yrs of experience with design and engineering consultants. Contact: 95759832, Email: ar.ahmedfaizal@gmail.com

DRIVER

Driver with 25 yrs experience, PDO licence looking for job. Contact: 99116268

JOB WANTED

Indian Female, completed MCA and also having experience in teaching, available in Oman on family visa, looking for a suitable job. Contact: +91 79090343/ +968 94117967, Email: induchandran01@gmail.com

IT

Female Software Engineer full stack developer also expert in digital marketing with 7 yrs experience. Contact 74102443

Oman-based 2025 Computer Science Engineering graduate seeking job opportunities in IT support, administration, or document control roles. Fresher, currently in Muscat, and available to join immediately. Contact: +968 94988567

MCA graduate seeking a suitable job opportunity in Oman. Available in Muscat. Contact: 91488059

ENGINEER

Indian Male, 15+ yrs Sales exp. (IT/ Software). Open to Sales/BD roles in any industry. Valid Oman D/L. Contact: 94110178

Diploma in Electrical Engineering looking for Fire Fighting site supervisor/suitable job. Contact: 95933453, Email: haquefaizan3786@gmail.com

Experienced Biomedical Engineers seeking opportunities in Oman. Presently in Oman & available for immediate joining. Email: asmathalipvi@gmail.com Contact: +968 72031225

Project Manager (Civil) Indian, 18 yr GCC experience, valid D/L and transferable visa, can join immediately. Contact: 97723786

Project Manager Civil seasoned professional with strong consultancy and construction expertise. Open for suitable opportunities.Contact 93455363 | WA +966 56 373 2589 (WhatsApp)

ENGINEER

Civil Site Engineer with 24 yrs of experience in building construction,15 yrs in oman,valid D/L looking for job.Contact 79128770

Indian Male (22yrs), Diploma in HSE. 1 yrs experience. Contact: 75086973

Quantity surveyor (B.Tech Civil, AIQS), 4+yrs Oman experience. Skilled in primavera, BIM, Revit, ongoing RICS accreditation, valid Oman D/L. Seeking infrastructure, oil & gas roles. Contact: 97649953

MEP Engineer having 3+ yrs experience looking for a suitable placement. Ready to join immediately . Contact +968 7509 9651

Electrical Engineer, experience 18 yrs in Oman.Contact 98148034

Sales Engineer Indian Male, 7 yrs experience in sales.Seeking suitable job opportunities NOC & Oman D/L available. Contact 94150903 Email:vaseem9633@gmail.com

BE Civil Engr. Indian Male, 11yrs experience in Oman,holding Oman D/L seeks placement. Contact: 93867573, Email:pineasdhas@gamil.com

LOGISTICS

Indian Male Graduate with 25 yrs of proven experience in Car rental, fleet Management & logistics. Currently seeking for Senior/middle management position. Contact: 92152334.

Indian Male, 23 yrs of experience in store,logistics & commercial operations, looking for a suitable job. Contact : 91425510

MANAGER

Accounting Manager, Indian (M), 43yrs, 18+ yrs in Oman, D/L & NOC. Contact: 76432203

Indian Male, MBA. 12 yrs of experience as (branch Manager & key accounts executive)looking for suitable position. Contact: 98132055

PURCHASE/PROCUREMENT

Indian Male Procurement Executive with 11 yrs of experience in Oman, holding Oman D/L available in Muscat for immediate joining.Contact 92345876

Indian male 41 yrs MBA, B.com having 13 yrs experience in procurement UAE & Oman with valid UAE D/L,seeking suitable opportunities in Oman. Contact: +971529546753

Procurement Engineer 19 yrs experience construction and trading. whatsapp:+96895839964

Indian Male 40 yrs Bcom MBA having 13 yrs experience in procurement UAE & Oman with valid UAE D/L,seeking suitable opportunities. Contact: +971529546753

SALES/MARKETING

Indian Male, 15+ yrs Sales exp. (IT/ Software). Open to Sales/BD roles in any industry. Valid Oman D/L. Contact: 94110178

Indian, MBA, 20yrs of experience in Sales(FMCG/retail) with D/L seeks suitable placement. Contact: 95548480

Indian Male, 08 yrs experience having Oman D/L looking for suitable placement in Sales and Marketing. Contact: 94566786

Indian Male (35) MBA in Oman 10 yrs exp in marketing in FMCG, pharma Contact -79755795

Indian Male (MBA) with 5 yrs experience looking for a business development, marketing manager role. Contact: 99470508

STARTING ON FEBRUARY 1



Rome to introduce entry fee for historic Trevi Fountain

ROME: Rome is set to introduce an entrance fee for the Trevi Fountain and five other sites, the Italian capital's mayor announced on Friday.

Rome's mayor, Roberto Gualtieri, said at a press conference that tourists will be expected to pay the new fees starting on February 1.

Rome residents will be afforded free access to the monument.

While the Trevi Fountain will still be viewable from a distance for free, tourists will have to purchase a €2 (\$2.35) ticket to get a closer look.

Rome had already implemented restrictions in order to combat overtourism, with only 400 people allowed in the area around Trevi Fountain at a time.

The 18th-Century Baroque fountain is typically beset by dense crowds, with many people making a wish and tossing a coin into its water.

Gualtieri said that an average of 30,000 people visited the fountain per day this year, amounting to some nine million tourists between January 1 and December 8.

The other sites to introduce entry fees are the Villa of Maxentius — an imperial structure built in the 4th Century — the Napoleonic Museum, the Barac-



co Museum, the Carlo Bilotti Museum and the Pietro Canonica Museum.

Italy grapples with overtourism

Italy is one of the most visited countries in the world, and Rome and other popular tourist destinations have introduced measures to curb mass tourism.

Rome's Pantheon, a church and former Roman temple, introduced entrance fees in 2023.

In 2024, Venice, known for its iconic canals, began charging an access fee for day visitors during peak periods, doubling the price to €5 this year. — DW

US launches airstrikes on IS targets in Syria

A Pentagon official said that the attack was conducted using F-15 Eagle fighter jets, A-10 Thunderbolt ground attack aircraft and AH-64 Apache helicopters



WASHINGTON DC: The United States on Friday launched airstrikes against more than 70 IS targets in Syria in retaliation for an attack that killed two US soldiers and an interpreter in Palmyra last week.

