

Times

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OF OMAN



50

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LEGACY

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MINISTRY OF HEALTH

Campaign launched for early detection of disease, promote healthy lifestyles

MUSCAT: Represented by the Directorate General of Khoula Hospital, the Ministry of Health on Tuesday launched a comprehensive, year-long health campaign themed “Your Health Matters to Us”.

The campaign, which targets government and private establishments, reflects the Ministry’s efforts to consolidate the concepts of prevention of health problems, limit the spread of diseases and promote sustainable healthy lifestyles.

The campaign, which addresses employees, visitors to health establishments and members of the community, focuses on the importance of early detection of diseases and the promotion of positive health conduct.

Its programmes include lectures and the distribution of educational awareness materials and messages to different segments of society in general.

The campaign covers ways to keep pace with the most common health challenges in society. It lays emphasis on the importance of periodic check-ups, commitment to a healthy lifestyle and the detection of chronic diseases like obesity, diabetes and endocrine disorders, in addition to controlling blood sugar levels and preventing complications.

The campaign includes the implementation of field activities inside target establishments, where health checks are conducted for the early detection of some common diseases, measuring blood pressure, sugar levels and body mass index, in addition to providing direct medical consultations with a specialised medical staff.

The launch ceremony was held under the auspices of Dr. Hilal Ali Al Sabti, Minister of Health.

The campaign also deals with the importance of healthy nutrition through the implementation of a programme called “Proper Nutrition for a Better Life”, which highlights the risks involved in obesity and malnutrition, the interaction of food with medicine and the safe use of antibiotics.

The campaign’s themes focus on awareness about physical activity, first aid for those who meet with sports injuries and health education about osteoporosis, spinal injuries and foot care among diabetic patients.

The launch of the campaign was attended by Suleiman bin Nasser Al Hajji, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Health for Administrative and Financial Affairs, health ministry officials and employees from Khoula Hospital and Al Nahda Hospital.

OMR700MN

IT WILL BE ONE OF THE LARGEST INDUSTRIAL INVESTMENTS IN THE RENEWABLE ENERGY

1,850 JOBS

THESE PROJECTS ARE EXPECTED TO PROVIDE MORE THAN 1,850 JOBS

FOUR MAJOR OIA PROJECTS TO STRENGTHEN INDUSTRY, CREATE JOBS



The total investments in the projects are expected to be over OMR935 million



اتفاقية إقامة مصنع لإنتاج حمض التيرفثاليك المنقّف (PTA) وبيع إيثيلين تيرفثالات (PET)

One of the largest industrial investments in renewable energy

The investment value of the project stands at OMR700 million (approximately USD 1.8 billion), making it one of the largest industrial investments in the renewable energy sector in the region.

A joint financing agreement was concluded between United Solar Polysilicon (a subsidiary of United Solar Holding), the International Finance Corporation (IFC), and several regional and local banks.

The project will enable the Sultanate of Oman to enter the global solar energy supply chain by localising advanced technologies, enhancing local content, and providing 1,012 direct job opportunities in engineering, manufacturing, maintenance, and technical services related to clean energy. **>A2**

This initiative stems from a series of international partnerships implemented by OIA-affiliated companies, alongside direct investments that contribute to localising technologies and strengthening local supply chains.

These efforts are part of ongoing endeavours to support economic diversification and enhance local content within the target sectors of the 11th Five-Year Plan, specifically manufacturing, tourism, and the digital economy.

Among the most prominent of these projects is the completion of financing for the United Solar project, supported by a contribution from the Future Fund Oman.

The project involves the establishment of an integrated plant for the production of polysilicon in the Sohar Freezone, which serves as the company’s largest facility of

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN

Ground station for satellite images

1 A pact was inked to establish a ground station for receiving satellite images. **>A3**

MARKET

Summit on future of Islamic finance starts

2 The CBO, in collaboration with the IFSB, organised the 17th IFSB Summit. **>B1**

WORLD

Winter storms claim 27 lives across Japan

3 A severe cold snap has led to the death of 27 people across Japan. **>B4**

BREAKING THE GLASS CEILING

Omani women lead the way in non-traditional sectors

Times News Service



MUSCAT: The growing presence of young Omani women in non-traditional sectors is no longer viewed as an exception or merely a social milestone.

It has evolved into a national trajectory aligned with Oman’s strategic vision to build a knowledge-based economy driven by innovation, advanced technology and sustainability.

Across key sectors such as energy and minerals, cybersecurity, chemical engineering and biomedical equipment engineering, Omani women are taking on influential roles in planning, decision-making and developing future-ready solutions that directly contribute to the country’s economic progress.

Zainab bint Ali Al Saadi, Director of the Health, Safety and Environment Department at the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, said her academic background in petroleum and mineral resources engineering and her specialised training in health, safety and environment enabled her to build a strong professional foundation in one of the most demanding work environments.

She noted that practical, on-site training helped translate theoretical knowledge into applied skills, particularly in risk management and sustainability practices. Al Saadi holds a master’s degree from the University of Sheffield and previously worked with Petroleum Development Oman and the Oman Energy Association.

She also represented the oil and gas sector in the national Net Zero programme under Oman Vision 2040. Her career spans nearly 20 years, progressing from production engineer to director of HSE in 2021.

In cybersecurity, Iman bint Mohammed Al Rawahi, Director of Information Security at Muscat Governorate, highlighted the importance of building a strong foundation in information technology, including networks, databases, programming and systems analysis, to understand evolving cyber threats amid rapid digital transformation.

She said continuous learning, exposure to global best practices and direct involvement in drafting policies and ensuring compliance have been key to strengthening institutional cyber resilience. She added that technologies such as cloud computing and artificial intelligence require flexible security frameworks that balance innovation with risk management.

Eng Ebtesam bint Khamis Al Hulwani, Head of Chemical Materials Management at the Environment Authority, said chemical engineering plays a crucial role in transforming raw materials into valuable products while maintaining environmental and economic efficiency.

She explained that the discipline is closely linked to sustainability goals, renewable energy, waste management, water desalination, green hydrogen and climate action — all of which align with Oman Vision 2040. Her work focuses on managing chemical materials and supporting safe industrial practices that protect both people and the environment. **>A2**

SJC praises speedy trial, digital transition

The court aims to establish a specialised judicial system for regulating investment and commercial cases

MUSCAT: The Supreme Judiciary Council (SJC) on Tuesday held its first meeting in 2026 under the chairmanship of Sayyid Mohammed bin Sultan Al Bussaidi, Deputy Chairman of the Supreme Judiciary Council. At the outset of the meeting, the Council valued efforts made during the past year, including the smooth functioning of the judicial system, promptitude in the settlement of legal cases, the stability of judicial rulings and accelerated digital transition featuring the expansion of electronic services extended to members of the public at the courts, the Public Prosecu-



REVIEWED: The Council members also reviewed a report on the progress of work at the Investment and Commerce Court, which started its duties recently. - ONA

tion Department and the offices of the Notary Public. The Council members also reviewed a report on the progress of work at the Investment and Commerce Court, which started its duties recently. The court aims to establish a specialised judicial system for regulating investment and commercial cases, enhancing the business environment and providing strong guarantees for investors. During the meeting, the Council discussed decisions and issues related to administrative, financial,

and professional affairs of judges and members of the Public Prosecution Department. The meeting also dealt with matters related to the regulation of judicial action, the development of laws and the improvement of the quality of judicial services. -ONA

HM sends greetings

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Anura Kumara Dissanayake of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka on his country's Independence Anniversary. In the cable, His Majesty the

Sultan expressed his heartfelt sentiments and best wishes to Sri Lanka for further progress and achievements on all spheres. His Majesty also wished the bilateral relations further growth and progress to serve mutual interests. -ONA

Oman, EU hold talks on human rights



MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman and the European Union held a joint dialogue on human rights on Tuesday in Muscat, with the participation of a number of specialised authorities. During the session, both sides affirmed their commitment to strengthening joint cooperation in the field of human rights in alignment with international standards

and the promotion of the principles of justice and equality. The Omani side was chaired by Saleh Yahya Al Maskari, Head of the Global Affairs Department at the Foreign Ministry, while the European side was chaired by Anna Maria, Head of the Arabian Peninsula and Iraq Division at the European External Action Service (EEAS). -ONA

MARITIME SECTOR

OIA aims to raise contribution of non-oil sector to GDP

< FROM A1 In the maritime industries sector, the Asyad Group launched a project to manufacture the first integrated marine tugboat within the Sultanate of Oman. A tripartite agreement was signed between Asyad Drydock, Oman Liquefied Natural Gas Company (Oman LNG), and the international company Svitzer. This project contributes to the creation of several direct job opportunities, in addition to indirect opportunities within the supply chains and technical services associated with ports. The local content contribution for this project is expected to reach approximately 50 percent of its total value. The project aims to develop national capabilities in maritime manufacturing and advanced logistics by establishing a production system that relies on local resources and national technical expertise, while facilitating knowledge transfer from the international partner to Omani cadres. This project represents a pioneering step towards localising maritime industries and raising



technical and operational readiness in Omani ports, reflecting the Authority's commitment to stimulating industrial innovation and enhancing Oman's competitiveness as a regional hub for advanced industries and logistics. Hisham Ahmed Al Shidi, Head of Economic Diversification Investments at OIA, stated that these projects represent a new milestone in the series of measures implemented by the Authority over the past five years to elevate the national development portfolio. He noted that the Authority aims through these projects to maximise the outcomes of synergy initiatives between its subsidiaries, enhance local content, create new job op-

portunities, and localise advanced technologies in service of the economic pillar of Oman Vision 2040. In the context of supporting advanced petrochemical industries and expanding high-value manufacturing, OQ Group and Sohar Freezone launched a qualitative project to localise advanced technologies in this vital sector. OQ Refineries and Petroleum Industries, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the German company MAK. The project aims to enable local production of materials used in basic and final industries, enhancing Oman's readiness to serve as a competitive regional industrial hub for petrochemicals and specialty chemicals. The goal is to establish an integrated industrial complex in the Sohar Freezone for the production of Purified Terephthalic Acid (PTA) and Polyethylene Terephthalate (PET), which are essential materials in the packaging industry, particularly for consumer products such as water and beverage bottles and industrial packaging. The plant's annual production capacity is set at 700,000 tonnes of

PTA and PET, with 425,000 tons of Para-xylene as a primary input. The total investment value of the project exceeds OMR192 million (USD 500 million), contributing to the creation of approximately 700 direct job opportunities and additional indirect opportunities within the local supply chain. This project strengthens Oman's ability to achieve import substitution, localise supply chains for advanced plastic industries, and support the growth of small and medium enterprises in this field, while maximising local content and expanding the non-oil industrial export base. Additionally, OQ Base Industries launched a project to establish a specialty chemicals plant in the Salalah Freezone through an agreement with Deepak, a company from the Republic of India. The project involves the supply of ammonia as a raw material for the production of sodium nitrate and sodium nitrite, with a production capacity of 70,000 tonnes per year. This project complements the industrial ecosystem in Salalah by leveraging advanced infra-

structure and the port's strategic location, thereby enhancing export opportunities to regional and international markets. The estimated investment value of the project exceeds OMR38 million (USD 110 million) and is expected to provide 150 direct job opportunities. The project aims to support the specialty chemicals sector in Oman, particularly those used in pharmaceutical and agricultural fertilizer industries, while enhancing national industrial and pharmaceutical security and providing broad avenues for technology transfer and the development of specialised Omani competencies. These projects serve as an extension of the pivotal role undertaken by Oman Investment Authority in implementing the 11th Five-Year Plan and increasing the contribution of the non-oil industrial sector to the Gross Domestic Product. These efforts highlight the Authority's commitment to economic sustainability, the integration of its subsidiaries, and the consolidation of Oman's position as a regional centre for industries in energy, chemicals, and industrial services. -ONA

Ministry of Labour

Tender Announcement

The Internal Tender Committee at the Ministry of Labour announces the following tender:

Tender No.	Tender title	Last date for tender purchase online	Bid submission date
04/2026	Construction of an outer fence, guard room with gates and entrances at the Vocational Training Center in Shinas	Tuesday 10/02/2026 2:00 p.m.	Sunday 22/02/2026 10 a.m.

- Specialized establishments may obtain the tender's documents online through the following link, starting from Sunday 01/02/2026 at 08:00 a.m.: [/https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om](https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om)
- Bids shall be opened at 11:00 am on Sunday 22/02/2026.

(The Ministry shall not be bound to accept the lowest or any other bid)

 labour_OMAN

MEETING

Oman, Slovakia hold talks

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Slovakia hold the first round of political consultations on Tuesday in Muscat. The Omani side was led by Sheikh Khalifa Ali Al Harthy, Undersecretary of the Foreign Ministry for Political Affairs, while the Slovak side was led by Marek Éstok, State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs. During the consultations, the two sides reviewed the existing bilateral relations between the two countries and discussed ways to enhance cooperation in various fields, including investment, culture, tourism, and the opening of direct air routes. The meeting also touched upon several regional and international issues of mutual interest. The session was attended by Lenka Miháliková, Ambassador of Slovakia to the Sultanate of Oman, and a number of officials from both sides. -ONA

SHAPING SECTORS

Women break the glass ceiling

< FROM A1 Meanwhile, Hajar bint Nasser Al Shandoudi, a biomedical equipment engineer in the private sector, described biomedical engineering as a field that combines medical knowledge with advanced digital technologies. She said engineers in this field contribute to improving diagnostic and therapeutic devices, ensuring their reliability and integrating smart systems capable of real-time data analysis. She pointed out that artificial intelligence, robotic surgery and 3D printing technologies are shaping the future of healthcare, while also presenting challenges related to data protection, device safety and ethical standards. These examples reflect how Omani women are not only entering non-traditional professions but are actively shaping sectors that are critical to the Sultanate's future economy, reinforcing the role of knowledge, innovation and sustainability in national development.



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Pact to establish ground station for satellite images signed at SQU

These stations are not merely antennas that receive images from space, but rather advanced centres for transforming space data into practical knowledge that supports national decision-making

MUSCAT: Sultan Qaboos University (SQU), represented by its Remote Sensing and Geographic Information Systems Research Center, and the Second Chinese Institute of Oceanography signed a joint scientific cooperation agree-



ment to establish a specialised ground station for receiving satellite imagery, primarily focused on ocean monitoring.

The signing ceremony was held under the auspices of HH Dr. Fahd Al Julanda Al Said, SQU's Vice Chancellor, and in the presence of Professor Zihua Mao, representing the Chinese institute.

In this context, Dr. Yaseen

Ahmed Al Mulla, Director of the Remote Sensing and Geographic Information Systems Research Center at Sultan Qaboos University and Project Manager of the Satellite Image Receiving Ground Station, spoke about the station and its importance, stating that satellite image receiving ground stations have become an essential part of the scientific infrastructure

of any country seeking to enhance its capabilities in various fields such as the environment, climate, and natural resource management.

He explained that these stations are not merely antennas that receive images from space, but rather advanced centres for transforming space data into practical knowledge that supports national decision-making. He pointed out that in a world that increasingly relies on geographic information, with precise spatial and temporal data, countries capable of receiving data directly have become more independent and faster in responding to natural and economic challenges.

According to Dr. Yaseen, the importance of ground stations lies in their ability to provide countries with immediate access to satellite data without the need to wait for processing or distribution through external servers. This allows scientists, researchers, and operators to analyse data in real time, develop more accurate local models, and produce information tailored to the country's specific needs.

He added that possessing a na-

tional space receiving infrastructure enhances cybersecurity, reduces reliance on external sources, and elevates scientific and technological sovereignty.

He also emphasised that these stations serve as advanced training and research platforms, enabling universities and research centers to develop national expertise in remote sensing, big data analytics, artificial intelligence, and ecosystem modeling.

With the increasing importance of these fields in the global economy, investing in space infrastructure is a direct investment in human and intellectual capital.

Dr. Yaseen explained that the project to establish a ground station to receive satellite images is at this stage more specialised in the oceans, as these satellites provide continuous measurements of sea surface temperature, biological productivity, ocean current movement, sediment spread, and water quality.

From a research perspective, he pointed out that the station allows Omani researchers access to raw data and the development of

accurate local algorithms, instead of relying entirely on ready-made products from abroad, which enhances scientific innovation.

He stressed that the project is in line with the goals of Oman Vision 2040, which focuses on innovation, the knowledge economy, environmental sustainability and contributing to the emergence of specialized services in the fields of environmental analysis and geospatial data.

Dr. Yaseen emphasised that the station is not merely a research facility, but a strategic infrastructure that enhances the Sultanate of Oman's scientific and technological standing and opens up broad horizons for sustainable development.

The station also serves as a future platform for collaboration with space agencies and scientific institutions specialising in remote sensing and Earth observation worldwide, thereby strengthening Oman's presence in international scientific networks and reinforcing its role as an active partner in producing environmental knowledge on a global scale. -ONA

AGREEMENT

OMR300 million worth real estate deals signed

MUSCAT: LEO Development announced strategic partnership with "Rove" to launch real estate projects in the Governorate of Muscat and the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD) to the tune of OMR300 million.

The collaboration lays the foundation for the development of multiple Rove projects across the Sultanate of Oman, supporting the long-term regional growth ambitions of both partners and reinforcing Oman's position as an emerging destination for contemporary lifestyle hospitality.

The partnership is anchored by the signing of Rove Home Muscat Expressway, the brand's first branded residential development in Oman. The project represents a significant milestone for LEO Development as it brings an internationally recognised lifestyle brand to the Omani market.

