

Times

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51

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Founded 1975 · Volume 51 No. 25 | 16 Pages · Baisas 200 · Subscription OMR63 | ISO 9001:2008 Certified Company | Chairman/Editor-in-Chief: Mohamed Issa Al Zadjali | Printed & Published by Muscat Media Group



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BILATERAL RELATIONS



HM the Sultan receives written message from Bangladesh PM

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has received a written message from Tarique Rahman, Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, pertaining to the bilateral relations between the two countries. The message was handed over yesterday to Sayyid Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister when he received Humayun Kabir, Adviser to the Prime Minister of Bangladesh for Foreign Affairs. During the meeting, the two sides reviewed the bilateral relations and cooperation between the two countries. They also affirmed the joint keenness to enhance these relations in various spheres in manner that serves mutual interests and the aspirations of the two countries' peoples. They also exchanged views on developments in the region and underscored the importance of backing efforts aimed at achieving peace and sustainable security and stability. The meeting was attended by Sheikh Abdulaziz Mohammed Al Hosni, Head of the Asia and Pacific Department at the Foreign Ministry, Rear Admiral Khondkar Misbah Ul Azim, Ambassador of Bangladesh to the Sultanate of Oman and several officials from both sides. **-OMA**

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MORE THAN 100,000 CITIZENS GET SOCIAL SECURITY PENSIONS

The minister reaffirmed the commitment of His Majesty the Sultan for the social sector and for strengthening protection and care system



PLANS FOR 2026

- New executive regulations for Disabilities Law
- Construction of Autism Care Centre
- Establishment of new rehabilitation centres and units
- Complete National Registry for Persons with Disabilities

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Social Development on Wednesday held a media briefing under the theme "Empowerment That Makes an Impact," during which it presented its most notable achievements, key performance indicators and future plans and strategic aspirations across the various sectors under its mandate. Dr. Laila Ahmed Al Najjar, Minister of Social Development, reaffirmed the unwavering commitment of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to advancing the social sector and strengthening the comprehensive protection and care system. She noted that this commitment has brought about a qualitative transformation in social protection policies, evidenced by the continued disbursement of social security pensions to over 100,000 citizens at a cost of OMR178 million, as well as the directive to assess the status of households eligible for the Family Income Support benefit within the social protection system. Additional measures include the establishment of marriage funds across various governorates, the issuance of a Royal Decree regulating premarital medical examinations, the allocation of OMR7 million for the construction of an Autism Spectrum

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Disorder Care and Rehabilitation Centre, the enactment of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Law, and the creation of a new sector at the level of Undersecretary within the Ministry's structure to oversee services provided to persons with disabilities. She stated that the Ministry achieved 100 percent of its 2025 performance targets as outlined in Oman Vision 2040, reflecting the progress made in implementing social programs and enhancing their developmental impact. **>A4**

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN CSR plans with OIA officials discussed

1 The Media Tourism and Culture Committee of the Shura Council met on Wednesday with a number of specialists from the Oman Investment Authority (OIA), as part of the ongoing study of a proposal to allocate a percentage of companies' financial provisions under corporate social responsibility (CSR) to fund projects in the heritage, culture, and tourism sectors across the Sultanate of Oman. **>A2**



OMAN Oman condemns Knesset's death law

2 Oman has condemned the Knesset's enactment of the so-called 'Death Penalty for Prisoners Law', denouncing it as a breach of humanitarian law. **>A3**

MARKET Oman, Belarus to enhance investment

3 Oman-Belarus Joint Committee for Cooperation and Investment, established in May 2025, held its first meeting in Muscat on Wednesday. The meeting discussed ways to enhance economic and investment cooperation between Oman and Belarus. The Omani side was headed by Abdulsalam bin Mohammed Al Murshidi, Chairman of Oman Investment Authority (OIA). **>B1**

FOREIGN MINISTRY

Oman facilitates return of its citizens from Iran through land and air routes

MUSCAT: In light of the current developments in the region, the Foreign Ministry, in coordination with the relevant authorities in the Sultanate of Oman, continued to implement the necessary arrangements to facilitate the return of Omani citizens currently abroad. In this context, a group of citizens arriving from the Islamic Republic of Iran safely reached the homeland yesterday. Travel arrangements were facilitated by land and air, in coordination with the Sultanate



of Oman's diplomatic missions in Tehran and Ankara, as part of the approved plan. The Foreign Ministry affirms that ongoing monitoring

of the citizens' situation continues around the clock, in coordination with overseas missions to ensure their security and safety. **-OMA**

THRIVING NATURAL ATTRACTIONS

Rains transform South Al Batinah into vibrant eco-tourism hub

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Recent heavy rainfall across the South Al Batinah Governorate has breathed new life into the region's wadis and aflaj, turning them into thriving natural attractions and drawing visitors eager to experience Oman's refreshed landscapes. The downpours have triggered strong flows in streams and valleys, replenishing traditional irrigation channels and enhancing the scenic beauty of several wilayats. With cooler temperatures, clear waters, and lush greenery, many of these locations have become popular weekend destinations for families, nature lovers, and adventure enthusiasts. Wadis across the governorate now offer a unique blend of rugged mountains, fertile farms, and traditional villages, creating ideal settings for hiking, exploration, and eco-tourism. The revival of the aflaj system has further added to the appeal, showcasing an essential part of Oman's cultural heritage while continuing to support local agriculture. In Wilayat Nakhl, Wadi Al Abyad stands out as a key attraction with its steady water flow and picturesque surroundings. Nearby, Wadi Mistal villages such as Hadash, Al Qura, and Wakan offer visitors a mix of natural springs, greenery, and traditional charm. Wadi Al Hamam, fed by Ain Al Thawarah, and Wadi Buwah have also seen rising visitor interest, particularly among adventure seekers. Wilayat Al Awabi has witnessed similar activity, with Wadi Bani