The US military's Central Command (CENTCOM), which is responsible for the Middle East, said on social media that US forces "have commenced a large-scale strike against ISIS infrastructure and weapons sites in Syria."

Syrian state television reported that strikes hit targets in rural areas of Deir ez-Zor and Raqqa provinces as well as in the Jabal al-Amour area near Palmyra.

It said they targeted "weapons storage sites and headquarters used by IS as launching points for its operations in the region."

A Pentagon official told the Associated Press that the attack was conducted using F-15 Eagle fighter jets, A-10 Thunderbolt ground attack aircraft and AH-64 Apache helicopters.

"Earlier today, US forces commenced OPERATION HAWKEYE STRIKE in Syria to eliminate ISIS

fighters, infrastructure, and weapons sites in direct response to the attack on US forces that occurred on December 13 in Palmyra, Syria," US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said in a social media post.

'We killed our enemies'

"This is not the beginning of a war — it is a declaration of vengeance," he continued. "Today, we hunted and we killed our enemies. Lots of them. And we will continue."

Two Iowa National Guard members and a civilian interpreter were killed on December 13 in an attack in the Syrian desert that the Trump administration has blamed on the IS group.

The US Army named the soldiers as Sergeant Edgar Brian Torres-Tovar, 25, of Des Moines, and Sergeant William Nathaniel Howard, 29, of Marshalltown. The interpreter was Ayad Mansoor Sakat of Macomb, Michigan.

Soon after the attack, which occurred when a Syrian security guard burst into a meeting of US and Syrian security officials and opened fire, US President Donald Trump promised "very serious

retaliation."

He insisted the target of the response would be IS, not Syria, stressing that Syrian President Ahmad al-Sharaa was "extremely angry and disturbed by this attack."

On Friday, the Syrian Foreign Ministry released a statement reading: "Syria reiterates its commitment to combat IS and intensify military operations against the group after the US strikes." It said there could be "no safe havens on Syrian territory" for the terrorist group.

Trump said on Friday that the US was "striking very strongly against ISIS strongholds in Syria, a place soaked in blood which has many problems, but one that has a bright future if ISIS can be eradicated."

Earlier this week, Trump met privately with the families of the dead Americans at Dover Air Force Base in Delaware.

US Secretary of War Pete Hegset further warned that attacks on Americans anywhere in the world would invite a decisive response. "If you target Americans, any-

where in the world, you will spend the rest of your brief, anxious life knowing the United States will hunt you, find you, and ruthlessly kill you," he said.

Trump also issued the same warning in a post on Truth Social, saying ISIS would be hit harder than ever before.

Killing of brave American patriots

"Because of ISIS's vicious killing of brave American patriots in Syria, I am announcing very serious retaliation on the murderous terrorists responsible," Trump said. "We are striking very strongly against ISIS strongholds in Syria."

According to the US Army, the soldiers were killed while engaging hostile forces in Palmyra, Syria. Both were assigned to the Iowa National Guard's 1st Squadron, 113th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 34th Infantry Division.

Three additional members of the Iowa National Guard were wounded in the attack and were evacuated for further medical treatment. — Agencies

INTERNATIONAL RESCUE COMMITTEE

'Ongoing war in Sudan is the most neglected global crisis in 2025'

KORDOFAN: The ongoing war in Sudan is the most neglected global crisis in 2025, a survey among 22 global aid organisations concluded this week. The war-torn country also ranked first in "The top 10 crises the world can't ignore in 2026" by the International Rescue Committee.

Throughout 2025, the situation in the African country has continued to deteriorate since the war began in April 2023. At the time, the generals of the Sudanese Armed Forces, or SAF, and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces, or RSF, fell out over the integration of the paramilitary forces into the national army. Since then, oil- and gold-rich Sudan, with its vast agricultural lands, has turned into what the UN and other aid organisations call the world's largest humanitarian and displacement crises.

According to the UN, some 14 million people remain displaced within Sudan and in neighboring countries.

The estimated death tally ranges between 40,000 and 250,000 people. More accurate or updated figures remain out of reach as fighting continues, satellite-based internet communication is curbed, and many aid organizations and observers have left the country.

"The Sudan crisis should be front page news every single day," Save the Children humanitarian director Abdurahman Sharif said in a statement.

New hotspot: Kordofan

Fighting between the RSF and SAF meanwhile is concentrated on the region of Kordofan, where the Sudanese army holds control of several cities that are surrounded by the paramilitary RSF.

Kordofan is also the last region that separates army-held territories in the north and the center, including Sudan's capital Khartoum, and RSF-controlled areas in Sudan's western Darfur region and parts of the south.

"Most recently, violence in Kordofan has escalated dramatically," Jan Sebastian Friedrich-Rust,



executive director of the German section of the NGO Action against Hunger, confirms.

"The siege of communities in Dilling and Kadugli [in South Kordofan] is blocking access to vital humanitarian aid," he told DW, explaining that people have nothing left to eat and there is no access to medicine.

"Famine has been already declared in [Darfur's] el-Fasher and Kadugli, and 20 other locations in Darfur and Kordofan are at acute risk of famine by January 2026," he said.

The dire situation is also reflected in the latest Sudan update by the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC). As of mid-December, the IPC estimated that 21.2 million people — nearly half of Sudan's population — face acute food insecurity.

This number is likely to increase given that the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) announced last Friday that from January onwards, it needs to reduce rations in Sudan to "the absolute minimum for survival" due to a lack of funding.

"If the world does not urgently step up, diplomatically, financially, and morally, an already catastrophic situation will deteriorate further with millions of Sudanese and their neighbors paying the price," Mamadou Dian Balde, the

UN Refugee Agency's Regional Director for Eastern and Southern Africa, warned in a statement this week.

Civilians 'at the heart of warfare'

Action Against Hunger's Friedrich-Rust also worries that Kordofan is about to turn into a second el-Fasher, where the RSF committed mass atrocities during their takeover in November.

Meanwhile, Yale University's Humanitarian Research Lab (HRL), which uses satellite imagery to monitor atrocities, warned in a new report that the RSF militia "destroyed and concealed evidence of its widespread mass killings."

Of the 150 clusters of objects consistent with human remains the HRL had initially identified, nearly 60 are no longer visible. Instead, eight earth disturbances appeared near the sites of mass killing, the HRL said.

