

Times

GOLDEN JUBILEE

OF OMAN



50

YEARS OF LEGACY

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TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN
OCCI participates in maritime conference

1 The OCCI participated in the Arab-Greek conference, organised by the Arab-Greek chamber in Athens. >A2

OMAN
Tourism boom in South Al Sharqiyah

2 The coastal areas of the Wilayat of Jalan Bani Bu Ali witnessed a boom in tourism during the holiday. >A3

MARKET
Al Rusayl Industrial City signs 17 contracts

3 Al Rusayl Industrial City, affiliated to 'Madayn', signed 17 contracts in 2024 for projects covering an area of over 235,000 sqm. >B1

OMAN'S NON-OIL SECTOR DRIVES GDP TO \$10.5 BILLION IN Q1 2025

Non-oil activities rose by 4.1 percent to OMR 7.13 billion by the end of the first quarter of this year



MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman's gross domestic product (GDP) at current prices increased by 4.7 percent to OMR10.53 billion by the end of the first quarter of 2025 compared to OMR10.05 billion during the same period of 2024.

Preliminary data released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) indicated that this growth in GDP is primarily attributed to a rise in non-oil

activities, which increased by 4.1 percent to OMR7.13 billion by the end of the first quarter of this year compared to OMR6.85 billion by the end of the corresponding quarter of 2024.

The NCSI data further showed that agriculture and fishing activities witnessed a growth of 11.1 percent, reaching OMR326.60 million, while industrial activities recorded a growth of 2.8 percent, contributing OMR1.96 billion to the gross domestic product. The growth of service activities reached 4.2 percent, with a total

contribution of OMR4.83 billion.

Oil-related activities also played a significant role, with an overall increase of 6.8% in value-added contributions, reaching OMR3.71 billion by the end of the first quarter of 2025, compared to OMR3.47 billion by the end of the first quarter of 2024

This comes despite a 7.5% dip in crude oil activity, which stood at OMR2.74 billion. The standout performer was the natural gas sector, which surged by a remarkable 89%, adding OMR970.8 million to the national output. -ONA



HM THE SULTAN LEAVES FOR UK

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik left on Sunday for the United Kingdom on a private visit lasting several days. May the Almighty Allah protect His Majesty in his journeys and grant him good health and wellbeing! - ONA



MOHAMED ISSA AL ZADJALI

Shifting sands: Why our defence future lies in East, not in West

The recent escalating conflicts in Palestine and the wider Iran-Israel tensions have laid bare a stark reality for nations in our region: Reliance on Western arms suppliers and alliances comes with significant geopolitical strings attached, strings that consistently pull in favour of Israel.

We have seen, for instance, in the context of the Ukraine conflict, how the political will of supplying governments can dictate the terms of use, the types of targets permissible, and even the timely delivery of crucial armaments.

This raises a profound concern: Can we truly depend on weapons systems whose operational deployment might be constrained by the strategic preferences of their Western government benefactors, especially if our national interests diverge from theirs, particularly concerning Israel?

It is time for us to fundamentally reassess our defence strategy and look eastward, drawing lessons from nations like Iran in developing indigenous capabilities, particularly in advanced drone and rocket technology.

Advanced weaponry

For decades, the West has positioned itself as the primary provider of advanced weaponry and security partnerships.

Yet, the unfolding crises demonstrate a clear pattern: When push comes to shove, the deep-rooted alliances between Western powers and Israel supersede any commitments to other regional partners. We have witnessed a consistent siding with Israel, often at the expense of regional stability and justice, regardless of the humanitarian consequences.

This bias is not merely a matter of policy but is intrinsically linked to the very nature of their strategic relationships and arms industries.

This predicament leaves us vulnerable. To truly safeguard our sovereignty and security, we must cultivate self-reliance.

And in this pursuit, Iran, despite its own complex geopolitical standing, offers invaluable insights, particularly in the realm of asymmetric warfare capabilities.

Formidable innovator

Sanctions and isolation have forced Iran to become a formidable innovator in drone and missile technology. >A2

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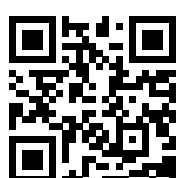


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Tourism boom in South Al Sharqiyah during holiday

The coastal areas are characterised by relatively cool weather, clear air, and dense fog, making them a favourite choice for many families



JALAN BANI BU ALI: The coastal areas of the Wilayat of Jalan Bani Bu Ali in South Al Sharqiyah Governorate witnessed a boom in tourism during the Prophet's(PBUH) Hijra holiday.

The coastal areas are characterised by relatively cool weather, clear air, and dense fog, making them a favourite choice for many families, young people, and camping and surfing enthusiasts. A host of recreational activities on Al Ashkhara Beach, Asilah

Tourist Park, and the seaftront of Al Haddah also contributed to attracting many tourists, visitors, and those seeking adventure and marine entertainment from within and outside the Sultanate of Oman. Hotel and resort staff emphasised that through these services,

they are committed to providing and meeting tourists' expectations for a high degree of tranquility and relaxation. Occupancy rates at hotels and resorts reached more than 90 percent, given Oman's moderate weather during the summer. There are 152 tourist facilities in the governorate, spread across the states of South Al Sharqiyah Governorate. Marine tourism is at the forefront of tourist destinations that attract tourists and visitors, especially during the summer and with the start of the summer tourist season, which begins in early July and continues until the end of August. With the help from authorities, the coastal areas are witnessing enhanced diverse tourism services and activities, coinciding with the third edition of the Ashkhara Atmosphere Forum, which will run from July 16 to August 9, 2025. -ONA

BILATERAL RELATIONS

HM the Sultan sends written message to President of Bulgaria



SOPIA: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a written message to President Rumen Radev of the Republic of Bulgaria dealing with bilateral relations between the two friendly countries and ways to enhance them. The message was delivered by Yousef Ahmed Al Jabri, the Sultanate of Oman's Non-resident Ambassador to Bulgaria, when the Bulgarian President received

him at the Presidential Palace in Sofia. During the meeting, President Rumen Radev commended the Sultanate of Oman's efforts of mediation, its contribution to finding solutions to tensions through dialogue and diplomatic means and its commitment to the realisation of fair and lasting peace in the Middle East and the world at large. -ONA

COMMENTARY

Protecting workers from the heat: Challenges and employer responsibilities in Oman

In the Sultanate of Oman, where summer temperatures can soar well above 45°C, many workers, especially in construction and outdoor services, continue to labour through the intense heat of the day. Despite the legal safeguards enshrined in the Labour Law, the reality on the ground often reflects a gap between policy and practice. Speaking to the *Times of Oman*, founding partner of Mohammed Ibrahim Law Firm, a leading law office in Oman, explained that according to the Article 70 of the Labour Law, workers should not be made to work more than eight actual hours a day or forty hours a week, and the continuous period of work must not exceed six hours without a rest break. Moreover, the Ministry of Labour typically issues seasonal decisions each year, suspending



DR. MOHAMMED IBRAHIM AL ZADJALI, Founding partner of Mohammed Ibrahim Law Firm

outdoor work during peak mid-day hours in the summer. However, enforcement challenges and commercial pressures sometimes push employers to keep op-



erations running, exposing workers to significant health risks such as heatstroke, dehydration, and fatigue, said Dr. Mohammed Ibrahim Al Zadjali.

Safe environment Another spokesperson from the law firm stated that the law also



emphasises the responsibility of employers to provide safe working environments, including protective measures against extreme weather. Yet, many laborers, especially expatriates, continue to endure these harsh conditions without adequate shelter, hydration, or medical

care. This not only violates the legal framework but also disregards the basic human dignity of workers who build and sustain the nation's infrastructure. Protecting workers from extreme heat is not merely a regulatory requirement, it is a moral and humanitarian obligation.

Authorities must strengthen inspections and ensure compliance, while employers should prioritize health over deadlines. In the face of rising global temperatures, sustainable labour practices are not optional, they are essential, the expert said. (Mohammed Ibrahim Law Firm (info@mohammedibrahim.net), (+968 244 87 600) was established 18 years ago and is serving clients through its offices in Muscat and Sohar, as well as operating on a request basis in other areas. It offers legal representation across a wide range of practice areas that include Labour Law, Corporate, Commercial, Contracts, Banking and Finance, International Trade, Foreign Investment, Insurance, Maritime Law, Construction and Engineering Contracts, International Arbitration, Intellectual Property and more).

TEAM GETS THE PATENT

Omani students invent a device that helps reduce carbon dioxide emissions

Times News Service

SOHAR: A team of students from Naeim bin Masaud Basic Education School, North Al Batinah Governorate, created a device 'AERO-CARBON' which helps in reducing carbon dioxide generated by car exhausts by over 50% using peridotite rock. The team has got the patent for this device. Under the supervision of Majid bin Khalfan Al Maqbali, students Omar bin Isa Al Barmani and Tamim bin Yousef Al Mamari, invented this device which made their project get the first place award in the environment field at the 36th International Invention, Innovation and Technology Exhibition (ITEX 2025), held at Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. About the device, Al Barmani said that it is an environment-friendly invention aimed to reduce the emissions of carbon dioxide (CO₂) generated by car exhausts through installation of a filter provided with particles of peridotite rock which transform carbon dioxide into calcium carbonate (CaCO₃) when starting the car engine. Al Barmani said that the invention has undergone several steps



and procedures including testing the sample before and after installing the same in the car by a certified laboratory at the SQU. The test results reaffirmed the success of the idea of the project in reducing the emissions of carbon dioxide from the air and the car exhausts, he added. Student Tamim Al Mamari spoke on the mechanism of participation in the International Inven-

tion, Innovation and Technology Exhibition, saying that the project was selected from among the projects of the teams taking part in the National Olympiad for Scientific Innovation, Robotics, and Artificial Intelligence. Majid bin Khalfan Al Maqbali, supervising the students' team taking part in the 36th International Invention, Innovation and Technology Exhibition (ITEX

2025), said that the participation was an opportunity for exchange of expertise with the talents and innovators from other countries and for acquainting with the various projects in all scientific fields. He said that the exhibition represents an international platform for innovations, investors and businessmen interested in such fields of innovation and inventions.

