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HIS MAJESTY DISCUSSES REGIONAL STABILITY WITH TURKIYE, GERMANY

HM receives phone calls from Erdogan and Friedrich Merz over ongoing crises

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik received phone calls from President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of the Republic of Turkiye and Friedrich Merz, Chancellor of Germany on Sunday.

During the phone call from President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of the Republic of Turkiye, HM discussed the latest developments regarding the Israeli aggression against the Islamic Republic of Iran and its concerning repercussions in the region.

The two sides also exchanged views on ways to de-escalate tensions and reduce hostilities in a manner that safeguards the security and stability of nations while protecting the interests of their peoples.

The two sides emphasised the importance of prioritising dialogue and diplomacy, returning to the negotiating table, and adhering to the principles of international law as the optimal path to resolving conflicts and preventing the escalation of crises in the region.

Phone call from German Chancellor

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik also received a phone call from Friedrich Merz, Chancellor of Germany. >A2

Oman calls for intensifying diplomatic pressure

MUSCAT: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister held continuous consultations and communications with counterparts across Arab countries and the globe regarding Israel's heinous military aggression against the Islamic Republic of Iran and its serious security repercussions on the region. >A2

BOOST NATIONAL EMPLOYMENT

Oman tightens workforce rules for foreign investors

Times News Service

MUSCAT: In a significant move to bolster national employment and strengthen local workforce participation, the Ministry of Labour (MoL) has officially rolled out a comprehensive mechanism mandating the employment of at least one Omani national for every commercial registration that has completed one year of establishment. The directive, which targets various categories of businesses including foreign investment entities, comes as part of the broader labour market regulation reforms announced in early May 2025.

Foreign-owned businesses in Oman are now required to hire at least one Omani national within three months of completing a year of operations.

The MoL emphasised that failure to comply with this regulation will result in a comprehensive ban on these establishments, irrespective of the number of expatriate workers employed. Companies can either directly hire an Omani or submit a structured employment plan that leads to actual recruitment within the designated time frame. The mechanism was developed in collaboration with the Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion to ensure effective oversight of commercial registrations.

Establishments shall be granted a grace period not exceeding three months from the date of notification to rectify their status in accordance with the decision.

For larger businesses employing more than ten workers, the ministry has issued clear directives. These companies must also submit an employment plan or hire at least one Omani within three months from the date of notification. Non-compliant firms will face automatic restrictions on the issuance of new licenses, with enforcement carried out through the ministry's digital system.

Businesses employing fewer than ten individuals have been granted a six-month window to comply.

These establishments are expected to either recruit one Omani, submit a feasible employment plan, or undergo an assessment to determine their contribution to local value addition. >A2

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN

Airports handle over 4.7mn passengers

1 The total number of passengers travelling through Oman's airports by the end of April 2025 reached 4,701,055, marking a 4.1% decline compared to the same period in 2024, which recorded 4,901,855 passengers. >A3

OMAN

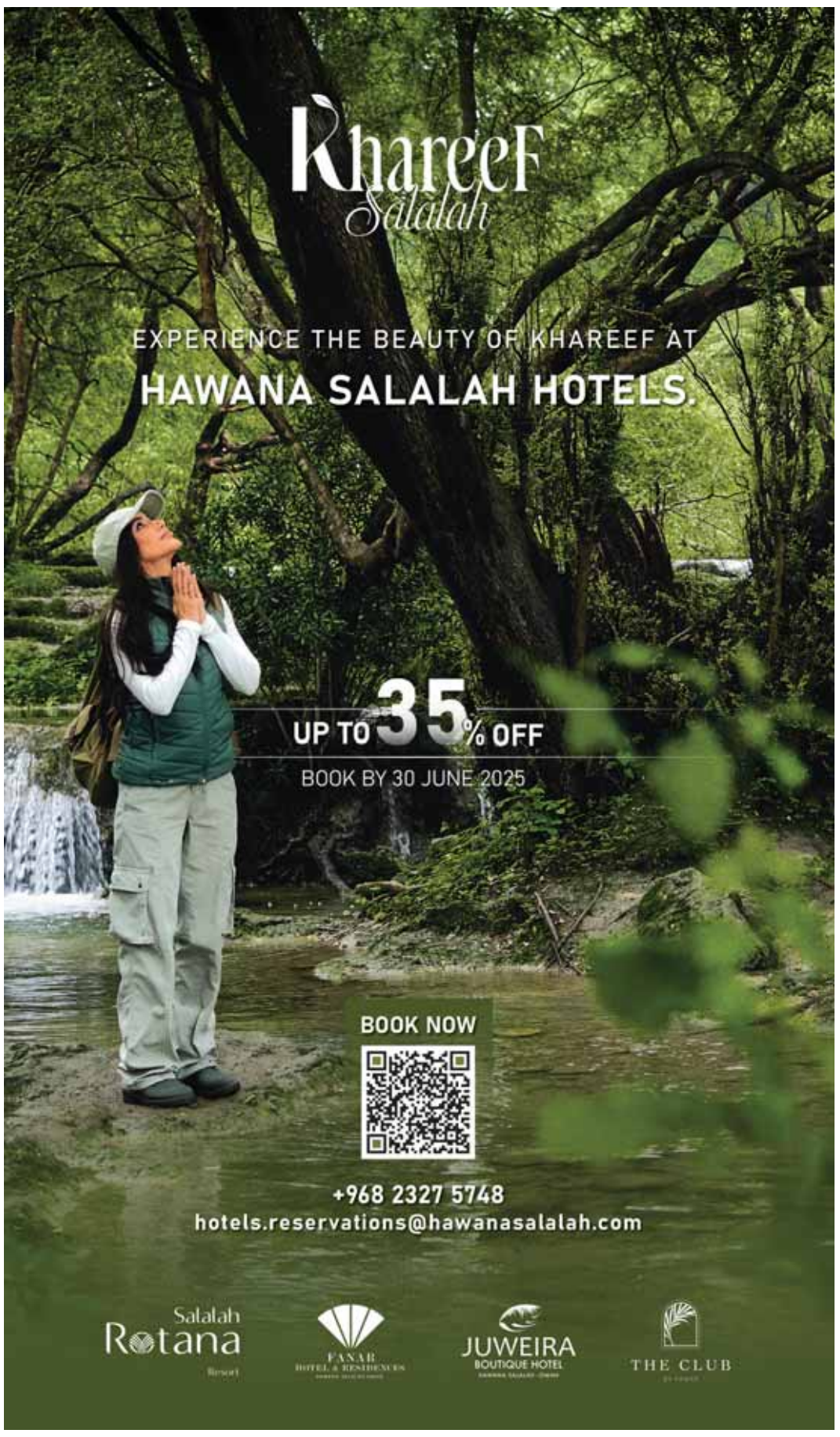
Preparations on for attractive Khareef

2 The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion has affirmed the completion of preparations to welcome the Khareef Dhofar (monsoon season 2025). >A4

WORLD

Israeli strikes crossed a new red line: Iran

3 Iran's Foreign Minister said Israel's strikes on nuclear sites "crossed a new red line" and showed that Israel "does not want negotiations and does not seek diplomacy". >A7



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OMAN

New management programme to strengthen skills of citizens

The Future of Human Capital Management programme will enable participants to implement their new knowledge and practical skills, contributing to driving institutional efficiency and innovation

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Royal Academy of Management (RAM) announced the launch of the Future of Human Capital Management programme, a groundbreaking initiative that aims to strengthen and hone national competencies of national talent, enabling them to contribute to achieving Oman's strategic vision for the future.

Designed for human resource development managers across the public sector, the programme aims to cultivate high-performing and supportive organisational environments by enhancing participants' effectiveness and ensuring the efficient implementation of strategies.

Delivered in partnership with Integrated Business Solutions (IBS), the new initiative reflects an ongoing commitment to achieving organisational excellence by investing in human capital.

The two-month programme will equip participants with advanced capabilities as it explores strategic workforce planning, talent management, leadership development, and effective communication, each playing an essential role in improving productivity and organisational performance.

Ultimately, the Future of Human Capital Management programme will enable participants to implement their new knowledge and practical skills, contributing to driving institutional efficiency and innovation.

"The launch of the Future of Human Capital Management programme represents a pivotal step towards the realisation of Vision 2040 by investing in our national talent. We believe that equipping human resource leaders with advanced leadership capabilities is essential to drive the development of dynamic and innovative workplaces, which directly contribute to enhancing organisational performance and towards achieving Oman's long-term goals. The programme also seeks to provide participants with an opportunity to reflect on cutting-edge global practices and explore effective practical tools, enabling them to become strategic partners in driving impactful and lasting results in their organizations and society at large," said Abla Al Buali, the supervisor of the new programme.

The Future of Human Capital Management programme takes a holistic learning approach that links theory with practice. Participants will engage in interactive workshops and explore real-world case studies and hands-on activities that are directly applicable to their professional roles. It will also include dialogue sessions with distinguished local and international experts in the area of human capital management.

Moreover, it fosters peer-to-peer engagement and the cultivation of professional networks that will support participants' long-term career development.

The learning journey explores themes such as strategic human resource planning, where participants examine contemporary HR strategies and methods for assessing workforce requirements alongside approaches to managing change in dynamic work environments.

It delves into talent development and the integration of artificial intelligence (AI), focusing on how to attract and retain top talent, implement impactful training programmes, design succession plans, and leveraging AI-driven tools to evaluate employee performance and training effectiveness. Additionally, the new programme addresses effective communication and team leadership, empowering participants to enhance interpersonal communication, resolve conflicts, inspire teams, and to contribute to building a positive, results-oriented organisational culture.

The launch of the Future of Human Capital Management programme reflects the RAM's broader commitment to nurturing national leadership and strengthening human capital in line with the strategic goals laid out in Oman Vision 2040. Through establishing such strategic programmes, RAM seeks to position itself as a regional leader in capability development, contributing to sustainable and inclusive growth across the Sultanate of Oman.

FAIR COMPETITION

TRA issues bylaw on regulating retail tariffs

MUSCAT: The Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) has issued a bylaw on price control titled "Retail Tariff Regulation" that repeals the regulation issued vide Decision No. 27/2016.

The new bylaw comprises several regulatory provisions, including general provisions on retail tariffs for telecommunications services, special provisions for tenders offered to commercial beneficiaries and government institutions, and additional regulatory provisions on monitoring pricing practices that may exceed certain levels.

The regulation targets all licensees who provide public telecommunications services in retail markets.

The new bylaw seeks to keep pace with regional and international updates in the telecom sector. It seeks to promote fair competition and ensure transparency in the retail telecommunications services market, while at the same time safeguarding the rights and choices of beneficiaries. -ONA

REGIONAL SITUATION

Phone calls

< FROM A1

The call addressed the current regional situation and its ongoing conflicts and tensions. Both sides stressed the importance of intensifying international efforts to solidify de-escalation and avoid the risks of further confrontation, in a bid to safeguard regional and international security and stability.

The German Chancellor expressed deep appreciation for Oman's balanced approach and wise policy in advocating peace efforts and promoting dialogue. He commended Oman's constructive role in bridging perspectives between parties, reinforcing principles of cooperation, serving mutual interests among nations and enhancing opportunities for a dignified life for peoples around the world.

In his turn, His Majesty the Sultan valued the efforts of the German government in supporting international security and its commitment to fostering mutual understanding and cooperation based on respect and shared interests. - ONA

FOREIGN MINISTER

Call for peace efforts

< FROM A1

Sayyid Badr emphasised the critical importance of intensifying global diplomatic and political pressure to stop this unlawful and irresponsible act of aggression. He called for the strict application of international law to restore security, stability, and peace in the region.

Within the same context, the Foreign Minister reaffirmed the Ministry's ongoing around-the-clock efforts to assist Omani nationals seeking to return home from Iran. To ensure efficient communication, the Ministry has established dedicated hotlines in both Muscat and Tehran, based on citizens' geographical distribution. Additionally, citizens may contact authorities through the Ministry's official application or via WhatsApp.

Meanwhile the Ministry of Foreign has started planning to bring back all the Omani citizens in Shiraz and nearby areas.

As part of the Ministry of Foreign's plan, the Ministry called all citizens in Shiraz and nearby areas to gather at specific points yesterday, in preparation for their departure to Bandar Abbas.

Some of the points include Rudaki Ferdowsi Intersection - Opposite Sorna Hotel and Talar Hotel, Vazra Hotel in Imam Khomeini Street - After City Center, Naz Hotel in Imam Khomeini Street - After City Center, Anamis Hotel in Imam Khomeini Street.

Oman has already strongly condemned the heinous military aggression carried out by Israel against the territory of the Islamic Republic of Iran, which targeted sovereign facilities and resulted in casualties.

Oman considers this act a dangerous and reckless escalation that constitutes a flagrant violation of the United Nations Charter and principles of international law. This represents unacceptable and continuing aggressive behavior that undermines the foundations of regional stability. -ONA

MOL

Non-compliance to invite curbs

< FROM A1

Those demonstrating tangible contributions may be temporarily exempted, though non-compliance will result in licensing bans similar to larger businesses.

Entrepreneurs and full-time business owners are being given a one-year grace period to meet the Omanisation needs. Within six months of notification, their businesses will undergo a value addition review. The MoL has encouraged business owners who do not yet hold a Riyada Card to register with the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority to access incentives and exemptions related to Omanisation targets.

The MoL's initiative represents a decisive step in aligning foreign and domestic commercial activities with national workforce development goals. By requiring each business, particularly foreign investment entities, to directly contribute to local employment, the policy underscores Oman's commitment to economic diversification without sidelining Omani talent.

The new rules also reflect Oman's Vision 2040 goals, aiming for a sustainable economy supported by an empowered national workforce. Businesses are advised to act promptly to avoid operational disruptions and to demonstrate commitment to the development agenda.

Oman's airports handle over 4.7 million passengers till April

Muscat International Airport handled 4,222,789 passengers by the end of April 2025, down 4.7% from 4,428,726 passengers

MUSCAT: The total number of passengers travelling through Oman's airports by the end of April 2025 reached 4,701,055, marking a 4.1% decline compared to the same period in 2024, which recorded 4,901,855 passengers.

Preliminary data released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) indicated that Muscat International Airport handled 4,222,789 passengers by the end of April 2025, down 4.7% from 4,428,726 passengers during the same period in 2024.

The number of flights also decreased by 8.6%, totalling 29,731 flights compared to 32,520 flights in the previous year.