"The reality is that both parties to the conflict and their allies haven't just failed to protect civilians, but the targeting of civilians is at the heart of their warfare," Philippe Dam, Human Rights Watch's EU Director for Advocacy, told DW.

"Although the majority of sexual violence, attacks on hospitals, aid workers, and the use of explosive

weapons in densely populated areas pertain to the responsibility of the RSF, also the SAF commits massive violations against civilians," he said.

For example, the SAF have stepped up mass detentions against those suspected of having collaborated or supported the RSF, Dam told DW on Thursday.

These detentions appear to be extremely arbitrary as those targeted also include humanitarian workers, he warned.

"We have also received reports of numerous deaths in SAF-run prisons and we see the re-emergence of death penalty sentences," Dam said, raising alarm.

In his view, it is high time for the EU to step up its actions, to take robust measures and address the crimes which are continuing to be committed by both sides.

"I find it shocking that the RSF leader General Mohammed Dagalo, popularly known as Hemedti, has not yet been sanctioned by the EU despite the clear links between his responsibility and the crimes committed that we and others could identify," Dam said.

He also appealed on the EU to address the backers of the conflict. While the SAF is mainly backed by Egypt, the RSF is allegedly supported by the United Arab Emirates, even though Abu Dhabi denies any involvement. — DW

WHO DIRECTOR-GENERAL

India shows how tradition, modern science can advance together

NEW DELHI: World Health Organisation (WHO) Director-General Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus on Friday underlined the need for an integrated and inclusive approach to healthcare, emphasising that science and tradition complement each other, as the Second WHO Global Summit on Traditional Medicine concluded.

The summit, jointly organised by the WHO and the Government of India, began on Wednesday and brought together ministers, scientists, indigenous leaders, and traditional medicine practitioners from over 100 countries to discuss the role of traditional medicine in modern health systems. Addressing the gathering on the closing day, the WHO Director-General highlighted the relevance of traditional medicine in addressing contemporary health challenges.

"Traditional medicine can help address many of the threats to the health of our modern world, the growing burden on economic capabilities, and inequitable access to healthcare services," he said.

Praising India's approach, Tedros said the country has demonstrated how tradition and innovation can progress together.

"India has shown the world that traditional wisdom and modern science are not inconsistent, but complementary to

each other," he said.

Reiterating the broader impact of traditional medicine, he noted, "Traditional medicine can help address many of the threats to the health of our modern world, the growing burden of economic capabilities, and inequitable access to services and healthcare," adding that "Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership has helped bring this vision to the world."

Outlining the key outcomes of the summit, Tedros said participants reached consensus on multiple areas of action.

"We have agreed to ensure safety, quality and public trust through common and risk-based regulation. We have also agreed to safeguard biodiversity and traditional knowledge while respecting cultural heritage, intellectual property and equitable sharing," he said.

He further added, "We have agreed to harness digital technologies and innovation responsibly to improve access to research and data generation, and we have agreed to integrate safe and effective traditional medicine into health systems, especially private healthcare."

Wrapping up his address, the WHO Director-General called for collective commitment to the future of global health. — ANI

Full story at timesofoman.com/world





LIFESTYLE

SCIENTISTS TURN BODY FAT INTO BONE TO HEAL SPINAL FRACTURES: STUDY

Researchers have developed a promising new method for repairing spinal fractures using stem cells extracted from adipose tissue, also known as body fat

Researchers in Osaka have found that stem cells from fat tissue can repair spinal fractures similar to those caused by osteoporosis.

By turning these cells into bone-forming clusters and pairing them with a bone-rebuilding material, rats regained stronger, healthier spines.

The approach could provide a safe and minimally invasive alternative for treating bone diseases in humans.

Researchers at Osaka Metropolitan University have developed a promising new method for repairing spinal fractures using stem cells extracted from adipose tissue, also known as body fat.

In animal studies, the treatment successfully healed spinal injuries in rats that mimic osteoporosis-related fractures seen in humans. Because these cells are easy to collect, even from older adults, and cause minimal strain on the body, the technique could provide a gentle, non-invasive alternative for treating bone diseases.

Osteoporosis weakens bones, making them fragile and more likely to break. As Japan's population continues to age, the number of people affected is projected to surpass 15 million.

Among the various types of fractures caused by osteoporosis, compression fractures of the spine, known as osteoporotic vertebral fractures, are the most common.

These injuries can result in long-term disability and severely reduce quality of life, highlighting the need for safer and more effective treatments.

Researchers at Osaka Metropolitan University have developed a promising new method for repairing spinal fractures using stem cells extracted from adipose tissue, also known as body fat.

In animal studies, the treatment successfully healed spinal injuries in rats that mimic osteoporosis-related fractures seen in humans. Because these cells are easy to collect, even from older adults, and cause minimal strain on the

body, the technique could provide a gentle, non-invasive alternative for treating bone diseases.

How fat-derived stem cells help rebuild bone

Stem cells derived from adipose tissue (ADSCs) show strong potential for repairing bone damage. These multipotent cells can develop into various types of tissue, including bone.

When ADSCs are cultivated into three-dimensional spherical groups called spheroids, their ability to promote tissue repair increases. Pre-differentiating these spheroids toward bone-forming cells further enhances their effectiveness in stimulating bone regeneration.

Led by Graduate School of Medicine student Yuta Sawada and Dr. Shinji Takahashi, the Osaka research team used ADSCs to create bone-differentiated spheroids and combined them with b-tricalcium phosphate, a material commonly used in bone reconstruction. The mixture was applied to rats with spinal fractures, resulting in significant improvements in bone healing and strength.

