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Times OF OMAN

GOLDEN JUBILEE

50 YEARS OF LEGACY

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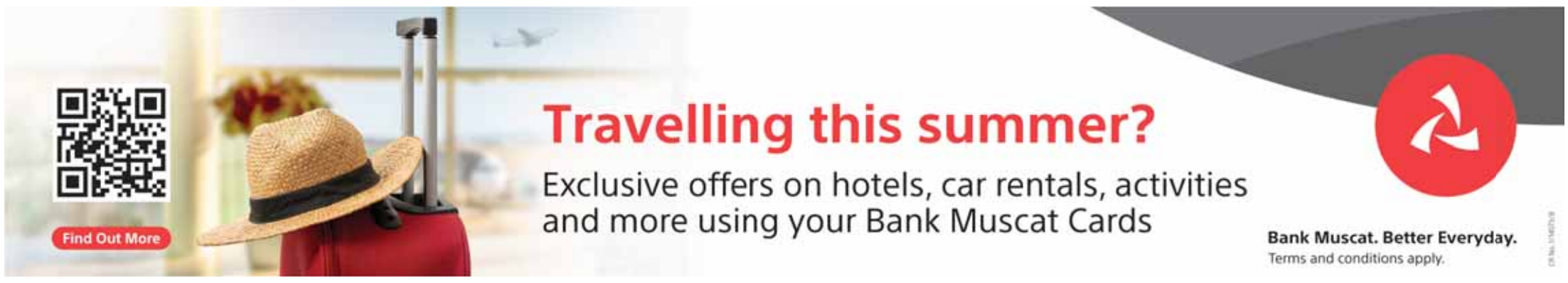

EXCHANGE VIEWS

HM, Jordan King stress the need to de-escalate regional tensions

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik made a phone call to King Abdullah II of Jordan on Monday.

During the call, the two leaders exchanged views on the concerning developments in the region and their serious repercussions, particularly in the wake of recent US strikes targeting facilities inside the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The two monarchs emphasised the necessity of combined regional and international efforts, along with enhanced coordination and consultation, to halt escalation and extinguish the flames of war—both in the Gaza Strip and in relation to the ongoing conflict resulting from the Israeli aggression against the Islamic Republic of Iran. They also stressed the importance of returning to peaceful dialogue and negotiation to achieve political solutions to all issues and crises, in accordance with international law, in a manner that ensures security and stability across the region and spares its peoples further risks and repercussions. — ONA

IRAN FIRES MISSILES AT US MILITARY BASES IN QATAR AND IRAQ

Qatar condemns "blatant violation" as Gulf braces for wider fallout

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Middle East edged dangerously closer to wider conflict on Monday after Iran reportedly fired a barrage of missiles at US military installations in Qatar and Iraq, including Al Udeid Air Base — the largest American military facility in the region.

According to multiple media reports, the Iranian attack came in retaliation for US airstrikes that targeted Iranian nuclear facilities early Sunday, in what is now one of the most serious escalations between Tehran and Washington in recent years.

In a statement released by Iranian state media on Monday, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) confirmed the strike, declaring that it had launched a "devastating and powerful missile attack" under Operation Besharat Fatah.

"The Al Udeid base, the headquarters of the US Air Force and the largest strategic asset of the US terrorist army in Middle East, has been targeted with the sacred code of Aba Abdullah Al-Hussein (PBUH)," the statement read.

Iranian military officials warned that any violation of the country's territorial integrity, sovereignty, or national security "will not go unanswered under any circumstances," directly addressing the United States and its allies.

The Qatari Ministry of Foreign Affairs swiftly condemned the attack, calling it a "blatant violation" of its sovereignty, airspace, international law, and the UN Charter.

The Ministry confirmed that the base had been evacuated prior to the strike as a precaution, and that Qatari air defences had successfully intercepted the missiles. No casualties or injuries were reported.

"We express the State of Qatar's strong condemnation of the attack on Al Udeid Air Base by Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC)," the ministry said in a strongly worded statement posted on X.

"Qatar affirms its right to respond directly in a manner proportional to the nature and scale of this blatant aggression, and in accordance with international law."

The statement added that "all necessary measures were taken to ensure the safety of personnel at the base, including members of the Qatari Armed Forces, allied forces, and others."

The Qatari government also announced the temporary closure of its airspace amid escalating regional tensions. Bahrain, Kuwait, Iraq and the UAE have closed their airspaces over the threat.

(With inputs from agencies)

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN

Youth initiatives programme launched

1 The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth has announced the launch of the 2025 edition of the "Youth Initiatives Support Programme". The programme comprises 61 initiatives covering a broad range of activities spanning the fields of culture, health, sports, economy, media, religion. >A2

WORLD

Death toll in Gaza surges to 55,998

2 Medical sources confirmed on Monday that the death toll in the Gaza Strip has risen to 55,998, the majority of whom are children and women, since the start of the Israeli aggression on October 7, 2023. The source added that a number of victims remain under the rubble. >A7

OMAN

Oman welcomes Khareef Dhofar

3 The Dhofar Municipality has officially announced the launch of Khareef Dhofar 2025 from June 21 until September 20, with renewed programmes designed to offer innovative experiences that meet visitor expectations and enhance Dhofar's status as a global tourism destination. >B7

'SOUT AL SHABIBA - TAMKEEN WA TA'THEER'

Forum charts bold future for Oman's young entrepreneurs

MUSCAT: In a powerful demonstration of national commitment to youth empowerment and sustainable development, Muscat witnessed the launch of the inaugural edition of the 'Sout Al Shabiba – Tamkeen wa Ta'theer' on Monday. Organised by Al Shabiba, a publication of Muscat Media Group, in collaboration with Gulf Leaders Circle, the forum brought together government leaders, business executives, academics, and civil society voices under one roof at the JW Marriott Hotel. **Full story >A4, A5**

23 JUNE 2025
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FOREIGN MINISTRY

Oman stands in full solidarity with Qatar, supports security measures

MUSCAT: An official spokesperson for the Foreign Ministry has voiced the Sultanate of Oman's strong condemnation of the escalating tensions in the region, sparked by Israel's unlawful missile strike against the Islamic Republic of Iran on 13 June and the subsequent cycle of retaliatory attacks.

This includes Iran's recent missile strike targeting sovereign sites in the State of Qatar—an act Oman deems unacceptable and reprehensible, as it violates the sovereignty of a GCC member state, contravenes the principles of good neighbourliness, and risks further destabilising the region.

Calls for immediate halt

Such actions only deepen conflict, threaten security, and endanger the lives and stability of the region's people.

The spokesperson reiterated Oman's full solidarity with Qatar and its right to take all necessary measures to ensure its security and stability.

Additionally, Oman urges an immediate halt to all military and missile operations, calling instead for dialogue, peaceful negotiations, and strict adherence to international law to address the root causes of the crisis and reach a fair and lasting resolution through legitimate means. - ONA

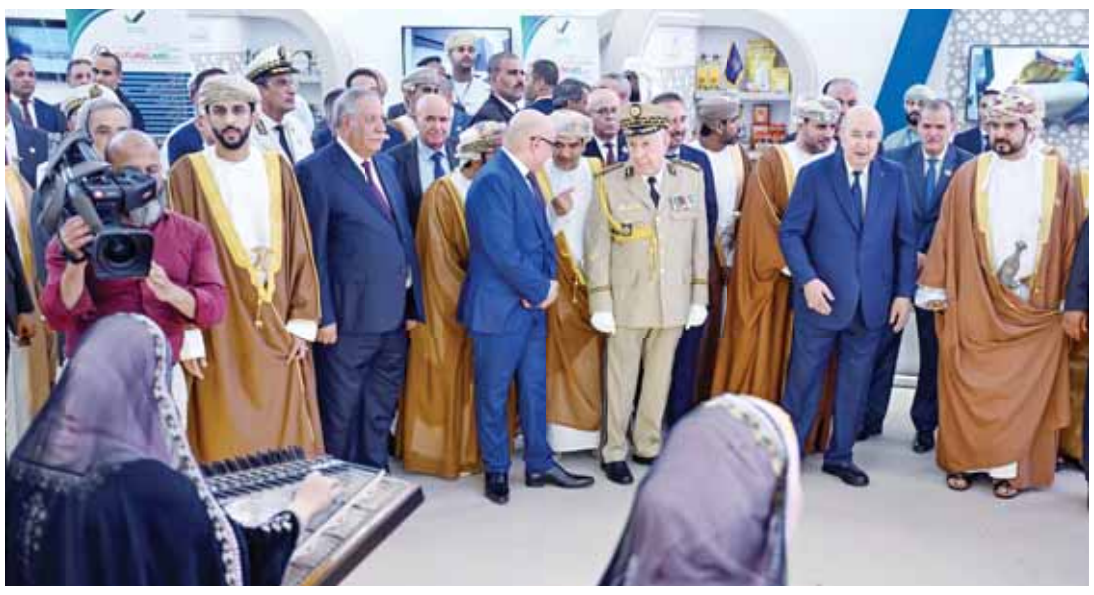
OMAN

PRAYER TIMINGS

Dhuhr....12:14pm
Asr....3:32pm
Maghrib....7:02pm
Isha....8:25pm
Fajr (Tomorrow).... 3:54am

EXHIBITION PALACE

Algerian President opens Oman's pavilion in Algiers



ALGIERS: President Abdelmadjid Tebboune of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria inaugurated the Sultanate of Oman's pavilion as guest of honour at the 56th Algiers International Fair on Monday evening.

The fair, which runs until 28 June, is being held at the Exhibition Palace in the Algerian capital.

Accompanied by Qais bin Mohammed Al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, the President toured the 900-square-meter Omani pavilion featuring participation from 60 Omani companies and institutions representing industrial, commercial and service sectors, along with several government entities.

This participation reaffirms the distinguished fraternal and economic relations between Oman and Algeria, building on the foundations laid during the state visit of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to Algeria last May, which established a new phase of comprehensive cooperation between the two nations.

The Omani companies at the pavilion represent diverse sectors including pharmaceuticals, transportation, electrical conversions, real estate, fisheries, tourism, food products, and handicrafts.

Qais Al Yousef emphasized that Oman's participation as guest of honor came in response to an official invitation from the Algerian President, as confirmed in the joint communique during His Majesty the Sultan's visit.

He noted the participation includes major, medium and small enterprises that will enhance trade opportunities between the two countries, with particular representation from pharmaceutical, construction materials, and food industries, along with dedicated sections for handicrafts and cultural displays.

In his statement to Oman News Agency (ONA), Al Yousef highlighted that the Algiers International Fair, with participation from over 20 countries, provides an excellent platform to showcase Oman's commercial, investment and cultural offerings. He noted the Algerian President's appreciation for the diversity and quality of Omani industries displayed at the pavilion.

In his turn, Faisal Abdullah Al Rowas, Chairman of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), stated that this participation represents an important opportunity to strengthen Oman's external economic presence and reflects the depth of fraternal and economic relations between the two countries. He emphasized the growing role of Oman's private sector in international economic forums and its contribution to expanding trade and investment horizons between the two nations.

In his remarks to ONA, he underlined the Chamber's commitment to active participation in international exhibitions to open new prospects for the private sector in building sustainable partnerships abroad while promoting Omani products.

He pointed out that this participation will highlight the competitiveness of Omani products and enhance international investors' confidence in national capabilities and the growth potential of Omani institutions, while also providing opportunities to learn from successful experiences in the Algerian market.

Meanwhile, Saif Nasser Al Badai, Ambassador of Oman to Algeria, stated that Oman's participation as guest of honor aims to explore trade and investment exchange opportunities between the two countries, and examine potential partnerships and export possibilities to the Algerian market and regional markets.

In his statement to ONA, he noted that Oman's participation in the 56th Algiers International Fair will enhance its commercial and investment presence internationally while opening new horizons for Omani and Algerian private sectors to build sustainable partnerships supporting economic diversification and regional integration efforts.

For his part, Eng. Dawood Salim Al Hadabi, CEO of the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn) and Chairman of "OPEX" Committee for Omani Products Promotion, explained that the supervisory team's participation – represented by Madayn, the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority – builds on the long-standing relations between Oman and Algeria.

He added that this aligns with OPEX's plans to establish footholds for Omani products in the promising Algerian market of nearly 40 million consumers, while also accessing Mediterranean region markets through Algeria's strategic ports. These markets have growing demand for various products including consumer goods, plastic and aluminum products, and construction materials.

Al Hadabi noted that the OPEX team aims through this participation to develop non-oil Omani exports and secure new markets as part of its annual plans, while facilitating deals for participating companies or securing distribution agencies for their products in Algeria and neighboring markets. Such participations play a vital role in achieving positive outcomes that increase production, generate job opportunities for Omanis, and ultimately boost the national economy.

The Algiers International Fair stands as one of the most prominent international economic events, showcasing national economic development and production capabilities while enhancing commercial and professional exchanges through creating an environment conducive to partnerships and foreign direct investment across various sectors.

The 2024 edition featured participation from about 700 national and foreign exhibitors from approximately 20 countries active in multiple sectors including manufacturing, food industries, construction, services, and petrochemical industries.

The opening ceremony of Oman's pavilion was attended by representatives from various government and private entities and business leaders from both countries. -ONA

ALGERIA

Social protection systems discussed

ALGIERS: The Sultanate of Oman on Monday took part in the 16th session of the Social Development Committee of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA). The meeting was held in the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria.

Oman's delegation to the meeting was headed by Dr. Laila Ahmed Al Najjar, Minister of Social Development.

During its sessions, the ESCWA committee discussed topics related to social protection systems in the Arab region as a means of promoting equality. It also underlined the importance of adopting innovative and more comprehensive policies to ensure the sustainability and efficiency of social programmes.

The meeting reviewed ESCWA's efforts in the field of social development, recommendations issued by the Committee at its 15th session, activities of ESCWA "Intersessional Expert Working Group on Persons with Disabilities" and the organization's "Expert Group on Social Protection Reform".

The session will include the "Fourth Arab Forum for Equality", which will highlight the ability of social protection systems to address the most serious forms of inequality.

The participation of the Ministry of Social Development in the meeting stems from its commitment to enhance regional cooperation, exchange expertise and support efforts for achieving sustainable development. -ONA

MEETING

Algerian President and Oman's Minister of Commerce review bilateral relations

ALGIERS: President Abdelmadjid Tebboune of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria received in Algiers on Monday Qais bin Mohammed Al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion.

The meeting took place on the sidelines of opening the 56th Algiers International Fair, where the Sultanate of Oman is the guest of honour.

During the meeting, the minister conveyed greetings of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to the Algerian President, along with his best wishes of continued progress and prosperity to President Tebboune and Algerian people.

For his part, President Tebboune asked the minister to convey his greetings and appreciation to His Majesty the Sultan for Oman's participation, extending his wishes of progress and prosperity to Oman and its people.

The meeting reviewed the bilateral relations between the two countries across various economic, trade and investment fields.

