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Times OF OMAN

GOLDEN JUBILEE

50 YEARS OF LEGACY

Muscat Media Group

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TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN

Revenue of 3-5 star hotels increase

1 Revenue from 3-5 star hotels in Oman saw a 17.3% increase by the end of April 2025, reaching OMR109,213,000, compared to OMR93,094,000 during the same period in 2024, according to statistics released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information. The statistics indicate that this growth is attributed to an 8.6% rise in the total number of hotel guests, recording 831,751 guests by the end of April 2025, compared to 766,153 guests in the in 2024. >A2

WORLD

Over 16,000 students killed in Palestine

2 The Palestinian Ministry of Education and Higher Education announced that 16,382 students were martyred, and 25,959 injured since the start of the Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. The Ministry indicated that 917 teachers and administrators were martyred. >A6

SPORTS

Seven inducted into ICC Hall of Fame

3 MS Dhoni, Matthew Hayden, Daniel Vettori, Hashim Amla, Graeme Smith, Sarah Taylor and Sana Mir were the inductees into the ICC Hall of Fame unveiled two days out from the World Test Championship final at Lord's on Monday. Sana became the first woman from Pakistan to be a Hall of Fame inductee. >A8

Eid Al Adha celebrations wrap up as Oman gets back to business A4

AMBITIOUS PLAN TO DIVERSIFY 2025 TOURISM EXPERIENCES

Some of the projects, include the Recreational Slides Project, Al Ashkhara Gateway Project, Recreational Fishing Project, Mountain Slopes Project

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism is implementing an ambitious plan in 2025 to diversify tourism sectors and enhance recreational offerings through a series of high-quality projects.

These initiatives, coordinated with the governors' offices across Oman's various governorates, fall under the broader framework of the comprehensive tourism development plan.

They aim to strengthen tourism infrastructure and expand the range of experiences available to visitors.

The ministry highlighted some of the most prominent projects, including the Recreational Slides Project, Al Ashkhara Gateway Project, Recreational Fishing Project, Mountain Slopes Project, Aromatic Tourism Experiences Project, Falaj Experience Activation Project, Adventure Tourism Initiatives and the Great Oman Journey Experience Project.

Fakhriya Khamis Al Ghassani, Director of the Product and Tourism Experiences Development Department at the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, stated that these projects align with the objectives outlined in the comprehensive tourism development plan.

They seek to enhance the quality of tourism offerings, boost competitiveness, and provide unique opportunities and experiences across various destinations, she explained.

Foreign investments

She added that these efforts support increasing the contribution of non-oil sectors to the Gross Domestic Product, attract local and foreign investments to Oman, and offer exceptional experiences for domestic, regional, and international tourists while appealing to diverse demographic groups.

She affirmed that the ministry continues to promote cultural tourism as a cornerstone for diversifying the tourism product and reinforcing national identity.

The ministry launched the "Omani Cuisine and Culinary Arts Tourism" programme, which includes multiple initiatives such as documenting Omani cuisine and developing dedicated culinary tourism routes.

These routes feature visits to traditional kitchens and restaurants serving authentic recipes, elevating Omani gastronomy as a key element of the tourism experience.

Al Ghassani lauded the pivotal role of Omani museums in showcasing history, culture, and living heritage.

The ministry, she said, is enhancing museum content through interactive digital displays, allowing visitors to engage deeply with Oman's rich civilisation.

Museums serve as both educational and tourism institutions, blending physical exhibits with modern technology to present historical narratives in an engaging manner. >A2

ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE

Muscat Municipality launches landmark design competition to shape the city's future

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Muscat Municipality officially launched the Muscat Municipality Design Competition 2025 with a site visit recently conducted by Ahmed Al Humaidi, Chairman of Muscat Municipality.

The visit marked the formal start of this landmark initiative, which is now underway and drawing global attention as leading architecture studios from around the world to submit their visionary concepts.

Civic building

The selected site, strategically located adjacent to the Mall of Oman and spanning over 8,000 square metres, will serve as the future home of a multi-functional civic building that reflects Muscat's modern aspirations while honouring its rich architectural heritage.

Set between the Sea of Oman and the Hajar Mountains, the site is a unique canvas that speaks to the evolving narrative of urban Oman.

"Muscat is expecting a growing number of tourists in the near future, and the city is doing everything to welcome them in a sustainable way and to the highest standards of quality and beauty," said Ahmed Al Humaidi, adding "This competition represents a commitment to shaping how Muscat is experienced, through architecture that enhances our urban landscape, honours our heritage and reflects the values we hold as a society.

"We aim to create spaces that foster civic pride, set new benchmarks in sustainability and contribute meaningfully to Muscat's future as a global destination."

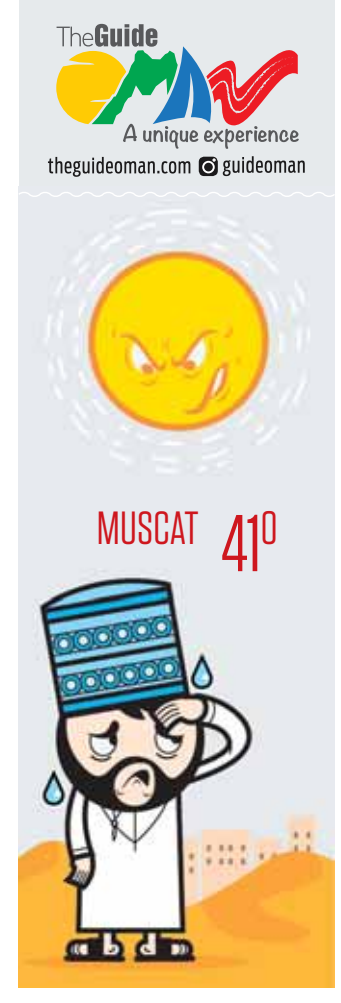
The international competition invites top-tier architecture studios to design a sustainable, iconic structure rooted in Omani identity and built for modern civic use. Submissions are currently being prepared, and five shortlisted studios will soon be selected to present their proposals to a distinguished jury comprising local and international experts.

The final jury presentations will take place in early July, where the jury will deliberate and narrow the selection down to three finalists. The winning design will be officially announced thereafter.

The Muscat Municipality Design Competition 2025 represents more than a building; it is a public initiative centred on transparency, design excellence, and long-term urban impact.

It also reinforces Muscat's commitment to embedding sustainability, accessibility, and cultural authenticity at the heart of its development strategy.

This site visit marks both a symbolic and operational milestone in a competition that will shape the architectural identity of Oman's capital for generations to come. For ongoing updates, visit www.mmcdd.com



OMAN

PRAYER TIMINGS

Dhuhr....12:12pm
Asr....3:30pm
Maghrib....6:58pm
Isha....8:20pm
Fajr (Tomorrow).... 3:52am

Revenue of 3-5 star hotels exceeds OMR109 million

Guests from the Americas increased by 19.1%, reaching 28,843, while GCC nationals saw a 12.6% increase, totalling 53,642 guests

MUSCAT: Revenue from 3-5 star hotels in the Sultanate of Oman saw a 17.3% increase by the end of April 2025, reaching OMR109,213,000, compared to OMR93,094,000 during the same period in 2024, according to statistics released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The statistics indicate that this growth is attributed to an 8.6% rise in the total number of hotel guests, recording 831,751 guests by the end of April 2025, compared to 766,153 guests in the corresponding period in 2024.

Occupancy rate

Additionally, the occupancy rate increased from 53.4% by the end of April 2024 compared to 61.1% by end of April 2025, marking a 14.4% growth.

The number of guests from Oceania surged by 57.8%, totaling 18,124 visitors, followed by Africa with a 57.6% increase, reaching 5,993 guests. European guests rose by 19.9%, totalling 314,535 visitors.

Meanwhile, guests from the Americas increased by 19.1%, reaching 28,843 visitors, while GCC nationals saw a 12.6% increase, totalling 53,642 guests. Asian nationalities recorded a 5.4% rise, with 114,426 visitors.

Conversely, the statistics revealed a 0.7% decline in Omani guests, totalling 238,895 visitors by the end of April 2025.

Additionally, guests from other Arab nationalities decreased by 2.3%, recording 32,072 visitors. -ONA

HOLY LAND

Military Hajj Mission returns

MUSCAT: The military Hajj mission returned home on Tuesday after performing this year's Hajj pilgrimage in the Holy Land.

Upon arrival at Al Seeb Air Base, the mission was received by Maj. Gen (retired) Hamad Sulaiman Al Hatmi, along with several senior officers from the Sultan's Armed Forces and other military and security units.

The military Hajj mission returned aboard several transport aircraft of the Royal Air Force of Oman (RAFO).

The delegation included a number of pilgrims and administrative personnel from the Sultan's Armed Forces and other military and security units. All members of the mission performed the Hajj rituals with ease and returned in good health.

The dispatch of the military Hajj mission comes under the directives of His Majesty the Supreme Commander and is organised annually by the Moral Guidance and Military Protocol Department of the Sultan's Armed Forces.

Comprehensive administrative and health measures related to the mission were implemented in coordination with the Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs, the Omani Hajj Mission, the Embassy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in the Sultanate of Oman, and other relevant authorities.

The military mission was accompanied by a fully integrated administrative team comprising specialists in administration, medical services, media, and technical support. -ONA

TOURISM

Over 415,000 visit Nizwa Fort, Jabrin Castle

< FROM A1

Fakhriya Khamis Al Ghassani, Director of the Product and Tourism Experiences Development Department at the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, noted that statistics indicate significant growth in heritage site visitors.

For instance, Al Dakhiliyah Governorate — home to landmarks such as Nizwa Fort and Jabrin Castle — welcomed over 415,000 visitors in 2024, marking a 32% increase compared to the previous year. This surge, she said, is attributed to the development of heritage neighborhoods, improved services, and diversified tourism experiences. -ONA

SHABAB OMAN II PARTICIPATES IN ITALIAN NAVY DAY CELEBRATIONS

The Royal Navy of Oman's vessel "Shabab Oman II" participated in the naval parade marking the annual Italian Navy Day celebrations, held under the auspices of the President of the Italian Republic.The Italian Navy organizes this annual maritime display, known as "Festa della Marina", celebrated every year on 10 June. The event features a fleet of modern and historic Italian warships, alongside international participation from friendly nations' naval vessels, underscoring mutual military cooperation. Earlier, Shabab Oman II docked at the port of Genoa, Italy, as part of its 7th International Voyage "Glories of the Seas" to the European Continent. During this voyage, the vessel will drop anchor at several destinations and ports. -ONA

RUSTAQ

Two drown in Wadi Al Hoqain

Times News Service

MUSCAT: In a tragic incident, two individuals drowned in Wadi Al Hoqain in Rustaq, South Al Batinah Governorate, and their bodies have been recovered, said the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority (CDAA).

The CDAA confirmed that rescue teams responded to the incident. The CDAA urged the public to avoid swimming in undesignated areas to prevent future tragedies.

Two arrested

The Royal Oman Police (ROP) has arrested more than 25 expats for attempting to enter the Sultanate of Oman illegally.

ROP said in a statement : "The Coast Guard Police, led by the North Al Batinah Governorate Police, arrested 29 people, including 27 Pakistanis, one Iranian, and one Bangladeshi, while they were trying to enter the country illegally via a boat coming from the Islamic Republic of Iran. Legal procedures are being completed."

Pact signed for health-promoting educational environment in schools

The agreement will enable students to enhance their academic achievement, acquire necessary life skills, and integrate into society

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Education, Ministry of and Health, and Al Jisr Charitable Foundation signed a cooperation agreement to support the health promoting schools initiative at Al Jisr Charitable Foundation's headquarters in Muscat.

The agreement aims to provide a safe and health-promoting educational environment for schools, enabling students to enhance their academic achievement, acquire necessary life skills, and integrate into society.

The agreement was signed on behalf of the Ministry of Education by Dr. Abdullah bin Khamis Ambosaidi, Undersecretary for Education; on behalf of the Ministry of Health by Sulaiman bin Nasser Al-Hajji, Undersecretary for Administrative and Financial Affairs; and on behalf of the Al Jisr Charitable Foundation by Dina Al Khalili, Director-General of the Foundation.

On the importance of signing the agreement to support the health promoting schools initiative, Dr. Abdullah bin Khamis Ambosaidi, said: "This initiative, which will be implemented over the next five years, is of great importance in promoting a healthy environment for students, as it is a key tool that positively reflects on their academic achievement.

"The total number of schools participating in this initiative since its launch has reached 566 from various educational directorates in the governorates, in which the various initiative programmes are implemented in cooperation with the Ministry of Health and Al Jisr Charitable Foundation."

Sulaiman bin Nasser Al Hajji, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Health for Administrative and Financial Affairs, stated: "This initiative stems from a strategic partnership to achieve the common good of society and promote health in the school environment, in particular, by improving the learning environment for students, enhancing their academic achievement, protecting them from diseases, reducing their absence from school, enhancing their mental health, and building lasting healthy habits for these students, so that they are more able to focus, pay attention, and learn."

Regarding the community partnership between Al Jisr Charitable Foundation and the government sector, Dina Al Khalili, the Foundation's Director-General, said: "This strategic partnership embodies the convergence of healthcare and educational efforts and achieves our shared vision of providing a healthy school environment that enhances students' academic achievement and develops their necessary life skills.

"We appreciate the role of the Ministries of Education and Health for their trust and cooperation in this initiative, and we affirm our commitment to achieving a sustainable impact for students and society."

It's worth noting that Al Jisr Foundation is funding sustainable projects for three schools that have achieved the highest gold rating in the health promoting schools initiative over a five-year period.

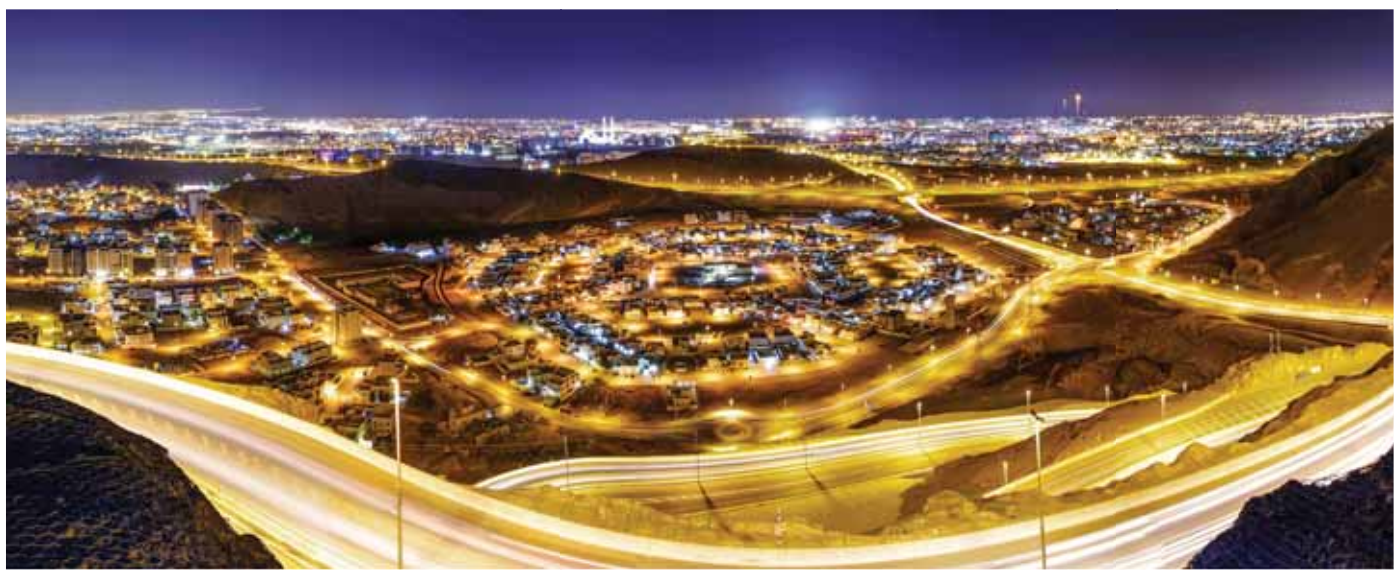
It also provides general oversight of the initiative's implementation and collaborates with a specialised team from both ministries to develop a visual identity and guidelines for the initiative.