Meanwhile, Salalah Airport saw a 6.8% increase in passenger traffic, reaching 458,394 passengers by the end of April 2025, up from 429,181 passengers in the same period last year.

However, total flights at the airport experienced a marginal decline of 0.2%, with 2,974 flights compared to 2,980 flights in April 2024. Sohar Airport recorded a sharp drop in flight operations, with a 62.5% decrease in flights (72 flights compared to 192 in April 2024). Passenger numbers plummeted by 98.7%, with only 307 passengers, down from 23,842 in the same period last year.

Duqm Airport

Similarly, Duqm Airport witnessed a 1.9% reduction in flights, totaling 204 flights by the end of April 2025 versus 208 flights in April 2024. Passenger traffic also declined by 2.7%, reaching 19,565 passengers compared to 20,106 in the previous year.

As for the most active nationalities at Muscat International Airport, Indian travellers topped the list for both arrivals and departures, with a total of 182,628 passengers in April 2025 (99,163 arrivals and 83,465 departures).

Omani nationals followed with 101,087 passengers (45,072 arrivals and 56,015 departures), while Pakistani travelers ranked third with 47,078 passengers (25,426 arrivals and 21,652 departures). -ONA

COMMENTARY

When teachers fail to connect with students

Saleh Al-Shaibany

Schools should not be just about measuring performance whether children get top grades or completely fail from their studies.

Well trained teachers teach their students social skills not just math and science. I feel that there is a violation of human rights if a child is not taught the values and purpose why they are here in this world. Reading, writing or to score high in examinations are never enough. What teachers do not understand is that a child grows up in many emotional conflicts. They come to a class surrounded by other children who may not be in the same mental frame. As a result, some disrupt classes while the rest sit quietly too afraid to participate.

Good teachers would understand that. They would work out a method of teaching to calm the nerves of their students by making classroom activities much more relaxed. Imagine a teacher walking into the classroom with emotional hangover just because something went wrong at home last night. This teacher is not really a "beacon of light" for the students.

Schools are not just an "oasis" of learning but a place for children to feel secure with their feelings and thoughts. When a teacher creates a haven of calm in the classroom then students look forward to wake up in the morning and rush to school. This is particularly important if they come from an abusive home environment.

Teachers certainly need to go beyond the boundaries of the syllabus. Assigning homework, preparing for tests or covering the topics is not anymore enough. Take this example: would students excel in classwork when they do not have a stable home? Or if they thoughts are crippled by something beyond their control?

Learning certainly is beyond the academic curriculum. The world is fast changing but it seems young elementary students are left behind by teachers following outdated techniques. When students feel disconnected with the real world then they get disconnected from the reality, too. It is when they feel demotivated and find hard to get involved.

It is easy to know if your students are not interested on what you are teaching them. When they are muted and fail to respond then you have lost them. That is the time when a teacher has created an invisible curtain between the lessons and students. Teachers can remove that curtain by using real examples or topics that connect with their lives.

That's how students can orient themselves with life when they identify themselves in the scenarios teachers create for them. They feel it when they study something that excites them. This way, they look forward to attend the classes every day. Remember, young people these days feel frustrated very easily.

For example, instead of teaching global warming with a list of facts, a teacher can begin with a real life example of a young person who helped the community to fight it. It does not only engage them but they feel connected because someone their age was involved. It also raises curiosity and they start asking questions to learn more.

That's how teachers get modern day students hooked up. Otherwise, a very boring subject told in a monotonous way will make students ask "why do we have to learn this?"

ENHANCING OPPORTUNITIES

Discussion on empowering SMEs

MUSCAT: The Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development (Riyada) on Sunday held a dialgue session on enhancing opportunities for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the energy and minerals sectors.

The session, held in Muscat, explored ways of empowering SMEs by presenting innovative ideas, improving their operational efficiency and encouraging government and private partnerships with them.

It also discussed relevant policies, legislation, licensing and enablers that support SMEs in developing innovative solutions and partnerships in the energy and minerals sectors.

The dialogue session was attended by Eng. Salim Nasser Al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, Halima Rashid Al Zar'ai, Chairperson of Riyada, officials from the authorities concerned and owners of SMEs in the energy and minerals sectors. -ONA

CONSTRUCTION

Completion rate of Wadi Bani Khalid steep road project reaches 17.3%

WADI BANI KHALID: The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology continues to implement the Wadi Bani Khalid steep road project in the North Al Sharqiyah Governorate.

The 9-kilometer road begins at the Manakh area near the wilayat's police station and ends at the village of Muzayra', the centre of the wilayat.

Eng. Yousuf Abdullah Al Mujaini, Director General of Roads and Land Transport at the Ministry, stated that the project has so far achieved a 17.3% completion rate and is expected to open to traffic by the end of 2026.

In a statement to Oman News Agency (ONA), he explained that the road consists of two lanes, each 3.5 metres wide, with 1.5-metre asphalt shoulders, box culverts, and drainage channels to ensure road safety during rainfall. He added that the project includes essential road safety features such as concrete and metal barriers, directional signage, road markings, and warning paint.

He emphasised that the project will enhance traffic flow and boost urban, tourism and economic activity. -ONA

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Tender Announcement

Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Company SAOG invites Bidders to submit their proposal for the below detailed tender:

Tender No.	Description	Tender Fee (Non refundable)	Tender Purchase deadline	Clarification deadline	Tender Submission Date
TENDER/ 2025/06/ ENG/017	CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW FILLING STATION & SHOP BUILDING AT AWQAD NORTH 2 IN DHOFAR GOVERNORATE	100	22.06.2025	25.06.2025	01.07.2025
Bank Name & Account Number		Bank Muscat (0423005687760617)			

The Conditions:

1. Collection of Tenders: Interested, specialized companies and establishments registered under grade 3 and above (in C.R) with minimum of 3 years' experience in the same field. Bidders can collect the tender documents from the procurement department by sending a copy of the payment slip to **procurement@almaha.com.om** The tender may be collected on any working day between 08:00 AM – 03:00 PM.
2. **Bank Guarantee:** The bidder should enclose a bank guarantee issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman for an amount equivalent to (1%) of the tender value, with a validity of (90) Days from the last date of submission and addressed to Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Company SAOG.
3. **Offer Submission:** Tender bid should be submitted a sealed envelope and addressed to the Chairman of Tender Committee, Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing SAOG marked with tender number and subject. Other marks or any reference must not be printed outside the envelope. The exterior of the envelope containing the tender document must not reveal the identity of the bidder.
4. **Submission Location:** The bid should be deposited in the tender box at Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing SAOG head office located in Ghala before 01:00 PM on the submission date.
5. Any bid received after the specified date or if it does not meet the conditions will not be considered.
6. Each bid shall be signed and stamped with the signature of the authorized person.
7. Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Co SAOG reserves the right to accept, reject or cancel the tender without giving any reasons.
8. Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Co SAOG reserves the right to add or cancel some of the works mentioned in the tender if necessary.
9. Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Co SAOG is not bound to accept the lowest bid or any other bid without giving any reasons.
10. For any enquiry email us at **(procurement@almaha.com.om)** or by calling **24610289/24610287/24610355/24610376**

OMAN

KHAREEF SEASON

Civil aviation sector ready to ensure safe, and smooth travel experience for travellers

MUSCAT: The Civil Aviation sector has confirmed its complete operational readiness to ensure a safe, smooth and efficient travel experience for passengers visiting Dhofar Governorate during the upcoming Khareef season, which traditionally attracts increasing numbers of domestic and international tourists.

The comprehensive preparations involve coordinated efforts between the Civil Aviation Authority, Oman Airports, Oman Air and SalamAir as part of an integrated national system aimed at enhancing air transport operations. This includes increasing domestic flight frequencies and optimizing operational efficiency at both Muscat International Airport and Salalah Airport to ensure seamless air traffic flow while maintaining the highest standards of service quality and safety.

Authorities emphasized that these preparations reflect the sector's commitment to developing a comprehensive and sustainable aviation system that supports Oman's tourism economy. The civil aviation sector serves as a strategic partner in this regard, providing advanced infrastructure that contributes to economic growth while reinforcing the Sultanate of Oman's position as a leading tourist destination.

Operational readiness measures have been intensified thorough reviews of emergency response plans, verification of air traffic control system capabilities, provision of specialized aviation weather forecasts, and continuous coordination between all relevant entities. These efforts collectively ensure that travelers would experience safe and hassle-free journeys throughout the season.

Flight operations will see significant expansion during the peak period. Oman Air will operate up to 12 daily flights during the busiest periods starting from 1 July, while SalamAir will increase its operations to 8 daily flights during July and August, including the introduction of a new direct route between Sohar and Salalah from 15 July with one daily flight.

Capacity enhancements include Oman Air adding over 70,000 additional seats for the season, representing a 16% increase compared to last year, while SalamAir has expanded its capacity by 58% with approximately 176,000 seats available for 2025. These adjustments directly respond to growing passenger demand while supporting Dhofar's tourism sector during the Khareef season.

Special fare structures remain in place for Omani citizens, with Oman Air maintaining fixed pricing starting at RO 32 for one-way trips and RO 54 for round trips between 1 July and 15 September. Similarly, SalamAir offers fares beginning at RO 30 for single journeys and RO 48 for return flights during the same period.

Oman Airports Company has completed comprehensive preparations at both Muscat and Salalah airports to deliver an integrated travel experience. These include streamlined passenger processing from initial booking to final arrival.

Salalah Airport introduces innovative services to enhance passenger convenience, including the "Travel Easier" initiative that allows travelers to complete check-in and baggage drop procedures between 6 to 12 hours before departure. This service operates daily from 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM between 15 July and 15 September 2025, specifically designed to reduce congestion and improve terminal accessibility.

A new drive-through check-in service will debut this season as part of the "Travel Easier" program, enabling passengers to complete all departure formalities including boarding pass collection and baggage check-in without exiting their vehicles. This pioneering service represents a significant advancement in travel convenience and customer experience at Salalah Airport.

These comprehensive measures demonstrate the aviation sector's commitment to supporting Oman's tourism industry while maintaining operational excellence and delivering world-class travel services throughout the Dhofar Khareef season 2025. - ONA

Dhofar readies for Khareef with strong business, investment, and tourism push

The number of new investors in Q1 2025 reached 1,217, with 88 commercial registrations issued

SALALAH: The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion has affirmed the completion of preparations to welcome the Dhofar Khareef season 2025, one of the governorate's most prominent economic and tourism events.

This is achieved through a series of inspection campaigns and awareness initiatives, reinforcing ongoing efforts to ensure a sound and secure business environment while stimulating local and foreign investments.

Mohammed Khalifa Al Badrani, Director General of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion in Dhofar, stated that the Khareef season presents a significant opportunity to revitalise ommercial and economic activity in Dhofar.

This necessitates intensified oversight of commercial establishments to ensure compliance with legal and professional requirements, as well as educating shop owners on sound business practices that stimulate market activity and safeguard consumer rights.

He emphasised the importance of monitoring essential requirements in commercial outlets, such as electronic payment systems, to facilitate service provision for targeted businesses.

In a statement, he explained that the Directorate has been conducting comprehensive inspection campaigns for several months, covering markets, commercial complexes, restaurants, hotels, and retail outlets, to verify compliance with health regulations and commercial business laws.

He added that the Directorate, in collaboration with relevant authorities, is organising workshops and awareness sessions for merchants and business owners to promote a culture of compliance and innovation in service delivery, aligning with visitor expectations during the Khareef season.

Al Badrani noted that Dhofar Governorate has seen significant growth in the commercial sector, with 718 commercial registrations recorded by the end of Q1 2025, reflecting the sector's vitality and increasing investment interest in the governorate.

He highlighted that construction and contracting activities topped the list of the most licenced commercial activities, with a total of 2,100 licences issued by the end of Q1 2025, compared to 1,274 licenses in 2024 — demonstrating the momentum in Dhofar's construction and infrastructure sectors.

As for new investments in the governorate, he clarified that the number of new investors in Q1 2025 reached 1,217, with 88 commercial registrations issued, reflecting investor confidence in Dhofar's economic environment. He credited the Directorate's role in facilitating procedures and providing necessary support to investors while working to localize commercial projects that enhance trade and industrial activity across Dhofar's wilayats. Efforts are also underway to integrate industrial cities, free zones, and optimal utilization of Salalah Port to boost commercial activities.

Al Badrani pointed out that the number of commercial licenses issued in Q1 2025 reached 9,527, compared to 13,800 in 2024, attributing the decline to the reorganization of certain commercial activities and updated procedures to ensure higher service quality and operational sustainability. In the industrial sector, 1,155 industrial licenses were issued in Q1 2025, compared to 1,742 during the same period in 2024.

He affirmed that this year's Khareef season preparations follow an integrated action plan in coordination with Dhofar Municipality, the Royal Oman Police, Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and the Consumer Protection Authority. This collaborative effort aims to provide a secure investment and business environment, enhancing the governorate's appeal as an investment and tourism destination.

Al Badrani explained that Dhofar Governorate is intensifying preparations for the Khareef season, which attracts large numbers of visitors and tourists from within and outside Oman.

A comprehensive plan ensures the readiness of various service and regulatory sectors, with field teams already conducting fuel station inspections to verify supply availability and equipment safety. Markets are also being monitored to ensure compliance with health and environmental standards, along with the provision of essential goods at reasonable prices.

Awareness campaigns targeting merchants and consumers promote safe purchasing practices and deter negative behaviors, while hotlines operate around the clock to receive feedback and inquiries, ensuring swift responses and boosting visitor confidence in services. He added that the Directorate aims to provide consumers and visitors with a comfortable and secure shopping experience by improving sales facilities and strategically distributing commercial activities based on expected demand.

All business operators are urged to adhere to legal requirements and approved standards. Concurrently, continuous efforts are being made to educate investors on leveraging the economic opportunities presented by the Khareef season, which directly stimulates commercial and industrial activity while enhancing the governorate's business environment—contributing to local economic growth and elevating services for both citizens and visitors. - ONA

OMAN VISION 2040 GOALS

Health Ministry celebrates graduation of students

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Health on Sunday celebrated the graduation of the 2nd and 3rd batches of the Health Assistants Programme.

The programme support the Health Ministry's strategy on consolidating the national health workforce and achieving Oman Vision 2040 goals for the health sector.

The programme seeks to raise the efficiency of competencies in health sector and enable them to promote healthcare services in Oman.

The second and third batches of the Health Assistants Programme included more than 100 male and female graduates.

The programme constitutes a link in national initiatives implemented by the Ministry of Health to meet the health system's need for technical support personnel.