CURRENT YEAR

Over 111kms of road projects ongoing in Al Dhahirah



IBRI: Al Dhahirah Municipality is carrying out a number of construction works on internal road projects in the wilayats, as part of the general plan for service, development and beautification projects undertaken by the municipality during the current year. The total length of these roads amounts to 111 kilometres in various wilayats. Engineer Salem bin Mohammed Al Sarkhi, Director of the Projects Department at Al Dhahirah Municipality, said that the internal road projects are distributed across the Wilayat of Ibri, through paving 60 kms across the first and second packages at a

cost of OMR4 million. In the Wilayat of Yanqul, 25 kilometres were paved at a cost of OMR2.2 million, and in the Wilayat of Dhank, 26 kilometres were paved at a cost of OMR1.6 million. He stated that work is still underway on various projects at varying rates of implementation. The completion rate of the internal road paving project in the Wilayat of Ibri, packages one and two, has reached approximately 15 percent, while the completion rate has reached 30 percent in the internal road paving project for the Wilayats of Yanqul and Dhank. -ONA



AL-QASH'A VILLAGE:

A HIDDEN GEM FOR ADVENTURE AND HERITAGE TOURISM IN OMAN

MUSCAT: Al-Qash'a village in the Wilayat of Al Jabal Al Akhdar (Green Mountain) in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate is emerging as a rich destination for adventure tourism, distinguished by its exceptional terrain, unique geology, and a climate that remains moderate in summer and cold in winter.

Geographical charm and agricultural riches
Nestled at the eastern foot of a towering mountain, Al-Qash'a village lies at the end of one of the longest mountain terraces on its western side. To its north, it overlooks the village of Al Ain, while to the south, it is bordered by the villages of Salut and Masirah Al Rawajeh.

The village is renowned for its expansive agricultural terraces, which, akin to other villages in the Wilayat, are abundant with various fruit trees. These include pomegranates, walnuts, peaches, and apricots, alongside seasonal crops such as garlic and onions.

Walid bin Saif Al Zakwani, a member of the Municipal Council in the Wilayat of Al Jabal Al Akhdar and a resident of the village, explained that the name "Al-Qash'a" originates from the rocks descending towards it from various directions. Another linguistic interpretation of the name refers to the clearing of clouds after they cover the sky—a poetic description fitting its enchanting relationship with nature.

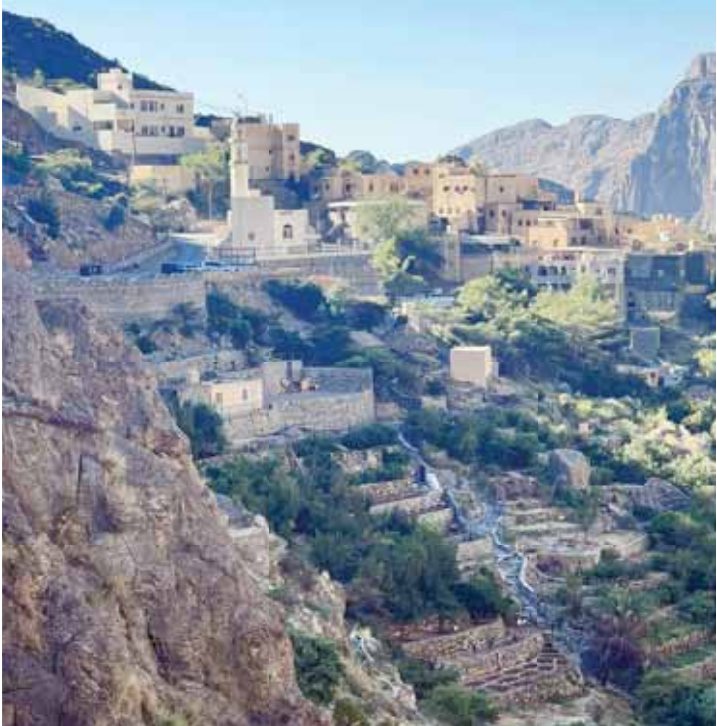
Historical depth and archaeological significance
Al Zakwani noted that the village holds numerous archaeological evidences, hinting at human settlement in the Green Mountain dating back to ancient times. Scattered throughout the village are ancient graves of unusual shapes and orientations, distinctly different from the Islamic style, suggesting their pre-Islamic origins, possibly even from the Paleolithic era. Some agricultural terraces have



become fossilised due to geological and weather factors, indicating their immense antiquity. Traces of residential caves, complete with fire pits and smoke residue, further reinforce the hypothesis of ancient human habitation. Additionally, there are ancient stone buildings that warrant in-depth archaeological studies by relevant government agencies.

The village's historical depth is further underscored by its historical monuments and several mosques, including Al-Bilad Mosque, Al-Wadi Mosque, Al-Jufrah Mosque, and Al-Hijrain Mosque. It is also sustained by a number of aflaj (ancient irrigation systems) and water springs that nourish its crops, such as Falaj La'our, Falaj Al-Ghuj, Falaj Azal, Falaj Al-Harf, Ain Al-Samna, Ain Al-Suwaib, and Ain Shadhan.

Tourism potential and natural wonders
The harvest seasons for roses,



pomegranates, and various fruits during the summer transform Al Jabal Al Akhdar, and Al-Qash'a village in particular, into a captivating tourist destination. These seasons offer visitors a diverse tourism product and an up-close insight into traditional and modern rose water production. Al Zakwani emphasized the significant economic viability of cultivating roses and pomegranates as a crucial income source for local farmers.

Hamad bin Subaih Al-Zakwani, another resident, noted the village's recent emergence as a prominent tourist spot, especially for nature lovers in the summer. This is attributed to its enchanting waterfalls, such as Wadi Al-Ain Waterfall, Sharjat Al-Anbur Waterfall, and Kor Azk Waterfall. Its geological diversity, featuring metamorphic, sedimentary, and igneous rock formations; its unique caves and grottoes, like Lambrad

Cave; and the rare growth of tropical trees locally known as "sugar" along Wadi Al-Ain, all distinguish Al-Qash'a from other mountain villages.

The village also offers well-prepared hiking trails that wind through several valleys, ravines, and agricultural terraces, all set within a temperate Mediterranean climate. Prominent trails include Al-Lamd Road, Al-Sab Road, and Maslak Al-Magharat Road, which historically connected Al-Qash'a to neighboring villages and were vital transportation routes for residents in the past.

Al-Zakwani concluded by affirming that the fruit harvest seasons in Jabal Akhdar State generally, and Al-Qash'a village specifically, significantly contribute to attracting tourists and visitors who come to explore the region's rich tourism potential through adventure, nature, and heritage tourism. - ONA



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COMMENTARY

Where are the ordinary people?



SALEH AL-SHAIBANY

What happened to the ordinary people doing ordinary things? It seems real life is not anyway to be seen and it all has changed for the worse.

It also seems that, for most people now, their goals are not anymore rooted in things that make them better humans. They do things just to get through another day. For some, the minutes tick away very slowly and they have a long day to go through.

While others just jump into the social wagon that hurries through the day without a pause. Everyone these days want to do something extraordinary then they get into trouble somewhere along the way. We all rush through like we will never get another chance.

What are we afraid of? People judging us. If you slow down then they will say you are 'lazy'. If you correct someone then you are judged as a "know-all". If you give advice then they tell you to mind your own business.

What about if you keep to yourself? They either call you 'anti-social' or 'arrogant'. The other day, I was trying to do something ordinary people do in everyday life. I saw a friend walking towards me. I stopped and asked for his

health. He just gave me a cold look and waved back without stopping.

It was not hard to know what went in his mind. I was interfering with his life. Why would I want to know about his health? A week later, I stopped to help when a child fell down while running on a car park. When I tried to pick up the little boy, the mother pushed me away rudely and picked him up.

I was not offended. I just continued with my walk towards my car. Obviously, she was angry that she was not careful enough to make sure her child was safe. I did what 'ordinary people' would do in a very ordinary day.

When I don't see ordinary people doing ordinary things, I just look for them. It is like looking for a coin in a vast desert. They have now become a rare species. Talking about the desert, that gives us a clue. The Bedouins out there live a very ordinary life.

They have no distractions. The camels, goats, sheep and

the sands make no demands with their lives. Life is simple there and very ordinary, too. Today is exactly the same like it was yesterday and no one is trying to do anything extraordinary.

Unlike in the towns and cities, no one is judging anyone there. The Bedouins expectations in life is ordinary. The hot sun is still up there in the sky and the winds are occasionally blowing sands on their eyes. But they have no complaints at all.

While here in the cities, everyone is trying to do something different on a regular basis. It is a competition that never ends. Everyone wants to be noticed and stand out from the crowd. What they don't realize that people who built pyramids were ordinary. All they wanted was to make a little change in their lives.

The truth is that 'extraordinary' has got nothing to do with achievements. If we infuse love and care in our daily lives, then that is ordinarily enough.



Date peeling season begins in a number of wilayats of Oman

MANAH: Date peeling, known as Tabsil in Arabic, for the production of Al Faghour, a local delicacy, has begun in a number of wilayats of the Sultanate of Oman.

Al Faghour refers to a product derived from unripe dates and its production is an activity in Oman, particularly in the in the Wilayat of Manah, Al Dakhiliyah Governorate. It is one of the social and heritage activities, mainly done by hand by family members and neighbours.

Mohammed bin Khalaf Al Masroori, one of the farmers in the Wilayat of Manah, Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, who is in this activity, said that the process involves

careful removal of the outer skin of unripe dates (Tabsil). The date is then dried and processed into Al Faghour.

This seasonal activity is restricted to Al Mabsaly date palm trees, which is planted in most wilayats of the Sultanate of Oman, mainly in North Al Sharqiyah Governorate.

The Tabsil season is usually between June and July every year, he said, adding that Al Faghour is a delicious food with increasing demand within and outside the Sultanate of Oman and marketed in coordination with the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion with the

majority of the product exported to India.

The price of Al Faghour is between 500 to 700 baisa per kg. and OMR1 in most of shopping centres and hypermarkets, he added.

This product is also converted into powder and used in making sweets, cakes and cookies instead of using white sugar as Al Mabsaly date palm is known for its sweetness, he said.

"We have future plans for using the Al Faghour products into food industries such as sweets, biscuits and cookies as to ensure high revenues for the product," he further added. — **ONA**

Annual strategic drill commences in Muscat



Activities of the 'Decision Making-12' drill is aimed to enrich the skills and thoughts of the participants in the field of decision-making at the strategic level and to analyse the key strategic issues among other goals



cluding the modern training techniques at the national, regional and international levels..

Rear admiral Ali bin Abdullah Al Shidi, Commandant of the National Defence College and director of the drill, reaffirmed the significance of drill and the optimal dealing with the strategic issues and events of the drill along with the implementation of the procedures and strategies the participants have acquainted with during the 12 session of the National Defence College.

He said that the drill translates the academic knowledge and skills of the participant as part of the general syllabus of the 12 national defence course / session.

The 12th drill "Decision Making" aimed to enrich the skills and thoughts of the participants in the field of decision-making at the strategic level and to analyse the key strategic issues among other goals. — **ONA**

MUSCAT: The activities of the annual strategic drill "Decision Making-12", kicked off on Sunday at the National Defence College (NDC) at the Academy for Strategic and Defence Studies.