It is also working on developing an electronic platform for the initiative, which will be launched at a later time.

COMMENTARY

Oman's diplomacy is impeccable and indispensable

Bilal Bilici



In a region often defined by volatility, ideological divides, and protracted conflicts, Oman has emerged as a steady and principled force for dialogue and reconciliation.

While global superpowers engage in power struggles and regional actors entrench themselves in zero-sum rivalries, Oman has quietly carved out a niche as one of the Middle East's most consistent and reliable mediators.

Its latest efforts in facilitating indirect talks between the United States and Iran over Tehran's nuclear programme once again underscore Muscat's indispensable role in preserving regional stability.

Unlike global powers such as the United States or Russia, which can afford to disengage from the region at will, Oman does not have that luxury. Geography binds it to the fate of the Middle East. For Muscat, peace is not just a diplomatic preference—it is a national security necessity. Oman does not welcome instability or adventurous activities in its neighbourhood; it seeks continuity, dialogue, and de-escalation.

Oman's commitment to peace is hardly new. During the Iran-Iraq war of the 1980s, when most Gulf states chose sides, Oman held firm in its neutrality. That stance was not one of passivity, but of foresight. It enabled Muscat to quietly facilitate backchannel communications between Tehran and Baghdad, laying the groundwork for future engagement.

This pragmatic doctrine has been a throughline of Omani foreign policy.

More recently, in the Yemen conflict, Oman opted out of any regional power coalition's military campaign. Instead, it pursued diplomacy—mediating between warring factions, brokering prisoner exchanges, and hosting discreet talks.

For Oman, indeed in real life, there are no winners in war, only shared consequences. Oman does not pick and choose sides, nor does it seek to undermine or confront any country in the region.

Today, that same approach is once again at play in Oman's mediation between Iran and the United States. Following the Trump administration's 2018 withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), bilateral relations quickly deteriorated. Sanctions followed. Escalations mounted. At several points, Washington and Tehran stood on the brink of open conflict.

Fast forward to 2025, and Oman is once again quietly building diplomatic bridges. Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian's visit to Muscat this week underscores Oman's unique role in efforts to re-energise nuclear talks. Acting as an intermediary, Oman has helped orchestrate indirect negotiations in both Muscat and Rome—passing messages, conveying proposals, and narrowing gaps.

These talks are anything but easy. Iran maintains its right to enrich uranium for peaceful purposes, while Washington insists on stringent limits to prevent a potential pathway to weaponisation. Yet Oman persists. Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr Hamad Al Busaidi and his diplomatic team remain focused on keeping dialogue alive, however incremental, because they believe sustained engagement is better than dangerous silence.

What makes Oman a uniquely trusted mediator?

First, Oman maintains cordial and balanced relations with virtually all sides. It is one of the few Gulf countries that enjoys trust in both Washington and Tehran without appearing compromised or biased.

Oman does not believe in getting entangled in historical rivalries or ideological confrontations—it simply refuses to participate in them.

Second, Oman's diplomacy is discreet, methodical, and deliberately low-profile. It does not seek credit, nor does it engage in loud posturing. This discretion has won it rare levels of trust—even among the most secretive regimes. Few knew that Oman hosted the backchannel talks that ultimately led to the 2015 nuclear deal until long after they had concluded.

Third, Oman's neutrality is not performative; it is principled. It does not push ideological agendas or exploit conflicts for geopolitical advantage. Rather, its focus is on de-escalation and sustainable outcomes. Oman does not confront or undermine other countries—it seeks solutions, not scapegoats.

This principled diplomacy reflects Muscat's broader worldview. Oman clearly sees the emerging global order as one in which pragmatism, restraint, and realism matter more than ideological allegiance or historical grievance. The country's quiet but firm commitment to peace is a rejection of the maximalism that has defined so much of Middle Eastern politics.

The belief that only superpowers can resolve complex global issues is outdated. Smaller, nimble states—like Norway, Switzerland, Qatar, and Singapore—have proven otherwise. Oman belongs in this league of quiet influencers. Its methods resemble those of a seasoned diplomat: listening more than speaking, prioritising substance over symbolism, and acting with discretion over drama.

That said, Muscat's path is not without challenges. Mediating between the U.S. and Iran at a time of hardened positions is fraught with risk. The standoff over uranium enrichment remains a serious hurdle, and Oman must navigate this terrain carefully.

Moreover, skepticism from regional actors like Israel and Saudi Arabia adds another layer of complexity. Some view Muscat's engagement with Tehran warily. But Oman has never sought to isolate or antagonize its neighbours. Its message is consistent: it will not join military blocs, stoke tensions, or align itself with hardline agendas.

At a time when diplomacy is often transactional and strategic patience is in short supply, Oman offers a compelling counter-narrative. It mediates not for prestige, but for peace. It does not flaunt its influence, but exercises it quietly, consistently, and purposefully.

Oman's initiatives deserve to be respected and well positioned in the broader regional discourse—particularly at a time when antagonistic, imperialist, and interventionist agendas are no longer valid nor productive in shaping the future of the Middle East. The region no longer rewards coercion and confrontation; it increasingly requires dialogue, trust-building, and restraint. Oman's role as a diplomatic bridge is not self-appointed—it is earned, through years of principled engagement and quiet perseverance. In a region too often shaped by noise and confrontation, Muscat reminds the world that peace is still possible—and that sometimes, the most powerful voices are the ones that speak the least.

Bilal Bilici is a Member of the Turkish Parliament, representing Adana province.

Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed in this column are those of the writer, Bilal Bilici and do not reflect the opinion of Times of Oman.

OMAN

Eid Al Adha celebrations wrap up as Oman gets back to business

Offices and businesses resumed work on Tuesday as thousands returned from the green mountains, the beaches, and overseas trips

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Eid Al Adha festivities came to an end on Tuesday as Oman resumed its regular workweek, with businesses reopening and daily routines returning to normal after days of celebration and holiday spirit. The festive five-day Eid Al Adha holiday was filled with joy, family gatherings, and travel as thousands returned from mountain retreats, beach outings, and overseas trips.

The extended break saw a remarkable surge in domestic tourism, with resorts, historical sites, and family farms bustling with activity and laughter.

The green terraces of Jabal Akhdar (Green Mountains) welcomed numerous families and tourists eager to escape the coastal heat and enjoy cooler climates. "The views were stunning, and the weather up there was refreshing. It felt like a completely different world," shared K Abhishek, an Indian expatriate who stayed with his family at dusitD2 Naseem Resort.

Jabal Shams, Oman's highest peak, was equally popular. "The temperatures here were around the low 30s during the day," said Sharmila, another expatriate who enjoyed hiking in the mountain's pleasant climate.

The freshwater wadis — Wadi Shab, Wadi Bani Khalid, and others — also attracted visitors seeking respite from the summer heat.

Picnic and beach spots, including Qurum, Azaiba, and Shatti, came alive in the evenings with families enjoying barbecues, games, and strolls by the sea.

"We spent our evenings on the beach and dined out most nights," said D Manoj, a longtime Ruwi resident. "The restaurants were buzzing, and there was a real festive atmosphere. It was great to see people enjoying themselves."

Eid Al Adha traditions unite families

At the heart of Eid celebrations across Oman was the beloved tradition of preparing shuwa, a marinated meat dish slow-cooked underground in earthen ovens.

"Preparing shuwa with my family is something I look forward to every Eid," said Badr Al Wahaibi from Quriyyat.

"We gathered at my grandfather's farm to prepare Shuwa. The smell and taste brings everyone together — it's more than food, it's our heritage."

The holidays were also a time for extended family visits, exchanging greetings, and sharing festive meals.

"Eid is a time when the entire family — sometimes four generations — comes together under one roof," said Saada Al Rawahi, a schoolteacher from Nizwa.

"We wear our finest traditional clothes, share sweets, and spend the evenings with family and relatives. Despite the heat, the spirit of togetherness shines."

Visitors like MaryAnn Davis, vacationing from Dubai, summed up the experience. "We wanted something peaceful this Eid. Oman offered that — great hospitality, breathtaking scenery, and a lot of warmth. It was magical."

'Al Amerat Events' to continue till 14 June

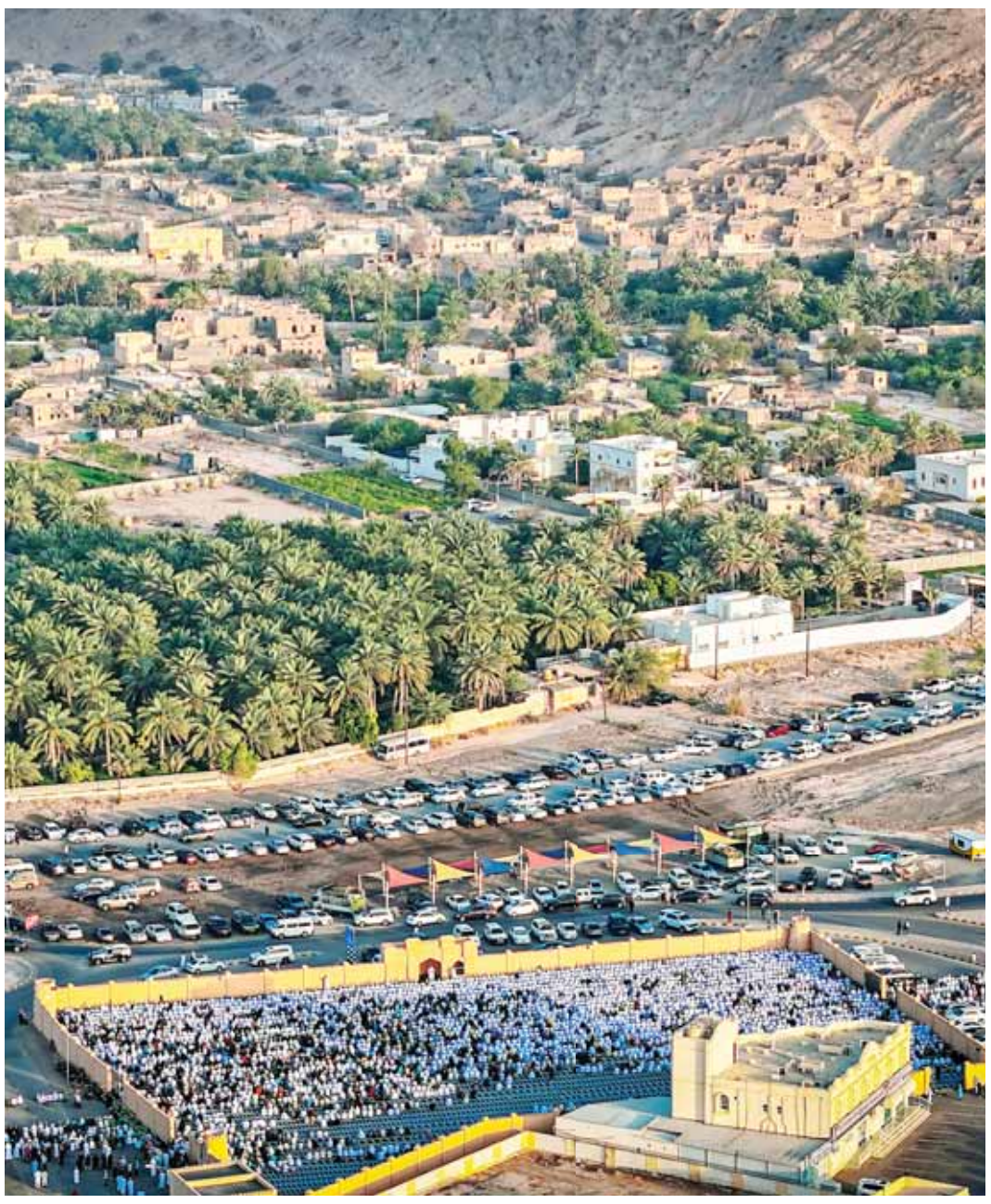
Meanwhile, the ongoing 'Al Amerat Events' at Al Amerat Park continues to draw crowds.

Launched on 25 May and running until 14 June, this vibrant community festival, supervised by the Wali of Al Amerat's office, attracts families and visitors of all ages from the region.

The event features a diverse range of programmes, including displays of products from productive households, folk arts performances, children's games, and authentic Omani cuisine.

Visitors also enjoy educational and recreational activities such as "Reptiles World," equestrian and camel shows, classic car displays, and daily competitions with motivational awards.

"This event supports cultural and social engagement, inspires local entrepreneurs, and promotes local tourism during the summer holidays," said a spokesperson from the organisers. "It reflects the diversity and cultural spirit of Al Amerat while enhancing community participation."



Worshippers offering Eid prayers in Ibri PHOTO BY SHIHAB AL SHANDUDI

OMAN/REGION

IMF expert mission commends CBO's transparency practices

The Sultanate of Oman is the first country among the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) States to undergo this voluntary assessment and the second among Arab countries

MUSCAT: The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has issued and published a report on the transparency of the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) based on the IMF's best practices for central bank transparency (CBT).

The report issued yesterday said that this voluntary assessment was conducted to review the transparency and disclosure practices of CBO, focusing on five key areas, as issued by the IMF: governance; transparency of policies, operations, outcomes and official relations of central banks. This assessment serves to enhance CBO's independence and its relations with relevant stakeholders and facilitates information sharing and intellectual exchange with counterparts.

The IMF report concluded that CBO places great importance on transparency in its practices, in line with international best practices. This reflects its commitment to strengthening its role as a critical public institution in the country through a robust transparency framework.

The Sultanate of Oman is the first country among the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) States to undergo this voluntary assessment and the second among Arab countries. This reflects CBO's commitment to advancing to the highest international standards and practices.

During its field visit, the IMF held extensive meetings with stakeholders from CBO and relevant government, private, and civil society organizations to assess its transparency practices and governance frameworks. This ensures constructive dialogue with stakeholders to achieve more effective outcomes in monetary and banking policies.

