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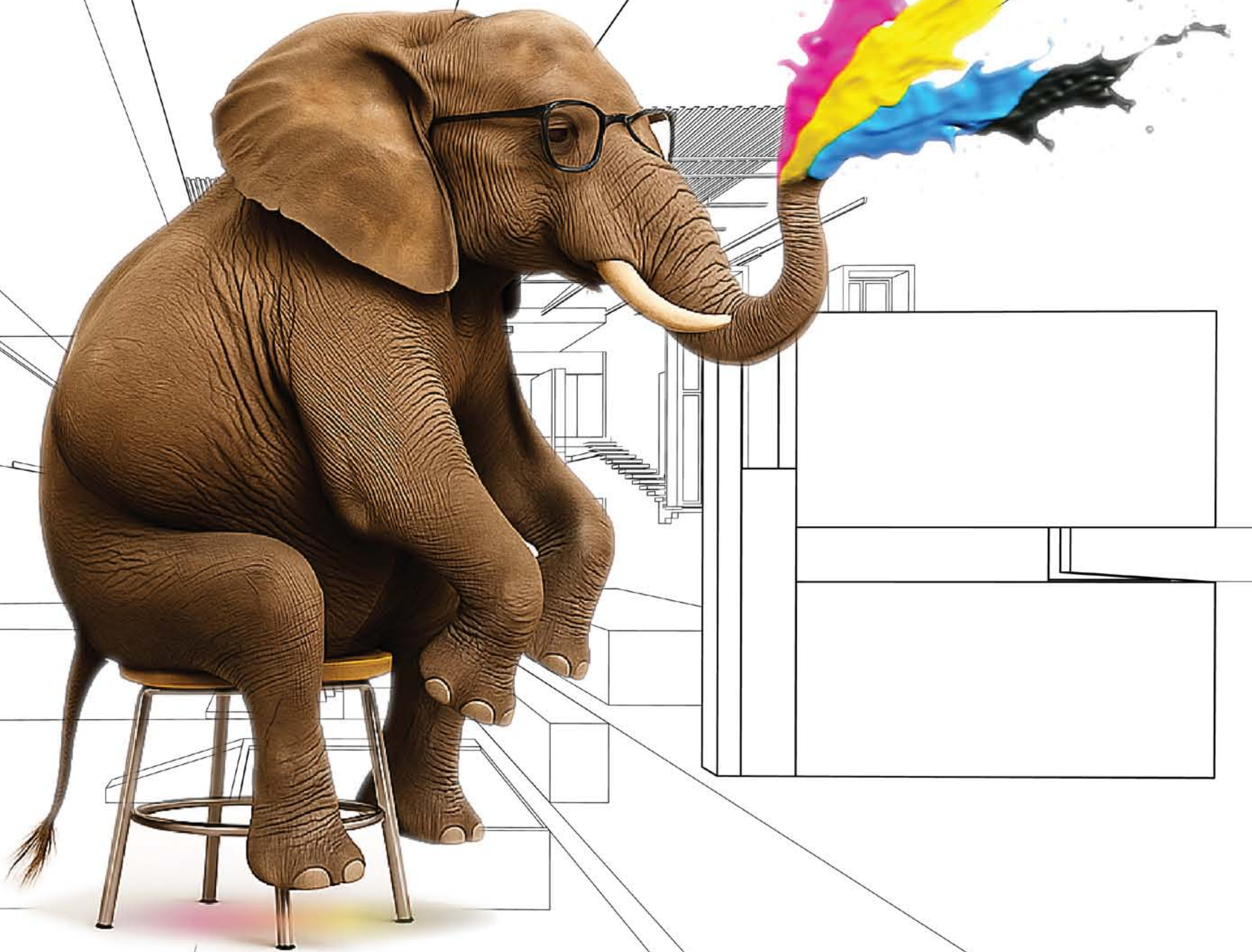
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TOURISM DESTINATION

Contracts worth OMR116mn signed during COMEX 2025

Times News Service

MUSCAT: More than 150 contracts worth OMR116 million were signed by the local and international government and private sector companies during COMEX 2025.

The signing of agreements registered an increase of 45% compared to OMR80 million worth contracts signed in COMEX 2024.

These agreements comprised memoranda of understanding and cooperation between a number of government establishments and local companies, mainly the SMEs and international companies on execution of tech projects and offering digital services such as in artificial intelligence (AI), sustainable energy for data centres, digital solutions and cyber security services and other fields, activities and technological services.

Dr. Ali bin Amer Al Shizani,



Undersecretary For Communications And Information Technology at the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, said that the tangible growth in the total value of the contracts during COMEX 2025 reflected the attention of local and international investors for the opportunities in the digital sector in the Sultanate of Oman.

He said that these results boost the Sultanate's place as a destination attractive to investments and

strategic partnerships in the field of technology in the Sultanate of Oman.

The results achieved also reaffirm the ministry's commitment towards digital innovation, development of digital basic structure besides the contribution to digital transformation in the Sultanate of Oman.

The number of visitors at COMEX 2025 amounted to over 90, 000, an increase of 10% compared to COMEX 2024 , while the number of startups which participated in COMEX 2025 amounted to over 140 companies along with over 200 government entities, private companies and international delegations in the field of technology and digital transformation.

The activities accompanying COMEX 2025 included 80 workshops and the launch of over 40 products, innovations and services.

-With ONA inputs

Sohar International Balloon aims to boost Oman tourism

CAPPADOCIA: As part of the Oman Balloons Project, the Sohar International Balloon celebrated its launch in the Turkish city of Cappadocia, one of the key international destinations for balloon tours.

The joining of the Sohar International Balloon came within a strategic partnership aimed to boost the Sultanate's place as an international tourism destination in the field of adventures and aerial tourism.

The launch of the new hot air balloon which holds the brand "Sohar International" is celebrated under the atmosphere that reflects the deep-rooted cooperation among the partners and their role supportive to tourism and the national economy.

The joining of the balloon is a significant step within Oman Balloons Project, aimed to offer a unique tourism experience in



Oman, mainly in the Wilayat of Bidiyah, North Al Sharqiyah Governorate, through the daily tours during the tourism season from October to May every year.

The Civil Aviation Authority contributed to this project through the technical and organisational supervision and provision of all permits and procedures necessary to guarantee the safety of aerial op-

erations coupled with the support of the efforts targeting localisation of this industry and transfer of the international expertise to the Sultanate of Oman.

Sohar International Balloon would promote tourism in the Sultanate of Oman and create job opportunities for the Omani youth coupled with transfer of the knowledge in this industry and in operation and maintenance of balloons.

The flying of Sohar International Balloon represents a new stage in Oman Balloons Project as it targets making Oman a regional hub for hot air balloons in the Middle East and Africa.

The ceremony was attended by the representatives of Oman Balloon Co. and its strategic partners including Pasha Balloon of Turkey, which is one of the international companies operating in making and operating balloons. ONA

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- HR Leader of the Year – Healthcare
- HR Leader of the Year – Tourism
- HR Transformation Leader of the Year
- HR Leader of the Year – Overall
- Lifetime Achievement
- HR Consultant of the Year

Company / HR Team Awards

- HR Team of the Year
- Excellence in Talent Acquisition
- Learning & Development Initiative of the Year
- Employee Engagement Excellence
- Diversity & Inclusion Excellence
- Best Workplace Culture
- HR Innovation Award
- Excellence in Employee Well-being & Mental Health
- Employer of the Year
- HR Consultancy of the Year
- HRTech Company of the Year
- Company of the Year in Building National Talent

For more information on partnership or speaking opportunities, contact:

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CABLES

His Majesty the Sultan sends greetings

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent cables of greetings to the following leaders on the occasion of their countries' Independence Day anniversaries: President Vahagn Khachaturyan of Armenia, President Myriam Spiteri Debono of Malta, and Froyla Tzalam, Governor-General of Belize. In his cables, His Majesty expressed his sincere wishes for the friendly nations' leaders to achieve further progress and accomplishments across all domains, fulfilling the aspirations of their peoples. His Majesty also expressed his hope for the continued growth and expansion of the existing relations of cooperation and partnership in service of mutual interests and benefits. -ONA

DEEP LEGAL INSIGHT

YLAW appoints Abdullah Al Jabri as a partner

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Younis Al Amri and Sayed Taher Advocates & Solicitors (YLAW) announces the appointment of Abdullah Mohamed Al Jabri as a partner.

Mr. Al Jabri is a respected figure in the legal fraternity across Oman with an extensive career spanning over three decades.

His expertise is rooted in his high hierarchy role within the Public Prosecution and top management in the Royal Oman Police, where he oversaw critical departments in legal affairs, criminal intelligence, civil status, and information technology.