The three-month programme included knowledge acquisition, skills in basic nursing, first aid, patient care and handling of medical devices, in addition to practical training at primary and secondary healthcare institutions.

The graduation ceremony was held under the auspices of Dr. Badria Mohsen Al Rashdi, Director General of Health Services at the Ministry of Health, and attended by department heads, programme supervisors and health and training personnel. -ONA

OHRC

Workshop on preparing 1st human rights strategy

MUSCAT: Oman Human Rights Commission (OHRC) is organizing a set of workshops on analysing the current status of the National Human Rights Strategy in the Sultanate of Oman, with emphasis on legal, regulatory and procedural aspects.

The workshops' opening ceremony was held under the auspices of Dr. Abdullah bin Mohammed Al Sa'eedi, Minister of Justice and Legal Affairs.

The three-week workshops seek to furnish grounds for drafting the first comprehensive national human rights strategy in the Sultanate of Oman.

They aim to identify major challenges, explore opportunities and ensure that the strategy's goals are implementable and measurable in the short and long terms.

The workshops, which will run until 3 July 2025, aim to review the current situation in the Sultanate of Oman in terms of civil, political, economic, social, cultural and environmental factors. They represent one of the basic stages for preparing a "national strategic document" featuring precise and realistic understanding of the human rights situation in the Sultanate of Oman.

The workshops aim to assess the progress made in all areas of human rights by analysing legal, regulatory and procedural aspects. They focus on the clarity of governance and monitoring the value of indicators.

The workshops will help formulate realistic and time-bound strategic objectives that can be used to develop future executive plans and establish performance indicators, evaluation and follow-up. -ONA

OMAN/WORLD

BILATERAL TIES

Oman, Germany explore enhancing cooperation amid regional tensions

MUSCAT: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister received here on Sunday Dr. Johann David Wadephul, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Germany to discuss strengthening bilateral ties.

The two sides explored opportunities to expand economic cooperation, with particular focus on renewable energy initiatives.

On the political front, the two sides exchanged views on the serious tensions currently gripping the region due to Israel's military aggression against Iran.

The ministers also discussed developments in ceasefire negotiations for the Gaza Strip, updates on the Yemeni crisis, and ways to contain conflicts and crises through dialogue and peaceful means.

Both sides emphasised that security and stability cannot be achieved through violence or the imposition of military solutions, stressing that the only path to just and lasting peace lies in political negotiations, diplomatic channels, adherence to justice and international law, and respect for state sovereignty.

The meeting was attended by Munthir bin Mahfoudh Al Mantheri, Head of the Europe Department at the Foreign Ministry and Dirk Lölke, Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to the Sultanate of Oman. -ONA

Canada hosts G7 Summit overshadowed by strifes

US trade tariffs and conflicts in the Middle East and Ukraine are expected to feature heavily during the meeting

OTTAWA: Leaders from Ukraine, Mexico, India, Australia, South Africa, South Korea and Brazil are also likely to want to hold bilateral meetings with Trump to put across their interests on the sidelines of the G7 summit.

Of particular interest is the likely meeting between Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and Trump, with their last prolonged one-to-one encounter at the end of February turning into a notorious televised dressing-down of the Ukrainian leader by Trump and his deputy, JD Vance. Canada, for its part, has long been one of Ukraine's most vocal supporters, while the US has become ever more ambivalent in its attitude to Russia's invasion of its neighbour.

The leaders of the Group of Seven economies are coming together for their annual gathering, which is the first of its kind since US President Donald Trump returned to the White House.

For this G7 meeting, diplomats say Canada has dispensed with the idea of issuing a comprehensive joint final communique, and will instead release chair summaries.

"This will be a successful meeting if Donald Trump doesn't have an eruption that disrupts the entire gathering. Anything above and beyond that is gravy," said University of Ottawa international affairs professor Roland Paris, who was foreign policy adviser to Trudeau.

The last time Canada was host, during Trump's first term in 2018, the US leader left the summit, held in Quebec, before slamming then Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau as "very dishonest and weak."

He also instructed the US delegation to go back on its approval of the final communique.

Macron to visit Greenland in signal of European unity

French President Emmanuel Macron will pay a visit to the autonomous Danish territory of Greenland on Sunday.

The island, the world's largest, has been the focus of much attention in recent months after US President Donald Trump made several remarks indicating his interest of incorporating it into US territory, citing reasons of national security. Both Greenland and Denmark have categorically rejected Trump's approaches.

Macron's visit, which comes just hours ahead of his participation in the G7 summit, is being seen as a show of European support for the territory, whose some 60,000 citizens are Danish nationals and thus also citizens of the EU.

Canada's list of priorities for the G7 summit meeting

The office of Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney last Saturday released a list of topics to head the agenda at the meeting.

According to the statement, discussions will center on three main thematic areas: reinforcing peace and security in the face of foreign threats, transnational crime and increased wildfire risk; energy security and digital technology; and promoting private investment to improve infrastructure and activate economies.

Other topics are to include examining possibilities for peace in Ukraine and other conflicts and the search for non-EU partners to bolster security and prosperity.

The French president will visit Greenland alongside Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen, with the leaders planning to discuss the security situation in the North Atlantic and the Arctic with Greenland's Prime Minister Jens-Frederik Nielsen.

Macron's office said talks, which are planned aboard a Danish frigate, will also touch on economic development, climate change and renewable energy.

He is expected to visit a glacier threatened by global warming and a hydroelectric power plant.

Greenland's ice sheet is currently melting at a rapid rate as the Earth warms, contributing greatly to the rise of sea levels across the world.

The upcoming G7 Summit in Canada is expected to prioritise discussions on the escalating tensions between Iran and Israel, according to Foreign Affairs expert KP Fabian. -DW

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Chief Executive Officer: Ahmed Essa Al Zedjali

EDITORIAL: Telephone: 24726666, Fax: 24813153, E-mail: editor@timesofoman.com
ADVERTISING: Telephone: 24726666, Fax: 24812624, E-mail: advertising@timesofoman.com
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PRESTIGIOUS TITLES

Oman Air wins two APEX awards

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman Air has been named the winner of two prestigious titles at the Apex 2025 Awards, securing Best Food & Beverage and Best Cabin Service in the Middle East. The dual recognition highlights the airline's unwavering dedication to delivering a guest-centric journey that blends authentic Omani hospitality with world-class service standards.

As part of its ongoing drive to elevate the travel experience, Oman Air has recently introduced a series of on-board service enhancements. Among the latest culinary offerings is 'Roqaa Omania', a thoughtfully curated Omani-themed menu, and its bespoke dessert featuring the Omani rock rose in partnership with Oman's renowned fragrance house, Amouage. Combined with exceptional cabin service, every element of the journey is designed to delight guests with the distinctive warmth and charm of Omani hospitality.

"These two awards are a powerful endorsement of our continual efforts to redefine the passenger journey through a blend of heartfelt Omani hospitality, culinary artistry, and exceptional service," said Con Korfiatis, Chief Executive Officer of Oman Air. "From our cabin crew to our products and catering teams, our people play ensure guests enjoy a seamless and memorable journey, and this is evident time and again in the awards we receive. We are honoured to be acknowledged by our guests; their feedback inspires us to raise the bar at every touchpoint."

In partnership with TripIt® from Concur®, the APEX Awards are the only airline ratings based entirely on travellers' feedback. For the 2025 honours, passengers rated over one million PNR-verified flights across 600+ airlines using a five-star scale, evaluating seat comfort, cabin service, food and beverage, entertainment, and Wi-Fi, all in under 15 seconds via a single-screen interface.

These awards complement Oman Air's growing list of accolades, including most recently the APEX World Class™ by YATES+ award, and the Best Airline Staff in the Middle East at the Skytrax 2024 World Airline Awards, which collectively highlight the airline's industry-leading focus on guest satisfaction, cultural authenticity, and innovation.

ROBOMISSION JUNIOR CATEGORY

Darsait's community robotics education initiative rockets to national podium at WRO Oman 2025

Times News Service

MUSCAT: In a story that has captured the imagination of educators and innovators alike, a humble, volunteer-led Robotics Education Initiative from Darsait, Muscat, has made waves on the national stage by clinching Second Place at the World Robotics Olympiad (WRO) – Oman National Qualifiers 2025, in the RoboMission Junior Category (ages 11–15).

This incredible achievement—just 1 month after the programme's launch—marks a shining example of what community, commitment, and creativity can achieve when united by purpose.

The winning team, ROBOMINDS, featured three bright young minds: Master Nusrat Mohiuddin (12), Master Muhammed Narmawala (13), Master Muhammed Shahul Hameed (14).

Their journey is nothing short of extraordinary.

Igniting Young Minds with Purpose and Vision

Launched on 2nd May 2025, the Robotics Initiative was born from a simple but bold purpose:

- To increase access to high-end technologies among students who might not otherwise have exposure
- To build awareness among parents and students about global competitions like the World Robotics Olympiad
- To ultimately prepare students to compete at national and international robotics platforms .

Powered by LEGO Spike Prime Kits and a structured 10-session curriculum, the programme combines hands-on learning with mentorship, creativity, and critical thinking.

The inaugural session drew strong appreciation from students, parents, and education enthusiasts.

A moment of triumph, a message of hope

Standing on the national podium just a month later, the ROBOMINDS team not only brought home a trophy—but ignited a spark of inspiration across Oman and beyond.

In his remarks, the lead volunteer offered heartfelt thanks to the Almighty, to the students for their dedication, and to the community members and mentors who stood by the initiative every step of the way.

"This resounding success is proof that with focus and hard work, communities can achieve wonders—even in a short span," he said.

"We encourage all communities—across Oman and around the world—to replicate this model. The Darsait Robotics Volunteer Team is ready to support and guide anyone who shares this vision, "he added.

Community-led, globally relevant

The initiative has been supported by a passionate team of volunteers including Shakil Narmawala, Ubaid Ur Rahman, Shiraz Khan, Sanif Danyal and several others who dedicated their time and expertise to mentoring the students.

Special appreciation was extended to Mr. Ubaid Ahmed, STEM Instructor at Indian School Muscat, for his critical role in WRO registration, and competition day preparation.

The team also expressed profound gratitude to community leaders whose vision and support made this journey possible: Shaikh Ibrahim Al Wahaibi, Shaikh of Darsait, Shaikh Salem Al Ghammari, CEO, Muttrah Zakat Committee, Shaikh Zaheer Al Deen, Prominent Social Service Expert, Oman, Aneesuddin Farooqui, Founder and President, International Students Education Bridge (ISEB), Toronto, Canada.

Their guidance served as both foundation and fuel for this initiative's early success.

The visionary behind the movement

Aleem Mohiuddin, architect of the initiative, reiterated his powerful message that continues to resonate across circles of education and innovation: "This is just the beginning of a larger movement to empower our children with the tools of tomorrow."

A global model of possibility

The Darsait Robotics Initiative is not just a program—it's a movement. A testament to what can be achieved when communities come together with a shared purpose, even with limited resources but unlimited determination.

From a small classroom in Darsait to the national stage of the WRO Oman 2025, the message is loud and clear: Innovation doesn't need a big budget—just a big heart.

As the global education community looks for sustainable models for STEM education, this initiative now stands tall as a replicable, scalable, and inspirational blueprint. From Darsait, a spark has been lit. The world is watching—and the future is being built.

EXCHANGED VIEWS

Jaishankar appreciates France's support in India's fight against terror

PARIS: Indian External Affairs Minister (EAM) S Jaishankar during his talks with French President Emmanuel Macron appreciated France's strong support to India in the fight against terrorism, the Ministry of External Affairs said in a statement.

Jaishankar visited France from June 11-14. The visit, coming within four months of visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to France, reaffirmed the robust and long-standing strategic partnership between India and France.

During the visit, EAM called on President of the French Republic, Emmanuel Macron. He conveyed warm greetings of Prime Minister Modi to the French President and appreciated France's strong support to India in the fight against terrorism.

The two sides committed to fully implement the Horizon 2047 Roadmap and Defense Industrial Roadmap that were agreed between the two leaders. The discussions reflected the deep trust, comfort, and shared ambition that characterize the India-France bilateral ties, as per the statement.

Jaishankar held comprehensive bilateral discussions with his counterpart, Jean-Noel Barrot, Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs of France.

The Ministers reviewed and appreciated the progress made in India-France collaboration in strategic domains of defence, security, space, counter-terrorism and global issues.

Both sides also expressed satisfaction in the advances made in bilateral cooperation in emerging sectors of technology, innovation, trade, investment, health, life sciences, education, talent mobility, museum cooperation and people-to-people ties, and exchanged views on exploring new avenues of cooperation to further strengthen bilateral relations, the statement said.

In this context, both Ministers looked forward to the celebration of India-France Year of Innovation next year in a befitting manner, that will add another dimension to our relationship. EAM expressed deep appreciation for French Government's condolences on the tragic loss of lives in the plane crash in Ahmedabad earlier this week, as per the statement.

During the meeting, both leaders exchanged views on regional and global issues of mutual interest, including the Indo-Pacific, underscoring the convergence of views between India and France in addressing global challenges. -ANI

Iran says Israeli strikes 'crossed a new red line'

Israel targeted oil depots and the Iranian defence ministry as Iran hit Israel with new missile and drone attacks

TEHRAN: Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said that Israel's airstrike on a major gas facility was likely aimed to "expand the war beyond Iranian territory."

In comments carried by the IRNA news agency, Araghchi labeled the move "extremely dangerous." Araghchi also said Israel's strikes on nuclear sites "crossed a new red line" and showed that Israel "does not want negotiations and does not seek diplomacy" regarding nuclear negotiations.

The Iranian top diplomat also said his country would stop its missile attacks on Israel should the Israeli army's attacks stop.

Israeli military warns Iran residents to evacuate

The Israeli military told Iranians living near weapon facilities across the country to evacuate the area. "For your safety, we ask you to evacuate immediately and refrain from returning until further notice," military spokesperson Avichay Adraee posted on his X account in both Arabic and Persian. This comes after a night of Israeli airstrikes on military targets in Iran.

Houthis claim missiles launched at Israel

The Houthi group said it had launched several missiles at Israel, saying the attacks were "coordinated with the operations carried out" by their main backer, Iran. The group said it had shot at "sensitive targets of the Israeli enemy" on several occasions over the past 24 hours.

Israeli military officials said that they are unaware of any attacks from Yemen within that time frame.