ged mountains, fertile farms, and traditional villages, creating ideal settings for hiking, exploration, and eco-tourism. The revival of the aflaj system has further added to the appeal, showcasing an essential part of Oman's cultural heritage while continuing to support local agriculture. In Wilayat Nakhl, Wadi Al Abyad stands out as a key attraction with its steady water flow and picturesque surroundings. Nearby, Wadi Mistal villages such as Hadash, Al Qura, and Wakan offer visitors a mix of natural springs, greenery, and traditional charm. Wadi Al Hamam, fed by Ain Al Thawarah, and Wadi Buwah have also seen rising visitor interest, particularly among adventure seekers. Wilayat Al Awabi has witnessed similar activity, with Wadi Bani



Kharous emerging as one of the most prominent destinations due to its length and diverse terrain. Other valleys, including Wadi Al Asami and Wadi Al Subaykha, provide tranquil environments suited for relaxation, while Falaj Bani Khazir remains a family-friendly spot. In Al Rustaq, Wadi Al Sahtan, Wadi Bani Awf, and Wadi Al Hawqain continue to attract visitors with their flowing waters, waterfalls, and mountain landscapes. Additional wadis such as Wadi Bani Hani and Wadi Bani Ghafir further enrich the wilayat's tourism offerings. Meanwhile, in Wilayat Wadi Al Maawil, strong flows have revitalized wadis including Al-Lajal, Al-Ain, and Al-Maysin, transforming them into serene natural retreats

for visitors seeking peace and scenic beauty. Authorities have highlighted the importance of preserving these environments while promoting sustainable tourism. The South Al Batinah Municipality has stepped up efforts to improve infrastructure, including road access, safety measures, and public services at key sites. The Heritage and Tourism Department is also actively promoting these destinations by incorporating wadis and aflaj into tourism itineraries and organizing awareness initiatives in collaboration with relevant entities. With nature at its peak following the rains, South Al Batinah is emerging as a seasonal eco-tourism hotspot, offering visitors a rich blend of environmental beauty and cultural heritage.

A Strategist of Value, Trust, and Change

What sparked your personal interest in innovation and fintech, and how has your perspective evolved since you first entered the banking sector?

My interest in innovation was shaped very early in life. Growing up, my parents encouraged curiosity, creativity, and independent thinking, which helped embed an innovation-driven mindset from childhood. That foundation stayed with me as I grew older and became increasingly interested in how technology can challenge traditional models and create new forms of value. When I entered the banking sector, I was fascinated by the contrast between well-established financial systems and the rapid emergence of digital alternatives.

This curiosity deepened in 2013, when I began studying cryptocurrencies at a time when the topic was still largely unexplored.

I focused my academic thesis on Bitcoin economics and the evolving concept of money and value, which gave me early exposure to decentralized finance and digital assets.

Since then, my perspective has evolved not merely by my fascination with technology itself, but with a deeper question: how value is created, transferred, and trusted at scale.

The Central Bank sits at the intersection of caution and possibility. How do you personally balance enabling innovation while ensuring stability and trust in the system?

For me, the balance starts with mindset. I try to remain open to what innovation can unlock,



while also being disciplined enough to draw clear lines when trust, resilience, or fairness might be at risk. Curiosity and caution are not opposites; they work best together.

In practical terms, this means creating safe, structured spaces for innovation through sandboxes, pilot initiatives, and ongoing dialogue with industry and the wider ecosystem.

I believe innovation is best supported by clarity—clear expectations, transparent engagement, and proportionate safeguards.

Approaches such as controlled testing allow us to learn alongside innovators without putting the system under strain. Listening, in my view, is just as important as rule-making.

When done well, regulation

TOP WOMEN LEADERS IN OMAN

does not hold innovation back; it helps channel it in ways that strengthen the financial system rather than stretch its limits.

If you could fast-track one emerging technology across Oman's financial system tomorrow, which would you choose and why?

I would start by saying that no single technology exists in isolation. Technologies are deeply interconnected, and their true



Ghada Al Kharusi Innovation Manager, Central Bank of Oman

Ghada Nasser Al Kharusi is shaping the future of Oman's financial system at the intersection of innovation, trust, and regulation. With over a decade of experience in fintech and financial sector oversight, she has been instrumental in advancing emerging technologies while safeguarding systemic stability. Known for her thoughtful, future-oriented approach, Ghada brings intellectual rigor, global perspective, and a strong ethical lens to how value, risk, and inclusion are reimagined in modern finance.



seamless payments, and more inclusive access to financial services. Many advanced use cases fail not because the technology is unavailable, but because identity and data foundations are fragmented.

For young Omani talent entering finance today, what skills or mindsets will matter most in the next decade and how can they prepare for a future that is being shaped right now?

For young Omani talent entering finance today, technical skills will matter, but mindsets will matter even more.