The report's most prominent findings indicate strong governance and a sound legal framework. The CBO has a strong legal framework for internal governance, with a clear legal structure and broad powers, which enhances decision-making and accountability.

The report also highlights the monetary policy transparency as the CBO ensures transparency in monetary policy and the stability of the financial system through cooperation with other financial institutions in the country, as well as through the issuance of regular bulletins and periodicals to ensure effective communication.

Additionally, the report spotlights effective financial stability tools as IMF experts found that CBO is focusing on enhancing tools related to the Emergency Liquidity Response (ELA) and macro-financial stability, reflecting its ongoing efforts to improve the transparency of financial system stability management in the Sultanate of Oman.

Further, the report underlines commitment to stakeholder communication as the CBO is working to enhance its communication with the public, ensuring that key policy decisions are accessible and understandable, including through its website and social media channels.

In addition, the CBO's efforts to strengthen its AML/CFT framework were commended, and the review encouraged it to continue enhancing transparency in its supervisory and oversight practices in this area. It is noteworthy that the IMF issued the "Central Bank Transparency Code" in 2020, reflecting the growing responsibilities and significant expansion in the requirement for central banks to clarify the nature, purpose, and manner of their activities. This allows for a deeper public understanding of the role of these activities in optimally serving their interests, consistent with current mandates, enhancing central bank independence, and enhancing the impact of monetary and banking policies.

Accordingly, the CBO has taken into account the recommendations presented by the IMF team and is committed to continuing to enhance transparency in line with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040 and international best practices, while considering the local context and national legal framework. The mission provided an opportunity for self-assessment, in conjunction with the CBO's ongoing efforts to modernize its legal and regulatory frameworks. The CBO will develop a plan to implement the recommendations and findings contained in the IMF report, which will contribute to ongoing improvements in the transparency of its operations, practices, and policies to ensure sustainable economic growth. -ONA

KEY MILESTONE

Foundation stone for Dubai Metro Blue Line laid

DUBAI: His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President, Prime Minister, and Ruler of Dubai, attended the foundation stone laying ceremony of the Dubai Metro Blue Line, a key milestone in the expansion of the city's public transportation network.

Spanning 30 km and comprising 14 stations, the new line is set to transform mobility across nine key districts, projected to be home to over one million residents, as outlined in the Dubai 2040 Urban Master Plan.

His Highness also approved the distinctive architectural design of the iconic Emaar Properties Station, the highest metro station in the world, standing at 74 metres.

Inspired by the concept of a crossing gateway, the station was designed by the renowned American architectural firm Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM), one of the world's leading design studios. The firm's portfolio includes iconic landmarks such as the Burj Khalifa, the Olympic Tower in New York, and the Sears Tower in Chicago.

The station is designed to integrate harmoniously into the existing urban environment and embodies the vision of 'Dubai: A Gateway to the Future'.

Covering an area of approximately 11,000 square metres, the station is designed to accommodate up to 160,000 passengers per day, with the number of daily users expected to exceed 70,000 by 2040. With the completion of the Blue Line project, Dubai's rail network will expand to a total of 131 km, comprising 78 stations and 168 trains.

Upon arriving at the venue of the ceremony, H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid was welcomed by Mattar Al Tayer, Director-General, Chairman of the Board of Executive Directors of the Roads and Transport Authority.

At the start of the ceremony, His Highness viewed a historical gallery showcasing the dream of the late Sheikh Rashid bin Saeed Al Maktoum for constructing a metro line connecting Dubai districts. It included a collection of photographs from His Highness's visits to several world capitals, as well as rare images of him using the railway network in the United Kingdom, where the idea of constructing a similar project in Dubai was conceived.

H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid was briefed by Al Tayer on the expansion of metro services, including the growth in ridership, station design, number of stations, and train carriages. The Dubai Metro has transported over 2.527 billion passengers from its launch on 9/9/2009 through the end of 2024. The Metro recorded a daily average of 900,000 passengers in 2024.

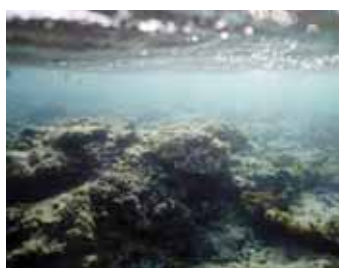
Ridership has grown steadily over the years, from 38.887 million in 2010 to 69 million in 2011, reflecting a growth rate of 77%. It continued to rise to over 109 million passengers in 2012, before surpassing 200 million in 2017, jumping to 260 million in 2023 and hitting 275.4 million in 2024.

According to studies, the number of Dubai Metro passengers is expected to exceed 300 million in 2026 and reach 320 million by 2031. -WAM

MARITIME SAFETY

Global conference seeks to preserve oceans, promote sustainable use

PARIS: The third United Nations Ocean Conference is addressing the challenges facing oceans, including rising temperatures and ocean acidification surpassing safe limits.



The conference aims to mobilise all stakeholders to preserve oceans and promote their sustainable use, contributing to the conservation of marine resources and the enhancement of biodiversity.

Jassim Mohammed Al Budaiwi, GCC Secretary-General emphasised during his participation that the GCC countries are making continuous efforts to enhance maritime and environmental safety.

He noted that they are investing in modern technologies to reduce the risk of spills and protect the marine environment in the Arabian Gulf. This reflects the GCC's strong commitment to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 14 (Life Below Water), despite numerous environmental challenges.

He pointed out that oceans are facing unprecedented threats—from rising temperatures and acidification to pollution and habitat loss—stressing the need for global cooperation, innovation, and shared responsibility to counter environmental degradation and safeguard ocean health.

A report co-authored by the Plymouth Marine Laboratory (UK) the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the Cooperative Institute for Marine Ecosystems and Resources Studies at Oregon State University revealed that ocean acidity has exceeded the safe "planetary boundary", signaling a potential environmental catastrophe.

This "planetary boundary" is defined as the point where calcium carbonate concentrations in seawater drop by more than 20% compared to pre-industrial levels, threatening the stability of the entire marine ecosystem. Ocean acidification results from the absorption of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, which reacts with seawater, lowering its pH levels.

Exceeding safe acidity thresholds has devastating effects on coral reefs and calcifying marine organisms. In extreme cases, it can even dissolve the shells of small marine creatures. -ONA

CEASEFIRE VIOLATION

2 killed in Israeli raid in Lebanon

BEIRUT: The Israeli entity renewed its attacks and targeting of villages and towns in southern Lebanon.

The Lebanese National News Agency reported that an Israeli drone targeted Janam area of Shebaa town, killing two people and wounding another.

Air and ground incursions

The Israeli occupation continues to violate the ceasefire agreement announced on 27 November 2024, through repeated air and ground incursions and violations in southern Lebanon and the border areas. This happens despite the agreement stipulating the occupation's withdrawal from the villages and towns it had invaded within 60 days. Israeli forces remain stationed in more than 30 Lebanese villages and towns.

These violations come amid growing international calls to pressure the Israeli occupation to abide by the terms of the agreement, stabilise the situation in southern Lebanon, and protect civilians from further attacks.

-ONA

EGYPTIAN SCHOOL
Muscat, P.O. Box : 116 - P.C.: 112, Ruwi, Sultanate of Oman,
Tel.: +968 24202221, GSM: +968 97244710.
Email: info@egyptianschool.edim.om

ANNOUNCEMENT

The Egyptian School Muscat announces a new contract for a janitorial company for the new school year 2025-2026 under these conditions:

- Maximum age of 35
- Workers should be healthy fit
- Capability of working under pressure and fulfilling all the cleaning tasks and other jobs needed in time.
- 4 males and 6 females are required

Contracting should indicate supplying workers only or workers plus Detergents.

Applications should be submitted to: info@egyptianschool.edu.om

Applications will be accepted from the date of the announcement until 17/6/2025.

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SCHOOL CANTEEN RENTAL (2025-2026)

Egyptian school Muscat announces school canteen rental for the academic year (2025-2026) according to the conditions and regulations mentioned in the tender book.

Getting and handing the tender book is from the Egyptian school in Al-Ansab in maximum :17/6/2025.

A copy of the commercial register should be brought.

Contact: 24202221

WORLD

Israelis kill over 16,000 students in Palestine

443 government schools, universities, as well as 91 schools affiliated with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency were bombed in the Gaza Strip

RAMALLAH: The Palestinian Ministry of Education and Higher Education announced that 16,382 students were martyred, and 25,959 injured since the start of the Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

In a statement issued on Tuesday, the Ministry said that the number of students martyred in the Gaza Strip since the beginning of the aggression has reached more than 16,245, and 25,062 injured. In the West Bank, 137 students were martyred, 897 others were injured, and 749 were detained.

The Ministry indicated that 917 teachers and administrators were martyred, 4,347 were injured in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, and more than 196 were detained in the West Bank.

It noted that 443 government schools, universities, and their affiliated buildings, as well as 91 schools affiliated with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), were bombed and vandalized in the Gaza Strip. Sixty university buildings were completely destroyed, and 20 educational institutions sustained severe damage. In the West Bank, 152 schools and eight universities were raided and vandalized.

Six UNRWA schools in Jerusalem have remained closed since 8 May.

Separately, the number of Palestinian journalists martyred since the beginning of the genocidal war on the Gaza Strip has risen to 227, following the announcement of the martyrdom of a photojournalist while covering events in the Strip on Monday.

In a statement issued today, the Government Media Office in Gaza condemned the systematic targeting and assassination of Palestinian journalists by the Israeli occupation, holding it fully responsible for these brutal crimes.

The office called on the international community and all human rights and media organizations to take a firm stance to condemn the occupation's crimes, work to respond to them, and prosecute them legally before international courts. The perpetrators of these crimes must be brought to justice, and journalists and media professionals in the Gaza Strip must be protected and stopped from being targeted and assassinated.

Since the outbreak of the Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip on 7 October 2023, Palestinian journalists have faced extremely dangerous conditions, subjected to direct and systematic targeting while carrying out their journalistic duties.

31 Palestinians killed, dozens injured across Gaza

Thirty-one Palestinians were martyred and dozens injured today as a result of a series of Israeli strikes and artillery shelling targeting various areas across the Gaza Strip.

Palestinian medical sources reported that the majority of the martyrs fell during an attempt by civilians to obtain humanitarian aid near what is known as the Netzarim Corridor in central Gaza. Al-Quds Hospital in Gaza City received about 12 martyrs and more than 124 injured, most of whom were awaiting aid. -ONA

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INTENSIFY TENSIONS

Trump's new travel ban on 12 nations sparks outcry

WASHINGTON : President Donald Trump's new travel ban targeting 12 countries- mainly from Africa and the Middle East came into effect on Monday, intensifying tensions over the administration's expanded immigration crackdown, CNN reported.

According to the CNN report, the new order affects citizens of Afghanistan, Myanmar, Chad, the Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Haiti, Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, and Yemen. Additionally, it imposes restrictions on individuals from Burundi, Cuba, Laos, Sierra Leone, Togo, Turkmenistan, and Venezuela who are outside the US and do not possess valid visas.

While the proclamation does not revoke existing visas, it blocks new applications unless individuals meet specific exemption criteria. "Travelers with previously issued visas should still be able to enter the US," CNN noted, citing official guidance to American diplomatic missions. The restrictions are designed to avoid the legal chaos and mass airport confusion that followed Trump's initial travel ban during his first term.

CNN reported that this time, the administration emphasized improved legal framing by focusing on visa procedures rather than outright entry bans. The move is widely seen as an attempt to avoid legal challenges that derailed earlier versions of the policy.

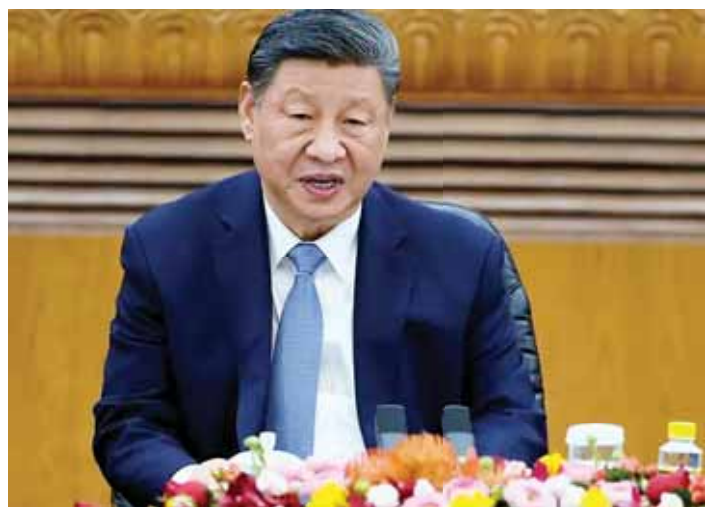
Trump defended the action by citing security concerns, claiming that certain countries had poor screening systems or failed to cooperate with US deportation protocols.

He also referenced visa overstay rates from an annual Homeland Security report, although experts have questioned the consistency and accuracy of such measurements.

Notably, Trump tied the travel ban to a recent terrorist attack in Boulder, Colorado, allegedly committed by a man from Egypt--a country not included in the ban. -ANI

BILATERAL RELATIONS

Chinese President calls for stronger ties with South Korea



BEIJING: Chinese President Xi Jinping held a phone call with South Korea's newly elected President Lee Jae-myung on Tuesday, emphasising the importance of strengthening bilateral ties and promoting regional stability, according to China's state media.

During the call, Xi called for China and South Korea to "jointly safeguard multilateralism" and uphold free trade, state news agency Xinhua reported.

"A healthy, stable, and continuously deepening China-South Korea relationship aligns with the trend of the times," Xi said.

"Close bilateral cooperation and multilateral coordination should be maintained to jointly uphold multilateralism and free trade, ensuring the stability and smooth functioning of global and regional industrial and supply chains."

Xi also urged the two countries to "inject more certainty into regional and international situations" and to elevate their "strategic cooperative partnership to a higher level."

A healthy, stable, and deepening relationship between China and South Korea would lead to both regional and global peace, Xi said, according to state-run People's Daily.

Lee indicates foreign policy shift

The call comes as Lee, elected in a landslide last week, signals a potential shift in Seoul's foreign policy.

Relations between China and South Korea have improved since a 2017 rift over a US missile defense system, but tensions remain due to Seoul's balancing act between Beijing and Washington.

Ties with China were strained under former South Korean president Yoon Suk Yeol, who veered toward the US and Japan.

President Lee has signalled a shift, pledging to improve relations with Beijing, as US President Donald Trump's tariffs hit both Asian countries.

Recently, Lee pointed out the importance of China as a major trading partner, but drew criticism for his reluctance to take a firm position on security tensions in the Taiwan Strait. -DW

FRESH DEPLOYMENT

US deploying Marines to quell Los Angeles protests

LOS ANGELES: California governor Gavin Newsom said the Donald Trump administration will deploy an additional 2,000 National Guard troops to Los Angeles in light of the protests in the city.