Trump says US had 'nothing to do with' strikes on Iran

US President Donald Trump threatened to react with "the full strength and might of the US Armed Forces" should Iran attack any US target. "The US had nothing to do with the attacks carried out on Iran tonight," Trump said.

"If we are attacked in any way, shape or form by Iran, the full strength and might of the US Armed Forces will come down on you at levels never seen before."

This comes after Iran previously threatened to hit US targets in the region as part of the ongoing conflict with Israel.

According to Trump, an agreement between Israel and Iran, which would end the conflict between the two sides, can "easily" be done.

Death toll from strike in central Israel rises to 4

The death toll from an Iranian strike on Bat Yam in central Israel has risen to four, Israeli media report. A boy and a girl as well as two women were killed, Israel's emergency service Magen David Adom said. So far, around 100 people are reported injured at Bat Yam, a city just south of Tel Aviv.

Several of the injured are critically wounded. Some 35 people are still missing at Bat Yam, according to the Home Front Command, after a strike on a residential building.

Rescuers fear the building could collapse, reports Times of Israel.

Dozens of other people are also injured in a separate strike nearby Rehovot, 30 kilometres from Tel Aviv. This includes two who are critically wounded.

Israel launched an expanded assault on Iran on Sunday, again targeting military and nuclear sites it said, as well as its energy industry.

The Israel Defence Forces said in a social media post that its air force struck Iran's defense ministry headquarters in the capital Tehran and a number of targets that "advanced the Iranian regime's efforts to obtain a nuclear weapon."

German Foreign Minister asks Middle East leaders to talk to Iran

Asked about a de-escalation of the crisis between Iran and Israel, German Foreign Minister Johann Wadephul has said he was "hopeful of achieving a better situation in the next few days."

To achieve this, he said, he is asking those he is meeting with in the Middle East to talk with Iran. Germany is talking to Israel, Wadephul said. -DW

MANY MISSING

Nigeria: Gunmen kill at least 100 in Benue state

ABUJA: Gunmen killed at least 100 people in the Yelewata village in Nigeria's Benue state late on Friday, Amnesty International Nigeria said.

"Many people are still missing...dozens injured and left without adequate medical care. Many families were locked up and burnt inside their bedrooms," the human rights organization said in a social media post.

Police spokesperson Udeme Edet from Benue confirmed the attack but did not specify the death toll. It was not immediately clear who was responsible for the attack. Governor of Benue state Hyacinth Alia sent a delegation to Yelewata to provide support to the relatives of the victims.

Visuals circulated on social media showed burnt houses and corpses. Benue state lies in Nigeria's Middle Belt, in the center of the Muslim-majority north and the Christian-majority south.

The region often sees violence over access to land and water resources between farmers and herders, worsened by ethnic and religious tensions. Violence in the region has claimed 500 lives since 2019, and displaced thousands of others, as per data by Nigerian geopolitcal research consultancy SBM Intelligence.

Last month, gunmen believed to be herders killed at least 20 in the Gwer West district in Benue. In April, 40 were killed in in the nearby state of Plateau. -DW

GAURIKUND

Indian helicopter crash: Seven passengers onboard feared dead

DEHRADUN (UTTARAKHAND):: Seven passengers onboard a helicopter that crashed near the forested area of Gaurikund in Uttarakhand early on Sunday morning are feared dead, State Disaster Response Force said.

According to preliminary information, the helicopter crashed due to bad weather.

SDRF and National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) personnel are on the spot carrying out relief operations in the area and have been facing challenges as the site of crash is said to be a difficult and inaccessible area.

According to the statement by UCADA, the helicopter that crashed around 5:20 am today carried six passengers and a pilot. The passengers in the helicopter hailed from Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra and Gujarat.

The Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) will investigate Sunday morning's helicopter crash near Gaurikund in Uttarakhand's Rudraprayag District, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) stated.

The DGCA further said that, in light of the crash, the frequencies of helicopter operations to Char Dham would be reduced as a precautionary measure.

Enhanced surveillance and operational reviews are also being carried out by DGCA.

"Today, Aryan Aviation Bell 407 helicopter VT-BKA operating flight on sector Shri Kedarnath ji-Aryan Helipad, Guptkanshi, was involved in an accident. There were five passengers, one infant and one crew member on board. The helicopter took off at 05:19 hours for Guptkanshi and crashed near Gaurikund," DGCA said providing details of the crash.

Meanwhile, Chief Executive Officer of Uttarakhand Civil Aviation Department (UCADA), Sonika, stated that helicopter shuttle services in the area had been closed given the ongoing relief operations and weather conditions in the valley. Sonika further stated that the District Magistrate and Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) will reach the site soon.

"Since the rescue operation is underway and seeing the weather conditions in the valley, our shuttle services have been closed.

"At around 5:30 AM, we got the information that a helicopter, which was going from Shri Kedarnath Dham to Guptkashi, could not be located. After some time, it was learnt that it had crashed near Gaurikund. Rescue operation is underway, SDRF teams have reached the spot. A total of 6 passengers and one pilot were on board the helicopter..." she further said. -ANI

HUGE OPPORTUNITY

Relationship between India-Bangladesh people cordial, says BGMEA president Mahmud Hasan Khan Babu

DHAKA : Mahmud Hasan Khan Babu, President of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), termed the relationship between India and Bangladesh people as "cordial".

Babu highlighted the similarities between the culture of West Bengal and Bangladesh, due to which the relationship between both countries is "good".

Mahmud Hasan Khan asserted that due to the regime change in both countries, the situation also changes. He said that sometimes the relationship of countries is cordial, sometimes one-sided love and sometimes it is a resentful situation.

Weighing on the "huge" business between India and Bangladesh, Mahmud Hasan Khan said the people of both countries will benefit if relationship is cordial.

"The relationship between Indian and Bangladeshi people is cordial. Especially in West Bengal and Bangladesh, we have some common cultural things, so the relationship is good. But the problem is that when the government changes on both sides, the situation also changes. Sometimes cordial, sometimes one-sided love and sometimes it is a resentful situation. It depends on the government in India or the government in Bangladesh...If the relations between the governments are cordial, it would be the best because both countries will benefit. Business between India and Bangladesh is huge", he told ANI.

Meanwhile, addressing the issue of investment situation in the country, Mahmud Hasan Khan Babu praised the current government and said that it has taken some good initiatives in terms of banking reforms, especially, control of looting and mismanagement of the banking sector.

However, Babu asserted that the investors are waiting for the elected government in Bangladesh for investment and said that the business people of the country also want a "permanent" government.

"By definition, this government is interim. Everybody knows, for the time being, they have come after the situation of the July uprising and revolution (last year)... This government has taken some good initiatives in terms of banking reforms, especially, control of looting and mismanagement of the banking sector. But in terms of investment, investors or businesses are waiting for the elected government. We, business people, would like to have a permanent government. We would like to see who is coming in the future. Based on their policy and activities, investment will depend. In an interim government, investors do not want to invest", Mahmud Hasan Khan Babu added. -ANI

SPORTS

COMMENTARY

The power of staying the course: Lessons from South Africa and Oman

BY GURU PRASANNA BHAT

On Saturday at the iconic Lord's, South Africa won the World Test Championship (WTC), their first ICC men's title in 27 years. For a nation that has endured the weight of history, the sting of near misses, internal challenges, and complex selection issues, this was more than a trophy.

It was a story of redemption, of standing tall through adversity. Fittingly, it wasn't their most celebrated team that did it — it was one written off by many as their weakest.

Oman's cricketing journey bears similar traits. As a non-traditional cricketing nation, we weren't handed opportunities — we earned them. Over four to five decades, passionate individuals —players, administrators, volunteers, and supporters — have built something extraordinary from scratch.

Today, Oman Cricket boasts a proud record: 9 wins out of 12 in the ongoing ICC World Cup League 2, often against better-ranked and better-resourced opponents.

And here's what makes it more remarkable: this performance came from a team assembled at the last minute. A team that was formed after 10 senior players withdrew just before a major international tournament. It was a decision that shocked many — not just because of its timing, but because of its consequences.

In moments like these, we're reminded of a hard truth: when individuals act out of momentary frustration or personal gain, the cost is carried by many. The team is left scrambling.

The organisation suffers reputational and structural strain. The country loses credibility on the global stage. And often, the individuals who took that decision bear the heaviest burden — struggling to recover professionally and personally, their careers derailed, their futures uncertain.

In contrast, those who stood by the team — who chose discipline over drama, and commitment over conflict — are now writing a new chapter for Oman Cricket. A chapter built on unity, resilience, and deep respect for the game, the institution, and the country that nurtured them.

We don't always get everything we want, exactly when we want it. But when we choose the harder right over the easier wrong — when we stay patient, stay together, and stay grounded —success, recognition, and growth will always follow.

South Africa reminded us of that yesterday. Oman is living proof of it today.

(The writer is a former manager of a top-flight cricket team in Oman and currently resides in Bengaluru, India)

Russell snatches pole from Verstappen at Canadian GP

Mercedes' driver defeated the Dutchman by 0.160 seconds to grab the fastest time at the Circuit Gilles Villeneuve in Montreal

MONTREAL: Mercedes' George Russell snatched pole position for the Canadian Grand Prix at the Circuit Gilles Villeneuve from Red Bull's Max Verstappen on Saturday. Russell beat Verstappen by 0.160 seconds to grab the fastest time just seconds after the Dutchman himself had taken it away from McLaren's Oscar Piastri.

The Australian's team-mate and title rival Lando Norris could manage only seventh place, behind Mercedes' Kimi Antonelli, Ferrari's Lewis Hamilton and a superb performance from Fernando Alonso in the Aston Martin. The grid sets up a battle into the first corner between Briton Russell and Verstappen in Montreal, just a race after their controversial conflict at the Spanish Grand Prix.

Verstappen was penalised 10 seconds and given three licence penalty points for deliberately colliding with Russell in the closing stages of the race and is one licence point away from a race ban.

Russell had felt on arriving at Circuit Gilles Villeneuve on Saturday morning that he had a good chance of setting the pole, and his confidence was well placed.

Like Verstappen using the medium tyre for his final lap, Russell said it was "one of the most exhilarating laps of my life".

He added: "I swear, every corner I was looking at my lap-time delta on my steering wheel and I was going 0.1secs quicker, 0.1secs quicker. I got to the last corner and I was 0.6secs up and I thought: 'This lap's mighty.' It felt like the car was on rails. I am so pleased with the pole." Russell said he "had goosebumps" after crossing the line. "I don't think I've ever had that before," he said.

Verstappen said: "I felt quite good all weekend. The car was in a good window. This track is quite cool. It feels like a big go-kart on the kerbs.

"You need to be quite efficient on the straights, which I think we are. The tough choice was the tyres and I think we chose the right ones. We will see what we can do tomorrow. I am already happy to be on the front row and I hope we can have a solid race."

McLaren had had a difficult weekend and Piastri said he was "pretty happy with third".

The grid gives the Australian a good chance to extend his championship lead over Norris, who had a tricky session.

Norris said: "Just a couple of big mistakes. One, hitting the wall on the last lap in the exit of (Turn) Seven and the first lap, I think, last corner. So, yeah, just two mistakes that cost me, I guess.

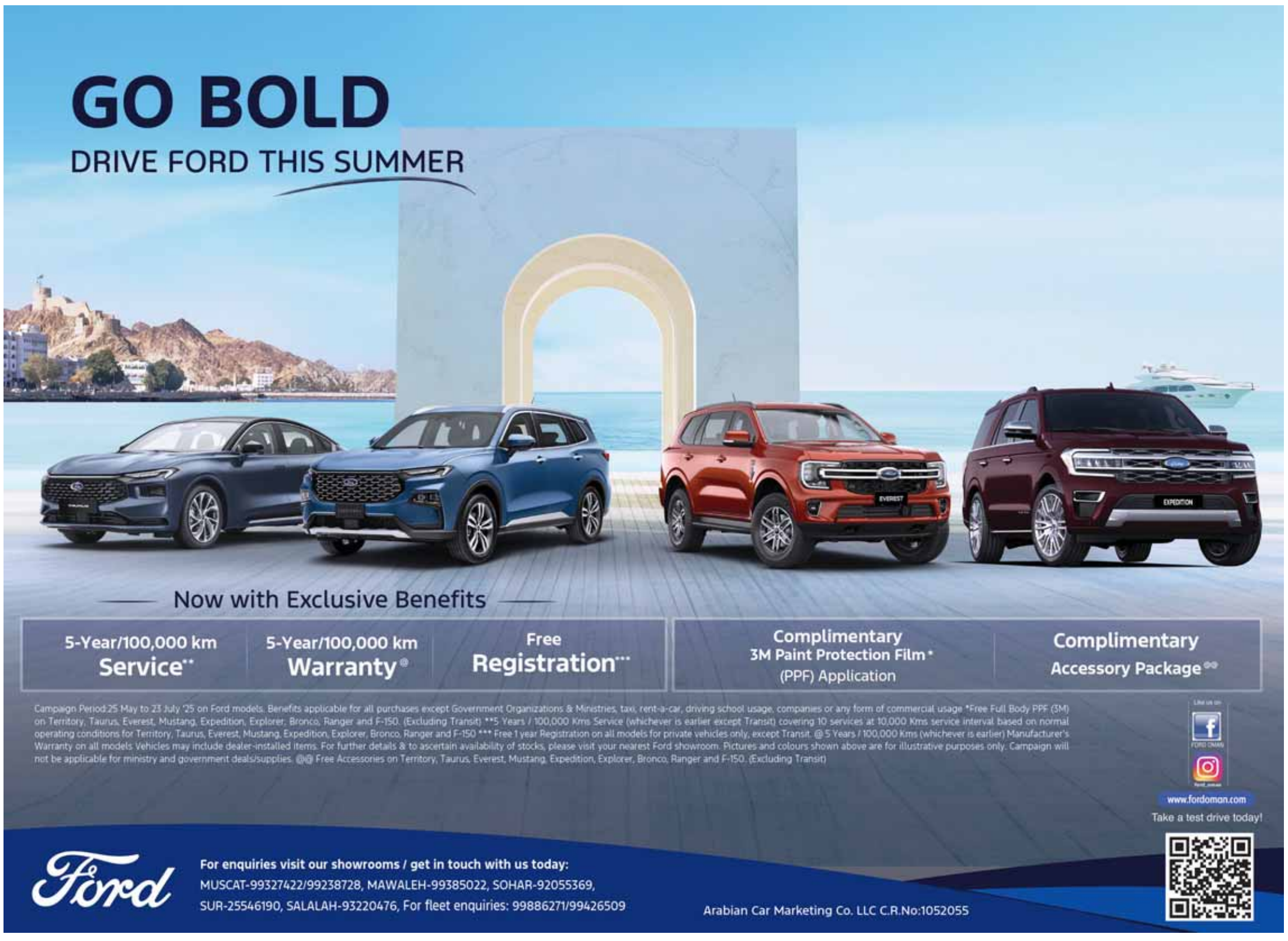
Alonso's sixth place was Aston Martin's best grid position of the season and confirms the progress the team have made since introducing an upgrade at the Emilia-Romagna Grand Prix.