The meeting was attended by Saif bin Nasser Al Badai, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to People's Democratic Republic of Algeria; Faisal bin Abdullah Al Rowas, Chairman of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry; Eng. Dawood bin Salim Al-Hadabi, CEO of Madayn; and Sheikh Saad bin Suhail Bahwan, Chairman of OTE Group and the Algeria-Oman Fertilizer Company. – ONA

The meeting took place on the sidelines of opening the 56th Algiers International Fair on Monday

Youth initiatives programme launched to meet society needs

The programme comprises 61 initiatives covering a broad range of activities spanning the fields of culture, health, sports, economy, media, religion

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth has announced the launch of the 2025 edition of the "Youth Initiatives Support Programme".

The programme comprises 61 initiatives covering a broad range of activities spanning the fields of culture, health, sports, economy, media, religion, the environment and entrepreneurship. It serves all segments of society in the Sultanate of Oman's governorates.

Hilal Saif Al Siyabi, Director General of Youth at the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, said that the Ministry accords special attention to youth initiatives that address the needs of society and align with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040, notably in the areas of innovation, sustainability and social development."

Al Siyabi added that youth initiatives include community projects or activities that address social and developmental issues through a voluntary, non-profit approach. The initiatives, he explained, reflect the spirit of innovation and active citizenship and accommodate the Omani cultural values.

Statistics show that the "Youth Initiatives Support Programme" has seen steady growth and that, since its inception in 2016, it has provided support for more than 600 initiatives benefited more than 150,000 young men and women. The programme organizers also held exhibitions and local activities that consolidated the media presence and institutional outreach of the initiatives.

The Ministry has prepared a guide and an integrated electronic system for evaluating and developing the initiatives, within the framework of supporting youth initiatives, regulating their objectives and improving their quality in cooperation with government and private establishments. This reflects a strategic approach to upgrade these initiatives from mere voluntary experiences into active community institutions. -ONA

Oman growing as a global hub for higher education

Oman Vision 2040 has set a goal of having 4 universities ranked among the world's top 500 in the QS rankings

MUSCAT: With education, learning, research, and national competencies being the priorities of Oman Vision 2040, the Sultanate is growing as an international hub for higher education.

The British institution Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) unveiled on Monday in Muscat the contents of its new global report, praising the advanced capabilities of higher education in the Sultanate of Oman.

The launch of the report, held under the patronage of Dr. Khamis Saif Al Jabri, Chairman of the Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit, underscored the significant growth in Oman's research output, which increased by 36.9% in 2024 compared to 2023.

Dr. Maryam Bil'arab Al Nabhani, Director General of Private Universities and Colleges, stated that Oman Vision 2040 has placed education, learning, research, and national competencies at the heart of national priorities, forming the foundation for building a competitive and sustainable knowledge-based economy.

She added that the Vision has set an ambitious goal of having four Omani universities ranked among the top 500 globally in the QS rankings by 2040.

Notably, Oman achieved positive results in the 2026 QS World University Rankings, with five Omani universities included, compared to only two in the 2025 rankings—reflecting the sector's rapid progress.

Dr. Al Nabhani explained that three private universities made their debut in the global rankings, namely Nizwa University (ranked 770-761), Dhofar University (ranked 900-851) and the German University of Technology in Oman "GUtech" (ranked 1200-1001).

Additionally, Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) made remarkable progress, climbing to 334th place globally, up from 362nd in 2025. – ONA

LEGALISATION PROCESS

Labour ministry eases worker transfer rules during grace period

MUSCAT: In a significant move aimed at stabilising the labour market and addressing past employment irregularities, Oman's Ministry of Labour has introduced a streamlined mechanism allowing employers to transfer the services of workers previously reported for work abandonment.

As part of the ongoing grace period for legal status rectification, employers can now process the transfer of such workers—whether their work permits are still valid or expired—provided there are no existing labour violations associated with the individuals.

Importantly, the Ministry has announced that approvals for these transfers will be granted automatically, reducing administrative delays and facilitating a smoother legalisation process.

To initiate the transfer, employers must submit a request via the Ministry's electronic system. Once the request is approved, they are required to visit the relevant Labour Welfare Division to obtain an official notification letter.

This document enables the removal of any associated travel bans or alerts registered with the Royal Oman Police, clearing the way for the worker's service transfer to be legally completed.

Authorities have underscored that this opportunity will only remain available for the duration of the current grace period, urging employers to act swiftly to take advantage of the temporary relaxation.

The initiative is part of the Ministry's broader efforts to regulate the labour market, enhance fair employment practices, and offer flexibility in resolving past documentation and employment issues, particularly for workers whose legal status has been compromised due to abandonment reports.

MEETING

Shura panel calls for national strategy for farm marketing

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Food and Water Security Committee of the Shura Council approved on Monday its final report named 'Marketing Agricultural Products: Current Reality and Future Prospects', in preparation for its presentation and discussion during the Council's upcoming sessions.

In its report, the Committee provides a comprehensive evaluation of the current marketing landscape for agricultural products in Oman, outlining the gap between present conditions and future ambitions.

It further reviews existing agricultural marketing strategies and assesses their role in supporting the sector and maximising its contribution to the national economy.

Among the key recommendations highlighted is the need for a comprehensive national strategy for agricultural marketing, aimed at enhancing the efficiency of value chains, supporting local production, and expanding access to domestic and international markets.

Such measures would contribute to achieving food security and improving the economic sustainability of the agricultural sector.

Additional recommendations are expected to be discussed during the report's review in forthcoming Council sessions.

Over the course of the current annual session, the Committee focused on efforts to studying this desire by preparing detailed working papers, collecting data and statistics, and holding a series of meetings and hearings with relevant stakeholders.

These engagements sought to capture insights on the realities of agricultural marketing in Oman, the major challenges facing the sector, and proposed measures for development.

It is worth noting that the Committee's study is conducted in line with Article (59) of the Law of the Council of Oman, which states: "Without prejudice to the provisions of Article (27) of this law, the Shura Council may, on its own initiative, express desires to the government regarding matters related to public services and facilities and the means to improve and develop their performance, or on challenges facing the economic sector and ways to promote development, whenever the Council deems it in the public interest."

The Committee also approved its position on the 2024 annual report of the Ministry of Agricultural, Fisheries and Water Resources.

This took place during the Committee's seventh meeting of the second annual session (2024–2025) of the tenth term of the Council, chaired by Khoweidem Mohammed al- Ma'shani, Head of the Committee, and attended by members of the Committee.

FROM RUSSIA

Salalah Mills firm signs pact to import 110,000 tonnes of wheat

SALALAH: Salalah Mills Company in the Dhofar Governorate has announced the signing of an agreement to import 110,000 tonnes of Russian wheat, with the shipments expected to arrive during July and August.

This step comes as part of the company's efforts to strengthen Oman's strategic wheat reserves, keeping pace with regional developments and securing the needs of the local market.

Eng. Ahmed Amer Al Shanfari, Acting CEO of Salalah Mills stated that the agreement falls within the company's plan to secure its wheat requirements for the second half of 2025.

He emphasised the management's commitment to ensuring the stability of food supplies in the Sultanate of Oman.

In a statement to Oman News Agency (ONA), he noted that Salalah Mills is one of the leading flour production companies in Oman, with a daily production capacity of approximately 1,500 tonnes and a storage capacity exceeding 200,000 tonnes. - ONA

LONDON

OCCI takes part in Arab-UK economic summit 2025

LONDON: Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) on Monday took part in the 4th Arab-British Economic Summit 2025, held in London.

Arab British Chamber

The summit, which took the theme "Friendship Through Trade", was organised by the Arab British Chamber in cooperation with the Union of Arab Chambers.

The summit highlighted the importance of consolidating the strategic partnership between Arab countries and the United Kingdom, action to expand cooperation into different commercial sectors to enrich British and Arab markets and promote sustainable tourism, e-commerce and franchises. It also touched on means of activating the sectors of banking and financial services.

The summit saw the participation of high-level government officials, CEOs, intellectuals and decision-makers from Arab countries and the United Kingdom. The participants exchanged ideas and discussed emerging opportunities for trade and investment in new technology-based industries. - ONA

صوت الشبيبة
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Sout Al Shabiba - Tamkeen wa Ta'theer

Sout Al Shabiba - Tamkeen wa Ta'theer

FORUM CHARTS BOLD FUTURE FOR OMAN'S YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS

Sout Al Shabiba – Tamkeen wa Ta'theer brought together national leaders, innovators, and changemakers to support Oman Vision 2040 through youth empowerment and SME development

Khalid Orabi

MUSCAT: In a powerful demonstration of national commitment to youth empowerment and sustainable development, Muscat witnessed the successful launch of the inaugural edition of the 'Sout Al Shabiba – Tamkeen wa Ta'theer' on Monday.

Organised by *Al Shabiba*, a publication of Muscat Media Group, in collaboration with Gulf Leaders Circle, the forum brought together government leaders, business executives, academics, and civil society voices under one roof at the JW Marriott Hotel, Oman Convention & Exhibition Center.

Held under the esteemed patronage of His Highness Sayyid Faris bin Fatik Al Said, and attended by Mohamed Issa Al Zadjali, Chairman of Muscat Media Group, the one-day forum served as a dynamic platform to promote inclusive dialogue, advance the goals of Oman Vision 2040, and reaffirm the nation's dedication to empowering its youth and fostering the growth of small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

"I am honoured to attend this important forum," said His Highness Sayyid Faris bin Fatik Al Said. "It is both timely and necessary for media groups like Muscat Media Group to play a leading role in driving national priorities forward, particularly through such economic forums and initiatives that support the country's development goals."

HH Sayyid Faris stressed that the forum aligns with the central pillars of Oman Vision 2040, which include economic diversification, governorate development, self-employment, and maximising the role of youth in nation-building.

The forum opened with a compelling presentation by Dr. Ghalib bin Saif Al Hosni, Chief People Officer at Omantel and Chairman of the Oman Society for Human Resource Management (OSHRM).

Dr. Al Hosni addressed the evolving needs of human capital and the essential leadership skills required in today's fast-changing landscape. He shared insights into Omantel's internal leadership programmes, highlighting that more than 60 percent of the programme's graduates now occupy managerial positions within the company.

Engineer Amer Al Fadhel, Managing Partner at Competence HR, followed with a futuristic view on the world of work. He discussed how artificial intelligence, robotics, and automation are redefining the employment landscape, emphasising the need for critical skills such as digital literacy, analytical thinking, emotional intelligence, and problem-solving.

"Today, 33 percent of new employees lack basic soft skills," he noted, stressing the need for flexibility and adaptability among the new generation entering the workforce.

One of the highlights of the day was a vibrant panel discussion titled "Cultivating Entrepreneurship and Innovation for Omani Youth," moderated by Omani media professional Abdullah Nasser Al Saidi.

The panel featured a distinguished lineup of speakers, including Eng. Abdulrahman Al Yahyaei, CEO of Integrated Gas Company; Eng. Said Al Shanfari, CEO of Oman Convention & Exhibition Center; Ali Ahmed Muqaibal, CEO of Sharakah; Dr. Suleiman Al Hasani, Deputy Dean for Academic and Resources at the Global College of Engineering and Technology; and Khalid Al Mahrouqi, Co-founder and CEO of QPay, a rising Buy Now, Pay Later (BNPL) platform launched earlier in 2025.

Engineer Al Yahyaei made a strong case for entrepreneurship as the engine of job creation. "If you want to build an economy, start with the entrepreneur. Entrepreneurship is responsible for the majority of jobs in many countries. In Mexico, for example, SMEs account for 95 percent of employment, and in Dubai alone, over 600,000 jobs are provided by small and medium enterprises."

Echoing the sentiment, Engineer Al Shanfari highlighted the commitment of Oman Convention & Exhibition Center to SMEs. "We work hand in hand with entrepreneurs, giving them real opportunities. Even the carpets in this venue are supplied by a local SME," he said, pointing out the broader support such businesses receive from institutions like the Oman Investment Authority (OIA) and its affiliated companies.

Muqaibal emphasised the importance of originality and innovation in the SME sector, noting that while there are many ideas, the market still suffers from repetition and a lack of differentiation. "Oman is doing well compared to many Gulf countries in supporting SMEs, but we must ensure liquidity and promote diversity," he said.

Dr. Al Hasani underscored the role of higher education in fostering entrepreneurial thinking.

"Entrepreneurship may not be a standalone subject, but it is embedded across all higher education programmes in Oman, as directed by the Ministry of Higher Education. Still, fear of failure remains a major barrier for many young people," he added.

For Al Mahrouqi, financial technology is a gateway to empowerment. "Fintech is not new. Even traditional banks are embracing it now," he said.

"At QPay, you can open an account or apply for a loan in under three minutes. We're here to remove the barriers that have traditionally slowed innovation."

The forum also included a detailed presentation by Qasim bin Mohammed Al Zadjali, Assistant Officer Customer Relationship Management at the Development Bank, who outlined the institution's expanded mandate following Royal Decree No. 84/2023.

With the bank now able to provide financing of up to OMR 5 million, Al Zadjali emphasised its commitment to supporting small, medium, and even micro-enterprises.

"We offer interest-free loans up to OMR15,000 for self-employed micro-projects — provided the applicant is fully committed to the venture," he explained.

The second panel of the forum focused on "Policy, Collaboration, and Sustainability for Youth Empowerment," and was moderated by journalist Khalfan bin Said Al Amri.

The session brought together key voices including Hassan Haider Mohammed Jawad Al-Lawati, Chairman of the Oman Association for Persons with Disabilities; Ghassan Fadhal, Director, Tashgheel; lawyer Omran Aljabri, CEO Deputy, Ahmed Al-Muqbali Advocate and Legal Consultants; Talal Abdulrahman Al Zadjali, Acting Chief Operating Officer, Development Bank, and Rumaitha Al Busaidi, Vice President, Environment Society of Oman (ESO).

Al-Lawati shared a personal and heartfelt perspective on the challenges faced by people with disabilities, particularly stigma and societal bias. "Our capabilities are no less. What we need is acceptance and opportunity," he said.

Fadhal called for a more integrated framework to support freelance work and entrepreneurship. He also praised the 1.2% initiative, which allocates a portion of government procurement spending toward on-the-job training and employment-linked learning programmes.

Aljabri addressed the legal challenges that often intimidate young entrepreneurs. "It's not funding that stops many youth — it's the fear of legal complications and of failure itself. We need to help them overcome this psychological hurdle," he said.

Rumaitha brought the conversation full circle by emphasising environmental sustainability as a key part of youth development. "Young Omanis are scientifically and practically ready. What they need is ownership — give them space, let them lead. We've seen great success through our projects, competitions, and environmental initiatives."

Talal bin Abdulrahman Al Zadjali, Acting Chief Operations Officer, Development Bank, affirmed that the bank's support to the forum stemmed directly from its strategic objectives and national role in fostering entrepreneurship.

