

Times

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TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

11 JANUARY 2026

OMAN

RAFO inducts new set of military systems

1 As part of ongoing modernisation of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF), the Royal Air Force of Oman (RAFO) inducted modern military systems and equipment. The inaugural ceremony was held under the auspices of Air Vice Marshal Khamis bin Hamad Al Ghafri, RAFO Commander. **>A2**

WORLD

India suspends visa operations

2 The Indian Visa Application Centre in Chittagong has announced the immediate suspension of all visa operations, effective Sunday, following a security incident at the Assistant High Commission of India (AHCI) in the port city. The suspension follows reports of unrest. **>A7**

MARKET

Oman's Producer Price Index dips

3 The Producer Price Index (PPI) in Oman recorded a 4.3% dip in the third quarter of 2025 compared to the corresponding period in 2024. The decline was driven by a 5.3% dip in prices within the mining and quarrying sector, reflecting a 5.4% drop in crude oil and natural gas prices. **>B1**

CBO announces issuance of One Rial Polymer Commemorative Banknote

MUSCAT: The Central Bank of Oman announced the issuance of the One Rial Polymer Commemorative Banknote, the first-of-its kind in the history of Omani Currency. The new polymer commemorative banknote will be put into circulation starting from 11 January 2026.

This commemorative banknote is made from a polymer substrate that differs from the current circulated cotton banknotes, offering specific durability and security features.

Omani national identity

The 145x76 mm banknote comes with a design that incorporates a combination of the national achievements such as the Oman Botanic Garden on the front side and Sayyid Tarik bin Taimour

Cultural Complex, Duqm Port and Duqm Refinery on the back side of the banknote, creating a wonderful blend of Omani national identity.

In addition, the new commemorative banknote includes diverse set of security features such as the

large transparent window represented by the arched windows of the Oman Botanic Garden, which occupied a large area of the banknote, in addition to the optically variable ink represented by the Frankincense Tree on the front side of the banknote, as well as the

iridescent ink as the CBO's pattern on the back side of the commemorative banknote.

The CBO confirms that the new One Rial commemorative banknote will circulate alongside the existing banknotes and will be valid with its legal tender value for use

in all transactions. It also clarified that 1,000 uncut sheets and 10,000 banknotes allocated in elegantly designed envelopes will be available for sale at the CBO (Ruwi-Salalah-Sohar) and Oman Post's sales window at the Opera Galleria, starting from 11 January 2026. — ONA

Activities of Muscat Nights 2026 to begin on January 1, 2026

A4

OVER 96% COMPLIANCE RATE OF TYRE QUALITY IN OMAN MARKET: SURVEY

The project reflects MoCIIP's commitment to strengthening market surveillance, and maintaining product standard

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) has conducted inspections of tyres traded in the local market to assess sample quality and ensure the safety of road users.

Shaima bint Khamis Al Balushi, Head of the Standards and Metrology Inspection Department at MoCIIP, said inspections of 58 samples recorded a high compliance rate of 96.55 percent, with only two cases of non-compliance. She noted that the initiative represents a key step in supporting product safety and quality oversight.

The project reflects MoCIIP's commitment to strengthening market surveillance systems, enhancing the capabilities of national inspection and conformity teams, protecting consumers, and reinforcing confidence in local markets.

Shaima bint Khamis Al Balushi explained that the results demonstrate the effectiveness of existing inspection mechanisms and highlight the vital role of the GCC Conformity Mark in ensuring product safety and reliability. She stressed the importance of carrying out random checks

on customs transactions cleared through automatic systems to verify the completeness of documentation, applying penalties to non-compliant companies, and strengthening border controls through intensified inspection of tyre shipments.

She also emphasised the need to continue joint inspection campaigns with relevant authorities and to raise consumer awareness through outreach initiatives that underline the importance of the GCC Conformity Mark

As part of the project, a specialised training workshop titled "Tyre Technical Regulations and Market Surveillance" was held in September.

The workshop was delivered by Eng. Ibrahim Al Rahbi from the Gulf Standardisation Organisation (GSO), with participation from inspection and conformity teams across Oman.

The Ministry, represented by the Directorate General of Standards and Metrology (DGSM), implemented the GCC Tyre Market Survey in cooperation with the

GSO to ensure continued compliance of products bearing the GCC Conformity Mark and to verify that tyres traded in member states meet approved technical regulations.

The workshop covered GCC technical regulations for passenger tyres imported from China, India, Thailand and Taiwan, tyre manufacturing stages, international best practices in market surveillance, and the role of the GSO in tyre safety. It also included practical training on visual and laboratory inspection methods and sampling procedures.

Field visits recorded several observations, including tyres without GCC data labels, the use of European tyre efficiency labels either alone or alongside GCC labels, discrepancies between European and GCC label data—particularly in wet grip and energy efficiency ratings—and potentially misleading information, such as tyres branded with a Singaporean company name, claims of German engineering, and Chinese manufacturing origins.

Sohar International Wins Best Event of the Year at TOMI 2025

MUSCAT: Sohara International was honoured with the Best Event of the Year Award at The Oman Marketing Impact Awards (TOMI), recognising excellence in strategic vision, experience design, and flawless execution.

The opening of Sohara International's KSA branch was more than a launch—it was a landmark brand moment that seamlessly blended strategic intent with a distinctive, thoughtfully curated experience.

From concept to delivery, the event showcased Oman's rich identity on a regional stage, creating a strong and

authentic connection with audiences in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Met with an overwhelm-

ing response from guests, the event stood out for its clarity of purpose, cultural storytelling and experiential impact, setting a new benchmark for brand-led events and earning Sohara International the title of the Best Event of the Year.

The trophy was presented by His Highness Sayyid Suhail Bin Barghash Bin Said Al Said. TOMI 2025, organised by Muscat Media Group, took place on 10th December at Crowne Plaza Qurum, Muscat, bringing together over 200 marketing professionals from Oman and the MENA region in a celebration of creativity, strategy, and impact.

GRADUATION

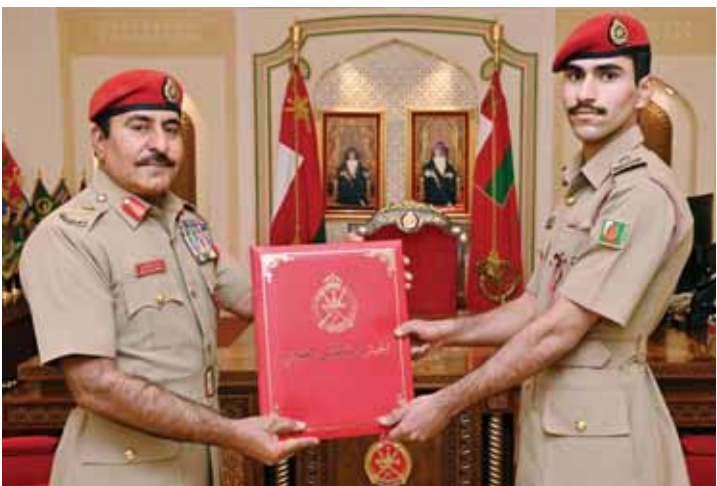
RAO Commander hands over Royal commission certificates to officers



MUSCAT: Maj.Gen Matar Salim Al Balushi, Commander of the Royal Army of Oman (RAO) handed over the Royal commission certificates to a number of officers who graduated from the Royal

Military Academy Sandhurst in the United Kingdom, in a ceremony held at Al Murtafa'a Camp on Sunday.

The Royal Army of Oman Commander congratulated the officers



on their graduation and completion of military training.

The Commander of the Royal Army of Oman commended them for earning the gracious trust and confidence of His Majesty the Su-

preme Commander as officers in the Royal Army of Oman. He urged them to exert further effort and dedication in performing their upcoming duties, wishing them continued success. - ONA

HERITAGE ACTIVITIES

Fourth Sohar Festival to begin on 22 December

SOHAR: The 4th edition of Sohar Festival will begin on Monday 2025, and run until 31 January 2026.

The festival will feature a variety of cultural, entertainment, tourist and heritage activities that meet the expectations of different age groups. Special emphasis will be laid on enhancing Omani identity and promoting national domestic tourism.

A key feature of the festival will be "Omnia Museum", which will offer visitors an interactive experience through the application of artificial intelligence (AI).

The festival venue will also house an 'integrated Omani village' and it will feature other activities like photography compe-



tion, kite-flying and go-karting.

The festival's events also include carnival shows, concerts and stalls that appeal to families, children and private business households—making the festival venue a comprehensive destination for different segments of society. - ONA

Guidelines for adventure tourism operators issued

The tourism ministry emphasised that operators who fail to adhere to the guidelines may face legal action in accordance with laws governing tourism activities



Operators who fail to adhere to the guidelines may face legal action in accordance with laws governing tourism activities and environmental protection.

The directive aims to ensure that adventure tourism activities—including canyoning, rock climbing, hiking and other outdoor experiences—are carried out in a safe and responsible manner, while safeguarding participants

and preserving Oman's natural environment.

In a recent notice, the ministry outlined several requirements for adventure tourism service providers. These include obtaining prior written approval from the relevant authorities before conducting any adventure activity on private land or government property.

Operators are also required to ensure that all safety and adven-

ture equipment, such as ropes, zip-line installations, climbing gear and descent systems, are inspected and approved by the competent authorities before installation.

The ministry further stressed that altering, damaging or tampering with existing safety equipment at adventure sites is strictly prohibited, as such actions could endanger visitors and compromise overall safety.

ACROSS GOVERNORATES

Sixteen Quranic centres established



MUSCAT: Oman Association of Holy Quran Care is exerting significant efforts to prepare a society proficient in the recitation, memorisation, and chanting of the Holy Quran by operating 16 Quranic centres distributed across the various governorates of the Sultanate of Oman.

The Association is a voluntary charitable association supervised by the Ministry of Social Development.

It works to provide a diverse range of Quranic courses and circles, utilising a variety of means, methods, and approaches.

These programmes are conducted both directly and indirectly, through in-person attendance or remotely, and via both technical and traditional means

to suit the varying circumstances and needs of all segments of society.

Furthermore, the association collaborates with various Quranic efforts and endeavors dedicated to serving the Holy Quran, including competitions and activities held in partnership with government, private, and community entities.

The association continuously seeks to expand its activities across all wilayats of the Sultanate of Oman.

To ensure the quality of its work, the association has developed special regulations governing the mechanism for opening new centres, defining their specific activities, and clarifying their operational workflows. - ONA

INAUGURAL CEREMONY

Royal Air Force of Oman inducts modern military systems

MUSCAT: As part of ongoing modernisation of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF), the Royal Air Force of Oman (RAFO) on Sunday inaugurated a new set of modern military systems and equipment.

The inaugural ceremony was held under the auspices of Air Vice Marshal Khamis bin Hamad Al Ghafri, Commander of the Royal Air Force of Oman.

The ceremony, held at Al Murtafa camp, began with a speech about efforts made to enhance RAFO's operational efficiency and improve its technical system by adopting modern solutions in a manner that

keeps pace with digital transition taking in Oman.

The ceremony included a presentation showcasing some of RAFO's equipment, devices and laboratories.

'Esnad' electronic application

Then, the chief guest launched 'Esnad' electronic application designed to support the operational plans of the Air Force in line with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040. He also unveiled the visual identity of RAFO buses and specialized vehicles.

AVM Al Ghafri and the guests



toured an exhibition organised on the sidelines of the event that showcased. At the exhibition,

they were briefed about the latest equipment and devices with which the RAFO has been supplied. - ONA

THREE-DAY EVENT

'Governorates' Ambassadors' forum to be held in Al Dakhiliyah

MUSCAT: The projects, Tenders and Local Content Authority, in cooperation with the Office of the Governor of Al Dakhiliyah, will organise the second 'Governorates' Ambassadors' forum on Tuesday, 23 December.

The three-day event is part of ongoing efforts to enhance institutional integration and exchange expertise among various government entities.

Eng. Said bin Hamad Al Amri, Director General of Tenders at the Authority, explained that the forum provides an opportunity to bolster the capabilities of local cadres and develop work tools within governors' offices.

This aligns with the trend toward empowering governorates to exercise broader powers under the decentralisation framework, contributing to balanced and sustainable development across Oman.

In a statement to Oman News



Agency (ONA), he added that the forum—which includes officials, engineers, and specialists overseeing government projects in A Dakhiliyah—aims to build effective communication channels.

It focuses on exchanging best practices in contracts, tenders, and project management, while supporting local content to achieve integration in government work and reviewing major developmental

projects implemented in the governorate.

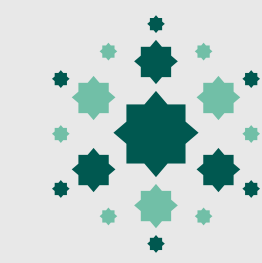
The forum's agenda includes several specialised sessions and workshops.

The second day is dedicated to field visits to witness progress on key projects. The final day will conclude with technical workshops.

The "Governorates' Ambassadors" Forum held its first edition in Muscat and will continue to rotate periodically across different governorates.

This step aims to unify practices, develop institutional work tools in contracts and tenders, and support local content.

The organisation of this forum embodies the approach of good governance, solidifying principles of transparency and integrating national efforts to enhance the efficiency of government performance throughout the Sultanate of Oman. - ONA



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COMMENTARY

When I was alone with time



SALEH AL-SHAIBANY

When my family was away last week, I thought I should do something different. I looked at my old books trying to find one that I had not really had the time to read. I was surprised that my taste of reading has changed over the years and I am not the same person now who found Alvin Toffler interesting twenty years ago.

So a quiet reading was out of question. Then my eyes rested on the car keys. Perhaps a drive somewhere I have not been before? That did not appeal to me either. I decided to catch up with my friends so I called one of them. He would not answer

the phone but I had better luck with the second one.

He did not say he had better things to do but he declined politely. I suddenly realised that friends or things to do don't exactly make themselves available when you are bored.

By eleven in the morning, I was pretty frustrated with myself. I looked at the clock and thought the best way of spending the next eight hours or so. I tried another friend and this one obliged. He came over to my house half an hour later and we started talking about our schooldays.

Somewhere in the conversation, he touched a period of my life that I'd rather forget. He reminded me about a bully of a teacher that made my life a misery. Before I could change the subject, he added that the man had died last year.

Suddenly, I felt bad and guilty at the same time.

My thoughts were not charitable about him while he was alive but it was different in death. I probed my mind for something good that I remembered about him. There were quite a few and I felt better about it. We talked some more about the past and while away until lunch time. He suggested a burger but I said I would whip something at the kitchen to

satisfy our hunger. He laughed and said that he did not wish to be poisoned. I remembered the old curry my wife had cooked and now it was at the back of the freezer.

He was not very keen but I managed to convince him. The electric rice cooker came handy and fifteen minutes later we were tucking in and talked at the same time.

It was not until five in the afternoon that he declared he had to go back home. A twinge of guilt made me apologise for taking him away from his family for so long.

"Oh, don't worry about it," he said. "I sent my wife to her parents together with the children."

Thinking about it, it was funny how we ended up been together when both our families were away. He was also having difficulties to fill his time while alone in the house.

My call had answered his prayers as much as mine. I am not sure what he told his wife on how he spent his day but my wife had a fit when I told her about it.

"You cooked today?" She asked and laughed.

At least I made someone laugh and hopefully my friend happy when he was with me in the morning.

Oman, Belarus to boost cultural, academic ties

Discussions focused on strengthening ties between SQU and Belarusian academic institutions; enhancing Arabic language education and cultural exchanges



MINSK: A delegation from the National Museum and Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) visited the Belarusian State University (BSU) on Sunday as part of the activities accompanying "Oman Day" in the Belarusian capital, Minsk.

The delegation was led by HH Sayyida Dr. Mona bint Fahd Al Said, Assistant Vice-Chancellor for International Cooperation at SQU and Vice Chairperson of the Board of Trustees of the National Museum.

The visit began with a meeting involving Andrei Ivanets, Minister of Education of the Republic of Belarus, and Dr. Andrei Korol, Rector of Belarusian State University.