Rove is a joint venture between Emaar Properties and Dubai Holding, and has recorded strong regional growth, with over 8,000 units open or under development. Rove Home Muscat Expressway, the first of several planned developments, will be located in a central and well-connected area near Muscat Hills, with direct access to major road networks.

The site offers proximity to Muscat's primary business districts, urban destinations, Oman



Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC), and Muscat International Airport.

The project will comprise fully furnished one- and two-bedroom apartments and lofts, supported by a curated range of lifestyle amenities including a lap pool with jacuzzi, roof garden, retail and co-working spaces designed for modern urban living, in addition to the brand's signature Rove Café. Commenting on the announcement, Viktor Serenkov, Chairman of LEO Development, said: "We are proud to announce our partnership with Rove, bringing a fresh and highly relevant approach to branded residential living in Oman. This collaboration reflects a shared vision to respond to evolving lifestyle expectations and deliver developments defined by intention, cultural sensitivity, and long-term value. Rove Home Muscat Expressway is the first

step in a broader pipeline that we believe will redefine urban living in Oman.

Paul Bridger, Chief Operating Officer at Rove Hotels, added: "We are incredibly proud to partner with LEO Development to bring Rove to Oman. LEO's deep understanding of the local market, combined with Rove's lifestyle-led design philosophy, creates a powerful platform for long-term growth. This project signals our commitment to Oman's future and sets the stage for multiple developments across the country."

As part of the long-term partnership, LEO Development and Rove are aligned on expanding the Rove portfolio across city hubs, leisure destinations, ITCs and free zones in Oman, reinforcing Oman's position as an emerging destination for contemporary lifestyle hospitality in the GCC. -ONA

SOUTH AL BATINAH GOVERNORATE

Restoration of castles, towers

NAKHAL: The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism is pressing ahead with the restoration of castles and towers in South Al Batinah Governorate.

The step aims to maintain the historical value of the heritage landmarks in the wilayats of the governorate and convert them into tourism attractions.

Dr. Al Mutassim Nasser Al Hilali, Director of the Heritage and Tourism Department in South Al Batinah, told the Oman News Agency (ONA) that restoration and maintenance projects are



now being implemented in castles, forts, towers, walls and her-

itage mosques that are likely to become tourism destinations. -ONA

INTEGRATED PLATFORM

Camel festival promotes culture

ADAM: The 9th Al Bashayer Camel Racing Festival, which kicked off recently, will include events that reflect the Sultanate of Oman's cultural heritage and enhance integration among cultural, sporting and marketing activities.

The festival will support traditional business households and small and medium enterprises (SMEs), in addition to establishing an integrated platform for marketing traditional products and attracting tourists and visitors from Oman and abroad.



Ahmed Nasser Al Junaibi, Head of the committee tasked with cultural, heritage, marketing and sports events that accompany Al Bashayer Camel Racing Festival,

said that camel races constitute a historical symbol for Omani people and a major component in Omani people's culture, economy and social life. -ONA



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Business Environment in Oman: Between Legislation and Fair Competition Toward a Sustainable Economy

Intellectual Property in Oman: Innovation Without Monopoly	Raising Legal Awareness: The Key to Effective Competition Law Enforcement	Competition Protection Center: Oman's Shield Against Market Abuse and Price Manipulation	Digital Transformation in Public Tenders: Fair Competition and Equal Opportunities for All	Empowering SMEs: A Core Driver of Oman's Economic Growth
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As Oman advances toward a diversified and sustainable economy under Vision 2040, fair competition and market protection have become essential pillars for fostering economic growth and improving the business environment, especially for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

Competition protection legislation and the establishment of the Competition Protection and Anti-Monopoly Center represent a major milestone in regulating markets, ensuring equal opportunities, and embracing digital transformation.

Yet institutional challenges and limited legal awareness remain key areas for enhancing the effectiveness of these laws.

Competition Legislation: A Legal Framework for Equal Opportunities
Competition protection laws in Oman form the cornerstone of a fair and balanced market. The Competition Protection and Anti-Monopoly Law (2014) and Royal Decree 2/2018 established an independent authority tasked with enforcing the law, monitoring market concentration, and preventing anti-competitive practices or abuse of dominant positions.

- Key objectives of the law include:*
- Regulating economic activity while ensuring freedom of pricing.
 - Prohibiting anti-competitive agreements such as price-fixing, market division, or excluding competitors.
 - Raising awareness about free competition principles.
- The center has judicial authority to inspect businesses, review documents, and citizens can file complaints and appeals.
- Administrative fines can reach OMR 5,000, doubling in repeated violations, with serious cases referred to the public prosecution.

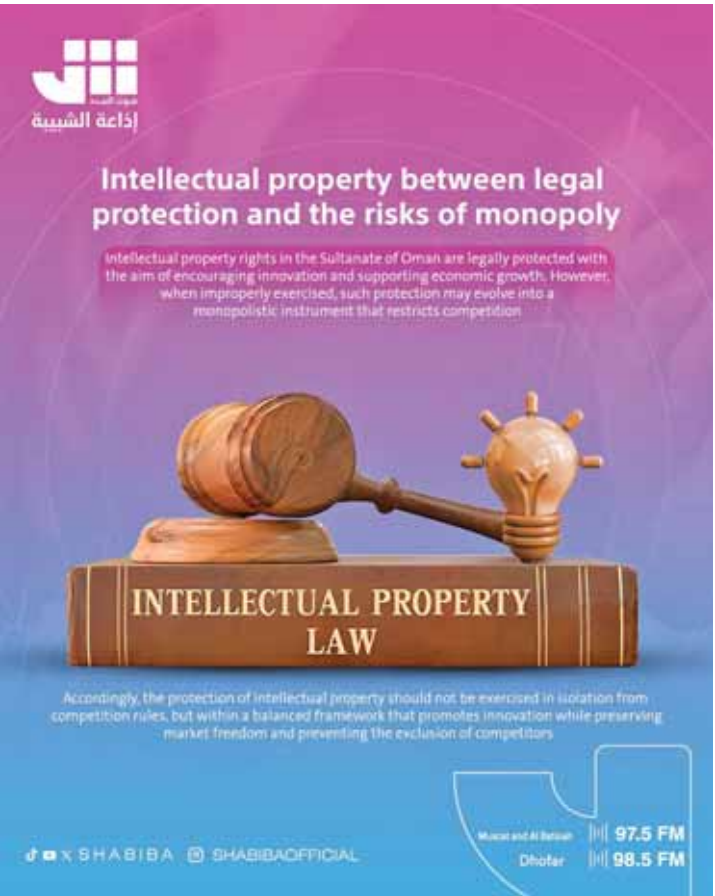
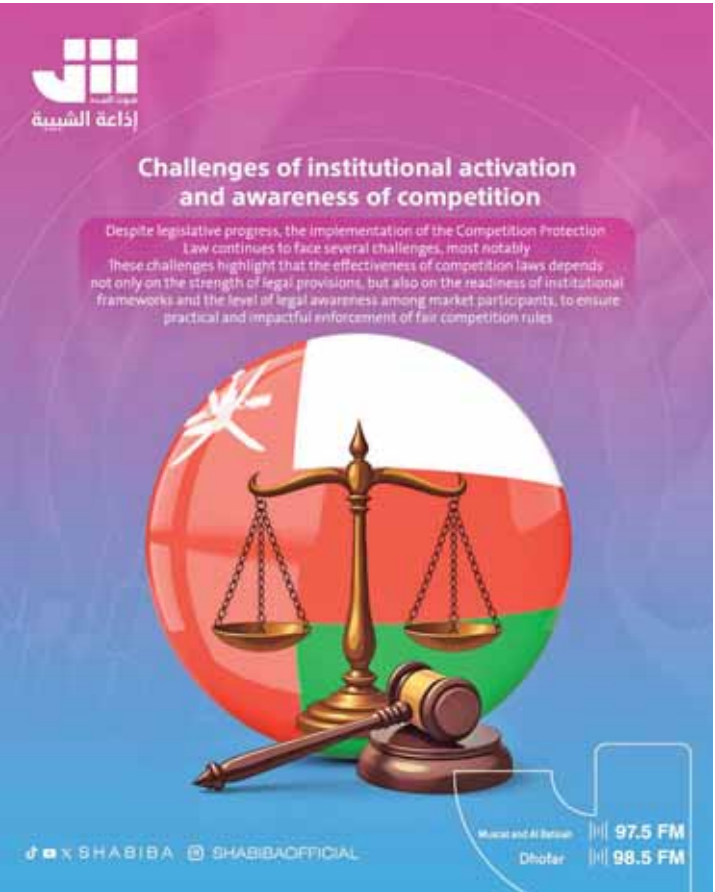
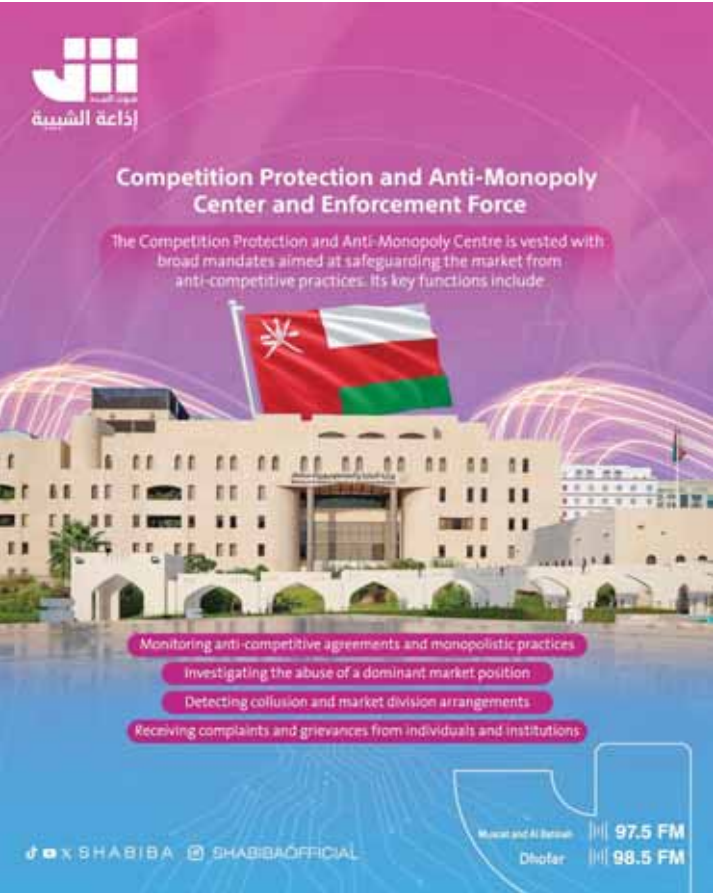
Intellectual Property: Balancing Legal Protection and Market Fairness
Oman's intellectual property (IP) laws encourage innovation but can become anti-competitive if misused.

- The Competition Protection Center monitors abuses, such as:
- Excessive licensing fees.
 - Using patents to block competitors.
 - Registering trademarks without real commercial use to prevent market entry.
- The law emphasizes the need to balance innovation protection with market freedom, ensuring a fair and competitive business environment.

- Institutional Challenges & Legal Awareness**
Despite robust legislation, enforcement faces challenges:
- Weak coordination among regulatory authorities.
 - Lack of structured data-sharing mechanisms.
 - Limited legal awareness among entrepreneurs and consumers.

These gaps lead to underreporting and incomplete complaints, highlighting the need for better coordination, monitoring, and ongoing awareness campaigns.

Competition Protection Center: Market Enforcement and National Product Safeguard
The Center has wide-ranging powers to monitor anti-competitive



practices, oversee pricing, and protect domestic products from dumping.

It receives complaints from individuals and institutions and can impose fines or refer cases to the public prosecution.

These powers reinforce the importance of an independent institution with effective legal tools to maintain market balance and protect all economic actors.

Fair Competition in Government Tenders
With digital transformation, Oman's public tender market has become more transparent and equitable through the "eSnad" platform. The center monitors tenders to prevent collusion and enforce fair competition, boosting confidence among the private sector, especially SMEs.

Business Environment Development & SME Support
Oman aims to enhance SME participation by:

- Integrating SMEs into national supply chains.
- Developing Omani skills and expertise.
- Promoting R&D and innovation.
- Ensuring a supportive legislative and regulatory environment.

This strategy aligns with Vision 2040, which places fair competition at the heart of economic development and foreign and local investment attraction.

Competitiveness Indicators & Investment Impact
Oman has seen significant improvements in competition indicators over the past decade:

- Performance index rose from 59% (2015-2017) to 65% (2018-2020) and higher after implementing executive regulations and AI-based monitoring tools (2021-2025).

These reforms have improved the business climate and attracted FDI, reaching OMR 5.2 billion in Q1 2025, up from OMR 4.1 billion in Q1 2024.

Innovation & Entrepreneurship
According to the Global Innovation Index 2024, Oman ranks 74th globally, showing notable improvement in innovation inputs (59th). This reflects better business conditions, supported by legislation and regulatory institutions, fostering SME growth and competitiveness.

The Future of Fair Competition in Oman
Developing a healthy business environment is more than legislation—it requires:

- Continuous state-private sector partnership.
- Stronger inter-agency coordination.
- Broad awareness campaigns.
- Emphasis on knowledge economy and global best practices.

This ensures laws are practical tools that stimulate markets, protect investors, and empower entrepreneurs.

Conclusion
Oman's legal and institutional reforms reflect a strong commitment to Vision 2040. Competition protection, SME support, market oversight, and equal opportunity form the foundation of a fair, transparent, and investment-friendly business environment, capable of sustaining long-term economic growth.

10TH EDITION

Italian Design Day: An occasion to boost Oman-Italy ties

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The 10th edition of the Italian Design Day in the World will be celebrated in Muscat from 2 to 4 February 2026, reaffirming Italy's commitment to promoting design and architecture as drivers of sustainability, innovation, and social well-being.

The 2026 edition titled "Re-Design. Regenerating spaces, objects, ideas, relationships", invites reflection on the role of design and architecture in regenerating urban spaces and rethinking objects, processes, and relationships to improve everyday life and strengthen communities.

Through this lens, Italian Design Day highlights how thoughtful design can contribute to more inclusive, sustainable, and resilient environments.

The initiative places particular emphasis on the Italian experience in urban regeneration, drawing from Italy's cities as living laboratories shaped by centuries of stratification, adaptation, and innovation.

These cities embody a model that integrates sustainability, so-



cial inclusion, and technological advancement, an approach that, while rooted in local identity, has proven adaptable and replicable internationally through cooperation projects with partner countries.

At the same time, Italian Design Day 2026 will showcase Italy's leadership in the regeneration of objects and products, inspired by the principles of the circular economy.

The use of recycled materials, attention to product life cycles,

and innovative production chains underline Italian design's capacity to merge aesthetics, functionality, and environmental responsibility.

Commenting on the occasion, Pierluigi D'Elia, Ambassador of Italy accredited to the Sultanate of Oman stated: "The Italian Design Day represents a powerful platform for dialogue between Italy and Oman. Through the theme of regeneration, we aim to share Italy's expertise in design and architecture as tools for sustainable development, cultural exchange,

and the improvement of quality of life for future generations."

The 2026 edition in Oman will feature the special participation of Architect

Andrea Boschetti, Founder of the Italian Studio Metrogramma and Head of Design of The One Atelier, and Ambassador of the Italian Design Day to Oman 2026, and Architect Arianna Piva, Partner of Metrogramma and Senior Architect of The One Atelier, internationally renowned for their work in architecture, urban planning, and research-driven design.

The Architects' participation promotes the exchange of expertise on sustainable

urban development, innovation in design and the regeneration of public spaces and can give an important contribution in the framework of the Italy-Oman partnership for the implementation of the Vision 2040.

The visit further strengthens dialogue and cooperation between Italian and Omani institutions, professionals, and academic communities, contributing to the development of resilient, inclusive and future-oriented cities in the

Sultanate of Oman.

Speaking ahead of the event, Architect Andrea Boschetti noted: "Regeneration today is not only about buildings or cities, but about relationships—between people, spaces, and resources. Italian design offers a methodology that connects memory, innovation, and responsibility, and we look forward to sharing this approach with the Omani design community and young professionals."

As part of their visit, Architect Andrea Boschetti, Ambassador the Italian Design Day for the year 2026 will also participate in a panel at Interior Design

Furnishing Expo (IDF 2026) in Oman titled: The Architect's Craft: (RE)- Designing Cities, and lead a dedicated workshop titled: The Architect's Craft: (RE)-Designing at Every Scale at the Scientific College of Design, engaging directly with students and professionals in the field.

The workshop aims to encourage dialogue, creativity, and critical thinking around contemporary design challenges from both physical and digital perspectives.

In addition to the public pro-

gramme and academic activities, Architect Andrea Boschetti, Ambassador of the Italian Design Day to Oman 2026, joined by Architect Arianna Piva, Partner of Metrogramma and Senior Architect of The One Atelier, Michele Galli, CEO of The One Atelier and Fabrizio Cardinali, CEO of Etro, will present a short lecture titled: The Architect's Craft: Designing at Every Scale, Empowering Brands at a special networking event hosted at the residence of the Italian Ambassador. The event will bring together local stakeholders, professionals, institutions, and representatives from the design and architecture sectors, providing a platform to foster dialogue, exchange expertise and explore opportunities for collaboration between Italian and Omani actors in the fields of design, urban development and sustainable innovation.

Italian Design Day 2026 in Muscat promises to be a meaningful occasion for exchange, learning, and collaboration, strengthening cultural ties between Italy and Oman while celebrating design as a catalyst for regeneration and sustainable futures.