"Our participation reflects the Development Bank's ongoing commitment to building an entrepreneurial culture in Oman," he said.

"One of our primary goals is to raise awareness about the various financial and advisory services we offer to empower youth-led businesses."

Al Zadjali explained that the bank's involvement aimed to introduce forum participants to the wide range of programmes designed to support SMEs and micro-projects across the Sultanate. "We are here to ensure young entrepreneurs know that they have a financial partner ready to support their ambitions," he added.

Al Zadjali emphasised that all of these initiatives are closely aligned with Oman Vision 2040. "Our work directly supports national goals — from boosting self-employment and empowering governorate-level development, to increasing in-country value," he concluded.

Sout Al Shabiba, in its first edition, has already positioned itself as a landmark platform for national dialogue, bringing together decision-makers, youth leaders, and innovators to explore actionable solutions for building a more inclusive and entrepreneurial Oman.

In line with the objectives of Vision 2040, the forum champions youth as vital stakeholders in shaping the nation's future — and provides them with the tools, networks, and confidence to lead it.

The event was supported by Development Bank, Changan, Turkish Airlines, Global College of Engineering and Technology, and Ahmed Al-Muqbali Advocate and Legal Consultants.

OMAN

TWO-DAY EVENT

South Al Batinah Design Hackathon kicks off

AL RUSTAQ: The South Al Batinah Design Hackathon, organised by the Governorate's Office in collaboration with the University of Technology and Applied Sciences in Al Musannah, launched at the Office of Wali of Al Rustaq on Monday.

Held under the theme "An Urban Design with the Identity of Place," the two-day event aims to design and develop an integrated tourism project for "Khor Al Qareem" in the Wilayat of Al Musannah, combining the area's environmental and cultural identity with modern technologies, including artificial intelligence (AI) tools.

The hackathon aligns with national approach in sustainable tourism and smart urban development, supporting the goals of Oman Vision 2040. Over 125 students from 25 educational institutions—both within the Sultanate of Oman and abroad—are participating in multidisciplinary teams specializing in urban planning, architecture, civil engineering, and interior design.

The programme includes training workshops and consultative sessions supervised by experts to enhance participants' skills and refine their design ideas.

Six projects

On the final day, a judging panel will select six projects for evaluation based on criteria such as innovation, sustainability, environmental and cultural integration, space efficiency, and AI utilisation. – ONA

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Responsibility of legislative councils to uphold humanitarian concepts stressed

The Chairman of Shura Council emphasised the importance of this parliamentary channel in promoting ties between EU and GCC at the Gulf-European Parliamentary Meeting held in Abu Dhabi, UAE

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Shura Council on Monday participated in the Gulf-European Parliamentary Meeting held in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, with the participation of the heads of Shura, National, and Parliamentary Councils of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, along with Roberta Metsola, President of the European Parliament.

The meeting forms part of ongoing efforts by both sides to activate channels of constructive dialogue and enhance cooperation on various shared concerns.

During the meeting, Khalid Hilal Al Maawali, Chairman of the Shura Council and head of the delegation, delivered an address in which he said: "The wise directives and forward-looking vision of the leaders of the GCC serve as a guiding compass for our legislative bodies in such forums. These gatherings aim to strengthen cohesion among our nations and institutions, deepen partnerships with regional and international counterparts, and work towards common goals. Inspired by this vision, we seek to enhance coordination, exchange experiences, and reinforce bilateral ties that contribute to economic and developmental integration, supporting a more prosperous and stable future for our countries."

He commended the outcomes of the joint final communiqué of the first EU-GCC Leaders' Summit, titled "Strategic Partnership for Peace and Prosperity," and lauded the results of the GCC-European Parliamentary Committee meeting with the Delegation for Relations with the Arabian Peninsula in the European Parliament.

He emphasised the importance of this parliamentary channel in promoting ties between the EU and the GCC, particularly through enhanced cooperation in economic and development sectors to achieve sustainable growth.

He further highlighted the need to expand collaboration across areas such as climate change, regional security, and humanitarian assistance in crisis regions. He also called for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, unimpeded humanitarian access, and serious efforts to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through the establishment of an independent and sovereign Palestinian state, in line with international resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative—ensuring the right of peoples to live in freedom, dignity, and safety, with full respect for fundamental human rights.

Concluding his remarks, Al Maawali said: "We express our concern over the recent developments between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Israel, which threaten regional stability and undermine international efforts—particularly those led by the United States and Iran—to reach a peaceful agreement. We believe that the responsibility of parliaments and legislative councils extends beyond lawmaking and oversight; it includes defending humanitarian values and opposing aggressive policies that violate international law and the UN Charter. Therefore, we urge national, regional, and international parliaments to take clear and responsible stances that contribute to de-escalation, support peaceful solutions, and protect peoples' rights to security, sovereignty, and stability."

The joint meeting focused on key priority areas, including food and energy security, climate change, the shift to renewable and clean energy sources, the Fourth Industrial Revolution, digital transformation, and the role of advanced technologies in promoting sustainable development.

Participants praised the strength of the strategic partnership between the GCC and the European Union, founded on mutual respect, cooperation, and shared interests aimed at enhancing security, stability, development, and prosperity for both sides.

They stressed the importance of intensifying joint efforts to develop cooperative frameworks for addressing urgent challenges such as climate change, energy security, sustainable development, counter-terrorism, and promoting universal human values of coexistence and tolerance.

On the sidelines of the meeting, the rapid and concerning developments in Gaza and the Middle East were addressed. Both sides stressed the need to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure, including healthcare institutions, in accordance with international law. They warned of the grave consequences of the current escalation and its impact on global peace and regional stability.

The participants called for an immediate halt to violations, protection of lives, and the secure and sustained delivery of humanitarian aid to Gaza.

They demanded a ceasefire in the territory and the release of hostages and detainees, affirming that a two-state solution remains the only viable path to a just and comprehensive peace.

The Gulf-European dialogue also touched on international efforts to end the war in Ukraine, reiterating commitment to resolving the conflict.

They welcomed the contributions of GCC countries in supporting ceasefire efforts, enhancing maritime security in the Black Sea, and providing humanitarian aid to Ukraine, including prisoner exchanges and family reunification. The war, they agreed, continues to cause widespread humanitarian suffering and increases the fragility of regional security.

In view of the current geopolitical dynamics in the Gulf region, both sides emphasised the need to de-escalate tensions, contain conflicts, exercise wisdom, and prioritise diplomacy and dialogue as essential tools for maintaining regional and international peace and security.

They expressed a strong desire to sustain this constructive strategic dialogue, acknowledging the pivotal role parliaments play in advancing Gulf-European relations.

It is worth noting that the joint Gulf-European Parliamentary Meeting reflects a sincere commitment from both sides to elevate relations to new levels of depth and inclusivity through active parliamentary diplomacy, enhanced political coordination, and the development of economic, technological, and social cooperation—aligned with the aspirations of the peoples and nations of the GCC and the European Union for a future of greater peace, security, and prosperity.

The Shura Council delegation to the meeting included Ahmed Mohammed Al Nadabi, Secretary General of the Shura Council, and Jamal Ahmed Al Abri, Council Member.

ENHANCING COORDINATION

Oman, Mauritania review cooperation in fields of records and archives

MUSCAT: Dr. Hamad Mohammed Al Dhoyani, Chairman of the National Records and Archives Authority (NRAA), on Monday received Mokhtar El Hosseinou Lam, Minister in charge of the General Secretariat of the Government in Mauritania, and his accompanying delegation.

The Mauritanian delegation toured the National Records and Archives Authority as part of its official visit to the Sultanate of Oman.

Al Dhoyani and El Hosseinou Lam discussed various aspects of cooperation between the two countries in the fields of records, archives and historical studies.

The two sides looked into means of enhancing coordination in organising conferences, scholarly seminars and exhibitions.

The Mauritanian delegation had a close look at the Sultanate of Oman's experience in the conservation and management of electronic documents, records and archives.

The delegation saw a visual presentation about the NRAA, its main objectives, specialisations and the missions it has undertaken so far. It also took note of the historical treasures and components of cultural heritage that abound in the Sultanate of Oman. -ONA

ENHANCING EFFICIENCY

Omani Standards Store is an effective instrument supporting diversification

MUSCAT: The Omani Standards Store has emerged as one of the strategic projects contributing to strengthening quality infrastructure and enhancing efficiency standards for quality and reliability across various production and service sectors.

This digital platform forms a fundamental pillar in Oman's quality infrastructure system through a unified and advanced portal providing thousands of national, regional and international standards, offering direct and rapid access for all relevant parties including producers, importers, exporters and regulatory bodies to the latest approved technical and regulatory standards.

The store serves as an effective tool supporting Oman's strategy towards a diversified and prosperous economy based on innovation and quality.

It represents a genuine addition to the business and investment environment by providing a reliable standard reference that helps Omani institutions excel in delivering high-quality products meeting global market requirements, maintaining consumer confidence, and supporting sustainable development initiatives across various fields.

Eng. Imad Khamis Al Shukaili, Director General of Specifications and Metrology at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, affirmed that the store represents a qualitative leap in enhancing quality and reliability culture in Oman, reflecting the ministry's commitment to digital transformation and providing advanced solutions that keep pace with global developments in this field.

He added that the store serves as an integrated platform providing a supportive environment for industrial and commercial institutions and consumers by making standard specifications easily and transparently available, which contributes to improving the quality of Omani products and enabling them to compete in regional and international markets.

Al Shukaili pointed out that what distinguishes the store is its partnerships with international organizations such as the International Organization for Standardisation (ISO), the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC), and the GCC Standardisation Organization (GSO), which contribute to issuing specifications compatible with international standards and support the national economy in achieving sustainable development goals.

The Omani Standards Store is part of the developed identity of quality infrastructure in Oman, reflecting the government's approach towards enhancing digital transformation and facilitating procedures for obtaining specifications. It provides comprehensive and regularly updated technical content according to global best practices, allowing users from inside and outside Oman to access Omani, Gulf and international standard specifications through a unified window, which helps facilitate trade exchange processes and ensure compliance with quality standards and product safety in markets.

The store contains more than 28,427 specifications classified to cover all vital sectors in Oman, providing specialised content in various fields including 4,855 specifications in chemistry and textiles, 6,766 in the mechanical sector, 5,731 in electricity, 1,810 in metrology, 2,075 in food and agriculture, 2,260 in construction and building, 1,367 in oil and gas, 2,166 in information, 1,171 in health, in addition to 226 specifications in management systems. This precise sectoral classification enables users immediate access to relevant specifications for each sector. -ONA

Gaza death toll from ongoing Israeli aggression hits 55,998

Sources added that the number of aid victims taken to hospitals over the past 24 hours reached 17, with more than 136 injured

GAZA: Medical sources confirmed on Monday that the death toll in the Gaza Strip has risen to 55,998, the majority of whom are children and women, since the start of the Israeli aggression on October 7, 2023.

The same sources added that a number of victims remain under the rubble, unable to be reached by ambulances and civil defence crews.

They indicated that 39 slain people, including one whose body was recovered, and 317 wounded were admitted to hospitals in the Gaza Strip during the past 24 hours. The death toll and the number of wounded since March 18, after the Israeli occupation violated the ceasefire agreement, has reached 5,685, while 19,518 others were wounded.

The sources added that the number of aid victims taken to hospitals over the past 24 hours reached 17, with more than 136 injured. This brings the total number of the victims at hospitals to 467, and the number of injured to more than 3,602.

They noted that a number of victims remain under the rubble and on the streets, and that ambulance and civil defence crews are unable to reach them.

114 organisations calls on EU to suspend agreement with Israel

114 international civil society organisations, including Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, called on the European Union to suspend its Association Agreement with Israel, citing its genocide against Palestinians and other violations.

This came in a joint statement issued by the 114 organisations on Monday, ahead of a meeting of EU foreign ministers to review the suspension of the Association Agreement with Israel.

The organisations emphasised that a fair review of the Association Agreement must conclude that Israel has "seriously violated" the human rights clause.

Claudio Francavilla, deputy director of Human Rights Watch's EU Institutions office, explained in a press statement that all attempts at dialogue with Israel have largely failed.

He pointed out that pro-Palestinian protests have continued for months across Europe, and that people cannot ignore the horror, crimes, and brutality they see daily on social media.

Francavilla said that a review of the Association Agreement will be meaningless if it is not followed by concrete measures, including suspending the trade aspect of the agreement.

He emphasised that Israeli human rights organisations have observed that the rate of punishment for perpetrators of crimes in the West Bank does not exceed 3%, indicating that the Israeli judicial system does not seriously pursue these violations.

The Association Agreement between the European Union and Israel, which entered into force in 2000, constitutes the legal framework for political dialogue and economic cooperation between the two parties.

Article 2 of the agreement stipulates that the partnership is conditional upon "a commitment to human rights and international law."

President Mahmoud Abbas receives Tunisian ambassador, letter from President Kais Saied

President of the State of Palestine, Mahmoud Abbas, received on Monday, at the Presidential Headquarters in Ramallah, the Ambassador of the Republic of Tunisia to the State of Palestine, Habib Ben Farah.

The ambassador delivered a letter from Tunisian President Kais Saied, reaffirming the deep fraternal relations between the two nations and peoples, and reiterating Tunisia's firm and principled stance in support of the Palestinian people and their just cause.

President Saied expressed his appreciation for the Palestinian leadership's gesture in awarding the "Knight of Palestine Medal" to the late Tunisian student, Fares Khaled, who passed away while raising the Palestinian flag at his university campus. He stressed that this honour reflects the unity of purpose and destiny between Tunisia and Palestine—"the central cause of the Arab nation."

President Saied stated: "I received with great appreciation Your Excellency's noble initiative to award the "Knight of Palestine Medal" to the late Tunisian student Fares Khaled - may he rest in peace - who passed away while raising the Palestinian flag at the university where he studied. may he rest in peace. — WAFA

UN SECRETARY-GENERAL

US strikes on Iranian facilities mark 'perilous turn' in region

NEW YORK: UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres affirmed that the US strikes on nuclear facilities in Iran mark a 'perilous turn' in the region.

Speaking at the emergency meeting of the UNSC to discuss US reckless attacks on Iranian nuclear sites, Guterres said that US strikes on Iran could plunge the region into an endless spiral of retaliation.

The UN Secretary-General condemned any military escalation in the Middle East, stressing that "the people of the region cannot endure another cycle of destruction."

For his part, International Atomic Energy Agency Director (IAEA) General Rafael Grossi, in a video address to the UNSC, expressed concern about the risk of the conflict escalating in the region, calling for maximum restraint and stressing that the opportunity is ripe for a return to dialogue and diplomacy.

The IAEA Director-General warned that failure to return to diplomatic dialogue could threaten the nuclear non-proliferation regime. — ONA

GREECE

Wildfires continue to rage on Chios

CHIOS: Firefighters on the Greek island of Chios were working on Monday to extinguish three large wildfires that broke out almost simultaneously a day previously, forcing the evacuation of almost 20 villages and a reception center for migrants coming from nearby Türkiye.