Discussions focused on strengthening ties between SQU and Belarusian academic institutions; enhancing Arabic language education and cultural exchange programmes; facilitating student exchanges and reciprocal visits for researchers and developing collaborative frameworks to serve the mutual interests of both

RECIPROCAL VISITS: The delegation was led by HH Sayyida Dr. Mona bint Fahd Al Said, Assistant Vice-Chancellor for International Cooperation at SQU and Vice Chairperson of the Board of Trustees of the National Museum. -ONA

friendly nations.

The delegation also toured the Faculty of International Relations. As part of the knowledge-sharing programme, Jamal bin Hassan Al Moosawi, Secretary-General of the National Museum, delivered a lecture titled "Oman at the Crossroads of Civilisational Communication."

Attended by university students, the lecture explored Oman's

deep historical roots and Oman's role as a vital link between global civilisations throughout the ages.

Founded on 30 October 1921, BSU is the leading educational institution and primary academic reference in the Republic of Belarus.

It holds a prestigious global standing, ranked within the top 1% of universities in the QS World University Rankings 2025. -ONA

TOMI 2025 Recognises Ooredoo for Best Event Launch Video



MUSCAT: Ooredoo was awarded the Best Event Launch Video at The Oman Marketing Impact Awards (TOMI), recognising a compelling visual narrative that celebrated culture, creativity, and community during Khaareef Season 2025.

As a main sponsor of Khaareef, Ooredoo's launch video went beyond promotion to spotlight Oman's rich cultural heritage, inviting tourism and creative expression while reinforcing the brand's belief in connecting people beyond the digital space.

The video showcased prominent local influences and brought together theatre performances, family-friendly



experiences, CSR partnerships and initiatives empowering local entrepreneurs. A powerful musical tribute

to the beauty and traditions of Dhofar formed the emotional core of the campaign, positioning Ooredoo's launch video as a culturally rooted, socially impactful and visually engaging piece of storytelling — earning it top honours for Best Event Launch Video.

The trophy was presented by His Highness Sayyid Suhail Bin Barghash Bin Said Al Said. TOMI 2025, organised by Muscat Media Group, took place on 10th December at Crowne Plaza Qurum, Muscat, bringing together over 200 marketing professionals from Oman and the MENA region in a celebration of creativity, strategy, and impact.

IN MUSCAT GOVERNORATE

National Readiness 2025 drill to boost emergency response

MUSCAT: Acting in cooperation with the departments concerned, the National Emergency Management Centre will conduct a two-day drill themed "National Readiness 2025" in Muscat Governorate on 23 and 24 December 2025.

The exercise seeks to boost the

preparedness and efficiency of response teams and coordinate joint action among the parties tasked with tackling emergency situations—to ensure the protection of lives and property and the enhancement of security and public safety at a national level. -ONA





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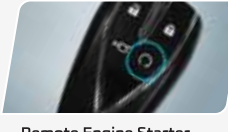
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Muscat Nights 2026 to be held from January 1-31

The events will be distributed across locations within Muscat Governorate

MUSCAT: The much-anticipated Muscat Nights 2026 is set to light up the city from 1 to 31 January 2026, offering a diverse and engaging programme that reflects a cohesive vision for the winter season. The event promises a unique urban experience across Muscat Governorate, seamlessly blending entertainment, culture, sports, and economic initiatives to captivate residents and visitors alike.

Muscat Nights 2026 will witness an integrated urban season reflecting the vitality of the capital, Muscat, and its ability to provide diverse content that resonates with various segments of society, enhancing its presence as a prominent winter destination at the regional level.

The events will be distributed across locations within Muscat Governorate, including Al Qurum Natural Park, Al Amerat Public Park, Oman Automobile Association, the Royal Opera House Muscat, A'Seeb Beach, the Wilayat of Quriyat, Wadi Al Khoud, in addition to commercial centers. This allows visitors to experience the festivities in more than one urban space and in different styles.

Muscat Nights 2026 will feature the character “Siraj,” the symbolic character introduced as an Omani child of light who roams the city’s sky, embodying the narrative and visual dimension of Muscat Nights, and serving as the main attraction for families and visitors from within and outside the Sultanate of Oman. The fountain and light symphony in the heart of Al Qurum offers a modern visual experience blending art and technology, as the lake of Al Qurum Natural Park transforms into an open-air theater hosting artistic water fountain shows synchronized with music and lighting.

The Muscat Nights Circus highlights daily shows held at Oman Automobile Association site, performed by international artists, including acrobatics, aerial acts, balance and sleight of hand, alongside the incorporation of hologram technologies as one of the show's main elements—advanced optical technologies utilizing light waves to produce three-dimensional scenes.

The circus area also includes an activity dedicated to children, aiming to provide an interactive educational experience enabling the child to role-play scientific professions and view simplified presentations from the world of astronomy and space, in addition to creative artistic activities in a drawing and coloring corner and crafting handmade works within an integrated educational entertainment environment that prioritizes the child's enjoyment and nurtures their imagination.

Al Qurum Natural Park will witness nightly drone shows displaying moving light formations mimicking artistic and cultural symbols inspired by the identity of Muscat Governorate and the events. Furthermore, “Masha and the Bear” activities offer a family adventure filled with imagination and fun, allowing the child to interact with characters and events in an interactive manner that engages children in the storyline and enhances values of friendship, co-operation, and a love for discovery.

Carnival areas will feature family games and amusement rides, daily parades, and performances by local and international artists, alongside cultural, artistic, and musical evenings that give the event a daily rhythm pulsating with joy.

The sports program for Muscat Nights 2026 offers a rich schedule including cycling races, endurance events, shooting, martial arts, friendly football matches, bowling, billiards, and snooker. Additionally, the local and international Muscat Nights 3x3 Basketball Championship will be held at Al Araimi Boulevard during 22-24 January, with the participation of teams from within and outside the



Sultanate of Oman.

The Oman Automobile Association and Wadi Al Khoud will host a package of youth events combining challenge and movement, among them drifting car shows offering professional demonstrations of advanced driving, alongside adventure activities such as zip-lining and interactive outdoor experiences within a safe and organized environment targeting the youth segment and providing them with a contemporary experience that matches their interests.

A'Seeb Beach in Sur Al Hadeed area will host beach football and volleyball tournaments, along with morning fitness sessions.

The motorcycle exhibition will feature classic and modern models, alongside demonstrations of safe riding and technical displays for motorcycle enthusiasts, enhancing traffic awareness and technical culture among youth.

The heritage village at Muscat Nights 2026 returns with a new look reflecting the depth of Omani identity and cementing local cultural heritage within a contemporary vision. Its activities will be held at Al Amerat Public Park and Al Qurum Natural Park, featuring live demonstrations of traditional crafts, folk arts, local cuisine, and heritage architectural environments.

Al Khuwair Square will host activities of Oman Design Week as a contemporary creative platform gathering designers, artists, and innovators who present artistic installations and interactive design works reflecting concepts of innovation, urban beauty, and sustainability. The week aims to highlight local and international creative energies and transform public space into an open-air exhibition of art and design, enhancing the presence of creative industries within the cultural scene of Muscat Nights.

The Royal Opera House Muscat will also host fashion week events as part of Muscat Nights 2026, with the participation of a number of international designers, presenting fashion shows that blend artistic creativity, cultural identity, and contemporary global trends. - ONA



Türkiye–Oman seek to enhance bilateral trade

The Protocol, signed at the conclusion of the Session, serves as a roadmap reflecting the progress achieved in Türkiye-Oman relations and setting out new areas of cooperation across a wide range of sectors

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The 13th Session of the Türkiye–Oman Joint Committee (JC) was held in Ankara on 19 December 2025, co-chaired by H.E. Mr. Mehmet Şimşek, Minister of Treasury and Finance of the Republic of Türkiye, and H.E. Mr. Qais bin Mohammed Al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion of the Sultanate of Oman.

At the meeting, both sides signed the Joint Committee Protocol, along with a Memorandum of Understanding to promote co-operation between educational institutions.

The Protocol, signed at the conclusion of the Session, serves as a roadmap reflecting the progress achieved in Türkiye-Oman relations and setting out new areas of cooperation across a wide range of sectors, including industry, transport, energy, tourism, education, banking and finance, agriculture, and e-commerce.



H.E. Mr. Qais bin Mohammed Al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion of the Sultanate of Oman, drew attention to the importance of expanding bilateral trade and investment relations in line with the directives of the leadership of both countries, particularly the shared objective of increasing total trade volume to \$5 billion over the next five years, and emphasised the need to translate the strong political momentum into concrete economic outcomes through joint projects and strategic sector investments.

He also noted the steady growth in trade and investment flows between the two countries, including the rising presence of Turkish companies in Oman and the increasing confidence of Omani investors in the Turkish economy, and welcomed the steps taken to accelerate the conclusion of the Türkiye–GCC Free Trade Agreement, strengthen cooperation in industrial zones, logistics, export promotion, and capacity building, as well as to enhance people-to-people exchanges in areas such as tourism, education, and technical cooperation.

H.E. Mr. Qais bin Mohammed Al Yousef also drew attention to the significant growth in bilateral trade, noting a 5.3% increase in 2024 followed by a further 7.8% rise in the first half of 2025. He emphasized that Türkiye remains a key export destination for Omani

products and welcomed the 21% increase in Turkish companies operating within the Sultanate as of September 2025. Furthermore, he highlighted the 18.7% growth in Turkish investment, which continues to play a vital role in supporting Oman's infrastructure and development projects.

He also noted a strategic plan to increase total trade to \$5 billion over the next five years and proposed the creation of a dedicated Turkish-Omani industrial zone in the Sultanate. This zone would aim to leverage Oman's strategic location and its existing Free Trade Agreements with the USA and India, focusing on sectors such as spare parts and textiles. To facilitate this, the Minister underscored the importance of exploring direct import routes and learning from Türkiye's successful experience in export promotion and special incentives.

During the meetings, H.E. Mr. Mehmet Şimşek underlined that concluding the Free Trade Agreement negotiations between Türkiye and the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) would be a decisive catalyst for regional trade, and stressed the importance of finalising the process without delay.

On investments, Minister Şimşek stated that Türkiye is ready to support Oman's Vision 2040 objectives and its non-oil economic transformation, noting that logistics and connectivity

are among the natural strengths of both countries. He emphasized that bringing together Oman's world-class ports and economic zones with Türkiye's extensive links to Europe, Central Asia, and the Middle East could create an end-to-end trade corridor, reducing time, cost, and risk. He also highlighted the importance of exploring joint projects in third countries, particularly in Africa.

Minister Şimşek further noted that Turkish and Omani institutions in finance and banking remain in close and regular contact, that the 2026 work programme has been discussed, and that cooperation will be broadened further in the period ahead.

Emphasising the critical role of SMEs as the backbone of both economies, Minister Şimşek stated that strengthening cooperation in this area is a shared priority. He pointed to the mutual opportunities offered by Türkiye's nearly 400 organised industrial zones and Oman's special economic zones, and stressed the need to swiftly finalise the Memorandum of Understanding on special economic zones.

In the energy field, Minister Şimşek stated that finalising the agreement between Turkish Petroleum Corporation (TPAO) and OQ Exploration and Production (OQEP) would support the diversification of Türkiye's energy supply security. He also noted that the cooperation agreement on critical minerals and mining would facilitate joint investments, and welcomed the encouraging co-operation among TPAO, BOTAŞ and OQEP across oil and natural gas, pipeline security, storage, and green energy.

Finally, Minister Şimşek emphasised that deepening technical cooperation and capacity-building remains a key objective of the partnership.

Full story @ timesofoman.com/business

Symposium focuses on investment in sustainable education



A'RUSTAQ: The Directorate General of Education in South Al Batinah Governorate on Sunday organised a symposium titled "Investing in a Safe Educational Environment".

The symposium was held under the auspices of Dr. Abdullah bin Khamis Ambusaidi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education for Education.

The symposium aimed to meet a number of objectives: Raise public awareness the importance of early childhood education and its role in shaping personality and developing cognitive skills and moral capacities; Provide KG managers and teachers with the latest educational practices and facilitate the exchange of expertise among specialists and educators; Support partnerships between the Ministry of Education and private

schools and contribution to the realisation of sustainable educational development in line with Oman Vision 2040.

The symposium included a visual presentation about the concept of early education and its salient features, in addition to a number of specialised working papers.

The event saw the launch of a "Private Schools Guide" that serves as a reference to unifying educational and administrative practices and enhancing the commitment of private schools to approved standards and regulations.

A prize titled "Performance Excellence Award in Private Schools" was also launched during the ceremony. The award aims to foster a culture of positive competition and innovation and raise the standard of institutional performance. -ONA



ISWK ALUMNI COMMITTEE

Inaugural edition of ISWK Alumni Reunion successfully organised

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The ISWK Alumni Committee, in association with the Indian School Wadi Kabir (ISWK), successfully hosted the Inaugural Edition of the ISWK Alumni Reunion on Friday, 12 December 2025, at the ISWK Senior School Auditorium, Muscat. The landmark event marked the first alumni reunion held since the formal establishment of the ISWK Alumni Association and brought together generations of former students in a memorable celebration of shared heritage, lifelong friendships, and enduring connections.

The reunion was attended by ISWK alumni and their spouses/partners, including alumni from the earliest batches that gradu-

ated from the 10th and 12th grades, making it a truly historic gathering for the ISWK community.

The evening commenced with a welcome address by Mr. Antony Kallukaran, President of the ISWK Alumni Association, followed by addresses from Mr. D. N. Rao, Principal of ISWK, and Mr. Alkesh Joshi, Executive Director of the School Management Committee. The formal proceedings concluded with a Vote of Thanks delivered by Mr. Jagdish Patil, one of ISWK's long-serving faculty members.

A key highlight of the event was the presentation of Long Service Awards, honouring faculty members who had completed 25 years or more of dedicated service to the institution.

The programme also featured the screening of video messages



from former teachers, evoking fond memories and emotional moments among the audience. The evening concluded with networking, dinner, and live entertainment by JukeBox, led by an alumni member, further reinforcing the spirit of camaraderie and nostalgia.

Speaking at the event, Mr. Antony Kallukaran, President of

the ISWK Alumni Association, said: "The objective of the ISWK Alumni Association is to pick up where alumni left off, by providing a strong platform to stay connected with the school and with one another. Through regular engagement via events, educational programs, and activities, we aim to foster lifelong relationships. To further this vision, we have

introduced avenues for alumni to remain connected through the school's Instagram presence and the newly launched alumni portal, designed to encourage continuous interaction and collaboration."

The event was supported by several esteemed sponsors and partners.

The successful planning and execution of the reunion were driven by the dedicated efforts of the current ISWK Alumni Committee, led by Antony Kallukaran (President), Krunal Ahya (Vice-President), Nitin Arvind (Treasurer), Sasha Saldanha (Secretary), Makushla Santimano (Director of Events & Marketing), and Farren Pinto (Sports Coordinator). The committee was further supported by Joylene Pinto, Anisha Dias, Jobinson Babu, and Ernst Schwan,

whose contributions played an integral role in the smooth conduct of the event.

Alumni registration and continued engagement

Alumni who wish to stay connected with the ISWK Alumni Association and participate in future initiatives may register via the ISWK Alumni Website or by contacting 99ALUMNI (99258664). These platforms will serve as key touchpoints for updates, upcoming events, and ongoing alumni engagement.

The Inaugural ISWK Alumni Reunion marked the beginning of a renewed chapter for the ISWK alumni community, laying a strong foundation for sustained interaction, collaboration, and future gatherings.

OMAN CANCER ASSOCIATION



OCA signs MoU for technical exchange and clinical programmes

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Oman Cancer Association (OCA) signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) recently

The MoU was signed by Dr Sangita Reddy, joint managing director of Apollo Hospitals Group and Dr Wahid Al Kharusi,

president and chairperson of OCA. Detailing the components of the MoU, Dr Reddy said that it covered technical exchange and clinical programmes which facilitated an upgradation of knowledge. It also covered scientific data exchange and joint research plus patient education and protocols for early detection.