He was called to serve as Head of Asset Quality Management at a leading commercial bank in Mus-



Abdullah Mohamed Al Jabri.

cat and currently serves as a Board Member of the Arab Federation for Digital Economy.

Mr. Al Jabri inclusion in YLAW

brings a strong and deep legal insight, public policy experience, and organisational leadership, enriching the legal practice capabilities in criminal litigation, regulatory advisory, and governance matters.

YLAW is a comprehensive law firm known for its strong capabilities across commercial litigation, corporate advisory, and commercial legal services. The firm is highly regarded for handling high-stakes dispute resolution arising from arbitration agreements and complex criminal cases. The appointment of Mr. Al Jabri further strengthens YLAW's strategic vision to deliver exceptional legal services across Oman.

Contact Law firm - admin@anlawoman.com, Ph - +268-24473212

GREEN HYDROGEN

Hydrogen Fuel Station a step towards sustainable energy

Times News Service

MUSCAT: A Hydrogen Fuel Station was inaugurated by Shell Oman near Muscat International Airport on Thursday.

It is the first station in the Middle East to combine the production, distribution, and packaging of green hydrogen at one location, utilising solar energy electrolysis technology to generate about 130 kg per day of green hydrogen.

The station was inaugurated as Shell's Gift to Homeland in its sixth edition, to advance sustainable mobility solutions in Oman, aligning with Oman's Vision 2040 and Carbon Neutral 2050 plans.

This station also offers additional options including fast charging for electric vehicles and conventional fuelling, thus, supporting the energy transformation efforts and infrastructure readiness for sustainable transport.

As part of the Oman Institute for Energy's renewable energy training programme in Muscat, a group of professionals and specialists from Muscat Governorate and Muscat Municipality visited the fuel station.

During this visit, the participants were briefed on the station's components and technologies.

This visit aimed to link theoretical



training with practical application, introduce participants to the support of green hydrogen for sustainability, and achieve carbon neutrality by 2050.

The aim is to highlight the effective partnership between the government and private sectors to implement modern energy projects.

It incentivised local competencies to explore innovation opportunities in clean energy, confirming the strategic role of Muscat Governorate in supporting national projects supporting Oman's Vision 2040.

This visit was part of the three-day professionals' programme.

It focused on five key topics, specifically, future energy mix, decarbonisation, hydrogen, carbon capture and storage, renewable energy

sources, case studies and potential opportunities to Oman.

This programme aims to enable participants to increase their knowledge in energy transition, sustainability, energy efficiency, and modern energy technologies.

This programme kicked off with a training programme for Muscat Governorate's government executive officers, attended by Sayyid Saud bin Hilal Al Busaidi, Governor of Muscat, Their Excellencies the Walis, and several Directors-General and officials in the municipal sector.

The programme reflects the Muscat Governorate's pivotal role in supporting national initiatives for renewable energy through infrastructure and urban services to empower modern energy projects.

Invitation to Tender

Shell Oman Marketing Company SAOG ("SOM") is inviting qualified and interested parties to submit bids for the acquisition of its trade and storage fixed assets located at Mina Al Fahal, Muscat, Sultanate of Oman (MAF) terminal, a strategic coastal facility that has served Oman's downstream sector for over six decades. The assets available for acquisition include a number of refined petroleum product storage tanks of various capacities with total capacity of 123,000 MT, A Single Buoy Mooring (SBM), A network of undersea and above-ground pipelines, and supporting infrastructure including office and warehouse space. These assets are offered in "as-is" condition, located on a concession area leased from the Government of the Sultanate of Oman. The site's proximity to deep-water access and its established infrastructure present a unique opportunity for investment in petroleum trade, storage, and bunkering—contributing to Oman's logistics sector and national economic growth. Proceeds from the sale will be reinvested into strategic and sustainable growth initiatives aligned with SOM's future plans and **Oman Vision 2040**.

Tender Details

- **Tender No.:** SOM/T&S/MAF/1/2025
- **Tender Description:** Acquisition of SOM's Trade & Storage Fixed Assets in Mina Al Fahal
- **Tender Collection Period:** 21 September to 1 October 2025
- **Tender Fee (Non-refundable):** RO 1,000 (payable by cheque to Shell Oman Marketing Company SAOG)
- **Bid Bond:** 5% of the bid value
- **Bid Submission Deadline:** 30 October 2025, 11:30 AM
- **Mandatory Requirements:**
 - Trade Control Clearance
 - Approval from relevant authorities in the Government of the Sultanate of Oman on the acquisition and signing of the land lease.

Tender Management

SOM has appointed a third-party consultant to manage the tender process: Abu Timam Grant Thornton

All inquiries or bidders shall contact the Consultant for their offer, proposals and/or queries:

Mr. Kalhara Kathriarachchi, CFA
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JAWA'IZ BASMA 2025 CELEBRATES OMAN'S SOCIAL IMPACT CHAMPIONS



H.E. Sheikh Eng. Ibrahim bin Saeed bin Khalaf Al-Kharousi, Undersecretary for Heritage in the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism



Mohamed Issa Al Zadjali, Chairman of Muscat Media Group



Saud Al Jabri, ISC ICV Development Manager, Petroleum Development Oman



Raid Al Farsi



The Shabiba Jawa'iz Basma Awards 2025 honoured 28 winners across diverse categories, reflecting the breadth of Oman's social impact landscape.

MUSCAT: Muscat Media Group (MMG), in collaboration with Gulf Leaders Circle, hosted the inaugural Shabiba Jawa'iz Basma 2025 at the St. Regis Al Mouj Muscat Resort, celebrating exceptional contributions to Oman's social, environmental and economic well-being. The event was held under the patronage of H.E. Sheikh Eng. Ibrahim bin Saeed bin Khalaf Al-Kharousi, Undersecretary for Heritage in the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, and attended by senior government officials, private

sector leaders and representatives of society. In his welcome address, Mohamed Issa Al Zadjali, Chairman of Muscat Media Group, highlighted the vision of the awards: "The Shabiba Jawa'iz Basma Awards are not merely a ceremony to honour individuals and institutions; they are a platform to recognize true giving that has transformed ideas into influential projects and translated values into effective initiatives. These achievements embody Oman Vision 2040, and each winner

is a role model whose 'fingerprint' will remain a source of inspiration for generations to come." The evening featured a keynote speech by Saud Al Jabri, In-Country Value Development Manager at Petroleum Development Oman (PDO), who reflected on PDO's journey in local value creation and underscored the importance of collective responsibility. He stated that in the past, success was measured by profit margins but today, true success is measured by our ability to improve lives, create opportunities for youth, and protect the environment for future generations. He further added that honoring the winners is not only a celebration of their achievements, but an inspiration for all of us to continue working for a stronger and more sustainable Oman. The Shabiba Jawa'iz Basma Awards 2025 honoured 28 winners across diverse categories, reflecting the breadth of Oman's social impact landscape. The event was supported by Al Mouj, Bahar and Floward.

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JAWA'IZ BASMA AWARDS 2025 WINNERS

- Leadership in Sustainable Business Practice — MHD ACERE
- Community Development & Empowerment Initiative — Al Mouj
- Social Entrepreneurship Initiative — OQGN
- Leadership in ESG — Oman Qatar Insurance Company
- Community Education Initiative — OOREDOO
- Leadership in CSR in Banking — Bank Muscat
- In Country Value (ICV) Initiative — Petroleum Development Oman
- Community Impact Initiative — Development Bank
- Green Mobility Award — JETOUR - MHD
- Environment Protection Initiative — Shell Oman Marketing
- Sustainable Furniture Innovation — ID DESIGN
- Community Impact Initiative in Retail — Sultan Center
- Leadership in Safety & Security Services — Safety & Security Organization
- Social Impact Organization of The Year — Dar Al Atta'a
- Community Healthcare Initiative — Whispers of Serenity Clinic
- Environmental Advocacy and Action Initiative — Environment Society of Oman
- Oman's Young Sustainability Champions — ABA Oman International School
- Clean Energy Initiative — Birba Energy
- Leadership in Sustainable Business Practice in Telecom — AWASR
- SMEs Development Initiative — Sharakah
- Women Empowerment Initiative — Lahunna
- Leadership in In-Country Value (ICV) - Law Sector — Abdullah AlMoshyqri Advocates and Legal Consultants
- Leadership in CSR in Car Rental Services — Europcar
- First Aid & Safety Advocacy — Paramedics Oman
- Specialty-abled Support Initiative — Sign Book Oman
- Public Engagement Initiative — Voluntary Jamaa Team
- Safety Awareness & Education Initiative — E3tam Beslamtic
- Social Impact in Capacity Building — Al Manahil Foundation