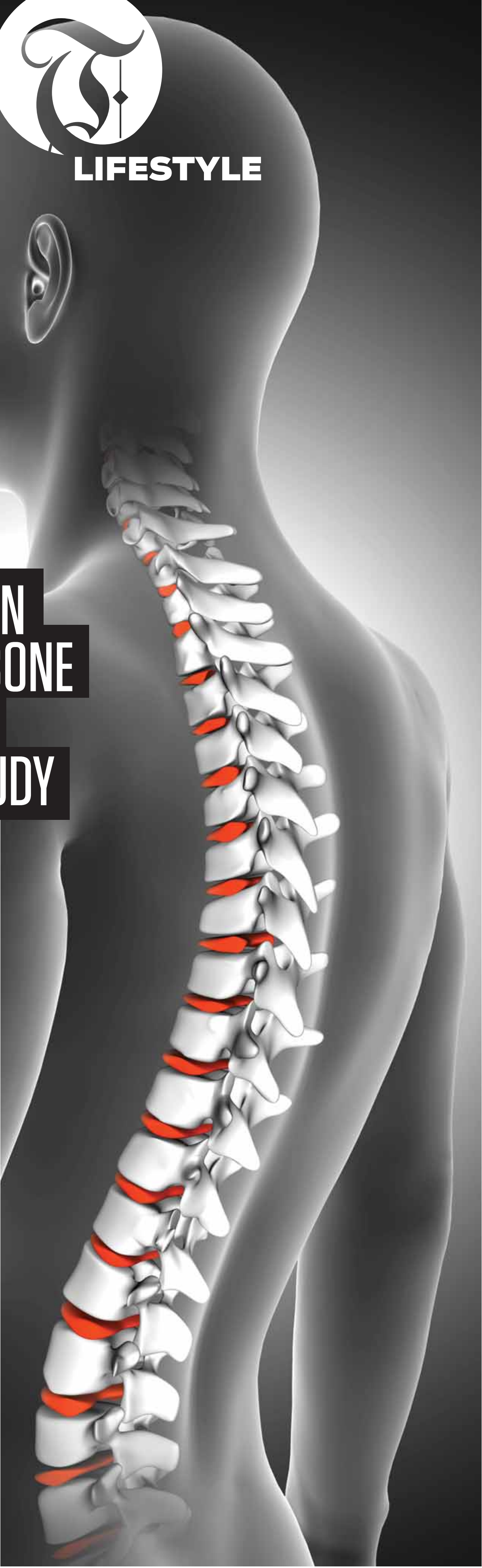
The researchers also observed that genes responsible for bone formation and regeneration became more active after the treatment, suggesting that the approach stimulates the body's natural healing processes.

Promising outlook for future treatments

"This study has revealed the potential of bone differentiation spheroids using ADSCs for the development of new treatments for spinal fractures," said Sawada. "Since the cells are obtained from fat, there is little burden on the body, ensuring patient safety."

Dr. Takahashi added, "This simple and effective method can treat even difficult fractures and may accelerate healing. This technique is expected to become a new treatment that helps extend the healthy life of patients."

The findings were published in Bone and Joint Research. -ANI



Aussies on cusp of Ashes glory

England stagger on as hosts four wickets away from winning the third Test

ADELAIDE: An unrelenting Australia were four wickets from retaining the Ashes at close of fourth day's play in the third Test on Saturday as England clung to the dying hope that they could chase a record 435 to save the series.

England clawed their way to 207-6 to take it to a fifth day in Adelaide with Will Jacks on 11 and Jamie Smith two, still 228 runs from their target.

They lost big guns Zak Crawley (85), Joe Root (39), Harry Brook (30), and Ben Stokes (5) in the final session with Nathan Lyon and Pat Cummins doing the damage.

Australia wicketkeeper Alex Carey, who made a century in the first innings, had another good day with his quick hands stumping Crawley off Lyon.

"I just thought Nathan was bowling really well and to continuing putting lots of energy on the ball," said Carey

"He toiled away all day and finally got some reward. There's enough on the pitch. We saw that, and finally he picked up a couple of late wickets."

Carey expected England to fight till the bitter end on Sunday and said he was still not thinking about winning the Ashes.

"We'll reflect on today and come up with plans for tomorrow.

"We know these guys are quality players right to the end, and we want to keep working hard and probably not look too far ahead."

England must win to keep the five-match series alive after being crushed by eight wickets at Perth and Brisbane.

With attendance over the first four days swelling to more than 200,000 - a record for the Adelaide Oval which has been hosting Tests since 1884 - they face a daunting task.

No team has ever chased down more than 316 at the venue, while the biggest successful run chase in Test history was 418 by the West Indies against Australia at St. Johns in 2003.

England took six wickets before lunch to wrap up Australia's second innings for 349 with Travis Head slamming 170 and Carey 72.

'Very disappointing'
It left them with 10 minutes to bat



before the break but they lost Ben Duckett in the second over as he edged Cummins to Marnus Labuschagne at second slip.

Out-of-form No.3 Ollie Pope was widely seen as on his last chance with Jacob Bethell waiting in the wings.

He failed to deliver again, gone for 17 with Labuschagne taking a stunning one-handed catch at full stretch in the slips, again off

Cummins.
Crawley was watchful as he built a 78-run stand with Root, who needed a big score to save his side but was undone by Cummins again.

The Australian skipper removed him for a 13th time in Tests, more than any other bowler, with a furious Root berating himself after prodding at a full delivery and feathering to Carey.

Crawley brought up a well-deserved 50 and with an uncharacteristically subdued Brook began a rebuild before his partner badly mistimed a reverse sweep and was bowled by a classic Lyon off-break.

With the pitch deteriorating, Lyon unleashed another trademark delivery to bowl Stokes, then tempted Crawley down the wicket to be stumped by Carey, leaving England's Ashes campaign in tatters.

"Very disappointing, it's an uphill battle from here, we're staring down the barrel," said Crawley.
"They are a very, very good side. It was always going to be tough against them. Obviously we have been short of our best, but credit to them."

Head ovation
Australia resumed at 271-4 with

Head on 142 and Carey 52 and they feasted early on some mediocre bowling.

Stokes didn't turn over his arm on Friday with assistant coach Jeetan Patel saying he was "knackered" after a stoic 83 with the bat.

The England captain opened the attack on Saturday but Head quickly got to work and reached his 150 with a boundary through backward point, earning a standing ovation from his home fans.

Targeting a maiden double-century, Head pulled a short ball from Josh Tongue with Crawley in the deep doing well to get underneath it in glaring sun.

Carey was taken at slip by Brook off Stokes, with Josh Inglis (10) following, caught behind by Smith off Tongue.

The tail folded quickly with Tongue taking 4-70 and Bryson Carse 3-80.