12th session

The drill, which lasts till 8 July, is conducted by the participants in the 12th session from the various military, security and civil entities and attended by a number of experts and advisors from the military, security departments, ministries and government units and the staff of the National Defence College.

The "Decision Making 12" drill of the NDC demonstrate the skills

and knowledge acquired by the participants in the session and translates the knowledge and theoretical and academic programmes in the field of strategic studies in-



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Invitation to Attend the Annual Ordinary General Assembly Meeting

The Board of Directors of Oman Agriculture Development Company SAOC (the "Company") is pleased to invite its esteemed shareholders to attend the Annual Ordinary General Assembly Meeting, which will be held as First Session on Monday, 14 July 2025 at 3:00 PM online via the Muscat Clearing & Depository Company platform www.mcd.gov.om at Company Head Office, Way No. 3706, Plot No. 48, Complex No. 237, Flat 24 and as Second Session (if a quorum is not met in the first session) on Sunday, 20 July 2025 at 3:00 PM at Same as above.

Agenda:

1. Review and approve the Board of Directors' report for the fiscal year ended 30 April 2025.
2. Review and approve the auditor's report, the balance sheet, and the profit & loss account for the fiscal year ended 30 April 2025.
3. Present to the Assembly the related-party transactions conducted by the Company during the fiscal year ended 30 April 2025 (per attached schedule).
4. Present to the Assembly the related-party transactions planned for the fiscal year ending 30 April 2026.
5. Review and approve the proposal to distribute cash dividends of OMR 0.400 (400 baisas) per share equivalent to a 40% payout out of the profit of the fiscal year ended 30 April 2025.
6. Elect members of the Board of Directors (shareholders or others). Nominations must be submitted on the prescribed form to the Company's office no later than five (5) days before the meeting (i.e., by Wednesday, 9th July 2025). Late submissions will not be accepted.
7. Appoint the external auditor for the fiscal year ending 30 April 2026 and determine their fees.

Please Note (per the Company's Articles of Association and the Ministry's Regulations on Virtual General Assemblies for Closed Joint-Stock Companies):

- A corporate shareholder may appoint (by proxy) a natural-person representative who must hold an investor number with the Muscat Clearing & Depository Company to attend and vote on its behalf via the online platform.
- Electronic voting on any agenda item will open three (3) days before the meeting date and close when voting on that item is concluded during the meeting. If a shareholder's shareholding changes (increase or decrease) before the meeting, any prior votes will be cancelled and must be re-submitted.
- For inquiries, please contact the Company's office at +968 9561 5272.
- All shareholders must ensure their contact details especially mobile numbers are up to date with the Muscat Clearing & Depository Company.

OCCI launches fourth edition of Franchise Programme

Since its launch in 2023, the programme has seen the signing of 110 franchise agreements in 16 countries around the world



MUSCAT: The Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) launched the fourth edition of its Franchise Programme on Sunday evening in Muscat. Since its launch in 2023, the programme has seen the signing of 110 franchise agreements in 16 countries around the world.

The launch ceremony of this edition was sponsored by Sheikh Al Fadhl bin Mohammed al-Harthi, Secretary General of the Council of Ministers.

Faisal Abdullah Al Rawas, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said that the establishment of the Commercial Excellence

Centre aims to provide support to business owners in building institutional expansion models based on best practices. He emphasised that the Chamber believes in the importance of supporting this path to increase the market value of Omani products and provide a stimulating environment for growth and expansion, both domestically and internationally.

He called on business owners, both men and women, to take advantage of the franchise programme as an opportunity to expand their businesses and build brands capable of competing in global markets, thus enhancing the position of the Omani economy on the international franchise map.

During the ceremony, the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry signed a memorandum of cooperation with the Federation of Saudi Chambers to organise the first edition of the Omani-Saudi Franchise Exhibition, to be held from September 29 to October 2. The exhibition aims to showcase investment opportunities in the franchise sector between the Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, enable Omani brands to expand into regional and international markets through the franchise model, attract Saudi brands, and introduce Omani investors to opportunities for cooperation and partnership with them.

The Chamber also signed a

memorandum of understanding with the Gulf and Middle East Franchise and Brand Association (GMA), aiming to organise bilateral cooperation between the two parties in the fields of exhibitions, conferences, training, marketing, and the exchange of information and reports, to enhance the franchise sector in local and regional markets.

The ceremony included a visual presentation detailing the program's fourth edition this year, which features precise selection criteria including operational and financial readiness, actual expansion, and growth plans, and links advanced workshops directly to companies' actual expansion needs. -ONA



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SOUTH AFRICA

Ramaphosa's firing of official prompts crisis

PRETORIA: South Africa's fragile coalition government is under mounting strain, as the Democratic Alliance (DA), the second-largest party, abruptly withdrew from President Cyril Ramaphosa's "National Dialogue" initiative on Saturday.

DA leader John Steenhuisen also announced that his party would withhold support for the budgets of departments led by ministers accused of corruption.

Unauthorised trip
The move follows Ramaphosa's dismissal of Deputy Trade Minister Andrew Whitfield, a DA member, earlier this week over an

unauthorised trip to the United States. The DA and Ramaphosa's African National Congress (ANC) are the two largest parties in South Africa's coalition government.

DA head Steenhuisen issued an ultimatum to the president, demanding the removal of ANC ministers and deputy ministers implicated in corruption within 48 hours and threatening "grave consequences" if the demands are not met.

That deadline passed on Saturday, with Steenhuisen accusing Ramaphosa of acting with "disrespect, arrogance, and double standards." - DW

INDIA

3 dead, 6 injured due to stampede

PURI: Odisha Law Minister Prithiviraj Harichandan on Sunday said that three people died and at least six people sustained injuries near the Gundicha Temple during the ongoing Lord Jagannath Rath Yatra in Puri.

Speaking to ANI over the phone, Odisha Minister Harichandan said, "It is an un-

fortunate incident. We are taking note of that. I spoke with the CM this morning. We are taking stringent action. DGP has been sent to the spot."

"Three people have passed away because of suffocation in the huge gathering. Six to seven people are injured," he added.

- ANI

SERBIA

Police clash with anti-govt demonstrators

BELGRADE: Police clashed with anti-government protesters in the Serbian capital, Belgrade, on Saturday night, as demonstrators demanded an early parliamentary election and an end to the rule of President Aleksandar Vucic.

Officers in riot gear used pepper spray to disperse crowds after flares were thrown near a counter-protest by Vucic supporters.

Earlier protesters, led by students, issued an ultimatum, saying the government must call a snap election or face a civil disobedience campaign.

Main demonstration
The main demonstration then ended, but some protesters marched toward the pro-government rally outside parliament. Many were wearing goggles and helmets. Police detained several dozen protesters, while six police officers were reported injured

in clashes, according to Dragan Vasiljevic, the director of police. The clashes came after months of anti-government demonstrations that were sparked by a deadly rail station collapse in late 2024 that killed 16 people and was widely blamed on government corruption and negligence.

Vucic has repeatedly rejected calls for an early election and accused unnamed "foreign powers" of fuelling the protests. - DW







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IN CAMBODIA

Mother and son contract H5N1 bird flu

PHNOM PENH: A 46-year-old Cambodian mother and her 16-year-old son have been confirmed positive for H5N1 human avian influenza, bringing the total number of cases to 10 so far this year, the Ministry of Health said in a statement on Sunday.

Both victims live in Lbeuk village of Puok district in northwest Siem Reap province.

“According to queries, there were sick and dead poultry at the patients’ home and their neighbors’ homes as well as in the village, and the patients had been in contact with sick and dead chickens and cooked them for food,” it added.

Health authorities are looking into the source of the infection and are examining any suspected cases or people who have been in contact with the victims in order to prevent an outbreak in the community.

Tamiflu (oseltamivir), an antiviral drug to prevent the bird flu from spreading, was also given out to people who had direct contact with the patients, the statement said.

So far this year, the kingdom recorded 10 human cases of H5N1 bird flu, with five deaths, according to the Ministry of Health. — *Xinhua*

US-backed Gaza aid operation is unsafe, killing people: UN chief

More than 400 Palestinians have been killed so far while seeking aid from GHF sites, according to the UN

GAZA: United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said the new system of aid distribution in Gaza was “inherently unsafe” and “killing people.”

Thousands of Palestinians line up nearly every day to get food under the new system operated by the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF).

GHF, backed by Israel and the United States, launched operations in mid-May. But it has faced criticism with the UN saying that it was a way for Israeli forces to use food as a weapon.

More than 400 Palestinians have been killed so far while seeking aid from GHF sites, according



to the UN.

GHF bypasses the UN and other NGOs, since Israeli forces have pushed for the alternative system that they say stops Hamas from seizing aid.

The UN has also denied that the group has diverted large amounts of aid.

Israel has vowed to control Gaza and fight until Hamas is destroyed, and until the group returns the remaining 50 hostages, not all of whom are thought to still be alive, it seized during the October 7, 2023, attack that sparked the war.

Search for food must never be a death sentence: Guterres

Guterres told reporters that the United Nations-led humanitarian efforts in Gaza are being “strangled” and aid workers themselves are starving. He also said Israel is required to facilitate aid deliveries into and through the Palestinian territory.

“People are being killed simply trying to feed themselves and their families. The search for food must never be a death sentence,” Guterres told reporters. “It is time to find the political courage for a

GHF says no deaths near aid distribution sites

A GHF spokesperson said there have been no deaths at or near any of the GHF aid distribution sites, Reuters news agency reported.

“It is unfortunate the U.N. continues to push false information regarding our operations,” the GHF spokesperson said. “Bottom line, our aid is getting securely delivered. Instead of bickering and throwing insults from the sidelines, we would welcome the UN and other humanitarian groups to join us and feed the people in Gaza.”

Trump says Gaza ceasefire ‘close’

Also on Friday, US President Donald Trump was asked whether a ceasefire in Gaza would follow, to which Trump said: “It’s close.”

“We think within the next week we’re going to get a ceasefire,” Trump told reporters in the Oval Office.

“We’re working on Gaza and trying to get it taken care of,” Trump added.

Qatar, which has been a lead mediator in ceasefire and hostage talks between Israel and Hamas, said talks were ongoing.

— *Agencies*

BORDER SKIRMISH

Thai protesters urge Shinawatra to quit over border dispute

BANGKOK: Thousands of protesters rallied in Bangkok on Saturday to demand the resignation of Thailand’s Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra over an escalating border dispute with Cambodia.