Session focuses on improving business climate

The session was held on the sidelines of Oman Expo and International Forum at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre



MUSCAT: The Oman Business Forum and Partnership with the Private Sector Office at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion organised the first session of the "Tejarah Talks" initiative for 2026, titled "International Partnerships that Deliver Results."

The session was held on the sidelines of Oman Expo and International Forum at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre.

The discussion addressed a methodology for tracking the trajectory of challenges by categorising partnerships into three primary pillars: regulatory frameworks, such as Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) and Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreements (CEPAs); market access through distribution and logistics; and capital and capabilities provided through investors.

The session aimed to examine the role of partnerships in expanding non-oil exports and investments in the Sultanate of Oman.

The session further focused on practical aspects related to ensuring market access, accelerating clearance and certification procedures, enhancing the reliability of dispute resolution, and developing risk-aware trade finance, ultimately aiming to agree on a clear implementation mechanism



within 12 months.

The Tejarah Talks initiative is part of an emphasis on the importance of involving various segments of society in discussing and understanding issues related to the business and investment environment in the Sultanate of Oman, while fostering constructive dialogue regarding national economic developments.

The Tejarah Talks initiative aims to highlight inspiring and untold stories within the Omani business environment by providing an interactive platform for candid and constructive discussion on the issues, challenges, and opportunities of the national economy.

This allows for the review of experiences shared by businessmen and entrepreneurs in the Sultanate of Oman, while discussing emerging economic challenges and opportunities in the fields of business and investment.

Additionally, the initiative

seeks to stimulate a culture of innovation and positive risk-taking within commercial circles, build effective communication bridges between different generations and business sectors, and enhance the role of youth and women in the economic landscape. It also encourages forward-thinking in the fields of technology, the green economy, and creative industries, contributing to the support of sustainable economic development in the Sultanate of Oman.

The second session of Tejarah Talks, titled "Cultural Capital: Transforming Heritage into Global Impact," is scheduled to be held on 14 April, followed by the third session on 22 September, titled "Value Chain Interaction: Sustainable Growth and Local Opportunities." The series will conclude with the fourth and final session, titled "Made in Oman: Redefining Competitiveness," on 17 November. —**ONA**

DISCUSSIONS

Oman-Türkiye Business Council explores private sector cooperation

MUSCAT: The Joint Oman-Türkiye Business Council held a meeting on Tuesday on the sidelines of Oman Expo and International Forum.

The meeting was organised by Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) at Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre.

During the meeting, the two sides discussed strengthening economic and investment cooperation between the two countries.

The discussions explored mechanisms for activating and linking the private sector from both the Omani and Turkish sides, as well as ways to revitalise the council's activities through the holding of periodic meetings, whether in person or online.

The meeting also highlighted the significance of Oman Expo and International Forum and its role in enhancing networking opportunities and building commercial and investment partnerships between



private sector institutions in both nations.

The meeting was chaired on the Omani side by Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al Rowas, Chairman of the Omani side of the Joint Oman-Türkiye Business Council, while the Turkish side was led by Yunus Ata, Chairman of the Turkish side.

Sheikh Salim Abdullah Al Rowas emphasised the pivotal role of the council in fostering trade and investment partnerships and

opening new horizons for cooperation between private sector establishments in the two countries.

direct communication

For his part, Yunus Ata reviewed the development of economic relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Türkiye, praising the role of the Joint Business Council in facilitating direct communication between business owners and enhancing opportunities for joint investment. —**ONA**



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[Factory Al Misfah West, Bausher, Tel. # 00968 24437070 ext. 102, Fax # 00968 24437777]

TENDERS

The company invites specialized companies to participate in the following tender:

Sl. #	Tender ID	Description	Tender Fee	Deadline for Request for Tenders	Deadline for Submission of Offers
1.	1564000213-26	Titan Crusher Rotors Reconditioning	Free	19 th February 2026 2359 Hours	24 th February 2026 2359 Hours
2.	1585000092-26	REFURBISHMENT OF GT 6B FRAM PARTS	Free	19 th February 2026 2359 Hours	24 th February 2026 2359 Hours

Tender documents can be obtained by sending a request to yaqub.tamtami@omacement.com & nasser.said@omacement.com with the Subject showing "Tender No." and "Tender Description," enabling the Company to provide the tender document through email to your company. Contact details: Office number: +968 22705565, 22705566.

The last date for submission of offers is on Tuesday, 2359 hours, detailed date on the above table, accompanied by a bid bond issued by any local bank in Oman (equivalent to 1%) of the total tender value. The bid bond must be valid for 120 days from the last date of submission of offers, and the ORIGINAL bid bond must be submitted on the tender box at the reception of our Administration Building, Al Mesfah West factory Site, Bausher, Muscat, Oman.

The Company's account is detailed below:

Account name: Oman Cement Company SAOG
Bank Name: Bank Muscat SAOG
Account number: 0423 01086 3070 017
Account Type: OMR
SWIFT Code: BMUSOMRX



To request for tender documents , Please scan the code and fill the requirements.



Ministry of Defence

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

1. The Ministry of Defense (MOD) invites registered suppliers to participate in the following tender:

NO	SUBJECT	TENDER NUMBER	LAST DATE FOR INQUIRIES	LAST DATE TO SUBMIT BIDS	TENDER DOCUMENT FEES+ VAT
1	SUPPLY OF BOOT AND TRAILER FOR ROYAL ARMY OF OMAN FOR MUSANDAM SECTOR	03/2026	02/03/2026	09/03/2026	83 RO

2. Tenders documents and terms may be obtained on payment from the office of the Secretary of the Tender Committee, gate No. 14 of MAM Camp between 0900 to 1300 hrs on the working days.
3. Payment of Tender documents to be made by using of any Visa Electron Cards or "Visa credit" Cards or through Smart Card issued from all the banks are operated in Oman

OMAN/WORLD

COMMENTARY

Parenting in the gadget era: Shaping minds beyond screens



DAMODAR KATTI*

We are living in a time where technology is no longer a luxury — it is a constant companion. Smartphones, tablets, gaming consoles, and social media platforms have become an inseparable part of daily life, especially for children. While these tools bring knowledge, connectivity, and convenience, they also present challenges that demand greater awareness and involvement from parents.

Parenting today is not the same as it was a decade ago. The playground has partly shifted from outdoor fields to digital screens, and conversations often compete with notifications. In such an environment, the role of parents has become more critical than ever — not as controllers of technology, but as guides in its responsible use.

Understanding the digital landscape

Children are naturally curious. Technology offers them learning resources, creativity platforms, and global exposure.

However, without direction, the same devices can lead to distraction, reduced attention span, social comparison, and emotional fatigue.

The objective is not to eliminate gadgets from a child's life — that is neither practical nor beneficial. The objective is balance.

The parent as a role model

Children learn more from what they observe than from what they are told. When parents demonstrate mindful gadget usage — such as limiting screen time during meals or prioritizing conversations over devices — children begin to mirror those habits naturally.

A few simple practices can create a powerful impact:

- Device-free family time each day
- Encouraging outdoor play and hobbies
- Reading together or engaging in creative activities
- Setting reasonable and consistent screen-time boundaries

The power of conversation

In the gadget era, conversation is one of the most powerful parenting tools. Children today are exposed to more information than ever before, but not all of it is understood or processed correctly. Regular, open conversations help them make sense of what they see and experience.

A child who feels comfortable talking to parents about school, friendships, online content, or worries develops emotional confidence and trust. These discussions do not always need to be formal or lengthy — even short daily check-ins can create a strong emotional bridge.

Instead of asking only about grades or performance, asking simple questions like “How was

your day?”, “What made you happy today?”, or “Did anything bother you?” can open meaningful dialogue. Listening without immediate judgment often encourages honesty and strengthens the bond between parent and child.

Communication over control

Strict rules alone are rarely effective. Open communication builds understanding. When children understand why balance is important, they are more likely to practice self-discipline rather than feel restricted. Parents who show interest in the digital world of their children — the games they play, the videos they watch, or the platforms they use — build cooperation instead of resistance.

The role of counselling and emotional support

Another important yet often under-utilised support system is counselling. Seeking guidance from a trained counselor should never be viewed as a weakness or stigma. Just as we consult professionals for physical health, emotional well-being also deserves attention.

Children sometimes experience stress, peer pressure, anxiety, or confusion that they may struggle to articulate. A counselor provides a safe and neutral environment where they can speak openly without fear of criticism. Counseling is not only for serious concerns; it can also serve as a preventive and developmental tool that builds resilience, emotional intelligence, and confidence.

For parents, counselling can offer perspective and practical strategies — helping them better understand behavioral changes,

communication styles, and emotional needs of their children.

Excessive screen exposure can sometimes limit real-world social interactions. Parents play a vital role in ensuring that children continue to develop empathy, patience, teamwork, and communication skills through offline experiences — sports, arts, debates, volunteering, or simple family gatherings.

Building digital responsibility

The ultimate goal is not to raise children who avoid technology, but to raise children who use technology wisely. Teaching digital etiquette, online safety, and time management prepares them for a future where technology will only grow more integrated into professional and personal life.

A shared journey

Parenting in today's world is not about perfection; it is about presence. Children do not expect flawless guidance — they seek consistent support, understanding, and reassurance. A balanced environment where gadgets are tools rather than masters helps nurture confident, thoughtful, and emotionally secure individuals.

In the end, it is not the number of hours a child spends on a device that defines their future, but the values, communication, and awareness instilled by parents along the way.

Technology will continue to evolve.

What must remain constant is parental involvement, meaningful conversations, empathy, and mindful guidance.

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N-ARMS REDUCTION

Russia warns of danger over START treaty

MOSCOW: The Kremlin yesterday reiterated its offer to Washington for a one-year extension of the New START nuclear arms reduction treaty, warning that its imminent expiration threatens to plunge the world into a “more dangerous situation.”

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov stated that President Vladimir Putin's proposal remains active, but the United States has yet to provide a response.

“In a few days, the world will likely be in a more dangerous situation than it has been so far,” Peskov told Russian news agencies, highlighting the rapidly approaching deadline this Thursday.

The 2010 treaty, a cornerstone of post-Cold War arms control, limits each side to 1,550 deployed strategic nuclear warheads and 800 delivery systems.

Russia suspended its participation in the treaty in 2023, one year after its invasion of Ukraine, citing impediments to on-site verification inspections, but

pledged to continue adhering to its central limits.

The diplomatic stalemate is complicated by a fundamental disagreement over the future of arms control.

Future negotiations

The United States insists that any future negotiations must include China, whose rapidly expanding nuclear arsenal it views as a strategic concern.

Peskov firmly rejected this precondition, arguing that China's arsenal is not comparable to those of Russia and the United States and “could therefore be disregarded.”

Instead, Russia redirected the focus to U.S. allies in Europe. “When discussing a future system of strategic stability, we cannot ignore the nuclear potential of US allies in Europe, namely Britain and France,” Peskov said.

He emphasised that these arsenals would need to be factored into any future talks, echoing a longstanding demand from President Putin. -**ONA**

IN INDIA



OCCI participates in World Forum of chartered accountants

NEW DELHI: Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) participated in the World Forum of Accountants, held at the India International Convention and Expo Centre (IICC) in Greater Noida, Republic of India.

The event is held under the theme “Nation Building to Global Collaboration: Strengthening Trust, Enabling Growth.”

The Chamber's delegation included Dr. Abdullah bin Masoud Al Harthy, OCCI Board Member and Chairman of the Supervisory Committee for the Omani Chief Financial Officer (CFO) Program, and Mustafa Salman Ahmed, OCCI Board Member and Chairman of the Finance and Insurance Committee.

The delegates participated in keynote sessions and specialised workshops addressing financial governance, compliance, sustainability, and digital transformation in business, alongside exploring ways to enhance cooperation between the public and private sectors.

Dr. Abdullah Masoud Al Harthy emphasized that this participation represents a significant opportunity to review leading international experiences and practices in accounting and governance, while building communication channels with global professional institutions. He noted that such engagement enhances the business environment in the Sultanate of Oman and supports the private sector's aspirations under Oman Vision 2040.

He further pointed out that the Chamber's presence at this forum runs parallel to its efforts in implementing the Omani CFO

Program, a strategic initiative aimed at raising the efficiency of national cadres in financial management, advanced accounting, and corporate governance.

This programme is conducted in cooperation with the Muscat Chapter of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI).

He explained that the program has succeeded in enhancing the readiness of Omani professionals to lead financial functions in both public and private sector institutions, thereby supporting the economic transformation ecosystem in Oman.

Global forum

For his part, Mustafa Salman Ahmed stated that the Chamber's participation in this global forum reflects its commitment to developing Omani capabilities in financial and accounting disciplines.

He noted that the discussions and meetings witnessed during the forum contributed to an exchange of expertise with international professional bodies and the exploration of cooperation opportunities in financial development, governance, and compliance.

He added that the Chamber's involvement is part of its ongoing efforts to strengthen its international presence and establish effective professional partnerships that contribute to developing the framework for governance and financial transparency, which in turn reflects positively on the competitiveness of the Omani private sector at regional and international levels. -**ONA**

AUSTRALIA

Teen swims for hours to save family lost at sea

PERTH: A young boy swam for several hours in rough seas to alert authorities to his mother and younger brother and sister being stranded off the coast of Quindalup in Western Australia.

Police said that Austin Applebee swam around 4 kilometres (roughly 2.5 miles) to raise the alarm after his family got into difficulties on their hired kayaks and paddleboards.

He and his family were on vacation in the coastal tourist area near Australia's southwest corner, south of Perth.

How he swam to shore and called for help

The boy set off on an inflatable kayak that was taking in water, then abandoned that and swam. He was wearing a life jacket for roughly the first two hours but ditched it when he realized it was slowing him down too much.

“The waves are massive and I have no life jacket on,” Applebee said on Tuesday. “I just kept thinking, ‘just keep swimming, just keep swimming.’”

Applebee was able to call police, alert them that his family was stranded in rough seas off the coast, and give them information on the kayaks and equipment they had with them.

A search helicopter found the mother Joanne Applebee and Austin's brother Beau, 12, and sister Grace, 8, clinging to a paddleboard, having drifted some 14 kilometres offshore during 10 hours at sea.



“The actions of the 13-year-old boy cannot be praised highly enough — his determination and courage ultimately saved the lives of his mother and siblings,” Police Inspector James Bradley said.

Using crutches after exertion equivalent to two marathons

Austin did not immediately know that his family had survived. He had passed out and was taken to a medical facility after running to his mother's phone to call for help.

On waking, he said he worried that he had not been fast enough.



But he was told the good news and given crutches, with medics saying his swim lasting around four hours in rough seas was akin to having

run two marathons. His mother Joanne said she had asked her eldest boy, a strong swimmer, to seek help, knowing she had to stay with the younger children.

“One of the hardest decisions I ever had to make was to say to Austin: ‘Try and get to shore and get some help. This could get really serious really quickly,’” she told the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC).

Western Australia state premier Roger Cook praised Applebee on social media, saying “This is what a true West Aussie hero looks like.”

-**DW**

BILATERAL RELATIONS

Seychelles President to visit India

NEW DELHI: At the invitation of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Patrick Herminie, the President of the Republic of Seychelles, will undertake a State Visit to India from February 5 to 10.

This will be President Herminie's first visit to India since assuming office last October. The visit coincides with the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between the two countries.

During his visit to India, President Herminie will meet the President and hold discussions with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on bilateral, regional, and international issues of mutual interest.

President Herminie will also visit Chennai and Mumbai where he would be attending business events.

“Seychelles is a key maritime neighbour for India in the Indian Ocean region and holds a special place in India's Vision MAHASAGAR (Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions) and our commitment to the Global South,” the official MEA brief said.

Wide-ranging cooperation

“The visit of President Herminie to India, following the visit of the Vice President of India to Seychelles in October 2025, is expected to lend further momentum to wide-ranging cooperation and robust people to people ties between the two countries,” the statement read further.

India's bilateral engagement with Seychelles is characterized by

our historical contacts and continuous support to Seychelles for its security. Today, India-Seychelles relations embody close friendship, understanding and cooperation.

First inhabitants

It was in the year 1770 that a small group of five Indians landed in Seychelles as plantation workers along with seven African slaves and 15 French colonists, and were recorded as the first inhabitants of the Islands.

During the British colonial period, Seychelles was governed from the Bombay Presidency for some time, with regular shipping links and flow of goods and essential commodities from India.

These trade links facilitated mi-

gration of an Indian trading community looking for greener pastures having reached a saturation point in East Africa.

Diplomatic ties were established with Seychelles after its independence in 1976.

When Seychelles attained freedom on 29th June 1976, a contingent from the Indian Naval Ship, INS Nilgiri, took part in the Independence Day celebrations. The Indian Mission was established in 1979 in Victoria, with the High Commissioner based in Dar-es-Salaam and concurrently accredited to Seychelles.