Brief scores: England 286 and 207/6 (Crawley 85, Cummins 3-24, Lyon 3-64) need 228 runs to beat Australia 371 and 349 (Head 170, Carey 72, Tongue 4-70). - Agencies

PRELIMINARY WORLD CUP SQUAD

Sri Lanka replace Asalanka with Shanaka as T20 skipper

COLOMBO: Dasun Shanaka will be Sri Lanka's T20I captain until the end of the forthcoming T20 World Cup. The move to replace Charith Asalanka as captain in the format had been floated by the previous selection committee under Upul Tharanga, whose term expired this month.

But new chief selector Pramodya Wickramasinghe confirmed that Shanaka would lead the team as he announced the preliminary squad for the tournament.

"We decided that Dasun Shanaka should be captain until the end of the World Cup, after talking to head coach Sanath Jayasuriya as well," Wickramasinghe said on Friday.

"The previous committee had chosen a list of 25 players. We spoke to Jerome Jayaratne, the head of high performance, as well as Sanath Jayasuriya. We decided to announce that same 25 as a preliminary squad for the World Cup."

"We are looking at Dasun as an allrounder. We'll have to talk to Sanath Jayasuriya and work out what is required of him."

Shanaka had been made stand-in captain for the tri-series in Pakistan last month, after Asalanka was sent home from that tour to recover from an illness, although standard protocol is to keep unwell players within the team for a minor illness of the kind Asalanka had. Sri Lanka had lost to Zimbabwe through the course of that tournament, but managed to earn qualification for the final, in which they were comfortably defeated by Pakistan.



"For now we've got to continue with what the previous committee was doing," the chief selector Wickramasinghe said.

"They had been following a plan. If I were to come in and change a lot of things, that would not be ideal. My plan is to keep this team together for the World Cup, and then see how best we can build after that."

The preliminary squad also opened the door for the return of Niroshan Dickwella, who last played for Sri Lanka back in March 2023, and that in Tests.

Preliminary World Cup squad: Dasun Shanaka (capt), Pathum Nissanka, Kusal Mendis, Kamil Mishara, Kusal Perera, Dhananjaya de Silva, Niroshan Dickwella, Janith Liyanage, Charith Asalanka, Kamindu Mendis, Pavan Rathnayake, Sahan Arachchige, Wanindu Hasaranga, Dunith Wellalage, Milan Rathnayake, Nuwan Thushara, Eshan Malunga, Dushmantha Chameera, Pramod Madushan, Matheesha Pathirana, Dilshan Madushanka, Maheesh Theekshana, Dushan Hemantha, Vijayakanth Vijayakanth, Traveen Mathew. - Agencies

THIRD TEST

Dogged Hodge ton helps WI save follow-on against New Zealand

MOUNT MAUNGANUI: Kavem Hodge scored his second Test century on Saturday as the West Indies avoided the follow-on in the third Test against the hosts at Mount Maunganui, New Zealand

At stumps on the third day, the West Indies were 381-6, still 194 runs behind with Hodge unbeaten on 109 and Anderson Phillip at the other end on 12.

The 32-year-old Hodge crawled to his century off 224 balls, hitting 12 boundaries and being dropped on 74 by Daryl Mitchell off Ajaz Patel.

It took him 33 balls to get through the 90s, including a long stoppage on 97 after he was hit a painful blow in the box by a Michael Rae delivery.

"Thankfully I was able to get over it and go past the landmark," Hodge said.

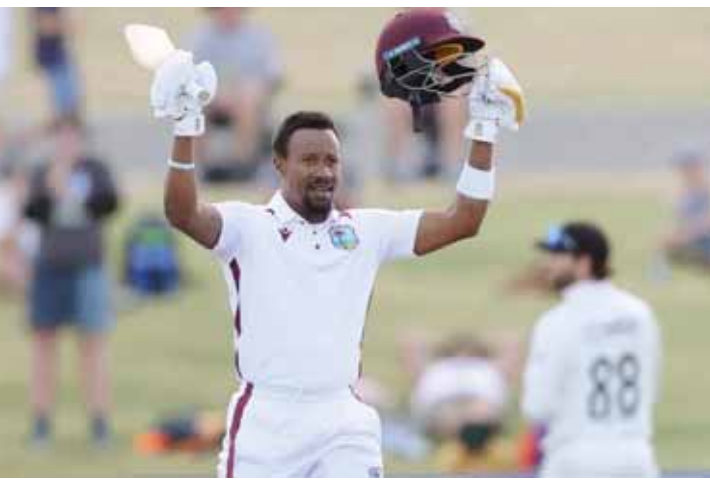
"I told myself, hey, I spent all day to get 90. I still have all day tomorrow. Just stick to the processes.

"It makes no sense I work so hard from zero to 90 and then go change. So just stick to the processes, keep concentrating on every opportunity I get."

Hodge shared in an 81-run partnership with Justin Greaves which edged the visitors closer to the follow-on target of 375, and fifty stands with Tevin Imlach and Alick Athanaze.

New Zealand received a spark from an unlikely source when Mitchell trapped Greaves lbw for 43, just his fourth Test wicket in his 35th match.

Batting suddenly looked a lot



harder, as West Indies captain Roston Chase came and went, trapped lbw by Patel.

Leading batsman, Shai Hope

was missing Saturday because of food poisoning. Phillip came to the crease and should have been out for two when edging Patel to wick-

etkeeper Tom Blundell, but New Zealand did not appeal. He was then dropped on eight from Patel's bowling by Rae at mid-on.

Jacob Duffy had 2-79 from 31 overs, while Patel took 2-94 in 33 overs to end his unwanted record of being the bowler to take the most Test wickets without a single one at home.

Patel's 86th Test wicket was his first in New Zealand, bowling Athanaze in the middle session some 2,562 days since his first Test in New Zealand and with his 394th ball on home soil.

England's Billy Bates, who took 50 wickets between 1882 and 1887, all in Australia, has regained the dubious honour in the Test history books.

The West Indies resumed on Saturday at 110-0 and added only one run before Duffy struck in the second over as John Campbell edged to Tom Latham at second slip without adding to his over-night 45.

The wicket ended the first West Indies century opening stand since February 2023.

Duffy then bowled Brandon King, who had begun the day on 55, for 63.

New Zealand declared their first innings on Friday at a mammoth 575-8, anchored by Devon Conway's epic 227 and captain Latham's 137.