Bangkok police said around 17,000 protesters had showed up despite monsoon rains in the afternoon.

They chanted “Ung Ing, get out,” using the prime minister’s nickname.

“She should step aside because she is the problem,” said Parnthep Pourpongpan, one of the protest leaders.

Saturday’s protest was organised by a nationalist group known as the United Force of the Land. In the past, the group has rallied against previous governments led



by various members of the Shinawatra family.

Paetongtarn faces growing dissatisfaction over her handling of a border dispute with Cambodia surrounding a historic Buddhist temple.

The dispute flared up on May 28 when a border skirmish broke out between the Thai and Cambodian armies. One Cambodian soldier was killed in the incident.

In the following days, a phone call between Paetongtarn and Cambodia’s former prime minister Hun Sen that was meant to

ease tensions was leaked to the press.

Paetongtarn was accused of kowtowing to the Cambodian lawmaker in the call, in which she called him “uncle” and referred to a Thai military commander in the border region as her “opponent.”

She later apologised for the comments.

In 1962, the International Court of Justice ruled that the area surrounding the Preah Vihear temple belonged to Cambodia.

The temple was the site of clashes in 2011. In 2013, the UN court reaffirmed its earlier ruling.

Hun Sen on Saturday accused the Thai army of a serious violation of Cambodia’s sovereignty in last month’s border skirmish.

“This poor Cambodia has suffered from foreign invasion, war and genocide, been surrounded and isolated and insulted in the past, but now Cambodia has risen on an equal face with other countries,” he said in a speech at the 74th anniversary celebration of the founding of his long-ruling Cambodian People’s Party. — *DW*

TANZANIA

38 dead, 28 injured after 2 buses collide

DAR ES SALAAM: At least 38 people were killed and 28 others injured on Saturday evening when two buses collided head-on and burst into flames in Moshi district in Tanzania’s northern region of Kilimanjaro.

The Kilimanjaro regional commissioner, Nurdin Babu, told Xinhua that the victims included members of the same family who were traveling to attend a wedding in the Moshi municipality.

Babu said the crash occurred around 5 p.m. local time (1400 GMT) after a front tire on one of the buses burst, triggering a fire that engulfed both vehicles, causing fatalities in both buses. — *Xinhua*

EARTHSIGHT REPORT

Are designer handbags linked to illegal deforestation?

LONDON: Designer brands such as Coach, Fendi and Hugo Boss have been listed as buyers of raw materials sourced from destroyed forests in Para, the northern Brazilian state set to host the UN Climate Conference, COP30, in November.

The allegations, which most companies have denied, are detailed in a report published by Earthsight, a UK-based nonprofit focused on environmental and injustice investigations. Their findings draw on thousands of records of Brazilian leather exports, data on the cattle sector, court rulings and satellite imagery, as well as interviews and on-the-ground research.

“Consumers probably expect that when buying a luxury product, the high price tag guarantees some level of ethics and sustainability,” Lara Shirra White, an Earthsight researcher, told DW. “They don’t expect that the leather bag might be linked to deforestation and human rights violations.”

The NGO warns of products made from the hides of cattle reared on farms embargoed for environmental violations, including some operating illegally within Para’s Apyterewa Indigenous Territory, which was heavily deforested during the presidency of Jair Bolsonaro from 2019 to 2022.

As part of its research, Earthsight investigated the business operations of Frigol, a Brazilian meatpacking company identified as one of the buyers of cattle raised on the territory.

The report says at least 17,000 animals were sold to Frigol between 2020 and 2023, which is “enough to produce 425 tonnes of leather.”

Researchers linked some of those cattle to illegal farms but said it’s not possible to determine the exact number that left Apyterewa, in part because Frigol itself



“does not trace most of its indirect suppliers.”

The report says this gap in reporting leaves the company’s “supply chain vulnerable to the widespread practice of ‘cattle laundering,’” in which cows from illegal farms are transferred to legally registered properties before being sold.

Paulo Barreto, senior researcher at the Brazilian conservation and sustainable development Institute of Man and Environment of the Amazon, Imazon, said control over indirect suppliers is either nonexistent or incomplete.

“As a result, cattle raised in illegally deforested areas end up entering the market as if they were legal. The lack of a transparent public system regarding the origin of the cattle makes control difficult.”

Frigol, however, told DW via email that it does not purchase cattle from Indigenous lands and monitors 100% of its direct suppliers.

“We are committed to working together with industry institutions, the production chain and

public authorities to make progress,” the company said in a statement. It added that it believes “only individual traceability of animals for socio-environmental purposes will make it possible to mitigate deforestation across all links of the cattle supply chain.”

Brazilian leather, Italian prestige

According to Earthsight’s research, after the animals are slaughtered at Frigol’s facilities, a percentage of cow skins are exported, in part by the Brazilian leather company Durlicouros, which shipped 14,700 tonnes of hide to Italy between 2020 and 2023. Some of that, the report found, went to the Italian tanneries Conceria Cristina and Faeda.

The research lists high-end names like Coach, Fendi, Chloé, Hugo Boss and Saint Laurent among Conceria Cristina’s clients. Faeda, meanwhile, provides leather to brands such as Chanel, Balenciaga and Gucci, according to the investigation.

In response to a DW request for

comment, Chanel cited deforestation as a “major concern” and said it no longer works with Faeda due to unmet traceability requirements: “92% of the calfskin we use is sourced from Europe, and we audit slaughterhouses and farms outside Europe to ensure they are not in deforestation zones.”

The Kering Group, which owns Balenciaga, Gucci, and Saint Laurent, told DW that while the two Italian companies mentioned in the report are suppliers, “the leather they provide to any Kering house does not come from Brazil.”

Based on Earthsight’s findings, Hugo Boss issued a statement to say it had conducted a detailed review, and could “confirm that none of the leather” it is supplied with “is connected to any of the alleged parties in connection with the investigation.”

LVMH, which owns Fendi and Louis Vuitton, said it has a system capable of tracing the origin of 98% of the leather used in its products and that it does not source this from South America. And Tapestry, which owns the Coach brand,



wrote to DW saying that while the system for tracking raw materials in Brazil is “complex and imperfect,” it is working to be “part of the solution to improve traceability and transparency.”

Chloé, Conceria Cristina and Faeda had not responded to a DW request for comment at the time of publication.

Flaws in the certification system

Durlicouros told DW that it tracks its indirect suppliers and participates in discussions on state and national models for full traceability and compliance.

“In addition, all Durlicouros facilities are certified by the Leather Working Group (LWG), ensuring high standards of sustainability, traceability, and environmental responsibility, according to the purpose of each facility.”

But Earthsight researcher Lara Shirra White said companies often use the certification to vouch for the ethics and sustainability of the leather they produce “instead of conducting meaningful due diligence themselves to ensure their supply chains are deforestation-free.”

She said the problem with the LWG, founded in 2005, is that “it does not require traceability back

to the farms,” and can therefore not account for environmental and human rights abuses in the areas where the cattle are raised.

The LWG told DW it is enhancing its “due diligence requirements related to deforestation and land conversion,” which will “include establishing a chain of custody system that would support more detailed traceability across the leather value chain.”

Can a shift come via Europe?

There is some hope that the European Union’s Deforestation Regulation (EUDR) could make a contribution to change. Due to come into effect at the end of this year after a 12-month delay, it will ban the purchase of products originating from destroyed forest areas.

“We hope the law will be implemented on schedule, despite certain sectors of the industry still trying, in some way, to exclude leather from the scope of the legislation,” Rafael Pieroni, a researcher at Earthsight, told DW.

However, he said the report also contains a message for the Brazilian government. “It should implement traceability and make all data public. Transparency is the best way to avoid all the illegalities we are exposing in our investigation,” he said. — *DW*

SPORTS

FIRST TEST: DAY TWO

Williams stands tall, but SA in command



BULAWAYO: Sean Williams struck a valiant century, scoring more than half of Zimbabwe's total, but it wasn't enough to prevent South Africa from tightening their grip on the first Test at Queens Sports Club on Sunday.

At stumps on the second day, the visitors held a commanding 216-run lead with nine second-innings wickets in hand.

South Africa declared their first innings on their overnight score of 418 for 9 — a total built on centuries from all-rounders Wiaan Pretorius (153) and Corbin Bosch (100*).

In response, Zimbabwe were dismissed for 251, largely due to Williams' fluent 137, with only skipper Craig Ervine crossing 35 while the rest of batters failed.

Zimbabwe's innings was in early trouble at 23 for 2. Opener Takudzwanashe Kaitano was snapped up at short leg by debutant seamer Codi Yusuf, and Nick Welch edged behind soon after.

The situation worsened when Brian Bennett, struck on the helmet by a sharp delivery from Kwenia Maphaka, walked off the field due to delayed concussion symptoms. Roy Kaia later confirmed Bennett would not return, and Prince Masvaure was named his replacement.

It was left to Williams to anchor the innings — and he did so brilliantly. Entering at No. 4, the Zimbabwe captain counterat-

tacked against the new ball.

He found an early rhythm with two boundaries off Maphaka: one a thick edge through the gully, the other a powerful pull to square leg. Alongside Craig Ervine (36), he added 91 runs for the third wicket, resisting a disciplined South African pace unit led by Yusuf and Wiaan Mulder.

Yusuf (3 for 42) was especially impressive on debut, combining pace with control, while Mulder's probing lines earned him four wickets (4 for 50).

The seamers were backed by a surface offering bounce and carry — conditions Zimbabwe's quicks had also exploited on the opening day.

Williams reached his hundred with a glide to third man — his sixth in Test cricket and fifth since 2020, underscoring his status as Zimbabwe's batting linchpin.

But after his dismissal, Zimbabwe's tail folded quickly, with no meaningful resistance from the lower order.

By the time the innings ended, South Africa held a 167-run advantage. Openers Wiaan Mulder (25*) and Tony de Zorzi (22*) then extended that lead with a confident, unbeaten stand of 49 before stumps.

Brief scores: South Africa 418/9 decl (Pretorius 153, Bosch 100*; Chivanga 4-83) & 49 for 1 (Mulder 25*, de Zorzi 22*) vs Zimbabwe 251 (Williams 137; Mulder 4-50, Yusuf 3-42). - Agencies

Norris fends off Piastri for Austrian GP victory

It was a battle between the McLaren drivers during Sunday's Austrian Grand Prix at the Red Bull Ring

SPIELBERG: Lando Norris returned to winning ways on Sunday at the Austrian Grand Prix after getting the better of McLaren team-mate Oscar Piastri in a head-to-head scrap for victory — title rival Max Verstappen having been eliminated in a first-lap incident.