Leadership in Sustainable Business Practice — MHD ACERE



Community Development & Empowerment Initiative — Al Mouj



Social Entrepreneurship Initiative — OQGN



Leadership in ESG — Oman Qatar Insurance Company S.A.O.G



Community Education Initiative — OOREDOO



Leadership in CSR in Banking — Bank Muscat



In Country Value (ICV) Initiative — Petroleum Development Oman



Community Impact Initiative — Development Bank



Green Mobility Award — JETOUR - MHD



Environment Protection Initiative — Shell Oman Marketing



Sustainable Furniture Innovation — ID DESIGN



Community Impact Initiative in Retail — Sultan Center



Leadership in Safety & Security Services — Safety & Security Organization



Social Impact Organization of The Year — Dar Al Atta'a



Community Healthcare Initiative — Whispers of Serenity Clinic



Environmental Advocacy and Action Initiative — Environment Society of Oman



Oman's Young Sustainability Champions — ABA Oman International School



Clean Energy Initiative — Birba Energy



Leadership in Sustainable Business Practice in Telecom — AWASR



SMEs Development Initiative — Sharakah



Women Empowerment Initiative — Lahunna



Leadership in In-Country Value (ICV) - Law Sector — Abdullah AlMoshyqri Advocates and Legal Consultants



Leadership in CSR in Car Rental Services — Europcar



First Aid & Safety Advocacy — Paramedics Oman



Specialty-abled Support Initiative — Sign Book Oman



Public Engagement Initiative — Voluntary Jamaa Team



Safety Awareness & Education Initiative — E3tam Beslamtic



Social Impact in Capacity Building — Al Manahil Foundation

SUPREME COMMANDER VISITS FIRAQ FORCES COMMAND



HM unveiled the plaque, marking the official opening of the building of the Firqah Forces

SALALAH: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Supreme Commander, on Thursday went on a visit to the Royal Army of Oman's Firqah Forces command.

During the visit, His Majesty inaugurated the Firqah Forces command building at the Ngour Sahalnoot Camp, Governorate of Dhofar.

Upon his arrival at the Ngour Sahalnoot Camp, His Majesty was welcomed by Maj. Gen Mattar bin Salim Al Balushi, Commander of the Royal Army of Oman, and the

Commander of the Firqah Forces. Senior officers of the Firqah Forces shook hands with His Majesty the Supreme Commander.

Then, His Majesty unveiled the commemorative plaque, marking the official inauguration of the new building of the Firqah Forces command.

He listened to a briefing about the roles and national duties carried out by the Firqah Forces.

After the briefing, a commemorative photo was taken of His Maj-

esty the Supreme Commander with the Firqah Forces officers. His Majesty went on tour of an exhibition, where he was shown military equipment and devices. Then, His Majesty listened to a brief account of various field training methods.

He also took note of field training exercises carried out by the Firqah Forces, with support from segments of other RAO units and the Royal Air Force of Oman (RAFO).

The event concluded with a "Haboot" performance, featuring anthems of loyalty and gratitude to His Majesty the Sultan.

The troops performed a military salute to His Majesty the Supreme Commander. They chanted thrice "Long live His Majesty the Sultan, the Supreme Commander." His Majesty then left the Ngour Sahalnoot Camp. — **ONA**



SPORTS

We showed great character against world’s No.1 team: Oman skipper

Oman may not have beaten India, but they walked away with pride intact on Friday. From Aamir Kaleem and Hammad Mirza’s half-centuries to a post-match pep talk from India skipper Suryakumar Yadav, the night in Abu Dhabi gave them belief ahead of the T20 World Cup qualifiers next month

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman may have lost to world champions India by 21 runs in their concluding Asia Cup Group A clash in Abu Dhabi on Friday, but their spirited performance earned admiration across the board.

On a night when many expected India to dominate, Oman’s grit and discipline won respect — not just from their captain Jatinder Singh, but also from Indian skipper Suryakumar Yadav and Player of the Match Sanju Samson.

Chasing 189, Oman fought valiantly to reach 167 for 4, thanks to two half-centuries from veteran Aamir Kaleem (64) and Hammad Mirza (51). Their partnerships kept the game alive until the final overs, drawing applause from the Zayed Cricket Stadium crowd.

India’s innings had earlier been anchored by Samson’s elegant 56 off 45 balls, supported by Abhishek Sharma’s explosive 38 from just 15 deliveries.

Yet, India never had things their way. Oman’s bowlers, led by Shah Faisal (2 for 23), Kaleem (2 for 31) and Jitenkumar Ramanandi (2 for 33), stuck to their plans to restrict them to 188 for 8.

Jatinder’s pride in his team
Captain Jatinder Singh was effusive in his praise. “I am extremely proud of the unit. They had their plans and executed them well. The boys have shown great character in front of the world’s No.1 team. We lack a little experience and exposure, but this game was a blessing in disguise,” he said.

With the ICC T20 Asia & East-Asia-Pacific (EAP) World Cup Qualifier set for Muscat next month, Jatinder believes the timing of such exposure is perfect. “We have a World Cup qualifier happening in October and the boys are ready,” he added.

Under coach Duleep Mendis, Oman will target qualification for their fourth ICC T20 World Cup and second in succession.

Jatinder singled out Kaleem, 43, for his evergreen energy and skills against India. “He’s the most energetic on the field or at training,” said the skipper. “He’s the most disciplined guy, even though he’s 40-plus. On the field, he’s electrifying. He brings great energy, and we’re so grateful he’s part of our team.”

All-rounder Ramanandi also drew his captain’s appreciation. “He’s a utility player and a team man. The way he shows up, the energy he passes on — it’s really commendable.”

Respect from India’s stars
India skipper Suryakumar Yadav was equally generous in his praise. “Oman played an unbelievable brand of cricket. Knowing their coach, I knew there would be something from them. It was amazing — I really enjoyed watching them bat,” he remarked.

But Yadav’s respect went beyond words. After the match, the Indian captain made his way to the Oman dugout, where he spent several minutes speaking to the players.

Jatinder described it as a memorable experience for his young team. “I am so thankful that he



came and had a chat with the boys. He was talking about different phases of the game, how to stay calm, how to play T20 cricket smartly. The boys heard him with full attention. He was really praising the Oman team. It meant so much to us,” said Jatinder.

Yadav said he wanted Oman to take confidence from their display. “The kind of energy they showed on the field, the way they bowled and batted — it tells me this team is ready for bigger challenges. They should believe they belong here. I told them that if they carry this same spirit into the World Cup qualifiers, they will be tough to beat,” he said.

Sanju Samson, who top-scored for India, also credited Oman for making the contest tough. “They bowled really well, especially in the powerplay,” he said.

Jatinder also hopes that the next step would be to get some exposure in domestic tournaments in India, or the chance to train in a high-performance environment somewhere.

“If we can get India coming forward, and allow us to make their home as our home, where we can train there, go to the National Cricket Academy (NCA) and work with skilled trainers, work on the mental aspect, fitness, it’ll be great,” he said. “Also, the exposure against club teams, matches

against Ranji teams - that’ll definitely help us fill the gap.”

Building for the future
Despite going winless in the tournament on their debut, Jatinder saw more positives than negatives. “This was a perfect platform for the boys to see where they stood, and they did not hold anything back. As an Associate nation, we don’t get to play Test teams often, so we are fortunate to get to this stage,” he said.

Oman may not have secured a win in Abu Dhabi, but they walked away with pride intact and belief strengthened. From disciplined bowling to fearless batting under

pressure, they showed they can compete with the very best.

Having concluded their maiden Asia Cup winless, the focus shifts homeward for Oman — to the Asia and East Asia Pacific World Cup qualifier, which will feature nine teams and be played at the Oman Cricket Academy ground in Al Amerat from October 8.

The top three teams will qualify for the 2026 ICC Men’s T20 World Cup.

Brief scores: India 188 for 8 (Sanju Samson 56, Abhishek Sharma 38; Shah Faisal 2-23, Aamir Kaleem 2-31, Jitenkumar Ramanandi 2-33) beat Oman 167 for 4 (Kaleem 64, Hammad Mirza 51) by 21 runs.



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*Specifications as provided by Toyota Motor Corporation and GSO Certificate

REFINERY PRODUCTION RISES

Total refinery production in Oman grew by 1.6 percent while automotive fuel production rose by 20 percent until the end of July 2025. Preliminary statistics issued by NCSI showed that the production of regular motor fuel (M91) rose by 8.3 percent to reach 10.87 million barrels until the end of July 2025. > **B2**

MARKET
BUSINESS & FINANCE



MSX RESUMES UPWARD TREND

The Muscat Stock Exchange's main index resumed its upward trend last week after a one-week decline, supported by banking, energy, and industrial stocks, with local investment funds and institutions buying. > **B2**

MCD Rulebook to strengthen Oman's regulatory framework

The MCD Rulebook governs all of Muscat Clearing & Depository's (MCD) business activities and services provided to investors and stakeholders of the Muscat Stock Exchange



of Oman's capital market, Muscat Clearing & Depository (MCD) has officially announced the approval and implementation of its Internal Regulatory Rulebook. The "MCD Rulebook" governs all of MCD's business activities and services provided to investors and stakeholders of the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX), in accordance with Royal Decree No. 82/98 establishing MCD, and the regulatory framework set by the Financial Services Authority (FSA).