Brief scores: West Indies 381/6 (Hodge 109*, King 63, Duffy 2-79) trail New Zealand 575/8 decl. (Conway 227, Latham 137, Ravindra 72*, Greaves 2-83). - Agencies

Al Touqi masters Nakhal to seal Rally Oman Baja Sprint crown

Ghaith Al Qasmi finished second and Mazin Al Shibani secured third place in OAA-organised race

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Salem Al Touqi delivered a composed and determined drive to clinch the Rally Oman Baja Sprint title in Nakhal on Friday, emerging victorious after a thrilling day of competition across the demanding Nakhal and Al Sareer stages.

Partnered by navigator Issa Al Wardi, Al Touqi topped the overall classification with a winning total time of 45 minutes and 3 seconds, overcoming strong challenges from some of Oman's leading rally drivers. Ghaith Al Qasmi, alongside navigator Ahmed Salem, finished second with a time of 49:20, while Mazin Al Shibani and co-driver Warith Al Kharousi secured third place in 52:07.

Musab Soomar, navigated by Sultan Al Batashi, claimed fourth position after clocking 54:10, with Abbas Al Lawati rounding out the top five on 54:51.

The rally unfolded dramatically from the early stages. After early leader Haitham Soomar was forced to retire due to an engine malfunction, Al Touqi seized the initiative in the second stage at Al Sareer.

He later shared identical stage times with Al Shibani in the third



Kindi, Walid Al Hashmi, and Sina Hasari also exited the race.

The closing ceremony was held under the patronage of Sheikh Said bin Mohammad Al Rashidi, Deputy Wali of Nakhal, who crowned the winners and presented prizes to the top finishers.

Organised by the Oman Automobile Association (OAA), the Rally Oman Baja Sprint was sponsored by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth. The event featured a variety of categories, including standard rally cars, off-road four-wheel-drive vehicles, and motorcycles such as Can-Am and Polaris, adding to the spectacle for motorsport fans.

The OAA continues to demonstrate its commitment to developing rallying in the Sultanate by hosting events across different regions, bringing high-level motorsport closer to local communities and nurturing a growing culture of competitive racing nationwide.



BOXING

Joshua stops Paul in sixth round of Miami mismatch

MIAMI: British heavyweight Anthony Joshua needed six rounds to stop boxing novice Jake Paul, who spent much of the contest in survival mode in one of the most striking mismatches in the sport's history on Friday.

Joshua cut an increasingly frustrated figure as Paul refused to engage by dancing around the ring for long spells, before the two-time world champion finally imposed himself by knocking down the YouTuber-turned-boxer twice in the fifth round.

Paul was down again in the sixth before Joshua landed a powerful and clean right hand that brought a surreal night to an abrupt conclusion at Miami's Kaseya Centre.

The American did not beat the count and there was palpable relief inside the arena when he was able to rise to his feet and leave the ring without assistance.

"It wasn't the best performance," Joshua, 36, said.

"The end goal was to pin Jake Paul down and hurt him. It took a bit longer than expected, but the right hand finally found the destination."

It was the result the boxing world had overwhelmingly predicted, and the controversial bout raises questions about the safety



risks created by such a vast gulf in experience, size and power.

Joshua claimed the 29th victory of his professional career in 33 outings and can now turn his attention to a more legitimate challenge - notably the long-mooted showdown with Tyson Fury next year.

"Come and fight one of the 'real-est' fighters out there, step in there with me next if you're a really bad boy," Joshua told his rival.

Paul, meanwhile, failed to deliver on his promise to pull off the greatest upset in sports history.

The 28-year-old spent much of the fight tumbling to the canvas and clutching at Joshua's legs, a reflection of the two-stone weight gap and how badly he struggled to cope with it.

Paul did manage to land a hand-

ful of shots, however, and the fact the contest stretched into the sixth round was an unflattering reflection on Joshua.

Paul's jaw broken in two places

Paul's jaw was broken in two places by Joshua during the defeat.

The YouTuber-turned-boxer hit the canvas twice in the fifth and sixth rounds and said in his post-fight comments he thought his jaw was "definitely" broken.

Paul later posted an image of his X-ray, on social media that showed the double break on his jawline.

Despite missing the post-fight news conference as a result of the jaw injury, Paul joked he could take on former four-weight world champion Saul Canelo Alvarez "in 10 days". - Agencies

GERMAN BUNDESLIGA

Dortmund defeat Monchengladbach



BERLIN: Borussia Dortmund kicked off the Bundesliga's 15th round by beating Borussia Mönchengladbach 2-0 at Signal Iduna Park on Friday.

Dortmund controlled the early phases and were ahead inside 10 minutes when Julian Brandt volleyed in at the far post from Niklas Süle's cross. The opener was contentious, with Gladbach appealing for a foul as Serhou Guirassy appeared to pull Philipp Sander to the ground, but referee Sven Jablonski and his team allowed the goal to stand. The hosts continued to dictate play against a compact visiting block. Guirassy headed wide, and Karim Adeyemi then forced goalkeeper Moritz

Nicolas into a sharp save in the 29th minute as Dortmund pushed for a second.

Gladbach improved late in the first half, with Florian Neuhaus and Giovanni Reyna both seeing deflected efforts drift off target, but Dortmund went into the break 1-0 up. The visitors began the second half with more intent and Neuhaus was denied when Emre Can threw himself in front of his shot, taking a heavy follow-through in the process. Dortmund thought they had doubled the lead when Guirassy scored, only for the goal to be ruled out for offside.

Chances then came at both ends without either side finding a cutting edge. Gregor Kobel re-

acted sharply to keep out Wael Mohya's drive in the 80th minute, while at the other end Nicolas continued to frustrate Dortmund, denying substitute Maximilian Beier before watching him miss a clear opening in the 89th minute.

Beier, however, had the final say, finishing Fabio Silva's pass in the seventh minute of stoppage time to seal the 2-0 win.

The result extended Dortmund's home winning run against Gladbach to a club-record 12 straight matches and consolidated its second place in the Bundesliga with 32 points from 15 games, six behind leader Bayern Munich, while Gladbach remained 11th on 16 points. - Xinhua

CONTRACT EXPIRES ON DECEMBER 31

Brazilian club Santos expect Neymar to stay until World Cup

RIO DE JANEIRO: Santos expects Neymar to stay at the club until at least next year's FIFA World Cup, sporting director Alexandre Mattos said on Friday.