The first resident High Commissioner was appointed in 1987, while Seychelles opened its resident mission in New Delhi in early 2008. -**ANI**

Withdrawal of United States from WHO threatens Africa’s health gains

The withdrawal of US creates a critical funding gap that disproportionately affects Africa, where WHO spending is heavily invested in fighting infectious diseases and strengthening fragile healthcare systems



NEW YORK: The United States sent major shockwaves through the global health system by leaving the World Health Organization (WHO) in January 2026. Not only is the United States one of the founding members of WHO, but it has also traditionally been the largest contributor, accounting for nearly 15% of its budget. Its withdrawal creates a critical funding gap that disproportionately affects Africa, where WHO spending is heavily invested in fighting infectious diseases and strengthening fragile healthcare systems. In 2020-2021, WHO, for example, allocated \$17.6 million (€15 million) to Malawi. The health body has not published recent figures, but many development finance analysts estimate a reduction following the US withdrawal. “It is saddening to note that the relationship between one of the founders of the World Health Organization, which is the US and the WHO has gone sour,” Maziko



Matemba, a Malawian health activist, said. “We know most of the developing countries, like Malawi, will have problems, because we have relied on technical expertise from the World Health Organization on health [sector] strengthening,” Matemba told DW. No one at WHO headquarters in Geneva was available for comment when DW reached out. A January statement made by the organisation says it “regrets” the US’s notification of withdrawal

from WHO, “a decision that makes both the United States and the world less safe.” WHO’s Executive Board is meeting on February 2 to discuss, among other things, the US intention to withdraw from WHO. Programmes targeting HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis (TB), malaria, polio and neglected tropical diseases are especially vulnerable. Countries such as Nigeria, Uganda, Kenya, Mozambique, Zambia and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) are among the larg-

est recipients of US-linked global health funding. These countries now risk disruptions to drug procurement, prevention campaigns and community health services. Experts warn that even short-term disruptions can lead to increased transmission, drug resistance and reversals of decades of progress in HIV and TB control. **Funding shortfall will weaken emergency response** Another significant impact could be on disease surveillance and emergency response. Health experts say the capacity to effectively respond to health emergencies in Africa may weaken. The WHO plays a significant role in coordinating outbreak detection, data sharing and rapid response. For example, in tackling outbreaks of the Ebola and Marburg viruses, cholera and emerging respiratory diseases. US technical support and funding have been critical to containing

and tackling these health challenges, through collaborations in laboratory testing, joint external evaluations of pandemic preparedness and emergency financing. African countries may face slower outbreak detection and less coordinated international support. Such a scenario also increases the risk that local epidemics escalate into regional or global crises. Individuals like Mildred Chisale, a sex worker in Malawi’s capital, Lilongwe, worry about access to lifesaving drugs, especially after the Trump administration also terminated USAID programs. “I was part of a group called Female Sex Workers Association (FISWA), which worked together with USAID to allow us access to drugs like PREP,” Chisale told DW. PREP is an antiretroviral tablet that people who are at risk of HIV exposure can take to prevent contracting HIV. “Since USAID stopped funding local organisations, we have been affected,” she added.

Extra burden on over-stretched health systems Beyond emergency response, WHO-supported programmes in Africa contribute to healthcare workforce training, maternal and child health, immunisation campaigns and health governance. Budget cuts to these crucial areas may force governments to increase borrowing, raise household healthcare costs and exacerbate health inequities. In low-income contexts, this can mean delayed care and higher mortality, especially for women and children. In addition, withdrawing from the WHO reduces US influence over global health norms and standards, potentially opening space for other powers – such as China – to shape priorities and governance. For Africa, this could mean a gradual shift toward alternative donors and regional health bodies, particularly the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC). While greater African ownership of health security is a positive long-term goal, a sudden transition risks creating gaps in financing, coordination, and technical capacity. **Health partnerships at risk** The US withdrawal also deals a blow to multilateralism. For African governments that have long depended on predictable and stable international health partnerships, the US move reinforces concerns about the reliability of major donors and the fragility of global health commitments. It also means skilled health workers will lose jobs. Malawian health activist Matemba said that he was hearing that a significant proportion of the WHO workforce globally will be retrenched, adding that it shows how vital US funding is to the WHO’s operations. Back in May 2025, the WHO already announced plans, which need to be discussed with member states, to reduce its workforce by about 25% by mid-2026. – DW

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73 MATERIAL CHANGES

MCC changes hit-wicket law, among other revisions

LONDON: The Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) has clarified and tightened the hit-wicket law, ruling that a batter can be dismissed even if they fall onto the stumps well after playing a shot, provided the loss of balance stems from the act of receiving the ball.

The clarification is one of 73 material changes introduced in the latest edition of the Laws of Cricket, announced by the MCC on Tuesday.

The revisions also include a significant tweak to how the final over of a day's play in multi-day cricket is completed, the approval of laminated bats in adult recreational cricket, and a simplified definition of overthrows.

This marks the third revision of the Laws since the 2017 Code, following updates in 2019 and 2022. While the new Laws will officially come into effect from October 1, 2026, they will first be discussed by the ICC's Cricket Committee for inclusion in international playing conditions. National governing bodies will then decide whether to

adopt the changes in their domestic competitions.

While the latest changes to Laws will be effective from October 1, 2026, they will also be discussed by the ICC's Cricket Committee at its next meeting to ratify the new tweaks to be included in the international Playing Conditions.

The MCC has also left it for the national governing boards to decide on whether they will adopt changes to the Laws in their playing conditions in their domestic cricket.

There are two changes to the Hit Wicket Law (35.1.1 and 35.2). Firstly, the MCC has defined a batter is hit wicket if they fall onto the stumps while attempting to find the balance well after receiving the ball.

The MCC said "receiving the ball lasts until the batter has gained control of their balance after playing the ball. If the batter is off balance because of the shot they played, hops around for a few steps, and falls onto their stumps, that is as a result of the action they



took to receive the ball. The ball may be long gone, but the striker is still out Hit wicket".

Strikers, though, wouldn't be declared Hit Wicket when they, while regaining balance, come into contact with a fielder who pushes them onto the stumps. "If, however, the contact with the fielder is purely incidental - perhaps they are falling onto the stumps - and in doing so their bat brushes the wicketkeeper, which will not pro-

tect them. If a part of the batter's equipment becomes detached and makes any contact with another player before hitting the stumps, then they cannot be out Hit wicket. So if the batter accidentally lets go of the bat, and it hits the wicket, the batter will be out hit wicket. However, if the bat hits the wicket-keeper and then the wicket, it will be Not out."

The final over of the day's play in multi-day cricket, including

potentially in Tests, will not end if there is a wicket. As per the new edition of the Laws of Cricket, the over will be completed, and a new batter will need to walk in.

One of the key reasons the MCC's Laws sub-committee felt the last over of the day could not be carried forward to the next morning in case a wicket fell was that not only was it favourable to the batting team but it also robbed the match of some "drama".

"The final over of a day's play will not end if there is a wicket," the MCC said, expanding on the reason for tweaking Law 12.5.2. "This is a significant change that will impact multi-day cricket. It was felt unfair that, if a fielding side takes a wicket in the final over of the day, the batting side does not have to send out a new batter."

"This doesn't save time (which is the case at lunch and tea) as the remaining balls need to be made up the next day, and it takes the drama out of the game, while letting the incoming batter off the hook - at a time when the conditions are often

more favourable to bowling. The new change means that the final over of the day will be bowled fully, even if a wicket falls during it (assuming conditions remain fit)."

The MCC also essentially discarded its "vague" wording used in Law 19.8, which deals with overthrows, and thus created a distinction with misfield. The updated version defines an overthrow as an "attempt to direct the ball towards the stumps to stop run-scoring or attempt a Run out".

Whereas for a misfield, the MCC said, "whether an attempt to stop the ball or pass it to another fielder close to the boundary - should not be treated as an overthrow."

No longer does the ball need to be in the bowler or the wicketkeeper's hand for it to become dead.

The MCC pointed out this was "quite a big" change in the Law (20.1.1.1), wherein the umpire will have "much greater leeway to determine whether a ball is finally settled, which can often be extremely important, particularly on the final ball of a close game". - Agencies

T20 WORLD CUP



Ponting backs Abhishek to be leading run-scorer

MUMBAI: Former Australian skipper Ricky Ponting has thrown his weight behind Abhishek Sharma, predicting that the India opener will be the leading run-scorer and, potentially, Player of the Tournament at the upcoming T20 World Cup.

Ponting also said that, back in 2018 when they were together in the IPL at Delhi Capitals, he had tried to convince the franchise owners to hold onto Abhishek and not let him go. "I was his first IPL coach," Ponting said on the ICC review.

"He debuted with me, I think as a 17-year-old in Delhi and made an immediate impact. I think he hit his first ball for four or six straight back over the bowler's head with that classical sort of straight bat and held the pose. And you could just see then as a 17-year-old that there was something extra special."

"We ended up trading him away from Delhi, but I pleaded and pleaded and pleaded and said, please don't do this. We've got to [keep him], there's an absolute superstar in the making here. And that's what it's turned out to be. I've got really high hopes for him this time."

Abhishek made a swashbuckling 19-ball 46* for Capitals on IPL debut, but played just two more

innings before being one of three players traded to Sunrisers Hyderabad for Shikhar Dhawan.

Since Abhishek began playing for Sunrisers in the 2019 season, he has made good on his promise with 1753 runs in 71 innings for them, at a strike rate of 162.16.

He has discovered even better form at the international level and is about to play his first ICC event, which Ponting believes won't faze him: "[It's] a real positive to be honest. He can be the leading run-scorer and potentially the Player of the Tournament. That's how good I think he is. And if he does, that makes India even harder to beat. If he doesn't, then they're as vulnerable as anybody else. So that's how important I think he is to this World Cup for India."

Abhishek's numbers since his T20I debut in July 2024 make for impressive reading: in 37 innings, he has scored 1297 runs at an average of 37.05 and an astonishing strike rate of 194.74. He has hit two rapid centuries and eight fifties. This includes the 14-ball fifty he scored against New Zealand just over a week ago. Abhishek, and India who are the defending champions, begin their World Cup campaign on February 7 in Mumbai, where they take on USA. - Agencies

Kaleem shines as Oman win WC warm-up game

The 44-year-old hammered 80 off 47 balls to lead the chase after Sri Lanka A were restricted to 145/9

Times News Service

COLOMBO: A classy half-century by experienced Oman opener Aamir Kaleem, backed by a disciplined bowling effort, gave Oman a morale-boosting five-wicket win in their opening official ICC Men's T20 World Cup warm-up match against Sri Lanka A at the Colombo Cricket Club Ground on Tuesday.

The victory will give the Duleep Mendis-coached side plenty of confidence ahead of their Group B campaign, which begins against Zimbabwe on February 9.

Oman are drawn along with former world champions Australia, hosts Sri Lanka, Ireland and Zimbabwe.

Anchored by a vintage knock from the 44-year-old Kaleem, Oman chased down a modest target of 146 after restricting the hosts to 145 for 9, finishing on 146 for 5 in 18 overs.

Oman's chase was defined by the authority and assurance of Kaleem, whose 80 off 47 balls was a reminder of his value as Mr Reliable at the top of the order in high-pressure tournaments. He mixed caution with aggression, finding gaps early before launching into the spinners with clean, calcu-



lated hitting. His innings, laced with eight fours and three sixes, ensured Oman stayed comfortably ahead of the required rate despite a brief wobble. The early loss of Hammad Mirza and Wasim Ali momentarily stalled the momentum, and Sri Lanka A sensed an opening when Wanuja Sahan struck three times in a superb spell, including the prized wickets of Kaleem and Mohammad Nadeem. At 78 for 4 and later 113 for 5, the contest briefly flickered.

Any lingering doubts were swiftly extinguished by Vinayak Shukla, who played a polished finishing role. The wicketkeeper-batter remained unbeaten on 39 from 24 balls, striking timely boundaries and showing composure under pressure. Supported

by Jiten Ramanandi at the other end, Shukla guided Oman home with two overs to spare, underlining the depth and calmness in the batting line-up.

Earlier, put in to bat, Sri Lanka A never quite found sustained momentum against Oman's varied bowling attack. A brisk start promised early fireworks as Sineth Jayawardena and Dulnith Sigera struck a few crisp boundaries, but the innings soon lost shape once the spinners settled into their rhythm.

Shah Faisal struck twice in his opening spell, removing Jayawardena and Pulindu Perera, while Nadeem Khan and Jay Odedra tightened the screws through the middle overs. The Lankan innings revolved around

Sahan's counter-attacking 29 off 21 balls and a late flourish from Chamindu Wijesinghe, who remained unbeaten on 24 from just 13 deliveries. However, regular wickets ensured Sri Lanka A were restricted to 145 for 9, a total that always felt slightly under par on a true surface.

Spinners Jay Odedra and Shakeel Ahmed chipped in with two wickets apiece, while medium pacer Shah Faisal's economical four-over spell of 2 for 21 set the tone up front.

Brief scores: Sri Lanka A 145/9 (Wanuja Sahan 29, Chamindu Wijesinghe 24*; Shah Faisal 2/21, Jay Odedra 2/18, Shakeel Ahmed 2/24) lost to Oman 146/5 in 18 overs (Aamir Kaleem 80, Vinayak Shukla 39*; Wanuja Sahan 3/16).

AUSTRALIAN OPEN WINNER



Defending champion Alcaraz opts out of Rotterdam Open

ROTTERDAM: Carlos Alcaraz will not return to defend his title at this year's ABN AMRO (Rotterdam) Open, with tournament organisers confirming on Monday the world No. 1's absence from the ATP 500 event.

The Spaniard has chosen to take a break following an arduous Australian Open campaign, which culminated in a historic triumph in Melbourne.

Alcaraz's decision rules out a repeat appearance at the Rotterdam Ahoy, where he claimed the title in 2025 — his maiden indoor ATP crown — after a three-set victory over Alex de Minaur.

"Carlos Alcaraz won't defend his title in Rotterdam. The Australian Open champion concluded that after his exertions over the past two weeks, he needs more time to return to action. We wish Carlos a

swift recovery," said the organisers of the ABN AMRO Open on Monday. The withdrawal comes shortly after Alcaraz's milestone success at the Australian Open, where he overcame Novak Djokovic in the final to lift the trophy for the first time. That win also made him the youngest man in the Open Era to complete the Career Grand Slam, having secured all four major titles by the age of 22. - Agencies

FORMULA ONE

Australian Doohan to be Haas reserve driver

LONDON: Australian Jack Doohan has secured a role as reserve driver at Haas after being released by the Alpine team.

The 23-year-old, the son of five-time MotoGP champion Mick Doohan, competed in six grands prix for Alpine last year before being replaced by Argentine Franco Colapinto.

Doohan joins Ryo Hirakawa as one of two reserve drivers at Haas. The Japanese has connections with technical partner Toyota, which has increased its role to become title sponsor this year. Haas' main drivers are Briton Oliver Bearman and Frenchman Esteban Ocon.

Doohan described Haas as "the ideal place to continue my F1 career," which he hopes to revive.

Haas team principal Ayao Komatsu said: "The dedication required to remain sharp and



prepared to race while getting to know how the team works and so on, it's challenging for any driver — especially one who's obviously still very keen

to race again at this level."

Doohan finished third in the Formula 2 feeder series in 2023 before becoming Alpine's reserve. - Agencies

OMAN OIL PRICE RISES

The price of Oman oil has increased, with prices for delivery by April 2026 reaching \$65.15, said Dubai Mercantile Exchange (DME). The DME statement said that the price of Oman oil rose by 28 cents from the price of Monday, which was which was \$64.87. -ONA

MARKET
BUSINESS & FINANCE



MSX INDEX ENDS HIGHER

The MSX index closed at 6,321.52 points, up by 1.10% from previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 1.09% at 586.03 points. Al Omaniya Financial Services, up 6.49%, was the top gainer while, Financial Services, down 4.88%, was the top loser.

Role of Islamic finance in driving economic diversification discussed

IFSB Summit brings together senior policymakers, central bank governors, industry leaders, and representatives from intergovernmental institutions and academia from more than 40 countries, reinforcing its position as a leading global platform for advancing dialogue and cooperation in Islamic finance



MUSCAT: The Central Bank of Oman (CBO), in collaboration with the Islamic Financial Services Board, organized the 17th IFSB Summit in Muscat, held under the theme "Islamic Finance for the Future: Breaking New Ground for Global Impact."

The summit brings together senior policymakers, central bank governors, industry leaders, and representatives from intergovernmental

institutions and academia from more than 40 countries, reinforcing its position as a leading global platform for advancing dialogue and co-operation in Islamic finance.

In his welcoming address, Ahmed Jaafar Al Musalmi, Governor of the Central Bank of Oman, highlighted the growing relevance of Islamic finance's ethical foundations, transparency, and strong linkages to the real economy, particularly in the face of global

economic uncertainty, rapid technological transformation, and climate-related risks.

He also underscored the Sultanate of Oman's steady progress in building a resilient Islamic finance sector since its introduction in 2012, supported by a robust regulatory and supervisory framework. Aligned with Oman Vision 2040, the Summit discussions focus on the role of Islamic finance in driving economic diversification, enhancing financial inclusion, promoting sustainability, and strengthening resilience

and social development, including women and youth empowerment.

The three-day programme features high-level plenary sessions, governors' and CEOs' forums, and technical discussions covering fintech innovation, capital markets, liquidity management, sustain-

ability, crisis preparedness, youth engagement, social impact, and Shariah governance. Particular emphasis is placed on strengthening integration across Islamic banking, capital markets, and takaful.

The Summit further reinforces international cooperation among IFSB member jurisdictions and showcases the Sultanate of Oman as an attractive investment destination, highlighting opportunities across priority sectors including logistics, renewable energy, advanced manufacturing, tourism, and the digital economy.

The event reaffirms Oman's commitment to an internationally aligned Islamic finance framework and its continued contribution to the future growth, resilience, and global impact of the Islamic financial services industry. -ONA

Al Madina Insurance Company SAOG (Al Madina Takaful) voted winner of Oman's Most Trusted Brand Awards 2025 in the Insurance Category



Muscat: Al Madina Takaful, one of the Sultanate's leading insurance providers, has been recognised as the winner in the Insurance category at the 9th edition of Oman's Most Trusted Brand Awards 2025 (OMTB). The accolades were presented during a gala ceremony held at the Hotel Kempinski Muscat in January 2026.