The Rulebook serves as a comprehensive legal reference for all MCD's operations. It clearly defines the rights, obligations, and responsibilities of both MCD by promoting transparency and consistency across the capital market ecosystem. This initiative addresses key requirements previously raised by rating agencies and foreign investors, and thereby strengthening legal certainty and promoting fairness within Oman's capital market.

Developed in collaboration with a leading international consultancy specialized in clearing and settlement services, the Rulebook reflects international best practices and adheres to Royal Decree No. 46/2022 (Securities Law). It also forms a core component of MCD's Five-Year Strategy (2024-2028) and supports the national objectives outlined in Oman Vision 2040. The "MCD Rulebook" includes general provisions governing services, operational workflows, roles

and responsibilities, dispute resolution, liability, and indemnification. It also sets out detailed criteria for MCD membership, the use of the Central Securities Depository (CSD) system, securities account management, record-keeping of the central registry, pledges and liens, collateral management, and enforcement mechanisms. In addition, it provides a detailed guide to all clearing, settlement, depository, and corporate action services, as well as the recently launched Securities Lending and Borrowing (SLB) framework. Mohammed Al Abri, CEO of MCD, stated: "MCD's services have seen substantial advancement in recent years, particularly with the adoption of digital technologies and the introduction of new services that enhance market efficiency and attract foreign investment. The new Rulebook reinforces our commitment to transparency, professionalism, and effective communication with all stakeholders. For the first time, all

relevant regulatory provisions are consolidated into a single, accessible document that will serve as the authoritative reference for our operations. We also encourage stakeholders and market participants to provide feedback through our official channels, helping us continuously enhance our services." The development of the "MCD Rulebook" involved extensive consultation with key stakeholders, including the FSA, Muscat Stock Exchange, Ministry of Finance, Central Bank of Oman, brokerage firms, custodians, listed companies, and investment institutions. The "MCD Rulebook" is available in both Arabic and English on the company's official website (www.mcd.om) and will undergo periodic review to incorporate new regulations, services, and market requirements. This initiative underscores MCD's commitment to regulatory transparency, market resilience, and proactive stakeholder engagement in advancing Oman's capital market. -ONA

FINANCIAL SERVICES AUTHORITY



Oman mandates full adoption of IFRS sustainability standards by 2029

MUSCAT: Abdullah Al Salmi, Executive President of the Financial Services Authority (FSA), announced the Authority's plan to adopt a phased implementation of the International Financial Reporting Standards for sustainability-related disclosures (IFRS S1 and IFRS S2) in the Sultanate of Oman. These standards, issued by the International Sustainability Standards Board (ISSB) in June 2023, are among the first global frameworks for sustainability-related financial disclosures. He confirmed that the Authority has set 2029 as the final deadline for full mandatory implementation of these standards across all private sector institutions in Oman that apply the full IFRS accounting framework. Speaking exclusively to Oman News Agency, Al Salmi explained that this step comes as part of the efforts of the Financial Services Authority (FSA) to strengthen transparency, advance sustainability practices among private sector institutions operating in Oman, and align them with international standards and climate accountability requirements. He added that the Authority's development of a comprehensive roadmap for implementing the two standards is part of the national strategy to align the non-banking financial sector with the requirements of green and sustainable finance, in addition to its mandate of regulating the accounting and auditing profession in line with Royal Decree No. 20/2024. Al Salmi emphasised that this initiative also supports the achievement of Oman Vision 2040 targets and the National

Strategy for an orderly and gradual transition to net zero, while contributing to the development of a legislative and regulatory framework that supports sustainability. He explained that IFRS S1 and IFRS S2 are the first two global sustainability disclosure standards. IFRS S1 sets out the general requirements for disclosures of sustainability-related risks and opportunities, while IFRS S2 focuses specifically on climate-related risks and opportunities. Together, they aim to enhance transparency and provide investors with consistent and comparable information on companies' performance in environmental, social, and governance (ESG) areas. He further stated that in the coming period, the Authority will conduct consultations with key stakeholders, including Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, Oman Investment Authority, Environment Authority, Oman Net Zero Centre, as well as other regulatory bodies, professional associations and institutions covered by the standards in the initial stages. Al Salmi highlighted that under the phased implementation plan, the FSA will launch specialised awareness and capacity-building programmes across the sectors it regulates, ensuring market readiness for the gradual transition leading to full adoption by 2029. This reflects the Authority's regulatory and supervisory role in developing Oman's non-banking financial markets and in establishing a legislative framework that supports sustainability in line with global trends and Oman's environmental and economic commitments. -ONA

IN MAHOUT

Production of silica sand project begins

MUSCAT: Minerals Development Oman (MDO), in collaboration with the Earth Sciences Consultancy Centre, has announced the commencement of production at the Silica Sand Project located in the Wilayat of Mahout within exploration block F51. This strategic milestone aims to support the growth of Oman's mining sector and strengthen downstream industries in Oman. The project covers an area of approximately 5 square kilometers, with confirmed silica sand reserves estimated at around 47 million tonnes. The current phase focuses on the production and supply of raw silica to both local and regional markets, addressing the growing demand and reducing reliance on imports. This will further establish Oman as a reliable regional supplier of this strategic industrial mineral. This initiative aligns with MDO's broader strategy to foster partnerships with the private sector, develop national mineral resources, and



advance value chain integration. In future phases, this partnership plans to develop a primary silica processing facility to enhance product quality and attract high-tech industries such as semiconductors, glass manufacturing, chemical processing, and metallurgical applications. All these efforts will contribute to the development of sustainable local value chains and advanced industrial growth in Oman. The Earth Sciences Consultancy Center will lead the operational

and developmental aspects of the project, including investment and production management, while MDO will serve as the resource owner and overall project overseer. According to the approved development plan, initial production capacity is expected to reach 100,000 tonnes annually, with a purity level of approximately 98%. Eng. Matar bin Salim Al Badi, CEO of Minerals Development Oman, emphasised that the commencement of production at the Mahout Silica Sand Project repre-

sents a "significant strategic step" in strengthening the mining sector and supporting national industries. He noted that the project goes beyond mere raw material extraction, representing a long-term investment in Oman's economy and reflecting MDO's commitment to empowering Omani companies and fostering sustainable private sector growth. He added, "By developing raw silica and expanding into value-added products, we aim to unlock new markets locally and regionally, and firmly establish Oman as a trusted supplier of critical materials for advanced industries." Dr. Mohammed bin Hilal Al Kindi, CEO of the Earth Sciences Consultancy Center, stated that the center will lead project operations and development to ensure optimal economic and industrial returns for the Sultanate of Oman. He described the project as a sound investment in Oman's natural resources and a platform for sustainable industrial growth. -ONA

GROWING INTEREST IN INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Opaz delegation holds meetings in London

LONDON: A delegation from the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (Opaz), headed by Sheikh Dr. Ali bin Masoud Al Sunaidy, Chairman of the Authority, held a series of meetings in the British capital, London. The delegation included officials from various economic zones and free zones. During the meetings, investment opportunities in various industrial clusters were presented, especially in the pharmaceutical, plastic, food, and green industries, as well as in mining industries and real estate development in economic zones. The visit also included meetings with investors to explore modern technologies related to renewable energy industries, as well as re-export activities, storage, and supply chains. The Authority organised a specialised workshop at the British-Omani Society headquarters, where the incentives and com-



petitive advantages provided by the special economic zones, free zones, and industrial cities in the Sultanate of Oman were discussed. In the same context, the delegation met with experts and specialists in real estate development within the economic zones and housing solutions for workers in these areas.