The Brazilian forward's existing contract is due to expire on December 31 and Santos has made clear its intention to extend it. "He is at Santos because he wants to be," Mattos told Globo Esporte.

"Financial matters have never been an obstacle or a reason for changes. Santos is in a rebuilding phase after being promoted from Serie B and Neymar knows that. I believe he is very happy here."

Neymar is currently on vacation with his family, but his representatives are in talks with Santos president Marcelo Teixeira

about a possible new deal.

Mattos said the 33-year-old had agreed to a greatly reduced salary when he joined Santos in January compared to his previous deal at Al Hilal.

"I think it [the contract renewal] is something that will happen naturally," Mattos said.

"This is his home, and it will always be open to him. He is on vacation, he needs to sort out some personal matters and the president is handling it the way it needs to be handled."

Neymar made just 28 appearances for Santos across all competitions this year, scoring 11 goals and providing four assists.

His injury-riddled campaign came after he spent more than year on the sidelines with a



ruptured anterior cruciate ligament suffered in October 2023.

Brazil's all-time leading scorer is in a race against time to be ready for the World Cup, which runs from June 11 to July 19 in the United States, Mexico and Canada. He has not represented his country for more than two years and Brazil manager Carlo Ancelotti has said he will only consider players who are fully fit and playing well for their clubs.

Brazil to face France, Croatia in friendlies

Meanwhile, Brazil will ratchet up preparations for next year's FIFA World Cup with friendlies against France and Croatia in the United States, the Brazilian Football Confed-

eration (CBF) said on Friday. The five-time World Cup champions will meet France in Boston on March 26 and Croatia in Orlando five days later, according to a CBF statement.

The fixtures will be the last chance for Brazil manager Carlo Ancelotti to test players before finalising his squad for the World Cup.

The March window will also mark the debut of Brazil's new World Cup kits. The traditional yellow shirt is expected to be unveiled against France, while the blue away kit will debut versus Croatia. Ancelotti's team will begin its Group C campaign against Morocco on June 13 before facing Haiti on June 19 and Scotland on June 24. - Agencies

ROUND-UP

Mojawhraty by Malabar launches 2nd showroom at Mall of Oman

The new showroom at Mall of Oman marks yet another milestone in the rapid expansion of Mojawhraty by Malabar, which now operates seven showrooms across the GCC; 2 showrooms in Oman at Mall of Oman & Muttrah Souq, 2 showrooms in the UAE at Dalma Mall & Ajman City Centre, 2 showrooms in Bahrain at Bahrain City Centre & Bab Al Bahrain , 1 showroom in Nakheel Mall, Dammam

MUSCAT: Mojawhraty by Malabar, the latest retail concept from Malabar Gold & Diamonds dedicated exclusively to Arabic jewellery, has unveiled their 2nd show-



room in Oman at Mall of Oman, Muscat. With the first showroom being launched at Muttrah Souq, this brings the total showroom count of Mojawhraty by Malabar to 7 in the GCC. The new showroom was inaugurated by Sheikh Faisal bin Abdullah Al-Rawas- Chairman of the Board of Directors for the Oman Chamber of Commerce & Industry (OCCI), in the presence of Malabar Group Vice Chairman, Mr. Abdul Salam K.P; Regional Head of Malabar Gold & Diamonds in Oman, Najeeb K; Business Head of Arabic Value Chain, Sherif Abdelmonem

Meligy Hassanin; Branch head, Muhasin P.P;Chairman Of Babil Internation Group, Mohammed Basheer Saidarakath; other senior management team members from Malabar Gold & Diamonds, customers and well-wishers. “The opening of our second Mojawhraty showroom in Oman reflects the growing acceptance of our Arabic jewellery offerings across the region. Our aim is to honour the deep cultural heritage of Arabic design while presenting it through a modern, world-class retail experience. With every expansion, we move closer to our

long-term vision of strengthening our global footprint and delivering jewellery that resonates with the tastes and traditions of our Arab customers. We have an ambition expansion plan for Mojawhraty in the pipeline, with more showroom launches planned across the GCC with the aim of establishing Mojawhraty by Malabar as the go-to destination for Arabic jewellery”, commented Abdul Salam K.P, Vice Chairman of Malabar Group. The new showroom at Mall of Oman marks yet another milestone in the rapid expansion of Mojawhraty by Malabar, which

now operates seven showrooms across the GCC; 2 showrooms in Oman at Mall of Oman & Muttrah Souq, 2 showrooms in the UAE at Dalma Mall & Ajman City Centre, 2 showrooms in Bahrain at Bahrain City Centre & Bab Al Bahrain , 1 showroom in Nakheel Mall, Dammam. At Mojawhraty by Malabar, each piece of jewellery is meticulously crafted by master artisans and is available in responsibly sourced 18K, 21K & 22K gold, alongside an exclusive range of ornaments featuring certified natural diamonds. The curated brand portfolio show-

cases several in-house collections that are reflective of Arabic artistry and the evolving tastes of the modern Arab consumer. Every purchase is also covered under the Mojawhraty Promise, which includes 100% value on diamond exchange, exclusive usage of tested & certified natural diamonds, assured lifetime maintenance, guaranteed buyback and more. Mojawhraty by Malabar has charted an ambitious expansion plan for the coming years, aiming to bring the Mojawhraty experience to a broader clientele of discerning jewellery lovers.

BY MEED

Bank Muscat honoured with Best Private Bank in Oman Award

MUSCAT: In recognition of its pioneering role in providing exceptional banking solutions that cater to the diverse needs of customers, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, was recently awarded the “Best Private Bank in Oman” by MEED at the MENA Excellence Wealth and Private Banking Awards.