Sean Parnell, assistant to the secretary of defence for public affairs, later confirmed the deployment in a statement on X, saying that Trump had ordered that the toops be "called into federal service to support ICE & to enable federal law-enforcement officers to safely conduct their duties."

Newsom was highly critical of the deployment.

"This isn't about public safety, It's about stroking a dangerous President's ego," Newsom posted on his X account, calling the move "reckless, pointless and disrespectful to our troops."

According to Newsom, only approximately 300 of the first 2,000 National Guard troops to be deployed to Los Angeles are currently active in the city, with the rest "sitting, unused, in federal buildings without orders."

The state of California has sued the Trump administration for deploying the National Guard in response to the immigration protests in Los Angeles.

According to the lawsuit, the deployment of troops in the state "trampled" on the state's sovereignty, with California pushing for a restraining order.

California attorney general Rob Bonta said the move became necessary once US President Trump escalated the number of troops, leading to growing unrest.

In a post on his X account, California governor Gavin Newsom said a government should be "accountable to its people... not military rule."

"California will be standing up for those principles in court," he added.

US Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. has fired all members of a US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) panel of vaccine experts, the Department of Health and Human Services said in a statement.

Kennedy removed all 17 members of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), a body that advises the CDC on which groups of people would most benefit from an already-approved vaccine and the timing in which they should get it.

The process of considering new members to replace the departing members has begun, the statement said. -DW

MEETING

Indian foreign minister welcomes Belgium's support in combatting terrorism

BRUSSELS : Indian External Affairs Minister Dr S Jaishankar began his visit to Belgium on Monday with a meeting with Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Maxime Prevot. The discussions focused on enhancing bilateral cooperation and combating terrorism.

He appreciated Belgium's support in combating terrorism and welcomed their solidarity and emphasised the strong momentum in the India-EU partnership, highlighting the potential for collaboration in clean energy, mobility, and pharmaceuticals.

The two leaders discussed deepening cooperation in areas such as trade, investment, technology, defense, and security.

Sharing the details in a post on X on Monday, EAM said, "Pleased to meet DPM & FM @prevotmaxime at the start of my visit to Belgium. Welcomed Belgium's support and solidarity in combatting terrorism. Appreciated the strong momentum of our bilateral engagement and the India - EU partnership. Also held wide - ranging discussions on deepening our cooperation including in trade, investment, technology, defence & security, pharmaceuticals, clean energy and mobility."

Jaishankar's visit to Brussels comes three months after Princess Astrid of Belgium led a 300-member economic mission to India. The recent visit by Princess Astrid, who met with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Jaishankar, discussed key areas such as labor migration, pharmaceuticals, defense, diamonds, space exploration, and green energy.

Interestingly, Jaishankar's visit coincides with the detention of fugitive Indian diamantaire Mehul Choksi in a Belgian jail. Choksi, accused of defrauding Punjab National Bank of Rs 13,850 crore, was arrested in mid-April on India's extradition request. India has an extradition treaty with Belgium, and the government is likely to pursue Choksi's extradition during the EAM's visit.

Jaishankar is on an official visit to France, the European Union (EU), and Belgium from June 8 to 14, 2025, the Ministry of External Affairs announced in a press release on Sunday.

The visit marks a significant step in further strengthening India's strategic partnerships with Europe. The EAM will first travel to Paris and Marseille, France, where he will hold bilateral discussions with the Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs of France, Jean Noel Barrot.

The EAM will hold a Strategic Dialogue with the EU High Representative and Vice President Kaja Kallas.

According to the MEA, "India-EU strategic partnership has strengthened over the years across diverse sectors and got a big boost with the first-ever visit of the EU College of Commissioners to India in February this year."

Jaishankar will also meet senior leadership from the European Commission and European Parliament and interact with think tanks and media.

The MEA highlighted, "India and Belgium share warm and friendly relations along with a very robust economic partnership. Today the collaboration between the two countries spans various domains like trade and investment, green energy, technology, pharmaceutical, diamond sector and strong people-to-people ties." -ANI

Russian drones target Kyiv, Odesa

Two people have been killed and 13 others wounded after more than 300 Russian drones hit Kyiv and Odesa

MOSCOW: Russia launched 315 drones and seven missiles at Ukraine overnight, in one of the largest air assaults since the start of the war, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on Tuesday.

Ukraine's Air Force reported that 284 drones and all seven missiles were intercepted. "The main direction of the attack - the capital of Ukraine, the city of Kyiv!" it said on Telegram.

Kyiv and the port city of Odesa were targeted by the Russian strikes.

Zelenskyy posted on X that drone attack included "250 Shaheds, and 7 missiles, 2 of which were North Korean-made ballistic missiles."

"Russian missile and Shahed strikes drown out the efforts of the United States and others around the world to force Russia into peace," he said.

Russian drone strikes hit maternity ward, medical facility in Odesa

Two people were killed and at least nine wounded after a "massive" Russian drone attack struck Ukraine's southern port city of Odesa overnight on Tuesday, Ukrainian authorities said.

The strikes hit a maternity hospital and an emergency medical facility, as well as residential buildings, said regional governor Oleh Kiper.

"A 59-year-old man was killed," Kiper posted on Telegram, adding that medics were treating four people wounded in the attacks.

The governor also said that residential buildings in the center of Odesa were destroyed and damaged.

The hospital patients and staff were evacuated before the Russian strikes. Photos shared by Kiper showed shattered windows and damaged building facades.

Kyiv comes under 'massive' Russian drone attack, officials say

Kyiv came under a large-scale drone assault for the second consecutive day overnight on Tuesday, with explosions and gunfire echoing across the city as air defenses engaged incoming drones, Ukrainian authorities have said.

"Stay in shelters! The massive attack on the capital continues," Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko posted on Telegram.

Timur Tkachenko, head of Kyiv's military administration, said on Telegram that Russian "drones are simultaneously attacking several districts of the city."

Emergency services responded to at least four districts after midnight.

Witnesses, including journalists from the French AFP and Reuters news agencies, reported hearing dozens of blasts and gunfire.

Several residential buildings and cars were damaged, and debris fell near a school. Four people were injured and taken to the hospital.

The strikes come just a day after Russia launched its largest drone barrage of the war, in what Moscow claims is in retaliation for recent Ukrainian attacks inside Russia.

Over 100 civilians injured in Ukrainian strikes

More than 100 civilians, including a child, were injured and four killed in Russian regions over the past week due to Ukrainian strikes, Russian Foreign Ministry Ambassador-at-Large Rodion Miroshnik said, according to TASS.

"Over the past week, 107 civilians have been affected by shelling - 103 people were injured, including one minor, and four people were killed," Miroshnik told TASS.

He added that most of the injuries were caused by Ukrainian first-person view (FPV) drone attacks.

As per TASS, the highest number of civilian casualties was recorded in the Belgorod and Kursk regions, along with the Luhansk People's Republic and Zaporozhye Region.

Miroshnik further claimed that Ukrainian forces launched nearly 1,800 munitions at civilian targets during the same period, most of which were of Western origin- allegations that come amid rising tensions, including the failure of a planned prisoner exchange between Russia and Ukraine on Saturday due to unresolved disagreements, CNN reported. -Agencies

OCEAN CONFERENCE

High Seas Treaty: UN Chief Guterres warns of looming threat

FRANCE: UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres on Monday told delegates at the UN Ocean Conference in Nice, France: "The ocean is the ultimate shared resource. But we are failing it."

The UN boss cited collapsing fish stocks, rising sea levels, ocean acidification, plastic pollution, destructive fishing and the quest for mineral riches at the ocean floor as key threats in his remarks.

The conference was organised to ratify a treaty that would give nations the right to establish protected marine areas in international waters.

Beyond providing sustenance and a habitat for local communities, sea creatures and organisms, oceans also absorb roughly 30% the globe's CO2 emissions.

The High Seas Treaty, adopted in 2023, would allow countries to legally establish protection for roughly two-thirds of the world's oceans — where activities are largely unregulated today.

Currently, only 8% of the world's oceans have marine conservation designations, although it is estimated that only 1% overall can be considered truly protected.

Macron says High Seas Treaty a 'done deal'

To go into effect, the High Seas Treaty must ratified by at least 60 countries.

French President Emmanuel Macron told those gathered that 50 countries had ratified the treaty so far and another 15 had formally promised to, making it "a done deal."

France's foreign minister said he expects implementation to take place by the end of the year.

Macron also announced that France would partially restrict bottom-trawling — a destructive form of fishing — in half of the countries protected marine areas. But conservation groups blasted him for not going far enough to protect French waters.

The UN's Guterres began the conference by addressing a major threat facing the world's oceans — deep-sea mining.

Guterres warned of the dangers of letting the ocean floor "become the wild west."

The US, China and Russia, among others, are keen to exploit potential mineral wealth on and beneath the ocean floor.

US President Donald Trump has moved aggressively on this front, fast-tracking US exploration in international waters and threatening to take territorial control of Greenland to get its share of Arctic rare earths.

Macron is lobbying for a moratorium on deep-sea mining, calling it "an international necessity."

"I think it's madness to launch predatory economic action that will disrupt the deep seabed, disrupt biodiversity, destroy it and release irrecoverable carbon sinks," he said.

Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva joined Macron in criticising a "predatory race" among countries looking to extract critical minerals on the ocean floor.

The US has also withdrawn from all international climate commitments and cut funding for climate and oceanographic projects under President Trump.

Commenting on the fact that the US had not sent a delegation to the conference, France's Macron, said: "It's not a surprise, we know the American administration's position on these issues."

"If they [the US] don't ratify it, they are not bound by it," said Rebecca Hubbard, director of the High Seas Alliance. -DW

MV WAN HAI 503 SHIP

China lauds India's swift response in rescuing crew from cargo ship

AZHIKKAL: Following an onboard explosion and fire aboard MV Wan Hai 503 off the coast of Kerala, China, expressed gratitude to Indian authorities for their swift and professional rescue efforts.

Spokesperson for the Chinese Embassy in Indian, Yu Jing, in a post on X said, "On June 9, MV Wan Hai 503 encountered an onboard explosion and fire 44 nautical miles off Azhikkal, Kerala. Of the total 22 crew members on board, 14 are Chinese, including 6 from Taiwan. Our gratitude goes to the Indian Navy @indiannavy and the Mumbai Coast Guard for their prompt and professional rescue. We wish further search operations successful and the injured crew members a speedy recovery."

The Chinese Embassy's statement came after an explosion under deck was reported aboard MV Wan Hai 503 while it was en route from Colombo to Nhava Sheva. Four crew members were reported missing and five injured in the incident. Indian Coast Guard ships have since been deployed for firefighting and rescue operations.

The vessel was carrying containerised cargo and had a total of 22 crew members onboard. CGDO on task diverted for assessment.

Indian Coast Guard units were immediately diverted for assessment and assistance. ICGS Rajdoot off New Mangalore, ICGS Arnvesh off Kochi, and ICGS Sachet off Agatti have been diverted for assistance.

In a post on X, the Indian Coast Guard said an ICG aircraft assessed the scene and dropped an air-droppable.

"Quick response by India Coast Guard after explosion on Singapore-flagged MV WAN HAI 503, 130 NM NW of Kerala coast. ICG aircraft assessed the scene & dropped air-droppable. 04 ICG ships diverted for rescue."

Fires and explosions have been reported from mid-ships to the container bay ahead of the accommodation block. The forward-bay fire is under control, but thick smoke continues to be observed. The vessel is listing approximately 10-15 degrees to port, and additional containers have been reported overboard.

Indian Coast Guard ships Samudra Prahari and Sachet are conducting fire-fighting operations and boundary cooling, while ICG ship Samarth is being deployed from Kochi. Further updates will follow, the Coast Guard added. -ANI

TRAGEDY

Several killed in Austria school shooting

VIENNA: Multiple people have been killed in an attack on a school in the southern Austrian city of Graz, according to authorities.

Police said that there had been "several deaths" after an operation was launched after reports of gunshots in Dreierschützengasse street. Police said in a later statement that the school had been succesfully evacuated.

"The situation is secure," police said. "No further danger is expected."

The ORF public broadcaster cited police as saying that several people had been killed or severely injured in the attack, among them both students and teachers.

Graz mayor Elke Kahr said that the shooter was among the dead. ORF earlier reported that the gunman was thought to be a student at the school. -DW

THRILLER WRITER

Frederick Forsyth, 'Day of the Jackal' author, dies aged 86

LONDON: Frederick Forsyth, the British author of 'The Day of the Jackal' and other bestselling thrillers, has died after a brief illness, his literary agent said on Monday. He was 86.

Jonathan Lloyd, his agent, said Forsyth died at home early Monday surrounded by his family.

"We mourn the passing of one of the world's greatest thriller writers," Lloyd said.

Forsyth published more than 25 books, also including The Odessa File and The Dogs of War, and sold 75 million copies around the world, he said.

Forsyth's most famous work was about a fictional assassination attempt on former French President Charles de Gaulle by right-wing extremists 35 days after falling on hard times.

The Jackal went on to be made into a hit film starring Edward Fox as the assassin. A Netflix remake, with Eddie Redmayne in the lead role, was released last year.

Forsyth attributed much of this success to "luck," recalling how a bullet narrowly missed him while he was covering the bloody Nigerian civil war between 1967 and 1970.

"I have had the most spectacular luck all through my life," he told British newspaper *The Times* last November in an interview.

"Right place, right time, right person, right contact, right promotion — and even just turning my head away when that bullet went past," he said.

Final novel to be released in August

Forsyth was a former journalist and pilot and saw many of his novels were also turned into films.

"After serving as one of the youngest ever RAF pilots, he turned to journalism, using his gift for languages in German, French and Russian to become a foreign correspondent in Biafra (in Nigeria)," Lloyd explained in announcing Forsyth's death.

"Appalled at what he saw and using his experience during a stint as a secret service agent, he wrote his first and perhaps most famous novel, The Day Of The Jackal," he added.

A sequel to *The Odessa File*, entitled *Revenge Of Odessa*, which he co-wrote with Tony Kent, is due to be published in August, his publisher Bill Scott-Kerr said.

"His journalistic background brought a rigour and a metronomic efficiency to his working practice and his nose for and understanding of a great story kept his novels both thrillingly contemporary and fresh," Scott-Kerr added.

Forsyth had two sons by his first wife. His second wife, Sandy, died last year. -DW

SPORTS

India's Dhoni, Pakistan's Mir among 7 inducted into ICC Hall of Fame

Hayden Smith, Amla, Vettori, and Taylor also inducted ahead of the WTC final

LONDON: MS Dhoni, Matthew Hayden, Daniel Vettori, Hashim Amla, Graeme Smith, Sarah Taylor and Sana Mir were the latest inductees into the ICC Hall of Fame unveiled two days out from the World Test Championship (WTC) final at Lord's on Monday. South Africa take on defending champions Australia in the WTC final, starting on Wednesday.

Sana became the first woman from Pakistan to be a Hall of Fame inductee.