The next decade will reward those who lead with authenticity and strong values, because trust remains the foundation of any financial system.

Knowing who you are, what you stand for, and why you do your work will guide better decisions in moments of uncertainty.

Curiosity is equally critical. Finance is being reshaped by technology, sustainability, and new business models, so the ability to ask good questions and explore beyond your job description is a real advantage.

Active learning — constantly updating your skills, experimenting, and learning from failure — will set you apart from more than any single qualification.

So my advice is to build strong foundations, stay curious, and take ownership of your growth. Those who prepare with intention today will not just adapt to the future of finance in Oman, they will help define it.

Shura panel discusses CSR plans with OIA



OIA efforts contribute to achieving sustainable development and align with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Media Tourism and Culture Committee of the Shura Council met on Wednesday with a number of specialists from the Oman Investment Authority (OIA), as part of the committee's ongoing study of a proposal to allocate a percentage of companies' financial provisions under corporate social responsibility (CSR) to fund projects in the heritage, culture, and tourism sectors across the governorates of the Sultanate of Oman.

Abdullah Humaid Al Harthy, Head of the Committee, welcomed the guests and commended the role played by government entities foremost among them the Oman Investment Authority in supporting community initiatives and promoting the concept of social investment.

He noted that such efforts contribute to achieving sustainable development and align with the



objectives of Oman Vision 2040, while expressing his aspiration for enhanced coordination between the Shura Council and the OIA in advancing this approach in the future.

During the meeting, OIA specialists delivered a visual presentation to the esteemed members of the committee and the Council's General Secretariat on the social investment policy and the performance of the Authority's affiliated companies.

The presentation outlined the concept and objectives of social investment, as well as the key features of the new policy, including governance frameworks and regulatory mechanisms aimed at improving spending efficiency and maximising the societal impact of projects.

The presentation also highlighted performance indicators of OIA-affiliated companies in this field, including expenditure levels, the number of initiatives and projects implemented, and their distribution across various sectors.

Particular emphasis was placed

on projects related to heritage, culture, and tourism in the governorates, and their role in supporting local development.

It further addressed key challenges facing social investment, most notably regulatory and structural issues, the need to enhance institutional integration, and the importance of balancing welfare-oriented initiatives with sustainable development projects. In addition, a set of development-oriented directions for social investment policies was reviewed.

These included strengthening governance through the establishment of specialised committees, setting precise criteria for project selection, defining spending priorities, reinforcing the principle of partnership with the community and stakeholders, and adopting clear methodologies for measuring performance and impact.

The presentation, an extensive discussion took place among committee members, focusing on the importance of directing CSR allocations toward projects that deliver tangible

added value to society.

Emphasis was placed on the need for allocation mechanisms linked to the needs and development priorities of each governorate, taking into account their heritage and cultural assets.

Interventions highlighted the importance of developing project selection criteria to ensure sustainability and systematically measure impact, particularly in heritage, culture, and tourism sectors.

Committee members underscored the importance of enhancing the role of OIA-affiliated firms in supporting initiatives that generate job opportunities and stimulate local economies.

They also stressed the need to strengthen coordination with relevant entities across the governorates to ensure integrated efforts and optimal outcomes.

Discussions touched on the importance of drawing on leading international experiences in this field and addressing regulatory, legislative, and financial challenges that may hinder the effectiveness of social investment. At the conclusion of the meeting, the committee emphasised the importance of continuing to develop social investment policies in a manner that enhances their developmental impact, supports the heritage, culture, and tourism sectors, and achieves balanced and comprehensive development across all governorates of the Sultanate of Oman.

The meeting was chaired by Abdullah Humaid Al Harthy, Head of the Committee, and attended by committee members.

Nama Water completes A'Rustaq network project



A'RUSTAQ: Nama Water Services has completed the executive works for the water network construction project in the Wilayat of A'Rustaq. This step reflects the company's continuous commitment to developing the infrastructure of the water sector and enhancing the sustainability of supplies to keep pace with population growth and urban expansion across the wilayats of the Sultanate of Oman.

The networks are currently undergoing quality testing and sterilization in preparation for commercial operation, which will facilitate the supply of water through the network to beneficiaries in the near future.

The project is considered a vital initiative aimed at improving the water distribution system in several areas of the wilayat, including Al Iraqi, Hai Al Sarh, and Al Dahas, in addition to the industrial area. It has significantly contributed to raising network efficiency, establishing new distribution networks, and enhancing service reliability for subscribers in both existing and planned residential layouts.

Eng. Badr Salim Al Rabaani, the Project Manager, clarified that the implementation of the project began in September 2023 at a total cost of approximately OMR2.3 million.

He pointed out that the project constitutes a qualitative addition to the local infrastructure through its integrated technical and engineering works.

In a statement to Oman News Agency (ONA), Al Rabaani explained that the project included the implementation of a water network using High-Density Polyethylene (HDPE) pipes of various diameters, with a total length of approximately 61 kilometres.

This is in addition to construct-

ing a main distribution line utilizing Ductile Iron (DI) pipes with a diameter of 400 mm and a length of 4 kilometers. These upgrades have bolstered the operational capacity of the network and contributed to improving the overall efficiency of water transmission and distribution.

He added that the project involved executing over 1,315 household connections, successfully extending the service to more than 6,500 beneficiaries.