Rounding out the top 10 behind Leclerc were Racing Bulls' Isack Hadjar and Williams' Alex Albon.

However, Hadjar was given a three-place grid penalty for impeding Williams' Carlos Sainz at the end of the first session, preventing the Spaniard from progressing. Alpine's Franco Colapinto will now start 10th.

Red Bull's Yuki Tsunoda, who qualified 11th, will start at the back because of a 10-place penalty for overtaking Piastri's damaged McLaren after a red flag during final practice.

Stewards rejected Tsunoda's explanations for his actions, saying Piastri was not going slow enough to excuse the breaking of a safety rule. - Agencies



MARKET BUSINESS & FINANCE

TSMC MARKET SHARE RISES

Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co. (TSMC) has further solidified its dominance in the global pure-play wafer foundry market, growing its market share to 67.6 per cent in the first quarter of this year. >B2

MSX INDEX ENDS LOWER

The MSX index closed at 4,503.74 points, down by 0.87% from previous close. The Sharia Index ended down by 2.57% at 430.48 points. Oman Telecom, up 0.60%, was the top gainer while, Jazeera Steel Products, down 9.21%, was the top loser. >B2

Projects worth OMR4.5mn being implemented in South Al Batinah

Plans and programmes are also being made to further enhance the governorate's economy, tourism, and infrastructure

AL RUSTAQ: The Development Committee of South Al Batinah Governorate, operating under the Governor's Office, is following up the execution of multiple developmental, service, and infrastructure projects aimed at boosting investment, trade, and tourism across the governorate's wilayats.

The total construction cost of these projects amounts to OMR4.5 million. They include: The development of the waterfront in Barka; The development of the waterfront in Al Musanna; The Wadi Al Ma'awil Commercial Market project; The Al Awabi Commercial Market project and the development of Nakhal Public Park.

Saud Said Al Ma'awali, Deputy Chairman of the Municipal Council and Head of the Development Committee for South Al Batinah Governorate, told Oman News Agency (ONA) that the committee is devising plans and programmes to enhance the governorate's economy, tourism, and infrastructure. Additionally, it supports small and medium enterprises (SMEs), generates job opportunities for youth, and develops skills and capabilities across various sectors.

He added that these projects fall under South Al Batinah's developmental and recreational initiatives, aligning with Oman's decentralisation policies and the strengthening of local governance as part of an ambitious phase of structural transformations in economic growth frameworks under the Tenth Five-Year Plan and Oman Vision 2040. These efforts aim to improve public facilities and services while stimulating economic activities.

Al Ma'awali noted that the Barka Waterfront Development Project, located in Al Muraisi and stretching over two kilometer, seeks to transform the area into a touristic and integrated recreational hub, serving as a natural retreat and attraction for all age groups. The project includes diverse sports, leisure, and entertainment facilities, along with tourism support services (trip planning, accommodation and transport bookings, tour guidance, and travel logistics). It also provides investment spaces that will generate employment opportunities for locals.

The project's completion rate has reached 55%, with an investment of OMR1.9 million.

As for Al Musanna Waterfront Development Project, situated in Al Awaid and spanning two kilometers, Al Ma'awali stated that its construction cost stands at OMR1.7 million, with 35% of work completed. The project will feature restaurants, retail outlets, children's play areas, indoor and outdoor sports facilities, and beachside recreational activities.

The Wadi Al Ma'awil Commercial Market, covering 16,000 square metres, includes 27 commercial shops with an investment of OMR319,000. The project's completion rate has exceeded 95% and is expected to enhance trade and tourism while supporting commercial activity in Wadi Al Ma'awil, he added.

Al Ma'awali explained that Al Awabi Commercial Market project reflects the government's ongoing efforts to elevate services, achieve sustainable development, and strengthen the local economy by stimulating commercial and social activity in the wilayat. The project, spanning 1,200 square metres, includes 16 commercial shops at an investment cost of OMR200,000, with 70% of work completed.

As for Nakhal Public Park Development project, Al Ma'awali indicated that 70% of construction work has been completed, with a development cost of OMR452,000. The project includes upgrades to enhance visitor experience, transforming the park into an integrated recreational and investment destination. Its strategic location presents promising investment opportunities, featuring three dedicated spaces for SMEs and local family businesses, thereby boosting economic prospects in Nakhal and neighbouring areas.

These initiatives underscore the governorate's commitment to fostering sustainable development, improving quality of life, and creating a vibrant economic environment in line with national development goals. — ONA

GCC-STAT

GCC countries' public spending estimated at $542bn in 2025

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Total public spending by the six GCC countries – the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Kuwait, Qatar, and Bahrain – is estimated to reach $542.1 billion in the current financial year 2025, according to data released by the Muscat-based GCC Statistical Center (GCC-Stat).

Most GCC countries have projected an increase in public spending in 2025 compared to their 2024 spending estimates. This increase is considered a key driver of economic growth in the GCC region and is directed toward completing infrastructure projects and stimulating growth in certain economic sectors, in line with strategic development plans.

GCC-Stat expects government revenues in the GCC countries to remain relatively stable, with oil prices likely to stay at moderate to high levels in 2025.

Current financial year

Estimated total public revenues for the GCC countries are projected to be around $487.8 billion during the current financial year, while the combined budget deficit of the six countries is estimated at $54.3 billion.

Government revenues in the GCC countries are directly affected by movements in global oil prices, as oil revenues constitute the largest proportion of income sources for the region.

GCC countries follow a conservative approach in calculating the break-even oil price in their general budget estimates. This approach aims to account for international economic fluctuations and volatility in global oil prices. The GCC countries plan to finance budget deficits through the use of reserves and domestic and foreign borrowing.

FOR PUBLIC CONSULTATION

FSA presents draft regulations for accounting and auditing profession

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Financial Services Authority (FSA) announced in a circular the presentation of the draft regulation for accounting and auditing profession as part of the ongoing efforts to review and develop the legislative structure regulating the profession in the Sultanate of Oman.

The FSA invited all accounting and auditing firms and stakeholders interested in the sector and the public to view the draft regulation, share their views and comments on the regulation within a period of 30 days from the date of posting on the FSA's website

This move comes as continuation of the approach adopted by the FSA in presenting draft laws and regulations for consultation with the industry and the public in general with the aim of exploring their views and observations in line with best international practices.

The FSA confirmed in the circular that the draft regulation is available on FSA's website www.fsa.gov.om and can be easily accessed through the FSA's social media accounts. Comments and views can also be sent via email: Audit.Profession@fsa.gov.om.

It is worth noting that the supervision and regulation of the accounting and auditing profession was transferred to the Financial Services Authority under Royal Decree No. (20/2024) establishing the Financial Services Authority and issuing its charter.

The Financial Services Authority conducted, during the past period, a number of processes that included examining the reality of practicing the profession, monitoring the number of licensed firms and evaluating their conditions to develop a clear road map with the aim of improving the regulatory aspect of the profession, enhancing the confidence of consumers and augmenting the competencies of the professionals working in the sector in a way that serves sustainable national goals.

FINANCIAL SERVICES AUTHORITY

FSA warns Oman International Audit and Consulting for professional violations

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Financial Services Authority (FSA) represented by the Professional Conduct Committee issued warning to Oman International Auditing and Consulting and granted them a four month grace period to adjust their situations under Article 23 of the Accounting and Auditing Profession's Law for violating the law and failure to comply with the international auditing standards.

The decision was made after the inspection showed that the firm did not conduct audit processes before giving opinion on the financial statements of the customers besides not keeping all audit files in violation of Article 22 of the law, which obligates the auditors to keep such files for ten years after the end of the audited financial year.

Documentation process

Keeping the files is an essential part of documentation process, which contributes to reviewing the procedures taken during the audit process to ensure compliance with international auditing standards, which reflects on the quality of the professional performance.

The audit teams of the FSA also detected a number of violations related to due practice of the profession such as compliance with international professional standards during the audit process especially International Auditing Standard No. 700 which obligates the auditors to include the opinion on the financial statements in the final audit reports.

Such violations are breach of technical and professional controls in the performance of the audit.

FSA emphasises that such actions are within the applications of highest standards of professional conduct and for enhancing the compliance with the laws and regulations governing the accounting the auditing profession to render high quality services and maintain the confidence of the consumers of the industry.

MARKET

MSX index ends lower

Oman Telecom, up 0.60%, was the top gainer while, Jazeera Steel Products, down 9.21%, was the top loser in yesterday's session

MUSCAT: The MSX index closed at 4,503.74 points, down by 0.87% from previous close. The Sharia Index ended down by 2.57% at 430.48 points. Oman Telecom, up 0.60%, was the top gainer while, Jazeera Steel Products, down 9.21%, was the top loser. Shares of OQBI were the most active in terms of number of shares traded while OQEP were the most active in terms of turnover.

A total number of 2214 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating turnover of OMR8.32 million, with more than 52.87 million shares changing hands. Out of 56 traded securities, 2 advanced, 42 declined, and 12 remained unchanged. At the session close, domestic investors were net buyers for OMR888,000 while foreign investors were net sellers for OMR846,000, followed by GCC & Arab investors for OMR42,000 worth of shares.

Financial Index closed at 7,817.37 points, down 0.88%. Prices of Al Omaniya Financial Services, Oman & Emirates Investment, Oman United Insurance, Al Sharqia Investment, and Al Madina Takaful were down by 7.14%, 4.23%, 4.20%, 3.75%, 3.66% respectively.

Industrial Index closed at 6,293.46 points, down 2.48%. Prices of Jazeera Steel Products, Al Maha Ceramics, Al Anwar Ceramics, Gulf International Chemicals, and Oman Fisheries were down by 9.21%, 5.41%, 5.41%, 4.23%, and 3.45% respectively.

Services Index was down by 1.77% before closing at 1,588.90 points. Prices of Oman Telecom were up by 0.60%. Prices of National Gas, Al Jazeera Services, Ooredoo, Shell Oman Marketing, and Phoenix Power were down by 8.05%, 6.42%, 5.69%, 4.95%, and 2.99% respectively.

— United Securities

OMAN STOCKS

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE

INDICES

Index	High	Low	Value	Prev . Value	Diff	Diff %
MSX 30 INDEX	4,542.85	4,455.74	4,503.74	4,543.10	-39.36	-0.87
FINANCIAL INDEX	7,883.69	7,776.89	7,817.37	7,887.07	-69.70	-0.88
Industry Index	6,442.13	6,288.78	6,293.46	6,453.66	-160.19	-2.48
Services Index	1,614.02	1,567.10	1,588.90	1,617.54	-28.64	-1.77
MSX Shariah Index	440.99	426.68	430.48	441.84	-11.36	-2.57
MSX TR INDEX	6,717.75	6,588.94	6,659.93	6,718.13	-58.20	-0.87
FINANCIAL TR IDX	9,343.16	9,216.58	9,264.56	9,347.17	-82.61	-0.88
INDUSTRIAL TR IDX	7,916.40	7,727.96	7,733.72	7,930.57	-196.85	-2.48
SERVICES TR IDX	2,058.26	1,998.43	2,026.23	2,062.75	-36.52	-1.77
FIXED INCOME INDEX	1,166.89	1,166.89	1,166.89	1,166.89	0.00	0.00

Trading Summary

Volume	Turnover	Trades	Market Cap	Up	Down	Equal	Sec. Traded
52,870,460	8,315,543	2,214	27,965,696,509	2	42	12	56

SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR SUNDAY, JUNE 15

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
OM0000003026	OMAN TELECOM	223,892	187,615	22	0.839	0.849	0.837	0.845	0.840	0.005	0.595	0.849	0.845	0.849	0.100	633,750,000
OM0000003398	SOHAR INTERNATIONAL BANK	8,174,748	1,118,095	157	0.138	0.140	0.136	0.140	0.140	0.000	0.000	0.140	0.140	0.140	0.100	926,414,478
OM0000004933	AL SUWADI POWER	165,773	11,197	21	0.067	0.068	0.067	0.068	0.068	0.000	0.000	0.068	0.067	0.068	0.100	48,579,631
OM0000001533	OMINVEST	118,342	25,809	25	0.219	0.220	0.214	0.219	0.220	-0.001	-0.455	0.219	0.214	0.218	0.100	204,920,840
OM0000003224	RENAISSANCE SERVICES	19,112	5,256	6	0.275	0.277	0.274	0.277	0.279	-0.002	-0.717	0.277	0.280	0.277	0.100	65,485,570
OM0000002796	BANK MUSCAT	1,610,519	436,605	65	0.270	0.273	0.270	0.273	0.275	-0.002	-0.727	0.273	0.275	0.273	0.100	2,049,246,398
OM0000002804	ASAFFA FOODS	32,504	12,034	8	0.374	0.374	0.370	0.370	0.373	-0.003	-0.804	0.370	0.370	0.409	0.100	44,400,000
OM0000003125	GLOBAL FINANCIAL INVESTMENT HO.	280,984	29,222	22	0.104	0.104	0.104	0.104	0.105	-0.001	-0.952	0.104	0.095	0.104	0.100	20,800,000
OM0000004925	ALBATINAH POWER	374,554	25,847	24	0.069	0.070	0.069	0.069	0.070	-0.001	-1.429	0.070	0.069	0.070	0.100	46,567,233
OM0000003661	VOLTAMP ENERGY	27,277	17,730	4	0.650	0.650	0.650	0.650	0.660	-0.010	-1.515	0.650	0.650	0.650	0.100	60,848,555
OM0000009072	OQ GAS NETWORKS	6,517,542	979,491	277	0.153	0.153	0.148	0.153	0.156	-0.003	-1.923	0.153	0.153	0.153	0.100	662,585,460
OM0000044420	BANK NIZWA	332,125	32,880	24	0.099	0.099	0.099	0.099	0.101	-0.002	-1.980	0.099	0.097	0.099	0.100	221,458,350
OM0000008934	ABRAJ ENERGY SERVICES	1,419,976	343,109	106	0.244	0.244	0.240	0.242	0.249	-0.007	-2.811	0.242	0.240	0.242	0.100	186,388,400
OM0000002374	UNITED FINANCE	156,000	9,048	11	0.058	0.058	0.058	0.058	0.060	-0.002	-3.333	0.058	0.058	0.060	0.100	20,655,383
OM0000004768	MADINA TAKAFUL	71,180	5,658	9	0.080	0.080	0.079	0.079	0.082	-0.003	-3.659	0.079	0.079	0.083	0.100	13,825,000
OM0000002440	AL SHARQIYA INVESTMENT HO.	4,076	314	1	0.077	0.077	0.077	0.077	0.080	-0.003	-3.750	0.077	0.077	0.080	0.100	6,930,000
OM0000001087	OMAN UNITED INSURANCE	17,101	3,929	6	0.230	0.230	0.228	0.228	0.238	-0.010	-4.202	0.228	0.228	0.240	0.100	22,800,000
OM0000002168	AL ANWAR CERAMIC	582,424	101,754	64	0.179	0.179	0.171	0.175	0.185	-0.010	-5.405	0.175	0.175	0.175	0.100	38,500,000
OM0000003968	OOREDOO	69,585	13,875	20	0.201	0.201	0.193	0.199	0.211	-0.012	-5.687	0.199	0.198	0.220	0.100	129,537,902
OM0000002226	ALJAZEERA SERVICES	203,649	35,619	32	0.172	0.187	0.172	0.175	0.187	-0.012	-6.417	0.174	0.173	0.174	0.100	7,497,523
OM0000002176	JAZEERA STEEL PRODUCTS	11,314	3,978	3	0.355	0.355	0.345	0.345	0.380	-0.035	-9.211	0.345	0.345	0.379	0.100	43,089,796
Total	21	20,412,677	3,399,069	907												