Norris converted pole position into the lead at Turn 1 but soon came under intense pressure from championship leader Piastri, who launched several attacks and at one point muscled his way past, only for the positions to be swiftly reversed.

After a particularly close call under braking for Turn 4, which saw Piastri lock up and almost run into the back of Norris, the Australian went slightly longer on his starting set of tyres in an attempt to build an advantage for the remainder of the race.

While Piastri lit up the timesheets in phases across the second and third stints, Norris had just enough pace in hand to hold onto P1 and take the chequered flag — marking his third win of the season and first victory since last month's Monaco Grand Prix.

In the absence of team boss Fred Vasseur, who travelled home pre-race for "personal reasons", the up-graded Ferraris had quiet but fruitful races en route to a podium with Charles Leclerc and fourth-place result with Lewis Hamilton.

George Russell was the sole Mercedes finisher in fifth, with rookie team mate Kimi Antonelli dramatically running into Max Verstappen under braking for Turn 3 on the opening lap — eliminating both drivers from the action.

Liam Lawson capitalised to convert his top-six grid slot into a



top-six finish, ahead of Aston Martin's Fernando Alonso and Kick Sauber's Bortoleto, who scored his first F1 points after a monumental scrap with the two-time World Champion.

A strong recovery from the back of the grid brought a third successive points finish for Nico Hulkenberg, and gave Sauber a double points reward, while Esteban Ocon rounded out the top 10 places for Haas.

Ollie Bearman followed team-mate Ocon home in 11th position,

with Isack Hadjar 12th in the other Racing Bulls machine and Pierre Gasly dropping from points contention to 13th amid severe balance problems aboard his Alpine.

Next up was Lance Stroll, whose eye-catching practice pace could not be carried over to Qualifying or the race, while Franco Colapinto (Alpine) and Yuki Tsunoda (Red Bull) were the final drivers to cross the finish line.

Colapinto came close to contact with Piastri in the closing stages of

the race when the McLaren man was putting a lap on him, an incident that earned the F1 returnee a five-second penalty but did not impact his finishing position.

Tsunoda was hit with a 10-second penalty of his own for sending Colapinto into a spin earlier in the race, with Verstappen and Antonelli joined on the sidelines by Williams drivers Alex Albon and Carlos Sainz — the latter unable to start after getting stuck on the grid. - Agencies

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WILL AI SHRINK WORKFORCES
Andy Jassy is not the first executive to warn about the broader adoption of artificial intelligence and how it will fundamentally reshape the workforce. Are the doomsayers right?

MARKET
BUSINESS & FINANCE



MSX MARKET CAP RISES
The Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) market capitalisation rose by OMR53.3 million to OMR28.27 billion by the end of Thursday's trading.



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Al Rusayl Industrial City localises 17 projects worth OMR49 million

These projects cover a diverse range of sectors, including industrial, logistics, and service

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Al Rusayl Industrial City, affiliated to the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn), signed 17 new contracts in 2024, covering over 235,000 sqm and attracting investments exceeding OMR49 million.

These projects cover a diverse range of sectors, including industrial, logistics, and service. Since its establishment in 1983, the city has played a central role in providing a conducive business environment and supporting government efforts aimed at economic diversification in line with Oman Vision 2040.

Eng. Fahad bin Nasser Al Abrawi, Acting CEO of Al Rusayl Industrial City Company, highlighted



that cumulative investments in the city have surpassed OMR767 million by the end of 2024, spread across nearly 11 million sqm area. The industrial city hosts activities in chemicals, electrical materials, building materials, fiber optic cables, food products, textiles, stationery, paints, filters, furniture, and more.

Madayn is currently advancing several strategic projects in Al Rusayl Industrial City, including

the infrastructure project of the Madayn Entrepreneurial Complex in collaboration with the SMEs Development Authority. Covering over 60,000 sqm area, this project aims to provide fully serviced industrial workshops of 500 sqm each, dedicated to supporting small and medium enterprises.

Additionally, the consultancy project for infrastructure improvements in Al Rusayl Industrial City is underway to ad-

dress rainwater accumulation in several areas. This includes constructing new access roads to some leased lands along with other enhancements.

Al Abrawi pointed out that the approved future projects include the redevelopment of the commercial area to increase retail capacity, an integrated project to support food security in cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, and a



sustainable wastewater recycling project to support industrial cooling and manufacturing processes within Al Rusayl Industrial City. Moreover, Madayn completed in 2024 the modernisation and beautification of the industrial city's main entrance with a contemporary design, reflecting its commitment to an attractive and modern industrial hub.

Since its inception, the Masar Service Centre in Al Rusayl In-

dustrial City has played a key role in streamlining investment procedures by providing a unified platform for all required approvals, permits, and licenses.

The centre offers integrated support services including consulting, financing, banking, medical checks, postal services, marketing, and promotion, and hence helping create a seamless and investor-friendly business environment in the Sultanate.

WTO GOODS TRADE

Goods barometer rises as imports surge in first quarter

GENEVA: Global goods trade posted a strong uptick in early 2025 driven by importers front-loading purchases ahead of anticipated higher tariffs; however, weakening export orders suggest that this momentum may not be sustained.

The latest WTO Goods Trade Barometer rose to 103.5 — up from 102.8 in March, while the forward-looking new export orders index fell to 97.9, pointing to weaker trade growth later in the year.

The Goods Trade Barometer is a composite leading indicator for world trade, providing real-time information on the trajectory of merchandise trade relative to recent trends. Barometer values greater than 100 are associated with above-trend trade volumes, while barometer values less than 100 suggest that goods trade has either fallen below trend or will do so in the near future.

While the current barometer reading of 103.5 (represented by the blue line in the chart) exceeds both the baseline value of 100 and the quarterly trade volume index (represented by the black line), the decline in export orders and the temporary nature of frontloading suggest that trade growth may slow in the months ahead as enterprises import less and start to draw down accumulated inventories.

The most predictive barometer component, the new export orders index (97.9), has dipped below its baseline value of 100 into contraction territory, signalling weaker trade growth later in the year. On the other hand, most other barometer components have risen above trend. Transport-related indices, including air freight (104.3) and container shipping (107.1), reflect

The latest WTO Goods Trade Barometer rose to 103.5 — up from 102.8 in March, while the forward-looking new export orders index fell to 97.9

increased movement of goods. The automotive products index (105.3) also is above trend due to resilient vehicle production and sales. The electronic components index (102.0) has climbed above trend after underperforming in 2023 and 2024. Finally, the raw materials index (100.8) shows only modest growth, just above baseline.

World merchandise trade volume growth moderated in the fourth quarter of 2024 but it is likely to rebound in the first quarter of 2025 based on the goods barometer and preliminary trade data. The WTO Secretariat's Global Trade Outlook and Statistics report of 16 April 2025 projected stable trade growth of 2.7% for 2025 under a low-tariff scenario reflecting policy conditions at the start of the year, and a -0.2% contraction under actual policies in place as of mid-April.

Subsequent developments, including US-China and US-UK trade agreements as well as higher tariffs on steel and aluminium, have nudged the forecast up and down slightly leaving the overall outlook basically flat at 0.1%. However, trade contraction is possible, for example if US reciprocal tariffs are reinstated, or if trade policy uncertainty spreads globally. -WAM

NEW ERA OF FINANCIAL INNOVATION

Sohar International launches Oman's first open banking platform

Times News Service

MUSCAT: In a landmark move underscoring its commitment to driving digital innovation and financial inclusion, Sohar International has announced the official launch of its Open Banking platform—making it the first bank in Oman to introduce a fully integrated Open Banking solution.

This strategic advancement enhances the bank's digital ecosystem and reflects its role as a catalyst for technology-driven progress within Oman's financial sector.

Open Banking gives businesses greater visibility and control over their financial information, helping them manage cash flow, plan more accurately, and make informed decisions. The platform also enables faster, more efficient financial transactions, reducing complexity and improving daily business operations.

“This launch reflects our strong alignment with the Central Bank of Oman's forward-looking regulatory framework,” said Abdulwahid Mohamed Al Murshidi, Chief Executive Officer of Sohar International. “Through Open Banking, we are not only meeting compliance requirements but also enabling the development of industry-specific financial and non-financial services. These capabilities empower businesses to streamline their operations, drive



innovation, and contribute meaningfully to national priorities such as financial inclusion, private sector growth, and digital advancement under Oman Vision 2040.”

By providing secure and compliant access to banking services through open APIs, Sohar International's Open Banking platform allows fintech companies, corporates, and government entities to

build tailored financial solutions with greater agility. The platform aims to lower integration costs, shorten time-to-market, and allow for more customer-centric services to emerge.

“At Sohar International, we continue to reinforce our position as a digital leader by accelerating innovation and delivering solutions at speed,” said Sajeel Bashiruddin, Chief Technology and Digital Officer. “Our commitment to leveraging advanced digital capabilities enables us to respond swiftly to market needs, foster meaningful partnerships, and shape a future-ready financial ecosystem for the Sultanate.”

The launch reflects Sohar International's long-term vision to serve as a strategic partner in Oman's journey toward a more digital, knowledge-based economy. As the financial sector evolves, the bank remains focused on creating value for businesses, customers, and the broader economy through innovation, collaboration, and technology-driven solutions.

REPORT

Global electric vehicle fleet rises to 55.8 million



STUTTGART: A new report from the Center for Solar Energy and Hydrogen Research (ZSW) in Baden-Württemberg, Germany, revealed that the global number of electric vehicles rose by 30% over the past year, reaching 55.8 million.

China leads with approximately 31.4 million electric vehicles, accounting for more than half of the global share. According to the German research group's data, which includes fully electric and plug-in hybrid vehicles, the United States ranked second with 6.4 million vehicles,

followed by Germany with 2.6 million. The United Kingdom and France each recorded around 2.1 million, while Norway surpassed the one million mark. The growth comes despite a slowdown in annual increases, with 13.8 million new vehicles added in 2024 compared to 14.2 million in 2023. This suggests the market may be stabilising after years of strong growth. The figures highlight the ongoing global shift in the transport sector toward clean energy, with China maintaining its lead as the world's largest EV market. -BNA

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MARKET

Muscat Stock Exchange market cap rises by OMR53.3mn to OMR27.27bn



Trading volume also rose by 5.2 percent, from OMR64.9 million to OMR68.3 million

MUSCAT: The Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) market capitalisation rose by OMR53.3 million to OMR28.27 billion by the end of Thursday's trading. Trading volume also rose by 5.2 percent, from OMR64.9 million to OMR68.3 million, while the number of transactions executed decreased from 9,389 to 8,626 during the week.