Meetings were also held with officials from funding bodies related to supply chains for renewable energy industries, discussing ways to provide competitive financing for major strategic factories. Additionally, the delegation participated in the Logistics Conference held in London in partnership with the Embassy of the

Sultanate of Oman, the Ministry of Transport, Communications, and Information Technology, and Asyad Group. Emphasis was laid on the opportunities available in the logistics sector through the advanced infrastructure provided by the free zones and their adjacent ports. At the conclusion of the visit, Sheikh Dr. Ali bin Masoud Al Sunaidy confirmed that the bilateral meetings with the British business community reflected the growing interest in investment opportunities in Oman. He added that the Authority aimed, through this visit, to build strategic partnerships that enhance the competitiveness of Oman's economic zones, attract future industries, reduce the import of production inputs for large factories, and support the priorities of economic diversification, particularly in the industrial clusters that have been identified. -ONA

CEO DATA

Credit granted by banking sector tops OMR34bn

MUSCAT: The total credit granted by the banking sector in the Sultanate of Oman increased by 8.9 percent to reach OMR34.1 billion by the end of July 2025. Data released by the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) showed that credit to the private sector grew by 6.4 percent, reaching OMR 27.9 billion by the end of July 2025. Data on the distribution of

credit granted to the private sector across various sectors by the end of last July indicated that the non-financial corporate sector accounted for the largest share, at 46.6 percent, followed by the individual sector at 44.8 percent. The remaining share was distributed among the financial corporate sector at 5.7 percent and other sectors at 2.9 percent.

Meanwhile, total deposits in the banking sector grew by 6.1 percent, reaching OMR 32.9 billion by the end of July 2025. Within this total, private sector deposits in the banking system increased by 5.8 percent to reach OMR 21.9 billion by the end of July 2025. When looking at the distribution of the total private sector de-

posit base across various sectors, statistics show that the individual sector accounted for the largest share, amounting to approximately 51.0 percent, followed by the non-financial corporate sector and the financial corporate sector, with shares amounting to 29.4 percent and 17.6 percent, respectively. The remaining 2.3 percent was distributed among other sectors. -ONA



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Sayyid Bilarab leads delegation at Oman’s pavilion in Japan



His Highness

was welcomed on arrival by Yoshitaka Ito, Minister for the 2025 World Expo, alongside senior Japanese government officials

OSAKA: At the behest of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, His Highness Sayyid Bilarab bin Haitham Al Said led the Omani delegation at the National Day celebration of the Sultanate of Oman Pavilion at Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan, earlier on Saturday.

His Highness was welcomed upon arrival by Yoshitaka Ito, Minister for the 2025 World Expo, alongside senior Japanese government officials.

HH Sayyid Bilarab signed the Expo 2025 Osaka VIP guestbook and attended a ceremony held in his honor at the Yumeshimanaka Hall, where he participated in a traditional Japanese tea ceremony.

The event opened with the raising of the Omani flag in the expo's main square and the playing of the Royal Anthem of the Sultanate of Oman and the National Anthem of Japan, underscoring the strong bilateral ties between the two nations.

Oman - Japan Relationship
In his address, Minister Yoshitaka Ito highlighted the enduring relationship between Oman and Japan, noting their shared history and ongoing bilateral cooperation. He emphasized the significance of the Oman Pavilion's theme, "Earth, Water, and Humanity," which showcases a vision of future society living in harmony with nature. Minister Ito expressed his hope that the Expo would help share Oman's unique appeal with Japan and the world.

Sayyid Said bin Sultan Al Bu-saidi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Youth for Culture and Commissioner-General of the Oman Pavilion, emphasized that Oman's participation reflects the nation's achievements during its ongoing renaissance—a period marked by extending ties with diverse cultures, inspired by a history of tolerance and civilizational exchange. He noted that Oman's spirit of interaction stems from water, earth, and humanity, enabling its people to share their identity, culture, and values of peace while embracing global cultures.

National Day ceremony
He further explained that the National Day ceremony symbolizes Oman's deep connections to these elements and emphasizes the importance of intercultural communication. The design of the Oman Pavilion, he added, is a result of the creativity of Omani youth—a winning project from the HH Sayyid Bilarab bin Haitham Award for Architectural Design, which encourages innovation and connects Omani architectural identity with future aspirations.

"Through the Expo, Oman cel-

brates its culture and builds bridges of communication with the world," he said. "The Pavilion offers an interactive, informative, and welcoming space where visitors can connect with the themes of earth, water, and humanity, and explore our shared commitment to harmonious coexistence with nature."

The ceremony featured a musical performance by the Royal Cavalry Music Band, including their specially composed Expo 2025 piece, as well as traditional Omani melodies. The program also included a piece from the Japanese animated fantasy film "Always With Me".

Traditional Omani folk arts—including Al Azi, Al Razha, and Al Midan—were staged, along with a sign language performance expressing national belonging.

His Highness then toured the Oman Pavilion, beginning with the Water Corridor, which connects the interior exhibition halls with the exterior space and features curated inscriptions from Omani and Japanese heritage on water culture.

In the Earth and Water Hall, HH Sayyid Bilarab viewed an audiovisual presentation depicting the origins of natural life in Oman through the interaction of water and earth, showcasing the nation's diverse flora and fauna.

The ceremony concluded with an exchange of commemorative gifts, including a presentation to His Highness from the Japanese government by Minister Ito.

This event is part of a broader program of over thirty activities organized by Oman throughout its participation in Expo Osaka 2025, aimed at introducing the country's history, culture, and initiatives in sustainability, energy, and innovation.

The ceremony was attended by senior officials from Oman, Japan, and other friendly nations.

Later, HH Sayyid Bilarab and his delegation visited the Japan Pavilion, where they were received by Director Noriyuki Kuroda. His Highness was briefed on the pavilion's design and explored its sections dedicated to earth, farming, and industry, gaining insight into Japan's cultural and technological identity.

Japan Pavilion's VIP guestbook
Before departing, HH Sayyid Bilarab signed the Japan Pavilion's VIP guestbook.

The Oman Pavilion has welcomed around one million visitors to date, who have experienced its narrative of continuity and sustainability through immersive and historical exhibits.

The Pavilion continues to host cultural and artistic events, including traditional fashion displays with contemporary elements, highlighting Oman's national identity and fostering cultural dialogue with Japanese and international visitors.

Oman Vision 2040
Aligned with Oman Vision 2040, the Pavilion emphasizes six key themes: communication and interaction, tourism, investment opportunities, cultural identity, international relations, and corporate collaboration.

Oman's participation in Expo 2025 Osaka represents a significant opportunity to promote cultural and technological exchange, showcase the nation's civilizational and economic progress, and celebrate its rich historical heritage. -ONA



T

SPORTS

HANDSHAKE ROW

Pycroft to stand as match referee in India vs Pakistan Super Fours game



DUBAI: Zimbabwean Andy Pycroft, who was at the centre of the handshake row when India and Pakistan met on September 14 at the Asia Cup, will be the match referee for the Super Fours fixture between the two teams in Dubai on Sunday as well.

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) had sought Pycroft's "immediate removal" after he had requested the captains Salman Agha and Suryakumar Yadav not to shake hands during the toss of the September 14 game.

Pycroft stayed, and the row

spilled over into Pakistan's next game, against UAE.

After they cancelled a pre-match press conference, Pakistan didn't arrive on schedule for the match, which had to be pushed back by an hour, as they conducted backroom talks with the ICC.

It wasn't until a late meeting between Pycroft and the Pakistan team management just prior to toss - which snowballed into another controversy - that Pakistan agreed to take the field.

It is in this backdrop that India and Pakistan square off again at

the Dubai International Stadium on Sunday, and Suryakumar made it clear that his team's focus was on the game and nothing else.

"I feel our preparations have been really good leading into the tournament. And we had three good games also," Suryakumar said on Saturday.

"So we are actually focusing on what we can do best. We want to follow all the good habits, which we've been doing in the last two-three games. And we'll take it one game at a time.

"But yeah, it doesn't give us an

edge because we played them once and we had a good game. Of course, it will be a good game. We'll have to start well from scratch. And whoever plays well will win the game."

Meanwhile, Pakistan cancelled another scheduled pre-match press conference, this one ahead of their Super Fours game against India. The reason for cancelling the press conference is not yet clear.

However, the team had a full training session at the ICC Academy in the lead up to the match. - Agencies

FORMULA ONE

Verstappen takes pole after record six red flags in Baku



BAKU: Red Bull's Max Verstappen took pole position on Saturday ahead of Williams' Carlos Sainz after an extraordinary qualifying session featuring a record six red flags at the Azerbaijan Grand Prix.

McLaren's championship rivals Oscar Piastri and Lando Norris will start seventh and ninth, the Australian after crashing in the final part of qualifying and Norris failing to produce a good final lap.

Sainz was on course for pole position after being the fastest of three drivers to set a time before Ferrari's Charles Leclerc crashed early in the final part of qualifying.

Piastri then crashed shortly after the session was restarted, and Verstappen was the only driver able to improve on Sainz's time when the session restarted for the final time with just over three minutes remaining.

Racing Bulls' Liam Lawson will start third, with the lap time he set behind Sainz in the first part of the session.