Hosted by Apex Media, the publishers of Muscat Daily, the awards are widely regarded as a benchmark for consumer confidence in the country. Guest of Honour Pankaj Khimji, Advisor for Foreign Trade and International Cooperation, presented the awards to the winning brands. This year's edition saw over one million consumer votes cast across 53 categories, selecting winners from a pool of approximately 750 participating companies.

For Al Madina Takaful, the award serves as a significant validation of its relationship with the customers and all other stakeholders.

Speaking on the achievement, Mr. Usama Al Barwani, Chief Executive Officer, highlighted the fundamental role of trust in the insurance sector. "Trust is the absolute currency of our industry, and to be voted the most trusted

brand by the public is the highest honour we could receive," said Al Barwani. "This award validates our enduring promise to stand by our policyholders when it matters most. It is about financial protection and about the deep confidence our customers place in us to safeguard their futures."

Mr. Shakaib Mahmood, Deputy CEO, commented while receiving the award that "Most trusted brand is built on integrity in every policy, clarity in every promise, compassion in every claim and reliability in every moment of customer need. Trust grows when customers feel protected, understood and respected. AMI adheres to these attributes by not only ethical governance but transparent policy terms. We prioritize quick and compassionate claim settlement. Our Company has settled the single largest claim in the history of Oman, which was around USD 250 Million, within few weeks of the claim. We opened special units in Barka to settle cyclone Shaheen claims on the spot. We are rated best in all attributes of claim services by an international Reinsurance Broker

for last three consecutive years. We pay dividend to our shareholders for last 10 years and maintain a healthy solvency ratio. We build long term relationship over short term gains-earning trust through consistent service and care"

Mr. Aneesh Varghese, Head of Operations, emphasized that operational excellence is the cornerstone of customer confidence. He stated, "Customer trust is built on a foundation of seamless service and consistent delivery. This recognition reaffirms that our operational strategies are aligned with the evolving needs of the market, enabling us to ensure that our clients feel valued, heard, and secure at every stage of their journey with us."

This achievement adds to a growing list of accolades for the company, which was also named Insurance Company of the Year at the Oman Leadership Awards 2025. The victory at OMTB reinforces Al Madina Takaful's position as a preferred and pioneering provider, dedicated to driving service excellence within the region.

STATISTICS

Oman's total refinery production rises by 12.5%



MUSCAT: The total production of refineries in the Sultanate of Oman recorded a 12.5 percent increase by the end of December 2025, reaching 84,739,200 barrels compared to the end of December 2024, according to preliminary statistics issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The statistics showed that motor fuel production during the month of December 2025 witnessed a slight decrease of 0.1 percent, totaling 2,846,000 barrels compared to 2,848,600 barrels in November 2025. Specifically, the production of regular motor fuel (M-91) rose by 19.3 percent to reach 16,775,600 barrels by the end of December 2025, compared to 14,058,800 barrels during the same period in 2024.

Its sales also recorded an increase of 1.1 percent, reaching 14,292,900 barrels compared to 14,140,100 barrels in the corresponding period of 2024, while its exports decreased by 10.4 percent to stand at 2,299,100 barrels compared to 2,566,500 barrels by the end of December 2024.

In contrast, the production of premium motor fuel (M-95) recorded an increase of 20.1 percent, reaching 14,891,500 barrels compared to 12,399,000 barrels during the same period in 2024. Its sales also rose by 2.4 percent to reach 13,589,800 barrels compared to 13,276,400 barrels by the

end of December 2024, while its exports achieved a growth of 95 percent, reaching 2,035,000 barrels compared to 1,043,400 barrels in the same period last year.

The production of gas oil (diesel) rose by 12.8 percent, recording 34,468,500 barrels compared to 30,553,400 barrels by the end of December 2024. Its sales increased by 7.2 percent to reach 15,174,600 barrels compared to 14,150,700 barrels during the same period last year, while its exports rose by 10.8 percent to record 18,286,400 barrels compared to 16,504,700 barrels by the end of December 2024.

Aviation fuel production recorded a decrease of 6.6 percent, reaching 10,873,600 barrels compared to 11,643,700 barrels during the same period in 2024. Its sales also decreased by 1.7 percent to reach 3,897,700 barrels compared to 3,963,800 barrels last year, in addition to a 10.8 percent decline in its exports, which stood at 6,768,600 barrels compared to 7,590,300 barrels at the end of December 2024.

Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) production rose by 16.4 percent to reach 7,730,100 barrels compared to 6,642,400 barrels in the same period of 2024. Its sales rose by 22.1 percent to reach 3,927,900 barrels compared to 3,216,200 barrels during the same period in 2024, and its exports increased by 127.4 percent to reach 821,200

barrels compared to 361,100 barrels at the end of December 2024.

Regarding petrochemicals, statistics indicated that benzene production rose by 7.2 percent, recording 171,900 metric tons compared to 160,300 metric tons during the same period in 2024. Paraxylene production grew by 16.6 percent, recording 578,900 metric tonnes by the end of December 2025 compared to 496,400 metric tons by the end of December 2024.

Polypropylene production recorded the highest growth rate at 81.3 percent, reaching 357,000 metric tons compared to 196,900 metric tonnes during the same period last year, while its sales rose by 4.4 percent to record 31,300 metric tons compared to 30,000 metric tons in the same period of 2024.

In terms of exports, benzene exports rose by 4.5 percent by the end of December 2025 to record 171,100 metric tonnes compared to 163,800 metric tonnes at the end of December 2024.

Paraxylene recorded a significant growth of 22.5 percent, reaching 606,200 metric tonnes compared to 494,700 metric tonnes in the same period last year, while polypropylene exports achieved a notable growth of 66 percent to reach 263,600 metric tonnes compared to 158,700 metric tonnes during the same period in 2024. -ONA

MARKET

MSX index ends higher

Al Omaniya Financial Services, up 6.49%, was the top gainer while, Financial Services, down 4.88%, was the top loser



MUSCAT: The MSX index closed at 6,321.52 points, up by 1.10% from previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 1.09% at 586.03 points. Al Omaniya Financial Services, up 6.49%, was the top gainer while, Financial Services, down 4.88%, was the top loser. Shares of Bank Muscat were the most active in terms of number of shares traded as well as in terms of turnover.

A total number of 4755 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating turnover of RO 36.27 million, with more than 126.54 million shares changing hands. Out of 74 traded securities, 35 advanced, 10 declined, and 29 remained unchanged. At the session close, foreign investors were net buyers for RO 788K while domestic investors were net sellers for RO 502K, followed by GCC & Arab investors for RO 286K worth of shares.

Financial Index closed at 10,934.91 points, up 1.21%. Prices of Al Omaniya Financial Services,

es, Takaful Oman, Bank Dhofar, Global Financial Investments, Bank Nizwa were up by 6.49%, 3.66%, 3.32%, 2.64%, 2.38% respectively. Prices of Financial Services, Taageer Finance, Muscat Insurance were down by 4.88%, 2.33%, 1.45% respectively.

Industrial Index closed at 9,012.25 points, up 0.76%. Prices of Oman Cables Industry, Jazeera Steel Products, Galfar Engineering, Gulf Mushroom Products, Oman National Engineering were up by 3.33%, 2.74%, 2.56%, 2.34%, 2.04% respectively. Prices of Oman Telecom were down by 0.55% respectively. — United Securities

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE

INDICES

Index	High	Low	Value	Prev. Value	Diff	Diff %
MSX 30 INDEX	6,335.45	6,256.29	6,321.52	6,252.58	68.94	1.10
FINANCIAL INDEX	10,947.45	10,808.26	10,934.91	10,804.62	130.29	1.21
Industry Index	9,014.90	8,847.37	9,012.25	8,944.07	68.18	0.76
Services Index	2,538.33	2,517.76	2,536.99	2,517.10	19.90	0.79
MSX Shariah Index	586.03	579.68	586.03	579.68	6.35	1.09
MSX TR INDEX	9,522.54	9,403.55	9,501.59	9,397.97	103.62	1.10
FINANCIAL TR IDX	13,005.95	12,840.59	12,991.05	12,836.26	154.79	1.21
INDUSTRIAL TR IDX	11,114.59	10,908.05	11,111.33	11,027.27	84.06	0.76
SERVICES TR IDX	3,310.17	3,283.35	3,308.43	3,282.48	25.95	0.79
FIXED INCOME INDEX	1,206.85	1,206.85	1,206.85	1,206.85	0.00	0.00

Trading Summary

Volume	Turnover	Trades	Market Cap	Up	Down	Equal	Sec. Traded
126,547,312	36,273,730	4,755	33,535,455,095	35	10	29	74

SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 3

	SECURITY NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR.	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF (RD)	DIFF %	LAST PR.	LAST BD	LAST OFFER	P/B VALUE	MARKET CAP
REGULAR MARKET																
OM0000001707	OMAN CABLES INDUSTRY	785	2,036	3	2,600	2,600	2,590	2,590	2,515	-0.075	-2.982	2,590	2,560	2,590	0.100	232,323,000
OM0000008934	ABRAJ ENERGY SERVICES	908,175	335,632	96	0.367	0.375	0.367	0.375	0.365	-0.010	-2.740	0.375	0.375	0.375	0.100	288,825,000
OM0000003125	GLOBE FINANCIAL INVESTMENT HO	201,800	46,439	5	0.230	0.233	0.228	0.233	0.227	-0.006	-2.643	0.233	0.231	0.235	0.100	46,600,000
OM0000002176	JAIZERA STEEL PRODUCTS	170,784	160,550	26	0.950	0.980	0.905	0.975	0.950	-0.025	-2.632	0.975	0.970	1.045	0.100	121,775,511
OM0000004420	BANK NIZWA	931,579	118,307	60	0.126	0.129	0.126	0.129	0.126	0.003	2.381	0.127	0.127	0.129	0.100	288,569,941
OM0000002796	BANK MUSCAT	34,764,254	12,581,977	896	0.360	0.370	0.358	0.367	0.359	-0.008	-2.228	0.367	0.369	0.367	0.100	254,847,722
OM0000009072	QAGS NETWORKS	14,618,660	3,017,387	591	0.204	0.208	0.204	0.208	0.204	0.004	1.961	0.208	0.208	0.208	0.100	900,769,775
OM0000002804	ASAFFA FOODS	72,510	48,590	6	0.678	0.680	0.670	0.680	0.672	-0.008	-1.190	0.680	0.671	0.680	0.100	81,600,000
OM0000002374	UNITED FINANCE	371,307	52,806	32	0.085	0.088	0.085	0.088	0.087	-0.001	-1.149	0.088	0.088	0.088	0.100	31,335,202
OM0000004768	MADINA KONGA FCU	342,225	42,772	29	0.136	0.136	0.124	0.126	0.125	-0.001	-0.800	0.126	0.125	0.125	0.100	22,050,000
OM0000004933	AL SUWADI POWER	25,210	4,160	5	0.165	0.165	0.165	0.165	0.164	0.001	0.610	0.165	0.162	0.165	0.100	117,877,046
OM0000003968	OREDDO	2,074	610	2	0.294	0.294	0.294	0.294	0.293	-0.001	-0.341	0.294	0.292	0.297	0.100	191,377,604
OM0000003224	RESURGENCE SERVICES	20,558	6,743	8	0.328	0.328	0.328	0.328	0.327	-0.001	-0.306	0.328	0.328	0.330	0.100	77,542,480
OM0000001533	OMINVEST	316,945	113,921	40	0.358	0.364	0.358	0.358	0.357	-0.001	-0.280	0.358	0.358	0.370	0.100	234,984,751
OM0000001087	OMAN UNITED INSURANCE	5,000	1,930	1	0.386	0.386	0.386	0.386	0.385	-0.001	-0.260	0.386	0.384	0.390	0.100	38,600,000
OM0000001483	NANALDA	426,040	168,284	46	0.385	0.386	0.391	0.386	0.385	-0.001	-0.253	0.386	0.395	0.396	0.100	645,874,757
OM0000002168	AL ANWAR CERAMIC	210,635	40,288	19	0.191	0.192	0.188	0.191	0.191	0.000	0.000	0.191	0.189	0.191	0.100	42,030,000
OM0000002226	ALJAZERA SERVICES	9,312	1,769	2	0.190	0.190	0.190	0.190	0.190	0.000	0.000	0.190	0.180	0.207	0.100	8,140,168
OM0000002440	AL SHARGYA INVESTMENT HO	1,000	113	1	0.113	0.113	0.113	0.113	0.113	0.000	0.000	0.113	0.112	0.116	0.100	10,170,000
OM0000003398	SOHAR INTERNATIONAL BANK	18,021,157	2,931,522	666	0.162	0.164	0.161	0.161	0.161	0.000	0.000	0.161	0.161	0.163	0.100	1,065,376,649
OM0000003661	VOLTAPE ENERGY	17,567	29,576	15	1.650	1.700	1.650	1.700	1.700	0.000	0.000	1.700	1.699	1.700	0.100	158,142,375
OM0000004925	ALBATHIN POWER	33,334	5,467	10	0.164	0.164	0.164	0.164	0.164	0.000	0.000	0.164	0.164	0.164	0.100	110,681,539
OM0000003026	OMAN TELECOM	3,380,190	3,707,570	103	1.099	1.101	1.093	1.093	1.099	-0.006	-0.546	1.093	1.093	1.096	0.100	819,750,000
Total	23	74,851,401	23,398,247	2,662												

Parallel Market

OM0000002077	AL OMANIYA FINANCIAL SERVICES	1,100	181	2	0.165	0.165	0.164	0.164	0.154	-0.010	6.494	0.164	0.160	0.163	0.100	51,728,388
OM0000004776	TAKAFUL OMAN	151,000	12,661	15	0.083	0.085	0.082	0.085	0.082	-0.003	3.659	0.085	0.082	0.087	0.100	21,250,000
OM0000001897	MAJAN COLLEGE	20,338	2,512	3	0.124	0.124	0.123	0.124	0.120	-0.004	3.333	0.124	0.122	0.124	0.100	12,276,000
OM0000002549	BANK DHOFAR	5,587,081	1,018,668	317	0.181	0.187	0.180	0.187	0.181	-0.006	3.315	0.187	0.187	0.187	0.100	568,442,325
OM0000002333	SALALAH PORT	310	124	2	0.400	0.400	0.400	0.400	0.390	-0.010	2.564	0.400	0.400	0.400	0.100	71,934,960
OM0000003141	BARKA WATER AND POWER	189,461	32,398	6	0.171	0.175	0.171	0.175	0.171	-0.004	2.339	0.175	0.171	0.175	0.100	28,000,000
OM0000009606	QJ RASE INDUSTRIES (SPZ)	21,138,584	3,983,152	668	0.187	0.191	0.187	0.191	0.187	0.004	2.139	0.191	0.191	0.191	0.100	316,800,000
OM0000001020	ASTAD SHIPPING	9,284,906	1,774,433	573	0.190	0.193	0.190	0.192	0.188	-0.004	2.128	0.192	0.192	0.193	0.000	1,000,078,902
OM0000001152	OMAN NATL ENGNG & INVESTMENT	114,519	17,132	18	0.148	0.148	0.146	0.146	0.145	-0.001	2.041	0.146	0.145	0.150	0.100	22,500,000
OM0000002287	GULF MUSHROOM PRODUCTS	12,742	5,043	15	0.385	0.388	0.384	0.388	0.382	-0.006	1.531	0.388	0.388	0.398	0.100	18,214,788
OM0000001772	ALANWAR INVESTMENT	261,688	34,637	17	0.133	0.133	0.131	0.133	0.131	-0.002	1.527	0.133	0.132	0.133	0.100	39,707,540
OM0000001020	OMAN CHROMITE	100	965	1	3.650	3.650	3.650	3.650	3.600	-0.050	1.389	3.650	3.600	3.650	1.000	12,045,000
OM0000007910	AMAN REAL ESTATE	12,830	1,014	5	0.080	0.080	0.079	0.079	0.078	-0.001	1.282	0.079	0.078	0.079	0.100	15,800,000
OM0000001889	SALALAH MILLS	960	308	1	0.415	0.415	0.415	0.415	0.410	-0.005	1.220	0.415	0.410	0.415	0.100	25,922,172
OM0000009659	JABAL REIF	48,024	4,899	8	0.102	0.103	0.102	0.103	0.102	-0.001	0.980	0.103	0.101	0.103	0.100	17,922,000
OM0000009759	QJ EXPLORATION AND PRODUCTION	8,860,475	3,499,262	150	0.394	0.396	0.393	0.396	0.383	-0.003	0.763	0.396	0.390	0.400	0.100	316,800,000
OM0000002572	OMAN OIL MARKETING	14,392	12,157	12	0.850	0.850	0.840	0.850	0.845	-0.005	0.592	0.850	0.850	0.844	0.100	52,083,750
OM0000001400	OMAN FLOUR MILLS	2,000	980	1	0.490	0.490	0.490	0.490	0.490	0.000	0.000	0.490	0.490	0.490	0.100	81,364,500
OM0000001434	NATL REAL ESTATE DEVT & INVTMNTS	2	10	1	4.900	4.900	4.900	4.900	4.900	0.000	0.000	4.900	4.900	4.900	1.000	8,836,250
OM0000001509	DIHOAF INTL DEVT & INVESTMENT	10,000	2,600	1	0.260	0.260	0.260	0.260	0.260	0.000	0.260	0.260	0.254	0.265	0.100	128,974,575
OM0000001590	MUSCAT FINANCE	572,372	40,073	28	0.070	0.071	0.070	0.070	0.070	0.000	0.000	0.070	0.068	0.070	0.100	21,500,243
OM0000001681	OMAN EMBRATES HO	16,897	1,766	5	0.104	0.106	0.104	0.105	0.105	0.000	0.000	0.106	0.104	0.106	0.100	12,796,875
OM0000001962	AL MADINA INVESTMENT HOLDING	7,512	327	3	0.044	0.044	0.044	0.044	0.044	0.000	0.000	0.044	0.041	0.044	0.100	3,740,000
OM0000002028	GULF INTERNATIONAL CHEMICALS	20,000	1,580	2	0.078	0.078	0.078	0.078	0.078	0.000	0.000	0.078	0.077	0.078	0.100	1,638,000
OM0000002200	AHLI BANK	2,529	478	4	0.189	0.189	0.189	0.189	0.189	0.000	0.000	0.189	0.182	0.189	0.100	511,585,261
OM0000002648	NATIONAL FINANCE	42,400	8,906	9	0.211	0.211	0.210	0.210	0.210	0.000	0.000	0.210	0.210	0.212	0.100	127,706,573
OM0000003000	AI MAHA PETROLEUM PRODTS MKRTNG	10,361	11,397	6	1.100	1.100	1.100	1.100	1.100	0.000	0.000	1.100	0.000	1.100	0.100	75,900,000
OM0000005983	PHOENIX POWER	804,163	131,854	30	0.164	0.164	0.163	0.164	0.164	0.000	0.000	0.164	0.164	0.164	0.100	239,866,639
OM0000007084	MUSCAT CITY DESALINATION	134,950	11,974	12	0.089	0.089	0.089	0.089	0.089	0.000	0.000	0.089	0.089	0.089	0.100	13,843,968
OM0000008447	OMAN REIT FUND	44,328	4,525	13	0.102	0.103	0.102	0.102	0.102	0.000	0.000	0.102	0.102	0.103	0.100	66,538,912
OM0000008868	THE PEARL REIF	17,286	3,323	9	0.196	0.196	0.192	0.192	0.192	0.000	0.000	0.192	0.192	0.196	0.100	133,585,550
OM0000009606	QJ RASE INDUSTRIES (SPZ)	21,138,584	3,983,152	668	0.187	0.191	0.187	0.191	0.187	0.004	2.139	0.191	0.191	0.191	0.100	316,800,000
OM0000001180	NATIONAL GAS	66,913	6,102	6	0.092	0.092	0.091	0.091	0.092	-0.001	1.087	0.091	0.090	0.092	0.100	77,350,000
OM0000001806	MUSCAT INSURANCE	2,200	1,496	1	0.680	0.680	0.680	0.680	0.680	-0.010	-1.449	0.680	0.680	0.700	1.000	7,487,192
OM0000003281	TAGEER FINANCE	7,845	988	2	0.128	0.128	0.128	0.128	0.128	-0.003	-2.328	0.128	0.128	0.128	0.100	14,912,000
OM0000003605	ALMAHA CEMENT	10,574	1,870	10	0.280	0.280	0.280	0.280	0.288	-0.008	-3.114	0.280	0.279	0.280	0.100	15,400,000
OM0000001384	FINANCIAL SERVICES	47,200	37,426	10	0.086	0.085	0.078	0.078	0.078	-0.004	-8.879	0.079	0.079	0.079	0.100	1,560,000
Total	37	47,558,900	10,645,129	1,983												