Furthermore, the work included the installation of fire hydrants, isolation and air valves, washouts, and pressure monitoring points, ensuring the sustainable operation of the network in accordance with the highest safety and efficiency standards.

Al Rabaani indicated that the scope of work also covered the construction of wadi crossings and internal road intersections, alongside the associated civil, mechanical, and electrical works.

All phases were executed according to the best engineering practices to guarantee the project's quality and long-term sustainability.

The completion of this project falls within Nama Water Services' ongoing efforts to enhance the readiness of water networks across the various governorates of Oman and to achieve comprehensive service coverage. This ultimately supports sustainable development plans and elevates the quality of services provided to citizens and residents.

Moving forward, the project is expected to continue improving the efficiency of the existing network, raising the level of reliability in water distribution, and meeting the growing demand for water services in the wilayat over the coming years. -ONA

COEXISTENCE

Oman participates in inter-civilization conference

KUALA LUMPUR: The Sultanate of Oman yesterday participated in the Inter-Civilization Academic Conference 2026, held in Malaysia.

Ahmed Saud Al Siyabi, Secretary General of the Fatwa Office at the Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs and head of the delegation, presented a scholarly paper titled "Islam and the Values of Global Coexistence: From Oma-

ni Roots to the Horizons of Civilization Dialogue."

In his paper, he highlighted the strong interconnection between theory and practice that has characterised the Sultanate of Oman throughout its successive stages of development and civilizational advancement in the realm of coexistence.

He further elaborated on the contribution the Omani model can

offer the world in terms of practical applications and theoretical frameworks for achieving coexistence among diverse communities.

The two-day conference aims to provide a dialogue-driven environment that addresses the integration of cultural pluralism, grounded in the recognition of others and mutual respect among members of diverse societies.

-ONA



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VIA VIDEO-CONFERENCING

Arab interior ministers discuss regional security

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman on Wednesday took part in the 43rd meeting of the Council of Arab Interior Ministers.

At the meeting, held via video-conferencing, the Sultanate of Oman was represented by Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal Al Busaidi, Minister of Interior.

At the outset of the meeting, the ministers reviewed the latest developments in the region and the events' related security implications. They stressed the need to enhance cooperation and unify efforts among Arab countries.

The meeting's agenda focused on developing the system of joint Arab security action and exchange-



ing expertise and information among Arab security departments in a manner that consolidates joint efforts. The meeting was attended by Maj. Gen Abdullah bin Ali Al Harthy, Assistant Inspector General of Police and Customs and Operations. -ONA

LAW FOR PALESTINIAN PRISONERS

Oman condemns Knesset's passage of death penalty

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman has condemned the Israeli Knesset's enactment of the so-called "Death Penalty for Prisoners Law," denouncing it as a breach of international humanitarian law, particularly the provisions safeguarding prisoners and detainees.

In a statement issued on Wednesday by the Foreign Ministry, the Sultanate of Oman reaffirms its categorical rejection of any measures that seek to sanction attacks on the lives of Palestinian prisoners or erode their fundamental human rights. It urges the international



community to uphold international legal standards, ensure the protection of prisoners and detainees and avert escalation in the interest of regional and global peace and stability. -ONA

PROJECT SPANS 9KM

Mountain road of Wadi Bani Khalid 74% completed

WADI BANI KHALID: The completion rate of the mountain road in Wadi Bani Khalid in North Al Sharqiyah Governorate has reached 74 percent.

The project spans 9 kilometres and is being executed at a cost exceeding OMR13 million.

The road, being executed by the Ministry of Transport, Com-

munications, and Information Technology, starts in the Manakh area, near Wadi Bani Khalid Police Station, and concludes at the village of Muzayri in the center of the wilayat.

The actual completion rate exceeds the planned target by over 20 percent, with the road expected to open to traffic in the

third quarter of 2026. The road serves as an alternative route for the Wilayat of Wadi Bani Khalid in North A'Sharqiyah Governorate and stands as one of the most prominent development projects implemented by the Ministry in the wilayat.

It is designed to function as a vital route that enhances logisti-

cal movement from an economic perspective, while also facilitating user mobility between villages within the wilayat—including residents, school buses, and other routine travel.

Additionally, it strengthens connectivity among villages, reinforcing social bonds and daily commutes in line with ongoing service

development in the wilayat.

The road comprises two lanes, each 3.5 metres wide, with asphalt shoulders extending 1.5 metres on each side.

The project also includes box culverts and water drainage channels to ensure road safety during rainfall.

-ONA





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Burj Al Khamis Fort attracts over 18,000 visitors in 2025



This turnout reflects the fort's growing presence as a tourist destination and the success of marketing efforts

AL MUSSANAH: Burj Al Khamis Fort in the Wilayat of Al Mus-sanah, South Al Batinah Governorate, attracted approximately 18,625 visitors during 2025. This turnout reflects the fort's growing presence as a tourist destination and the success of marketing efforts in positioning it as



a cultural and tourist landmark that blends authenticity with modernity, offering an interactive experience that embodies Omani identity. Burj Al Khamis Fort is one of the heritage sites in South Al Batinah Governorate that the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism has offered for investment to private sector institutions. This initiative aligns with the Ministry's efforts to le-

verage cultural heritage, ensure its sustainability, and maximize its benefits by creating direct and indirect employment opportunities, enabling private sector entities—including small and medium enterprises and family businesses—establishing marketing outlets for artisans, enriching domestic tourism and revitalizing cultural heritage sites across the Sultanate of Oman.