The fires are also threatening to destroy mastic plantations on the island, which provide it with a major source of income.

Greece has experienced frequent devastating wildfires in recent years, with scientists saying that climate change is increasing the chances of such disasters.

Fires on Chios fanned by strong winds

Some 190 firefighters assisted by six aircraft and 38 fire engines have been trying to contain the blazes, local authorities said.

Firefighters have also been sent to the island from the mainland by boat.

Attempts to fight the fires have been complicated by strong wind gusts.

Hundreds of people have been brought to safety, with authorities saying that tourists to the island have so far not been affected.

The firefighters are particularly focused on protecting the island's mastic tree plantations, which produce a resin used in the traditional sweet Greek liqueur mastiha, among other things.

Wildfires in 2012 already destroyed more than half of the mastic orchards on the island, causing a 60% crop loss to farmers and disrupting the global supply of the product, known also as "tears of Chios."

Arson suspected

A local politician told the broadcaster ERT News that the fires were in all likelihood deliberately lit, citing the fact that they all broke out almost simultaneously.

He said investigators were already on the scene.

In recent years, Greece has spent huge sums of money compensating households and farmers for damage related to extreme weather and acquiring new and modern firefighting equipment to deal with wildfires. — DW

40TH ANNIVERSARY

India, Ireland, Canada commemorate 1985 Air India Kanishka flight bombing

CORK [IRELAND]: Union Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas, Hardeep Singh Puri, remembers victims of the Air India Kanishka Bombing on the 40th Anniversary and calls on the international community to unite against terrorism.

Speaking at the commemoration of the 40th anniversary of the Air India Flight 182 (Kanishka) bombing in Ahakista, Cork, Ireland, Puri said, "he world needs to come together - not only in isolated episodes of solemn mourning such as these, but in collective, proactive efforts to combat terrorism."

Recalling the tragedy of June 23, 1985, when Air India Flight 182 was destroyed mid-air by a bomb planted by Canada-based terrorists, killing all 329 on board, including over 80 children, Puri said the tragedy was not an accident but a "deliberate, heinous act carried out by fringe elements seeking to divide India."

The Minister stressed that terrorism and extremism are not issues of the past but present-day threats that continue to endanger innocent lives across the world. "India has suffered the scourge of terrorism for decades -- from Jammu & Kashmir to Punjab to Mumbai. Time and again, our people have endured bombings, assassinations, and atrocities," he said, while noting that countries across the world are grappling with this problem as he highlighted that global terrorism-related deaths increased by 22 per cent in 2024.

Calling upon the Government of Canada to join India in countering this shared threat, Puri said: "Canada is a valued partner and friend. We share vibrant cultural and economic relations with each other. India and Canada are bound by democratic traditions."

He urged deeper collaboration between the two nations through intelligence sharing, counter-radicalisation efforts, and the disruption of terror financing. "India stands ready to do more. Our security agencies, intelligence apparatus, and diplomatic channels are fully committed to partnering with the world to ensure that such tragedies are never repeated."

Puri also acknowledged and thanked the people of Ahakista and the Irish government for their compassion in the aftermath of the 1985 tragedy. "They opened their homes and hearts to grieving families--an act of humanity that continues to inspire."

He further noted that the unique friendship forged between India and Ireland in the wake of the disaster has blossomed into strong bilateral ties, with trade reaching nearly $16 billion in 2023.

In closing, the Minister reiterated India's unwavering resolve to honour the memory of the victims by striving for global peace and security. "Let today's commemoration be a united message--those who spread hate and terror will never prevail over humanity, democracy, and friendship."

The ceremony was attended by Irish Prime Minister Micheal Martin, Canadian Minister of Public Safety Gary Anandasangaree, local Irish officials, first responders, and families of victims, all coming together in solemn remembrance. — ANI

SPORTS

Pant, Rahul tons power India; England chase 371 for victory

Visitors were bowled out for 364 in the second innings on day four of the first Test against England

HEADINGLEY: Centuries from KL Rahul and Rishabh Pant lit up Headingley on the penultimate day of the first Test, as India set a victory target of 371 to England on Monday.

India were bowled out for 364 in their second innings, to take an overall lead of 370 after Rahul (137) and Pant (118) launched a thrilling counterattack.

Their 195-run fourth-wicket partnership for the fourth wicket turned the tide decisively in India's favour.

After a cautious morning session that yielded 63 runs for the loss of captain Shubman Gill (8) — bowled by a brute from Brydon Carse — Rahul and Pant tore into the English bowling in the second, adding 145 runs in just 27 overs.

Both batters rode their luck early. Rahul was dropped on 55 by Harry Brook, and Pant had a couple of streaky edges fly through vacant slip positions on his way to 49.

But once set, both took charge with contrasting yet equally captivating styles. Rahul's century — his ninth in Tests — came off 202 balls and was a study in patience and poise, marked by crisp drives and stoic resistance despite three painful blows to the gloves.

A gentle push through the covers took him past three figures, his celebration characteristically understated. It was his sixth Test hundred outside Asia as an opener, a feat surpassed only by Sunil Gavaskar (15).

Carse got the prize wicket of Rahul after the Indian batter played on a lifter after tea with India's total at 333. Rahul's knock off 247 balls included 18 boundaries. Chris Woakes then dismissed Karun Nair for 20 to trigger a collapse.

Josh Tongue claimed three wickets in a maiden over as the visitors slumped from 333/5 to 349/9.

Ravindra Jadeja's late 25 helped India reach 364.

Earlier, Pant, after reaching his half-century exploded, hammering 44 runs off the next 25 balls.

His hundred, the eighth of his career and fourth in England — the most by any visiting wicketkeeper — was a mix of flair and fire and came off 130 deliveries.

His assault on Joe Root, whom he clubbed for 14 in an over, was followed by an attempted encore against Shoaib Bashir.

This time, though, he miscued one to Zak Crawley at long-on, falling for a blazing 118 off just 152 balls.

Bashir celebrated his maiden big scalp with gusto, but the damage had been done.

Pant had already lofted him for back-to-back sixes earlier in the session and was aiming for the same stand when he fell.

India lost their last five first innings wickets for 24, but they also lost six in their second innings for just 31.

Brief scores: India 471 & 364 (KL Rahul 137, Rishabh Pant 118, Brydon Carse 3-80, Josh Tongue 3-72) vs England 465. - Agencies

AGAINST BANGLADESH

Sri Lanka's Milan Rathnayake ruled out of second Test

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka's Milan Rathnayake has been ruled out of the second Test against Bangladesh in Colombo, which will start on June 25, with a side strain. Left-arm seamer Vishwa Fernando has been named as his replacement.

Spin-bowling all-rounder Dunith Wellalage was also drafted into Sri Lanka's squad. The 22-year-old is set to take the spot of Angelo Mathews, who had retired from Test cricket after the first Test.

Milan had briefly exited the field on the second morning in Galle, but had returned later to end the first innings with three wickets - he finished with four across the Test. He had been miserly with his economy rate, and his burst in the final session of day two ensured Bangladesh's first-innings total remained within Sri Lanka's reach. Then with the bat, he was part of a crucial 84-run seventh-wicket stand with Kamindu Mendis, in which the all-rounder contributed with 39 off 83.

Wellalage and Sonal Dinusha are both useful with their left-arm spin, but with SSC pitch not as conducive to spin as Galle - which itself was unusually batter-friendly - Sri Lanka will likely want to go with extra seam-bowling option.

If either were to get picked, Tharindu Rathnayake might be the odd man out. Vishwa, Asitha Fernando and Kasun Rajitha and the uncapped Isitha Wijesundara make up the pace contingent.

As for Mathews' replacement in the XI, it's more likely to come from one of Pasindu Sooriyabandara or Pavan Rathnayake, both of whom have impressed domestically and with Sri Lanka A recently. Oshada Fernando is also a potential pick, having returned to the national fold following an impressive stint with Sri Lanka A towards the end of 2024.

After the second match against Bangladesh, Sri Lanka will not play another Test until next year.

Sri Lanka squad: Dhananjaya de Silva (capt), Pathum Nissanka, Oshada Fernando, Lahiru Udara, Dinesh Chandimal, Kamindu Mendis, Kusal Mendis, Dunith Wellalage Pasindu Sooriyabandara, Sonal Dinusha, Pavan Rathnayake, Prabath Jayasuriya, Tharindu Rathnayake, Akila Dananjaya, Vishwa Fernando, Asitha Fernando, Kasun Rajitha, Isitha Wijesundara. - Agencies

CEREMONY IN LAUSANNE

Coventry takes over IOC presidency from Bach

LAUSANNE: Zimbabwe's Kirsty Coventry took over the presidency of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) from Thomas Bach on Monday during a handover ceremony at the IOC headquarters in Lausanne, Switzerland.

The 41-year-old former Olympic swimming champion made history by becoming the first woman and the first African to lead the 131-year-old global sports body. Her presidential term is eight years, with the possibility of seeking a four-year extension.

During her first speech as IOC President, Coventry praised the Olympic Movement as "a platform to inspire, a platform to change lives, and a platform to bring hope."

"I can't believe that in 1992 when I had the dream of going to the Olympic Games and winning a gold medal for Zimbabwe, that I'd be standing here with all of you, getting to make those dreams come true for more young people around the world," she said.

Coventry secured the presidency in a decisive first-round vote during the 144th IOC Session on March 20, receiving 49 votes out of 97 ballots cast to defeat six other candidates.

A seven-time Olympic medalist for Zimbabwe, including two golds, Coventry is one of Africa's most decorated athletes. She has been an IOC member since 2013 and previously chaired the IOC Athletes' Commission, playing a key role in advocating for athletes' rights and welfare.

Coventry has also served as Zimbabwe's Minister of Youth, Sport, Arts, and Recreation since 2018.

Outgoing President Bach, who will maintain contact to the IOC as honorary president, expressed full confidence in the Olympic Movement's under Coventry. "With Kirsty Coventry, the Olympic Movement will be in best of hands."

The German also paid tribute during the handover to IOC founder Pierre de Coubertin, whose tomb lies nearby.

"Today is a day of gratitude. Today is a day of confidence. Today is a day of joy," Bach stated. "There are many emotions I feel in this moment - but most of all, I feel gratitude. Gratitude, above all, to our beloved founder Pierre de Coubertin... To him we owe everything."

Bach added: "I am sure, he is watching us today from his Olympic heights, with that familiar smile, and that he feels content to see his - our - Olympic Movement flourishing, true to his vision and more relevant than ever." - Xinhua

THREE-MATCH SERIES

Bangladesh recall Litton for ODIs against Sri Lanka

DHAKA: Bangladesh have brought Litton Das back in the ODI side as one of five changes for next month's three-match series against Sri Lanka - two of the changes were forced as Mahmudullah has retired from international cricket and Mushfiqur Rahim has retired from ODIs.

The two made the announcements a week apart following Bangladesh's early exit from the Champions Trophy, which was also their last ODI assignment.

Chief selector Gazi Ashraf Hossain said that Litton was given the opportunity in part because he was recently named the Bangladesh T20I captain.

Litton made only 35 runs in eight ODIs between the tour of New Zealand in December 2023 and the tour of the West Indies in December 2024 before being dropped, including for the Champions Trophy.

"Litton Das was in a bad patch but time is the best healer. He is the T20 captain, so we can consider him till the next T20 World Cup," Ashraf said.

"If someone has to return to form, it is best to spend a long time in the middle. We feel that Litton can take his form from ODIs to T20Is."

The selectors have also recalled Mohammad Naim, Shamim Hossain, Tanvir Islam and Hasan Mahmud.

Ashraf added that five fast bowlers have been picked to manage the workload of Taskin Ahmed and Nahid Rana.

"We have included five fast bowlers in the ODI side as Mustafizur Rahman and Taskin Ahmed are returning from injuries. We are also mindful of Nahid Rana's workload management, so we have kept enough options to choose from."

The three ODIs will be played on July 2, 5 and 8. The first two ODIs will be held at the R Premadasa Stadium in Colombo while the third match will be held in Pallekele.

Bangladesh squad: Mehidy Hasan Miraz (capt), Tanzid Hasan, Parvez Hossain Emon, Mohammad Naim, Najmul Hossain Shanto, Towhid Hridoy, Litton Das, Jaker Ali, Shamim Hossain, Rishad Hossain, Tanvir Islam, Mustafizur Rahman, Tanzim Hasan, Taskin Ahmed, Nahid Rana, Hasan Mahmud. - Agencies

MARKET
BUSINESS & FINANCE

OMAN CRUDE PRICE FALLS

The price of Oman oil has decreased, with prices for delivery by August 2025 reaching $75.82, said Dubai Mercantile Exchange (DME). The DME statement said that the price of Oman oil fell by $1.50 from the price of Friday, which was $77.32. - ONA

MSX INDEX ENDS LOWER

The MSX index closed at 4,523.42 points, down by 0.04% from previous close. The Sharia Index ended down by 0.27% at 430.50 points. National Biscuits, up 10.00%, was the top gainer while, Dhofar Insurance, down 6.34%, was the top loser.

GCC e-commerce market expected to reach $33.3 billion in 2025

Workshop organised by GCC-Stat aims to strengthen national statistical capacities in collecting and analysing data related to e-commerce and the digital economy

MUSCAT: The activities of the regional workshop on e-commerce and digital economy statistics commenced yesterday.

The event, organised by the Statistical Centre for the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC-Stat), brings together representatives from the GCC General Secretariat, national statistical agencies, ministries of commerce, central banks, and other government bodies across the GCC countries.

The two-day workshop aims to strengthen national statistical capacities in collecting and analysing data related to e-commerce and the digital economy, ultimately supporting data-driven economic policymaking and advancing GCC statistical integration.

Intisar Abdullah Al Wahaibi, Director General of the GCC Statistical Center, noted that recent years have witnessed rapid changes in the global economic landscape driven by the rise of e-commerce, which is becoming a key engine of the digital economy. She highlighted that the Gulf region has experienced fast-paced growth in this area, fueled by advanced digital infrastructure, a young population, and the adoption of national digital transformation strategies.

She cited UNCTAD reports indicating that global e-commerce sales exceeded $27 trillion in 2022, a nearly 60 per cent increase since 2016. Regionally, the GCC e-commerce market is expected to reach $33.3 billion in 2025 and $46.1 billion by 2029, reflecting an annual growth rate of 10 per cent.

She stressed that while this digital boom offers many benefits, it also presents challenges in accurately and effectively measuring such rapidly evolving activity. She emphasized the growing need for reliable, timely data to assess e-commerce's contribution to GDP, monitor the digital divide, and support sound economic policymaking.

She also explained that the GCC Committee for Commercial Cooperation has tasked the Statistical Center with developing an integrated mechanism for building e-commerce indicators, publishing information, and enhancing transparency. This effort forms part of the executive plan for achieving the strategic objectives of the GCC's unified framework for e-commerce. The recommendation was reinforced in successive meetings with the GCC e-commerce working group, which began its work in 2023.