Mercedes drivers Kimi Antonelli and George Russell managed fifth and sixth fastest time

but the Italian faces an investigation for overtaking under yellow flags after one of many incidents in the session.

Ferrari's Lewis Hamilton was fastest in Friday practice but will start 12th after failing to progress from the second part of qualifying.

Norris had a golden opportunity to make up ground on Piastri, who has a 31-point advantage in the championship, after the Australian's crash at Turn Three in the middle of the final session.

But the Briton had a scrappy final lap, with lots of moments on the exits of corners and could only manage a time 1.122secs slower than Verstappen. He was also beaten by the second Red Bull of Yuki Tsunoda.

The second Racing Bull of Isack Hadjar, the other driver to set a time at the start of the session, was eighth, ahead of the crash drivers Piastri and Leclerc.

Verstappen said: "It was a very difficult session and on the last lap you just have to send it. I wasn't even on the best tyres I wanted because you just run out of tyres." - Agencies

Liverpool stay perfect after win over Everton

The Reds made it five from five with a 2-1 Merseyside derby victory, thanks to first-half strikes from Gravenberch and Ekitike



LONDON: Liverpool extended their flawless start to the Premier League season with a hard-fought 2-1 victory over Everton in the 247th Merseyside derby at Anfield on Saturday.

The win propelled the defending champions to the top of the table, maintaining their 100% record with five wins from five matches.

The Reds came out of the blocks quickly, asserting control early in the match.

In the 10th minute, Ryan Gravenberch opened the scoring with a superbly controlled half-volley from Mohamed Salah's precise pass. Gravenberch's deft touch left Everton goalkeeper Jordan Pickford with no chance.

Just 19 minutes later, Gravenberch turned provider, delivering a low cross into the box that Hugo Ekitike calmly slotted past Pickford to double Liverpool's lead.

Ekitike's composed finish un-

derscored his growing importance to the team, even with the high-profile arrival of Alexander Isak.

Everton, under pressure, regrouped after the break and found a way back into the match.

In the 58th minute, Jack Grealish delivered a pinpoint cross to Iliman Ndiaye, who squared the ball to Idrissa Gueye. Gueye unleashed a powerful rising drive that left Liverpool goalkeeper Alisson helpless, halving the deficit and reigniting the Toffees' hopes.

The goal injected new energy into Everton's play, and they

pushed forward in search of an equaliser. However, Liverpool's defense, led by Virgil van Dijk and Ibrahima Konaté, stood firm under pressure. Substitutes Curtis Jones and Florian Wirtz were introduced to help regain control in midfield, and their contributions were vital in stabilising the game.

Manager Arne Slot's decision to leave summer signings Wirtz and Isak on the bench highlighted the depth of Liverpool's squad.

Gravenberch and Ekitike, both of whom have been in excellent form this season, stepped up to deliver the crucial goals.

Slot's tactical acumen was evident as he managed the game effectively, making timely substitutions to maintain the team's momentum.

Ekitike is a natural finisher, and while Slot has suggested he could play off the left-flank, the £70m signing from Eintracht Frankfurt is making a powerful case to be used through the centre on a regular basis. Liverpool, as is their habit, made hard work of the second half as Everton improved, but once more they closed out the win to keep their place at the top of the table. - Agencies

GERMAN BUNDESLIGA

Kane strikes second hat-trick of season in Bayern's victory



MUNICH: : Harry Kane scored his second hat-trick of the season as Bayern Munich overcame a shaky start to win 4-1 at Hoffenheim and continue their 100% start to German Bundesliga on Saturday.

The England captain, 32, broke the deadlock on the stroke of half-time with a clinical first-time finish from a cleverly worked low corner, and doubled Bayern's lead from the spot after Albion Hajdari was harshly penalised for a handball.

That broke Hoffenheim's resistance and Kane completed his ninth Bundesliga hat-trick with another penalty, given for a foul on substitute Michael Olise after a video assistant referee (VAR) check.

This time Kane sent home keeper Oliver Baumann the wrong way for his 13th Bayern goal in seven matches across all competitions this season - adding to his Champions League double against Chelsea on Wednesday.

Hoffenheim had the better of the first 45 minutes, Fisnik Asllani only able to hit the post after goalkeeper

Manuel Neuer passed straight to the Kosovan. They eventually got some reward for their efforts, former West Ham full-back Vladimir Coufal's deflected free-kick beating Neuer to earn the Czech his first goal for the club.

Ex-Liverpool winger Luis Diaz hit the top of the bar late on as he failed to continue his record of scoring in every Bundesliga game this season, but Serge Gnabry added a fourth for Bayern with the last kick - converting a rebound from a tight angle after Baumann saved from Joshua Kimmich.

Nicolas Jackson made his first start since joining Bayern on an initial loan deal from Chelsea, but the Senegal striker had a very quiet game before being replaced in the 62nd minute.

Kane now has 13 goals this term, including eight in four Bundesliga fixtures. He has 98 goals in 103 games overall since joining Bayern in 2023. The hat-trick was his ninth for the club.

"Hat-trick Harry is what they called me in school," Kane told

DAZN, "that one kind of stuck when I was younger."

Kane has converted all 17 of his penalties in the Bundesliga. The England captain said keeping the streak alive "is not easy... I prepare a lot, I practise a lot. Any ball in the box, whether penalty or not, I back myself to hit the target."

In Hamburg, the promoted hosts beat lowly Heidenheim 2-1 to secure their first top-flight win in seven years and four months.

Hamburg had failed to score in three matches since returning to the Bundesliga this summer, but Luka Vuskovic tapped in a rebound from a free-kick just before the break. Arsenal loanee Fabio Vieira created Hamburg's second with half an hour to go, cutting the ball to Rayan Philippe who stroked the ball home. Heidenheim scored in stoppage time through Adam Koelle, which kick-started a wild end-to-end battle, but Hamburg held on.

Elsewhere, Freiburg won 3-0 at Werder Bremen and 10-man Mainz triumphed 4-1 at Augsburg. - Agencies

PLAYS AS KEEPER

Zidane's son switches allegiance to Algeria

PARIS: Luca Zidane, the son of France's World Cup-winning playmaker Zinedine, has switched his international allegiance from France to Algeria.

Born just outside Marseille, the 27-year-old goalkeeper had appeared for France at various youth levels.

The move, which was approved by FIFA, may enable Zidane to

follow in his father's footsteps by appearing at a World Cup, with Algeria expected to secure a place at the 2026 finals in North America in their qualifier against Somalia next month.

Zidane, who is the second of four brothers, all of whom came through the Real Madrid academy, currently plays for Spanish second tier side Granada.

He played two matches for Madrid and has La Liga experience at Rayo Vallecano, but dropped a level in 2022 to play for Eibar before heading to Andalusia in 2024.

He made his professional debut for Real Madrid in the 2017-18 season.

Zidane qualifies for the North African country through his father,

whose parents hailed from the Kabylie region of Algeria.

Zinedine Zidane, who is regarded as one of the game's greatest players scored twice for France in their 1998 World Cup final victory over Brazil, but was famously sent-off in the 2006 final for a headbutt challenge, which was won by Italy after a penalty shootout. - Agencies



Trump administration imposes \$100,000 annual fee on H-1B visas

This change could significantly impact Indian IT services companies like Infosys, TCS, and Wipro, which have historically used H-1B visas to bring junior and mid-level engineers to the US for client projects and skills development

WASHINGTON DC: The Trump administration has announced a massive increase in H-1B visa fees, imposing a \$100,000 annual charge that will fundamentally alter how American companies hire skilled foreign workers, particularly impacting Indian IT professionals who comprise the largest group of beneficiaries.

Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick revealed the changes during a Friday press call, describing the fee hike as a deliberate strategy to eliminate what the administration considers lower-skilled training positions while preserv-



ing opportunities for highly skilled workers.

The new \$100,000 annual fee represents a dramatic increase from current H-1B processing costs, which typically amount to a few thousand dollars. Companies will pay this fee on top of existing vetting charges, with the administration still deciding whether to collect the full amount upfront or annually.

"A company that wants to buy an H-1B visa... it's \$100,000 per year," Secretary Lutnick explained. The visa maintains its current structure: three years with one possible renewal for a total of six years.

The fee applies to all H-1B positions regardless of salary level or skill requirement, making the programme economically viable only for roles that justify the substantial cost.

The administration explicitly aims to eliminate what it calls "trainee programmes" - positions where companies hire less experi-

enced foreign workers for training and development on H-1B visas.

"No longer will you put trainees on an H-1B visa - it's just not economic anymore," Lutnick said. "If you're going to train people, you're going to train Americans."

This change could significantly impact Indian IT services companies like Infosys, TCS, and Wipro, which have historically used H-1B visas to bring junior and mid-level engineers to the US for client projects and skills development.