After making her debut in 2005, Mircaptained Pakistan in 72 of the 120 women's ODIs and in 65 of the 106 women's T20Is she played, including two gold-medal wins at the Asian Games in 2010 and 2014. She is the leading wicket-taker for Pakistan in ODIs, taking 151 scalps with her off-breaks, and topped the ODI rankings for bowlers in 2018.

"From dreaming as a little girl that one day there would even be a women's team in our country to now standing here, inducted among the very legends I idolised long before I ever held a bat or a ball - this is a moment I couldn't have dared to imagine," Mir said. "I am incredibly grateful for this honour and hope to give back to the sport in any way I can."

Former India captain Dhoni helped India break their drought of a men's ODI World Cup, four years after helping them to the inaugural men's T20 World Cup title in 2007. He hit the winning runs as India won the ODI World Cup in 2011 and became the first team to win the silverware on home soil. Two years later, he captained India to the Champions Trophy win in 2013. He finished his ODI career with an average above 50, having played 350 matches and scored over 10,000 runs. Apart from his ability to ace run-chases, Dhoni will also be remembered for being the only captain to win all three white-ball ICC trophies. India also reached the top of the ICC Test rankings under his captaincy.

"It is an honour to be named in the ICC Hall of Fame, which recognises the contributions of cricketers across generations and from all over the world," he said. "To have your name remembered alongside such all-time greats is a wonderful feeling. It is something that I will cherish forever."

Hayden was one of the feared Australia openers of his times, his aggressive batting making the bowlers hide for cover. He hit three centuries in Australia's 2007 ODI World Cup win and was also part of their win in the 2003 edition. He finished his career with 30 Test centuries and an average above 50.

Amla was a Test-cricket behemoth for South Africa, who became the No. 1-ranked team in the format during his long career. He was the first from South Africa to score a triple century in Tests when he hit an unbeaten 311 against England in 2012. He finished with over 55 international centuries across formats.

Amla's South Africa team-mate, Smith, was thrust into captaincy at only 22, and it is a role that he excelled at for a long time. He led South Africa in a world record 109 Tests, winning 53 of those. He is the only player to captain a Test team for over 100 matches. He also captained them in 150 ODIs, the most for South Africa.

Australia's assistant coach and former New Zealand captain Vettori is one of only three players to score 4000 runs and pick up 300 wickets in Tests. He also captained New Zealand to a runners-up finish at the 2009 Champions Trophy.

Sarah Taylor is one of the architects of England Women's double of an ODI World Cup win and a T20 World Cup title in 2009. She also starred in them winning the ODI World Cup on home soil in 2017, making a crucial 45 in the title-clash against India at Lord's. She made a name for herself with some sensational wicketkeeping, with which she effected 232 dismissals across formats. By taking regular mental-health breaks, she helped normalise conversations around anxiety. - Agencies

WI's Pooran announces shock retirement at 29

KINGSTON: Nicholas Pooran, the former West Indies white-ball captain, has retired from international cricket at the age of 29. He finishes with 1983 runs in 61 ODIs and 2275 runs in 106 T20Is.

Pooran had recently opted out of selection for West Indies' T20I series against England and hadn't featured in ODIs since West Indies' exit in the 2023 ODI World Cup Qualifiers. However, his retirement comes as a shock since it was only in November last year - on the occasion of his 100th T20I cap - that Pooran had said he could play 100 more T20Is.

In a statement on his social media, Pooran wrote on Monday: "After much thought and reflection, I've decided to announce my retirement from international cricket. This game we love has given and will continue to give so much - joy, purpose, unforgettable memories, and a chance to represent the people of the West Indies. Wearing that maroon, standing for the anthem, and giving everything I had each time I stepped on the field... it's hard to put into words what that truly means to me. To have led the team as captain is a privilege I will always hold close to my heart."

Pooran made his West Indies debut in 2016 against Pakistan in the UAE and three years later earned his first ODI cap, against England. In 2022, he was appointed West Indies' white-ball captain but stepped down after a disastrous T20 World Cup in Australia that year. He last played for West Indies in December 2024, in a home T20I series against Bangladesh in Kingstown.

But he had arguably his best year in 2024, hitting the most sixes in a calendar year (170) before finishing IPL 2025 with 524 runs at a strike rate of 196.25 with five half-centuries. He was also expected to be a key part of West Indies' plans for the 2026 T20 World Cup early next year.

A regular in the franchise circuit, Pooran is expected to feature in the MLC and The Hundred this summer. Apart from the CPL and the IPL, he is also a regular in the ILT20 in the UAE. In T20Is, a format where he finishes as West Indies' most capped T20I player and highest run-scorer, he scored 2275 runs at an average of 26.14 and strike rate of 136.39. In ODIs, he scored 1983 runs at an average of 39.66 and strike rate of 99.15. - Agencies

MARKET
BUSINESS & FINANCE

OMAN OIL PRICE RISES

The price of Oman oil has increased, with prices for delivery by August 2025 reaching $66.82, said Dubai Mercantile Exchange (DME). The DME statement said that the price of Oman oil rose by $1.03 from the price of Monday, which was $65.79. -ONA

MSX INDEX ENDS HIGHER

The MSX index closed at 4,582.46 points, up by 0.08% from previous close. The Sharia Index ended down by 0.16% at 444.00 points. National Gas, up 8.14%, was the top gainer while, Oman Cables Industry, down 5.11%, was the top loser.

Treasury bills worth OMR44.37mn issued

The value of the allotted treasury bills amounted to OMR 44.370 million, for a maturity period of 91 days

MUSCAT: The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) raised OMR44.370 million by a way of allotting treasury bills on Monday.

The value of the allotted treasury bills amounted to OMR 44.370 million, for a maturity period of 91 days. The average accepted price reached RO 98.953 for every RO 100, and the minimum accepted price arrived at RO 98.930 per RO 100. The average discount rate and the average yield reached 4.19883% and 4.24326%, respectively.

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

It may be noted that the interest rate on the Repo operations with CBO is 5.00% while the discount rate on the Treasury Bills Discounting Facility with CBO is 5.50%.

Furthermore, Treasury Bills promote the local money market by creating a benchmark yield curve for short-term interest rates. Additionally, the Government may also resort to this instrument whenever felt necessary for financing its recurrent expenditures. -ONA

SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONES

India eases SEZ rules to boost semiconductor, electronics component manufacturing

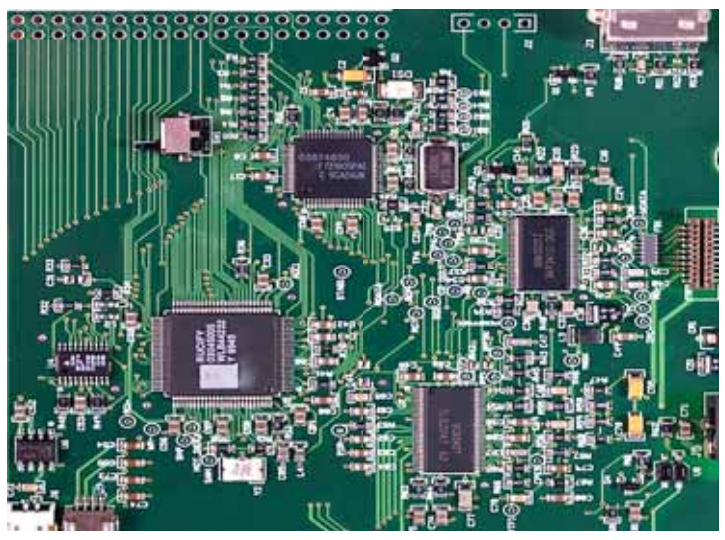
NEW DELHI: The central government has introduced pioneering reforms in the Special Economic Zones (SEZ) rules to address the specialised needs of semiconductor and electronics component manufacturing sectors.

Since manufacturing in these sectors is highly capital-intensive, import-dependent and involves longer gestation periods before turning profitable, rule amendments have been carried out to promote pioneering investments and boost manufacturing in these high-technology sectors.

After amendments in Rule 5 of SEZ Rules, 2006, an SEZ set up exclusively for the manufacturing of semiconductors or electronic components will require a minimum contiguous land area of only 10 hectares, reduced from the earlier requirement of 50 hectares.

Further, an amendment to Rule 7 of SEZ Rules, 2006, allows the Board of Approval for SEZs to relax the condition requiring SEZ land to be encumbrance-free in cases where it is mortgaged or leased to the Central or State Government or their authorised agencies.

The amended Rule 53 will allow the value of goods received and supplied on a free-of-cost basis to be included in Net Foreign Exchange (NFE) calculations and assessed using applicable customs valuation rules.



Moreover, amendments have been made in Rule 18 of the SEZ Rules to allow SEZ units in the semiconductor as well as electronics component manufacturing sector to also supply domestically into the Domestic Tariff area after payment of applicable duties.

The amendments will boost high-tech manufacturing in the country, spur growth of the semiconductor manufacturing ecosystem and create high-skilled jobs in the country.

These amendments were notified by the Department of Commerce on June 3, 2025.

Subsequently, the Board of Approval for SEZs has accorded approval to the proposals received from Micron Semiconductor Technology India Pvt Ltd (MSTI) and Hubballi Durable Goods Cluster Private Ltd (Aequs Group) for the setting up of SEZs for the manufacturing of semiconductors and electronic components, respectively.

Micron will establish its SEZ facility in Sanand, Gujarat, spanning an area of 37.64 Hectares with an estimated investment of Rs. 13,000 crores. Meanwhile, Aequs will establish its SEZ in Dharwad, Karnataka, covering an area of 11.55 Hectares to manufacture electronics components, with an estimated investment of Rs. 100 crores.

The semiconductor industry in India is still in a nascent stage, with various local and multinational companies intending to tap its vast potential. Chip shortages during Covid realised the importance of indigenous manufacturing to fill the deficiency, for national security and to galvanise indigenous innovation.

Five semiconductors are under construction in Gujarat and Assam.

In May 2025, the Union Cabinet approved a semiconductor manufacturing unit in Jewar, Uttar Pradesh, India's sixth. It will be a joint venture of HCL and Foxconn, to be set up near the Jewar airport. Production will start from 2027.

The works on other five units are currently underway, and of them is expected to be inaugurated later this year, Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw told reporters in May. -ANI

DESPITE HEADWINDS

China's foreign trade maintains resilience

BEIJING: China's foreign trade demonstrated resilience in the first five months of 2025, with total trade value rising 2.5 percent year on year, driven by the country's efforts to optimise its trade structure and stabilize growth.

The growth rate marked an increase of 0.1 percentage points compared to that registered in the first four months of 2025. The total value of goods imports and exports in yuan-denominated terms stood at 17.94 trillion yuan (about 2.5 trillion US dollars) in the January-May period, according to the General Administration of Customs (GAC) data released Monday.

During the first five months of 2025, China's exports rose 7.2 percent year on year to 10.67 trillion yuan while imports fell 3.8 percent to 7.27 trillion yuan, the data showed.

Lyu Daliang, director of the GAC's Department of Statistics and Analysis, said China's goods trade has maintained "relatively strong resilience" despite external pressures, as the country's economy has continued its recovery trend since the beginning of the year.

"In May, China's foreign trade continued its growth trend, with the pace of expansion accelerating notably following the high-level China-US economic and trade talks (held in Geneva last month)," the official said.

In May alone, China's total goods imports and exports in yuan-denominated terms rose 2.7 percent year on year. Goods exports rose 6.3 percent year on year, while imports went down 2.1 percent, according to the data.

"In the face of a more complex and challenging international situation, China's foreign trade has overcome difficulties and withstood pressure, maintaining stable growth and demonstrating strong resilience," said Wang Xuekun, head of the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation under the Ministry of Commerce.

This resilience has been underpinned by dedicated efforts to boost trade at the local level. In east China's Jiangsu Province, the provincial government has pledged increased funding to support exporters' participation in overseas exhibitions. Since the beginning of the year, it has helped more than 1,400 companies take part in over 120 exhibitions overseas.

In southwest China's Chongqing Municipality, cross-border freight vehicles carrying Chinese products, such as motorbike components and agricultural machinery, can reach Vietnam in as little as two days after clearing customs in Chongqing.

Thanks to the timeliness and flexibility of the road transport corridor, Chongqing's cross-border freight trucks transported goods worth 5.7 billion yuan in the first five months of 2025, marking a 4.3-fold increase year on year.

Monday's GAC data also showed continued structural improvements in China's foreign trade. High-tech product exports performed strongly in the first five months of 2025, rising 6.1 percent year on year in US-dollar term, while exports of mechanical and electrical products grew by 8.1 percent over the same period.

In terms of trading partners, ASEAN remained China's largest trading partner in the January-May period. During this period, trade between China and ASEAN totaled 3.02 trillion yuan, a year-on-year increase of 9.1 percent.

During the same period, China's trade with the European Union went up 2.9 percent year on year to nearly 2.3 trillion yuan, while its trade with the United States decreased by 8.1 percent year on year to 1.72 trillion yuan, according to the data. -Xinhua

BRIEFS

Oil rises amid optimism over US-China trade talks

SINGAPORE: Oil prices rose yesterday as investors awaited news from US-China trade talks in hopes a deal could boost the global economic outlook and subsequently fuel demand. Brent crude futures rose 12 cents to $67.16 a barrel. US West Texas Intermediate crude rose 13 cents to $65.42. The contract reached $65.38 a barrel during the session, the highest since 4 April. On Monday, Brent had risen to $67.19, the highest since April 28, buoyed by the prospect of a US-China trade deal. US-China trade talks were set to continue for a second day in London as top officials aimed to ease tensions that have expanded from tariffs to rare earth curbs, risking global supply chain disruptions and slower growth. A trade deal between the US and China could support the global economic outlook and boost demand for commodities including oil. -ONA

Gold slips in early trading

SINGAPORE: Gold declined yesterday as market participants awaited further developments from ongoing US-China trade talks in London. Spot gold fell 0.5% to $3,311.16 an ounce, as of 01:25 GMT. US gold futures also fell 0.7% to $3,330.90. Elsewhere, spot silver was down 0.6% to $36.51 per ounce, platinum dropped 0.8% to $1,210.46, while palladium fell 0.2% to $1,071.75. -ONA

Inflation rate drops in Norway

OSLO: Norway's annual core inflation rate, excluding energy costs and taxes, decreased in May 2025, according to data released by Statistics Norway (SSB) yesterday. The rate fell to 2.8% year on year, a drop from the 3.0% recorded in April. This figure was also lower than the 2.9% that analysts had anticipated. Accordingly, interest rates in Norway are expected to decrease during the coming months. -ONA

Korea's current account surplus narrows in April

SEOUL: The Republic of Korea logged a current account surplus for the 24th consecutive month in April, but the surplus narrowed from the previous month due partly to the impact of the United States' tariff scheme, central bank data showed Tuesday. The country's current account surplus reached US$5.7 billion in April, narrowing from a $9.14 billion surplus the previous month, Yonhap News Agency reported, citing data compiled by the Bank of Korea. The Republic of Korea has reported a current account surplus every month since May 2023. During the first four months of this year, the cumulative current account surplus stood at $24.96 billion, compared with $17.97 billion recorded during the same period last year. The goods account logged an $8.99 billion surplus in April as exports climbed 1.9 percent from a year earlier to $58.57 billion. Meanwhile, imports fell 5.1 percent to $49.58 billion. The services account, however, registered a $2.83 billion deficit in April, according to the central bank. -WAM

MARKET

MSX index ends higher

National Gas, up 8.14%, was the top gainer while Oman Cables Industry, down 5.11%, was the top loser

MUSCAT: The MSX index closed at 4,582.46 points, up by 0.08% from previous close. The Sharia Index ended down by 0.16% at 444.00 points. National Gas, up 8.14%, was the top gainer while, Oman Cables Industry, down 5.11%, was the top loser. Shares of OQBI were the most active in terms of number of shares traded as well as in terms of turnover.