On her turn, Dr. Hajar El Haddaoui, Director General of the Digital Cooperation Organization, affirmed that digital data has become the cornerstone for policymaking, sustainable development, and enabling individuals and businesses to participate effectively in the digital space.

She stated that the Organization believes accurate and up-to-date digital statistics are essential for measuring the impact of digital transformation and identifying challenges and opportunities in the digital business environment. She praised the efforts of the GCC Statistical Center in developing the statistical infrastructure for e-commerce and expressed a desire to strengthen collaboration with statistical and relevant bodies across GCC countries to develop unified indicators and standards that can be adopted regionally and globally.

She noted that enhancing the ability to measure the digital economy is not just a technical necessity but a strategic imperative for building an inclusive, thriving digital economy, one that can generate employment, foster innovation, support SME growth, and ensure the inclusion of all segments of society, including women and youth, in future opportunities.

The first session of the workshop introduced the concept of measuring e-commerce and the digital economy. It explained that measuring e-commerce, essential for understanding the sector and crafting effective economic and trade policies, involves collecting and analyzing data on commercial activities conducted via electronic channels.

This includes sales of goods and services through digital platforms, whether between businesses, between businesses and consumers, or among consumers themselves. It also covers transaction volume and value, types of goods and services traded, platforms used (websites, apps, social media), and consumer behaviour patterns.

Measuring the digital economy involves systematically assessing the various components of technology-driven economic activity. This includes digital infrastructure, software, artificial intelligence applications, digital platforms, and ICT-based job roles.

The session also addressed the importance of measuring e-commerce and the digital economy in the GCC, the operational definitions of both concepts, and the role of measurement in supporting policy development, economic diversification, and regional cooperation.

The second session reviewed the GCC Statistical Center's project on e-commerce and the digital economy. This initiative aims to enhance the quality of digital and economic data across GCC countries by establishing a unified statistical foundation for e-commerce and digital economy metrics. The project is expected to improve coordination among member states and develop indicators based on established international standards. -ONA

STATISTICS

Consumer price index in Oman rises by 0.6% in May

MUSCAT: The Consumer Price Index (CPI) in the Sultanate of Oman recorded a 0.6% increase in May 2025 compared to the same month last year, according to data released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

Report

The report showed that personal goods and miscellaneous services led price increases with a 6.4% rise, followed by transportation (2.4%), and restaurants and hotels (1.4%).

Health services saw a 0.8% increase, while clothing and footwear prices rose by 0.6%, and culture/entertainment by 0.3%. Education costs experienced a marginal 0.1% uptick.

Conversely, food and non-alcoholic beverage prices decreased by 0.8%, while furniture/household equipment/maintenance costs fell by 0.2%. Housing/utilities/fuel and tobacco prices remained stable.

Within the food category, sugar/jam/honey/sweets prices surged 3.7%, followed by other food products (3.6%). Dairy/cheese/egg prices increased 1.9%, oils/fats rose 1.8%, and meat prices edged up 0.2%. However, vegetable prices dropped significantly by 8.6%, with fish/seafood declining 2.3% and fruits decreasing 1.6%.

In term of governorates, A'Dakhiliyah Governorate recorded the highest inflation rate at 1.5%, followed by Musandam (1.1%) and South A'Sharqiyah (1.0%). Al Buraimi (0.4%) and Dhofar (0.3%) showed more moderate increases, while South Al Batinah and North A'Sharqiyah experienced deflation of 0.4% and 0.1% respectively. - ONA

MARKET

MSX index ends down

National Biscuits, up 10.00%, was the top gainer while Dhofar Insurance, down 6.34%, was the top loser

MUSCAT: The MSX index closed at 4,523.42 points, down by 0.04% from previous close. The Sharia Index ended down by 0.27% at 430.50 points. National Biscuits, up 10.00%, was the top gainer while Dhofar Insurance, down 6.34%, was the top loser. Shares of OQBI were the most active in terms of number of shares traded as well as in terms of turnover.

A total number of 1640 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating turnover of RO 14.62 million, with more than 87.26 million shares changing hands. Out of 58 traded securities, 17 advanced, 16 declined, and 25 remained unchanged. At the session close, domestic investors were net buyers for RO 526K while foreign investors were net sellers for RO 447K, followed by GCC & Arab investors for RO 79K worth of shares.

Financial Index closed at 7,833.18 points, down 0.05%. Prices of Oman United Insurance, Al Anwar Investment, OMINVEST, Bank Nizwa, and Bank Dhofar were up by 3.64%, 2.38%, 1.38%, 1.00%, and 0.75% respectively. Prices of Dhofar Insurance, Ahli Bank, United Finance, National Finance, and Oman Arab Bank were down by 6.34%, 1.94%, 1.70%, 1.67%, and 1.37% respectively.

Industrial Index closed at 6,318.97 points, up 0.39%. Prices of National Biscuits, Voltamp Energy, and A'Saffa Foods were up by 10.00%, 10.00%, and 1.34% respectively. Prices of Construction Materials, Al Anwar Ceramics, and Galfar Engineering were down by 4.11%, 2.94%, and 1.54% respectively.

Services Index was up by 0.32% before closing at 1,601.10 points. Prices of Al Jazeera Services, Renaissance Services, Al Batinah Power, Phoenix Power, and Al Suwadi Power were up by 4.12%, 2.94%, 2.86%, 1.47%, and 1.43% respectively. Prices of Muscat Desalination, OQ Gas Networks, National Gas, and Abraj Energy were down by 4.35%, 1.89%, 1.19%, and 0.42% respectively.— United Securities

OMAN STOCKS

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE

INDICES

Index	High	Low	Value	Prev. Value	Diff	Diff %
MSX 30 INDEX	4,530.31	4,498.34	4,523.42	4,525.31	-1.89	-0.04
FINANCIAL INDEX	7,837.48	7,801.24	7,833.18	7,837.48	-4.30	-0.05
Industry Index	6,344.46	6,280.28	6,318.97	6,294.33	24.64	0.39
Services Index	1,604.79	1,588.90	1,601.10	1,595.93	5.17	0.32
MSX Shariah Index	431.75	429.09	430.50	431.66	-1.16	-0.27
MSX TR INDEX	6,699.20	6,651.93	6,689.02	6,691.82	-2.79	-0.04
FINANCIAL TR IDX	9,288.39	9,245.44	9,283.29	9,288.39	-5.10	-0.05
INDUSTRIAL TR IDX	7,796.39	7,717.52	7,765.07	7,734.79	30.28	0.39
SERVICES TR IDX	2,046.50	2,026.23	2,041.79	2,035.20	6.59	0.32
FIXED INCOME INDEX	1,204.48	1,204.48	1,204.48	1,204.48	0.00	0.00

Trading Summary

Volume	Turnover	Trades	Market Cap	Up	Down	Equal	Sec. Traded
87,264,392	14,620,858	1,640	28,269,076,047	17	16	25	58

SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR MONDAY, JUNE 23

REGULAR MARKET

ISIN	SECURITY NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR.	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF (RO)	DIFF %	LAST PR.	LAST BID	LAST OFFER	PAR VALUE	MARKET CAP
OM0000003661	VOLTAMP ENERGY	36,233	25,449	18	0.670	0.737	0.670	0.737	0.670	0.067	10.000	0.737	0.701	0.737	0.100	68,992,900
OM0000002226	ALJAZEERA SERVICES	21,000	3,574	8	0.171	0.177	0.169	0.177	0.170	0.007	4.118	0.177	0.169	0.177	0.100	7,583,209
OM0000001087	OMAN UNITED INSURANCE	8,843	1,948	4	0.220	0.228	0.220	0.228	0.220	0.008	3.636	0.228	0.219	0.228	0.100	22,800,000
OM0000003224	RENAISSANCE SERVICES	2,967,496	830,520	17	0.274	0.281	0.274	0.280	0.272	0.008	2.941	0.280	0.280	0.295	0.100	66,194,800
OM0000004925	ALBATINAH POWER	60,891	4,273	5	0.070	0.072	0.070	0.072	0.070	0.002	2.857	0.072	0.069	0.072	0.100	48,591,895
OM0000004933	AL SUWADI POWER	29,711	2,084	6	0.070	0.071	0.070	0.071	0.070	0.001	1.429	0.071	0.067	0.071	0.100	50,722,850
OM0000001533	OMINVEST	115,667	25,586	12	0.219	0.222	0.219	0.221	0.218	0.003	1.376	0.221	0.221	0.225	0.100	206,792,263
OM0000002804	ASAFFA FOODS	3,417	1,295	1	0.379	0.379	0.379	0.379	0.374	0.005	1.337	0.379	0.368	0.379	0.100	45,480,000
OM0000004420	BANK NIZWA	772,973	77,547	18	0.100	0.101	0.100	0.101	0.100	0.001	1.000	0.101	0.090	0.101	0.100	225,932,256
OM0000003968	OOREDOO	362,230	73,458	27	0.202	0.205	0.202	0.203	0.202	0.001	0.495	0.203	0.203	0.220	0.100	132,141,679
OM0000003026	OMAN TELECOM	250,732	211,675	31	0.844	0.845	0.844	0.845	0.842	0.003	0.356	0.844	0.844	0.844	0.100	633,750,000
OM0000001483	NATIONAL BANK OMAN	100	30	1	0.300	0.300	0.300	0.300	0.300	0.000	0.000	0.300	0.290	0.300	0.100	487,783,907
OM0000001707	OMAN CABLES INDUSTRY	6,616	15,097	14	2.290	2.300	2.270	2.300	2.300	0.000	0.000	2.300	2.225	2.300	0.100	206,310,000
OM0000003398	SOHAR INTERNATIONAL BANK	8,761,693	1,232,073	65	0.141	0.142	0.140	0.142	0.142	0.000	0.000	0.142	0.139	0.142	0.100	939,648,970
OM0000004768	MADINA TAKAFUL	129,245	10,340	6	0.080	0.080	0.080	0.080	0.080	0.000	0.000	0.080	0.080	0.088	0.100	14,000,000
OM0000002796	BANK MUSCAT	7,375,989	1,997,687	145	0.274	0.274	0.270	0.273	0.274	-0.001	-0.365	0.273	0.270	0.273	0.100	2,049,246,398
OM0000008934	ABRAJ ENERGY SERVICES	6,082,942	1,467,307	148	0.241	0.246	0.240	0.240	0.241	-0.001	-0.415	0.240	0.240	0.240	0.100	184,848,000
OM0000002440	AL SHARQIYA INVESTMENT HO.	27,758	2,110	2	0.076	0.076	0.076	0.076	0.077	-0.001	-1.299	0.076	0.076	0.082	0.100	6,840,000
OM0000002374	UNITED FINANCE	36,250	2,126	3	0.059	0.059	0.058	0.058	0.059	-0.001	-1.695	0.058	0.055	0.064	0.100	20,655,383
OM0000009072	OQ GAS NETWORKS	11,877,402	1,844,260	184	0.158	0.158	0.153	0.156	0.159	-0.003	-1.887	0.156	0.157	0.156	0.100	675,577,332
OM0000002168	AL ANWAR CERAMIC	969,280	161,965	66	0.167	0.170	0.165	0.165	0.170	-0.005	-2.941	0.165	0.165	0.167	0.100	36,300,000
Total	21	39,896,468	7,990,405	781												

Parallel Market

OM0000001186	NATIONAL BISCUIT INDUSTRIES LIMITED	129	624	1	4.840	4.840	4.840	4.840	4.400	0.440	10.000	4.840	4.555	4.840	1.000	4,840,000
OM0000001772	ALANWAR INVESTMENT	2,270,343	193,042	67	0.084	0.086	0.084	0.086	0.084	0.002	2.381	0.086	0.085	0.086	0.100	24,688,031
OM0000008868	THE PEARL REIF	22,725	2,673	11	0.118	0.118	0.117	0.118	0.116	0.002	1.724	0.118	0.117	0.118	0.100	69,789,552
OM0000010120	ASYAD SHIPPING	13,984,975	1,741,570	157	0.123	0.127	0.122	0.126	0.124	0.002	1.613	0.126	0.122	0.126	0.000	656,301,779
OM0000005963	PHOENIX POWER	15,539	1,058	6	0.068	0.069	0.068	0.069	0.068	0.001	1.471	0.069	0.068	0.069	0.100	100,919,501
OM0000002549	BANK DHOFAR	19,496	2,603	5	0.133	0.135	0.133	0.135	0.134	0.001	0.746	0.135	0.132	0.135	0.100	410,372,802
OM0000001400	OMAN FLOUR MILLS	14,883	6,846	4	0.460	0.460	0.460	0.460	0.460	0.000	0.000	0.460	0.457	0.470	0.100	76,072,500
OM0000001509	DHOFAR INTERNATIONAL DEV. & INV. HO.	1,536,636	414,892	2	0.270	0.270	0.270	0.270	0.270	0.000	0.000	0.270	0.270	0.000	0.100	110,496,505
OM0000001590	MUSCAT FINANCE	246,675	12,334	23	0.050	0.050	0.050	0.050	0.050	0.000	0.000	0.050	0.050	0.050	0.100	15,357,316
OM0000001681	OMAN EMIRATES HO.	2,806	195	2	0.068	0.070	0.068	0.070	0.070	0.000	0.000	0.070	0.069	0.070	0.100	8,531,250
OM0000001889	SALALAH MILLS	677	299	1	0.441	0.441	0.441	0.441	0.441	0.000	0.000	0.441	0.000	0.441	0.100	27,546,211
OM0000001897	MAJAN COLLEGE	6,000	642	2	0.107	0.107	0.107	0.107	0.107	0.000	0.000	0.107	0.100	0.117	0.100	9,630,000
OM0000002275	SHELL OMAN MARKETING	835	459	1	0.550	0.550	0.550	0.550	0.550	0.000	0.000	0.550	0.000	0.550	0.100	52,250,000
OM0000002572	OMAN OIL MARKETING	2,250	1,450	2	0.640	0.650	0.640	0.650	0.650	0.000	0.000	0.650	0.640	0.715	0.100	39,828,750
OM0000003281	TAAGEER FINANCE	30,365	3,128	3	0.103	0.103	0.103	0.103	0.103	0.000	0.000	0.103	0.103	0.000	0.100	28,759,991
OM0000004248	SMN POWER HOLDING	38,499	7,892	6	0.205	0.205	0.205	0.205	0.205	0.000	0.000	0.205	0.205	0.205	0.100	40,925,298
OM0000004735	SEMBCORP SALALAH	817,390	82,252	29	0.102	0.102	0.100	0.102	0.102	0.000	0.000	0.102	0.100	0.109	0.100	97,366,339
OM0000005005	ALMAHA CERAMICS	6,558	1,790	5	0.273	0.273	0.273	0.273	0.273	0.000	0.000	0.273	0.273	0.300	0.100	15,015,000
OM0000007407	DHOFAR GENERATING	18,208	1,036	5	0.056	0.057	0.056	0.057	0.057	0.000	0.000	0.057	0.057	0.057	0.100	12,667,680
OM0000007811	MUSANDAM POWER	7,500	1,939	4	0.260	0.260	0.258	0.258	0.258	0.000	0.000	0.258	0.258	0.000	0.100	18,160,620
OM0000007910	AMAN REAL ESTATE	1,000	89	1	0.089	0.089	0.089	0.089	0.089	0.000	0.000	0.089	0.000	0.097	0.100	17,800,000
OM0000009908	OQ BASE INDUSTRIES (SFZ)	22,160,039	2,715,502	252	0.125	0.125	0.122	0.124	0.124	0.000	0.000	0.124	0.124	0.124	0.040	428,976,865
OM0000009759	OQ EXPLORATION AND PRODUCTION	3,029,537	988,425	178	0.326	0.329	0.323	0.323	0.326	-0.003	-0.920	0.323	0.322	0.323	0.010	2,584,000,000
OM0000001160	NATIONAL GAS	31,228	2,592	5	0.083	0.083	0.083	0.083	0.084	-0.001	-1.190	0.083	0.083	0.092	0.100	7,055,000
OM0000005260	OMAN ARAB BANK	41,890	6,054	5	0.145	0.145	0.144	0.144	0.146	-0.002	-1.370	0.144	0.145	0.145	0.100	240,395,040
OM0000002648	NATIONAL FINANCE	32,152	3,794	4	0.118	0.118	0.118	0.118	0.120	-0.002	-1.667	0.118	0.116	0.120	0.100	71,758,931
OM0000002200	AHLI BANK	2,400,453	372,070	19	0.155	0.155	0.152	0.152	0.155	-0.003	-1.935	0.152	0.152	0.155	0.100	357,147,935
OM0000008447	OMAN REIT FUND	180,179	14,733	15	0.082	0.082	0.080	0.081	0.083	-0.002	-2.410	0.081	0.080	0.081	0.100	52,535,816
OM0000001368	CONSTRUCTION MATERIAL INDUSTRIES	24,500	1,715	6	0.070	0.070	0.070	0.070	0.073	-0.003	-4.110	0.070	0.066	0.070	0.100	4,375,000
OM0000007084	MUSCAT CITY DESALINATION	1,282	85	1	0.066	0.066	0.066	0.066	0.069	-0.003	-4.348	0.066	0.066	0.072	0.100	10,266,326
OM0000001095	DHOFAR INSURANCE	105,000	20,150	3	0.190	0.192	0.190	0.192	0.205	-0.013	-6.341	0.192	0.190	0.225	0.100	22,339,390
Total	31	47,049,749	6,601,932	825												