FAMILY SUPPORT BENEFIT

More than 100,000 citizens get social security pensions

< FROM A1 These targets encompassed the percentage of families benefiting from the Family Income Support benefit within economic empowerment pathways, the percentage of productive families economically empowered out of the total families benefiting from the Family Income Support benefit, the percentage of beneficiaries satisfied with the services provided, the percentage of employed Omani persons with disabilities in decent work out of the total job-seeking persons with disabilities capable of work, the percentage of beneficiaries of early intervention services for persons with disabilities under the age of eight, the growth rate in total annual donations collected through "Jood" donation platform, and the percentage of family reconciliation out of total cases handled—reflecting the integrated efforts aimed at reinforcing social stability. The minister pointed out that the Ministry of Social Development, within its 2026 plan, aims to implement a package of developmental projects and initiatives, most notably the issuance of the executive regulations for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Law, the laying of the foundation stone for the Autism Spectrum Disorder Care and Rehabilitation Center, the establishment of a number of specialized rehabilitation centres and units, the completion of the National Registry for Persons with Disabilities project, the review of several legislations related to children and juveniles, as well as the enhancement of women's leadership empowerment, the implementation of developmental programmes for the elderly sector, and the launch of qualitative initiatives such as "Rafaqat Hayah"



(Life Companion) program. These efforts, she affirmed, reflect a sustained commitment to developing the social sector and enhancing the quality of life in society. For his part, Dr. Abdullah Hamoud Al Harthy, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Social Development for Persons with Disabilities Affairs, explained that the Ministry intensified its efforts to enhance the participation of persons with disabilities in economic and social life through the launch and implementation of qualitative initiatives aimed at their rehabilitation and integration into the labor market. The second cohort of "Be With Us for Them" initiative, implemented in collaboration with the Human Construction Centre, graduated 60 individuals, 39 of whom have so far entered the labour market—an indicator of the effectiveness of training programs in achieving professional integration. He stated that the Ministry

launched the second edition of "Mawhoob" (Talented) initiative to empower persons with disabilities in the tourism sector, in collaboration with Omran Group, which included 11 trainees, five of whom have actively entered the labour market, thereby strengthening the presence of this group in vital sectors. Additionally, a number of protected production workshops were established in the wilayats of Salalah, Al Mudhaibi, Nizwa, and A'Rustaq, benefiting 163 persons with disabilities—a step that supports economic independence and provides a suitable work environment, while also nurturing talents and showcasing creative abilities. He noted that the "South Al Batinah: Friendly to Persons with Disabilities" initiative, launched in collaboration with the Office of the Governor of South Al Batinah, aimed to enhance the inclusive environment and facilitate access to

services and programmes for persons with disabilities. It included the training of 29 trainees from various government entities as sign language interpreters. Meanwhile, the "Mu'in" (Aide) initiative sought to develop services for persons with disabilities in Al Dhahirah Governorate. Additionally, the National Guide for Licensing, Classification, and Quality Standards for Private and Civil Institutions Providing Services to Persons with Disabilities was issued, which sets forth the requirements for issuing licenses to institutions, classification criteria, specifications for the construction of centers and their facilities, and qualifications for technical staff. He added that the Persons with Disabilities Affairs sector achieved tangible results during 2025, including the expansion of rehabilitation services through the issuance of licenses for 20 new centers

for the rehabilitation of persons with disabilities across various governorates. The National Autism Centre also achieved notable international accomplishments, including its admission to the Qualified Applied Behavior Analysis (QABA) Credentialing Board as the first full member from the Arab region within the network, in addition to the renewal of its accreditation as a Certified Autism Center by the International Board of Credentialing and Continuing Education Standards (IBCCES). Furthermore, 358 persons with disabilities were integrated into public and private schools. In a related context, Sheikh Rashid Ahmed Al Shamsi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Social Development for Family and Community Development Affairs, stated that the sector continued to strengthen the care and social protection system for target groups, develop family empowerment programmes, and establish a culture of volunteer work and community participation in line with the objectives of comprehensive and sustainable development. These efforts, he said, materialised in the provision of a wide range of social assistance, benefiting more than 23,000 recipients by the end of 2025, with total amounts exceeding OMR17 million. This assistance varied to include cash and in-kind support, temporary and emergency aid, as well as special assistance and disaster allocations. He added that the Ministry is steadily advancing toward ensuring the upbringing of children in a safe and healthy environment by developing and improving the quality of services provided to them, thereby enhancing oppor-

tunities for their proper development and positive integration into society. The year 2025 witnessed a notable expansion in early childhood services, with the addition of 32 new nurseries, bringing the total number of nurseries across the Sultanate of Oman to 364, accommodating approximately 9,548 children—an indicator of growing institutional attention to childcare. He explained that the "Child Protection Guide" serves as a comprehensive practical reference aimed at supporting workers in the child protection sector to ensure swift and effective intervention to safeguard children and build a safe and supportive environment for them. Meanwhile, the "National Guide for Foster Family Child Care" regulates mechanisms for caring for children deprived of family care. He pointed out that the Ministry worked to enhance the economic independence of families by providing employment opportunities and supporting home-based projects. A total of 82 job opportunities were provided for family members of low-income families in the government and private sectors through joint efforts between the Ministry of Social Development and the Ministry of Labour. Additionally, 108 cases were supported to launch home-based projects with non-refundable financial support totaling more than OMR54,000. As many as 57 exhibitions for productive family projects were also organized, with the participation of 1,577 productive families, contributing to the marketing of their products and enhancing their productive capacities. -OMA

HOSTED SQU SPECIALISTS

Shura panel discusses food security for future agricultural cities

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Food and Water Security Committee of the Shura Council held its fifth regular meeting of the third annual sitting (2025–2026) of the tenth term on Wednesday.