These prestigious awards recognize the most innovative and customer-focused financial institutions across various sectors in the region. The Bank’s award was received by Salim Said Al Shanfari, the representative of Bank Muscat’s office in UAE, attended by prominent figures from across the Middle East and the world. This recognition highlights the professional standards which the Bank consistently adheres to, in line with international standards and practices. It also underscores Bank Muscat’s effective role in offering the best banking solutions and products to customers, in alignment with the Bank’s corporate vision “To serve you better everyday.” On this occasion, Abdulnasir N. Al Raisi, General Manager of Personal Banking at Bank Muscat, said: “We take pride in the recognition that the Bank has been honored with as the best private bank in Oman by MEED. This recognition further underscores the Bank’s leading role in providing a full suite of distinguished banking services and solutions that aim to cater to the various needs of its valued Private Banking customers. These services include banking and wealth management solutions, backed with an experienced team of relationship managers. We would like to thank our customers for their continued confidence and support over the years, as we continue to strive to bring the best banking experience to all of them. The Bank will maintain its commitment to offering the best banking services and products to enhance the banking experience for all its customers.” Bank Muscat has dedicated Private Banking desks at the Bank’s Head Office at Airport Heights, Madinat Sultan Qaboos branch, Azaiba 18th November Street



branch, and Sohar mega branch in Al Batinah North Governorate. These desks are equipped with the latest technologies to offer an exceptional banking experience to Private Banking customers, aligned with the best banking standards in the Sultanate and internationally. Customers enjoy convenience while initiating and completing various transactions, with the support of dedicated relationship managers who ensure efficient and swift customer service. The Bank will continue its commitment to expanding its branch network across the country to serve a wider customer base, thus, meeting their diverse needs. Bank Muscat offers Private Banking customers a complete suite of banking services and wealth management solutions including Mutual Funds, Fixed Income, Equity, Alternate Investment Products including Private Credit Funds, Structured Products and Real Estate Funds covering most global asset classes. The investment products offered by our Wealth Management Team are sourced internally from Bank Muscat Asset Management Team as well as through our reputed global partners. Bank Muscat Private Banking also sends regular investment research reports to its customers covering global macroeconomics and investment opportunities across asset classes, as part of our new initiatives to improve cus-

tomers experience. The Bank also organizes various investment-focused events, where customers get to engage with investment speakers and experts from time to time and expand their knowledge about the existing and emerging market trends. The Private banking services include conventional accounts, term deposits, currency exchange, domestic and international transfers, online banking, regular asset monitoring and full boutique of wealth management services. Along with most competitive rates on deposits, loans, and foreign exchange transactions, the Bank’s Private Banking customers have access to the most exclusive luxury and lifestyle benefits when using Visa Platinum Debit Card and Private Banking Visa Infinite Credit Card. Private banking Visa Infinite Credit cardholders enjoy 1% cash-back rewards on all transactions. The Credit Card also facilitates exclusive Hilton Honors Gold Membership, unlimited access to 1,000+ airport lounges globally, complimentary chauffeur service to and from Muscat & Salalah International Airport, special offers at over 900 luxury hotels around the world, multi-trip travel insurance and a Global Concierge Service. In recognition of its leadership role in the Sultanate’s banking sector, Bank Muscat Private Banking has been regularly receiving several prestigious awards locally, regionally, and globally.

SPECIAL FAN EXPERIENCE



Lulu Exchange celebrates Champion Spirit with community event

MUSCAT: Lulu Exchange, the leading provider of cross-border payments in the Sultanate of Oman, successfully hosted a large-scale community engagement event titled “Celebrate Champions. Build the Legacy” at Oman Avenues Mall on Friday, December 12 2025. The event celebrated Lulu Exchange’s role as the Regional Fintech Partner of the Argentine Football Association (AFA) and brought an exciting, football-themed fan experience to the public. The event witnessed an overwhelming response, attracting thousands of visitors throughout the day. Families, football fans, media representatives, influencers, mall visitors, and children participated enthusiastically in the activities, with many contributing to the building of the mosaic wall. At the heart of the celebration was the creation of a giant 6x2-metre puzzle mosaic featuring the Lulu Exchange and AFA partnership. The mosaic was completed piece by piece by 500 participants, each placing a personalised puzzle tile onto the growing structure—symbolising unity, teamwork, and the champion spirit shared by both football and Lulu Exchange. The event was inaugurated by Lulu Exchange Oman’s Director, Mohammed Hamed Ali Al Ghazali, who placed the first piece of the mosaic in the presence of invited guests, media representatives, influencers, and young football fans. His participation

set an energetic and inspiring tone for the daylong celebration. Visitors also enjoyed a wide range of football-themed engagement activities, including a Shoot-the-Goal challenge, freestyle football performances, public freestyle sessions, football trivia rounds, and a dedicated selfie zone featuring officially signed jerseys of Argentine stars Lionel Messi, Julián Álvarez, and Lautaro Martínez. These activities encouraged strong social media participation and a high volume of user-generated content. Mohammed Hamed Ali Al Ghazali, Director – Lulu Exchange Oman said, “Our association with the Argentine Football Association represents excellence, discipline, and a champion mindset—values that guide our work at Lulu Exchange. This event was a powerful celebration of community, bringing people together in a meaningful way. Every individual who placed a piece of the mosaic helped build a legacy, and we are proud to share this moment with Oman.” Lathish Vichitran, General Manager – Lulu Exchange Oman remarked, “As the Regional Fintech Partner of AFA, we are committed to creating experiences that inspire and connect with our customers. It was incredible to see thousands of people participate and enjoy this celebration. The event beautifully showcased the togetherness and champion spirit that Lulu Exchange stands for.” Mohammed Al Kiyumi, Head

of HR – Lulu Exchange Oman observed, “People are at the heart of Lulu Exchange, and today’s turnout reaffirmed the strength of our connection with the community. Watching families, children, and fans unite to complete the mosaic was truly inspiring and a reminder of how shared experiences bring people closer.” In line with its commitment to youth and community development, Lulu Exchange also announced its role as the official kit partner of the U-13 Elite Team at ProZone Sports Academy. During the event, the Lulu Exchange-branded team jerseys were officially revealed and handed over to the academy’s management, coach, and young players. This partnership underscores the company’s dedication to supporting grassroots sports, empowering young talent, and nurturing the champions of tomorrow. The event concluded with the full reveal of the completed mosaic, followed by the ceremonial handover of officially signed jersey of Argentine stars to one of the participants who contributed to building the mosaic wall. The moment drew admiration from attendees and created a powerful sense of collective achievement. With strong participation, extensive media and influencer presence, and a vibrant atmosphere throughout the day, the event stands as one of Lulu Exchange’s most successful and engaging community initiatives.



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