Indian nationals consistently receive the majority of H-1B approvals, with Indian IT companies among the largest sponsors. The fee increase threatens to reshape this landscape dramatically.

"If you have a very sophisticated engineer and you want to bring them in because they have expertise, then you can pay \$100,000 a year for your H-1B visa," Lutnick noted, suggesting the programme will now target only senior-level positions.

Secretary Lutnick claimed technology companies support the changes because they provide certainty and speed in processing applications. He said discussions with "hundreds of companies" informed the \$100,000 fee structure.

"They are very happy about it, because they would like a process that is known, that is clear and that is swift," he said of company responses.

However, the substantial cost increase will likely make companies far more selective about which positions warrant H-1B sponsorship, potentially reducing overall applications despite maintained visa caps.

The administration emphasised that H-1B visa quotas remain unchanged - the programme will issue the same number of visas but expects fewer applications due to cost barriers. Current annual limits stand at 65,000 regular H-1B visas plus 20,000 for advanced degree holders from US universities.

"Remember, these are the same cap, it's the same visa. There'll just be less of them issued because they used to be free, and now they cost USD 100,000," Lutnick explained.

The new fees will be implemented alongside enhanced vetting procedures by the Department of Homeland Security. While no specific start date was announced, the administration indicated changes would roll out within weeks of the current announcement.

Companies with existing H-1B workers may face immediate impacts when renewal periods arrive, as the new fee structure will apply to all applications processed after implementation. — ANI

Tech giants urge H-1B holders to stay in US after Trump's visa overhaul

WASHINGTON DC: Amid the looming implementation of US President Donald Trump's overhaul of the H-1B visa programme, tech giants Amazon and Microsoft on Saturday advised their foreign employees holding H-1B and H-4 visas to immediately return to the United States and urged the H-1B holders to stay in the US "for the foreseeable future", according to internal communications seen by Reuters.

Internal notes circulated to staff

In internal notes circulated to staff, Amazon urged H-1B visa holders currently in the United States to remain in the country and advised those outside the US to return before the deadline date of 12:00 AM EDT on September 21, when the Trump administration's new rules are set to take effect.

"If you have H-1B status and are in the US, stay in the country for now," Amazon stated in a note.

"We recommend H-1B and H-4 visa holders return to the US before 12:00 AM EDT on

September 21," the company added.

Similarly, Microsoft issued an internal email advising caution, stating that H-1B and H-4 visa holders should stay in the US for the foreseeable future and strongly recommended they return before the deadline.

"H-1B visa holders should stay in the US for the foreseeable future," Microsoft said in its email.

"We also recommend H-4 visa holders remain in the US. We strongly recommend that all H-1B and H-4 visa holders return to the US by tomorrow, before the deadline," it added.

The warnings come in response to US President Donald Trump's new presidential proclamation titled "Restriction on Entry of Certain Nonimmigrant Workers", imposing a USD 100,000 annual fee on H-1B visa applications. The measure, effective from September 21, aims to combat what the administration calls widespread abuse of the H-1B programme, particularly by IT outsourcing firms accused of displacing American workers and suppressing wages. — ANI

TWO-STATE SOLUTION

UN Chief Guterres calls for immediate ceasefire in Gaza

NEW YORK: UN Secretary-General António Guterres affirmed his support for the two-state solution and urged immediate measures to address the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, saying, "The ongoing massacre in Gaza must end. We need an immediate ceasefire."

This came during his meeting with Under-Secretary-General for Global Communications Melissa Fleming last night. He affirmed that "peace and security will be a major focus of discussions at the UN high-level meetings next week," highlighting global crises such as wars, climate change, inequality, and technological risks.

International cooperation

Ahead of the start of the General Assembly's high-level week, Guterres called on world leaders to change course and enhance cooperation to address common challenges. "There is a sense of impunity, with each side believing they can do whatever they want," he said, emphasising that the United Nations is seeking, through several channels, to mobilise international cooperation to address these crises.

He noted that the suffering in Gaza has reached indescribable levels, with famine and the collapse of health services, and that



the scale of the destruction and loss of life is the worst since I took office.

34 Palestinians killed in past 24 hours

Meanwhile, in Gaza, at least 34 Palestinians were killed and 200 others injured in the Gaza Strip over the last 24 hours as the ongoing Israeli genocide in the region continues for the 23rd month in a row, according to medical sources.

Local health authorities confirmed that the Palestinian death toll from the Israeli onslaught since October 2023 has risen to 65,208 fatalities, with an additional 166,271 people sustaining injuries. The majority of the victims are women and children. — WAPA

LONDON, BERLIN AND BRUSSELS

Several major airports across Europe face disruptions due to cyberattack

LONDON: Operations at several major airports in Europe faced disruptions on Saturday after a cyberattack targeted the service provider for check-in and boarding systems.

Flights were delayed or cancelled at airports in London, Berlin and Brussels.

"There was a cyberattack on Friday night, 19 September, against the service provider for the check-in and boarding systems, affecting several European airports, including Brussels Airport," a statement shared on the website of Brussels Airport said.

"This has a large impact on the flight schedule and will, unfortunately, cause delays and cancellations of flights," the operator said.

"The service provider is actively working on the issue and trying to resolve the problem as quickly as possible."

The airport authorities advised the passengers with a flight scheduled for Saturday to confirm their travel with airlines before heading to the airport.

Service provider reports 'cyber-related disruption'

Meanwhile, airport service provider Collins Aerospace confirmed to AFP that multiple European airports, including those in Brussels, Berlin, and London



(Heathrow), were hit by "cyber-related disruption," which affected the check-in and baggage drop systems.

"We have become aware of a cyber-related disruption to our MUSE software in select airports," the aerospace firm said.

It added that the impact is "limited to electronic customer check-in and baggage drop and can be mitigated with manual check-in operations."

More airports in Europe report issues

Heathrow also warned of delays caused by "a technical issue" at a third-party supplier.

Meanwhile, Berlin's Branden-

burg Airport ran a banner on its website saying, "Due to a technical issue at a system provider operating across Europe, there are longer waiting times at check-in. We are working on a quick solution."

Saturday's apparent cyberattack comes a day after the airport in Russia's second-largest city, St. Petersburg, said that its website had been hacked.

Air India cautions passengers over possible check-in delays

Meanwhile in New Delhi, Air India on Saturday issued a travel advisory due to a cyberattack on a third-party service provider af-

fecting check-in and boarding systems at major European airports, including London's Heathrow.

This disruption may cause delays in the check-in process, but Air India's ground teams in London are working hard to minimise the inconvenience.

In an update posted on X, Air India said, "A third-party passenger system disruption at Heathrow may cause delays in the check-in process. Our ground teams in London are working to minimise inconvenience. Passengers flying with us from London today are advised to complete their web check-in before arriving at the airport to help ensure a smooth experience." — Agencies

MARITIME SECTOR

PM Modi says chips or ships, they must be Made in India

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated and laid the foundation stone of development works worth over Rs 34,200 crore in Bhavnagar, Gujarat, on Saturday.

Addressing the 'Samudra se Samridhhi' event, the Prime Minister welcomed all the dignitaries and the people.

"If India is to become a developed nation by 2047, it must become self-reliant, there is no alternative to self-reliance and that all 140 crore citizens must commit to the same resolve--whether it is chips or ships, they must be 'Made in India'," emphasised the Prime Minister, remarking that with this vision, India's maritime sector is now moving towards next-genera-

tion reforms.

He announced that from today, all major ports in the country will be freed from multiple documents and fragmented processes. The implementation of 'One Nation, One Document' and 'One Nation, One Port' Process will simplify trade and commerce.

PM Modi highlighted that during the recent Monsoon Session, several outdated laws from the colonial era were amended. He informed that a series of reforms have been initiated in the maritime sector, and five maritime laws have been introduced in a new form. These laws will bring major changes in shipping and port governance.

Acknowledging the birthday



wishes sent to him on September 17, stating that the affection received from the people is a great source of strength, the Prime Minister highlighted that the nation is observing Seva Pakhwada from Vishwakarma Jayanti to Gandhi

Jayanti, i.e., from 17th September to 2nd October.

He remarked that several service-oriented activities have taken place in Gujarat over the past 2-3 days. The Prime Minister noted that blood donation

camps have been organised at hundreds of locations, with one lakh individuals having donated blood so far. He added that cleanliness drives have been conducted across numerous cities, with lakhs of citizens actively participating. PM Modi informed that over 30,000 health camps have been set up across the state, providing medical check-ups and treatment to the public and women in particular. He extended his appreciation and gratitude to everyone involved in service activities across the country.