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Email: bajifazil@gmail.com

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What's app: 0096895392251
Email: regil.lukose@gmail.com

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Indian male, MBA Finance, 20+ yrs Gulf experience in Accounting, Auditing, Oman VAT, Tax Assessment. Valid Oman Driving License. Available immediately.

Contact: 96987261 (Oman), +917418469385 (India)
Email: nrajan19742003@gmail.com

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Dynamic professional with 16+ yrs of progressive experience in financial strategy, business consulting/management, operational excellence, and growth leadership across Trading, Construction, RMC production, and MNCs company. Open to strategic senior management opportunities.

Contact: 92022786 or 97403883
Email: gm.seekers.2025@gmail.com

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Pharmacist with 16 yrs exp. in retail & hospital pharmacy in Muscat & India. Previously registered with MOH, Oman with work License, NOC with D/L, currently in Muscat

Contact: 77336141
Email: confession.mercy@gmail.com

MANAGER

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Email ID: alhameed1527@gmail.com

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Cost Accountant, B.Com with 15 yrs exp in Oman. Can join urgently, Contact: 7733 6141

Indian (M), 28, Accountant with overall exp. 3 yrs valid D/L. Contact: 78624277

Indian male Accountant. 10 yrs in muscat. D/L and NOC available. 79774800

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

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Indian male Sr. Accountant (M.com with Finance) 17+ yrs exp. in Oman with valid D/L. Contact: 91314540

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Management, accounting operations & MIS reporting. Seeking a suitable managerial or senior accounting position. Contact: 78581435

Indian male, Bcom, MBA finance, 14 yrs of Oman and Indian experience, seeking suitable jobs in accounts. Have valid Oman D/L. Contact:97436925. Email : sandeep_as@yahoo.com

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

Accountant looking for job. Contact: 75024166

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

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

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

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

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

ADMINISTRATION

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

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

ARCHITECT

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

IT

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

ENGINEER

Civil foreman Indian 14 yrs experience valid Oman D/L seeks job contact :94255966

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

ENGINEER

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

ENGINEER

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

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

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

Btech Civil Engineer Indian female, looking for job.experience in AutoCad &quantity measurements. Contact: 90109372/91358740, email: anuvikram9812 @gmail.com

Indian male, B.E mechanical with 4+ yrs automotive CFD experience (underhood thermal, ANSA). senior CFD engineer at Alten India. immediate joiner. Contact: 9080451226 | +96896008574 | maheshbabuv1799@gmail.com

Software Engineer / full-stack developer B. Tech computer science with experience at Google strong in Python, Java, Go, Cloud & AI systems. Contact: +968 91950661 | anaswer.impluse@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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Finance manager, Indian 26 yrs of experience, looking Job Change, Contact:- 98006226

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

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

PURCHASE/ PROCUREMENT

Quantity surveyor (B.Tech civil, AIQS , Assoc.RICS), 4+ yrs Oman experience, skilled in primavera, BIM, Revit,valid Oman D/L. seeking infrastructure, oil & gas, fit-Out roles. Contact: 97649953

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Strategic operations leader with 22 yrs experience in Logistics, Procurement and Commercial administration. Expert in leading high performing teams across Store, Branch office, Warehouse, Service and Financial domains. Seeking leadership roles. Contact 93451519, Email anirudhadat@gmail.com

Indian male procurement executive with 11 yrs of experience in Oman, holding Oman D/L available in Muscat for immediate joining. Contact: 92345877

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

28 years of experience in sales & marketing in Oman within the consumer durables and FMCG. Indian MBA. seeking a senior managerial position. Contact: 93340457

Indian male 15 yrs experience having Oman D/L Looking for suitable placement in sales & marketing- contact - 9169 3829

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Cuba rejects US security threat claims

HAVANA: The Cuban government has firmly denied allegations that it poses a security threat to the United States, even as tensions escalate between Havana and Washington over broader geopolitical and economic disputes.

In a statement released on Monday, Cuba's Ministry of Foreign Affairs stressed its readiness to engage in dialogue and cooperation with the US on issues ranging from counterterrorism to regional security, a sharp contrast to the harsh accusations coming from the White House.

In its declaration, Cuban officials made clear: "The Cuban people and the American people benefit from constructive engagement, lawful cooperation, and peaceful coexistence," underscoring a willingness to pursue "a respectful and reciprocal dialogue ... based on mutual interest and international law."

The dispute has intensified in the wake of the controversial US military operation in Venezuela last month that resulted in the capture of President Nicolas Maduro.

Washington's actions there have strained relations throughout the Caribbean and Latin America, with Havana bearing the brunt of policy shifts that have cut off its primary source of energy. —ANI

India's apex court slams Meta, and WhatsApp on data privacy

A Bench led by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant said, 'We will not allow to share a single piece of information. You can't play with the right to privacy in this country'

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court of India on Tuesday expressed serious concern over WhatsApp and Meta's data-sharing practices while hearing a batch of appeals arising from the Competition Commission of India's (CCI) order imposing a Rs. 213.14 crore penalty on Meta for WhatsApp's 2021 "take it or leave it" privacy policy.

On November 4, 2025, the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) upheld the



CCI's penalty but partially allowed data sharing for advertising purposes, reversing a five-year ban imposed by the regulator. Subsequently, on December 15, 2025, a clarification was issued mandating that while advertising-related data sharing may continue, all data sharing, both advertising and non-advertising, must provide users with clear opt-out rights.

A Bench led by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant, while hearing appeals filed by WhatsApp and Meta, as well as a separate appeal by the CCI challenging one of the NCLAT findings, said: "We will not allow to share a single piece of information. You can't play with the right to privacy in this country." Calling the practice a "mockery of constitutionalism,"

the Court questioned how consent could be considered valid when users are effectively forced to accept the policy on a "take it or leave it" basis. Justice Joymalya Bagchi observed that what had been held against the companies was that the consent obtained was "manufactured consent."

The Bench also raised concerns about the effectiveness of opt-out

mechanisms, noting that a street vendor or a person placed in a remote area in Tamil Nadu or in Bihar may not understand the "crafty language" used in privacy policies. The Court remarked that consumers were being commercially exploited and described silent consumers as victims of the system with "no voice".

The Court further observed that users have been made "addicted" on such platforms and that the real choice was not whether they were warned, but whether they were compelled to accept the terms or walk away from the service.

Emphasising that the right to privacy cannot be compromised, the Bench asserted that it would not allow the rights of any citizen to be violated.

"This is a decent way of committing theft on the privacy of the country. Right to privacy is so zealously protected in this country, we will not allow you to violate it", the CJJ said.

The Court posted the matter for the purpose of issuing interim directions on February 9.

"On the joint request made by senior counsels, the Union of India is impleaded as respondents. Union may also file its counter affidavit", the Court said in its order.

— ANI

HEAVY SNOWFALL

Winter storms claim 27 lives in Japan

TOKYO: A severe cold snap has led to the deaths of 27 people across northern and coastal Japan, authorities confirmed on Monday, as heavy snowfall and freezing temperatures continue to batter the region.

The Fire and Disaster Management Agency reported the majority of fatalities occurred along the Sea of Japan coast, with Niigata Prefecture hardest hit, recording 12 deaths. Akita Prefecture in the north reported six fatalities, while Hokkaido, the country's northernmost island, confirmed three.

The agency further detailed that two deaths were recorded in Aomori Prefecture, and one each in Iwate, Yamagata, Nagano, and Shimane Prefectures. The casualties are largely attributed to incidents such as vehicle accidents, collapses under the weight of snow while clearing roofs, and exposure.

The deadly conditions are the result of a powerful and persistent



cold air mass that has settled over the area in recent weeks, triggering snowfall far exceeding seasonal averages. Many regions along the Sea of Japan coast have received more than double their typical winter accumulation, paralyzing transport, disrupting power, and overwhelming local infrastructure.

Emergency services continue to issue warnings as meteorological forecasts predict further snowfall and frigid conditions in the coming days.

— DNA

INTERIM PRIME MINISTER

Gen-Z leaders exerted pressure for appointment of specific individuals as ministers in Nepal

KATHMANDU: Nepal's interim Prime Minister Sushila Karki has revealed that the leaders of September's Gen Z movement exerted strong pressure on her to appoint specific individuals as ministers on board the interim government.

Addressing the national assembly for the very first time since the dissolution of the house of representatives and the new session of the upper house, Karki revealed the pressure on her to induct figures who had earlier resigned from ministerial posts to contest elections.

"As I was appointed as the interim Prime Minister on 12th of September (2025) the cabinet expansion took quite a time. The government was not formed under the leadership of political party as they have those specified members to go on board; I had to search for those from outside. At that time, I had a strong pressure from the Gen-Z, to bring on people from Gen-Z's. At that time came the name of Mahabir Pun, Kulman



Ghising amongst the names, I had the pressure to include them and many other names were floated in at that time. Some of them came on board the cabinet as well, while some had rejected but the Gen-Z had pressured that you should take Kulman (Ghising), (Mahabir) Pun and then communication minister

must be inducted and I personally requested them to remain on board the government saying that I have the pressure from the Gen-Z, the name of Bablu Gupta (former sports minister) also came from the Gen-Z's," Karki said.

Recalling the circumstances under which Pun joined the govern-

ment, she said youth leader Sudan Gurung had personally brought him in. She further stated that, even at the time of appointment, she had agreed to allow some ministers, including Ghising, to leave the Cabinet if they chose to contest elections.

She shared that Pun was also inducted under similar circumstances and had left the cabinet dissatisfied with the government's inability to introduce the laws he advocated for.

Karki was appointed prime minister on September 12, 2025, a day after President Ramchandra Paudel exercised his constitutional authority to appoint her as head of an interim government following the September 8-9 protests and the resignation of then prime minister KP Sharma Oli.

She was given a six-month mandate to lead the country and hold elections by March 5, 2026, marking her tenure as Nepal's first female prime minister and executive head. — ANI

ECONOMIC HARDSHIP

In Zimbabwe millions choose funeral insurance over pricey medical cover

HARARE: In a striking reflection of economic hardship and shifting social priorities, millions of Zimbabweans are opting for funeral insurance rather than health coverage, a trend that highlights deepening challenges in accessing affordable medical care across the country, according to media report.

Funeral insurance policies have become the dominant form of financial protection for many, even as basic healthcare costs strain household budgets.

The story of Steward Ganda, 60, encapsulates the dilemma facing many Zimbabweans. Suffering from a debilitating illness and unable to afford early medical intervention, he spent his final months at home in Kambuzuma, a low-income Harare suburb, before finally being admitted to hospital. His family struggled to pay a specialist consultation fee of \$600, an amount far beyond their reach, and he died within a month.

We couldn't raise that amount," Ganda's nephew Ngoni Mutambararo told Al Jazeera.

Ganda's life and death underline a growing trend: while health insurance in Zimbabwe can cost around \$200 per month, a prohibitive sum for most, funeral insurance premiums often start as low as \$0.75 to \$1, making them far more affordable for families with limited income. As a result, fu-



neral cover has eclipsed medical insurance as the most widely held financial product in the country, reported Al Jazeera.

Current data indicate that approximately 90 per cent of Zimbabwe's population, some 16 million people, lack health insurance and must pay medical costs out of pocket. Although some middle- and higher-income earners have access to employer-provided health coverage, fewer than 900,000 Zimbabweans are in formal employment with such benefits.

Industry insiders point to several factors driving the preference for funeral cover. Funeral expenses are seen as immediate and unavoidable, with significant cultural

importance placed on dignified burial rites. "Funerals are immediate, unavoidable events that come with significant financial and communal expectations," said Innocent Tshuma, a public relations manager at a funeral services provider. "In contrast, access to comprehensive medical aid remains limited due to affordability challenges, exclusions and unpredictable out-of-pocket costs."

Zimbabwe's public health system, weakened by chronic underfunding, limited infrastructure, and migration of healthcare professionals, further compounds the problem. Public clinics and hospitals struggle to provide quality care, prompting many to avoid them unless absolutely necessary.

Cultural attitudes also play a role. Some Zimbabweans, like physician Vivek Solanki, note that discussing illness and preparing for medical crises can be socially taboo, while planning for death is widely accepted and prioritised.

Community responses have emerged alongside formal insurance products. Grassroots burial savings groups and informal "burial societies" help members contribute small monthly amounts to cover funeral costs, offering an alternative for those unable to afford commercial policies.

The government has acknowledged the need to expand access to health coverage and plans to launch a national health insurance scheme later this year. — ANI

TRAVEL ADVISORY

IndiGo cancels Central Asian flights

NEW DELHI: IndiGo on Tuesday issued a travel advisory following developments in Iran and adjusted its flight schedule to ensure a "safe and seamless" experience for customers and crew.

In a post on X, IndiGo noted that its flights to and from Tbilisi, Almaty, Baku, and Tashkent have been cancelled until February 28.

"Travel Advisory- In view of the developing situation around Iran, we have made additional adjustments to our flight schedule to ensure a safe and seamless experience for our customers and crew. As part of these measures, IndiGo flights to and from Tbilisi, Almaty, Baku, and Tashkent have been cancelled until February 28, 2026. Customers may visit <https://bit.ly/4rnkK5G> to explore alternate travel options or opt for a full refund, as per their preference. As the situation continues to evolve, our plans remain under regular review. Any further updates or changes will be shared through our communication channels. We appreciate your patience, understanding, and continued trust," the airlines said.

On January 25, IndiGo Airlines issued an advisory regarding cancellations and certain "proactive" changes to its international flights, as deemed necessary, due to recent developments in Iran.

IndiGo flights scheduled for January 25 from Delhi to Tbilisi and from Mumbai to Almaty, as



well as the return flights, were cancelled.

These developments follow Trump's deployment of warships to the Middle East and his call for Tehran to resume nuclear negotiations, which were halted in June after attacks by Israel and the US on Iranian facilities. On Sunday, Trump said the US was talking with Tehran, reiterating that "we have very big, powerful ships heading in that direction", while expressing hope for an agreement.

Khamenei maintained a firm stance, warning that any attack would trigger a "regional war". The United States and the European Union continue to express concern over Iran's nuclear activities, which Tehran insists are for civilian purposes. Washington has outlined conditions for resuming talks, including ending uranium enrichment, limiting the missile programme and ceasing support for regional armed groups.