CENTRAL BANK OF OMAN

Treasury bills worth OMR23.4mn issued

MUSCAT: The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) raised OMR23.4 million by a way of allotting treasury bills on Monday.

The value of the allotted treasury bills amounted to RO 1.2 million, for a maturity period of 28 days. The average accepted price reached RO 99.700 for every RO 100, and the minimum accepted price arrived at RO 99.700 per RO 100. The average discount rate and the average yield reached 3.91071% and 3.92248%, respectively.

The value of the allotted treasury bills amounted to RO 22.2 million, for a maturity period of 91 days. The average accepted price reached RO 98.944 for every RO 100, and the minimum accepted price arrived at RO 98.930 per RO 100. The average discount rate and the average yield reached 4.23683% and 4.28209%, respectively.

The Treasury Bills are short-term highly secured financial instruments issued by the Ministry of Finance, and they provide licensed commercial banks the opportunity to invest their surplus funds. The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) acts as the Issue Manager and provides theadded advantage of ready liquidity through discounting and repurchase facilities (Repo).

The interest rate on the Repo operations with CBO is 5.00% while the discount rate on the Treasury Bills Discounting Facility with CBO is 5.50%.-ONA

STRATEGIC COLLABORATION

Omran and Sharakah to enable Omani SMEs and promote innovation

Times News Service

MUSCAT: In a strategic move to support economic diversification and empower entrepreneurship in the Sultanate of Oman, Sharakah, an SME development organization, has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Omran Group, the government's executive arm for tourism development, to jointly support SMEs across the country.

This collaboration reflects the shared commitment of both entities to strengthen Oman's SME ecosystem by leveraging Sharakah's expertise in financial and advisory solutions, alongside Omran Group's wide-ranging tourism development initiatives. The partnership also aims to elevate both parties' market presence through joint marketing campaigns and collaborative events.

Commenting on the agreement, Ali bin Ahmed Muqaibal, CEO of Sharakah, stated: "This collaboration with Omran Group marks a pivotal step in our efforts to empower Omani entrepreneurs and promote the entrepreneurship culture. By combining our financial and advisory expertise with the Group's prominent position in the tourism sector, we can drive tangible impact within the SME ecosystem and contribute to building a resilient, innovation-led national economy."

For his part, Dr Hashil bin Obaid Al Mahrouqi, CEO of Omran Group, added: "Our partnership with Sharakah is an extension of Omran Group's ongoing commitment to supporting Oman's SME ecosystem and enabling it to play a vital role in driving economic growth. Through this strategic alliance, we aim to strengthen the synergy between tourism development and local entrepreneurship, contributing to the creation of sustainable economic opportunities and long-term value aligned with Oman Vision 2040."

The collaboration will focus on providing comprehensive support to SMEs nominated by OMRAN Group. These enterprises will be nurtured and empowered to enhance their competitiveness both locally and internationally, serving as exemplary models of sustainable business. Sharakah will offer the necessary financing, as well as specialized advisory services in key areas such as strategic planning, financial management, and market expansion, in addition to tailored mentorship on innovation and business growth.

This partnership forms part of broader national efforts to promote sustainable development in Oman—by fostering entrepreneurship, creating employment opportunities, and building the capacities of local enterprises—ultimately supporting the aspirations of Oman Vision 2040 for a prosperous, diversified economy and an inclusive, productive society.

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Accountant with 2 yrs experience searching for job, have own D/L. accounting well known & VAT filing, bank reconciliation known. Contact: 91875558

B.Com, Diploma in accounts, currently pursuing M.Com (final semester), with 1 yrs of hands-on experience in accounting up to finalization. Proficient in handling day-to-day accounts, reconciliations, and financial reporting. Currently in Muscat and available for immediate joining. Contact: 95998225 Email: sauravkiran3@gmail.com

Accountant with CMA (USA) qualification and 2 yrs of experience in accounts payable, receivables, financial reporting, budgeting, and bank & cash reconciliation. Actively looking for new opportunities in Muscat. Contact: +968 71048654 Email: mubeenmahamoodcma@gmail.com

Experienced part-time accountant with book keeping, finalization, VAT,tax filing. Contact: 79102100

Accountant (Indian) with D/L 8 yrs experience, can join immediately. Contact: 95273377

Senior Accountant, Indian having D/L fully independent up to closing, audit taxation Vat return, with 11 yrs Oman experience , Ready to join as Sr. Accountant and finance or Asst. manager accounts and finance. Contact: 94375581 Email: Oman.muscat8080@gmail.com

Indian male Bachelor degree in Commerce (CA) looking for a suitable job with 1 yr experience in accounts,finance Currently in Oman with family visa & Omani D/L. Can join immediately. Contact: +96876469134 Email: shemantk32@gmail.com

Pakistani male with experience of 12 yrs (5 yrs in Oman) in finance,accounts seeks job. Have Oman D/L also. Contact 78363317 E-mail bilalattariacca@gmail.com

Senior accountant, Accounts manager ACCA, CA Inter, MS finance. 12 yrs gulf experience. Ready to join immediately. NOC & D/L available. Contact: 77258382.

Indian male Bachelor degree in Commerce (CA) looking for a suitable job with 1 yr experience in accounts, finance Currently in Oman with family visa & Omani D/L. Can join immediately Contact:+96876469134 Email:shemantk32@gmail.com

Accounts, finance, a well experienced Indian male [MBA Fin] having more than 19 yrs of experience in Oman, looking for suitable placement. Contact: 92076716

Indian, MBA dual specialization (finance and business analytics) and SAP FICO in Oman looking for immediate openings. Contact: +968 7859 6850. Email: rahulgnair31@gmail.com

Indian (M), 24yrs, B.Com graduate (+SAP FICO&SAP B-ONE) with 01 yr of experience in accounting. Currently in Oman and looking for a suitable position. Contact: 76422467. Email: mohdthanseeb@gmail.com.

ADMINISTRATION

HR Manager 15 yrs experience in the Gulf looking for a suitable position. NOC available, valid D/L. Qualification: MBA in HR & finance & HR certifications. Available to join immediately. 95323264, Email: deep.vg9@gmail.com

Dynamic and well-experienced professional: 5 yrs of Dubai and 4.5 yrs of Muscat experience in operations management, business excellence or key account management looking for new challenges. Contact: 96766702, Email: ilyas3299@gmail.com

Experienced Indian male with 23+yrs of experience in various fields,looking for suitable position in admin, operation, store, sales. Contact: 78645911

Indian Male have 10 yrs experience in Oman as supervisor, have valid D/L and NOC. Contact: 90789282.

Canadian citizen with 10 yrs experience in customer service and 2 yrs as purchasing agent,buyer. Seeking a job in Oman to relocate. Available for interviews. Contact: 99492403. Email: batool.drizvi@gmail.com

Secretary with 20 yrs of experience in India and Oman looking for a job. NOC available. Contact: 97932277.

ARCHITECT

Architect, Urban planner with experience in various design software .Looking for architect planner job. Contact : 96577109, E-mail: ar.silpa011@gmail.com

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

Graduate Architect with valid Oman D/L. Proficient in various Design software. Looking for Architect, interior designer roles. Contact: 93249129, Email: psmenez2015@gmail.com

DRIVER

Indian male, having valid Oman D/L. with 04 yrs of driving experience in the Gulf. Looking for a suitable driver job. Contact 94589573

Looking at driving job. Contact: 78514001

Looking for driving job. Contact: 99667817

Looking for driving job. Contact: 95215679

Looking for driving job with 8 yrs experience. Contact: 79453897

Looking for driving job with 15 yrs experience. Contact: 78037801

Looking for driving job have car. Contact: 98586920

Looking for driving job. Contact: +968 99532361

Looking for driving job with 2 yrs experience. Contact: 97995898

DESIGNER/ AUTOCAD D/MAN

20 yrs. exp Sr. Draughtsman sewer buildings & roads looking for job. Contact: 76283837

Interior designer (3D rendering, shop drawings, site supervision, showroom sales & marketing) with 15+yrs of experience in a reputed furnishing company in Oman. D/L Contact: 95060377

Draughtsman Indian, consultancy & construction experience (Arch, civil, infra). Looking job. Contact: 98724049, 78137495

ENGINEER

Senior Civil engineer B.Tech with 32 yrs experience (24 yrs in Oman), specialized in project execution, quantity surveying, contract management, tendering, variations, claims settlement, and final account preparation. Available for immediate joining. Muscat-based roles preferred. Contact: 95809622

Senior MEP Engineer 20+ yrs exp in design, supervision & execution. Available with NOC & D/L. Contact: 99148940, jobluk.om@gmail.com

Site Engineer (civil) Indian 5 yrs experience GCC, can join immediately. Contact: 78462634

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

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

MEP, Electrical Engineer 20+ yrs of exp. in Oman and GCC, expert in design, supervision & execution in consultant, contractor. Oil & gas, industrial, building with Oman D/L. Contact: 99148940. Email: jobluk.om@gmail.com.

Experienced Biomedical Engineers seeking opportunities in Oman. Presently in Oman & available for immediate joining. Email: asmathalipv1@gmail.com Contact: +968 72031225

Indian, male experienced Mechanical Engineer (4+ yrs Muscat) expert in customer service, marine/automotive repair, PDI inspections. Seeking a challenging role in sales or service departments. Contact: 92957063. Email: farzinferoz19@gmail.com.

HSE professional with 13+ yrs of experience in Oman's oil & gas, IPP, and IWP sectors. IOSH, NEBOSH, first aider, firefighter, working at height, and permit to work certified. Valid license and visa. Contact: 90499887 Email:sheikhnabeel84@gmail.com

Tendering & proposal specialist (Civil & MEP) proposal preparation, accurate quantity take-off and estimation. available on contract basis. Cont 76612255, Email: bm.engg008@gmail.com

Indian Engineer, +Nebosh IGC and IT knowledge with D/L. 2 yrs experience in Oman looking for job and currently in Oman. Contact : 79860144

MEP estimation engineer, quantity surveyor,11 yrs Oman experience,Indian male. Contact: 99462978. Email: anwar.anwar1986@gmail.com

ENGINEER

Electronics and Communication Engineer with AutoCAD experience Contact: 76622441. Email: fatinkisho10@gmail.com

Indian male, automobile engineer, 10 yrs experience in dealership workshop operations and supervision, seeking job opportunity. Contact +968 78406449.

Civil Engineer with D/L, 10 yrs experience in Oman. Contact: 97993078

EDUCATION/TRAINING

Specialist in swimming instruction and rescue techniques seeking an immediate opportunity Contact: 95975375, 94676186

PhD in Chemistry with B.Ed. seeking roles in lecturing,post doc,research & development or QC. Experienced and available. Contact: 76423455, 78283248

Chemistry teacher with 7 yrs experience of teaching IGCSE chemistry (Pakistani). Currently in Oman. Contact: +968 78684306.

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

Software Engineer (29) with 6+ yrs experience in dev, QA, PM, IT support & sales, system admin, ERP data. Handles full IT tasks. Call: 78558980

Female software Engineer full stack developer also expert in digital marketing with 5 yrs experience. Contact: 78462153

LOGISTICS

Storekeeper with experience of 13 yrs in Oman, construction and manufacturing company. Looking for suitable placement. Contact:96785379. Email: msudhilal@yahoo.com

PROCUREMENT/ PURCHASE

Senior purchase executive with strong Oman experience in MEP, fit-out, FM services, AMC, hospital, office equipment, auto parts, tools & stationery procurement. Strong leadership. Immediately available. Contact: 93662030.