Prime Minister began by paying tribute to Krishnakumarsinh Ji, recalling his noble legacy and remarked that Krishnakumarsinh Ji made a significant contribution

to India's unity by aligning with the mission of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. He highlighted that inspired by such great patriots, the nation continues to strengthen the spirit of unity. The Prime Minister emphasised that the resolve of Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat, is being reinforced through these collective efforts.

Mentioning that he arrived in Bhavnagar at a time when the auspicious festival of Navratri is about to begin, Modi stated that due to the reduction in GST, markets will witness increased vibrancy and festive enthusiasm. In this celebratory atmosphere, the Prime Minister highlighted that the nation is celebrating a grand festival of Samudra se Samridhhi. — ANI

ROUND-UP

TRADERS EVENT

Milano marks 20 years, scales higher with Oman’s property surge

MUSCAT: The surge in Oman’s real estate activity has fuelled strong demand for sanitaryware and home improvement solutions, a sector forecasted to grow at around 5.3% CAGR in Oman over the coming years. Against this backdrop, Milano, the leading brand in bath & home solutions under the Danube Group, has re-inforced its commitment to Oman with a record-breaking gathering of more than 600 traders at its Milano Traders Event held at Shangri-La on September 19.

Real estate boom fuels demand for Milano
With property developments and luxury housing projects multiplying across the Sultanate, Milano has seen robust growth in sales of its bath, sanitaryware, and water heater ranges. Known for Italian-inspired designs and durability, the brand is playing a pivotal role in shaping Oman’s modern homes and commercial spaces.
Anis Sajjan, Vice Chairman of



Danube Group, said, “Oman has truly given wings to Milano and made it what it is today. The traders of Oman have been the reason behind our growth, and Milano Traders Events give us the opportunity to recognise their efforts while sharing our vision for the

future. The government recently granting me a 10-year visa is a testament to the deep connection I share with this country. Oman has become my second home after the UAE and India, and I am committed to taking my dreams even bigger here. The real estate boom is

not just reshaping the nation, it is inspiring us to grow alongside it, bringing world-class solutions to Omani homes and developments.” Sajjan added, “The dealers’ network was a huge hit as customers from all over Oman had come—be it Salalah, Nizwa, or

Sohar—which is a testimony that the brand is well accepted everywhere in Oman and our dealers want to be associated with it. With experience, I have learnt that business is not just about selling but about staying connected to our partners closely.”

Celebrating dealers and launching new products
The Milano Traders Event at Shangri-La was the largest of its kind in Oman, uniting dealers from across the Sultanate for an evening of recognition, new product launches, and networking. The highlight of the event was the unveiling of Milano’s new water heater collection, tailored specifically for the upcoming winter season—part of the brand’s strategy to support dealers with high-demand seasonal products.
In addition, Milano announced its latest dealer incentive program, revealing Japan as the next destination for its fully paid international trip. This continues

Milano’s tradition of rewarding top performers, following earlier trips to Switzerland, Italy, Georgia, and Sri Lanka.
Sahil Sajjan, Director of Milano, added, “Our brand is built on trust, and my vision is to take Milano to the next level as a truly global name in bath and home solutions. Oman is a vital part of that journey. Events like this give us the chance to connect directly with our dealer network, introduce new innovations, and empower them to capture the immense opportunities created by Oman’s booming property market.”
With growing demand comes the challenge of imitation products entering the market. Genuine Milano products come with warranties, after-sales service, and the assurance of internationally benchmarked standards. By combining innovation, quality, and a strong dealer ecosystem, Milano aims to consolidate its leadership position in Oman’s fast-expanding sanitaryware and home solutions market.

4Elements and bp Oman promote environmental sustainability at schools

Water for Earth, Water for Life project stands as a pioneering model of public-private partnership in serving both society and the environment



year, “Water for Earth, Water for Life”, which focused on installing wastewater treatment plants and irrigation systems in eight schools across Al Dahirah and Al Dakhiliyah regions, with the goal of treating wastewater and reusing it for irrigating trees within the school premises.
The initiative used Japan’s Johkasou technology from Kubota

and modern automated irrigation systems to enhance environmental sustainability by reusing treated water for irrigating school trees and gardens, thereby reducing the consumption of freshwater and expanding green spaces in the face of water scarcity challenges. In addition, it also indirectly instilled awareness among younger generations, highlighting the im-



portance of protecting the nation’s natural resources.
Eng. Moosa Al Khatri, General Manager of 4Elements further added: “The project has an important role in enhancing environmental awareness within the school community and represents an example of how private sector can contribute to civil society development. With

bp Oman’s support, these treatment systems feature a production capacity of 4.2 cubic meters per day, equivalent to thousands of litres of treated water annually. This contributes directly to reducing the consumption of freshwater, providing additional resources for irrigating school gardens, and supporting afforestation initiatives. And this fur-

ther reflects our nation adopting innovative environmental solutions to safeguard its water resources and protect the environment for future generations.”
Ibrahim Al Hinai, Social investment manager at bp Oman, Kuwait, and Qatar, commented: “Water for Earth, Water for Life project stands as a pioneering model of public-private partnership in serving both society and the environment. It is an important step toward a greener and more sustainable future within schools and local communities alike. The project will also include a practical learning platform through dedicated programmes for teachers and students on water treatment technologies and the importance of environmental conservation.”

OFFICIAL SPONSOR

Abraj Energy Services set to reinforce innovation at SPE Hydraulic Fracturing Conference



MUSCAT: Abraj Energy Services, Oman’s leading oil and gas services provider, announced its participation as the official sponsor of the Hydraulic Fracturing Technology Conference and Exhibition, scheduled to take place from 23 to 25 September in Muscat. The company will showcase its pioneering expertise and operational excellence in hydraulic fracturing, further strengthening its role as a trusted regional and international partner.
As the first company in the MENA region to introduce fully integrated fracturing services, Abraj

has set new benchmarks in efficiency, innovation, and safety. With a 33% share of Oman’s fracturing market, the company has delivered more than 399 jobs, achieving world-class results with a 98.6% efficiency rate and maintaining five consecutive years without a lost-time injury. These milestones reflect Abraj’s trusted role in providing safer, smarter, and more sustainable energy solutions.
During the conference, Abraj experts will also present a series of technical papers, sharing knowledge, best practices, and innovative approaches that are shaping

the future of well stimulation in the region.
In addition to SPE, Abraj will also participate as an official sponsor of the MEIRA Annual Conference 2025, the region’s largest and most influential investor relations gathering, taking place on 24–25 September at the Oman Convention & Exhibition Centre in Muscat. Through this strategic sponsorship, Abraj reaffirms its commitment to strengthening investor confidence in its long-term growth journey and reinforcing Oman’s capital market presence on the regional stage.

LEARNING BEYOND CLASSROOM

MCBS students explore legislative process at Oman’s State Council

MUSCAT: In a vibrant exchange of ideas and a significant step toward bridging academic learning with real-world governance, the State Council of Oman recently opened its doors to a delegation of enthusiastic Commercial Law students from Modern College of Business and Science (MCBS).
The tour provided an immersive journey into the heart of Omani legislative work, designed to inspire the next generation of leaders and promote a deeper appreciation for the nation’s democratic institutions.
The visit served as a practical, engaging extension of the students’ studies, bringing the theories of law, governance, and public administration to life within the very halls where national policies are debated and shaped.
The day’s agenda was crafted to provide a comprehensive and intimate look at the State Council’s operations. The students, a mix of enthusiastic legal minds and future business leaders, were first welcomed to a detailed awareness session. Here, senior officials from the Council shared invaluable insights into its crucial role as the upper house of Oman’s bicameral parliament. They detailed the Council’s extensive responsibilities, from scrutinizing draft laws



and development plans to offering expert recommendations on matters of national interest.
This opportunity allowed the students to grasp the intricate machinery of the state, understanding how every proposed law and policy is carefully deliberated to ensure it serves the best interests of the Omani people. “You read about these processes in textbooks, but to hear it directly from the people who live and breathe this work every day is an entirely different experience,” remarked Commercial Law student, Asma Al Barwani, clearly energised by the lecture.
Following the thought-provoking discussion, the delegation was led on a guided tour of the magnificent facilities. They walked

through the grand halls, sat in the very seats where esteemed members of the State Council convene, and absorbed the solemn atmosphere of the main session hall. This firsthand glimpse of the Council’s physical environment was more than just sightseeing; it was a chance to visualise the gravity and weight of the decisions made within those walls. The students’ faces were alit with curiosity as they absorbed every detail, from the impressive architectural design to the seamless integration of modern technology that facilitates the legislative process.
The visit culminated in a question-and-answer session where the students had the opportunity to engage directly with Council officials.

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+2 Full Bottles*

+30 E-coupons

30 OMR Only

+2 Full Bottles*

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