Tender Notice

وزارة الزراعة والسمكية وموارد المياه
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources

The Ministry of Agricultural, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources Announces the following Tenders: -

Tender no.	Tender Title	Tender Document Sales Start Date	Tender Document Sales End Date	Bid Submission Closing	Companies that are eligible to participate	Tender Document fee (R.O)
847/2025/MAFWR/HQ- 95	Providing (15) Hot Drinks Machines in the Ministry building (1 and 2) for a year	Tuesday 16/12/2025	Monday 5/1/2026	Sunday 25/1/2026	SMEs Specialized companies registered with Excellent, First, Second, Third, Fourth grades	(10/-) Omani riyals for SMEs

- Above mentioned (Grade) may obtain Tender documents from the E-Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>.
- The value of the document will be paid & submitted on line on given website.
- The Tenderer should attach Bid Commitment Declaration for local companies.
- All correspondence pertaining to the tender inquiry must be online at e-tendering System.
- All correspondence pertaining to the e-tendering System technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number: +968 24402244 or etenderhd@ptlc.gov.om.

TENDERS COMMITTEE
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources

Arab Shooting and Airgun Championship 2025 begins

The championship, hosted by the Sultanate of Oman and represented by the Oman Shooting Association, features broad participation from national teams from the Arab world

MUSCAT: The first day of competitions for the Arab Shooting and Airgun Championship (Rifle and Airgun, 10 metres) kicked off on Sunday at the National Olympic Shooting Complex in Muscat.

The championship, hosted by the Sultanate of Oman and represented by the Oman Shooting Association, features broad participation from national teams across the Arab world in the junior and senior categories for both men and women.

In the Junior Girls' competition, shooter Fatima Al Suwaidi from the United Arab Emirates secured the first-place position. She was followed by Ritaj Al Yafei from the State of Qatar in second place, while Yosr bin Ammar from the Republic of Tunisia finished third.

The Junior Boys' category saw Omani shooter Khalid Al Kalbani clinch first place. Abdulrahman Al Sulaiti from Qatar came in second, and Sultan Saleh Mohammed from



the UAE took third place.

In the Women's Individual competition, Nouf Al Dossari from the Kingdom of Bahrain was crowned with first place. She was followed by Yasmin Tahlak from the UAE in second place, and Bahraini shooter Marwa Al Omairi took third place.

For the Men's Individual competition, Ibrahim Al Ali from the UAE earned the top spot. Omani shooter Hamad Al Khatiri finished in second place, while Khalid Al Shorshani from Qatar secured the third-place position.

On the level of Women's Team competitions, the Kingdom of Bahrain achieved first place. The State

of Kuwait secured second place, and the State of Qatar finished third.

In the Men's Team competitions, the United Arab Emirates won the gold medal. The Kingdom of Bahrain came in second place, while the Sultanate of Oman finished third. — ONA

WORLD MEDITATION DAY

Meditation takes root as way of life for Myanmar children

YANGON: As the morning sun filters through the quiet halls of a post-primary monastic school in Dala township, Yangon region, 14-year-old Wai Yan Tun sits cross-legged, eyes gently closed, his attention fixed on his breathing.

For him, this moment of stillness is as familiar as opening a

textbook. On World Meditation Day, observed on Sunday, his daily routine reflects a tradition deeply rooted in Myanmar's education system. Across the country, meditation is not an occasional exercise but a regular part of basic education school life, particularly in monastic and government schools.

Children are often introduced

to the practice at an early age and continue it throughout their school years, learning to calm their minds before turning to lessons in mathematics, language, and science.

Wai Yan Tun, now an eighth grader, has been meditating since kindergarten. He said the practice has shaped not only his school performance but also his emo-

tional life. "Meditation makes me feel calm and peaceful," he said. "It makes my mind more concentrated, which helps my studying become easier."

The challenge, he admitted, is keeping his thoughts from drifting. When possible, he prefers quiet spaces like pagodas, where silence makes focus easier. —ANI

LEHRKRÄFTE PLUS PROGRAMME

Germany trains immigrant teachers to fill gaps in schools

BERLIN: If Germany could choose a well-trained teacher from abroad, it would probably be someone like Inge Pizarro Krause. With her eight years of study and two years of classroom experience in Viña del Mar, the 33-year-old from Chile is highly qualified and is now preparing to tackle Germany's desperate teacher shortage. Pizarro Krause has been studying German, didactics and pedagogy under the special programme since August. And she has already had a taste of teaching at a vocational school.

"When I came to Germany, I felt like I had to start from scratch again, which is, of course, very frustrating," she told DW. "You have studied, you have worked as a teacher, you want to get started again straight away and you are desperately looking for a programme that will somehow introduce you to the German education system. Lehrkräfte PLUS was exactly what I needed."

In just twelve months, Pizarro Krause and the other 23 participants from Bosnia, Kyrgyzstan and Ukraine will be given fast-track training and plenty of practical experience to prepare them for teaching in German schools. The Lehrkräfte PLUS programme is on offer at four other universities in North Rhine-Westphalia. It is the state's attempt to respond to Germany's teacher shortage, which is becoming more and more widespread.

There is a shortage of tens of thousands of teachers nationwide — and numbers are rising. At the same time, immigrants with many years of professional experience as teachers are often forced to get by with temporary jobs. "You ask yourself the sense of it: Germany urgently needs teachers, yet the bureaucratic hurdles we face are enormous. The country should work on a system to speed up inte-



gration," says Pizarro Krause.

Germany cannot afford to neglect potential

That requires dedicated people like Semra Krieg and Ariane Elshof, who helped launch the qualification programme in Cologne in 2018 and have been constantly developing it ever since. Even back then, the spirit was: "We can do it." Just like the former German Chancellor Angela Merkel, who used these words to encourage the German population to take up the challenge of integrating refugees, Elshof recalls.

"In the early days, we had a lot of very qualified teachers from Turkey and Syria, but now most of them come from Ukraine. But we also receive applications from Brazil and even Tanzania. Given the shortage of teachers, Germany cannot afford to neglect such potential. They are teachers through and through; they put their heart and soul into it."

A study by the University of



Potsdam recently took a closer look at the Lehrkräfte PLUS programme. Its findings: the teachers feel much more confident about their future tasks, speak German much better and are very motivated to work as teachers in Germany in the long term. And, above all, the vast majority would recommend the qualification to other migrants.

New applications piling up

On average, fewer than one person per year has dropped out of the

programme, Krieg told DW. She already has another 50 applications piled up on her desk for the next intake in August 2026, and the application deadline is on January 8, 2026. And yet, despite being a success story, funding for the program is only secured until the end of 2027. The Germany-wide pioneering project "Refugee Teachers Programme," which was launched by the University of Potsdam in 2016, has now ended.

"We've had a lot of positive feedback that Lehrkräfte PLUS is like a springboard. At the same time, it is a challenge for the participants. In a full-time, year-long program, you can be pushed to your limits. Language proficiency is an important factor in getting established in school. In addition, openness, perseverance and tenacity are also crucial," says Semra Krieg.

How a teacher from Ukraine made the leap

Natalia Zemlianskaia was tenacious and resilient enough. The



Ukrainian took part in the program two years ago, completing an internship at a vocational school in Bonn at the same time, and was subsequently taken on directly by the school. Having taught English in Odesa for more than 20 years, she now teaches the language in her new home and also teaches German to young people from Guinea, Syria and Turkey.

"When I arrived here in 2022, I knew that I definitely wanted to continue working as a teacher. I initially completed a lot of German courses and then came across Lehrkräfte PLUS by chance. The best thing about the program: the German courses and the internship, in which you are thrown in at the deep end even if your German isn't perfect yet."

Germany needs more programmes of this kind, not fewer

So what does it take for a teacher from abroad to get to grips with everyday school life in Germany?

The 47-year-old doesn't have to think twice: proactively soak up everything at the new school to understand what makes it tick, especially the students. Have mentors and colleagues who accept you, support you and, if necessary, are there to listen in an emergency. And set up more programmes like Lehrkräfte PLUS, not just in a few cities, and advertise them much more.

"Every teacher from abroad should know that this qualification is available. And there need to be more places offering it. On my course back then, there was even a participant from Bremen who was commuting. Some stayed in a hotel for the week."

Zemlianskaia's appeal to German politicians? To integrate such skilled workers into the German education system more quickly! "They should recognise degrees from abroad more easily. I'm not a beginner, I'm an experienced teacher."

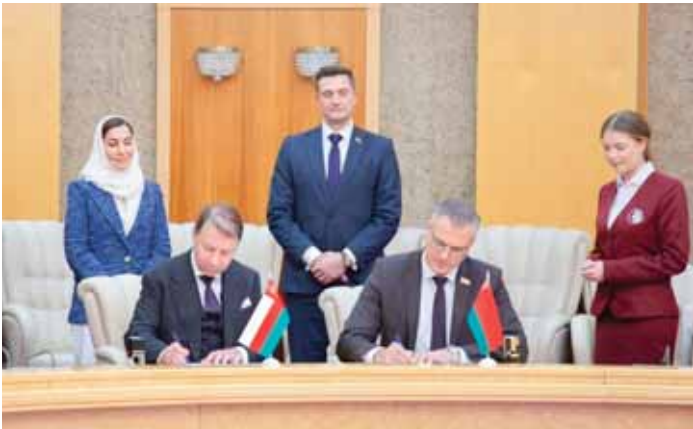
— DW

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IN BELARUS



National Museum signs two cooperation pacts with cultural institutions

MINSK: The National Museum signed two strategic cooperation agreements with the National Art Museum and the National Library of the Republic of Belarus, in the Belarusian capital, Minsk.

The signing coincided with the inauguration of the "Oman Day" events and the opening of the exhibition titled "The Splendor of Silver: Treasures from the Omani Court".

The first agreement, signed with the Belarusian National Art Museum, aims to host a specialized Belarusian art exhibition at the National Museum in Muscat next January. This upcoming exhibition will feature a collection of avant-garde artworks dating back to the early 20th century.

The agreement was signed by Jamal bin Hassan Al Moosawi, Secretary-General of the National Museum and Irina Matyas, Director General of the National Art Museum.

The second agreement was signed with the National Library

in Minsk to host an exhibition of Islamic manuscripts from Belarus. The collection will be drawn from the prestigious holdings of the National Library in Minsk and will be displayed at the National Museum in Oman.

The agreement was signed by Jamal bin Hassan Al Moosawi, Secretary-General of the National Museum and Vadim Gigin, Director General of the Belarusian National Library.

The signing ceremony was attended by several high-ranking officials, including HH Sayyida Dr. Mona bint Fahd Al Said, Assistant Vice-Chancellor of Sultan Qaboos University for International Cooperation and Vice Chairperson of the Board of Trustees of the National Museum, Abdullah bin Hamad Al Riyami, Head of the Cultural Cooperation Department at the Foreign Ministry and Ruslan Chernenetsky, Minister of Culture of the Republic of Belarus.

— ONA

Trump team floats Ukraine-Russia-US talks in Miami, says Zelenskyy

However, Zelenskyy said any joint meeting would make sense only after clarity emerges from talks that have already taken place between Ukraine and its partners

KYIV: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Saturday said that the United States has proposed a possible framework for peace talks that would bring Ukraine and Russia to the same table, but he expressed scepticism over whether such a meeting would result in any substantive breakthrough, according to media report.

Speaking to reporters in Kyiv, Zelenskyy said Washington has suggested a trilateral format involving Ukraine, the United States and Russia. However, he said any joint meeting would make sense only after clarity emerges from talks that have already taken place between Ukraine and its partners.

“They proposed this format as far as I understand: Ukraine,

America, Russia,” Zelenskyy said, adding that it would be “logical” to consider such a meeting only after assessing the results of earlier discussions held in Berlin.

The Ukrainian President noted that the proposed trilateral talks would likely be held at the level of national security advisers. Nevertheless, he remained cautious, pointing out that similar formats in the past had yielded limited results.

“I am not sure something new would come of that. We already had such a format of meetings in Istanbul,” Zelenskyy told journalists during a WhatsApp briefing.

Ukrainian and Russian representatives last met face-to-face in Istanbul in July. While those discussions led to prisoner-of-war exchanges, they failed to achieve progress on a comprehensive peace settlement. Zelenskyy described the prisoner swaps as “very important” but acknowledged that no broader agreement was reached.

He added that if a trilateral meeting, possibly in Florida, could help unlock further prisoner exchanges or serve as preparation for a meeting between leaders, Ukraine would support it.

“There are very important and difficult issues that must be decided at the leaders’ level. So how can I be against such a meeting?” Zelenskyy said.

According to the Ukrainian president, Kyiv’s key priorities in any peace talks include the status of Ukrainian territories, firm security guarantees, and the future operation of the Zaporizhzhia Nu-



clear Power Plant.

Zelenskyy said the possibility of trilateral talks would depend on the outcome of ongoing US-Ukrainian negotiations that began on Friday. He added that a European delegation currently in Florida could also join the discussions if the talks move forward.

Meanwhile, negotiators from Russia and the United States met on Saturday in the US city of Miami, even as Zelenskyy urged Washington to increase pressure on Moscow to end the war, Al Jazeera reported.

The meeting involved Russian President Vladimir Putin’s special envoy, Kirill Dmitriev, and US President Donald Trump’s special envoy, Steve Witkoff, along with Trump’s son-in-law, Jared Kushner.

Dmitriev told reporters that the talks were positive and would con-

tinue. “The discussions are proceeding constructively,” he said, adding that talks would resume.

Earlier, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said he might also join the discussions in Miami. Rubio said progress has been made, but acknowledged that significant differences remain.

“The role we’re trying to play is figuring out whether there’s any overlap they can agree to,” Rubio said. “That may not be possible. I hope it is. I hope it can get done this month, before the end of the year.”

US officials said Trump’s envoys have been working for weeks on a 20-point peace plan in discussions with Ukrainian, Russian and European officials. However, major disagreements remain, particularly over territorial issues and security guarantees, which Kyiv has said are essential for any peace deal. — **ANI**

Kremlin quashes chances of three-way talks in Miami

MOSCOW: The Kremlin emphasised that three-way talks between Russia, Ukraine and the US were not on the cards, despite diplomats from all parties currently being in Miami. According to Russian news agencies, Vladimir Putin’s foreign policy adviser Yuri Ushakov, told reporters that discussions for such a meeting had not taken place and no preparation was therefore being made.

The comments came after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on Saturday that Washington had spoken of a possible trilateral format, though he too expressed scepticism.

Despite saying it would be a logical step for a first face-to-face meeting in almost six months between Russia and Ukraine, Zelenskyy added: “I am not sure that anything new could come of it.”

On Saturday, Ukrainian and European negotiators met with US diplomats while Russian envoy Kirill Dmitriev also travelled to Florida to meet with US special envoy Steve Witkoff and President

Donald Trump’s son-in-law Jared Kushner in a separate meeting at different locations.

Those talks will continue on Sunday, after which Ushakov said Dmitriev “will return to Moscow, make his report, and we will discuss what to do next.” Meanwhile, Ushakov also expressed doubts that any changes put forward by European and Ukrainian diplomats to the current US peace plan would yield a positive outcome.

“I am sure that the proposals that the Europeans and Ukrainians have made or are trying to make definitely do not improve the document and do not improve the possibility of achieving long-term peace,” he said.

Meanwhile, officials from Russia and the United States ended a day of peace talks in the southern US state of Florida and will continue their efforts on Sunday.

Russian President Putin’s envoy Kirill Dmitriev told reporters that the meeting with US counterparts Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner had been constructive. — **AW**

A MINUTE OF SILENCE OBSERVED



Bondi Beach terror attack: Australia holds Day of Reflection

SYDNEY: Australia is holding a National Day of Reflection on Sunday, one week after an antisemitic terror attack at Sydney’s Bondi Beach left 15 people dead and dozens more wounded.

The Day of Reflection is “to honour the victims of the horrific terrorist attack at Bondi Beach and to stand in solidarity with the Jewish community,” according to a statement from Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese’s office.