A total number of 1,566 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating turnover of RO 8.13 million, with more than 51.33 million shares changing hands. Out of 54 traded securities, 18 advanced, 17 declined, and 19 remained unchanged. At the session close, domestic investors were net sellers for RO 531K while GCC & Arab investors were net buyers for RO 289K, followed by foreign investors for RO 242K worth of shares.

Financial Index closed at 7,947.86 points, up 0.21%. Prices of Global Financial Investments, Oman & Emirates Investment, Bank Dhofar, Al Madina Investments, and Oman United Insurance were up by 4.95%, 4.23%, 2.84%, 2.27%, and 0.84% respectively. Prices of Bank Muscat, Al Sharqia Investment, and Bank Nizwa were down by 2.14%, 1.19%, and 0.99% respectively.

Industrial Index closed at 6,509.70 points, down 0.58%. Prices of Al Maha Ceramics were up by 2.32% respectively. Prices of Oman Cables Industry, Oman Packaging, Galfar Engineering, Gulf International Chemicals, and Oman Flour Mills were down by 5.11%, 2.86%, 2.78%, 1.35%, and 0.23% respectively.

Services Index was up by 0.36% before closing at 1,636.26 points. Prices of National Gas, Al Batinah Power, OQ Gas Networks, Muscat Gases, Musandam Power were up by 8.14%, 2.90%, 1.94%, 1.70%, and 1.55% respectively. Prices of Oman Oil Marketing, Muscat Desalination, OIFC, Renaissance Services, and Dhofar Generating were down by 4.35%, 4.29%, 2.60%, 1.75%, and 1.64% respectively. — United Securities

OMAN STOCKS

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE

INDICES

Index	High	Low	Value	Prev. Value	Diff	Diff %
MSX 30 INDEX	4,585.35	4,545.18	4,582.46	4,578.81	3.65	0.08
FINANCIAL INDEX	7,956.70	7,895.98	7,947.86	7,931.46	16.40	0.21
Industry Index	6,546.37	6,496.47	6,509.70	6,547.81	-38.11	-0.58
Services Index	1,636.97	1,626.51	1,636.26	1,630.40	5.86	0.36
MSX Shariah Index	444.94	440.50	444.00	444.72	-0.72	-0.16
MSX TR INDEX	6,780.60	6,721.20	6,776.33	6,770.92	5.41	0.08
FINANCIAL TR IDX	9,429.68	9,357.72	9,419.21	9,399.78	19.43	0.21
INDUSTRIAL TR IDX	8,044.50	7,983.18	7,999.44	8,046.27	-46.83	-0.58
SERVICES TR IDX	2,087.53	2,074.19	2,086.63	2,079.15	7.48	0.36
FIXED INCOME INDEX	1,166.89	1,166.89	1,166.89	1,166.89	0.00	0.00

Trading Summary

Volume	Turnover	Trades	Market Cap	Up	Down	Equal	Sec. Traded
51,331,691	8,128,100	1,566	28,231,131,469	18	17	19	54

SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR TUESDAY, JUNE 10

REGULAR MARKET

ISIN	SECURITY NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR.	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF (RO)	DIFF %	LAST PR.	LAST BID	LAST OFFER	PAR VALUE	MARKET CAP
OM0000003125	GLOBAL FINANCIAL INVESTMENT HO.	441,867	45,393	35	0.100	0.107	0.100	0.106	0.101	0.005	4.950	0.106	0.106	0.106	0.100	21,200,000
OM0000004925	ALBATINAH POWER	18,319	1,277	6	0.069	0.071	0.069	0.071	0.069	0.002	2.899	0.071	0.070	0.071	0.100	47,917,008
OM0000009072	OQ GAS NETWORKS	7,687,334	1,187,136	301	0.154	0.158	0.152	0.158	0.155	0.003	1.935	0.158	0.159	0.158	0.100	684,238,579
OM0000001087	OMAN UNITED INSURANCE	8,000	1,892	3	0.234	0.239	0.234	0.239	0.237	0.002	0.844	0.239	0.220	0.240	0.100	23,900,000
OM0000003026	OMAN TELECOM	274,872	232,535	17	0.844	0.846	0.844	0.846	0.845	0.001	0.118	0.846	0.845	0.929	0.100	634,500,000
OM0000001533	OMINVEST	29,133	6,412	8	0.221	0.221	0.220	0.220	0.220	0.000	0.000	0.220	0.220	0.220	0.100	205,856,551
OM0000002168	AL ANWAR CERAMIC	220,200	43,217	17	0.197	0.200	0.196	0.197	0.197	0.000	0.000	0.197	0.196	0.197	0.100	43,340,000
OM0000002226	ALJAZEERA SERVICES	8,000	1,544	2	0.193	0.193	0.193	0.196	0.196	0.000	0.000	0.193	0.193	0.199	0.100	8,397,226
OM0000002374	UNITED FINANCE	100	6	1	0.061	0.061	0.061	0.061	0.061	0.000	0.000	0.061	0.060	0.064	0.100	21,723,765
OM0000002804	ASAFFA FOODS	263	100	1	0.380	0.380	0.380	0.380	0.380	0.000	0.000	0.380	0.376	0.380	0.100	45,600,000
OM0000003398	SOHAR INTERNATIONAL BANK	2,845,778	396,005	38	0.140	0.140	0.139	0.140	0.140	0.000	0.000	0.140	0.141	0.140	0.100	926,414,478
OM0000003968	OOREDOO	65,821	14,375	14	0.219	0.220	0.218	0.220	0.220	0.000	0.000	0.220	0.217	0.222	0.100	143,207,731
OM0000004933	AL SUWADI POWER	159,050	10,974	12	0.069	0.069	0.069	0.069	0.069	0.000	0.000	0.069	0.069	0.070	0.100	49,294,037
OM0000008934	ABRAJ ENERGY SERVICES	4,199,922	1,014,239	76	0.242	0.242	0.240	0.241	0.241	0.000	0.000	0.241	0.241	0.241	0.100	185,618,200
OM0000004420	BANK NIZWA	14,549	1,455	1	0.100	0.100	0.100	0.100	0.101	-0.001	-0.990	0.100	0.091	0.110	0.100	223,695,303
OM0000002440	AL SHARQIYA INVESTMENT HO.	113,953	9,554	9	0.085	0.085	0.082	0.083	0.084	-0.001	-1.190	0.083	0.083	0.085	0.100	7,470,000
OM0000003224	RENAISSANCE SERVICES	212,363	60,066	31	0.285	0.285	0.280	0.280	0.285	-0.005	-1.754	0.280	0.278	0.280	0.100	66,194,800
OM0000002796	BANK MUSCAT	3,644,916	997,727	94	0.275	0.278	0.271	0.274	0.280	-0.006	-2.143	0.274	0.278	0.274	0.100	2,056,752,795
OM0000001707	OMAN CABLES INDUSTRY	159	355	2	2.230	2.230	2.230	2.230	2.350	-0.120	-5.106	2.230	2.230	2.365	0.100	200,031,000
Total		19,944,599	4,024,263	668												

Parallel Market

ISIN	SECURITY NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR.	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF (RO)	DIFF %	LAST PR.	LAST BID	LAST OFFER	PAR VALUE	MARKET CAP
OM0000001160	NATIONAL GAS	1,460,846	133,435	121	0.094	0.094	0.089	0.093	0.086	0.007	8.140	0.093	0.092	0.093	0.100	7,905,000
OM0000001681	OMAN EMIRATES HO.	83,011	6,094	6	0.073	0.074	0.072	0.074	0.071	0.003	4.225	0.074	0.071	0.074	0.100	9,018,750
OM0000002549	BANK DHOFAR	274,780	39,093	4	0.142	0.145	0.142	0.145	0.141	0.004	2.837	0.145	0.142	0.145	0.100	440,770,787
OM0000005005	ALMAHA CERAMICS	85,238	25,667	23	0.298	0.309	0.298	0.309	0.302	0.007	2.318	0.309	0.301	0.315	0.100	16,995,000
OM0000007910	AMAN REAL ESTATE	2,850	254	2	0.089	0.089	0.089	0.089	0.087	0.002	2.299	0.089	0.087	0.095	0.100	17,800,000
OM0000001962	AL MADINA INVESTMENT HOLDING	131	6	1	0.045	0.045	0.045	0.045	0.044	0.001	2.273	0.045	0.045	0.048	0.100	3,825,000
OM0000001178	MUSCAT GASES	54,125	6,400	12	0.118	0.120	0.117	0.120	0.118	0.002	1.695	0.120	0.120	0.123	0.100	3,600,000
OM0000007811	MUSANDAM POWER	1,500	393	1	0.262	0.262	0.262	0.262	0.258	0.004	1.550	0.262	0.250	0.275	0.100	18,442,180
OM0000005963	PHOENIX POWER	41,603	2,790	10	0.067	0.068	0.067	0.068	0.067	0.001	1.493	0.068	0.068	0.068	0.100	99,456,899
OM0000008868	THE PEARL REIF	61,328	6,994	11	0.114	0.115	0.114	0.115	0.114	0.001	0.877	0.115	0.114	0.119	0.100	68,015,241
OM0000009908	OQ BASE INDUSTRIES (SFZ)	16,161,408	1,957,285	276	0.121	0.123	0.120	0.123	0.122	0.001	0.820	0.123	0.123	0.123	0.040	425,517,375
OM0000009759	OQ EXPLORATION AND PRODUCTION	2,061,163	609,849	181	0.295	0.296	0.295	0.296	0.295	0.001	0.339	0.296	0.296	0.296	0.010	2,368,000,000
OM0000001111	GULF HOTELS (OM)	30	108	1	3.600	3.600	3.600	3.600	3.600	0.000	0.000	3.600	3.450	3.600	1.000	12,341,959
OM0000001509	DHOFAR INTERNATIONAL DEV. & INV. HO.	7,000	1,820	1	0.260	0.260	0.260	0.260	0.260	0.000	0.000	0.260	0.260	0.000	0.100	106,404,042
OM0000001590	MUSCAT FINANCE	47,261	2,458	1	0.052	0.052	0.052	0.052	0.052	0.000	0.000	0.052	0.048	0.056	0.100	15,971,609
OM0000001772	ALANWAR INVESTMENT	283,637	23,542	25	0.083	0.083	0.083	0.083	0.083	0.000	0.000	0.083	0.078	0.083	0.100	23,826,820
OM0000002267	GULF MUSHROOM PRODUCTS	46,345	10,179	17	0.219	0.220	0.219	0.220	0.220	0.000	0.000	0.220	0.218	0.220	0.100	10,068,476
OM0000003281	TAAGEER FINANCE	60,000	6,240	2	0.104	0.104	0.104	0.104	0.104	0.000	0.000	0.104	0.099	0.104	0.100	29,039,214
OM0000008447	OMAN REIT FUND	46,010	3,776	9	0.083	0.083	0.082	0.082	0.082	0.000	0.000	0.082	0.078	0.082	0.100	53,184,406
OM0000010120	ASYAD SHIPPING	9,051,555	1,112,173	116	0.123	0.125	0.122	0.125	0.125	0.000	0.000	0.125	0.128	0.125	0.000	651,093,035
OM0000001749	OMAN CEMENT	2,250	1,105	3	0.491	0.491	0.491	0.491	0.492	-0.001	-0.203	0.491	0.491	0.530	0.100	162,458,501
OM0000001400	OMAN FLOUR MILLS	1,000	441	2	0.441	0.441	0.441	0.441	0.442	-0.001	-0.226	0.441	0.452	0.470	0.100	72,930,375
OM0000001152	OMAN NATIONAL ENGINEERING & INV.	70,000	8,325	5	0.119	0.120	0.118	0.118	0.119	-0.001	-0.840	0.118	0.117	0.120	0.100	17,700,000
OM0000002028	GULF INTERNATIONAL CHEMICALS	55,000	4,030	5	0.074	0.074	0.073	0.073	0.074	-0.001	-1.351	0.073	0.073	0.074	0.100	1,533,000
OM0000004248	SMN POWER HOLDING	55,861	11,771	14	0.213	0.213	0.210	0.210	0.213	-0.003	-1.408	0.210	0.210	0.210	0.100	41,923,476
OM0000007407	DHOFAR GENERATING	55,827	3,350	6	0.060	0.060	0.060	0.060	0.061	-0.001	-1.639	0.060	0.060	0.060	0.100	13,334,400
OM0000001608	OMAN PACKAGING	1,000	136	1	0.136	0.136	0.136	0.136	0.140	-0.004	-2.857	0.136	0.136	0.000	0.100	4,411,277
OM0000007084	MUSCAT CITY DESALINATION	17,751	1,192	4	0.069	0.069	0.067	0.067	0.070	-0.003	-4.286	0.067	0.067	0.071	0.100	10,421,877
OM0000002572	OMAN OIL MARKETING	1,090	734	3	0.690	0.690	0.660	0.660	0.690	-0.030	-4.348	0.660	0.660	0.692	0.100	40,441,500
Total		30,089,600	3,979,638	863												

SAUDI PORTS AUTHORITY

Mawani reports 13% growth in container handling at ports in May

RIYADH: Ports supervised by the Saudi Ports Authority (Mawani) recorded a 13% increase in container handling during May 2025, reaching 720,684 twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs), compared with 639,736 TEUs in the same period last year.

Transshipment containers increased by 12.89%, totaling 149,143 TEUs compared to 132,112 last year. Imports also grew by 15.84%, reaching 292,223 TEUs, compared to 252,265 TEUs in May 2024.

Imported containers increased by 9.38%, totalling 279,318 TEUs compared to 255,359 TEUs in the same month last year. Total handled cargo—including general cargo, solid bulk, and liquid bulk—increased by 1.40% to reach 21,337,699 tons, up from 21,042,684 tons in the corresponding period of 2024. This total includes 935,932 tons of general cargo, 5,059,899 tons of solid bulk cargo, and 15,341,868 tons of liquid bulk cargo.

The ports also received 1,635,489 heads of livestock, marking a 61.22% increase from 1,014,417 in the same period last year. Maritime traffic rose by 9.39%, with 1,083 vessels received compared to 990 last year. Passenger numbers increased by 68.15% to 95,231, up from 56,636 in May 2024. The number of vehicles grew by 13.09% to 84,352, compared to 74,590 last year. -SPA

RUSSIAN FERTILISER

EU's push to cut Russian energy imports overlooks critical dependence on fertiliser

BRUSSELS: Amid the intense focus on the European Union's efforts to reduce imports of Russian gas and oil over the past few years, a significant product has slipped under the radar: fertiliser.