Parallel 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
OM0000002200	AHLI BANK	313,929	48,659	2	0.155	0.155	0.155	0.155	0.155	0.000	0.000	0.155	0.152	0.155	0.100	364,196,907
OM0000002333	SALALAH PORT SERVICES	140	35	1	0.252	0.252	0.252	0.252	0.252	0.000	0.000	0.252	0.000	0.252	0.100	45,319,025
OM0000002580	OMAN EDUCATION & TRAINING INVNTS	2,100	2,520	1	1.200	1.200	1.200	1.200	1.200	0.000	0.000	1.200	1.200	0.000	0.100	84,000,000
OM0000003000	Al MAHA PETROLEUM PRODS MARKNG	100	95	1	0.950	0.950	0.950	0.950	0.950	0.000	0.000	0.950	0.945	0.950	0.100	65,550,000
OM0000003141	BARKA WATER AND POWER	154	31	1	0.200	0.200	0.200	0.200	0.200	0.000	0.000	0.200	0.180	0.200	0.100	32,000,000
OM0000003281	TAAGEER FINANCE	9,400	978	1	0.104	0.104	0.104	0.104	0.104	0.000	0.000	0.104	0.094	0.000	0.100	29,039,214
OM0000004735	SEMBCORP SALALAH	63,000	6,382	8	0.100	0.103	0.096	0.103	0.103	0.000	0.000	0.103	0.096	0.103	0.100	98,320,911
OM0000007910	AMAN REAL ESTATE	3,500	308	1	0.088	0.088	0.088	0.088	0.088	0.000	0.000	0.088	0.087	0.088	0.100	17,600,000
OM0000008868	THE PEARL REIF	84,202	9,767	10	0.116	0.116	0.116	0.116	0.116	0.000	0.000	0.116	0.116	0.119	0.100	68,606,678
OM0000002267	GULF MUSHROOM PRODUCTS	2,000	436	3	0.218	0.218	0.218	0.218	0.219	-0.001	-0.457	0.218	0.218	0.218	0.100	9,976,944
OM0000009759	OQ EXPLORATION AND PRODUCTION	5,997,751	1,848,174	293	0.309	0.310	0.300	0.309	0.312	-0.003	-0.962	0.309	0.309	0.312	0.010	2,472,000,000
OM0000004248	SMN POWER HOLDING	9,015	1,849	5	0.206	0.206	0.204	0.204	0.207	-0.003	-1.449	0.204	0.203	0.204	0.100	40,725,662
OM0000010120	ASYAD SHIPPING	6,983,987	839,658	207	0.120	0.122	0.119	0.121	0.123	-0.002	-1.626	0.121	0.121	0.121	0.000	630,258,058
OM0000001590	MUSCAT FINANCE	55,000	2,750	5	0.050	0.050	0.050	0.050	0.051	-0.001	-1.961	0.050	0.049	0.051	0.100	15,357,316
OM0000001400	OMAN FLOUR MILLS	127,816	58,797	31	0.462	0.462	0.460	0.460	0.470	-0.010	-2.128	0.460	0.460	0.465	0.100	76,072,500
OM0000008710	BARKA DESALINATION	231	29	1	0.126	0.126	0.126	0.126	0.129	-0.003	-2.326	0.126	0.121	0.126	0.100	9,515,772
OM0000001772	ALANWAR INVESTMENT	3,480,947	285,507	64	0.082	0.083	0.081	0.083	0.085	-0.002	-2.353	0.082	0.082	0.083	0.100	23,826,820
OM0000008447	OMAN REIT FUND	57,385	4,603	11	0.080	0.081	0.079	0.081	0.083	-0.002	-2.410	0.081	0.079	0.081	0.100	52,535,816
OM0000009908	OQ BASE INDUSTRIES (SFZ)	13,478,482	1,600,792	500	0.121	0.121	0.117	0.121	0.124	-0.003	-2.419	0.121	0.121	0.121	0.040	418,598,393
OM0000001152	OMAN NATIONAL ENGG & INVESTMENT	99,846	11,495	12	0.116	0.116	0.115	0.115	0.118	-0.003	-2.542	0.115	0.115	0.116	0.100	17,250,000
OM0000005963	PHOENIX POWER	135,829	8,932	9	0.066	0.066	0.064	0.065	0.067	-0.002	-2.985	0.064	0.064	0.065	0.100	95,069,095
OM0000007084	MUSCAT CITY DESALINATION	6,700	436	1	0.065	0.065	0.065	0.065	0.067	-0.002	-2.985	0.065	0.065	0.070	0.100	10,110,776
OM0000002648	NATIONAL FINANCE	65,498	7,859	6	0.120	0.120	0.118	0.118	0.122	-0.004	-3.279	0.118	0.118	0.120	0.100	71,758,931
OM0000001681	OMAN EMIRATES HO.	500,000	34,275	21	0.069	0.069	0.067	0.068	0.071	-0.003	-4.225	0.067	0.067	0.067	0.100	8,287,500
OM0000002028	GULF INTERNATIONAL CHEMICALS	15,000	1,035	2	0.071	0.071	0.068	0.068	0.071	-0.003	-4.225	0.068	0.068	0.078	0.100	1,428,000
OM0000002275	SHELL OMAN MARKETING	1,000	538	1	0.538	0.538	0.538	0.538	0.566	-0.028	-4.947	0.538	0.541	0.000	0.100	51,110,000
OM0000005005	ALMAHA CERAMICS	47,542	13,378	29	0.280	0.283	0.280	0.280	0.296	-0.016	-5.405	0.280	0.324	0.280	0.100	15,400,000
OM0000002077	AL OMANIYA FINANCIAL SERVICES	6,000	780	2	0.130	0.130	0.130	0.130	0.140	-0.010	-7.143	0.130	0.130	0.130	0.100	41,004,210
OM0000001160	NATIONAL GAS	603,259	48,387	54	0.080	0.084	0.079	0.080	0.087	-0.007	-8.046	0.080	0.079	0.080	0.100	6,800,000
Total	29	32,149,813		4,838,485	1,283											

2025 FIRST QUARTER

TSMC market share rises to 67.6% in Q1

NEW DELHI: Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co. (TSMC) has further solidified its dominance in the global pure-play wafer foundry market, growing its market share to 67.6 per cent in the first quarter of this year, according to a report by Taipei-based research firm TrendForce Corp, reported by Focus Taiwan.

Although TSMC's revenue declined by 5 per cent quarter-on-quarter to USD 25.52 billion due to seasonal slowdowns, the company's market share still edged up from 67.1 per cent in the previous quarter.

TrendForce attributed this performance to continued strong demand for artificial intelligence (AI) and high-performance computing (HPC) applications, as well as accelerated client orders seeking to mitigate risks from ongoing U.S. tariff policies. TSMC's closest competitor, South Korea's Samsung Electronics, saw its market share fall to 7.7 per cent. — ANI

ENHANCED SPENDING EXPERIENCE

Dhofar Islamic's Mastercard World credit card: An invitation to experience a world of exceptional privileges

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Dhofar Islamic Banking, the Islamic window of BankDhofar, invites customers to apply for the Dhofar Islamic Mastercard World credit card and experience a world of exceptional privileges. Designed exclusively for priority banking customers, the Dhofar Islamic Mastercard World credit card offers customers exceptional benefits that suit their exclusive lifestyles. This underscores the bank's commitment to providing distinguished banking solutions that meet customers' aspirations, enhance their financial flexibility and enrich their lifestyles within as well as outside the Sultanate of Oman .

The Dhofar Islamic Mastercard World credit card allows customers to enjoy an enhanced spending experience as it unlocks a comprehensive suite of rewards, travel benefits and lifestyle offerings that can be availed both locally and internationally. Additionally, cardholders enjoy 1.5% value back on all international purchases and 1% value back on purchases made within Oman, earning consistent rewards with every transaction.

Another key benefit of the Dhofar Islamic Mastercard World card is the 12 complimentary accesses to over 1,200 airport lounges in more than 450 cities across over 135 countries, facilitated through the convenient Mastercard Travel Pass app. The first lounge visit is complimentary without any spend condition while subsequent visits are unlocked after a USD 1 equivalent international transaction, providing extended complimentary access for three calendar months from the date of the last qualifying transaction. The complimentary lounge access is highly popular as it allows customers to enriching their travel experience. Beyond lounge access, the card unlocks a world of travel and lifestyle benefits which include a 10% discount on any international roundtrip airfare from Cleartrip using the code MCWORLD, up to two complimentary items at Costa Coffee in Dubai's Airport via the Mastercard Travel Pass App and the 'Priceless Cities' collection offering thousands of unique experiences and offers in over 40 cities globally, spanning dining, travel, and entertainment.

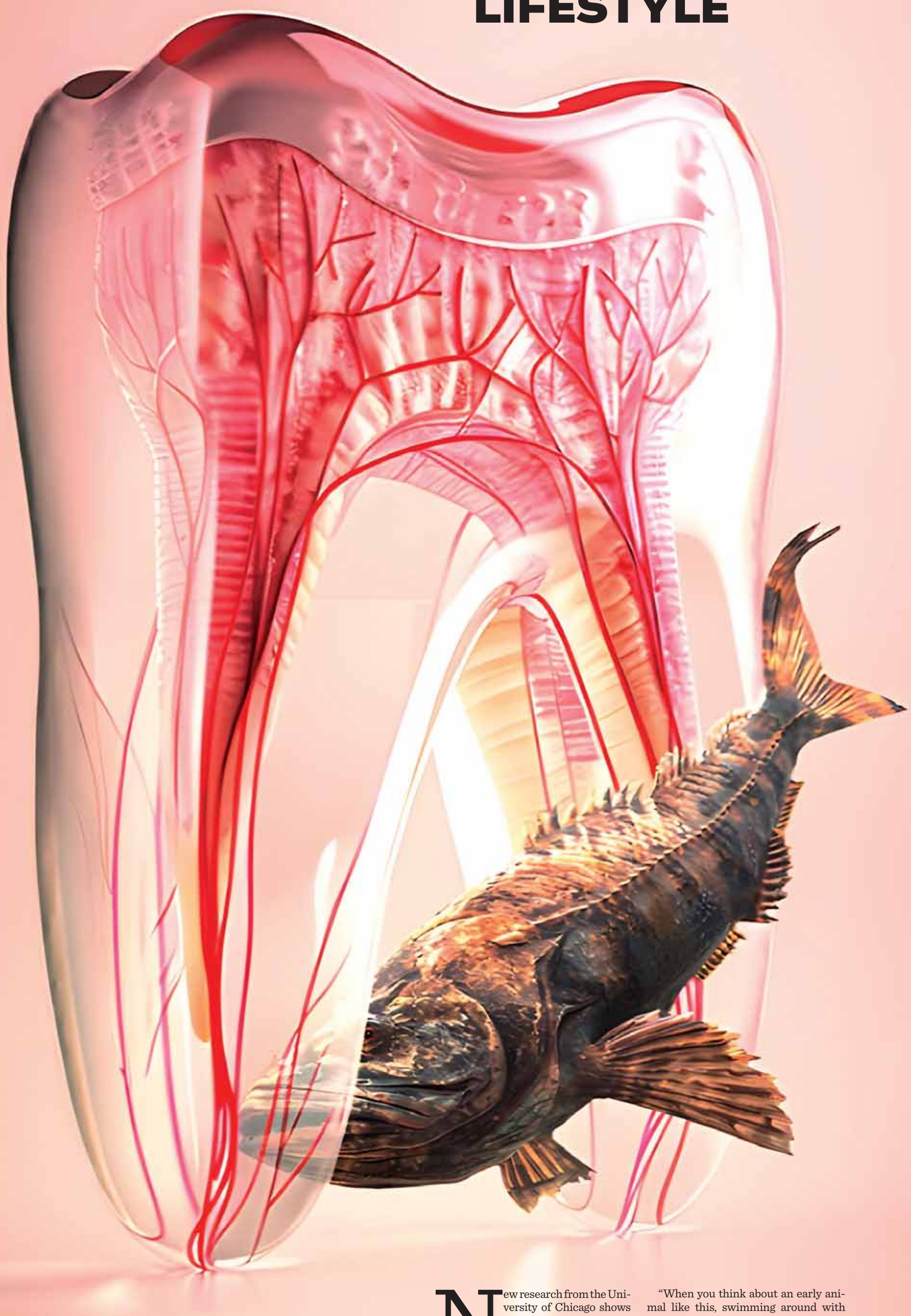
Additional travel advantages comprise a 15% discount on IHG Hotels & Resorts across Europe, Maldives, India, the Middle East, and Africa. Car rental discounts are also available, with up to 35% off with Avis, up to 10% off with Budget, and a 10% discount on rental bookings at Rentalcars.com.