LIFESTYLE

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STUDY

Three of the compounds, including two never seen before, showed particularly strong effects. The findings hint at a surprising new source for future skin-rejuvenation therapies

Scientists have discovered new anti-ageing compounds produced by a little-studied blood bacterium, opening up promising avenues for future skin-rejuvenation therapies.

These indole metabolites were able to reduce inflammation, oxidative stress, and collagen-damaging activity in skin cell cultures.

Three of the compounds, including two never seen before, showed particularly strong effects. The findings hint at a surprising new source for future skin-rejuvenation therapies.

People invest significant time and effort into keeping their skin looking young through masks, creams and serums.

Researchers have now identified naturally produced molecules with anti-ageing potential that originate within the body itself.

These three compounds are derived from a blood-dwelling bacterium and have been shown

to reduce both cellular damage and inflammation in laboratory-grown human skin cells.

The results, reported in the Journal of Natural Products by the American Chemical Society and the American Society of Pharmacognosy, suggest a promising direction for future skin-ageing treatments.

Scientists still have a limited understanding of how bacterial by-products (called metabolites) circulating in the bloodstream influence human health.

One group of metabolites, known as indole compounds, has attracted particular interest due to their anti-ageing, anti-inflammatory, and antimicrobial effects.

In 2015, researchers discovered a blood bacterium capable of producing these compounds and named it Paracoccus sanguinis.

Chung Sub Kim, Sullim Lee and their team wanted to learn more about P. sanguinis and focused their study on its indole-functionalised metabolites.

“We became interested in P. sanguinis because blood-derived microbes are a relatively uncharted area of research,” says Kim.

“Given the unique environment of the bloodstream, we believed that studying individual species like P. sanguinis could reveal previously unknown metabolic function relevant to health and disease,” added Kim.

Identifying new compounds

To explore this idea, the team cultured a large quantity of P. sanguinis for three days and then extracted the full mixture of metabolites produced by the microbe.

They used several analytical tools, including spectrometry, isotope labelling and computational approaches, to determine the chemical structures of 12 distinct indole metabolites within the mixture. Six of these had never been documented before.

Kim, Lee and their colleagues then examined whether the in-

dole compounds could limit processes linked to skin ageing.

They added liquid solutions containing each metabolite to cultured human skin cells. Before treatment, the cells had been exposed to conditions that increased reactive oxygen species, which are molecules known to trigger inflammation and damage collagen.

Among the 12 indoles tested, three of them, including two newly identified ones, reduced the levels of reactive oxygen species in these stressed skin cells compared with untreated samples.

These same metabolites also lowered the amounts of two inflammatory proteins and a protein involved in collagen degradation.

Based on these early results, the researchers note that the newly characterised indole metabolites could one day form the basis for therapies that help counter the effects of ageing on the skin.

-ANI



Sunderland trounce Burnley



The winners moved up to eighth in the Premier League, while Burnley 19th in table, remained winless in 15 league games

LONDON: Sunderland claimed a comfortable 3-0 victory against strugglers Burnley, whose miserable run without a Premier League win extended to 15 matches on Monday.

Once Habib Diarra's shot deflected off visiting defender Axel Tuanzebe to provide the hosts

with a ninth-minute opener at the Stadium of Light, the outcome appeared to be a foregone conclusion.

And so it proved as Sunderland celebrated a 12th game without a home defeat - the longest unbeaten start to a top-flight campaign at home by a newly promoted side since Nottingham Forest in 1977-78.

The hosts, who have exceeded expectations on their return to the Premier League after a nine-year absence, claimed their second goal in the 32nd minute. Diarra rounded off a sweeping move down the right with a low effort that Burnley goalkeeper Martin Dubravka should have done better with.

However, it was no more than Regis le Bris' side deserved.

Sunderland played with an intensity and purpose that Burnley simply failed to match and Moroccan Chemsdine Talbi put the gloss on an excellent night's work from the hosts with a stunning third goal that flew into the top corner from 20 yards.

The success lifted the Black



Cats up to eighth in the table - five points off the top four - while the second-bottom Clarets, who have not taken three points since 26 October, remain 11 points from safety.

Premier League's quiet deadline day

The Premier League had its quietest ever winter transfer deadline day as just seven deals were completed on Monday.

There were five further deals confirmed after the deadline - among them, Sunderland brought in Ecuador winger Nilson Angulo from Anderlecht in a deal worth £17.5m, while Wolves signed midfielder Angel Gomes from Marseille on loan and replaced Strand

Larsen with Adam Armstrong from Southampton for £7m.

That took the overall spending in the Premier League during the winter window to more than £390m. Liverpool did agree a deal on deadline day to sign defender Jeremy Jacquet from Rennes, but that move - and the payment of the £60m fee - won't happen until the summer.

The day's two big talking points involved Crystal Palace - Strand Larsen's arrival from Wolves and the calling off of fellow striker Jean-Philippe Mateta's move to AC Milan because of issues with his medical.

Otherwise, it was a day largely devoid of transfer drama as none of

the top-six clubs did any business.

One of the more interesting moves was a Premier League exit, as former England midfielder Calvin Phillips moved from Manchester City to Championship side Sheffield United on loan for the rest of the season.

That move comes four years after City signed Phillips from Leeds in a deal worth £45m.

Other deals confirmed late on included Nottingham Forest's signing of Borussia Monchengladbach defender Luca Netz, Chelsea winger Tyrrique George's move on loan to Everton for the rest of the season, while Tottenham and Arsenal both announced an academy signing. - Agencies

SUSPENSION SINCE FEBRUARY 2022



FIFA boss Infantino 'infantile' for wanting to lift Russia ban

LONDON: Ukraine's sports minister has called FIFA president Gianni Infantino "irresponsible" and "infantile" for saying that world football's governing body will look at lifting a ban on Russia, according to a BBC Sport report on Tuesday.

Russian national teams and clubs were suspended from all competitions by FIFA and UEFA in February 2022 after the country's invasion of Ukraine.

With the war still going on, Infantino has said "this ban has not achieved anything" and "has just created more frustration and hatred". He added: "Having girls and boys from Russia being able to play football games in other parts of Europe would help."

In response, Ukraine sports minister Matvii Bidnyi said in a

social media post: "Gianni Infantino's words sound irresponsible - not to say infantile. "They detach football from the reality in which children are being killed. "Let me remind you that since the start of Russia's full-scale aggression, more than 650 Ukrainian athletes and coaches have been killed by Russians. Among them were more than one hundred footballers."

Infantino was awarded the Russian Order of Friendship medal by president Vladimir Putin after Russia hosted the 2018 World Cup.

However, since Russia's ban, they have been unable to compete at the 2022 World Cup and and UEFA's Euro 2024 and the country will not be part of the 2026 World Cup. Russia have not completely stopped playing international foot-

ball as they have played matches against non-Western nations without needing the permission of FIFA or UEFA.

"War is a crime, not politics," added Bidnyi. "It is Russia that politicises sport and uses it to justify aggression."

Last year, Ukraine criticised the International Paralympic Committee's (IPC) decision to lift a ban on athletes from Russia and its close ally Belarus.

The Ukrainian National Paralympic Committee said the IPC had allowed Russia and Belarus to "raise their flags, drenched in the blood of hundreds of thousands of people". Despite the IPC lifting its ban, Russian and Belarusian Parathletes will not be at next month's Winter Paralympics. - Agencies

SWITCH FROM ATALANTA

Nigerian star Lookman joins Atletico Madrid

MADRID: Atletico Madrid have signed Nigeria forward Ademola Lookman from Atalanta in a deal worth £30.3m on Monday.

Lookman will be the first English-born player to have played in the Premier League, Bundesliga, Serie A and La Liga.

Just 21 players have done so, while only three - Christian Poulsen, Justin Kluivert and Stevan Jovetic - have featured in all of Europe's "big five" leagues, which also includes France's Ligue 1.

The London-born 28-year-old has played in Serie A since 2022, scoring 55 times and making 27 assists following a move from Bundesliga club RB Leipzig.

His goals included a hat-trick in the Europa League final against Bayer Leverkusen in 2024, which secured the club's first European trophy.

In 2024, he was named African Footballer of the Year and was also the only African player on the men's Ballon d'Or shortlist that year, finishing 14th.

He represented England at youth level, winning the Under-20 World Cup in 2017, before making his debut for Nigeria in 2022.

Atletico, who are third in Spain's top flight and trail leaders Barcelona by ten points, announced they had agreed a deal with Atalanta on Monday before confirming that Lookman has signed until June 2030 on trans-



fer deadline day. He began his career at Charlton Athletic, playing his first game in 2015, before moving to Everton two years later, where he scored on his Premier League debut. Following a successful loan spell, he then moved permanently to Leipzig in July 2019.

He then had season-long loans with Fulham and Leicester City before making the switch to Italy.

Meanwhile, Atletico Madrid also signed Mexico's Alaska-born midfielder Obed Vargas from Major League Soccer side Seat-

tle Sounders. Vargas, who was born in Anchorage, has joined the Spanish club on a deal until 30 June, 2030.

The 20-year-old joined the Sounders in 2019 and made his MLS debut on 22 July, 2021 when - aged 15 years and 351 days - he became the then-third youngest player in the league.

He has won the 2021-22 CONCACAF Champions League and 2025 Leagues Cup with the Sounders and played against Atletico at last summer's FIFA Club World Cup. - Agencies

SAUDI PRO LEAGUE

France star Benzema joins Al Hilal from rival Al Ittihad

RIYADH: France icon Karim Benzema swapped one Saudi club for another on Monday when joining Al Hilal from rival Al Ittihad - a move that could be bad news for Cristiano Ronaldo, according to media reports.

The former Ballon d'Or winner has joined Saudi Pro League leader Al Hilal, which is one point ahead of Ronaldo's Al Nassr.

Ronaldo is still waiting for his first league title since moving to Saudi Arabia in 2022 and has seen his main rival strengthen with the addition of five-time Champions League winner Benzema.

The former Real Madrid striker, a teammate of Ronaldo's at the Spanish giant, led Al Ittihad to

the title last year, as well as the King's Cup. Al Hilal is Saudi Arabia's most successful team with 21 league titles and four Asian Championships. Last year it stunned Manchester City at the Club World Cup 4-3 and knocked out Pep Guardiola's team. Coached by two-time Champions League finalist Simone Inzaghi, it represents a major threat to Ronaldo's hopes of being crowned league champion after sparking a wave of top soccer players - including Benzema - to move to the Saudi league.

Benzema's deal comes at a time when there are reports Ronaldo is unhappy about a lack of transfer activity from Al Nassr.

Saudi Arabia's Public Invest-



ment Fund is the majority owner of Al Hilal, Al Ittihad and Al Nassr.

Al Hilal is accustomed to making spectacular signings, having lured Neymar from Paris Saint-Germain in 2023. It previously tried to sign Kylian Mbappe for a world record \$332 million and last year moved for Manchester United captain Bruno Fernandes.

Ronaldo joined Al Nassr after leaving Man United as a free agent in 2022. The five-time Ballon d'Or winner has become the face of soccer in Saudi Arabia, but his only trophy has been the Arab Champions Cup. He was absent from Al Nassr's Saudi Pro League match against Al Riyadh on Monday amid reports he is unhappy. - Agencies

Kamindu in, Dhananjaya out as Sri Lanka flip-flop with selection

Pavan Rathnayake made the cut for the upcoming ICC Men's T20 World Cup, while Pramod Madushan was dropped



COLOMBO: Sri Lanka have recalled Kamindu Mendis and dropped Dhananjaya de Silva from their 15-man squad for the T20 World Cup that begins on Saturday. Twenty-three-year-old batter Pavan Rathnayake has notably made the cut, as has Eshan Malinga, who dislocated his shoulder on Sunday. But there was no room for seamer Pramod Madushan.

The major talking point is the return of Kamindu, who didn't feature in the starting XI in the T20Is against Pakistan last month, and was dropped ahead of the ongoing T20I series against England.

But he is back now, with Dhananjaya making way after struggling to force the pace in his recent T20I innings against England and Pakistan.

Kamindu himself hasn't been in the best form over recent months, scoring just 159 runs in the format since the start of 2025, at an average of 19.87, though his strike

rate in that period, of 130.32, gives cause for a small measure of optimism.

Dhananjaya's utility with the ball had been identified as a reason for his initial inclusion, but the ambidextrous Kamindu can fill that role too, even if he has bowled just six overs in 12 matches since the start of 2025.

This turn of events has also left the door open for left-arm-spin all-rounder Dunith Wellalage to stake a claim in the playing XI, but the 23-year-old's inexperience stands against him.

His franchise and domestic experience, however, is more substantial; he played in the SA20 for Paarl Royals last year and led Sri Lanka A in the Rising Stars Asia Cup in November.

Another potential-based pick is that of Rathnayake, who had made his T20I debut in Pakistan in November but was dropped for the return series at home, having batted

just once in three games. His century in the third ODI against England, however, turned selectors' heads and earned him a call-up to the T20I side, and now the World Cup squad.

The flip-flopping regarding Kamindu, and the inclusions of Rathnayake and Wellalage, all point towards the uncertainty surrounding Sri Lanka's middle order as they head into the World Cup. While the top three of Pathum Nissanka, Kamil Mishara and Kusal Mendis is settled, Charith Asalanka and Dasun Shanaka, the ex and current captain, haven't been in the best of form at Nos. 4 and 5.

These middle-order travails have had the knock-on effect of Sri Lanka frequently slotting Janith Liyanage at No. 7 at the expense of a fifth frontline bowling option.

Liyanage has struck at 103.94 across 11 T20Is, but recently showed glimpses of his ceiling with an explosive cameo in the

third T20I against Pakistan.

Sri Lanka have far fewer concerns with their bowling. In Dushmantha Chameera, Matheesha Pathirana and Eshan Malinga, they possess potent seam options across all stages of the innings, though the latter's participation is currently in doubt owing to his injury. This makes the exclusions of Pramod Madushan and Nuwan Thushara understandable - the latter was a key cog in Sri Lanka's plans over the past year before his fall-off in form towards the tail end of 2025. Binura Fernando, another frequent inclusion over the past year, couldn't make it either.

There are also no surprises in the spin department which is headed by Wanindu Hasaranga and Maheesh Theekshana, with Wellalage, Asalanka and Kamindu expected to provide support.

Co-hosts Sri Lanka are placed in Group B of the 20-team World Cup alongside Australia, Ireland, Oman and Zimbabwe. All four of Sri Lanka's group games are at home. They face Ireland (February 8) and Zimbabwe (February 19) at the R Premadasa Stadium in Colombo, and Oman (February 12) and Australia (February 16) in Pallekele.

Sri Lanka squad: Dasun Shanaka (capt), Pathum Nissanka, Kamil Mishara, Kusal Mendis, Kusal Perera, Charith Asalanka, Kamindu Mendis, Janith Liyanage, Pavan Rathnayake, Dunith Wellalage, Wanindu Hasaranga, Maheesh Theekshana, Dushmantha Chameera, Matheesha Pathirana, Eshan Malinga. - Agencies



FAST BOWLER



Aussie Hazlewood set to miss first half of T20 World Cup

SYDNEY: Australia fast bowler Josh Hazlewood is unlikely to be involved in the first half of the T20 World Cup as he continues his recovery from injury.

The 35-year-old has not played since mid-November, missing the start of the Ashes against England with a hamstring strain and then suffering an Achilles injury during his rehabilitation that meant he played no part in the series.

Head coach Andrew McDonald said in December following the provisional squad announcement and again last month that Hazlewood was on track to be fit for the start of the tournament.

However, team-mate Pat Cummins, who was ruled out of the T20

World Cup with a back injury last week, does not expect Hazlewood to feature until midway through the tournament.

Bowling all-rounder Sean Abbott has been added to the squad as a travelling reserve.

Australia's first match is against Ireland on 11 February with the Super 8s scheduled to begin on 21 February.

"I caught up with Josh a couple of days ago and he's working so hard. I really feel for him - he's had a few setbacks," Cummins told Australian broadcaster Nine Network.

"He's doing everything he can. I don't think he will be there for the start of the tournament, but he's

trying his best to be there about halfway through."

Fellow squad members Glenn Maxwell, Nathan Ellis and Tim David, who missed Australia's recent tour of Pakistan, are set to join the team in Sri Lanka this week before a warm-up match against the Netherlands on Thursday.

Hazlewood, however, is remaining in Sydney, with selector Tony Dodemaide saying it is "more practical and beneficial for him to continue his rehabilitation at home".

Hazlewood has taken 79 wickets with an economy of 7.47 in 60 T20s for Australia, including figures of 3-16 in their 2021 T20 World Cup final victory over New Zealand. - Agencies

AUSTRALIA ODI SKIPPER

Cummins 'hopeful of IPL return'

MELBOURNE: Australia's Pat Cummins said he "ran out of time" to be fit for the T20 World Cup, but is hopeful of a return in the 2026 IPL and mindful of being fit for Australia's monster 2027 schedule.

The Test and ODI captain has been replaced in Australia's squad for the upcoming tournament in Sri Lanka and India by Ben Dwarshuis.

Cummins has been plagued by a back injury since Australia's tour of the Caribbean last July, with his only match since being the Ashes-clinching win in Adelaide.

When the urn was retained in just 11 days, Cummins and the Australian hierarchy decided he would sit out the final two Tests of the summer with an eye on the T20 World Cup.

But a "minor setback" led to the star quick not risking his long-term health, especially given he endured years of back issues early in his career.

"It was really unfortunate," Cummins, an Amazon Prime Video ambassador, told AAP.