Russia is a major global producer and exporter of fertilizer, which is used by farmers and food producers to provide nutrients to plants and crops.

While the EU has largely cut out Russian oil and gas from its import list, it has ramped up its purchases of the country's fertilizer since Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022.

Russia's share of EU fertilizer imports has grown from 17% in 2022 to about 30% now. In 2024 alone, imports rose by more than 33% to around $2 billion.

According to the MIT Observatory of Economic Complexity — a detailed trade data platform — Russia exported a total $15.3 billion worth of fertilizers in 2023, making it the largest exporter in the world.

While its primary export markets are India and Brazil, the EU collectively accounts for a significant chunk of Russia's exports, weighing in at around 13% in 2023. Earlier this month, however, the European Parliament endorsed the European Commission's proposal to introduce a 6.5% tariff on fertilizers imported from Russia and Belarus. The plan is to continue ramping up the tariffs to 50% by 2028.

Why does the EU buy so much Russian fertiliser?

This can be partly explained by the type of fertilizer Russia produces and how it produces it. Russia specializes in nitrogen-based or inorganic fertilizer, which requires huge amounts of natural gas both as a raw material and to produce it.

Many EU nations require nitrogen-based fertilizers because they are particularly rich in nitrogen and vital nutrients such as phosphorus and potassium.

William Moseley, professor of geography at Macalester College in the USA and a member of the UN High-Level Panel of Experts for Food Security and Nutrition, told DW that Russia is particularly well-placed to meet this demand because it can use cheap gas to produce the fertilizer for far lower prices than European competitors can.

The European fertilizer sector has railed against what some have said is Russia "dumping" cheap fertilizer into the EU market.

When European energy prices surged and energy markets were disrupted by the invasion of Ukraine, many European producers of nitrogen-based fertilizers were forced to stop production. Now they have lost market share to Russia and are struggling to compete.

What are the EU's alternatives?

According to Moseley, the EU's tariff plans suggest it is serious about weaning itself off Russian fertilizer by 2028.

"This will force EU countries to source inorganic fertilizer from elsewhere," he told DW, identifying China, Oman, Morocco, Canada or the US as potential alternative markets.

Mosley believes other alternatives for the EU would be to turn to its own sources of nitrogen-based fertilizer — which would be very expensive, due to the gas requirements — or to ramp up the use of organic fertilizer made from manure and composted organic waste. This option, he added, was "more sustainable and better for the soil."

"While it is unlikely that the EU could become totally independent of inorganic fertilizer imports, it could certainly shift the ratio towards more dependence on home-grown organic fertilizer production, especially if it is done gradually," said Mosley.

The EU itself has acknowledged that it wants to move in this direction of developing fertilizer processed from animal dung and urine.

Christophe Hansen, European Commissioner for Agriculture and Food, said in February that the livestock sector could "provide a positive input to the circular economy" with organic fertilizer, as it is "domestically grown and doesn't need to come from outside and is not based on high energy prices like gas."

How will the EU plan work?

Moseley thinks the EU fertilizer tariffs, if carried out as planned by 2028, will gradually eliminate Russian imports from the EU market. "By 2028, the duties will be so high that it will be economically unviable for the EU to import inorganic fertilizer from Russia and Belarus."

The EU's sanctions will come into effect in July and specifically target agricultural products which it had neglected previously, including fertilizers.

In a statement, the EU Commission said particularly fertilzer imports "make the EU vulnerable to potential coercive actions by Russia and thus present a risk to EU food security."

The reason why the sanctions are to be phased in gradually over the next three years is to give EU farmers time to find alternatives, particularly if they are already dependent on Russian fertilizers. -DW

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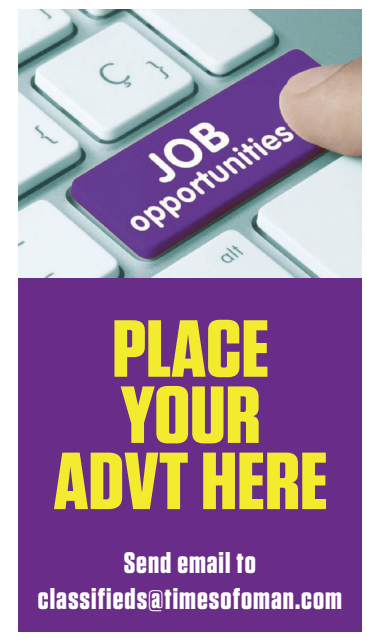

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LIFESTYLE

STUDY REVEALS LINK BETWEEN CONSUMING BUTTER, MARGARINE

WASHINGTON: A recent study conducted by researchers in Boston University in the United States has revealed that decades of medical warnings that saturated fats, such as butter and margarine, affect heart health and increase the risk of type 2 diabetes were inaccurate.

The study, published in the European Journal of Clinical Nutrition, included around 2,500 men and women over the age of 30. They were followed for years, monitoring their dietary patterns and incidence of diabetes and heart disease, in an attempt to understand the relationship between butter or margarine consumption and heart health.

The study results showed that consuming at least 5 grams of butter per day, roughly equivalent to one teaspoon, reduces the risk of type 2 diabetes by up to 31 percent. It was also found that butter raises levels of good cholesterol in the blood and contributes to reducing harmful fats known to cause clogged arteries, heart attacks, and strokes.

These findings contradict decades of dietary recommendations based on previous research linking saturated fats to heart disease. These warnings began in the 1960s, when researchers observed a link between Western dietary patterns and increased rates of heart disease, leading to calls to reduce animal fat consumption.

In this context, the results showed that margarine, which has been considered a healthy alternative to butter for decades, was associated with a more than 40 percent increased risk of diabetes and a 30 percent increased risk of heart disease. Researchers believe this is due to older margarines containing unhealthy trans-fats.

SPORTS

Madrid to make debut as Imola dropped from 2026 F1 calendar

New Spanish capital street race to conclude European Formula One leg

MADRID: The Spanish capital will make its long-awaited Formula One debut in 2026, replacing Italy's Imola on a reshuffled 24-race calendar aimed at improving logistics and cutting carbon emissions.

The inaugural Madrid Grand Prix is scheduled for 11–13 September and will take place on a newly constructed 5.47km street circuit around the IFEMA exhibition centre, located between central Madrid and Barajas airport.

The city's entry into the championship marks Spain's second race on the calendar, alongside the traditional round in Barcelona.

Madrid's arrival sees the Emilia-Romagna Grand Prix at Imola dropped, ending a recent run that began when the circuit was revived during the COVID-affected 2020 season.

Despite Imola attracting a record 242,000 fans in 2025, pressure to streamline the F1 calendar — capped at 24 races by Formula One Management — has led to its exclusion for 2026.

"This is part of a broader strategy to optimise the calendar for environmental sustainability and logistical efficiency," said F1 officials, with freight costs and emissions now a growing focus for the sport. The 2026 schedule has been structured with fewer long-haul back-and-forth flights, creating tighter regional groupings.

Streamlined calendar, shifting race dates

Canada has been moved from its traditional early June slot to 22–24 May, following the Miami Grand Prix on 1–3 May.

This reshuffling helps reduce freight movement across continents. As a result, Monaco has shifted to 5–7 June, ahead of Barcelona, which retains its mid-June position to honour the final year of its current contract.

From Monaco through to Madrid in mid-September, every race will be held in Europe, giving the series its longest uninterrupted continental run before the overseas leg begins in Azerbaijan.

While Madrid has been added, the calendar also signals the end of Zandvoort's recent resurgence. The Dutch Grand Prix, revived in 2021 with support from local hero Max Verstappen's popularity, will see its final edition on 21–23 August 2026.

Meanwhile, Belgium's Spa-Francorchamps — long considered one of the crown jewels of F1 — will enter a new rotational contract. From 2026, Spa will host only four races over six years (2026, 2027, 2029 and 2031), despite its historic and fan-favourite status.

The loss of Imola and Zandvoort underscores growing pressure on European venues, as F1 looks to accommodate new markets.

While Spain will temporarily have two races next year, this situation is unlikely to persist. Madrid is expected to be the long-term host, while Barcelona may join a pool of circuits rotating in and out of the calendar.

Beyond Europe, efforts to establish a Grand Prix in Africa continue but face challenges. Hopes of staging a race in Rwanda have faded, and South African options like Kyalami and Cape Town remain logistically and financially complicated.

A proposed project in Tangier, Morocco, also faces funding hurdles. Meanwhile, Thailand is actively pushing to host a race in Bangkok.

2026 Formula 1 World Championship calendar: Australia (Melbourne): 6–8 March; China (Shanghai): 13–15 March; Japan (Suzuka): 27–29 March; Bahrain (Sakhir): 10–12 April; Saudi Arabia (Jeddah): 17–19 April; United States (Miami): 1–3 May; Canada (Montreal): 22–24 May; Monaco (Monte Carlo): 5–7 June; Spain (Barcelona): 12–14 June; Austria (Spielberg): 26–28 June; Great Britain (Silverstone): 3–5 July; Belgium (Spa): 17–19 July; Hungary (Budapest): 24–26 July; Netherlands (Zandvoort): 21–23 August; Italy (Monza): 4–6 September; Spain (Madrid): 11–13 September; Azerbaijan (Baku): 25–27 September; Singapore (Marina Bay): 9–11 October; United States (Austin): 23–25 October; Mexico (Mexico City): 30 October–1 November; Brazil (São Paulo): 6–8 November; United States (Las Vegas): 19–21 November; Qatar (Lusail): 27–29 November; Abu Dhabi (Yas Marina): 4–6 December. - Agencies

UEFA WORLD CUP QUALIFIERS

Italy win in coach Spaletti's final game

MILAN: Hosts Italy claimed a 2-0 win over Moldova in Luciano Spalletti's final game as the men's national team coach at the Mapei Stadium – Città del Tricolore in Reggio Emilia.

Spalletti said at a news conference on Sunday that Monday's World Cup qualifier would be his last match in charge.

The 66-year-old had been told after Friday's 3-0 loss to Norway that he would be relieved of his duties and the Azzurri ensured he bowed out with a victory.

Napoli forward Giacomo Raspadori and Juventus full-back Andrea Cambiaso scored either side of half-time in Reggio Emilia to give Italy their first points in the group.

Spalletti was appointed in August 2023 and, although Italy went into Euro 2024 as reigning champions, they were knocked out by Switzerland in the last 16.

Monday's game was Spalletti's 24th as Italy coach and brought his 12th victory, giving him a win ratio of exactly 50% - the lowest of any permanent boss since Cesare Prandelli, who led the team from 2010 to 2014.

"When you're the national team coach you have no excuses, it's you who selects the squad," Spalletti told public broadcaster Rai.

"It's the coach who has to make the difference and unfortunately I wasn't able to do that."

Monday's game was played in a flat atmosphere and Spalletti, who coached Napoli, Inter Milan and Roma in Serie A, said tiredness was a factor behind Italy's uninspiring winning display.

"I maintained this group, but I found them really fatigued at this stage of the season," he added.

"Perhaps seeking someone in better physical shape might've helped, but the fact we have 25 players all a bit like this means the campaign really took it out on everyone.

"This will be a very different team in much better shape come September."

Italy's next qualifiers are against Estonia and Israel on 5 and 8 September.

Bruyne's nets winner

In a Group J game played in Brussels, Wales sensationally stormed back from three goals down to level with Belgium in Brussels, only for Kevin de Bruyne's late winner to inflict an absurdly dramatic first defeat (4-3) on Craig Bellamy and knock his team off the top of their World Cup qualifying group.

The freewheeling home side were 3-0 up after just 27 minutes. Romelu Lukaku put them in front from the penalty spot before Youri Tielemans stylishly finished off an incisive team move, and Jeremy Doku feigned, jinked and fired into the bottom corner for the Belgians' third.

Wales were staring into the abyss of a first loss since a 4-0 thrashing by Slovakia exactly one year earlier cost previous manager Rob Page his job, and the scoreline suggested this could become a heavy one.

But Wales are a different team under Bellamy, and they responded brilliantly to a bleak situation as Harry Wilson's penalty moments before half-time gave them a glimmer of hope.

Wilson's excellent cross set up Sorba Thomas to fire in his first Wales goal, and then Brennan Johnson headed in an equaliser to spark spectacular celebrations in a raucous away end.

Yet just as Welsh fans were dreaming of another famous result against the nation they so memorably beat in a Euro 2016 quarter-final - particularly after the video assistant referee (VAR) disallowed a Lukaku second - De Bruyne popped up at the back post to score. Then it was the Belgians' turn to celebrate wildly, the sense of relief palpable as they survived what would have been a revival for the ages.

Other results: Group I: Estonia 0 Norway 1; Group J: Kazakhstan 0 North Macedonia 1; Group L: Croatia 5 Czech Republic 1, Faroe Islands 2 Gibraltar 1. - Agencies

PORTUGUESE SUPERSTAR

Ronaldo hints at staying with Nassr

MUNICH: Portuguese superstar Cristiano Ronaldo seems set to remain with Saudi Arabian club Al Nassr.

The 40-year-old forward is out of contract at the end of this month and although sources have told BBC Sport that they are confident of extending his deal, there has still been speculation over his future.

The former Real Madrid, Juventus and Manchester United striker last week posted a cryptic message on social media hinting he was set to leave the club he joined in January 2023.

But, speaking after Portugal's dramatic Nations League victory over Spain on Sunday, he suggested he would not be moving on.

"Future? Nothing will change. Al Nassr? Yes," the forward told reporters after the game where he scored a record-extending 138th international goal which levelled the scoring at 2-2.

The five-time Ballon d'Or winner was replaced in the 88th minute and was not involved in the resulting penalty shootout.

He was in tears after Ruben Neves slotted home the winning penalty following Diogo Costa's save from Alvaro Morata's spot-kick.

On Saturday, Ronaldo said he would not be playing at this month's Club World Cup after turning down offers from participating teams.

FIFA President Gianni Infantino had raised the prospect of him joining a team involved at the tournament after Al Nassr's failure to qualify. - Agencies

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE RUNNERS-UP

Inter appoint Parma boss Chivu as new manager

MILAN: Champions League runners-up Inter Milan have appointed Parma boss Cristian Chivu as manager.

The 44-year-old, a former defender and youth team coach at Inter, leaves Parma after only 13 games in charge and replaces Simone Inzaghi.

The former Romania international was appointed by Parma in February - his first senior coaching role - winning three games as he steered Parma to Serie A safety.

Inzaghi left Inter after the 5-0 Champions League final defeat by Paris Saint-Germain on 31 May and has taken charge of Saudi Pro League side Al Hilal.

Chivu, who has signed a contract until 2027, won three league titles during seven years as an Inter player.

Inter said, he has "gone through experiences and challenges of enormous importance, events that have shaped him as a man and a professional, binding him inextricably to the black and blue colours".