The Muscat Stock Exchange's main index registered a limited increase of less than a single point closing at 4,507 points. The industrial sector index achieved the highest increase, rising by approximately 84 points, while the financial sector index rose by 19 points, and the Sharia index rose by 3 points, while the services sector index remained stable at its previous level of 1,599 points. The week's trading showed a surge in buying activity among Omani individual investors, benefiting from the increased purchases by local investment institutions over the past four weeks. This led to a successive increase in trading volumes. Individual investor purchases accounted for 26.6 percent of the total trading value, compared to sales, which accounted for 25.7 percent of trading. Bank Muscat's shares saw high buying demand, pushing it up to

278 baisas during weekly trading. It closed at 275 baisas, up two baisas during the week. The stock saw 583 executed transactions worth OMR12.5 million, accounting for 18.3 percent of the total trading value. OQ Basic Industries shares also witnessed trading of approximately OMR11.4 million, representing 16.6 percent of the total trading value. Asyad Shipping came in third place with trading valued at OMR10.2 million, followed by OQ Gas Networks at OMR8.5 million. Bank Sohar International came in fifth place with trading of OMR8.34 million, representing 11.7 percent of the total trading value. During the week, Bank Sohar and Ahli Bank said in separate statements that they had not obtained the necessary legislative approvals to proceed with the previously announced merger, noting that they had decided to postpone

MSX sees limited movement amid uncertainty

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Oman stock market demonstrated limited performance during the week. While regional markets began to recover from heavy losses, the Omani market remained muted and failed to show the same upward momentum, according to an analyst. "Oil prices failed to provide support as they fell this week. This decline followed a period of elevated prices and volatility driven by the risk of the closure of the Strait of Hormuz," said Ahmed Negm, Head of Market Research MENA at XS.com. "The recent de-escalation of tensions and a subsequent decrease in the geopolitical risk premium have caused prices to retreat. Any further decrease in oil prices could negatively impact market performance, especially with Opec+ preparing for another increase in production," he further added. During the week, the market was also influenced by events in the US. The testimony of Chairman Jerome Powell did little to alter the Fed's current "wait-and-see" approach. The



central bank remains attentive to the potential impact of tariffs on inflation and other economic uncertainties facing the US economy. "This stance affected investor sentiment across regional markets, including Oman's, leading to a cautious stance by investors as traders awaited further signals," Ahmed Negm said. This week's trading resulted in a mixed performance across the market's main sectors. The Industrial sector was the standout performer, achieving

a 1.34% gain. This advance was driven by the positive performances of several key stocks. Voltamp Energy led the charge with a surge of 5.26 per cent, followed by Al Anwar Ceramic, which rose 4.85%. Additionally, OQ Base Industries posted a 3.28% gain, continuing its dominance as the most traded stock by volume. The Financial sector also concluded the week in positive territory, though with a more modest advance of 0.25%. The upward trend was supported by Al Anwar Investment, which climbed 2.35%, and Al Ahli Bank, with an increase of 1.94%. Bank Muscat contributed with a smaller gain of 0.73%. In contrast, the Services sector had a muted week. Despite positive performances from Renaissance Services, which was up 2.19%, and Abraj Energy Services with a modest 0.41% gain, these were not enough to lift the sector into the green. The slight decline was influenced by losses from key companies, including OQ Gas Networks, which fell 0.65%, and Oman Telecom, which edged down by 0.24%.

merger negotiations for the time being. Ahli Bank explained in its disclosure that, based on this, it had decided to proceed with the capital increase procedures through a rights issue of OMR50 million, as announced last March. Bank Sohar shares fell by one baisa in the week, closing at 139 baisas, while Ahli Bank shares rose by 3 baisas to close at 158 baisas after

witnessing 52 transactions worth OMR813,000. During the week, the prices of 39 securities rose, while 26 declined and 22 equities remained unchanged. The share of Arab Falcon Insurance Company recorded the highest increase, rising by 17.3 percent to close at 135 baisas. The share of Oman Investment and Finance Company rose by 13.1

percent to close at 86 baisas. The share of Muscat Insurance rose to 660 baisas, recording a 10 percent increase. Oman Qatar Insurance was the biggest loser, falling 9.6 percent to close at 196 baisas. Building Materials Industries fell 4.1 percent to close at 70 baisas, while Dhofar Insurance declined 3.9 percent to close at 197 baisas. -**ONA**

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Amazon CEO Jassy: AI will affect wide range of jobs and sectors

NEW YORK: Amazon CEO Andy Jassy recently announced that his company would reduce its workforce as artificial intelligence (AI) replaces human employees. He also warned that AI will affect a wide range of jobs and sectors. Jassy is not alone, as many other tech firms have issued similar warnings about how AI breakthroughs could reshape their workforce.

In May, the CEO of the AI start-up Anthropic told the Arlington, Virginia-based American news website Axios that AI could eliminate half of all entry-level white-collar jobs in the next one to five years. US public companies have reduced the number of their white-collar staff by a collective 3.5% over the past three years, the Wall Street Journal reported, citing employment data provider Live Data Technologies. Over the past decade, one in five companies in the S&P 500 have shrunk, it said. Several tech companies, including Microsoft, Hewlett Packard and Procter & Gamble, have announced layoffs of thousands of workers over the past several months. Recently, retail service provider Shopify said teams requesting additional staff would first need to prove that AI could not perform the tasks. Duolingo, a language-learning app, also plans to gradually replace its external workers with AI. **Fears of mass unemployment** The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has estimated that a quarter of jobs worldwide are at a high risk of being replaced by AI automation. But AI is also expected to create new opportunities and boost productivity. A report by the World Economic Forum earlier this year forecast that technological transformation would displace about 92 million existing jobs by 2030, while creating 170 million new ones. Jobs in developed economies will likely be more affected by AI than



those in developing ones. A study published by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) last year found that the technology could affect 60% of jobs in developed economies — around half of them negatively, while the other half will see a positive impact. The report concluded that about 40% of jobs in emerging markets and 26% of jobs in low-income countries would be hit. But while these labor markets may see a smaller initial impact from AI, they are also less likely to benefit from the increased productivity that AI promises.

Who will be most affected? During past technological breakthroughs, lower-skilled and blue-collar workers bore the brunt, such as workers on factory floors being replaced by robots. However, broad AI adoption is expected to hit higher-educated, white-collar workers hard, particularly those with tasks that AI could perform at a similar or better quality than a human worker. A study conducted by the Pew Research Center in the US found that occupations involving information gathering and data analysis, such as web developers, technical writers, accountants and data entry workers, among others, would be at high risk of being replaced by AI. Labor-intensive jobs that can't be easily automated, like construction workers, child care workers and firefighters, are expected to remain the most resilient. The possibility of massive job losses has triggered concerns over the disruptive effects of AI on

employment and society, drawing the attention of politicians and even religious leaders. Pope Leo XIV, who became the head of the Catholic Church in May, has warned of the threat posed by AI to jobs and human dignity. **AI concerns overblown?** Labour market expert Enzo Weber from the Institute of Employment Research in Nuremberg, Germany, believes the concerns over job losses are misplaced. Speaking with DW, he said AI advancements open up a wide range of economic possibilities and are more likely to help workers than cause mass unemployment. "AI primarily changes work, but it does not fundamentally eliminate it," said Weber, adding that the technology in most cases helps human workers "develop new tasks and perform their tasks better rather than just replacing them." A paper published in January by Harvard economists David Deming, Christopher Ong and Lawrence H. Summers shared a similar view. The economists argued that the automation of individual job tasks "does not necessarily reduce employment" and may even lead to "job gains in some sectors" of the economy. "In principle, being able to automate a previously onerous task could make workers so much more productive that the increased output offsets the fact that some of their work is now being done by a machine," they stated in the paper. -**aw**

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LIFESTYLE

Link between exposure to artificial light at night and depression

THE STUDY, CONDUCTED ON A GROUP OF HEDGEHOGS, DIURNAL MAMMALS CLOSELY RELATED TO PRIMATES, PROVIDES INSIGHT INTO HOW NIGHTTIME LIGHT CAN DISRUPT MOOD REGULATION

A study from the University of Science and Technology of China, the Kunming Institute of Zoology of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, and the Hefei University of Technology has revealed that exposure to artificial light at night can lead to depression-like behaviours by activating a specific neural pathway in the brain.

The study, conducted on a group of hedgehogs, diurnal mammals closely related to primates, provides insight into how nighttime light can disrupt mood regulation.

The research team exposed hedgehogs to blue light for two hours each night for three weeks. After this exposure, the animals showed clear depression-like symptoms, including a 20 percent decrease in sucrose preference, reduced exploratory behaviour, and impaired long-term memory.

Using advanced neural tracing techniques, the researchers identified

a previously undiscovered visual circuit. They found specialized retinal neurons sending direct signals to the periaqueductal nucleus, which in turn connects to the nucleus accumbens, a key brain center for regulating mood.

When the periaqueductal nucleus neurons were chemically silenced, hedgehogs did not develop depression-like behaviors in response to light exposure at night. Further analysis through RNA sequencing revealed that these changes coincided with altered activity in genes associated with depression, suggesting potential long-term effects.

“These findings provide us with both a warning and a roadmap,” said Yao Yonggang, professor at the Kunming Institute of Zoology. The same light that enables us to be productive at night may be subtly reshaping the brain circuits that control mood—but now we know where to look for solutions, he added. - OMA

SPORTS

PLAYER WELFARE

Club World Cup is football’s ‘worst idea ever’, says former Liverpool boss Klopp

LONDON: Former Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp believes the FIFA Club World Cup (CWC) is “the worst idea ever implemented in football” because of “serious fears” over player welfare.

The German is now Red Bull’s head of global soccer and one of their teams, Red Bull Salzburg, qualified for this summer’s tournament in the United States.

Klopp has often complained about players’ workload and fixture congestion, and days before the Club World Cup, global players’ union FIFpro released a report saying players should be allowed at least a four-week off-season break.

This year’s Club World Cup is the first to feature 32 teams and 48 games, and saw Salzburg knocked out in the group stage.

During an exclusive interview with German newspaper *Welt am Sonntag*, Klopp talked about the expanded format and player development.

“It’s all about the game and not the surrounding events - and that’s why the Club World Cup is the worst idea ever implemented in football in this regard,” said Klopp.

“People who have never had or do not have anything to do with day-to-day business anymore are coming up with something.



“There is insane money for participating, but it’s also not for every club.

“Last year it was the Copa [America] and the European Championship, this year it’s the Club World Cup, and next year the World Cup. That means no

real recovery for the players involved, neither physically nor mentally.”

In September, a week prior to suffering an ACL injury, Manchester City midfielder Rodri said players were close to going on strike because of the increase in games, while team-mate Manuel Akanji suggested he would have to retire aged 30 as a result of the lack of breaks in the calendar.