Procurement Engineer 19 yrs experience construction and trading whatsApp: 0096895839964

MANAGER

Experienced food processing officer with over 2 yrs of proven expertise looking for suitable roles. Quality control, hygiene officer. Contact:79150220, Email: jagath.sivanandan@gmail.com

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

MEDICAL

Indian, 4 yrs experience in medical social work (MSW postgraduate), looking for a suitable job in hospitals or institutions. Contact: 77030210, 99573353

TOUR/TRAVELS

Looking for a job as a air ticketing, reservation agent and office administration. Contact: 99080348. Email: reemadanthy830@gmail.com

SALES/MARKETING

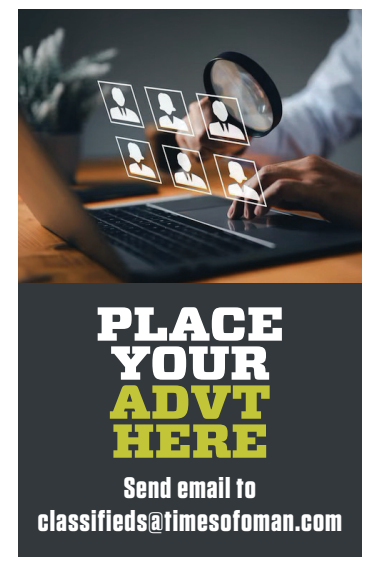
Indian male, 08 yrs experience having Oman D/L looking for suitable placement in Sales and Marketing. Contact: 9456 6786

MBA 20 years experienced in sales and marketing, working with reputed group looking suitable placement. 78564880

Indian male (35) MBA in Oman with 10 yrs exp in marketing, BDM position in multiple industries with D/L. Contact: 78607549

MBA HR & Marketing, Indian female, knowledge of MS office, Looking for suitable job, Currently in Oman. Contact: 72851131, Email: teenavalen01@gmail.com

Male 25+ yrs experience in sales (industrial) , looking for a suitable position with valid D/L. Available for immediate joining. 78569329.



LIFESTYLE

CHINESE RESEARCHERS DISCOVER MECHANISM TO TREAT CONGENITAL DISORDERS IN FETUSES

They found that when mouse embryos develop over a specific period, a unique signaling domain appears at the embryo's inner-outer boundary - the primordium determination zone

Chinese researchers have identified a crucial signaling region in early mammalian embryonic development, providing essential theoretical insights to address congenital disorders such as heart defects and to advance regenerative medicine.

The research team analysed single-cell spatial omics in mouse embryos, enabling them to map the dynamic process of organogenesis and identify a tissue specification zone, a crucial region that reveals early organ tissues and is the first rudimentary structures of developing organs, emerge during embryonic development, according to a study published in the journal Cell.

In this context, Lin Chengqi, the research team leader and a professor at Southeast University in China, explained that Spatial omics acts like a cellular GPS, simultaneously tracking spatial position data and gene expression profiles," explained Lin, noting that his team spent six years constructing full digital embryos at single-cell resolution and analysing gene expression in over 100,000 cells.

They found that when mouse embryos develop over a specific period, a unique signaling domain appears at the embryo's inner-outer boundary - the primordium determination zone.

This zone expresses multiple receptor signalling genes, creating a unique microenvironment capable of integrating multi-germ layer regulatory inputs to coordinately drive the development of cardiac and foregut primordia.

These microenvironmental signals are subsequently translated into selective gene expression programs that initiate the formation of the heart and other organ primordia.

The discovery confirms that disruptions to this zone's microenvironment, whether genetic or environmental, during this sensitive developmental phase can lead to malformed organ primordia.

The research offers unprecedented single-cell-level insights into the timing and spatial positioning of organ development, helping to prevent birth defects and opening new avenues for studying organ regeneration and the origins of cancer. - ONA

SPORTS

ICC MEN'S T20 WORLD CUP 2024

Oman Cricket to disburse T20 World Cup prize money soon

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman Cricket (OC) has confirmed that the prize money awarded by the International Cricket Council (ICC) for the team's participation in the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024 will be disbursed to the full squad (squad comprises of players and support staff) by July 2025. The total amount of USD 225,000 is set to be shared among full squad, in line with ICC regulations.

The OC board's decision follows various emergency meetings convened over the last 8 months on this topic. The board reiterated that the delay in disbursement was procedural, dependent on formal post-event clarifications from the ICC, which are typically received after global tournaments.

Walkout before ACC Emerging Teams Asia Cup

At the centre of the controversy lies a highly unusual and deeply concerning episode in October 2024, when 11 senior players, including then captain Aqib Ilyas and ex-skipper Zeeshan Maqsood, withdrew from national duty hours before Oman's campaign at the ACC Men's T20 Emerging Teams Asia Cup, which was held in Muscat.

While concerns over the delayed prize money had been raised, Oman Cricket officials, including OC Chairman Pankaj Khimji, had repeatedly assured the players that payments would be made in full following the ICC's confirmation of the allocation and structure.

Despite these reassurances, the group of players escalated the situation and refused to play, putting Oman's international commitment at serious risk.

"The players had every right to seek clarity, and we were transparent about the timelines involved," said Pankaj Khimji.

"But to walk out at the last moment — just hours before representing the nation — was not only irresponsible, but it was also an insult to the entire team, the coaching staff, the board, and most importantly, the nation they were supposed to serve."

Board takes disciplinary action

Following the walkout, the OC Board met twice in emergency sessions and unanimously resolved to terminate the central contracts of the 11 players and bar them from all national and domestic cricket until further notice. The decision was in line with the players' contractual obligations, which the board emphasised the players had clearly breached.

The suspended players were Aqib Ilyas, Zeeshan Maqsood, Ayaan Khan, Kashyap Prajapati,

Pankaj Khimji

Alkesh Joshi

Shoaib Khan, Ahmed Fayyaz Butt, Pratik Athavale, Kaleemullah, Rafiullah, Naseem Khushi, and Khalid Kail.

Khimji reiterated that this was not a routine disciplinary matter but a serious act of disruption that almost compromised Oman's participation in a major tournament. The board described the episode as a coordinated walkout that amounted to 'blackmail', an act of pressure unbecoming of national representatives.

The OC chairman also strongly criticised the involvement of the World Cricketers' Association (WCA), accusing it of orchestrating unrest within the squad at a critical time.

"It is evident that the players were heavily influenced and misled by external voices — particularly the WCA — which encouraged them to abandon their duties under the guise of advocacy. What happened was not protest, but provocation," Khimji said.

"The WCA played an active role in sowing distrust and destabilising the team environment. The players were urged to take a drastic and unjustified stance, despite having my personal assurance that the prize money would be paid in full — regardless of whether they played the Emerging Cup or not. Such interference is unacceptable, and we cannot allow outside entities to manipulate our national team cricketers."

New leadership, new momentum

In the wake of the withdrawals, a new squad was swiftly assembled under the leadership of experienced batter Jatinder Singh. With limited time to prepare, the revamped team regrouped and has since shown tremendous character.

Under Jatinder's captaincy, Oman have won 9 out of 11 matches in the ongoing **ICC World Cup League 2, showcasing both resilience and emerging talent. The performance has helped restore belief in the team and underlined the depth of cricketing potential in the Sultanate.

OC Treasurer Alkesh Joshi said: "The response of the new squad has been nothing short of inspirational. They've played with heart, discipline, and a sense of responsibility — everything the national jersey should represent. It is a shame that the barred players came under the influence of certain people and organisations and threatened the sanctity of the game."

Transparency measures and way forward

To avoid future lapses, Oman Cricket has constituted a special internal committee to investigate the communication gap around the prize money and to recommend a more robust, transparent structure for tournament-based remunerations and player engagement ahead.

Joshi said: "This was an isolated incident, but it showed us the need for stronger systems. We will ensure that players are never left uncertain about their entitlements — but also that professional commitments are never compromised."

Oman Cricket reiterated its commitment to upholding the integrity of the national team and ensuring that the values of discipline and respect for the nation remain non-negotiable.

Khimji said that over the years, the players have been the largest beneficiaries of Oman Cricket's growth, with a sizeable percentage of ICC grants spent on their development.

"As an Associate nation, we have been at the forefront — not only in building world-class infrastructure — but also in treating our players like family.

"They have never been treated unfairly. This incident has been deeply unfortunate."

"Our doors are open to talent, but closed to indiscipline," added the Oman Cricket president.

"We will continue to support our players and honour their efforts — but we expect them, in turn, to honour the nation and the badge they wear."

City, Juve reach last 16

Ten-man Real Madrid recorded a gritty win over Mexican club Pachuca to close in on knockout stage spot at the FIFA Club World Cup

NEW YORK: Manchester City and Juventus reached the last 16 of the FIFA Club World Cup on Sunday while Real Madrid moved closer with a gritty win over Pachuca despite playing nearly the entire match with 10 men.

Pachuca, Al Ain and Wydad Casablanca joined previously eliminated Auckland City, Ulsan, Urawa Red Diamonds and Los Angeles FC in exiting the tournament in the United States.

In Philadelphia, 20-year-old Turkiye international forward Kenan Yildiz scored twice as Juventus routed Morocco's Wydad Casablanca 4-1 to clinch a knockout phase spot with a game to spare.

Abdelmounaim Boutouil gifted the Italian club the lead with a sixth-minute own goal and Yildiz doubled the advantage by thumping a 20-yard effort into the top-right corner.

Thembinkosi Lorch narrowed the deficit, lifting a shot over goalkeeper Michele Di Gregorio after Nordin Amrabat's defence-splitting pass. The impressive Yildiz made it 3-1 as he wrong-footed Boutouil before calmly side-footing into the far corner.

Serbian striker Dusan Vlahovic put the result beyond doubt by converting a 94th-minute penalty after being fouled by Guilherme Ferreira. Juventus now have six points from its two games while Wydad are eliminated irrespective of its last group-stage fixture against Al Ain.

"It was a different kind of match, also because of the [early] kick-off time and the tempo was lower," Juventus manager Igor Tudor said afterwards. "They had prepared for us as well. We scored early and that helped us. But in football, you never know, you always have to stay alert.

"I'm never calm, not even at 3-1 or 4-1. I always see danger. Credit to the boys, two good wins. Tonight they'll have an evening off and a dinner out. They've earned it. Now we przpare for City, which will be a great challenge," he added.

In Charlotte, Real Madrid registered their first win of the tournament with a 3-1 defeat of Mexican side Pachuca.

The Spanish giants were reduced to 10 men in the seventh minute after Raul Asencio was shown a straight red card for pulling down Salomon Rondon when the Venezuela international was through on goal.

Despite the numerical disadvantage, Real Madrid took the lead through Jude Bellingham, who charged into the box after Fran Garcia's pass before lashing low into the far corner.

Arda Guler doubled the lead with a clinical finish after combining with Gonzalo Garcia and Federico Valverde made it 3-0 by volleying home at the far post following Brahim Diaz's lofted pass.

Pachuca pulled one back through Elias Montiel's deflected strike 10 minutes from time.

The victory lifted Real Madrid to the top of Group H with four points while Pachuca are last and cannot advance to the next stage.

"We had to defend with one less player in a low block and in that situation you have to know how to suffer and have the humility to find the right moment," Real Madrid manager Xabi Alonso said.

"We weren't able to show what we've been working on but the defensive line held strong and we had good periods of possession. We took a lot of positives from the game, especially the three points."

In Atlanta, Ilkay Gundogan struck twice as Manchester City trounced Al Ain of the United Arab Emirates 6-0.

Claudio Echeverri, Oscar Bobb, Rayan Cherki and Erling Haaland were also on target - the latter from the penalty spot - as City secured its place in the next round.

Al Ain had only 26% of the possession and managed only one shot on target, sealing its early exit from the competition.

"We spoke a lot before the game about how to maintain our pressure so that we could score the goals that we did," Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola said.

"The guys that played today took their opportunity. We are fortunate to have a lot of talented players that are waiting for their chance."

In Sunday's other fixture, Austria's RB Salzburg drew 0-0 with Saudi Arabian club Al Hilal at Audi Field in Washington D.C.

Al Hilal had 58 percent of the total possession but managed only four shots on target while Salzburg had six attempts saved by Morocco international goalkeeper Yassine Bounou.

The result leaves Salzburg second in Group H with four points, two ahead of third-placed Al Hilal. - Xinhua

KIELER WOCHE REGATTA

Oman's leading 49er duo competes in Kiel regatta

MUSCAT: Oman's high-performance 49er sailing team has kicked off racing at the renowned Kieler Woche regatta in Kiel, Germany — one of the largest and most prestigious sailing events in the world.

Represented by seasoned sailors Musab Al Hadi and Waleed Al Kindi, the team is competing against 81 crews from 22 nations in the Men's Skiff 49er class, taking place from 21–25 June as part of the event's Olympic programme.

This marks the duo's second major international appearance of the season, following their participation in the 49er European Championship in Greece earlier this month. With 12 races scheduled over five days, Kieler Woche presents a valuable opportunity for the team to sharpen their competitive edge and build vital experience against a world-class fleet.

Racing on the opening day was delayed due to light summer winds, with the team managing to complete only two races in a shortened session. They currently sit in 33rd position.

Hashim Al Rashdi, Head Performance Coach at Oman Sail,

commented on the significance of the regatta: "Kieler Woche is a cornerstone event in our roadmap to the Asian Games 2026 and the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic Games. The level of competition is outstanding and provides our sailors with an ideal environment to test their skills under pressure. Musab and Waleed have demonstrated exceptional commitment."

The team is under the guidance of coach Jacek Nowak, a veteran of the 49er class with extensive experience at both European and world championship levels.

Following Kieler Woche, the team will return to Oman for intensive training before their next international engagements: the 49er World Championship in Italy (7–13 October) and the Asian Sailing Championship in November.

SPA-FRANCORCHAMPS

Al Faisal Al Zubair returns to 24 Hrs Spa with Al Manar Racing by Team WRT

MUSCAT: Oman's Al Faisal Al Zubair returns to one of the most iconic circuits in motorsport this weekend — Spa-Francorchamps — the scene of one of his greatest career triumphs, as he partners with Jens Klingmann, Ben Tuck, and Neil Verhagen to compete in the Gold Cup category at the CrowdStrike 24 Hours of Spa.

Last year, Al Zubair, together with Dominik Baumann, Mikaël Grenier, and Philip Ellis, claimed a superb Gold Cup victory and finished seventh overall in the 24-hour classic. Now, he returns with a new line-up and a new car — the BMW M4 GT3 EVO — as part of the Al Manar Racing by Team WRT squad.

Heading into the third round of the GT World Challenge Europe Endurance Cup powered by AWS, Al Manar Racing by Team WRT leads the Gold Cup Teams' Championship by two points over Verstappen.com Racing following strong showings at Monza and Paul Ricard. Meanwhile, Al Zubair, Klingmann, and Tuck also top the Drivers' Championship standings by a narrow margin.

With points awarded at six, twelve, and twenty-four-hour marks during this flagship event, strategy, consistency, and endurance will be crucial across the full race duration. To strengthen the team's challenge, talented American BMW factory driver Neil Verhagen, 24, joins the line-up as the fourth driver for Spa.

Al Zubair said: "Looking forward to Spa 24. This is the biggest race of the year for all of us. It's an important one, especially because of the points awarded at multiple stages — six, twelve, and 24 hours. We'll aim to maximise those to help our championship campaign.

"The championship is looking strong so far. We're currently second in Sprint and first in Endurance, and Monza was a fantastic result that helped carry our momentum into Spa. The team has been outstanding all season.

"We're also very happy to have Neil Verhagen join us for this race. He's a BMW driver and will be a great addition to the line-up. Hopefully, we can top last year's result — if that's even possible!"