Chivu will take charge of Inter during the Club World Cup. They begin their campaign against Mexican side Monterrey on 17 June. - Agencies

UNVEILING OF ANDY MURRAY ARENA

Murray open to coaching return but says it won't be immediate

LONDON: Andy Murray says he is open to returning to coaching "at some stage" but stressed that any comeback to the role would not be immediate, as he continues to absorb lessons from his brief yet high-profile stint with Novak Djokovic.

Speaking at the unveiling of the newly renamed Andy Murray Arena at the Queen's Club in London on Monday, the 38-year-old admitted he had not originally intended to dive into coaching so soon after retiring from professional tennis at the 2024 Olympics.

"I wasn't planning on going into coaching as soon as I finished playing, but it was a pretty unique opportunity," Murray told BBC Sport. "It was a chance to learn from one of the best athletes of all time."

Murray joined Djokovic's coaching team in November 2024, but the partnership came to an end in May 2025 after just four tournaments. Djokovic later said he felt he "couldn't get more" out of their collaboration.

Despite the short duration, Murray reflected positively on the experience: "It was a brilliant opportunity for me. We got to spend some really nice moments away from the court. Results weren't what we hoped, but we gave it a go."

He acknowledged, however, that coaching presented a different set of challenges. "As a player, you're the focal point of your team. But as a coach, you're working with physios, trainers, agents — you need to understand how to get your message across, how to find what makes the player tick. That's something I need to work on if I want to do it again in the future."

While he won't be rushing back to the coaching bench, Murray is confident about the state of men's tennis, praising the new rivalry between Carlos Alcaraz and Jannik Sinner after their marathon five-hour, 29-minute final at Roland Garros, the longest French Open final in history.

"For me, particularly Alcaraz has an exciting brand of tennis to watch," he said. "They complement each other well, and it's great for the sport. People always worry what happens when a generation retires, but tennis keeps evolving."

He also tipped Britain's Jack Draper — now ranked fourth in the world — to be part of the future. "Jack's right in the mix and doing extremely well. He'll have opportunities to win majors over the next five to ten years."

However, Murray cautioned against premature comparisons with the Big Three. "It's important not to forget what Roger, Rafa and Novak have done. Winning 20-plus majors is exceptional. Alcaraz and Sinner are on the path to being greats — but it takes time."

The Queen's Club has played a central role in Murray's career, and now honours his achievements with the renaming of its centre court. "It's surreal," said Murray. - Agencies

IN PICTURES

Chinese sci-fi finds a muse in traditional culture
Traditional Chinese culture is finding a new life not in text books or museums, but in the speculative futures of Chinese science fiction. Writers and creators are mining the past -- classical literature, philosophies, and archaeological marvels -- and threading it into a genre that is vividly, unmistakably Chinese.

Palestinian boy carries pastries for sale
A Palestinian boy carries pastries at a temporary shelter in Gaza City, on June 9, 2025. He was displaced from Beit Hanoun, northern Gaza Strip, and now lives in Gaza City. He is trying to earn a few dollars per day by selling pastries made by his family members, amid surging prices of flour. Xinhua

Indian Navy rescues crew members of the Singapore-flagged container
Indian Navy conducts a coordinated search and rescue operation with the Coast Guard, Directorate General of Shipping and other stakeholders, as they safely rescued 18 out of 22 crew members of the Singapore-flagged container ship MV Wan Hai 503, that had reported an internal container explosion and a resultant major fire onboard, in Kochi on Monday. ANI

Model walks the ramp at the Toronto's Fashion Week
A model presents a creation at the 2025 Fashion Art Toronto's Fashion Week Spring/Summer in Toronto, Canada. Featuring collections from over 40 Canadian designers, the annual fashion show kicked off Sunday. Xinhua

2025 Kigali International Peace Marathon
Florence Niyonkuru of Rwanda crosses the finish line as the winner of the Half Marathon in the female category during the 2025 Kigali International Peace Marathon in Kigali, Rwanda, on June 8, 2025. Xinhua

Milu deer seen in Yancheng City, east China's Jiangsu
This photo taken on June 7, 2025 shows milu deer in Tiaozini wetland in Dongtai of Yancheng City, east China's Jiangsu Province. Yancheng City of east China's Jiangsu Province is home to the world's largest milu deer reserve, the largest wild milu deer population in the world, and the world's largest milu deer gene pool. -Xinhua

ROUND-UP

Sohar International receives 'CX Team of the Year' award 2025

This accolade underscores Sohar International's unwavering dedication to enhancing the customer experience through a progressive approach that blends innovation, real-time responsiveness, and personalised service delivery

MUSCAT: Reinforcing its position as a leader in redefining service excellence within the Sultanate's banking landscape, Sohar International has been awarded the title of 'CX Team of the Year' at the CX Awards 2025.

The recognition was presented during the prestigious Oman CX Forum, held recently at the St. Regis Al Mouj Muscat Resort, under the patronage of His Highness Sayyid Mohammed Bin Salim Al Said.

This accolade underscores Sohar International's unwavering dedication to enhancing the customer experience through a progressive approach that blends innovation, real-time responsiveness, and personalized service delivery. Grounded in digital transformation and an in-depth understanding of evolving customer expectations, the bank continues to set new benchmarks in customer-centric banking across the region.

Commenting on the recognition, Abdulwahid Mohamed Al Murshidi, Chief Executive Officer of Sohar International, stated, "In an increasingly dynamic and competitive landscape, customer experience has emerged as a critical differentiator. At Sohar International, we have embedded customer-centricity into the core of our strategy—leveraging intelligent digital capabilities, data-driven insights, and a deep understanding of evolving customer expectations to deliver proactive and personalised service experiences. This award is a testament to the unwavering commitment and agility of our teams who consistently go beyond the conventional to create meaningful value for our clients. As we move forward, we remain committed to setting new benchmarks in service excellence, driving innovation, and empowering customers to thrive in a fast-changing world."

Bringing together more than 200 senior executives spanning banking, telecom, insurance, FMCG, hospitality, education, and healthcare, the Oman CX Forum 2025 served as a meaningful industry touchpoint for customer experience leadership. For Sohar International, the forum's broader themes—ranging from AI integration and personalized service journeys to data-led strategies, loyalty-building, and emotional engagement—closely align with the bank's evolving approach to CX. Participation in such platforms reflects the bank's commitment to staying attuned to emerging trends, strengthening internal capabilities, and delivering meaningful interactions that resonate beyond transactions.

These recognitions come as part of a broader series of accolades that Sohar International has garnered throughout the year, underscoring its leadership across key areas of banking excellence.

PROMOTION

Kia launches welcoming season offer with bonus and exciting raffle prizes

MUSCAT: It's the welcoming season at Kia! Become a proud Kia owner and receive a welcome bonus worth RO 500 on the purchase of any Kia vehicle, including stress free car service up to 100,000 km with first-year insurance, and registration. Plus, all Kia customers get a chance to win iPhone 15 (256 GB) in the raffle.

Furthermore, step into the era of electric mobility and buy Kia's futuristic range of electric vehicles to reap more benefits this summer season. Buy the EV9 or EV6 and get an exclusive bonus of up to RO 3,000 with free service upto 105,000 km & free insurance. Don't miss out and explore Kia's dynamic range of SUVs and sedans at showrooms across Oman, before the offer ends on 16th July 2025.

To make each family moment memorable, experience the spacious, high-tech, and stunning Kia Telluride. Built to cater to larger families seeking weekend getaways to the desert or a mountain retreat to enjoy the cool, fresh air. Experience Kia's finest SUV, the Telluride, boasts a powerful, high-performance 3.8L GDI V6 engine. This 8-seater SUV offers unmatched utility, space, and performance. Kia places great emphasis on passenger safety. The Telluride is equipped with front and rear seat airbags, side and curtain airbags, electronic stability Program (ESP), anti-lock braking system (ABS), Electric Parking Brake (EPB) with Auto hold, and a driver's knee airbag, among other advanced safety technologies, making it a perfect all-rounder in the SUV league.

Designed for a new era of innovation and sustainability, the EV9 is Kia's all-electric SUV. With an impressive driving range of up to 500 km on a full charge, and fast-charging capability that delivers an 80% charge in just 24 minutes, it's built for those who live life at a full charge. Compared to gasoline-powered vehicles, EVs have fewer moving parts, reducing maintenance needs. The EV9 also comes with a battery warranty of 160,000 km or 8 years, and includes a free AC charging unit with installation for all customers along with the RO 3,000 welcome bonus as part of the summer offer.

Demonstrating Kia's commitment to meeting evolving customer needs, the brand-new Kia Sportage L comes with the 'Make Space for Adventure' concept. It features a longer 2,755 mm wheelbase and a 543-liter luggage compartment, delivering more space for every journey. Whether you're navigating city streets, off-road terrain, or long highways, there's a Sportage that fits your lifestyle. Introduced in two high performance trims, the Sportage is now available in a 2.0T engine producing 233 HP, or a 1.5T engine delivering 197 HP, both mated to an 8-speed Shift-by-Wire transmission.

Reliable International Automotive is Kia's distributor in Oman.

SIXTH CYCLE

Youth Sada in partnership with bp Oman concludes Reading Family programme

MUSCAT: In partnership with bp Oman, Youth Sada concluded its sixth Reading Family programme in Al Dhahirah, which aimed to instil the culture of reading and literature within the Omani community by nurturing the children's enthusiasm in reading, developing the local youth capabilities in delivering literature workshops and raising awareness in the community on educational methods to encourage reading among the future generations.

This edition of the programme benefitted over 1000 people with more than 400 children, approximately 100 parents and over 400 students.

The programme came as part of bp Oman's social investment programmes in Al Dhahirah region and this year the Reading Family programme focused on seven main activities which are the 'Rawafid' Training Programme, My Child Reads sessions, the Reading Family Forum, a picture story telling competition, workshop on self-learning intelligence, 'Dehleez' sessions and 'Hakawati' sessions.

'Rawafid' Training programme targeted the young Omanis to develop their skills in child literature by understanding the writing styles aimed at children, as well as how to create compelling content for children to meet their intellectual and psychological needs and equip the trainers with innovative tools to design and implement reading programmes. My Child Reads sessions on the other hand targeted the mothers and parents and taught them the essential skills in how to deal with children and develop their reading skills. In addition, the Reading Family Forum included a series of challenges, fun competitions and educational workshops in various topics.

Qais Al Maqrashi, CEO of Youth Sada, commented saying: "At Youth Sada, we continuously strive to promote a culture of reading and literature on a wide scale. Over the past six cycles of the programme, we have reached more than 4,500 beneficiaries of all ages, including children, parents, and school students, reflecting on our commitment to contribute to building a culture of reading."

Ibrahim Al Hinai, Social Investment Manager at bp Oman, Kuwait, and Qatar, commented: "We're committed to supporting education at bp Oman, and the Reading Family programme doesn't just target children but also Omani youth, and parents, contributing to spreading the culture of reading and literature among a wider group of our society. Over the last 6 cycles of the programme, we have benefitted 1188 mothers with more than 30 sessions delivered for various age groups."

CUSTOMER-CENTRIC

BankDhofar unveils 'Laha' – A motor insurance solution designed exclusively for women

MUSCAT: BankDhofar, Oman's second-largest bank by branch network, has introduced 'Laha', a unique motor insurance product created exclusively for women. This launch underscores BankDhofar's commitment to innovation, inclusivity, and customer-centric financial services.

Developed in partnership with Dhofar Insurance, one of the largest insurance providers in the Sultanate, Laha delivers comprehensive coverage, exclusive lifestyle benefits, and round-the-clock support. Positioned as both premium and cost-effective, Laha redefines the insurance experience for women drivers in Oman.

At the core of Laha is a focus on safety, confidence, and convenience. The plan includes 24/7 emergency roadside assistance covering situations such as flat tyres, battery issues, vehicle lockouts, and mechanical breakdowns. It also features accident recovery and vehicle towage up to 100 kilometers or provides OMR 55 as compensation in lieu. In the event of medical emergencies, policyholders can benefit from ambulance services, including fast access to Aster Clinic or equivalent discounts.

Beyond standard coverage, Laha offers additional protections that reflect the lifestyle needs of modern drivers. These include compensation of up to OMR 200 for mobile phone damage, as well as coverage for personal items such as handbags and child seats. Terms & Conditions apply.

Laha joins a growing portfolio of bancassurance solutions from BankDhofar, which are designed to provide comprehensive protection against a range of risks—from road accidents and theft to fire and natural disasters. BankDhofar is widely regarded for its competitive premiums, reliable claims process, and customer-first approach. Its motor insurance offerings include both Third Party Liability and Comprehensive Insurance plans.

STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE INTERNAL AUDITS

Bank Muscat hosts workshop to strengthen collaboration with Labour Ministry

MUSCAT: In a demonstration of its commitment to fostering strategic partnerships with government entities, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in Oman, recently organised a workshop aimed at enhancing collaboration with the Ministry of Labour. The event took place at the bank's headquarters in Airport Heights and was attended by a number of employees.

The workshop focused on the plans and strategies for effective internal audits, emphasising the bank's role in economic development by showcasing the diverse banking services and facilities it offers. This initiative is part of various training courses facilitated by the bank in partnership with various governmental organizations, aimed to help to upskill staff in public sector in contemporary skills &competencies, share best practices and build banking services expertise in public sector.

Over the course of two days, the workshop featured visual presentations and knowledge sharing on several topics related to administrative and financial development, delivered by employees from different departments. Attendees actively engaged in discussions, sharing ideas and suggestions to foster business growth.

In his opening remarks, Said bin Salim Al Aufi, General Manager of Human Resources and Administration at Bank Muscat, expressed his enthusiasm for the collaboration with the Ministry of Labour, emphasizing its role in enhancing employee efficiency in administrative and financial disciplines. Al Aufi highlighted the importance of human resources, noting that employees are essential to the success and advancement of any organization. He extended gratitude to all partners from governmental agencies and reaffirmed the Bank's commitment to supporting these initiatives in alignment with national development goals.

Wafa Ibrahim Al Ajmi, Assistant General Manager of Transaction & Government Banking at Bank Muscat, acknowledged the long-standing relationships between the Bank and its governmental partners. She remarked on the Bank's leadership in adopting advanced digital solutions that transform the banking landscape, underscoring the Bank's dedication to staying abreast of technological advancements both locally and internationally. Al Ajmi emphasized the importance of strengthening partnerships with these institutions to enhance customer experience, streamline operations, and improve overall efficiency.

Bank Muscat is dedicated to the ongoing training and development of its human resources, striving to implement best practices and successful management methodologies to achieve operational efficiency. The Bank has established a dedicated department, Jadara Academy, focused on enhancing national competencies through administrative and professional training programs. The Academy also aims to develop employee skills through e-learning, scholarships, professional certifications, and targeted training initiatives in management and leadership.

Recognizing the development of human resources as a top priority, Bank Muscat allocates an annual budget for training and development across all roles. Training programs are conducted through accredited educational institutions or in partnership with leading colleges, universities, and training centers at both regional and global levels.