"I feel pretty good, just a minor setback and just ran out of time really. "I'll rest up for a few weeks and go from there.

"We knew after the [Adelaide] Test match we were going to need somewhere between four and eight weeks to let the bone settle right down before then building back up.

"Initially, we thought it might only be four weeks, because I was feeling really good, but just had a follow-up scan. "They thought it probably needs another couple of weeks, so the timeline just became a bit too tight."



Australia's schedule, starting in August when they host Bangladesh in Darwin and Mackay, is unprecedented.

After the Bangladesh Tests, Australia will embark on a Test tour of South Africa in September for the first time since the infamous "Sandpapergate" series in 2018.

They will return for four home Tests against New Zealand, before being on the road for much of 2027. Next year involves a five-Test tour of India, the pink-ball 150th anniversary match against England at the MCG, an away Ashes, an ODI World Cup, and a possible World Test Championship final at Lord's.

Cummins said he didn't want to be "chasing his tail" for the monster 18-month period ahead.

"We thought the first half of the year was a pretty good time to be

conservative with the amount of cricket that's coming up," the 32-year-old said.

"We'll get it right, then hopefully that will mean you won't have to worry about it, and you can just go out and play all those Test matches.

"Whereas, if you're not careful with it now and it flares up, you're chasing tail a bit."

Captain of Sunrisers Hyderabad in the Indian Premier League (IPL), Cummins hopes to lead his franchise when the lucrative competition starts on March 26. "We'll just be guided by my back," he said.

"We'll have another scan in a few weeks, and if it's good, then we'll have a slow build-up.

"T20s are a little bit easier to get up for [than Tests], that's why I was so close to getting up for this World Cup." - Agencies

RUGBY WORLD CUP FROM 1 OCTOBER

England face Wales in Sydney showdown at 2027 RWC

LONDON: England and Wales will face each other in a potential pool decider at the 2027 Men's Rugby World Cup on 16 October in Sydney.

Steve Borthwick's side open their campaign in Pool F against Tonga on 2 October in Brisbane, before a game against Zimbabwe, who last appeared at the 1991 iteration, in Adelaide on 8 October.

England were defeated by Wales at their home World Cup in 2015, which was the last meeting between the sides at the tournament.

Wales face Zimbabwe in their opening game in Adelaide on 2 October then take on Tonga in Melbourne six days later.

In Pool D, Scotland begin the tournament against Uruguay in Melbourne on 3 October before a

showdown against Ireland in Perth a week later.

Scotland wrap up the group stage against Portugal in Brisbane on 17 October.

Ireland face Portugal in Sydney on 4 October and Uruguay in Brisbane on 17 October either side of their meeting with Scotland.

World Cup hosts Australia, who are in a pool with New Zealand, open the tournament against Hong Kong in Perth on 1 October.

Reigning champions South Africa will begin their defence of the trophy in Adelaide against Italy on 3 October.

The semi-finals of the tournament will be played at Stadium Australia on 5-6 November with the final at the same venue on 13 November. - Agencies



IRELAND RUGBY

'No panic' over injury list: Sheehan

DUBLIN: Ireland hooker Dan Sheehan said there is "confidence" in the players still available for Thursday's opening Six Nations match against France.

Head coach Andy Farrell named his team for the game on Tuesday and is without several usual starters through injury. Tadhg Furlong, Hugo Keenan, Ryan Baird and Mack Hansen are all out through injury, while Bundee Aki is suspended.

"We have confidence in the people we have," said Sheehan. "Some teams would struggle [with the injuries]. I don't think much has changed and there has been no sense of panic." - Agencies

ROUND-UP

Chery unveils exclusive 3-day flash sale with unmissable price drops

In line with the brand’s customer centric strategy, this special event is designed to make advanced automotive technology and first-class comfort more accessible than ever. The Flash Sale will run for only 72 hours, from February 3 to February 5

MUSCAT: Chery Oman is delighted to announce an exclusive 3 Day Flash Sale, offering customers across the Sultanate a limited time opportunity to own a new Chery at an exceptional value.

In line with the brand’s cus-



tomter centric strategy, this special event is designed to make advanced automotive technology and first-class comfort more accessible than ever. The Flash Sale will run for only 72 hours, from February 3 to February 5, 2026.

During this limited-time promotion, Chery is extending significant cash-only savings across its flagship sedan and SUV lineup. The refined Arrizo 8 Comfort is now available from RO 6,300, while the feature-rich Tiggo 8 Pro starts from RO 6,980. For drivers seeking premium mobility at an

unmatched value, the luxurious Tiggo 9 is offered at an exclusive RO 8,738. These prices provide exceptional, direct value, making it a rare moment to upgrade to a technologically advanced Chery at an irresistible entry point.

Chery vehicles featured in this Flash Sale are engineered using the brand’s advanced hard core vehicle architecture, designed to deliver outstanding stability, durability, and dynamic performance. The Arrizo 8 Comfort impresses with its elegant styling, upscale cabin, dual 12 inch screens, and re-

sponsive 2.0T & 1.6T turbocharged engine. Meanwhile, the versatile Tiggo SUV range offers spacious seating, enhanced comfort, and modern convenience features, crowned by the Tiggo 9’s premium interior, 15.6 inch HD central display, and intelligent interactive technologies.

Safety continues to be at the heart of Chery’s engineering philosophy. All models included in the Flash Sale come equipped with Advanced Driver Assistance Systems (ADAS), such as Adaptive Cruise Control, Blind Spot

Monitoring, and a 540 degree panoramic camera system, ensuring heightened confidence and protection on Oman’s roads. With a blend of intelligent safety, refined craftsmanship, and fuel efficient powertrains, Chery reinforces its commitment to delivering exceptional value and long term reliability in the Sultanate’s automotive market.

Customers are encouraged to visit their nearest Chery showroom early, as stock is strictly limited and available on a first come, first served basis. This exclusive

3 day event is the final chance to secure select premium variants at special cash-only prices before the promotion concludes on February 5, 2026.

Chery’s global momentum continues to be reinforced by strong performance in international quality and brand rankings. Chery Automobile ranked first among Chinese automotive brands in the J.D. Power 2023 China Initial Quality StudySM (IQS), reflecting the brand’s consistent focus on manufacturing quality, reliability, and customer satisfaction. This recognition underscores Chery’s commitment to intelligent engineering and user-centric vehicle design. In addition, Kantar and Google’s 2023 Chinese Global Brand Builders report ranked Chery as the leading Chinese automotive brand in the passenger car category, placing it 14th overall across all industries. The ranking highlights Chery’s growing global brand strength and sustained progress in international markets.

Customers are invited to visit any Chery showroom across Oman during the 3 Day Flash Sale to experience Chery’s advanced vehicle line-up and take advantage of these limited-time offers.

In Oman, Chery vehicles are distributed by New World Autos.

SPECIAL OCCASION

Indian School Wadi Kabir commemorates 77th Republic Day of India

MUSCAT: The Indian School Wadi Kabir [Cambridge] in Muscat formally observed the 77th Republic Day of India in a ceremonial event held on January 26, 2026. The proceedings, conducted at the ISWK Primary School Grounds, were anchored in the resonant theme of “Aatmanirbhar Bharat & Vande Mataram,” championing the dual ideals of national self-reliance and patriotic devotion.

The programme commenced with a formal introduction, leading to the arrival of the Chief Guest, N. D. Someshwar, a distinguished figure in banking, corporate finance, and educational administration. His arrival was heralded by a ceremonial fanfare, after which he and accompanying dignitaries received a traditional welcome.

A Guard of Honour, comprising 50 Scouts and Guides from the Senior Wing, was meticulously presented to salute the Chief Guest, dignitaries, and members of the School Management Committee. The ceremony progressed with a symbolic tricolour balloon release, followed by the solemn rendition of the Indian National Anthem by the students.

Subsequently, the Chief Guest inspected a ceremonial parade,



which featured a disciplined march past by student contingents from both the Cambridge and Senior School wings, accompanied by the cadence of the school band. A choral performance of the patriotic medley “Yeh Waqt Ki Aawaz Hai, Milke Chalo”, succeeded by the rendition and 150th anniversary celebration of the classic “Vande Mataram” by Senior School students.

In his keynote address, Chief Guest N. D. Someshwar delivered an inspirational oration, deftly connecting the day’s theme to the aspirations of the youth. His remarks encouraged students to reflect on their potential as global

citizens while remaining firmly rooted in Indian ethos and values.

The cultural segment, “Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat,” presented a vibrant tableau of traditional dances from across India, performed by students of the Senior, Primary, and Cambridge wings. The showcase celebrated the nation’s cultural diversity and underlying unity.

The formal proceedings concluded with a vote of thanks. The event was widely acknowledged as a demonstration of exemplary student discipline, artistic talent, and profound national respect, leaving a marked impression upon all attendees.

SIGNIFICANT STEP

Bait Al Zubair Foundation, Zubair Corporation announce strategic CSR collaboration

MUSCAT: Bait Al Zubair Foundation and The Zubair Corporation have announced a strategic collaboration under the Corporation’s newly structured Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) model, marking a significant step in aligning cultural investment with national development priorities in the Sultanate of Oman.

The collaboration introduces a programme-based CSR framework aligned under the Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) priorities of The Zubair Corporation, with Bait Al Zubair Foundation appointed as the delivery partner. Through this model, the Foundation will design and implement a portfolio of culturally rooted, impact-driven initiatives that generate sustainable social value and measurable outcomes.

Niels Bormans, Group Chief Executive Officer of The Zubair Corporation, said, “This collaboration reflects a deliberate evolution in how we approach CSR at The Zubair Corporation. By adopting a structured, programme-based model aligned with our ESG priorities, we ensure our initiatives deliver measurable, long-term impact. Partnering with Bait Al Zubair Foundation allows us to anchor our CSR efforts in culture, education, and community development – areas that are deeply



connected to Oman’s national identity and long-term development aspirations.”

The collaboration will introduce a series of flagship programmes delivered annually, including the Muscat International Book Fair, the Qaranqasho Cultural Celebration, cultural and educational workshops, youth- and school-focused initiatives, sustainability-oriented community events, and targeted support for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). Each programme is mapped directly to the Corporation’s ESG pillars, ena-

bling consistent impact measurement, transparent reporting, and long-term community impact.

This new direction reflects a shared vision that positions culture as a key driver of sustainable development, social cohesion, and national identity. It also represents a scalable CSR model that enables consistent programme delivery, effective impact reporting, and alignment across The Zubair Corporation and its subsidiaries, reinforcing the role of both institutions in contributing meaningfully to Oman’s development priorities.

STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITY

Meethaq Islamic Banking participates in IFSB Summit 2026

MUSCAT: Reinforcing its leading role in the development of Islamic banking sector, Meethaq Islamic Banking from Bank Muscat is participating in the 17th round of the 2026 Islamic Financial Services Board (IFSB) Summit, hosted by the Central Bank of Oman (CBO), from 2 to 4 February 2026 in Muscat.

The summit sessions were attended by distinguished global leaders and experts, including senior representatives from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, central bank governors, heads of regulatory authorities, and representatives of Islamic financial institutions from around the world, as well as other key stakeholders and international organizations active in the Islamic finance industry.

The Summit is recognized as one of the most prominent global platforms dedicated to the Islamic financial industry, bringing together policymakers, experts, and financial institutions to discuss the future of Islamic finance and

exchange insights on governance, risk management, financial stability, and innovation within the Islamic banking sector.

Meethaq’s participation in the Summit represents a strategic opportunity to gain exposure to the latest global trends in Islamic finance, strengthen relationships with international regulatory bodies, and engage with regional and global financial institutions. This presence aligns with Meethaq’s vision to enhance the competitiveness of the Islamic banking sector in Oman and support national efforts aimed at positioning the Sultanate as an emerging financial hub in the region.

On this occasion, Ali bin Ahmed Al Lawati, Assistant General Manager Meethaq Corporate Banking, stated: “We would like to express our gratitude to the Central Bank of Oman for their efforts in organizing this prestigious event. At Meethaq, we are proud to participate in the IFSB Summit, one of the most important international



platforms dedicated to the Islamic financial industry. Our participation reflects our steadfast commitment to fostering innovation, advancing Sharia-compliant financial services, and strengthening international collaboration in ways that create tangible value for the financial sector in the Sultanate. We will continue to build on

our leadership in Islamic banking space and contribute by supporting national economy through innovative and value-added financing, trade, investment and wealth management solutions.

On the sidelines of the Summit, Meethaq hosted a dedicated stall, where visitors and participants could learn more about its

wide range of Sharia-compliant products and services. Meethaq representatives were present throughout the three-day event to introduce key Islamic banking solutions, including home and auto financing programmes, corporate solutions, investment products, trade finance services, and the latest digital innovations developed to enhance customer experience.

Visitors were also introduced to Meethaq’s digital initiatives launched over the past years, which have strengthened its position as one of the leading providers of Sharia-compliant digital banking services in the Sultanate, reaffirming the role of innovation in improving service quality, expanding transactional convenience, accessibility and paperless banking for individual and corporate customers alike.

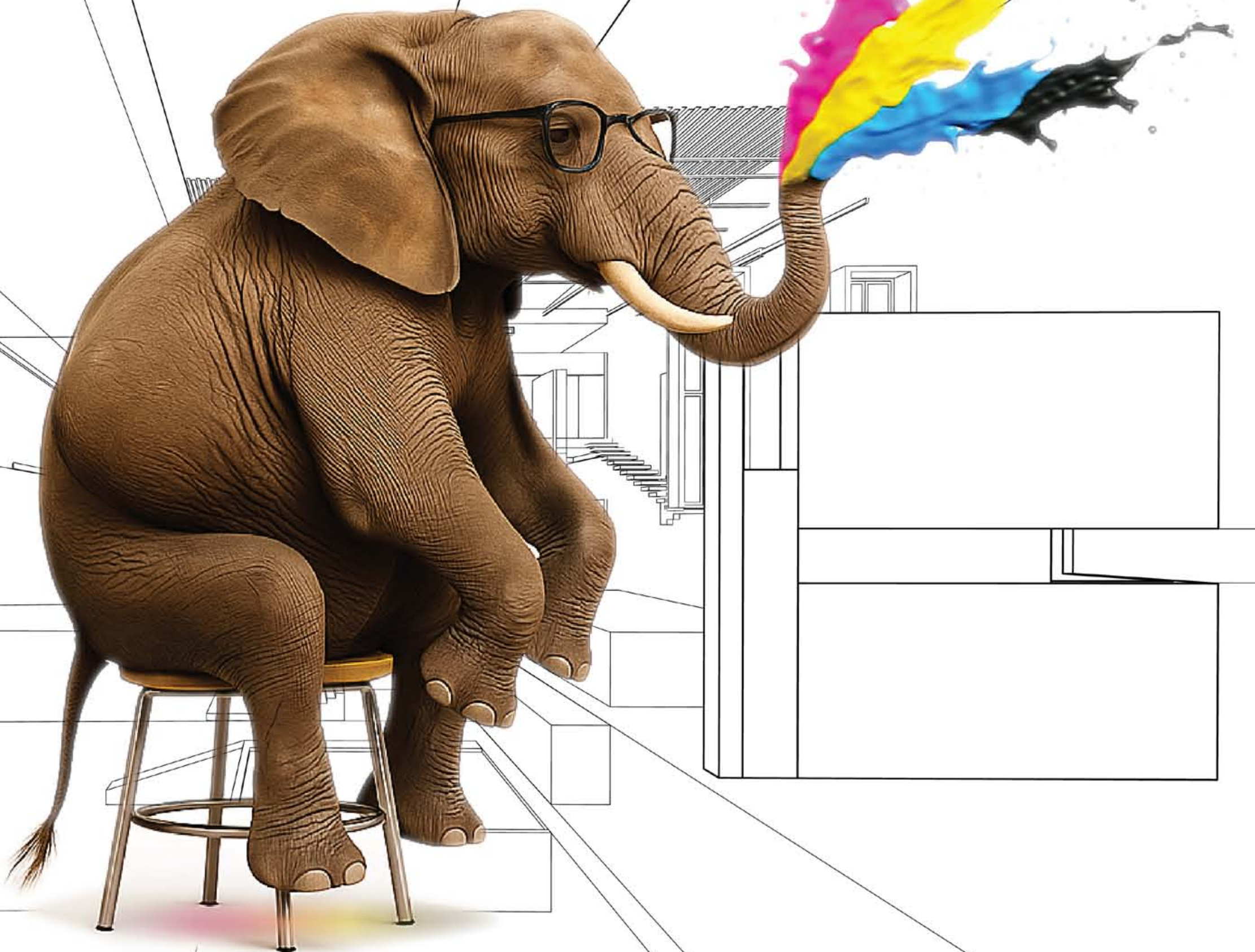
The Islamic Financial Services Board (IFSB) is a leading international organization responsible for developing regulatory and supervisory standards for Islamic finan-

cial institutions.

Established in 2002 and headquartered in Kuala Lumpur, the Board aims to enhance stability and resilience across the global Islamic financial services industry. Its standards and guidelines cover capital adequacy, risk management, governance, and regulatory oversight, ensuring that Islamic financial institutions operate in a safe, transparent, and efficient manner.

Today, the IFSB comprises of 184 members across 61 jurisdictions, including 84 regulatory and supervisory authorities, 10 international governmental organizations, and 90 other members representing banks, financial institutions, consulting firms, professional associations, and capital market entities. The Board also monitors financial stability and builds institutional capacity to support effective implementation of its standards, making it a global reference point for best practices in Islamic finance.

We make your Business bigger than your problems.



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- Event conceptualisation
- Event management

Wait, there's more

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