During the meeting, the committee hosted specialists from Sultan Qaboos University, represented by the College of Agricultural and Marine Sciences, to discuss a proposal on “Future Agricultural Cities: Opportunities and Challenges.”

The committee is currently studying this topic to identify the key challenges facing such cities and explore ways to develop them in a manner that supports sustainable food security and economic diversification in line with Oman Vision 2040.

The meeting, Professor Rashid Abdullah Al Yahyai, Dean of the College of Agricultural and Marine Sciences at Sultan Qaboos University, delivered a visual presentation highlighting the college's academic programmes and departments, as well as its efforts



in advancing agricultural research and utilising the latest artificial intelligence technologies.

The presentation also addressed prominent research in smart agriculture and sustainability, along with considerations of environmental and climatic characteris-

tics specific to Oman in the planning of such cities.

The meeting further explored optimal institutional models to enhance integration between universities, government entities, and the private sector in implementing large-scale agricultural projects.

investment entities.

Participants also reviewed key initiatives and ongoing research projects in plant sciences and agricultural engineering, particularly those related to precision agriculture and resource management.

The potential application of these research outcomes in supporting the design and implementation of future agricultural cities in the Sultanate of Oman was highlighted.

Committee members emphasised the importance of focusing such projects on critical issues, including water and energy efficiency in arid environments, in alignment with Oman's climatic and geographical conditions.

Committee members also inquired about the technological readiness of current research outputs in this field and the challenges associated with transitioning research from laboratory stages to practical, real-world applications.

They questioned whether the university has business incubators or accelerators capable of supporting the transformation of agricultural innovations into

startups—an effort that would help align scientific research outputs with comprehensive development plans and the objectives of Oman Vision 2040.

The meeting focused on the main challenges and proposed solutions to strengthen integration between research and investment, as well as the importance of aligning scientific outputs with the needs of investors in the agricultural sector and identifying practical tools to build trust between researchers and investors.

On another note, the committee also reviewed the draft unified law (regulation) for the management of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture within the Gulf Cooperation Council, which was referred by the government.

The meeting was chaired by Abdullah Ahmed Al Malek Al Shuhi, Head of the Committee, and attended by committee members.

It concluded with an emphasis on the importance of establishing an integrated national ecosystem linking scientific research, practical application, and investment in future agricultural cities.

RAM highlights achievements, unveils 2026 plan



As many as 11,984 beneficiaries have engaged with RAM's programmes, dialogues, research, and initiatives

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Royal Academy of Management (RAM) yesterday held its second annual media briefing under the theme “Impact in Action.”

The event brought together media professionals and representatives of government communication departments in Oman, reaffirming RAM's institutional commitment to transparency, impact measurement, and strategic partnership with the national media.

Designed as an interactive experience structured across five key stations, the briefing offered a comprehensive overview of RAM's journey, achievements, and forward-looking plans.

Participants engaged in curated presentations, visual showcases, and dialogue sessions highlighting how the Academy's initiatives translate into tangible, measurable impact at individual, institutional, and societal levels.

As many as 11,984 beneficiaries have engaged with RAM's programmes, dialogues, research, and initiatives. In 2025 alone, 2,258 participants took part in its activities, bringing the cumulative total number of direct programme participants to 4,006.

The Academy recorded an overall service satisfaction rate of 88.6%, reflecting its continued focus on quality, participant experience, and measurable outcomes.

A key highlight of the briefing was RAM's achievement of the prestigious LIFT (Learning for Impact Today and Tomorrow) Certification from the European Foundation for Management Development (EFMD Global), one of the world's most respected accreditation bodies in leadership and management development.

The LIFT framework is recognised internationally as a benchmark for measuring impact and sustainability across the entire learning value chain — from planning and delivery to assessment — at individual, organisational, sectoral, and societal levels. RAM is the first institution in the region to receive this certification, distinguished by its demonstrated contribution to society among LIFT-accredited organisations worldwide.

RAM further strengthened its international presence through the Future Readiness Award, delivered in partnership with Thinkers50, the United Kingdom-based global authority on management thought leadership.

During the briefing, RAM unveiled its 2026 operating model, aligned with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040 and structured around three core pillars: executive learning, strategic initiatives, and sectoral interactive units. The model encompasses specialised programmes in artificial intelligence, international negotiation, leadership, and logistics, alongside initiatives to activate the Programme Impact Unit, enhance participant experience measurement, and further advance digital services.

As part of its digital transformation agenda, RAM announced the launch of eight interactive digital programmes within its integrated digital learning ecosystem.

The platform connects participants and alumni, offering a flexible and continuous learning journey supported by a comprehensive digital knowledge library.

This blended learning model integrates digital and in-person

programmes to ensure sustained engagement and long-term impact, while the Alumni Office continues to foster an active leadership network through curated knowledge exchanges and professional initiatives.