“People across the country are invited to light a candle at 6:47 p.m., exactly one week since the attack unfolded, as a quiet act of remembrance with family, friends or loved ones,” it added. “We are also asking Australians to observe a minute of silence at 6:47 p.m.”

Australian flags at federal buildings and state government buildings in New South Wales, where Sydney is located, are being flown at half-mast.

Mourners gathered at Bondi Beach and formed a circle of peace, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) reported.

At 6:47 p.m., the nation observed a minute of silence in flickering candlelight.

Sunday is the last day of Hanukkah, with Rabbi Eli Feldman telling ABC that Australians are welcome to observe the holiday with the Jewish community at Bondi Beach “to show that light will always overcome darkness.”



Naveed A., are alleged to have carried out the attack, with authorities believing the massacre was “motivated by IS ideology.” The attackers are believed to have traveled to the southern Philippine region of Mindanao, a hotbed of “IS” operations, in November prior to the Bondi shooting.

Sajid A., 50, was killed in a shootout with police during the Bondi attack. Naveed A., 24, was injured but survived and now faces 59 charges for his presumed role in the attack.

Albanese ordered review into police and intelligence services

The Bondi Beach shooting was the worst terror attack in Australia’s history and the deadliest shooting since 1996.

The shooting targeting Sydney’s Jewish community has led to accusations that the Albanese government has not done enough to tackle rising antisemitism.

Albanese on Sunday mandated a review into Australia’s police and intelligence services to analyze whether they have the “right powers, structures, processes and sharing arrangements in place to keep Australians safe” in the wake of the attack. — **NW**

BANGLADESH

Indian visa operations suspended in Chittagong amid rising tensions

CHITTAGONG: The Indian Visa Application Centre (IVAC) in Chittagong has announced the immediate suspension of all visa operations, effective Sunday, following a security incident at the Assistant High Commission of India (AHCI) in the port city.

In an official statement, IVAC Bangladesh confirmed that services would remain halted for an indefinite period. “Due to a recent security incident at AHCI Chittagong, Indian visa operations at IVAC Chittagong will remain suspended from 21/12/2025 until further notice,” the statement read.

The suspension follows reports of unrest and security concerns near the diplomatic mission earlier this week.

The IVAC has clarified that the decision to resume services will depend on a thorough assessment of the local environment.

“The announcement for reopening the visa centre will be made after reviewing the situation,” the IVAC Bangladesh added.



The heightened security situation coincides with a series of violent incidents across Bangladesh. On Sunday, ten individuals were arrested in connection with the brutal murder of 27-year-old Hindu youth, Dipu Chandra Das, in Mymensingh.

Das was beaten to death by a mob over alleged blasphemy, and his body was subsequently set on fire on December 18.

The incident sparked wide-

spread outrage and condemnation. Chief Adviser of the Interim government of Bangladesh, Muhammad Yunus, confirmed the legal action in a post on X.

“10 Arrested in Mymensingh Hindu Youth Beating Murder Case: Mymensingh, 20 December 2025: Law enforcement agencies have arrested ten individuals in connection with the beating murder of Dipu Chandra Das (27), a Sanatan Hindu youth,

in Baluka, Mymensingh,” Yunus stated.

The Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) apprehended seven suspects, while the police arrested three others.

Simultaneously, the capital city, Dhaka, remains on edge. Following the final funeral prayers for Sharif Osman Hadi, the slain convenor of Inqilab Moncho, on the Dhaka University campus on Saturday, the organisation rallied towards the Shahbagh area.

The Inqilab Moncho convenor, Sharif Osman Hadi, one of the prominent figures behind the July Uprising last year, was pronounced dead on Thursday, after he was shot at close range on December 12 while travelling in a rickshaw in Dhaka’s Bijoynagar area.

Following his death, protests broke out in the capital of Dhaka, with a fresh wave of protests breaking out today as the activists gathered at Dhaka’s Shahbagh intersection to call for justice for the slain leader. — **ANI**

INTERIOR MINISTRY

Germany revokes pledges to grant asylum to Afghans



list” and the “bridging list.”

However, Interior Minister Alexander Dobrindt made a U-turn on these commitments, which date from after the Taliban took power in Afghanistan in 2021, dismissing them as “legacy issues.”

Afghans who worked for German ministries also rejected

This is the first time that the third resettlement programme for local staff who worked for German ministries in Afghanistan has been affected. Last week, these workers and their families received the news via email, according to the aid organisation Kabul-

Luftbrücke.

Eva Beyer, spokesperson for the group, told DW that around 130 people who had received commitments from the German government’s local staff program were told they would no longer be taken in by Germany.

The email was sent by the German government’s development aid agency GIZ. Its decisive sentence reads: “After further detailed examination, it has been decided that there are no grounds for granting admission to Germany under Section 22 of the Residence Act.” The message does not give a specific reason for the reversal.

Kock from the Interior Ministry confirmed that this means only 90 of the remaining 220 local staff can now claim admission.

Interior minister wants to stick to commitments for local staff

Interior Minister Dobrindt was not aware of these developments when DW asked him about the rejection of local staff. “I have read a report on this, which I cannot fully assess, but I have asked my office to provide me with an assessment today,” he said.

“There has been no change in my decision, which I have made clear for some time,” he assured DW. “Where we have legally binding admission commitments, we will fulfill them. We see ourselves as having an ongoing responsibility toward so-called local staff.”

A prerequisite for admission is passing a security check.

According to government statistics, Germany has accepted a total of 4,000 local staff and almost 15,000 family members from when the Taliban seized power in 2021 until April 2025. The group still waiting in Pakistan is relatively small in comparison. — **NW**

SPORTS

Perfect start for SSL Team Oman

The ten-member crew is unbeaten after two days of racing in Chonburi, Thailand

Times News Service

MUSCAT: SSL Team Oman produced a flawless opening performance at the Star Sailors League (SSL) Gold Cup Asia Qualifier in Chonburi, Thailand, winning all four races over the first two days to take a commanding lead in Group B. Racing at Ocean Marina Yacht Club, the Omani crew — featuring 10 sailors from Oman Sail — showed outstanding consistency and control in the one-design SSL47 fleet, handling tight upwind battles and complex downwind manoeuvres with precision to remain unbeaten in the early stages of the 'Road to Rio' Asian Qualifier. SSL Team Oman set the tone in Race 1 by breaking away early on



the opening upwind leg, then sailing conservatively to protect their advantage and secure a clear victory. In Race 2, stronger winds tested the fleet, but the team stayed composed, executed clean manoeuvres and crossed the line first to complete a perfect opening day.

The momentum continued on Day 2 as the Omani sailors again proved their dominance, sweeping both scheduled races to extend their flawless record and establish themselves as the team

to beat in Group B. The team is skippered by Nasser Al Mashari and includes Hussain Al Jabri, Yasser Al Rahbi, Ali Al Balushi, Akram Al Wahaibi, Haitham Al Wahaibi, Raad Al Hadi, Abdul Rahman Al Mashari, Ibtisam Al

Salmi and Marwa Al Khaifi. Skipper and team leader Nasser Al Mashari credited preparation and teamwork for the strong start. "We have trained a lot, and that preparation helps us stay calm on board, even in tricky condi-

tions," he said. "Our focus was to keep things simple, use common sense, and execute each manoeuvre cleanly. Good communication across the whole crew was key. Everyone knew their role, and we focused on choosing the right moments to push and the right moments to stay conservative. That balance helped us avoid major mistakes." SSL Team Oman are competing in Group B against Kazakhstan and the United Arab Emirates, with only the group winners qualifying for the SSL Gold Cup finals in Brazil. Group A comprises Myanmar, the Philippines, South Korea and Vietnam. Six Asian nations — Japan, China, Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia and India — have already secured qualification for the SSL Gold Cup 2026 through the official SSL Nations Ranking, which is based on the performances of each country's top sailors. In total, 40 nations will contest the title of World Champion of Nations at the SSL Gold Cup finals in Brazil. The SSL Gold Cup Asia Qualifier is organised in collaboration with the Yacht Racing Association of Thailand. The event marks the first SSL Gold Cup qualifier to be staged in Asia.

LOP-SIDED FINAL

Minhas leads Pakistan to U19 Asia Cup glory with big win over India

DUBAI: Pakistan produced a dominant all-round performance to clinch the ACC Under-19 Asia Cup in emphatic fashion, thrashing India by 191 runs in the final at ICCA Dubai on Sunday. This marked Pakistan's first outright U19 Asia Cup title, having previously been declared joint winners in the 2012 edition. After being put in to bat, Pakistan built a massive total of 347 for 8, anchored by a sensational innings from Sameer Minhas, who smashed 172 off 113 balls, laced with 17 fours and nine sixes. Minhas took control after an early wicket, combining first with Usman Khan (35) and then with Ahmed Hussain (56) to lay a solid platform before accelerating brutally in the final overs. Captain Farhan Yousaf (19) and late cameos from Niqab Shafiq (12*) and Mohammad Sayyam (13*) ensured Pakistan finished



just shy of 350, a total that always looked beyond reach. India's bowlers struggled to contain the flow of runs, with Deepesh Devendran claiming three wickets but conceding 83, while Khilan Patel was the most economical, taking 2 for 44. Chasing a daunting 348, India Under-19 never found momentum. Early strikes from Ali Raza rocked

the chase as wickets fell in clusters. Vaibhav Suryavanshi's explosive 26 off 10 balls provided a brief spark, but it was quickly extinguished as Pakistan's disciplined bowling strangled the middle order. Ali Raza led the attack with an impressive 4 for 42, well supported by Abdul Subhan (2 for 29) and Mohammad Sayyam (2 for 38). India

were eventually bowled out for 156 in 26.2 overs, succumbing to relentless pressure and smart fielding. Sameer Minhas was adjudged player of the match for his match-winning century and was also named player of the tournament after amassing 471 runs from five matches at an average of 157. Pakistan U19 will now travel to



Zimbabwe to feature in a tri-series involving Afghanistan and hosts Zimbabwe, starting from Thursday, 25 December. The ICC Men's U19 World Cup will be played in Zimbabwe and Namibia from 15 January to 6 February 2026. **No handshakes** After the match, the Indian team

did not take part in the customary post-match handshake with Pakistan on Sunday. The Ayush Mhatre-led team had skipped the gesture during the two sides' group stage encounter as well. There was also no handshake after the toss during the summit clash. The decision mirrors a recent pattern involving Indian teams in matches against Pakistan. During the men's Asia Cup earlier this year, Indian players opted out of pre- and post-match handshakes in all three meetings between the sides. The approach was also followed by the Indian women's team during the Women's World Cup 2025. **Brief scores:** Pakistan 347/8 (Sameer Minhas 172, Ahmed Hussain 56; Deepesh Devendran 3/83) beat India 156 in 26.2 overs (Vaibhav Suryavanshi 26, Deepesh Devendran 36; Ali Raza 4/42). -Agencies

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On 25 MY models, the Big Savings amount are being directly adjusted in the price of the vehicle whereas in 26MY the savings amount of RO 300 are adjusted in Cash Gift as a part of down payment. The Big Savings amount is in addition to the normal Cash Gift offer applicable on the models. ®- Total applicable Service benefit will be from 3 Years / 30,000 Kms whichever is earlier. 30,000Kms / 3 years' Service, on all Models (except Tasman). The Service benefit applicable to EV vehicles is 60,000 kms / 4 years, whichever is earlier. ★1st year comprehensive insurance is applicable on all 25MY available models in stock. On 26MY models, 1st year's insurance is applicable on all models (except Picanto, Pegas, Carnival, Sportage 2.0 RVC and Tasman). Registration available on all models except Tasman and EVs. All the above benefits are not applicable on Ministry, Bulk fleet, Corporate & RAC deals. Scheme Period: 23/11/2025 to 22/01/2026 Vehicles may also include some Dealer Installed Accessories. Pictures & Colours are indicative. For further details, please visit your nearest Kia showroom.

NEW APPOINTMENT
The St. Regis Al Mouj Muscat Resort announced the appointment of Manuel Levonian as general manager. His appointment marks a new chapter for the resort as it continues to strengthen its position within Oman's and the region's luxury landscape.

MARKET
BUSINESS & FINANCE



MSX INDEX ENDS HIGHER
The MSX 30 Index concluded yesterday's session at 5,958.69 points, gaining 17.7 points, or 0.30 percent, compared to the previous close of 5,941 points.

Producer Price Index falls 4.3% in 3rd quarter



The decline was primarily driven by a 5.3% decrease in prices within the mining and quarrying sector, reflecting a 5.4% drop in crude oil and natural gas prices

MUSCAT: The Producer Price Index (PPI) in the Sultanate of Oman recorded a 4.3% decline in the third quarter of 2025 compared to the corresponding period in 2024, according to data released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The decline was primarily driven by a 5.3% decrease in prices within the mining and quarrying

sector, reflecting a 5.4% drop in crude oil and natural gas prices. In contrast, prices of metal ores increased by 13.3% during the same period.

The manufacturing sector also registered a 4.1% decline, influenced by a marginal 0.2% decrease in prices of food products, beverages, and textiles, alongside a 4.6% fall in prices of other transportable goods and a 4.7% reduction in prices of fabricated metal products, machinery, and equipment.

As for key utility sectors, electricity prices rose by 3.5%, while the water sector recorded a sharper increase of 6.1% during the third quarter of 2025. **-OMA**

YEAR-END REVIEW

India's telecom sector records historic expansion in 2025

NEW DELHI: The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) closed 2025 on a high note, registering landmark achievements in connectivity, digital infrastructure, and telecom self-reliance. A Year-End Review statement released by the Ministry of Communications highlighted unprecedented growth in internet and mobile penetration, rapid nationwide rollout of 5G services, and major strides in indigenous technology development. India's telecom footprint expanded rapidly during the year. **-ANI**





The Tax Authority announces the imminent activation of the Tax Warehousing System for excise goods, which aims to achieve the following objectives:

- Enhance compliance with Excise Tax.
- Enable taxpayers to store their excise goods under Excise Tax suspension within licensed warehouses, in accordance with specific technical and regulatory controls.
- Improve the monitoring process in coordination with competent authorities.

The Tax Authority invites business sectors whom desire to benefit from the Tax Warehousing System to review the technical requirements by scanning the QR code, and prepare for submitting license applications when they open soon.











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Campaign Period: 23 November 2025 to 31 December 2025 on Lincoln models Navigator, Nautilus & Corsair. Benefits applicable for all purchases except Government Organizations & Ministries, taxi, rent-a-car, driving school usage, companies or any form of commercial usage. **5 Years / 100,000 Kms covering 10 services at 10,000 Kms service interval based on normal operating conditions for Nautilus, Navigator and Corsair. *** Free 1 year Registration on all models Navigator, Nautilus & Corsair, for private vehicles only, @ 5 Years / 100,000 Kms (whichever is earlier) Manufacturer's Warranty on Nautilus, Navigator and Corsair. Raffle Draw and Win (Raffle Draw) - 3 iPhone 17 on Navigator, Nautilus & Corsair. Raffle Draw will be conducted on 20 January 2026. Vehicles may include dealer-installed items. For further details & to ascertain availability of stocks, please visit your nearest Lincoln showroom. Pictures and colours shown above are for illustrative purposes only. Campaign will not be applicable for ministry and government deals/supplies.



LINCOLN

MARKET

MSX index ends higher

The total trading value reached OMR43,680,484, reflecting a rise of 29.8 percent from the previous session's value of OMR33,648,077



MUSCAT: The MSX 30 Index concluded yesterday's session at 5,958.69 points, gaining 177 points, or 0.30 percent, compared to the previous close of 5,941 points.

The total trading value reached RO 43,680,484, reflecting a rise of 29.8 percent from the previous session's value of RO 33,648,077.

A report issued by the Muscat Stock Exchange indicated that the total market capitalization

increased by 0.140 percent from the last trading day, reaching approximately RO 32.19 billion.