In October, FIFpro filed a legal complaint with the European Commission over what it said was FIFA’s “abuse of dominance”, specifically related to the Club World Cup, and FIFpro representatives

met with FIFA over the fixture calendar in January.

Klopp added: “I have serious fears that players will suffer injuries they’ve never had before next season. If not next season, then it will happen at the World Cup or afterwards.

“We constantly expect the players to go into every game as if it were their last. We tell them that 70 or 75 times a year. But it can’t go on like this.

“We have to make sure they have breaks, because if they don’t get them, they won’t be able to deliver top performances - and if they can’t achieve that anymore, the entire product loses value.” - *Agencies*

Chelsea set up quarter-final clash with Palmeiras at CWC

Blues outplay
Benfica in extra time
after weather chaos
at the FIFA Club
World Cup

NEW YORK: Chelsea scored three goals in extra time on Saturday to beat Benfica 4-1 and set up a FIFA Club World Cup (CWC) quarter-final with Palmeiras, which edged past Botafogo 1-0 courtesy of a 100th-minute strike from Paulinho.

The Premier League side overcame a late equaliser and a near two-hour storm delay in Charlotte to pull away in the added 30 minutes.

Chelsea captain Reece James struck with a 64th-minute free kick before Angel Di Maria equalised with a stoppage-time penalty following a Malo Gusto handball.

Benfica was reduced to 10 men early in extra time when Gianluca Prestianni was sent off for a second booking. Chelsea made the advantage count as Christopher Nkunku, Pedro Neto and Kiernan Dewsbury-Hall sealed the progression.



“I’m very happy because we are in the last eight teams of this fantastic competition,” Chelsea manager Enzo Maresca said after the match, which took more than four hours to complete.

Earlier in Philadelphia, a 100th-minute strike from substitute Paulinho gave Palmeiras a 1-0 victory over Botafogo in their all-Brazilian round-of-16 duel.

Following 90 minutes with few chances, Paulinho - a 64th-

minute replacement for Vitor Roque - broke the deadlock in extra time with a low finish into the far corner.

The match took another turn when Palmeiras defender Gustavo Gomez was sent off for a second yellow card six minutes later.

Botafogo dominated the closing stages and almost found an equalizer when Joaquin Correa’s delivery to the back post was met by Vitinho, who could only drill it

into the side netting.

Palmeiras survived to become the first team to progress to the competition’s last eight.

“It was a fair victory,” Palmeiras manager Abel Ferreira told reporters. “We tried to win from the first to the last second. As we always do, but not always in the same way.”

Ferreira admitted that Botafogo’s 1-0 victory over Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) in the group stage forced Palmeiras to adopt



a different approach.

“We saw how well Botafogo defended against Paris Saint-Germain and we realised that if we played that way we would hit the wall,” he said, before praising the reigning Brazilian Serie A and Copa Libertadores champions.

“The game showed how balanced Brazilian football is. I told my dear friend Renato Paiva (Botafogo’s manager) beforehand that no matter what happens to-

day, one of us will get through and continue to represent Brazil.”

Paiva reflected positively on Botafogo’s performance, expressing gratitude to his players.

“The first feeling I had when the referee blew his whistle, regardless of the result, was one of pride,” he said. “Pride in the journey we’ve been on and the effort the players put in against a strong team that we knew well. The game was decided by small details.” - *Xinhua*

WEATHER CHAOS

It’s a joke’: Chelsea manager Maresca on two-hour delay

CHARLOTTE: Chelsea manager Enzo Maresca said the decision to suspend the Club World Cup with Benfica for two hours because of extreme weather was “a joke” and said the US is “probably not the right place to do the competition.”

“This is not football” was how the Italian described the situation after the 4-1 extra-time victory in a match that lasted four hours and 39 minutes in Charlotte on Sunday. It was the sixth game of the tournament that has been suspended because of seasonal summer thunderstorms.

Players, staff and supporters were immediately pulled indoors because of extreme weather, in this case because thunderstorms were detected within an eight-



mile radius of the venue, in line with US safety regulations.

The weather has been one of the Club World Cup talking points a year out from the US co-hosting the 2026 World Cup, with extreme heat also affecting games.

“I think it’s a joke, to be honest,” said Maresca. “It’s not football. It’s completely something new; I



struggle to understand.

“I can understand if it’s security reasons but if you suspend seven or eight games then it’s probably not the right place to do the competition. “It’s not normal to suspend the game. In a World Cup, how many games are suspended? Zero probably. In Europe how many games get suspended? Zero.” - *Agencies*

PORTUGAL SUPERSTAR

2026 World Cup target behind Ronaldo’s Al Nassr decision

RIYADH: Cristiano Ronaldo said on Saturday that the chance to rest over the summer and be in the best condition for the 2026 World Cup is why he signed a new deal at Al Nassr - rather than joining a team involved in the FIFA Club World Cup.

The Portugal forward is targeting a sixth World Cup appearance in the United States, Canada and Mexico next summer.

He signed a new two-year contract with Saudi side Al Nassr earlier this week, having already revealed that he had turned down offers from teams at the Club World Cup, which is currently being played in the United States.

“I had some offers to play [Club] World Cup, but I think it didn’t



make sense because I prefer to have a good rest, a good preparation, because this season will

be very long, because this is the season of the World Cup at the end,” 40-year-old Ronaldo told Al Nassr TV.

He said he decided to “not listen” to offers in order to be “ready not only for Al Nassr, but also for the national team.”

Ronaldo has scored 138 goals in 221 appearances for Portugal since making his debut in 2003.

The five-time Ballon d’Or winner has played at 11 major tournaments, lifting two Nations League titles and winning Euro 2016.

He has managed 99 goals in 111 appearances for Al Nassr and is well on his way to reaching 1,000 senior goals in his career, with a current tally of 938 for club and country. - *Agencies*

CRICKET

Former England batter Larkins dies aged 71

LONDON: Wayne Larkins, the former England and Northamptonshire batter, died after a short illness aged 71, on Saturday.

Larkins, popularly known as “Ned”, played 13 Tests and 25 ODIs between 1979 and 1991. His second England appearance was in the 1979 World Cup final - he batted at No. 7 and bowled two overs - but his finest hour came when hitting the winning runs at Sabina Park as England took an unexpected 1-0 lead on the 1989-90 tour of the West Indies.

That was Larkins’ seventh Test, coming more than eight years af-



ter his sixth. He might have played more in between had he not been banned for three years for involvement on the 1982 rebel tour of South Africa. - *Agencies*

SERBIAN TENNIS GREAT

Wimbledon my best chance to win 25th Slam: Djokovic

LONDON: Novak Djokovic believes Wimbledon gives him the best chance of disrupting the dominance of his younger rivals and finally landing an outright record 25th Grand Slam title.

Djokovic has not won any of the tennis majors since triumphing at the US Open in September 2023, with Jannik Sinner and Carlos Alcaraz splitting the six Grand Slam titles in that time.

The 38-year-old Serb is bidding for what would also be a record-equaling eighth Wimbledon men’s title, moving him level with his long-time rival Roger Federer.

Djokovic, who plays France’s Alexandre Muller in the first round, has lost each of the past two Wim-



bledon finals to Alcaraz.

Asked about claiming the 25th major that would take him clear of Australia’s Margaret Court, he said: “I would probably agree that Wimbledon could be the best chance.

“That’s because of the results I have had, because of how I feel and how I play in Wimbledon.

“I get an extra push mentally and motivation to perform the best tennis at the highest level.”

Italy’s Sinner, 23, and Spain’s

Alcaraz, 22, have emerged as the dominant pair on the ATP Tour in what has been a changing of the guard over the past two seasons.

Djokovic’s 2025 season has been patchy by his lofty standards, but he continues to be a threat at the business end of the Grand Slams.

He has continued to defy age - and logic - by producing some extraordinary performances, particularly when he beat Alcaraz in a memorable Australian Open quarter-final in January.

At last month’s French Open, he lost to Sinner in straight sets in their semi-final, but the way he pushed the world number one throughout showed how much he still offers at the top of the game. - *Agencies*

IN PICTURES



Kajol attends the screening of the film 'Maa'
Bollywood actress Kajol poses for a picture at the screening of the film 'Maa', in Mumbai. ANI Photo



42nd Int'l Book Fair of National Polytechnic Institute of Mexico held in Mexico City
This picture shows the opening ceremony of the book fair in Mexico City, capital of Mexico. The 42nd International Book Fair of the National Polytechnic Institute of Mexico was held here recently. China, as the guest country, showcased achievements in publication, cultural inheritance and sci-tech development. Xinhua



National Paddy Day marked in Lalitpur, Nepal
Farmers work in a paddy field on the occasion of National Paddy Day in Lalitpur, Nepal. The National Paddy Day marks the beginning of the paddy planting season in Nepal. Xinhua



Dragon boat race held in Vladivostok, Russia
Teams compete in a dragon boat race in Vladivostok, Russia. A total of 21 teams took part in the dragon boat race in Vladivostok. Xinhua



St. Petersburg hosts annual Scarlet Sails festival to celebrate school graduation
A ship with scarlet sails is seen on the Neva River in celebration of the Scarlet Sails festival in St. Petersburg, Russia. St. Petersburg celebrated the Scarlet Sails festival over the weekend while commemorating school graduation for students. Xinhua



A wild bird seen in Colombo, Sri Lanka
A gray-headed swamphen is pictured in the suburb of Colombo, Sri Lanka. Xinhua

Jakarta International Marathon 2025
Participants run during the Jakarta International Marathon 2025 in Jakarta, Indonesia. Xinhua



ROUND-UP

Mitsubishi Motors Oman awarded ‘Best Distributor of the Year’

The award reflects GAC’s exceptional performance across all key business areas and reinforces its position as one of the most accomplished Mitsubishi distributors in the entire Middle East and Africa region