A total of 73 GT3 cars have been entered across various classes for the Belgian endurance classic,.

In the Gold Cup category, Al Manar Racing by Team WRT will go up against strong competition, including entries from CSA Racing, Herberth Motorsport, Verstappen.com Racing (Aston Martin), Tresor Attempto Racing (Audi), and McLaren squads from Garage 59, Optimum Motorsport, and Team RJN.

On-track action on the demanding 7.004km Spa circuit begins on Thursday (June 26th) with free practice, followed by pre-qualifying. Four qualifying sessions are scheduled, with additional night practice available.

Friday for GTWC entrants, will witness the Super Pole session, followed by a warm-up session. The 24-hour race starts at 16:30 hrs on Saturday afternoon and concludes at the same time on Sunday, rounding off one of the most prestigious endurance events in global GT racing.

OMAN WELCOMES KHAREEF DHOFAR 2025 WITH A RICH ARRAY OF EVENTS

Astronomically, the Khareef (monsoon) season in Dhofar began on Saturday, June 21, 2025 the most anticipated annual event that affects Dhofar's coastal regions from Dhalkut in the west to Mirbat in the east.

Triggered by seasonal monsoon winds and clouds arriving from the Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean, the season will continue until September 20.

The Dhofar Municipality has officially announced the launch of Khareef Dhofar 2025 from June 21 to September 20, with renewed programmes designed to offer innovative experiences that meet visitor expectations and enhance Dhofar's status as a global tourism destination.

The season includes cultural, recreational, and tourism activities for all age groups, with a strong emphasis on Omani identity and heritage to create an authentic atmosphere.

His Highness Sayyid Marwan bin Turki Al Said, Governor of Dhofar, affirmed that the Governorate welcomes the monsoon every year on June 21 with divine beauty and unique weather conditions, stating: "We all unite to prepare the conditions, events, and facilities necessary to make Khareef Dhofar 2025 exceptional and successful across 90 days of joy and natural splendor."

He warmly welcomed all visitors and wished them a pleasant stay amid the region's natural charm and unique appeal.

"Esh Jabak?"

As part of a new promotional approach, the Office of the Governor of Dhofar has launched the campaign "Esh Jabak?" an Arabic phrase meaning "What brought you here?" This campaign emerges from a deeper understanding of visitor behaviour, market trends, and the global move toward meaningful, personal experiences.

"Esh Jabak?" celebrates the diverse reasons that make Dhofar a multi-faceted destination — each visit sparked by a different story. The campaign highlights Dhofar's timeless natural beauty, adventure opportunities in caves and mountains, the warmth and generosity of its people, a vibrant calendar of events, and the luxury offered by local resorts and hotels.

Rather than simply promoting the physical attractions, the campaign focuses on the emotional journey uncovering the motivations behind each traveler's decision to visit. It invites visitors to share their stories and passions, transforming Dhofar from a seasonal escape to a destination of connection, discovery, and meaningful personal impact.

Khareef Dhofar 2025 events

This year's season offers a refreshed vision that boosts Dhofar's touristic and cultural standing. Events are distributed across five main thematic zones that reflect the governorate's diverse environments:

- Ateen Square: Home to dazzling fireworks, drone shows, carnival parades, and fantasy-themed performances.
- Al-Saada (Return to the Past): Showcases traditional folk events and cultural heritage.
- Awqad Park (Kids Time): A favorite destination for children, with exciting carnival shows and exploration zones.
- Ateen Plain Promenade: A modern mixed-use venue for adults and children offering entertainment and sports.
- Salalah Park (Health Garden): Offers unique fitness experiences in lush green surroundings.

Each site has been developed with a distinct identity and professional standards in collaboration with supporting institutions to ensure a rich and unique visitor experience.

Accompanying Sites and Cultural & Sports Activities

The 2025 season also includes additional venues hosting various public and cultural events, including:

- Frankincense Market
- Al-Gharf Experience at a local Salalah farm
- "OSARA" and "Afsinia" beach events in Raysut
- Art mural displays at Burj Al-Nahda using advanced visual technologies

Events will also extend to towns like Taqah, Mirbat, and Sadah, as well as the historical site of Sumhuram and Al-Haffa Beach Market. Sports enthusiasts can enjoy major national and international events such as:

- Salalah International Cycling Tour
- Dhofar International Drag Race Championship
- Salalah Marathon
- Khareef Dhofar Traditional Weapons Competition

On the cultural front, Al-Murooj Theatre in Salalah will host theatrical performances and symposiums with top thinkers and creatives from Oman and beyond to support both local and global cultural content.

A comprehensive experience for people and place

Dhofar Municipality aims to deliver an integrated tourism experience aligned with the beauty of nature through distinctive events and advanced services that meet visitor needs. Shopping centers and local businesses are ready to accommodate increased commercial activity during the season, with a focus on traditional industries and local products such as frankincense, incense, silverware, pottery, Omani sweets, and traditional foods.

Public and private institutions continue preparing to receive visitors by providing facilities and services, while several regional airlines have announced direct flights to Salalah International Airport.

Fullscale preparations and unified efforts

Dhofar Municipality has intensified efforts in cleaning and maintaining parks and roads, increasing cleaning teams, and providing waste containers and public facilities at tourist sites. Upgrades have been made to sites like Darbat Waterfalls, Ain Razat, Sumhuram, and the Highlands — including parking, rest areas, and infrastructure improvements.

Safety protocols have been coordinated with security and health authorities to ensure visitor wellbeing, including mobile toilets, first aid points, and other precautionary measures.

A unique climatic and tourism phenomenon

Khareef in Dhofar is a rare weather and tourism phenomenon in the region. The governorate experiences cloudy, rainy weather and moderate temperatures — especially in high-altitude areas often blanketed in mist.

The mountains and plains turn vibrant green due to continuous drizzle and light rains, nourishing plants and natural grazing lands.

Water flows abundantly from famous springs such as Razat, Hamran, Jarziz, Sahalnoot, and Tabraq, and dramatic waterfalls emerge — particularly in August in Darbat, Athoum, Khor, Jojob, and Hawta in Rakhyut, drawing large crowds.

Natural and historical identity

Dhofar boasts varied topography — coastal, agricultural, mountainous, and desert and a rich historical and archaeological heritage. It includes UNESCO World Heritage sites such as Al-Baleed and Sumhuram Archaeological Parks, The Land of Frankincense Museum, and historic forts in Rakhyut, Taqah, Mirbat, and Sadah.

The Salalah Plain is known for its tropical produce like coconuts, bananas, papayas, and sugarcane, and the region is home to many creeks, protected natural reserves, and abundant marine and wildlife.

In 2024, the Khareef Dhofar season welcomed over one million visitors, marking a 9% increase from 2023a testament to Dhofar's growing appeal.

With this momentum, organizers of Khareef Dhofar 2025 extend a heartfelt invitation to both local and international visitors to explore the beauty of Dhofar and enjoy an unforgettable experience of nature, culture, and the warmth of authentic Omani hospitality.

ROUND-UP

BankDhofar pioneers hybrid fleet transition in Oman's banking sector

The transition involves replacing the bank's existing petrol-powered vehicles with 25 hybrid cars, recognised for their superior fuel economy and lower carbon emissions

MUSCAT: In a landmark move for the Sultanate's financial industry, BankDhofar has announced the transition of its operational vehicle fleet to hybrid electric models, becoming the first bank in Oman to adopt this sustainability-driven initiative. This step reinforces the bank's position as a leader in environmental innovation and aligns with the national goals outlined in Oman Vision 2040.

The transition involves replacing the bank's existing petrol-powered vehicles with 25 hybrid cars, recognized for their superior fuel economy and lower carbon emissions. These vehicles emit just 98 grams of carbon dioxide per kilometer, a significant reduction from the 167 grams emitted by the previously used models. This shift translates into a 41 percent decrease in emissions per vehicle.

BankDhofar estimates that its new fleet will collectively avoid over 76,000 kilograms of carbon dioxide emissions each year, equivalent to the environmental benefit of planting nearly 1,900 trees annually. Over a five-year period, this reduction will amount to approximately 380,880 kilograms of CO^2, effectively matching the environmental benefit of removing 83 conventional gasoline-powered vehicles from the road for a full year.

Commenting on the milestone, Ammar Askari, Head Customer Experience & Sustainability stated, "This transition reflects our resolve to lead by example. By cutting emissions by 76 tons annually, we're not just reducing our carbon footprint—we're investing in Oman's future." He added, "The Hybrid cars efficiency proves that eco-friendly choices can also drive operational excellence. This is a win for our planet and our stakeholders."

The initiative underscores BankDhofar's strategic commitment to sustainability, a value enshrined at every level of its operations. As detailed in its 2024 Sustainability Report, the bank has institutionalized Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) principles across all tiers of leadership, ensuring that sustainability is not a side project but a core business priority.

The hybrid vehicle rollout is the latest in a series of measures designed to help BankDhofar contribute meaningfully to Oman's transition to a Net Zero economy by 2050, in line with the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

Beyond its internal operations, BankDhofar continues to invest in green finance, energy efficiency, water conservation, and waste reduction initiatives, demonstrating that responsible banking is not only possible but essential in today's financial landscape. This first-mover step also positions the bank favorably among customers and investors who increasingly prioritize climate-conscious practices, while ensuring it remains ahead of potential future regulations such as carbon taxation or emissions mandates. Through initiatives like this, BankDhofar continues to reinforce its identity as a forward-thinking, sustainability-led financial institution, committed to creating long-term value for its customers, shareholders, and the communities it serves.

EUROMONEY PRIVATE BANKING AWARDS

Bank Muscat awarded Best Bank for Alternative Investments title

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, continues to demonstrate its leadership as one of the top asset managers in the MENA region with Assets Under Management (AUM) of US$ 3.5 billion as of 31 March, 2025. In this context, the Bank announced that it has recently been awarded The Best Bank for Alternative Investments at the Euromoney Private Banking Awards 2025.

Khalifa Abdullah Al Hatmi, Deputy General Manager – Investment Banking and Capital Markets at Bank Muscat, said: "We are tremendously thrilled at being recognised with the best bank in Oman for offering alternative investment solutions to individual and corporate customers. We thank Euromoney for this prestigious recognition, which stands as a testament to the excellent performance of our Asset Management team and, in specific, to our capabilities in managing Real Estate across asset classes as well as local and regional markets. This recognition also reaffirms the trust of the international financial community in the Bank's performance and the unparalleled products and sustainable services it provides.

"We aim to continue developing contemporary and customized solutions to accommodate the unique requirements of our customers by consistently focusing on innovation, agility and customer-centricity in all of our engagements and solutions. We thank all customers for their continuous trust in the services that Bank Muscat is constantly providing."

Bank Muscat's Asset Management Department (AMD) has a track record of managing funds and portfolios since 1993. This strong position in the local and regional markets has been achieved due to the solid performance of its funds that are managed by a professional and the most experienced team of fund managers. The Bank, represented through its AMD, offers a wide range of investment solutions covering equities, fixed income, real estate and alternate investments. Real Estate investments is at the core of its expertise with, AMD managing more than US$ 450 million of real estate assets directly in Oman and the GCC region.

PROMOTION

Ford Taurus now available with exclusive summer campaign benefits

MUSCAT: Own the Ford Taurus now and get exclusive benefits including 5 Years/100,000 km Service (whichever is earlier), 5 Years/100,000 km Manufacturer's Warranty, Free Registration, Free 3M Paint Protection Film and Free Accessory Package. (Conditions apply. Please visit the Ford showroom for details.). The offer ends on 23 July.

Bold, refined and effortlessly powerful, the Ford Taurus redefines what it means to drive in style. With a design that exudes modern elegance and a performance that commands attention, the Taurus has been crafted to elevate your drive, turning every journey into a memorable experience.

OPENING DOORS TO GLOBAL STUDENT BENEFITS

MCBS breaks new ground as first Omani institution to partner with ISIC

MUSCAT: The Modern College of Business and Science (MCBS) announced an innovative partnership with the International Student Identity Card (ISIC) organization, making it the first higher education institution in Oman to issue ISIC cards to its student community. Endorsed by UNESCO, ISIC is the only globally recognized proof of student status, accepted in over 130 countries across six continents.

This milestone partnership reflects MCBS's ongoing mission to prepare students for success in an increasingly globalized world. It offers immediate and long-term benefits, positioning MCBS students as part of a powerful international network of learners, explorers, and future leaders. Through this collaboration, MCBS students will gain access to more than 150,000 curated discounts and

student-exclusive benefits across travel, education, retail, dining, entertainment, and technology. From reduced airfare and hotel stays to discounts on cultural experiences, software subscriptions, and educational platforms, the ISIC card enhances the student experience both locally and internationally.

"We are pleased that Modern College of Business and Science is leading the way and is the first college in Oman to adopt the ISIC card as the official college ID. The cooperation with ISIC and provision of co-branded Modern College of Business and Science ISIC ID cards to our students is just one of the ways of enhancing the student life experience at the College," says Dr Moosa Al Kinda, Dean of MCBS. "We hope that our students will enjoy the new added value and benefits of the ISIC cards both in Oman and abroad."

The newly introduced co-branded MCBS-ISIC card blends institutional pride with global connectivity. Featuring integrated security measures and digital capabilities, the card will function both as a local student ID and an international access tool, usable through physical presentation or mobile platforms. Michal Lezo, ISIC International Development Manager, commended the partnership, "The ISIC card is the only internationally recognized student ID in the world. ISIC provides students with access to over 150,000 benefits in more than 130 countries," said Michal Lezo, the ISIC International Development Manager. "Students can save on their flight tickets with Oman Air, admissions to cultural sights, restaurants, accommodation, shopping, and entertainment in Oman and when traveling abroad."

This collaboration is part of MCBS's broader strategic commitment to holistic student development. The College continues to invest in international partnerships, study abroad opportunities, faculty exchanges, and intercultural programming, all aimed at preparing students to thrive in a rapidly changing world.

TRAINING PROGRAMME

Alizz Islamic Bank welcomes third batch of Manahil Alizz

MUSCAT: As part of its ongoing commitment to youth development, Alizz Islamic Bank has launched the third edition of its distinguished training program, Manahil Alizz, targeting university and college students across Oman.

Building on the success of its first two editions, the program aims to equip 51 students from diverse academic disciplines with practical skills and specialized knowledge to enhance their employability and competitiveness in the job market.

The program has been carefully designed to cover a wide range of training modules, including:

Fundamentals of Islamic Banking and Islamic Economics

Leadership and Project management skills

Personal development and professional competencies

Volunteer Work and Waqf (Endowment) Management

Ghalib Al-Kharusi, Head of Human Capital at the bank, emphasised that the program aims to develop students academic competencies and professional capabilities through an intensive two-month curriculum. The comprehensive training integrates theoretical foundations with hands-on practice, facilitated by selected experts comprising both the bank's professionals and distinguished external.

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