For peace of mind during travel, the Mastercard World offers 'Inconvenience Insurance' covering issues such as lost luggage or flight delays, alongside automatic insurance for medical conditions and unexpected incidents. A Travel Insurance Confirmation Letter is also provided for Schengen and other customs areas.

Digital connectivity is enhanced with free data While roaming (valid for 5 days from selected start date) and a 15% discount on subsequent Flexiroam data roaming plans. Lifestyle benefits extend to up to 20% off on one order per month on the Talabat app, exclusive access to luxury shopping at The Bicester Village Shopping Collection boutique, free premium membership and 30% off shipping with MyUS retailers, and a 10% discount on fashion purchases over $200 at FARFETCH

For more information about Dhofar Islamic's Mastercard World Credit Card and how to enjoy its full range of features, customers are encouraged to visit www.dhofarislamic.com or their nearest Dhofar Islamic branch.

LIFESTYLE



These ancient fish are likely to be blamed for toothaches in cold: Study

The new study, published this week in Nature, confirms that these structures in an early vertebrate fish from the Ordovician period, about 465 million years ago, contained dentine and likely helped the creature sense conditions in the water around it

New research from the University of Chicago shows that dentine, the inner layer of teeth that transmits sensory information to nerves inside the pulp, first evolved as sensory tissue in the armoured exoskeletons of ancient fish.

Paleontologists have long believed that teeth evolved from the bumpy structures on this armour, but their purpose wasn't clear.

The new study, published this week in Nature, confirms that these structures in an early vertebrate fish from the Ordovician period, about 465 million years ago, contained dentine and likely helped the creature sense conditions in the water around it.

The research also showed that structures considered to be teeth in fossils from the Cambrian period (485-540 million years ago) were similar to features in the armour of fossil invertebrates, as well as the sensory organs in the shells of modern arthropods like crabs and shrimp.

These similarities imply that sensory organs in the armour of diverse animals evolved separately in both vertebrates and invertebrates to help them sense the larger world around them.

"When you think about an early animal like this, swimming around with armour on it, it needs to sense the world. This was a pretty intense predatory environment, and being able to sense the properties of the water around them would have been very important," said Neil Shubin, PhD, Robert R. Bensley Distinguished Service Professor of Organismal Biology and Anatomy at UChicago and senior author of the new study.

"So, here we see that invertebrates with armour like horseshoe crabs need to sense the world too, and it just so happens they hit on the same solution," added Neil Shubin.

While they didn't pin down the earliest vertebrate fish, Shubin said this discovery was more than worth the effort.

"For some of these fossils that were putative early vertebrates, we showed that they're not. But that was a bit of misdirection," Shubin said.

"We didn't find the earliest one, but in some ways, we found something way cooler," Shubin added.

The study, "The Origin of Vertebrate Teeth and Evolution of Sensory Exoskeletons," was supported by the National Science Foundation, the US Department of Energy, and the Brinson Family Foundation. -ANI

SPORTS

Messi's Inter Miami draw with Egypt's Al Ahly 0-0

Revamped FIFA Club World Cup got underway at the Hard Rock Stadium in Miami on Saturday

MIAMI: Lionel Messi and a heavy security presence were on show as the revamped FIFA Club World Cup got under way at the Hard Rock Stadium in Miami, USA, on Saturday.

Host city side Inter Miami, led by Argentine legend Messi, played out an entertaining goalless draw against Egyptian giants Al Ahly to kick off the tournament.

Miami were thankful to goalkeeper and man of the match Oscar Ustari for making a string of saves, including one from the penalty spot, to preserve a clean sheet.

Messi came close to opening the scoring in the second period with a free-kick and almost won it late on with an incredible, long-range strike but saw his effort acrobatically tipped onto the crossbar by Mohamed El Shenawy.

This event, which has been much maligned in some parts, may have started without a goal.

Matchday was the first time this week that it felt like a significant tournament was about to get under way. Around the South Beach area travelling Al Ahly supporters were enjoying lunch and drinks before the big game.

The Egyptian side had qualified as winners of the African Champions League and have serious pedigree, winning more league championships (45) and more titles on the continent (12) than any other club, but they could not translate that on to the global stage.

The last major game to be played at the Hard Rock Stadium took place 11 months ago when "a party almost became a tragedy" as ticketless fans forced their way in to the ground for the Copa America final between Argentina and Colombia, delaying kick-off by 80 minutes.

Authorities learned a tough lesson and were taking no chances, making sure there was no repeat this time as police cars with flashing sirens lined the boulevards outside the stadium. With that match and recent unrest in Los Angeles in mind, police officers with 'counter terrorism' logos patrolled the exterior of the venue and numerous security checks and bag searches were made before entry was granted.

Supporters needed extra time to make their way inside as they were forced to have further checks at a second perimeter point.

Fireworks and razzmatazz

The week leading up to the opening game featured apparent ticketing issues but FIFA president Gianni Infantino said he expected "a full stadium" with an "incredible atmosphere". He positioned himself in the stands at the centre of a front three, flanked by footballing icons Ronaldo of Brazil and Italian legend Roberto Baggio.

Casting a glance around, thousands of empty green seats were clearly evident in the 65,326-capacity stadium and a crowd of 60,927 was announced in the second half. But the presence of Messi, the sizeable travelling Egyptian contingent - who chanted and waved flags throughout - and an action-packed game made for a watchable contest.

Moroccan-American rapper French Montana produced a hit in the pre-match build-up, there were fireworks aplenty and, to add further razzmatazz, each player was announced on to the pitch individually before kick-off.

Miami failed to win potentially their easiest group game and come up against Portuguese side Porto on Thursday.

"Clearly, when we find Leo in positions and get the ball to him in the best way, that's where we have the most options," said Miami manager Javier Mascherano.

"We take it game by game. We know that the level will clearly rise in the next game because they're a European opponent, but we have to stay with the feeling that it's 11 against 11. The lengthy pre-match activity meant the match began six minutes later than the scheduled 8pm local kick-off time.

Al Ahly should have been 2-0 up in the opening eight minutes, but goalkeeper Ustari stood tall to keep out efforts from Wessam Abou Ali and Emam Ashour.

At half-time some entertainment was added to proceedings for the crowd as YouTuber iShowSpeed, who seems to be everywhere, Sergio Aguero, Pepe, Kaka, Alessandro del Piero and Youri Djorkaeff took part in a crossbar challenge. - Agencies

CONCACAF GOLD CUP

Mexico begin Gold Cup defence on winning note

LOS ANGELES: Holders Mexico began their defence of the CONCACAF Gold Cup with a 3-2 win over the Dominican Republic on Saturday in Los Angeles, amid tensions over US president Donald Trump's immigration crackdown.

The Mexico team were forced to change hotels over security considerations and, on Friday, Mexico's President Claudia Sheinbaum urged US authorities not to conduct immigration enforcement targeting fans at Saturday's game at the SoFi in Stadium in Inglewood. On Saturday, protests continued elsewhere in LA, and in towns and cities across the US.

The city is also due to host the first of six FIFA Club World Cup matches to be played at Pasadena's Rose Bowl over the next fortnight, with Paris Saint-Germain facing Atletico Madrid.

Mexico's West Ham midfielder Edson Alvarez headed in the opening goal just before half-time in Los Angeles. Fulham striker Raul Jimenez converted his 40th international goal right after the break although Peter Gonzalez swiftly pulled a goal back for the Dominican Republic, who are making their tournament debut.

Defender Cesar Montes then deflected an Alvarez header past the Dominican goalkeeper to make it 3-1, before Edison Azcona scored with a deflected strike to leave Mexico holding on for a hard-fought win.

A crowd of 54,309 were in attendance at the SoFi Stadium, which has a capacity of about 70,000 for soccer games, with mostly Mexican fans.

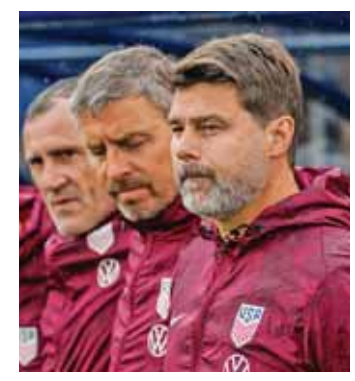
The attendance for Mexico's past three games at SoFi has averaged 63,760.

Mexico will play their next two group stage games in Arlington, Texas and Las Vegas, Nevada.

The Gold Cup is the leading competition for national teams in North and Central America and the Caribbean. - Agencies

USA FOOTBALL COACH

USA players 'cannot dictate plan': Pochettino



LOS ANGELES: United States men's coach Mauricio Pochettino has told his players they cannot pick and choose which games they will be available for.

AC Milan forward Christian Pulisic offered to play in two friendlies before the Gold Cup, but wanted to be rested for the tournament itself.

However, Pochettino decided to leave the 26-year-old out of his squad for the friendlies with Turkey and Switzerland.

Pulisic has played 118 games for club and country since joining Milan from Chelsea in July 2023, but was criticised by former US internationals Landon Donovan and Alexi Lalas.

Speaking to CBS Sports, Pulisic said that while he "respected" Pochettino's decision he "didn't understand it", adding that those questioning his commitment to the national team were "way out of line".

"Players [do] not need to understand or not understand," Pochettino said on Saturday. "Players need to listen and to stick with our plan. They cannot dictate the plan.

"The most important thing is that we explained why we decided not to include [him] in the two friendly games.

"Then if you have some problems, no, that is not my problem to understand. I am the head coach, I am not a mannequin."

USA lost 2-1 to Turkey and 4-0 to Switzerland, meaning they have suffered four straight defeats before their Gold Cup opener against Trinidad and Tobago in San Jose. - Agencies

US OPEN GOLF

American Burns leads by one stroke heading into final round

OAKMONT: America's Sam Burns will take a one-shot lead into the final round of the US Open after a terrific finish to the third round at Oakmont on Saturday.

The 28-year-old world No.22 carded three birdies and two bogeys in his one-under 69 as he maintained his overnight lead and moved to four under par.

Playing partner JJ Spaun was level with Burns for much of the round but bogeyed the final hole to end the day as he started it, one shot back.

Alongside Spaun at three under par, 2013 Masters champion Adam Scott made a decisive move on the back nine to stake his claim for a second major title at 44 years old.

The only player in the top 10 to have previously won one of golf's biggest four tournaments, the Australian birdied the 13th and 14th holes before draining a 15-foot birdie putt on the 17th to briefly tie the lead.

His round of three-under 67 was joint best in the field - alongside Mexico's Carlos Ortiz who improved to level par - and earned him a spot in the final group on Sunday.

Norway's Viktor Hovland remains a threat. He hit two trees and a flagstick on his way to a level-par 70 and produced a wondrous shot out of the rough on 17 to find a bonus birdie.

England's Tyrrell Hatton and Scotland's Robert MacIntyre both impressed in their search for a first major title and are at one over and three over par respectively.

World No.1 Scottie Scheffler carded his best round of the week, a level-par 70, but is eight shots off the lead, while Rory McIlroy hit a 74 to fall to 10 over.

Soggy conditions changed the dynamic of the course but not the difficulty as Burns and Spaun traded blows in the final group.

Both are winners on the PGA Tour but they also share play-off defeats this season – Spaun at The Players Championship by Rory McIlroy in March and Burns only last week on the fourth play-off hole as Ryan Fox won the Canadian Open.

The two briefly swapped places at the beginning of the round but were level for the majority of Saturday and both picked up birdies on the 17th to move clear of Scott on four under.

But Spaun, who still boasts the only bogey-free round of the week on Thursday, hit an erratic tee shot at the 18th. That led to a bogey and cost him a place in Sunday's final group. That spot alongside Burns will be filled by Scott, who is making his 96th consecutive appearance at a major championship.

His second shot at the 14th was sublime, landing a foot from the pin, and his fist-pump celebration to raucous cheers after making birdie on 17 showed his heart – and popularity – remain undimmed.

On Friday, Scott said a second major title would "go a long way" in fulfilling himself. He is well placed to make that happen on Sunday and has the added bonus of being the only player in contention to have contested the 2007 and 2016 US Opens at Oakmont.

"I was less overwhelmed coming to Oakmont this time, and that's not a knock on the golf course, but maybe just a couple trips around the U.S. Open here, I knew what to expect," said Scott, who missed the cut in 2007 and finished joint 18th in 2016.

And do not discount Hovland, who despite coming within inches of hitting his opening drive out of bounds, retained his composure to produce a typically swashbuckling round that featured three birdies and three bogeys.

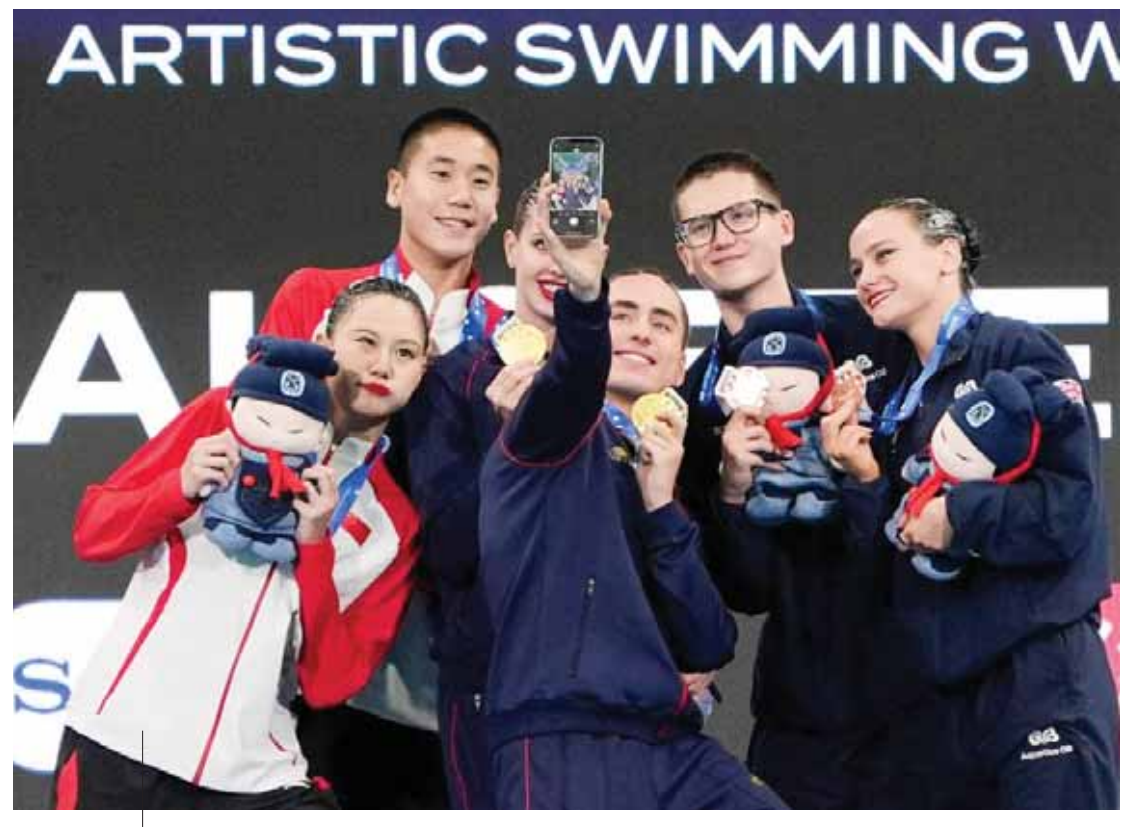
One further back, Scheffler remains a presence but is yet to find his best form this week, summed up by an ugly missed par putt from two feet at the eighth.