MUSCAT: General Automotive Company (GAC), the official distributor for Mitsubishi Motors in Oman and part of The Zubair Corporation, has been awarded ‘Best Distributor of the Year’ by Mitsubishi Motors Middle East and Africa (MMMEA). The award reflects GAC’s exceptional performance across all



key business areas and reinforces its position as one of the most accomplished Mitsubishi distributors in the entire Middle East and Africa region. In a landmark achievement, Mitsubishi Oman secured a total of five prestigious awards, each highlighting a core strength of the company’s operations. The title of “Distributor of the Year” is awarded to the top-performing distributor in the Middle East and Africa region, based on a holistic evaluation of performance in Sales, Marketing, Customer experience, After-sales, and overall business growth. This award stands as a testament to Mitsubishi Oman’s consistent excellence, strategic

development, and unwavering customer-centric approach. In addition, Mitsubishi Oman received the prestigious “Best in After-Sales” award, distinguishing itself as the only winner in the entire Middle East and Africa region. This recognition highlights the company’s operational strengths, including exceptional workshop standards, technical expertise, parts availability, and proactive service outreach. These factors all contribute to high levels of customer satisfaction and loyalty. Mitsubishi Oman was also honoured with the award for “Best Customer Experience”, which recognises organisations that excel at creating seamless, customer-centric touchpoints, from digital plat-



forms to showroom interactions and after-sales support, ensuring an elevated ownership journey. Further, the “Platinum Award for Sales and Marketing Excellence” was presented to Mitsubishi Oman as recognition for its innovative campaigns, effective branding, and data-driven retail strategies that have significantly contributed to Mitsubishi’s market presence and consumer appeal in Oman. Finally, the “Platinum Award for After-Sales Excellence” affirms Mitsubishi Oman’s leadership in customer care and technical service delivery. It acknowledges the company’s ongoing commitment to providing world-class customer experience, support, and timely ser-

vice, long after the vehicle is sold. This is the 4th consecutive year that Mitsubishi Oman has won the much-valued Platinum Award in After-Sales Excellence, becoming the only distributor to have achieved this remarkable feat. Hani M. Al Zubair, Chairman of the Mobility & Equipment Sector at The Zubair Corporation, said, “Our achievements this year are a direct result of focused leadership, operational excellence, and a company-wide culture of customer-first approach. This recognition reaffirms our long-standing commitment to setting industry standards and building lasting trust with our customers. Achieving this amazing feat, especially in the 50th Golden Anniversary of our

partnership with Mitsubishi Motors, makes it even more special.” Niels Bormans, Group Chief Executive Officer of The Zubair Corporation, said, “We are immensely proud of General Automotive Co. - Mitsubishi Oman’s continued success. These awards are not just recognition from Mitsubishi Motors, but a reflection of the group’s broader vision for excellence, innovation, and impact across the sectors in the market we serve.” Manoj Ranade, General Manager of General Automotive Company, said, “This is a proud milestone for our team. Being recognised not only for our sales or after-sales strength, but across every customer touchpoint highlights the consistency and dedication that we as a team bring to the brand we represent. These awards reinforce our ongoing commitment to enhancing the dynamic “Mitsubishi-ness” experience in Oman, year after year.” With a strong nationwide network of 9 showrooms, 14 service centers, and 17 parts outlets, Mitsubishi Oman continues to make ownership accessible and rewarding to all motorists across the Sultanate. These latest honours are not only a celebration of past success but a reaffirmation of the company’s mission to deliver excellence at every touchpoint.

RECOGNITION



Dr. Thumbay Moideen honoured with 5th Honorary Doctorate by University of Lublin, Poland

MUSCAT: In a moment of immense pride and global recognition, Dr. Thumbay Moideen, Founder and President of Thumbay Group, has been conferred his Fifth Honorary Doctorate, this time by the prestigious University of Lublin, Poland. This accolade reaffirms his unmatched contributions to global healthcare, medical education, and Research for the community development. The honorary doctorate was awarded in recognition of Dr. Moideen’s extraordinary leadership in establishing the First Private Academic Health System and the region’s largest private medical university — and for transforming Thumbay Group into a global model of purpose-driven entrepreneurship in healthcare, education & Research. Under his visionary leadership, Thumbay Group has impacted millions across more than 175 nationalities, offering compassionate care, research excellence, and world-class medical training. The University of Lublin acknowledged Dr. Moideen’s pioneering efforts in integrating innovation with empathy, notably through the Thumbay International Research Grant (TIRG) — an initiative investing AED 3 million annually in areas like cancer immunology, AI in healthcare, precision medicine and

many more Area’s of Research. From a young entrepreneur in Karnataka to being celebrated as the most respected Indian Muslim and leading Beary in the world, Dr. Thumbay Moideen’s journey is a testament to what’s possible when faith meets action. Recognized as the leading NRI from Karnataka in the Gulf region, he is admired not just for his accomplishments, but for the values that drive them. Once someone who measured success through projects and milestones, he has evolved into a changemaker who defines impact by how many lives his work touches. With this latest recognition, Dr. Moideen joins an elite group of globally honored visionaries who have reshaped industries while staying rooted in service, humility, and impact. This doctorate reflects not only his entrepreneurial brilliance but also his enduring belief that health and education are fundamental rights, not privileges. Dr. Moideen said: “If our work has empowered others to dream, to heal, to grow, then I consider it a success. It’s no longer about how far I’ve gone, but how many I’ve taken along. I want Thumbay Group to be remembered as a force that empowered the underprivileged, raised the standards of education, healthcare and research.”

GO-TO CHOICE

MG HS continues to impress as benchmark for style, safety and everyday excitement

MUSCAT: The MG HS is steadily carving its space in Oman’s mid-size SUV segment, with growing attention from customers who seek the perfect blend of dynamic styling, safety, and comfort. Launched earlier this year, the HS has quickly become the go-to choice for younger drivers and families looking for a vehicle that keeps up with their active lifestyle while turning heads wherever it goes. Praised for its commanding design and immersive tech, the MG HS continues to win hearts with features like dual 12.3-inch HD screens, BOSE premium sound, and intelligent driver assistance systems that make every journey safer and more enjoyable. Its five-star Euro NCAP safety rating and Level 2 ADAS underline MG’s ongoing commitment to advanced engineering and occupant protection. The MG HS comes in two performance-driven engine options – A 1.5L turbo engine paired with a 7-speed dual clutch transmis-



sion, offering a spirited 173hp & A 2.0L turbocharged variant with a 9-speed automatic, pushing 231hp for those who want more punch. This performance, when combined with features like 360-degree cameras, six airbags, and superior NVH control, delivers a driving experience that’s equal parts smooth and exhilarating.

Inside, the MG HS continues to impress. The ‘squiracle’ steering wheel, panoramic roof, and premium finishes elevate every drive. Add to that the wireless charging, dual-zone AC, and connected smartphone ecosystem and it’s clear why the MG HS is redefining what a mid-size SUV can offer. What sets the HS apart is how

it balances boldness and practicality. Whether you’re heading to the office, on a weekend escape, or managing school runs the MG HS adapts with ease. The electronic tailgate, up to 1,397L cargo capacity, and driver memory settings make it ready for any lifestyle. Mohsin Hani Al Bahrani, CEO, MHD ACERE remarked, “The MG HS represents the evolution of what today’s SUV buyers truly want — bold design, intelligent features, and uncompromising safety. At MHD, we are proud to bring this dynamic vehicle to Oman, offering a driving experience that speaks to a new generation of customers who demand both performance and practicality in their everyday journeys.” MG Oman continues to see a surge in interest for the HS, especially among young professionals, first-time SUV buyers, and tech-savvy families. The HS isn’t just another SUV, it’s a statement of ambition, energy, and confidence.

INSPIRING FUTURE CHAMPIONS

Lulu Exchange supports youth football

MUSCAT: Lulu Exchange shines a spotlight on tomorrow’s champions by providing official jerseys to Al-Itifaq Sport Academy, inspiring young athletes to dream big and pursue their passion for football with pride and purpose. The jersey handover ceremony was held at Al-Itifaq Sport Academy in Yitti, Muscat, and was attended by Lathish Vichitran, General Manager of Lulu Exchange, Mohammed Al Kiyumi, Head of HR, and other senior staff members. Al-Itifaq Sport Academy is committed to nurturing the next generation of sports leaders by offering high-quality football training and instilling values of discipline,



teamwork, and ambition in young athletes across the community. The academy focuses on developing both athletic abilities and life skills, with health and fitness

as its foundation. The General Manager of Lulu Exchange, Lathish Vichitran, said, “We are proud to collaborate with Al Itifaq Sports Academy, an insti-

tution that plays such an important role in shaping the future of young athletes. Our contribution of official jerseys aims to motivate these young talents and help them shine in the world of football. We remain committed to supporting initiatives that foster discipline, teamwork, and holistic growth among the youth.” Mohammed Al Kiyumi, Head of HR, Lulu Exchange, added, “These jerseys are a symbol of pride, belonging, and the spirit of teamwork. We believe this gesture will motivate these young athletes to play with passion, stand by each other, and pursue their biggest dreams both on and off the field.”

POWERING YOUTH INNOVATION

Oman Shell recognises student change-makers at NXplorers awards

MUSCAT: In a vibrant celebration of innovation, creativity, and youth-led problem solving, Oman Shell, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education (MoE), hosted the NXplorers Juniors and Seniors Award Ceremony. The event gathered 31 outstanding student teams—a dynamic mix of junior and senior participants, each presenting innovative solutions to real-world sustainability challenges. These final presentations were the culmination of hands-on workshops, interactive training sessions, and guided mentorship that equipped students

with critical thinking tools and the NXplorers methodology to tackle the food, water, and energy nexus. Representing their schools in pairs, the students took part in a vibrant exhibition, where they showcased their ideas to, evaluators, special guests, and the guest of honour. Their projects were guided by Shell’s NX thinking methodology, a unique approach that combines systems thinking, scenario planning, and change management. The day concluded on a celebratory note, as 5junior and 10senior teams were honored for their exceptional ideas and their potential



to drive tangible, positive change within their communities. Launched in 2018, Shell NXplorers is the result of a longstanding partnership between Oman Shell

and the Ministry of Education. It aims to empower young minds to explore complex problems related to food, water, and energy, and to inspire solutions through critical

thinking and scientific inquiry. Speaking on the occasion, Al Ahnaf Al Zubaidi, Oman Shell’s Social Investment and Community Relations Manager, said: “Every year, we are inspired by the boldness and clarity with which our youth confront the challenges of tomorrow. NXplorers is more than a competition or a series of workshops, it’s a launchpad for future changemakers. Together with the Ministry of Education, we are proud to nurture a generation that doesn’t just imagine a better world, but actively builds it.” The program’s organizers reaf-

firmed that it serves as a dynamic extension of classroom learning—bringing to life the connection between theoretical knowledge and practical, creative thinking. Zakia Al-Muqaimiya, Head of the Scientific Innovation Department at the Ministry of Education, remarked: “The Shell NXplorers program goes beyond delivering scientific knowledge—it instills in our students the confidence to lead change. We take pride in continuing this partnership with Oman Shell to support a program that aligns closely with the Ministry’s vision for a holistic and future-ready education.”

THE ALL NEW

MG RX9

PRESTIGE WITH CONFIDENCE



NET BLUE
2.0L TURBO ENGINE

7-SEATER
CONFIGURATION

PREMIUM
LEATHER INTERIOR