In its efforts to empower national talent, RAM continues to implement the National “One Government Team” Initiative. In its first year, the initiative targeted 5,000 employees across 19 government entities, achieving a 95% satisfaction rate. Looking ahead to 2026, the initiative will conclude its first cycle, assess the impact of its outcomes, and refine its operating model in preparation for its second phase, ensuring sustainable institutional performance aligned with Oman Vision 2040.

Reinforcing its commitment to positioning training as a strategic instrument for impact, RAM also launched the Certified Executive Learning Trainer Programme, designed to qualify 25 participants and build a national pool of professional facilitators capable of designing innovative, high-quality learning solutions in line with international standards.

The briefing concluded with alumni success stories demonstrating how executive learning has translated into improved institutional performance and decision-making efficiency, followed by an open dialogue between senior officials and media representatives.

The Academy also expressed its appreciation for the role of national media institutions in amplifying its mission and communicating its measurable, multi-level impact to the wider public.

RAM emphasised that convening the annual media briefing forms part of a sustained institutional approach to aligning communication messages, strengthening partnerships with national media, and reinforcing the principle that meaningful impact is measured not by effort alone, but by tangible outcomes.

INAUGURATED

Sur Referral Hospital expansion adds 58 beds

SUR: The new expansion of the Sur Referral Hospital in the Wilayat of Sur, South Al Sharqiyah Governorate, was inaugurated yesterday under the auspices of Dr. Mohammed Said Al Maamari, Minister of Endowments and Religious Affairs, and in the presence of Dr. Hilal Ali Al Sabti, Minister of Health.

The expansion aims to enhance specialised health services and improve the efficiency of medical care provided, contributing to an increase in the hospital's total capacity to 206 beds—an addition of 58 beds—which supports efforts to develop the health system and achieve sustainability in therapeutic services.

The project was implemented through a partnership between the Ministry of Health and Al Jisr Foundation as part of supporting community partnerships aimed at contributing to the development of the health sector and enhancing the quality of its services.

The new expansion includes 58 beds, comprising a dialysis unit with a total capacity of 28 beds and four isolation rooms with a total capacity of 10 beds. Additionally, it features an Intensive Care Unit (ICU) with a 30-bed capacity, distributed into an 8-bed pediatric ICU, a 12-bed adult ICU,



ties and the increase in capacity, which contributes to improving the level of healthcare provided to citizens and residents in the governorate and neighboring areas.

Dr. Yahya Humaid Al Masrouri, Director of Sur Hospital, stated that the Ministry of Health is continuing its efforts to develop health services in accordance with international standards, noting that this expansion embodies the Ministry's direction toward building a sustainable and decentralised health system that responds to the needs of the population and provides a supportive work environment for continuous professional development, which is reflected in the quality of the health services provided.



TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Nama Dhofar Services invites the specialized companies to participate and submit their offers for the below said tenders:

Tender Number	Tender Name	Last Date for Collection of Tender Documents	Time & Last Date for Proposal Submission	Tender Fee (OMR) Including VAT (5%)
DISC/2026/035	Design Services to Effectively Manage and Treat Industrial Wastewater Influent in Dhofar Governorate	16-April-2026	30-April-2026	105.000
DISC/2026/036	UTILITY NETWORK EXTENSION – Lot – 02G/2026	16-April-2026	23-April-2026	52.500
DISC/2025/102-2	Re-Tender: LEGAL OUTSOURCE- RURAL AREA	16-April-2026	23-April-2026	52.500

- To purchase the tender document website via the link or the Barcode below:
https://isupplier.nama.om:4443/OA_HTML/OA.jsp?OAFunc=XTTEN_TENDER_FLOAT_DISC_F
- Every company wishing to participate in this tender must attach with its bid a bid bond in the form of a bank guarantee from one of the banks operating in the Sultanate of Oman. Any bid that does not contain the bid bond will be disqualified.
- The original bid bond must be submitted in an envelope sealed with red wax and addressed to the chairperson of the minor tender committee and written on outside the Tender name and the Tender number and it should be placed in the tender box in Nama Dhofar Services in Salalah before 03:00 pm of the last day for submitting Bids.
- Bids shall be submitted online through using “isupplier portal”. No hard copies are accepted.
- The Tender fees are not refundable. However, Tenderers who are holding “Riyada” card issued from public authority for SME development will be exempted from providing the tender fee and the Bid bond.
- The company is not obliged to accept the lowest or any other bid.
- In the event of receipt of the tender document on behalf of another company, the interested purchasers in the above tender document should provide details of the person's name and the company details.



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OMAN/WORLD

ON THURSDAY

Sayyid Kamil to grace closing ceremony of HM the Sultan’s Camel Racing Festival

MUSCAT: At the behest of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, HH Sayyid Dr. Kamil bin Fahd Al Said, Secretary General at the Secretariat General of the Council of Ministers, will patronise on Thursday the closing ceremony of the 2026 Camel Racing Festival for the Cup of His Majesty the Sultan.

Racecourse in Al Fulaij

The event will take place at the Royal Camel Corps racecourse in Al Fulaij, the Wilayat of Barka. The event is organised by the Royal Court Affairs, represented by the Royal Camel Corps.

The final day of the festival will feature six races, including the fifth race, designated for yearling camels “Houl,” in which the winner will be awarded the Cup of His Majesty the Sultan.