At least he remains somewhat in touch.

The 2021 US Open champion Jon Rahm's challenge came unstuck after playing the back nine in four over. At seven over par he is surely too far back to threaten. Alongside the Spaniard is world No.3 Xander Schauffele, who has finished inside the top 15 in all eight of his previous US Open appearances. As for Masters champion McIlroy, a bogey at the 18th capped another testing day and left him "waiting for my week to end". - Agencies

IN PICTURES

Musicians celebrate cultural harmony in Colombo
A musician performs during an event of the "Conversation and Connection" concert series in Colombo, Sri Lanka. Xinhua



Highlight of World Aquatics Artistic Swimming World Cup 2025-Super Final
Gold medalists Dennis Gonzalez Boneu, Iris Tio Casas of Spain, silver medalists Guo Muye , Liu Jinhan of China and bronze medalists Ranjuo Charles Tomblin/ Isabelle Anya Thorpe of Britain take selfies during the awarding ceremony for the mixed duet free event at the World Aquatics Artistic Swimming World Cup 2025-Super Final in Xi'an, northwest China's Shaanxi Province. Xinhua

Race for the Cure held in Bucharest, Romania
Participants run during the Race for the Cure, a part of an international fund-raising event aiming to fight breast cancer, in Bucharest, Romania. Xinhua

International film festival commences in Shanghai
This picture shows the opening show of the gala night of the 27th Shanghai International Film Festival (SIFF) in Shanghai, east China. Xinhua

Corgi race held in Vancouver, Canada
Corgis dash during a Corgi race in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. Xinhua

Fashion show held at National Museum of Indonesia
Women dressed in Kebaya, an Indonesian traditional costume, walk during the "Swarna Biru", a fashion show at the National Museum of Indonesia in Jakarta, Indonesia. Xinhua

ROUND-UP

Meethaq Islamic Banking's solutions and services available at dedicated booths in select commercial centres across Oman

The initiative is designed to provide convenient access to Meethaq's Sharia-compliant banking solutions and services for customers and visitors alike

MUSCAT: As part of its ongoing strategy to expand its offerings and ensure accessibility for all customer segments, Meethaq Islamic Banking from Bank Muscat, has launched dedicated service booths at various commercial centres across the Sultanate.

The initiative is designed to provide convenient access to Meethaq's Sharia-compliant banking solutions and services for customers and visitors alike. By making these services readily available at key commercial locations, Meethaq aims to simplify the banking experience, allowing customers to seamlessly access products, services & solutions and enjoy a more enhanced and efficient banking experience.

Meethaq will operate dedicated booths for three days at 5 selected commercial centres across various governorates of the Sultanate, supported by Meethaq's expert staff, who will introduce customers and visitors to Sharia-compliant services and solutions.

Meethaq's team was available at the Mall of Oman in Muscat from 12th-14th June, and they will be available at the Sur City Centre in Al Sharqiyah South from 19th-21st June, Sohar City Centre in North Batina from 26th -28th June, Nizwa Grand Mall in Al Dakhiliyah from 3rd-7th July, and Salalah Grand Mall in Dhofar from 10th-12th July.

All booths will be open during the morning and evening working hours of the respective centre. These dedicated booths present an excellent opportunity for customers and visitors to avail Meethaq's various Sharia-compliant banking services and solutions with ease.

These solutions will include account openings (including children and savings accounts), salary transfer requests, enrollment in Meethaq's savings plan and consultations on other financing products and solutions.

Customers can also inquire about services tailored to their specific needs, enabling them to choose the most suitable banking options.

Commenting on the initiative, Sami Bait Rashid, Assistant General Manager, Meethaq Personal Banking, said: "Meethaq remains firmly committed to enhancing customer experience through innovative, Sharia-compliant services and products. The launch of these booths at selected commercial centers, reflects our mission to bring our offerings closer to customers. I encourage everyone to visit and explore the benefits of Meethaq's products and services."

Sami Bait Rashid further added: "Meethaq Islamic Banking operates a robust network of 32 branches across various governorates, providing a wide array of Sharia-compliant services and solutions to meet the growing needs of our customers. By allocating booths in popular commercial centers, Meethaq is also enhancing service accessibility for tourists and visitors, particularly in regions that experience heightened business activity due to tourism and economic growth. These efforts are intended to streamline banking transactions in comfortable and accessible environments. I would like to thank all our valued customers for their trust in the Sharia-compliant services and solutions offered to them, which demonstrates Meethaq's stance of leadership in the Islamic banking industry.

Meethaq's diverse product portfolio includes Sharia-compliant banking services and solutions for individuals, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and institutions. For individuals, Shari-compliant offerings include savings and current accounts, children savings accounts, Meethaq savings plan and fixed deposit placements.

Financing solutions include personal finance, car finance, home finance, financing for travel, education, and marriage, as well as personal goods purchase financing. For SMEs and institutions, Meethaq offers a suite of banking solutions including current accounts, project financing options through short and long-term facilities, commercial financing solutions like "Ijarah", and large project financing.

All products comply with directives and regulations of the Central Bank of Oman, along with Sharia reviews and supervisory procedures carried out by Meethaq's Sharia Supervisory Board. This ensures that all products are structured in compliance with the Islamic law, local laws and regulations and meet customer expectations and aspirations.

Strengthening its leadership in the Islamic banking sector, Meethaq has been recognized with several prestigious awards, including, to name just a few, the Market Leadership Award 2024 from Global Islamic Finance, Best Islamic Bank in Oman from Euromoney, and the Most Trusted Islamic Banking Brand Award from Apex Media.

EXECUTIVE-LEVEL COMFORT

Bestune B70 combines elegance and performance across two powerful variants

MUSCAT: The Bestune B70 sedan offers a stylish and smart solution for drivers looking to balance everyday practicality with comfort and performance. Available in two distinct variants, the Comfort, priced at OMR7150, and the Limousine, offered at OMR9100, the B70 is crafted to meet a wide range of expectations, from refined daily drives to executive-level comfort.

The Comfort variant is powered by a 1.5-litre turbocharged engine that delivers 158 hp and 258 Nm of torque, paired with a 7-speed dual-clutch transmission for smooth, efficient performance. Its elegant silhouette is complemented by LED headlamps, daytime running lights, 18-inch alloy wheels, and a panoramic sunroof, giving it a premium edge. Inside, the cabin feels well-appointed with leather seats, a 6-way power-adjustable driver's seat, and dual-zone automatic climate control.

Convenience and tech features include keyless entry, push-button start, cruise control, and a 6-speaker audio system. The Comfort variant also comes equipped with an extensive list of safety features such as ABS, EBD, Brake Assist, Electronic Stability Control, and front and side airbags, along with a rear-view camera, enhancing safety and ease for everyday use.

The Limousine variant raises the bar with a host of upgrades that cater to drivers who seek greater refinement and presence. Under the bonnet is a 2.0-litre turbocharged engine delivering 215 horsepower and 340 Nm of torque, paired with a 6-speed automatic transmission for confident acceleration and control.

Its exterior styling includes 19-inch alloy wheels, puddle lamps, intelligent high-beam control, rhythmic LED rear lights, and a sporty square tailpipe. Inside, the Limousine transforms the cabin into an executive space with ambient lighting featuring a starry sky headliner, heated front seats, and a seat courtesy function. Technology is seamlessly integrated through a 12.3-inch infotainment display, a 7-inch digital cluster, and wireless charging.

Safety in the Limousine variant is comprehensive, thanks to adaptive cruise control, forward collision warning, lane keeping assist, blind spot monitoring, traffic sign recognition, and a 360-degree 3D camera system.

Whether it is the well-rounded Comfort or the top-tier Limousine, the Bestune B70 delivers standout features and versatility in every mile.

Gulf Great Sands (GGS) LLC is the official dealer of Bestune in Oman, with showrooms in Al Qurum and Sohar and sales centres in Mawaleh, Barka, Ibri, Nizwa, and Salalah. For more information, visit www.bestune-oman.com or call toll-free 80050800.

BYD HOT SUMMER DEALS

Own the future with exclusive deals and offers on all electric vehicles

MUSCAT: BYD is proud to present its Hot Summer Deals on its futuristic range of vehicles for customers in Oman. New BYD customers can enjoy 3 years/60,000 km free service plans on the purchase of electric vehicles.

What's more, participate in the grand raffle for a chance to win an all-expenses-paid holiday to Turkiye. Plus, scratch and win exciting prizes including an iPhone 16 Pro Max, Apple Watch, Apple AirPods, and a free EV battery charger for the convenience of charging your BYD at home.

BYD's dynamic lineup of EVs includes the Atto 3, Sealion 7, Seal and Han. Don't miss this exclusive opportunity to turn heads on the road with a brand-new BYD.

The BYD ATTO 3 is the perfect choice for those seeking an electric SUV with impressive performance and fuel efficiency. Powered by BYD's revolutionary Blade Battery, it delivers exceptional safety and high-performance output in a premium comfort setting. The gym-themed cockpit is designed to deliver an immersive driving experience with a 5-inch LCD dashboard, the exemplary 12.8-inch rotatable screen, rhythmic interactive ambient lighting, and ergonomic seats, the Atto 3 is a perfect balance modernity, luxury and performance.

Redefining the SUV segment, the recently launched Sealion 7 EV showcases the full power and vigor of BYD's revolutionary e-Platform 3.0 and Blade Battery technology. It delivers seamless power, precision handling, and exceptional efficiency—accelerating from 0 to 100 km/h in just 4.5 seconds. For enhanced security, The advanced driver assistance system (ADAS), features five radar sensors and nine airbags, significantly enhances safety. Its Cell-to-Body (CTB) battery integration also makes it one of the safest and smartest electric SUVs on the road.

Another ocean-inspired model, the BYD SEAL, is an all-wheel-drive, fully electric sedan that incorporates BYD's cutting-edge blade battery. Designed to be spacious, practical, safe, and comfortable, it also delivers an impressive range of 570 km on a full charge and acceleration from 0 to 100 km/h in just 3.8 seconds, the SEAL delivers both performance and efficiency.

Inspired by Chinese dragon, the all-electric BYD Han represents power and strength. This sleek, sporty sedan takes driving to new heights, reaching 0 to 100 km/h in just 3.9 seconds. Other sophisticated features include the multifunction dashboard, featuring the BYD Heart shift lever, a 12.3" LCD display, and a 15.6" 8-core rotatable touchscreen. Premium Nappa leather seats, a 12-speaker Dynaudio sound system, and multi-color gradient ambient lighting combine create an immersive, high-end driving experience.

With a rapidly expanding network of BYD showrooms and service centers, customers can expect seamless after-sales support and a worry-free ownership experience. Customers are invited to experience the lineup at BYD showrooms in Wattayah, Al Mouj, and Mall of Oman.

In Oman, BYD vehicles are distributed by World Auto Business LLC. Please visit www.bydoman.com, www.youtube.com/@BYD_oman, www.facebook.com/BYDinOman, and www.instagram.com/byd_oman.

OMAN ARAB BANK

OAB revolutionises payments with award-winning Soft POS Solution

MUSCAT: In a bold stride toward digital innovation and financial inclusion, Oman Arab Bank (OAB) has unveiled its cutting-edge Soft POS (Point of Sale) solution, transforming ordinary smartphones into secure, contactless payment terminals.

This game-changing product is reshaping how small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Oman conduct business—streamlining operations, boosting mobility, and reducing overhead.

Designed with the needs of entrepreneurs, mobile vendors, and growing SMEs in mind, OAB's Soft POS system eliminates the cost and complexity of traditional POS devices.

By simply downloading the "OAB Mobile Pay" app on any NFC-enabled Android smartphone, merchants can start accepting card payments instantly—no cables, no paper, and no extra equipment.

The system supports contactless payments via debit and credit cards, mobile wallets, and smart devices.

It also offers digital receipts, real-time inventory management, tax tools, and liquidity tracking—all from the palm of the merchant's hand. Most merchants are up and running within 24 hours of applying.

Mr Juma Al Fulaiti, Deputy Head of Retail Banking in Oman Arab Bank, stated, "Our Soft POS solution reflects OAB's deep commitment to small and medium enterprise empowerment and financial accessibility. We believe in giving businesses the needed digital tools to thrive. So by reducing the barriers to cashless commerce, we're helping Oman's entrepreneurs grow with agility and confidence."

The technology was also on display at the Muscat International Book Fair 2025, where it facilitated a totally cashless experience, showcasing its scalability and ease of use during high-traffic events. As part of its broader digital banking strategy, Oman Arab Bank continues to bridge the gap between innovation and inclusion.

And with the Soft POS platform, OAB is not only meeting the market's evolving needs but also enabling a smarter, faster, and more inclusive financial ecosystem, empowering a nation with intuitive solutions that drive forward customers, and enables them to persevere.

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The offer is valid from 4th May to 3rd July, 2025. The prices mentioned are for base model variants. VAT extra. *Free service is Ilinjaz service package and applicable to MY 2024 of Mazda 6 2.5, CX5, CX60 & CX90. #AAA roadside assistance is valid for the first 3 years from the date of retail purchase. **Trade In Vehicle Evaluation is only for Oman vehicles. Imported vehicles from US & other GCC countries are not accepted. Offer valid only for private vehicles and not applicable to fleet, Ministry, taxi, rental, or commercial car purchases.