The purchase value by non-Omani investors amounted to RO 3,093,000, representing 7.08 percent of the total trading value. Their sales value stood at RO 3,498,000, accounting for 8.01 percent. As a result, the net investment by non-Omani investors dropped by RO 405,000, a decline of 0.93 percent.— **ONA**

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE

MUSCAT
STOCK
EXCHANGE

INDICES							
Index	High	Low	Value	Prev. Value	Diff	Diff%	
MSX 30 INDEX	5,974.17	5,941.00	5,958.69	5,941.00	177.00	0.30	
FINANCIAL INDEX	9,786.88	9,713.06	9,756.03	9,713.06	42.97	0.44	
Industry Index	7,814.09	7,775.49	7,791.37	7,772.34	19.04	0.24	
Services Index	2,456.43	2,443.39	2,453.17	2,443.39	9.78	0.40	
MSX Shariah Index	528.36	524.34	527.15	524.96	2.19	0.42	
MSX TR INDEX	8,979.51	8,929.65	8,956.25	8,929.65	26.60	0.30	
FINANCIAL TR IDX	11,627.15	11,539.45	11,590.50	11,539.45	51.05	0.44	
INDUSTRIAL TR IDX	9,634.09	9,586.50	9,606.09	9,582.62	23.47	0.24	
SERVICES TR IDX	3,203.37	3,186.36	3,199.11	3,186.36	12.75	0.40	
FIXED INCOME INDEX	1,206.62	1,206.62	1,206.62	1,206.62	0.00	0.00	
Trading Summary							
Volume	Turnover	Trades	Market Cap	Up	Down	Equal	Sec. Traded
173,865,942	43,680,484	3,647	32,188,585,366	28	23	19	70

SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR SUNDAY, DECEMBER 21

ISIN	SECURITY NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF. RD	DIFF %	LAST PD	LAST BD	LAST OFFER	ASK VALUE	MARKET CAP
REGULAR MARKET																
OM0000001533	OMINVEST	265,521	121,140	21	0.326	0.332	0.326	0.332	0.326	0.006	1.840	0.332	0.325	0.332	0.100	310,656,250
OM0000008934	ABRAJ ENERGY SERVICES	2,743,062	944,758	378	0.343	0.346	0.341	0.346	0.340	0.006	1.765	0.346	0.346	0.346	0.100	266,489,200
OM0000009072	QO GAS NETWORKS	12,599,954	2,466,931	438	0.195	0.197	0.194	0.196	0.194	0.002	1.031	0.196	0.196	0.197	0.100	848,802,288
OM0000008961	VOLTAMP ENERGY	5,683	4,597	11	1.089	1.095	1.091	1.091	1.091	0.000	0.955	1.091	1.091	1.095	0.100	102,131,980
OM0000001707	OMAN CABLES INDUSTRY	51,130	128,797	4	2,519	2,520	2,519	2,520	2,500	0.020	0.800	2,520	2,520	2,550	0.100	226,044,000
OM0000004925	ALBATHIN POWER	10,050	1,632	8	0.163	0.165	0.162	0.164	0.163	0.001	0.953	0.164	0.162	0.164	0.100	110,581,528
OM0000004933	AL SUWADI POWER	13,177	2,149	7	0.163	0.164	0.163	0.164	0.163	0.001	0.613	0.164	0.163	0.164	0.100	117,022,640
OM0000002786	BANK MUSCAT	44,144,606	14,975,096	418	0.338	0.341	0.338	0.340	0.338	0.002	0.592	0.340	0.340	0.340	0.100	2,552,175,001
OM0000003868	OREDOO	1,594,170	454,550	28	0.298	0.299	0.296	0.298	0.297	0.001	0.357	0.298	0.298	0.298	0.100	193,981,381
OM0000002176	JAZEERA STEEL PRODUCTS	16,000	10,080	7	0.630	0.630	0.630	0.630	0.630	0.000	0.000	0.630	0.626	0.630	0.100	78,855,715
OM0000002804	ASAFFA FOODS	10,110	5,056	4	0.508	0.508	0.500	0.500	0.500	0.000	0.500	0.485	0.508	0.500	0.100	60,000,000
OM0000005389	SOHAR INTERNATIONAL BANK	46,640,418	7,692,102	379	0.185	0.192	0.184	0.184	0.184	0.000	0.154	0.184	0.184	0.184	0.100	1,085,228,388
OM0000001483	NATIONAL BANK OMAN	22,862	8,558	6	0.374	0.376	0.373	0.373	0.374	-0.001	-0.267	0.373	0.373	0.376	0.100	606,477,990
OM0000003036	OMAN TELECOM	2,977,844	2,987,798	133	1.073	1.074	1.069	1.069	1.074	-0.005	-0.466	1.069	1.068	1.069	0.100	801,750,000
OM0000002226	AL JAZEERA SERVICES	59,734	11,171	12	0.187	0.188	0.187	0.187	0.188	-0.001	-0.532	0.187	0.188	0.205	0.100	8,011,639
OM0000003224	RENAISSANCE SERVICES	203,100	66,300	11	0.329	0.329	0.326	0.329	0.329	-0.003	-0.912	0.328	0.326	0.328	0.100	710,669,690
OM0000004450	BANK NIZWA	525,779	97,556	38	0.111	0.111	0.108	0.108	0.109	-0.001	-0.917	0.108	0.108	0.115	0.100	241,580,927
OM0000004788	MADINA TAKAFUL	258,263	24,693	30	0.096	0.097	0.095	0.096	0.097	-0.001	-1.031	0.096	0.094	0.099	0.100	16,800,000
OM0000003125	GLOBAL FINANCIAL INVESTMENT HO	530,318	11,994	13	0.213	0.213	0.210	0.211	0.214	-0.003	-1.402	0.211	0.211	0.214	0.100	42,200,000
OM0000002374	UNITED FINANCE	99,208	6,765	6	0.069	0.069	0.068	0.068	0.069	-0.001	-1.449	0.068	0.068	0.072	0.100	24,216,656
OM0000002188	AL ANWAR CERAMIC	870,070	151,799	81	0.177	0.177	0.172	0.175	0.178	-0.003	-1.685	0.175	0.171	0.190	0.100	38,500,000
OM0000001087	OMAN UNITED INSURANCE	235,463	72,654	15	0.310	0.310	0.308	0.308	0.320	-0.012	-3.750	0.308	0.308	0.310	0.100	30,800,000
Total	22	113,606,968	30,157,878	2,048												

Parallel Market																
ISIN	SECURITY NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF. RD	DIFF %	LAST PD	LAST BD	LAST OFFER	ASK VALUE	MARKET CAP
OM00000007043	LIVA GROUP	52,000	15,080	2	0.290	0.290	0.290	0.290	0.275	0.015	5.455	0.290	0.290	0.302	0.100	115,529,559
OM00000008447	OMAN REIT FUND	27,500	2,655	10	0.095	0.099	0.094	0.099	0.095	0.004	4.211	0.097	0.097	0.099	0.100	54,210,441
OM00000006979	OMAN QATAR INSURANCE	16,600	3,188	4	0.192	0.199	0.192	0.199	0.191	0.008	4.188	0.199	0.186	0.199	0.100	32,082,495
OM00000005880	OMAN EDUCATION & TRAINING INV	75	1,209	3	1.600	1.645	1.600	1.645	1.600	0.045	2.813	1.645	1.590	1.640	0.100	115,150,000
OM0000001772	AL ANWAR INVESTMENT	800,701	84,738	66	0.104	0.107	0.104	0.106	0.104	0.002	1.923	0.106	0.106	0.106	0.100	31,646,611
OM0000001400	OMAN FLOUR MILLS	54,962	25,838	10	0.470	0.479	0.470	0.479	0.470	0.009	1.915	0.479	0.470	0.479	0.100	792,14,625
OM0000005605	ALMAHA CERAMICS	4,500	2,451	4	0.285	0.285	0.284	0.284	0.280	0.004	1.429	0.284	0.277	0.286	0.100	15,620,000
OM0000001301	DIHOFAR FOODS AND INVESTMENT	14,588	1,094	8	0.074	0.080	0.074	0.075	0.074	0.001	1.351	0.075	0.073	0.080	0.100	14,825,769
OM0000002549	BANK DHOOF	4,927,034	738,451	269	0.155	0.151	0.150	0.150	0.150	0.000	1.351	0.150	0.150	0.150	0.100	455,999,780
OM0000005260	OMAN ARAB BANK	272,201	46,274	3	0.170	0.170	0.170	0.170	0.168	0.002	1.190	0.170	0.170	0.170	0.100	340,466,367
OM0000002200	AHLI BANK	161,374	27,434	3	0.170	0.172	0.170	0.172	0.170	0.002	1.176	0.172	0.167	0.172	0.100	465,569,656
OM0000001020	ASTAD SHIPPING	10,340,854	1,899,696	333	0.186	0.188	0.186	0.188	0.186	0.002	1.075	0.188	0.188	0.188	0.100	979,243,925
OM0000001889	SALALAI MILLS	5,000	2,057	3	0.410	0.412	0.410	0.412	0.408	0.004	0.980	0.412	0.411	0.419	0.100	25,734,782
OM0000001152	OMAN NATIONAL ENGINEERING & INV	7,983	1,194	4	0.148	0.149	0.148	0.149	0.148	0.001	0.676	0.149	0.148	0.160	0.100	22,350,000
OM00000008710	BARKA DESALINATION	15,700	2,269	2	0.146	0.153	0.146	0.153	0.152	0.001	0.658	0.153	0.148	0.153	0.100	11,554,996
OM0000000868	THE PEARL REEF	16,656	2,611	7	0.157	0.157	0.155	0.157	0.156	0.001	0.641	0.157	0.157	0.158	0.100	92,855,590
OM0000000908	OMAN INDUSTRIES (SFZ)	24,789,418	4,710,296	406	0.190	0.191	0.189	0.190	0.189	0.001	0.529	0.190	0.190	0.190	0.100	697,803,992
OM00000004735	SEMBOCORP SALALAH	23,988	4,846	3	0.202	0.202	0.202	0.202	0.201	0.001	0.498	0.202	0.201	0.202	0.100	19,923,534
OM0000001180	NATIONAL GAS	92,800	3,538	19	0.093	0.093	0.092	0.092	0.092	0.000	0.002	0.092	0.092	0.093	0.100	7,820,000
OM0000001897	MAJAN COLLEGE	16,780	2,014	6	0.120	0.120	0.120	0.120	0.120	0.000	0.000	0.120	0.120	0.120	0.100	11,880,000
OM0000001982	AL MADINA INVESTMENT HOLDING	11,117	445	5	0.040	0.040	0.040	0.040	0.040	0.000	0.000	0.040	0.039	0.042	0.100	3,400,000
OM0000002028	GULF INTERNATIONAL CHEMICALS	10,000	710	1	0.071	0.071	0.071	0.071	0.071	0.000	0.000	0.071	0.070	0.078	0.100	1,491,000
OM0000002287	GULF MUSHROOM PRODUCTS	4,276	1,371	2	0.321	0.321	0.320	0.320	0.320	0.000	0.000	0.320	0.320	0.321	0.100	14,645,055
OM0000002572	OMAN OIL MARKETING	6,004	485	1	0.080	0.080	0.080	0.080	0.080	0.000	0.000	0.080	0.810	0.825	0.100	50,345,500
OM0000004776	TAKAFUL OMAN	1,322	73	2	0.055	0.055	0.055	0.055	0.055	0.000	0.000	0.055	0.054	0.055	0.100	137,500,000
OM0000007084	MUSCAT CITY DESALINATION	765	67	1	0.088	0.088	0.088	0.088	0.088	0.000	0.000	0.088	0.087	0.089	0.1	10,645,500
OM0000007407	DIHOFAR GENERATING	5,500	448	2	0.090	0.090	0.090	0.090	0.090	0.000	0.000	0.090	0.090	0.090	0.100	20,001,000
OM0000007534	OMANIAN POWER	10,334	11,083	2	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.100	11,488,000
OM0000007910	OMAN REAL ESTATE	200	16	1	0.080	0.080	0.080	0.080	0.080	0.000	0.000	0.080	0.079	0.085	0.100	16,000,000
OM0000009669	JABAL REEF	3,176,347	327,164	8	0.103	0.103	0.103	0.103	0.100	0.003	3.000	0.103	0.102	0.103	0.100	7,922,000
OM0000004026	OMAN REFRESHMENTS	1,490	1,490	1	0.990	0.990	0.990	0.990	0.990	0.000	0.000	0.990	0.990	0.990	0.100	1,490,000
OM0000002036	OMAN TREASURY BANK	12,948	2,593	2	0.201	0.201	0.200	0.200	0.201	0.001	-0.498	0.200	0.197	0.203	0.100	3,924,000
OM0000002507	OMAN COMM. BANK	421	450	1	0.499	0.499	0.495	0.499	0.495	0.004	0.800	0.499	0.495	0.500	0.100	1,490,000
OM0000002077	AL OMANIYA FINANCIAL SERVICES	1,236	175	2	0.142	0.142	0.141	0.141	0.142	0.001	-0.704	0.141	0.141	0.142	0.100	44,473,000
OM0000009759	QO EXPLORATION AND PRODUCTION	14,616,941	5,445,938	336	0.375	0.375	0.371	0.372	0.375	-0.003	-0.800	0.372	0.372	0.372	0.010	2,976,000,000
OM0000001680	OMAN INVESTMENT	26,371	1,580	1	0.102	0.102	0.101	0.102	0.101	0.001	0.971	0.102	0.101	0.102	0.100	11,554,996
OM0000003141	BARKA WATER AND POWER	4,646	827	3	0.178	0.178	0.178	0.178	0.180	-0.002	-1.111	0.178	0.178	0.180	0.100	28,800,000
OM0000001020	OMAN CHROME	9,025	37,447	7	4.100	4.150	4.100	4.150	4.100	0.050	-1.205	4.100	4.100	4.100	1.000	153,500,000
OM0000002529	OMAN INTERNATIONAL DEV. & INV.	2,521	25,209	2	0.255	0.255	0.252	0.255	0.252	0.003	1.190	0.255	0.252	0.260	0.100	15,620,000
OM0000001020	OMAN CHLORINE	31,644	30,564	13	0.237	0.237	0.233	0.233	0.238	-0.006	-2.221	0.232	0.225	0.240	0.100	16,590,000
OM0000001394	FINANCIAL SERVICES	949	949	1	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.100	1,490,000
Total		41	59,683,328	13,507,328	1,574											


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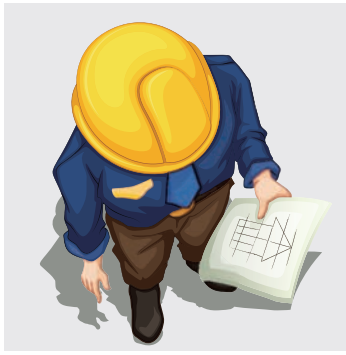
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Indian Male B.Com graduate with 2+yrs experience as an accountant, Contact-9071 2090-Email-mohdnaifi4@gmail.com

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

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

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

Ukraine secures \$105bn loan from EU amid internal division

Instead of using Russia’s frozen assets, the final agreement relies on joint EU borrowing. The money will be raised on financial markets, backed by the EU budget, and passed on to Ukraine as an interest-free loan

BRUSSELS: After more than 16 hours of negotiations, EU leaders left Brussels on Friday with a deal they had promised to deliver: a €90 billion (\$105 billion) loan to Ukraine to cover much of Kyiv’s financing needs for 2026 and 2027. For a country warning of severe budgetary shortfalls — brought on by the ongoing war — as early as next spring, the agreement provides a crucial lifeline.

“We committed, we delivered,” European Council President Antonio Costa said after the summit, visibly relieved to be able to present results in the early hours of Friday morning.

At the same time, the summit highlighted the growing difficulty for the European Union to translate political ambition into common action, particularly when legal risks, diverging national interests and geopolitical pressure collide.

Joint borrowing instead of frozen assets

Instead of using Russia’s frozen assets, the final agreement relies on joint EU borrowing. The money will be raised on financial markets, backed by the EU budget, and passed on to Ukraine as an interest-free loan. Kyiv would only be required to repay it once Russia pays war reparations. It remains far from clear, however, whether Russia would ever agree to pay reparations.

Relying on joint borrowing was

not the preferred option of the European Commission and several major capitals such as Berlin, which had pushed for using Russia’s frozen central bank assets for months. These assets are held mostly at the Belgium-based financial services firm Euroclear. The idea was to fund Ukraine while avoiding new burdens on EU taxpayers and increasing pressure on Moscow.

That plan failed primarily because of concerns raised by Belgium. As the host country of Euroclear, Brussels argued that it faced disproportionate legal and financial risks if Russia retaliated or pursued litigation. Belgian Prime Minister Bart De Wever demanded far-reaching guarantees from other EU states, demands that France, Italy and others were unwilling to meet.

What does that mean for Europe’s ability to act?

The division, as well as the current agreement, reveal a more fundamental question: If the legal and political obstacles to using Russian assets are too great now, under what circumstances might they ever become manageable later?

In an interview with DW, Jana Kobzova, co-director of the European Security Programme at the European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR), was equally critical. “We had an option of using our leverage vis-à-vis the Russians, and vis-à-vis the US, and we didn’t



go for that,” she said. This, Kobzova argued, put Europe’s ability to act as an independent and influential global player into question.

Tinatin Akhvediani, a researcher at the Brussels-based Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS), agreed that the result is not the optimal solution, but argued that it preserved the EU’s credibility as a political actor, able to reach decisions and finance Ukraine, even when under pressure. “Ukraine will get the money, and that was the most important thing,” she said.

Members of the European Parliament were more critical. Iratxe García Pérez, first vice-president of the Socialists and Democrats group, said the agreement “falls short” because it doesn’t establish a sustainable funding model and leaves the financial burden with the EU rather than shifting it to Russia. She argues that while the €90-billion loan “is necessary, it cannot be the final solution.”

Unity, but with objections

The summit outcome allowed all sides to claim partial success. Ukraine receives funding, supporters of legal caution avoided a precedent-setting use of frozen assets, and others ensured that the assets in question remain im-



mobilized and could still, in theory, be used in the future to repay the loan if Russia refuses to pay reparations.

But questions about unity remain. Three member states — Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic — secured exemptions from the financial guarantees linked to the loan. While they will not block the package, they will not carry direct liability for it, either.

These opt-outs underline what many analysts see as a trend towards a more fragmented form of EU solidarity. Rather than all 27 countries taking decisions together and sharing risks equally, coalitions are increasingly formed on a case-by-case basis.

Akhvediani pointed out that the

EU was searching for agility in a fast-changing world. She argued that a deal — even an imperfect one — was preferable to paralysis. “We may not have full unity across all 27 member states, but we have unity across the majority of them, and that at least allows the European Union to act,” she explained.

EU’s role in the world put into question

The decision comes at a time when European leaders are keen to assert influence over any future peace talks on Ukraine, particularly as the United States sends mixed signals about its long-term engagement.

Both experts agree that continued financial support strength-

ens Europe’s claim to relevance in the peace process. However, the failure to mobilize Russia’s frozen assets weakens the EU’s leverage and hinders its ability to move from a simple “payer” to an actual “player,” as Akhvediani put it.

This has strategic consequences, Kobzova from the ECFR added, because Russian President Vladimir Putin will continue to view European leaders as secondary actors. “He is willing to talk business with them, but not security. On that, he is very keen on keeping them out, and the Americans in,” she told DW.

Beyond Ukraine: EU leadership under strain

The Ukraine funding debate was not the only issue that proved divisive at the summit. Plans to finalize the long-negotiated Mercosur trade agreement with South American countries were again delayed after objections from France and Italy.

The postponement prompted criticism from former EU trade commissioner Cecilia Malmström, who said the EU had “missed an opportunity to show strength and unity,” stressing that the agreement “is not only about trade but also geopolitics.”

Under the Ukraine deal, the European Commission is now expected to move quickly to issue EU-backed bonds on financial markets, using the EU budget as a guarantee. Once approved by member states, the funds could begin flowing to Kyiv in early 2026, providing predictable financing over the next two years.

For now, the immediate crisis has been contained. Ukraine has funding, and the EU avoided an outright failure to agree. But the summit also left a lingering question: whether Europe can match its strategic ambitions with the unity and tools needed to act decisively in a rapidly hardening geopolitical landscape. — DW

BLUE ORIGIN



German engineer becomes first wheelchair user to visit space

TEXAS: German engineer Michaela Benthous on Saturday became the first person with paraplegia to travel to space.

The brief suborbital trip was carried out by US billionaire Jeff Bezos’ space tourism company Blue Origin.

The Saturday expedition was the 16th crewed flight for the firm. Also on board were former space engineer Hans Königs-mann of Germany and four US entrepreneurs.

The New Shepard NS-37 launched off from a Bezos property in West Texas at 8:15 a.m. local time (1415 UTC) for a flight that lasted around 11 minutes.

The vessel reached an altitude of approximately 100 kilometres (around 62 miles).

The passengers experienced a brief moment of weightlessness as part of the trip.

Dozens of people have travelled to space with Blue Origin, including pop singer Katy Perry and former Star Trek actor William Shatner. The firm aims to compete with Elon Musk’s SpaceX.

Benthous, who is 33, was exuberant about her experience in space in comments made after



her return to Earth.

“It was the coolest experience ever, honestly,” the engineer, who works at the European Space Agency (ESA), said.

“I think you should never give up on your dreams. There’s also sometimes just a low probability that it comes true,” she said.

Benthous sustained a spinal injury during a mountain bike accident at the age of 26 and now uses a wheelchair.

She called for the world to improve accessibility for people with disabilities.

“After my accident ... I really, really figured out how inaccessible our world still is,” she said, saying that facilities for disabled people are required in order to

US COAST GUARD

US seizes another oil tanker off Venezuela

WASHINGTON DC: The US Coast Guard, with the support of the Pentagon, has seized another oil tanker off the coast of Venezuela, US Department of Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem said on X.

“The United States will continue to pursue the illicit movement of sanctioned oil that is used to fund narco terrorism in the region,” Noem said on Saturday, while posting an unclassified video of the reported incident. She did not provide concrete evidence that the tanker’s activities are being used to fund narco terrorism.

In a post on X, Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth said the US “will unflinchingly conduct maritime interdiction operations — through OPERATION SOUTHERN SPEAR — to dismantle illicit criminal networks. Violence, drugs, and chaos will not control the Western Hemisphere.”

Vessel-tracking service MarineTraffic said the crude oil tanker is flying under the flag of Panama and was recently active off the Venezuelan coast.

It’s the second time the US has taken control of an oil tanker off Venezuela. US President Donald Trump has ordered a blockade, where US ships would seize any sanctioned oil tankers entering or exiting Venezuela.

Jeremy Paner, a partner at the Washington, DC-based Hughes Hubbard law firm, told Reuters news agency that the tanker had



not been targeted by US sanctions.

“The seizure of a vessel that is not sanctioned by the US marks a further increase in Trump’s pressure on Venezuela,” Paner said.

Venezuela denounces ‘theft and hijacking’ of private oil vessel

The Venezuelan government under Nicolas Maduro released an official statement regarding the oil tanker seizure, condemning the US for its actions.

Venezuela said the US engaged in “theft and hijacking” of a private vessel transporting Venezuelan crude oil.

The Venezuelan government said “these acts will not go unpunished” and vowed to take further steps “including filing a complaint before the United Nations Security Council.” Venezuela described

the seizure as a “grave act of international piracy.”

Brazil, Argentina divided over Trump’s aggressive Venezuela policy

The move comes as Trump has not ruled out a potential war with Venezuela against Maduro’s government. Trump earlier said that the US military would launch land strikes on Venezuela.

Brazilian leftist President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva earlier warned on Saturday at a Mercosur summit that a US military operation in Venezuela could trigger “a humanitarian catastrophe for the hemisphere and a dangerous precedent for the world.”

A potential US military intervention in Latin America would open old wounds in the region, with Washington having previously backed numerous coups in

the region during the Cold War, including in Brazil. Moreover, a US conflict with Venezuela could exacerbate the flow of Venezuelan refugees into Brazil and other neighbouring countries in the region.

Argentina’s right-wing libertarian President Javier Milei, meanwhile, said his country “welcomes the pressure from the United States and Donald Trump to free the Venezuelan people. The time for a timid approach on this matter has run out.”

Venezuela under Maduro and his predecessor, Hugo Chavez, has witnessed hyperinflation, stark poverty and food insecurity. Maduro’s victories in previous elections have been met with protests and allegations that his rule is illegitimate.

— DW

IN SAN FRANCISCO

Power outage affects 130,000 households

SAN FRANCISCO: San Francisco experienced a large-scale power outage that left 130,000 residents without electricity in the northern part of the city.

The city’s residents took to social media to post about many closed restaurants and shops, unusual for this time of year before the Christmas holidays.

Known to be home to many of the US’ biggest tech firms, San Francisco saw disruptions to pub-

lic transport and traffic as a result of the outage. Authorities told people to stay at home and off the roads.

“We’ve got rain coming. It’s night time. If you don’t need to go out, stay home,” San Francisco Mayor Daniel Lurie posted on X.

Some services were resumed

Lurie later posted that some services were resumed, but others

remained impacted, continuing to urge residents to stay home.

The San Francisco Department of Emergency Management later said that power was partially restored, though some 40,000 residents could remain without power overnight, citing the city’s main power provider, Pacific Gas & Electric Company (PG&E Co).

Fire partial cause of outage

PG&E Co. said it was working to-

gether with the authorities on restoring electricity supply. It later added that it stabilized the power grid and that no further outages were expected.

A fire at one of the company’s substations appeared to be the cause for some of the blackouts, according to fire officials.

It was not immediately clear how long it would take for power to be fully restored.

— DW



LIFESTYLE

HYPERTENSION AFFECTS BRAIN MUCH EARLIER THAN EXPECTED: STUDY

The findings may lead to medications that both reduce blood pressure and prevent cognitive decline

Hypertension may impair the brain far earlier than previously understood -- even before a measurable rise in blood pressure occurs -- according to a new preclinical study from Weill Cornell Medicine. The changes help explain why hypertension is a major risk factor for developing cognitive disorders, such as vascular cognitive impairment and Alzheimer's disease.

The study reveals that hypertension triggers early gene expression changes in individual brain cells, which may interfere with cognitive functions such as thinking and memory. The findings may lead to medications that both reduce blood pressure and prevent cognitive decline.

Patients with hypertension have a 1.2 to 1.5-fold higher risk of developing cognitive disorders than people without the condition, but exactly why is not understood. While many current hypertension medications successfully lower high blood pressure, they often show little or no effect on brain function. This suggests blood vessel changes could cause damage independently of the elevated pressure associated with hypertension.

"We found that the major cells responsible for cognitive impairment were affected just three days after inducing hypertension in mice--before blood pressure increased," said senior author Dr. Costantino Iadecola, director of the Feil Family Brain and Mind Research Institute, professor of neuroscience and Anne

Parrish Titzell Professor of Neurology at Weill Cornell. "The bottom line is something beyond the dysregulation of blood pressure is involved."

Dr. Anthony Pacholko, postdoctoral associate in neuroscience at Weill Cornell, co-led the work.

In previous work, Dr. Iadecola's team found that hypertension affects the function of neurons globally, but recent innovations in single-cell technologies have allowed them to zero in on what is happening in the different types of cells in the brain at the molecular level.

To induce hypertension in mice, the researchers administered the hormone angiotensin, which raises blood pressure, thereby mimicking the condition in humans. Then, they examined how different types of brain cells were affected three days later (before blood pressure increased) and after 42 days (when blood pressure was high and cognition was impaired).

At day three, gene expression dramatically changed in three cell types: endothelial cells, interneurons and oligodendrocytes. Endothelial cells, which line the internal surface of blood vessels, aged prematurely with lower energy metabolism and higher senescence markers. The researchers also observed early signs of a weakened blood-brain barrier, which regulates the influx of nutrients into the brain and keeps out harmful molecules. Interneurons, brain cells that regulate the balance of excitatory and inhibitory nerve signals, were damaged, leading to an imbalance between

inhibition and excitation like that seen in Alzheimer's disease.

In addition, oligodendrocytes that enrobe nerve fibers with myelin did not properly express genes responsible for their maintenance and replacement. Without enough oligodendrocytes to maintain the health of the myelin sheath, neurons eventually lose the ability to communicate with each other, which is critical for cognitive function. Even more gene expression changes were observed at day 42, coinciding with cognitive decline.

"The extent of the early alterations induced by hypertension was quite surprising," Dr. Pacholko said. "Understanding how hypertension affects the brain at the cellular and molecular levels during the earliest stages of the disease may provide clues to finding ways that can potentially block neurodegeneration."

An anti-hypertensive drug already in clinical use called losartan inhibits the angiotensin receptor. "In some human studies, the data suggest that the angiotensin receptor inhibitors may be more beneficial to cognitive health than other drugs that lower blood pressure," Dr. Iadecola said. In additional experiments, losartan reversed the early effects of hypertension on endothelial cells and interneurons in the mouse model.

"Hypertension is a leading cause of damage to the heart and the kidneys, that can be prevented by antihypertensive drugs. So independent of cognitive function, treating high blood pressure is a priority," Dr. Iadecola said. -ANI

SPORTS

‘Awesome’ Australia dominate to clinch Ashes in Adelaide



A gutsy fight from England’s lower order took the match into the afternoon session of the final day, but Australia held their nerve to win by 82 runs and take a 3-0 unassailable lead in the five-match Test series

ADELAIDE: Australia won the third Test against England in Adelaide on Sunday to wrap up the Ashes in just 11 days of play after some dogged resistance from England’s tail briefly threatened a great escape on the fifth and final day. It was the third successive Test win for the hosts in the five-match series. England had to win to keep the five-match series alive after being crushed by eight wickets inside two days at Perth and in four at Brisbane, with two more Tests still to play at Melbourne and Sydney. On Sunday, England’s last four wickets added 145 on the final day to be all out for 352 and lose by 82 runs after finally showing some fight in the series as they chased a record 435 to win. Australia’s Scott Boland removed last man Josh Tongue, caught by Marnus Labuschagne, to spark wild celebrations as the famous urn remained in Australian hands. “It feels pretty awesome,” said Australia captain Pat Cummins. “It wasn’t easy today, but we got it done. The last two months have been a bit of a grind,” he added. “But it’s all worth it for days like this. That’s when we are at our best ... it’s good old-fashioned grind, and I love the toil from all the guys.”

‘Everyone is hurting’
Australia had one setback on Sunday when they lost spin wizard

Nathan Lyon, who damaged his hamstring fielding and hobbled off after saving a boundary. But he was not needed as seamers Mitchell Starc, Cummins and Boland wrapped up the innings either side of lunch with the second new ball. Lyon was sent for scans and later seen on crutches, potentially putting him out of the Melbourne Test, starting Friday, and Sydney on January 4. “It doesn’t look great. Don’t know yet, but seeing someone on crutches doesn’t really bode well for someone with a Test match a week away,” said Cummins. “It’s going to be hard to replace him but we have some guys who have already had a taste of international cricket around the traps.” Cummins was playing his first Test since July after a long layoff with lower back issues and said he may well skip Melbourne as a precaution. “We’ll wait and see. So we’ll work on it over the next couple days. I doubt I’ll be playing Melbourne, and then we’ll have a chat about Sydney.” England’s demise in 11 days of play is the joint second quickest in more than a century, since the 1921 Ashes was completed in eight days, with their “Bazball” style of ultra-attacking cricket exposed. “That dream is now over, which is incredibly disappointing,” said

Stokes wants to remain captain despite defeat

ADELAIDE: Ben Stokes said he “absolutely” wants to remain England captain despite losing the Ashes series in Australia in just three Tests. Stokes took over as captain in the aftermath of the 4-0 defeat here four years ago and this tour was billed as the culmination of the leadership of the all-rounder and head coach Brendon McCullum. Asked whether this loss will cause him to question his commitment to the England job, Stokes said: “Nope.” Prior to this series, the 34-year-old agreed a new England central contract that will run until the end of the next Ashes in the UK in 2027. This series loss, completed in only 11 days of cricket across the first three Tests, is likely to put pressure on the positions of McCullum and director of cricket Rob Key.



Given Stokes’ influence and importance to the England team, the Durham man would probably be given the opportunity to continue as captain if he wants the role. Asked if he still has the energy for the job, Stokes replied: “Absolutely.”

After making 83 in more than five hours at the crease in the first innings, Stokes did not bowl on the third day in Adelaide, before taking the ball at the beginning of day four. “I just didn’t feel right,” he said. “I knew I still had a big role to play so I didn’t want to

expose myself. “I felt like I was going to snap every time I ran after a ball, so I just looked after myself. “I had a good night’s kip, woke up next morning and I was good to go again, but I actually listened to the advice that was given to me for a change from a few of the senior boys.” England now move on to the fourth Test in Melbourne, looking to win a Test in this country for the first time since January 2011. Even a draw would ensure they do not suffer the indignity of a clean sweep – England have been beaten 5-0 on three previous Ashes tours. “Walking out there and playing for England is a good enough thing in itself. We’re not going to turn around and kick the stumps over because we have so much more to play for in the series.” - Agencies

TEST AND ODI

Ngarava named Zimbabwe captain

HARARE: Left-arm seamer Richard Ngarava was on Sunday named Zimbabwe’s new Test and ODI captain. Ngarava, 27, takes over from Craig Ervine, who stepped down from the role, according to a media statement from Zimbabwe Cricket (ZC). All-rounder Brian Bennett was announced as Ngarava’s deputy. Veteran Sikandar Raza will continue to captain Zimbabwe in T20Is. The new appointments were made following the Zimbabwe board’s fourth quarter meeting in Harare. “Ngarava has shown remarkable growth as a player and leader over the years,” ZC chairman Tavengwa Mukuhllani said. “He commands respect within the dressing room and has con-



sistently delivered for Zimbabwe across all formats. We believe he is ready to lead the team into its next chapter. “Craig Ervine led with professionalism, resilience and dignity during a challenging period. ZC is deeply grateful for his contribution to the team’s stability and progress.”

Ngarava has played 11 Tests and 145 white-ball internationals for Zimbabwe since making his debut in 2017. He is Zimbabwe’s highest wicket-taker in T20Is, with 108 strikes in 90 matches at an economy rate of 7.30. He also has franchise T20 experience, having had stints in the UAE’s ILT20, Lanka Premier League and Bangladesh Premier League. At 22, Bennett has scored centuries in all formats for Zimbabwe and is known for his attacking enterprise at the top. “Brian’s appointment as vice-captain reflects our confidence in his cricketing intelligence, maturity and long-term leadership potential,” Mukuhllani said. - Agencies

FROM 2026

New Afghanistan franchise-based T20 league in UAE

DUBAI: The Afghanistan Cricket Board (ACB) on Saturday announced a new franchise-based T20 league, the Afghanistan Premier League (APL). The first season of the tournament, featuring five teams, is being planned to get underway around October 2026 in the UAE. The ACB had launched an Afghanistan Premier League in early 2018 as well and there was only one

season played of that tournament later that year, between five teams. High-profile names such as Chris Gayle, Brendon McCullum, Shahid Afridi and others had played in that edition, but it was discontinued after payment issues and concerns around the league’s integrity started emerging. The new league by the same name is likely to have its draft around June-July 2026. “The inaugural season will fea-

ture five city-based franchises, bringing together Afghanistan’s leading national players alongside prominent overseas professionals and emerging local talent,” the ACB said in a press release. “The Afghanistan Premier League represents a meaningful step forward in our cricketing journey,” Mirwais Ashraf, the ACB boss, said at the launch in Dubai on Saturday. - Agencies

THIRD TEST

New Zealand openers break Test records against Windies

MOUNT MAUNGANUI: West Indies were 43-0 at stumps on Sunday on the fourth day of the third Test against New Zealand, needing a further 419 to win, after Devon Conway became just the 10th player in Test history to hit a double century and a century in the same match. Brandon King was on 37 and John Campbell two not out off 50 balls as the West Indies began a record chase after being set a target of 462. No team has scored more than 418 in the fourth innings to win in Test history, but the West Indies must do so to square the three-match series after losing in Wellington and drawing in Christchurch. New Zealand declared their second innings an hour before the close at 302-2 with Conway’s 100 adding to his 227 in the first innings. He became just the sixth New Zealander to score a hundred in both innings of a Test. Moments later Tom Latham became the seventh, moving from 80 at tea to 101, having scored 137 in the first innings. Latham and Conway had a mammoth 323 opening partnership in the first innings, and set a world record for the opening wicket in combining for 515 runs in the



match. Conway joined an illustrious list in scoring a double century and a century in the same Test match. Only Doug Walters, Greg Chappell, Marnus Labuschagne, Sunil Gavaskar, Shubman Gill, Lawrence Rowe, Brian Lara, Graham Gooch and Kumar Sangakkara had achieved the feat. Conway’s 327 are the third highest for New Zealand in a single Test, behind Stephen Fleming’s 343 (274 and 69) against Sri Lanka in 2003, and Martin Crowe’s 329 (30 and 299) against Sri Lanka in 1991. Conway and Latham added 157 runs in the middle session at more than five an over as they looked for quick runs. Kane Williamson made 40 from 37 balls and Rachin Ravindra hit four sixes as he blasted 46 from 23 balls to take New Zealand past 300.

West Indies century maker Kavem Hodge took 2-80 from 17 overs with his left-arm spin but captain Roston Chase was hampered for 106 runs in 13 overs. New Zealand took four wickets in the morning session as West Indies were 420 all out, a first innings deficit of 155, with Hodge left stranded unbeaten on a fine 123 from 275 balls, including 15 boundaries. Jacob Duffy finished with 4-86 including the first two wickets of the day, taking his tally for the three-match series to 18. **Brief scores:** West Indies 420 (Hodge 123*, King 63, Duffy 4-86) and 43/0 (King 37*, Campbell 2*) need another 419 runs to beat New Zealand 575 for 8 dec and 306 for 2 dec (Latham 101, Conway 100, Hodge 2-80). - Agencies

CAF PRESIDENT ANNOUNCEMENT

AFCON to be held every four years from 2028

RABAT: The Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) will be held every four years from 2028, Confederation of African Football (CAF) President Patrice Motsepe announced on Saturday.

The tournament has taken place every two years since 1968, with a one-year gap between the 2012 and 2013 editions.

But it will switch to a four-year cycle after the 2027 AFCON in East Africa and a 2028 edition.

Motsepe has instead announced the creation of an African Nations League which will take place annually from 2029.

“We have the most exciting new structure for African football,” Motsepe said.

“I do what is in the interests of Africa. The global calendar has to be significantly more synchronised and harmonised.”

Meanwhile, CAF has increased the prize money for the winners of Afcon from \$7m (£5.2m) to \$10m (£7.5m).

The surprise announcement about the future of AFCON was made by Motsepe after a meeting of Caf’s executive committee in Morocco before the start of the 2025 finals in Rabat on Sunday.



The biennial hosting of AFCON has long caused issues with the football calendar, with the vast majority of recent tournaments held midway through the European club season.

However, CAF remained committed to scheduling the tournament every two years - not least as it needs the revenue raised from the finals to reinvest in the game on the continent.

CAF had made a resolution for AFCON to be held in a June-July slot from 2019 onwards and began its new plan in Egypt that year.

But the Covid-19 pandemic and

weather conditions in host nations in Central and West Africa meant the 2021 and 2023 editions in Cameroon and Ivory Coast respectively were staged in January and February instead.

Club World Cup

FIFA’s expanded 32-team Club World Cup was held in June and July this year, forcing CAF to opt for mid-season dates once again.

As a result this year’s AFCON in Morocco will take place over Christmas and the New Year for the first time, with the final on 18 January.

The dates for the finals in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda in 2027 are yet to be announced, and that will be swiftly followed by another AFCON in 2028 - with the hosts of that edition yet to be decided.

Motsepe also announced the creation of the African Nations League, which will take place in September, October and November every year from 2029.

The competition will see all 54 member associates split into four zones, with six nations in the Northern zone and 16 nations in the Eastern, Western and Central and Southern zones. - Agencies

FRENCH CUP

PSG cruise past fifth-tier Fontenay

PARIS: Ousmane Dembele ended his goal drought as Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) eased into the last 32 of the French Cup on Saturday with a 4-0 victory over fifth-tier Vendee Fontenay.

The 28-year-old Dembele, who added the FIFA Best award to his Ballon d’Or earlier this week, netted from the spot in a game played at Nantes’ Stade de la Beaujoire.

PSG are bidding for a third consecutive French league and cup double this season but sit second in Ligue 1, one point behind surprise leaders Lens.

Dembele set up Desire Doue to open the scoring in the 25th minute with cool, low finish into the far corner.

PSG were awarded a penalty shortly afterwards for a shirt pull on Goncalo Ramos and Dembele stepped up to score for the first time since October, ending a run of eight appearances without a goal.

It was only the France forward’s fourth goal of an injury-disrupted season. Ramos made it three in the 53rd minute, tapping in Senny Mayulu’s low cross after a swift team move, before doubling his tally just five minutes later.

Elsewhere, Lille needed an 80th-minute goal from Marius Broholm to get past fourth-division Creteil 1-0, while Lorient saw off AS Le Gosier of Guadeloupe 7-0 in a game played in a Paris suburb. - Agencies

Arsenal top as City win, Liverpool defeat Spurs

Viktor Gyokeres fired the Gunners to top of the Premier League with a narrow win over Everton

LONDON: Arsenal ensured they will top the Premier League at Christmas with a 1-0 over Everton, while Liverpool survived a nervy finale to beat nine-man Tottenham 2-1 on Saturday. Earlier on Saturday, Manchester City briefly moved top of the table after Erling Haaland’s double inspired a 3-0 win over West Ham.

Arsenal restored their two-point lead thanks to Viktor Gyokeres’ penalty but failed to shine in grinding out victory on Merseyside. It was a tale of penalty appeals at the Hill Dickinson Stadium. Arsenal had strong claims waived away for a foul on Gyokeres seconds before they were awarded a spot-kick for a Jake O’Brien handball, that the Swede converted.



Leandro Trossard and Martin Zubimendi hit the post after the break for the visitors, but Everton were furious that two challenges on Thierno Barry inside the area went unpunished.

City continued to apply pressure to the Gunners with a seventh consecutive win in all competitions.

Yet, Pep Guardiola was still far from satisfied as he demanded improvements if City are to win a seventh Premier League title under his tenure. “I want to be honest. I said to the players, ‘Merry Christmas everyone but it will not be enough if we don’t improve.’”

The Hammers feared a rout when Haaland smashed home after just five minutes.

Haaland turned provider for City’s second just before half-time as Tijjani Reijnders scored his first goal at the Etihad.

And he netted his 38th goal of the season already for club and country when the ball broke his way 21 minutes from time to move City one point ahead of Arsenal.

Isak injured

Liverpool extended their unbeaten run to six games to inflict a miserable Christmas on Spurs boss Thomas Frank.



goal in three league games to double Liverpool’s lead.

But Slot’s men still wobbled in the closing stages once Richarlison pulled a goal back.

A fifth defeat in nine home league games this season intensified the pressure on Frank and the Dane was not helped by his captain Cristian Romero, who got himself needlessly sent off in stoppage time. Liverpool climb up to fifth, while Spurs are rooted down in 13th.

Chelsea remain above the Reds in fourth on goal difference as a second-half fightback rescued a point with a 2-2 draw. Nick Woltemade’s double put Newcastle 2-0 up in a dominant first half from the Magpies.

Wolves remain without a league win this season and on course to enter the record books as the worst side in Premier League history after a 2-0 home defeat to Brentford. Burnley ended their seven-game losing streak as Armando Broja’s 90th-minute goal snatched a 1-1 draw at Bournemouth.

Leeds moved six points clear of the bottom three as Dominic Calvert-Lewin scored twice in a 4-1 win over Crystal Palace, Sunderland edged up to sixth after a 0-0 draw at Brighton. - Agencies

ITALIAN SERIE A

Juve edge Roma to close in on Inter

TURIN: Juventus are creeping back into the Serie A title discussion after deservedly beating Roma 2-1 on Saturday and moving four points behind league leaders Inter Milan.

Francisco Conceicao and Lois Openda scored the goals which decided an engaging encounter in Turin as Juve claimed a second big win in as many matches after beating Bologna last weekend.

Juve stay fifth on 29 points but are only one point behind fourth-placed Roma who sit in the last Champions League spot and suffered a sixth league defeat of the season.

Luciano Spalletti’s Juve have played a game more than Inter, champions Napoli and AC Milan who occupy the top three places and will play their matches from this round of fixtures next month, due to the Italian Super Cup which is being held in Saudi Arabia.

Conceicao fired a warning shot moments before he gave Juve the lead when he shot straight at Mile Svilar with the goal at his mercy



SPANISH LA LIGA

Mbappe matches Ronaldo record as Real Madrid down Sevilla

MADRID: Kylian Mbappe matched Cristiano Ronaldo’s club record for goals in a calendar year and Jude Bellingham also scored as Real Madrid beat Sevilla 2-0 on Saturday in La Liga.

French superstar Mbappe levelled Ronaldo’s tally of 59 goals in 2013 by stroking home a late penalty, after Bellingham sent Madrid ahead with a first half header.

The victory allowed Los Blancos, second, to cut the gap on leaders Barcelona to one point before the Catalans visit Villarreal on Sunday. “To do like Cristiano did, my idol, the best player in Real Madrid’s history and a world great, it’s an honour for me,” said Mbappe, who turned 27 on Saturday.

Gaining a third consecutive win across all competitions, after managing just two in the previous eight games, marginally eases the pressure on coach Xabi Alonso even though the performance was still underwhelming.

“We’ve got some time now to analyse and reflect where we are now,” Alonso told reporters ahead of the winter break.

“We want to do better, we’re self-critical, we got the three points and now we’ll use this time and try to start the year better.”

Sevilla, who thrashed champions Barcelona 4-1 in October, started strongly with veteran Chilean forward Alexis Sanchez heavily involved.

Odysseas Vlachodimos made a fine save to thwart Fran Garcia at the other end, and as the minutes ticked by Madrid began to find more of a foothold.

Bellingham headed the hosts in front at the Santiago Bernabeu after Rodrygo Goes whipped in a dangerous free-kick.

The Brazilian forward was booked for diving before the break as he tumbled in the box under little pressure. Sanchez landed the ball on the roof of Thibaut Cour-



tois’s net before the break with an acrobatic effort.

Sevilla coach Matias Almeyda was sent off at half-time for dissent, but his team plugged away in search of an equaliser regardless.

Courtois twice denied Isaac Romero early in the second half, while Mbappe intensified his search to emulate Ronaldo’s record. Mbappe headed against the crossbar and whipped a shot narrowly wide, while Vlachodimos fended off another effort from the forward.

Sevilla defender Marcao clumsily slid in to foul Bellingham after 67 minutes and was sent off for a second yellow card, hampering his side’s chances of adding to Alonso’s struggles.

Mbappe’s 59th

Eventually Mbappe got the goal he craved from the penalty spot, after Juanlu clumsily brought down Rodrygo. The forward sent Vlachodimos the wrong way as he stroked in his 59th of the year, to match Ronaldo’s record.

Mbappe copied Ronaldo’s trademark celebration and said it was a nod to the Portuguese great, Madrid’s all-time top goalscorer.

“I wanted to give him a wink

because he’s always been kind to me,” said Mbappe.

“He was my idol as a kid, I have a very good relationship with him, he’s a friend now.”

Madrid were awarded another penalty when Bellingham went down in the box but it was ruled out after a VAR review showed Sevilla defender Oso got the ball.

The referee then gave Madrid another penalty as Sow fouled Rodrygo on the edge of the box, but the offence was just outside the area and it was again scrapped.

Mbappe whipped the free-kick narrowly over the top corner as he battled in vain to go beyond Ronaldo’s mark, but he will have to try again in 2026.

“Scoring 59 goals is not easy, he’s got quality and talent -- it’s hard to stop him in training,” said Courtois, who called on the whole team to take a step forward next year.

“Hopefully 2026 comes with trophies, but for that we have to improve our level,” he added.

Elsewhere Celta Vigo rose to seventh even though they could only draw 0-0 at struggling Real Oviedo, while Levante held Real Sociedad 1-1. Osasuna thrashed Alaves 3-0 to go 12th. - Agencies

GERMAN BUNDESLIGA

Leverkusen rout Leipzig to move third

BERLIN: Goals from Martin Terrier, Patrik Schick and Montrell Culbreath took Bayer Leverkusen to a 3-1 win at RB Leipzig on Saturday, moving them past their hosts into third in the German Bundesliga table.

Xaver Schlager gave Leipzig the lead but Leverkusen struck back with Terrier and Schick both scoring inside four minutes just before half-time. Teenage winger Culbreath scored on his top-flight debut deep into stoppage time to round out the victory.

Leipzig fall back to fourth after a second-straight defeat, three points behind second-placed Borussia Dortmund.

Earlier on Saturday, Stuttgart



were held to a goalless draw at home by Hoffenheim, falling three points outside the Champions League placings.

Eintracht Frankfurt’s struggles continued with a 1-1 draw away against Hamburg.

A stoppage-time goal from Andras Schaefer took Union Berlin to a 1-0 win away against 10-man Cologne. Elsewhere, Freiburg came from behind twice to beat Wolfsburg 4-3, while Augsburg held Werder Bremen 0-0. - Agencies

ROUND-UP

AVICEN CONNECT 2025 brings strategic focus on digital health

Rather than limiting the event to celebration alone, Avicen sought to create a meaningful platform that would generate insights, encourage collaboration, and contribute constructively to national development priorities

MUSCAT: Avicen Group successfully hosted AVICEN CONNECT 2025, its annual corporate gathering, featuring a high-level Strategic Panel Discussion on the



theme “The Role of Digital Health in Oman Vision 2040.” The event brought together senior government officials, healthcare leaders, technology experts, and industry stakeholders to engage in a forward-looking dialogue on the future of healthcare in the Sultanate of Oman. While AVICEN CONNECT is traditionally an occasion to celebrate organizational milestones, teamwork, and shared success, Avicen Group intentionally broadened the scope of this year’s gathering.

Rather than limiting the event to celebration alone, Avicen sought to create a meaningful platform that would generate insights, encourage collaboration, and contribute constructively to national development priorities. This initiative reflects Avicen’s commitment and solidarity with Oman Vision 2040, particularly in supporting the transformation of the healthcare sector through digital innovation. The event commenced with a formal welcome acknowledging Avicen Group’s leadership, includ-

ing Ibrahim Al Ghafri, Chairman, Nissar Edathum Chalil, Managing Director, Shabeer Ali Konnola, Executive Director, Mr. Vinu Koderampat, General Manager and other board members whose strategic direction continues to guide the organization’s growth and contribution to the healthcare ecosystem. The Strategic Panel Discussion was moderated by Hamid Saif Al Sabahi, Managing Director, AAPC, and featured a distinguished panel representing government insti-

tutions, national strategy teams, healthcare providers, and technology leaders:

- Khalid bin Said bin Saif Al Kharusi, Director of Logistics and Medical Supplies, The Medical City for Military and Security Services
- Hanan bint Saif bin Sulaiman Al Maani, Senior Officer – Chief Nurse, The Medical City for Military and Security Services
- Manal Al Ansari, Senior Officer, Directorate General of Medical Supplies
- Ahmad Al Saalmi, Vice President, Future Technologies Team – Oman Vision 2040
- Abdul Hakeem Al Balushi, Vice President, Health Priority Support Team – Oman Vision 2040
- Sameer P.T., Chief Executive Officer, Badr Al Samaa Group of Hospitals & Polyclinics
- Rahul Kadavakolu, Group Chief Marketing Officer – GCC, Aster DM Healthcare
- Dr. Ranjith Raj, Chief Executive Officer, Paddle Business Consultancy, India

Discussions focused on the role of digital health as a strategic enabler for accessible, efficient, and patient-centric healthcare. The panellists highlighted the growing importance of digital health as a strategic enabler for improv-

ing access, efficiency, quality, and patient-centric care. Panellists shared insights on telemedicine, health data integration, technology-driven supply chains, public-private collaboration, and scalable digital solutions aligned with national health priorities. Avicen leadership emphasized that digital health is no longer optional, but a critical pillar for building a future-ready healthcare system aligned with Oman Vision 2040. By convening leaders from across the healthcare and technology landscape, AVICEN CONNECT 2025 reinforced the importance of shared responsibility and collaborative action in advancing national goals. The event also brought together Avicen Leadership Team, partners, media representatives, and the wider Avicen family, reaffirming Avicen Group’s role as a committed healthcare partner contributing beyond business, towards national development and long-term impact. AVICEN CONNECT 2025 concluded with strong alignment among stakeholders on the importance of digital transformation in strengthening Oman’s healthcare ecosystem and supporting the nation’s long-term vision.

RAFFLE DRAW



Sohar International and Sohar Islamic turn daily transactions into monthly rewards with Maal cards

MUSCAT: Reinforcing its role as a partner in strengthening Oman’s financial ecosystem through meaningful, customer-focused innovation, Sohar International, together with its Islamic banking window, Sohar Islamic, has launched a new raffle draw campaign that brings added value to everyday spending.

Monthly draws
Building on the recent introduction of the Maal debit card, the campaign invites customers to experience the ease and reliability of a nationally developed payment solution—while enjoying the excitement of monthly rewards. Customers and non-customers who order and activate their Maal debit cards through Sohar International or Sohar Islamic will be entered into monthly raffle draws, with prizes totalling OMR 12,000 awarded to multiple winners. Commenting on the initiative, Abdul Qadir Al Sumali, Chief Retail & Premier Banking Officer at Sohar International, stated: “National payment initiatives achieve scale when they are actively supported at the institutional level and implemented through practical engagement initiatives that encourage participation. At Sohar International, we approach this responsibility by aligning national frameworks with initiatives that integrate seamlessly into everyday banking activity. Through this approach, we seek to reinforce confidence in locally developed payment systems and contribute to the long-term resilience of Oman’s financial ecosystem.” Customers and non-customers who order and activate their Maal debit cards through Sohar International will be eligible to enter a monthly raffle draw with

a total prize pool of OMR 10,000, distributed among 20 winners, with each winner receiving OMR 500. Similarly, customers and non-customers who obtain and activate their Maal debit cards through Sohar Islamic will be eligible to participate in a monthly raffle draw totaling OMR 2,000, awarded to four winners, with each winner receiving OMR 500. Customers who applied for their Maal debit cards prior to the campaign period are also eligible to participate, reinforcing inclusivity and sustained engagement beyond initial sign-ups.

Domestic payment
The Maal debit card is a domestic payment solution developed by the Central Bank of Oman to strengthen the country’s digital payments infrastructure and advance financial self-reliance.

Secure transactions
Integrated with OmanNet, the national payment network, the card enables secure transactions at point-of-sale terminals, ATM cash withdrawals, and e-commerce payments within Oman. Issued free of charge by Sohar International and Sohar Islamic, the Maal debit card can be ordered seamlessly through the respective mobile banking applications, further supporting the shift toward cashless transactions while reinforcing the role of national platforms in everyday financial activity across the Sultanate. Through initiatives such as this, Sohar International, together with Sohar Islamic, continues to demonstrate its commitment to translating national priorities into tangible customer experiences, reinforcing its role as a trusted financial partner supporting the practical evolution of Oman’s payments environment.

OFFER

Experience Kia K8 with year-end savings

MUSCAT: The Kia K8 continues to stand out as a bold and luxurious sedan, combining striking design, advanced technology, and refined performance to deliver an exceptional driving experience. Now, with the Kia Big Savings Year-End Offer, customers in Oman can enjoy OMR 1,500 in savings, along with three years or 30,000 km of complimentary service, one-year insurance, and registration, making it the perfect time to own this flagship sedan. The K8 raises the bar in the executive sedan segment. It’s 3.5-litre GDI Smartstream engine, paired with an 8-speed automatic transmission, delivers 296 horsepower at 6,400 rpm, providing smooth, dynamic performance for every journey. Inside, the cabin offers modern luxury and comfort for all passengers. Features include crisp leather seats, ventilated power front seats with lumbar support, a memory seating system, and a panoramic sunroof, creating an executive lounge experience on the move. Advanced technology includes a 12.3-inch TFT digital cluster, a 12.3-inch infotainment system with Apple CarPlay and Android Auto, Bluetooth with voice recognition, and a 14-speaker Meridian surround sound system. Additional convenience



comes from wireless charging trays, remote engine start, and keyless entry. The K8 also provides practical luxury, with a 510-litre rear boot for luggage and daily essentials. Driver-focused features, such as the head-up display, ensure important information is always within view, enhancing safety and confidence behind the wheel. Safety is at the forefront with Kia’s Advanced Driver Assistance System (ADAS). The K8 is equipped with Forward Collision-

Avoidance Assist (FCA), Surround View Monitor (SVM), and Front & Reverse Parking Assist, helping drivers navigate safely while protecting all occupants. The Big Savings Year-End Offer makes the K8 an even more attractive choice. With OMR 1,500 in savings, plus service, insurance, and registration benefits, this is a unique opportunity to experience bold design, modern luxury, and cutting-edge technology in one exceptional sedan. Visit your nearest Kia show-

room today to explore the Kia K8 and the exclusive Big Savings offer, and discover why it continues to set the benchmark for luxury and innovation in Oman. Reliable International Automotive (RIA), the official distributor of Kia in Oman, is committed to delivering an exceptional ownership experience. With Kia ranked #1 in Sales Customer Satisfaction in 2024 across the Middle East and Africa, RIA offers not just vehicles, but a lifelong journey of excellence and satisfaction.

50TH ANNIVERSARY

Toyota’s celebrations continues to bring joy! 14 more chances to win Toyota Yaris

MUSCAT: The landmark 50th Anniversary Mega Celebration by Saud Bahwan Automotive continues to delight customers, with more winners taking home brand-new Toyota Yaris vehicles. With every draw, Toyota ownership proves to be a rewarding experience that goes beyond quality and value. Celebrating five decades of partnership between Saud Bahwan Automotive and Toyota, the campaign reflects a journey built on trust, reliability, and customer happiness. Along with the opportunity to win one of 50 Toyota Yaris cars, customers also enjoy exclusive benefits including 50% VAT covered, 5 Years / 50,000 Kms Service, 50% Insurance covered, and RO 50 worth of Thiqah Loyalty Points. The 10th Raffle Draw highlighted winners from across Oman, each demonstrating the strong bond customers share with the Toyota brand. Among them was Sultan Hamed Masoud Al Badi from Ibri, who purchased a Hilux. He said, “The Hilux is known for its toughness. Winning a Yaris in this celebration makes me even happier with my choice.” From SeebSanaya, Al Manal International Business, who purchased a RAV4, expressed their

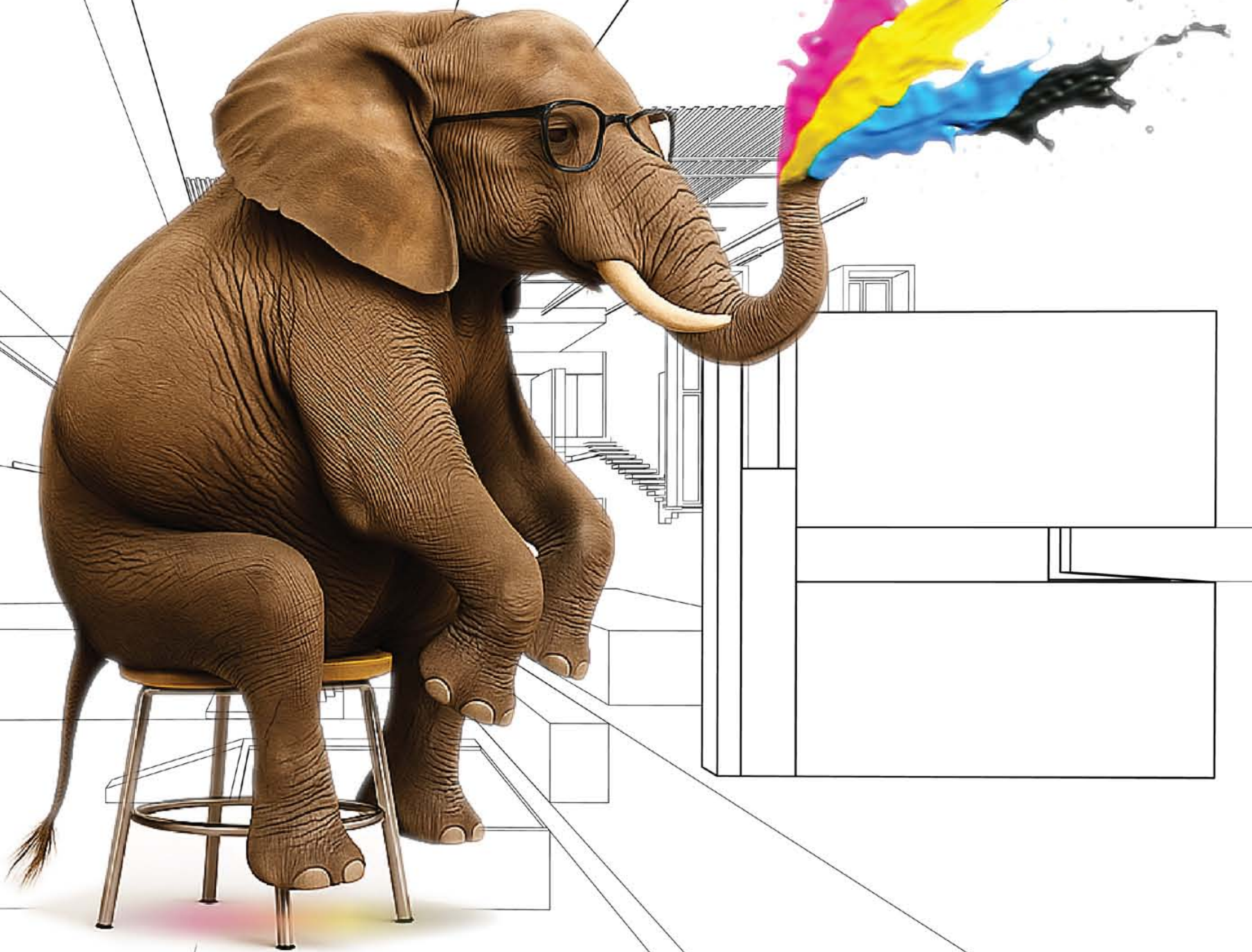


happiness, saying, “Toyota has always been a trusted partner. Winning a Yaris adds a wonderful surprise to our ownership experience.” The 11th Raffle Draw, continued the excitement with more delighted customers taking home brand-new Toyota Yaris cars. Among them is Dimah Al Raedah Trading from Muscat, who purchased a Yaris. They shared, “Buying a Toyota already felt right, and winning a Yaris as well is truly special.” Another thrilled winner, Yasir

Abdullah Hamed Al Harsoosi Al Musallami from Sinaw, who purchased a Hilux, said, “Toyota vehicles give you peace of mind. Winning a Yaris through this campaign is a proud moment for me.” Also among the winners is RuqayaYaqoobSaif Al Rawahi from SeebSanaya, who bought a Corolla. She said, “Toyota has always been part of our family’s life. Winning a Yaris during this 50th Anniversary celebration feels wonderful.”

Adding to the list of lucky winners is the customer holding Coupon No. 11732, whose Toyota purchase was rewarded with a truly unforgettable anniversary celebration moment. With every draw, more customers are turning their Toyota purchase into a memorable celebration. This mega campaign, one of the largest ever held in Oman, continues to create joyful moments for delighted winners across the Sultanate of Oman.

We make your Business bigger than your problems.



We get you ahead on

- Booth production
- Event conceptualisation
- Event management

Wait, there's more

- Large format digital printing
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- Vinyl stickers
- Back drops with metal frames
- Wooden standalones
- Backlit flex banners