Omani heritage performances
The races will be accompanied by a series of traditional Omani her-



itage performances, in addition to ceremonial displays on camelback performed by members of the Royal Camel Corps.

The staging of the Camel Racing Festival for the Cup of His Majesty the Sultan reflects the attention accorded by His Majesty the

Sultan to this cherished cultural legacy, as well as its vital role in preserving authentic Omani camel breeds. — **ONA**

WEST ASIA CONFLICT

Houthis claim ‘third joint missile operation’ targeting Israel sites

SANAA: The Yemeni Armed Forces have announced the execution of their “third joint operation” in coordination with allied groups in Iran and Lebanon, targeting “sensitive sites” in “south of occupied Palestine.”

In a post on X, the official spokesperson of the Yemeni Armed Forces, Yahya Saree, said the operation involved cooperation with “Brother Mujahideen” in Iran and Hezbollah. The statement claimed that a salvo of ballistic missiles was launched at “sensitive sites of the Israeli enemy, south of occupied Palestine.”

According to Iran’s Tasnim News Agency, the Yemeni Armed

Forces said the latest strike was conducted “in support of the resistance fronts” and marked their third such coordinated operation. The group asserted that the mission “carried out in cooperation with Iran and Hezbollah and has been successful.”

Meanwhile, according to the IDF’s official Telegram channel, the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) on Wednesday identified missiles launched from Iran towards Israel. According to the IDF, defensive systems were operating to intercept the threat. The Home Front Command had sent a precautionary directive directly to mobile phones in the relevant areas.

Earlier, on Sunday, Yemen’s Houthis announced a “second military operation” targeting Israel in a significant escalation of the ongoing West Asia conflict, using a barrage of cruise missiles and drones against what it described as “vital and military sites” in southern occupied Palestine.

In a statement posted on Telegram, Yahya Saree, the Houthis’ military spokesperson, said that the operation was launched as part of the “Holy Jihad Battle” and coincided with military actions by allied groups, including forces in Iran and Hezbollah in Lebanon.

— **ANI**

MINISTRY OF INTERIOR

Application invited for municipal polls

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Interior has announced that the application period for candidacy in the fourth-term Municipal Council elections will commence this Sunday, 5 April 2026, and will continue until Thursday, 23 April 2026.

‘Intakhib’ application

The Ministry of Interior invites eligible candidates who meet the requirements for Municipal Council membership to submit their applications via the “Intakhib” application or the official election website (elections.om), by completing the designated electronic form and attaching the required documents. — **ONA**



Printed and published by:
Muscat Media Group
Post Box: 770,
Postal Code: 112



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HERITAGE AND TOURISM



Tamkeen Forum opens in Muscat

MUSCAT: A forum codenamed “Tamkeen” (empowerment) kicked off in the Governorate of Muscat yesterday. The forum seeks to empower Omani human resources in the sectors of heritage and tourism.

The forum is organised by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour and Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI).

The forum targets managers and personnel operating in the field of hospitality, tour operators and workers in hotel and tourism establishments. It seeks to promote effective communication between target sectors and related sectors, in addition to human resources departments and training departments.

The forum contributes to the

realisation of strategic management in a bid to identify training needs and promote employees’ cooperation in implementing development programmes. It reflects the ongoing cooperation between the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism towards the regulation of the labour market and the generation of jobs for Omani human resources. It also seeks to achieve a localisation plan in the sectors of heritage and tourism in line with the objectives of Oman 2040.

Tamkeen Forum will be organised in the governorates of Dhofar, Al Wusta, Al Dakhiliyah, Musandam, North Al Batinah, South Al Batinah, North Al Sharqiyah, South Al Sharqiyah, Al Buraimi and Al Dhahirah.

— **ONA**

UNPRECEDENTED MOVE

Who’s winning under Trump’s tariff policy?

WASHINGTON: On April 2, 2025, Donald Trump shocked the world by announcing “economic independence” for the US, imposing sweeping tariffs on every country in the world. The US Supreme Court has since ruled against the unprecedented move, but the US president seems keen to double down.

DW analysed trade data on the origin of US imports over the past year to find out: What have Trump’s tariffs achieved? How is the rest of the world adjusting to this new economic order? And who, if anyone, is reaping the benefits?

Under the “Liberation Day” tariffs, the White House announced that every country — with a few exemptions due to sanctions and pre-existing trade deals — would be subject to a 10% baseline tariff on all goods they export to the US. Additionally, 85 countries that export more to the US than they import would be subject to higher tariffs of up to 50%.

“I don’t think people expected the US administration to essentially declare a trade war on the entire world,” says Haishi Li, economist at Hong Kong University whose research focuses on how tariffs and sanctions impact global trade.

Chaos broke out immediately, and global stock markets plummeted. While Trump insisted publicly that “big business is not worried about the tariffs,” he announced a 90-day pause of all tariffs exceeding the baseline 10% rate on April 9.

During this pause, many trading partners such as the European Union, Vietnam, and the United Kingdom hastily negotiated trade deals in the hope of bringing down the announced tariff rates. Negotiations with China remained tumultuous over the next few months, with rounds of tit-for-tat tariffs reaching up to 125%.

After multiple last-minute extensions to the 90-day tariff pause, country-specific rates finally came into effect on August 7, 2025.

Early 2025: US importers stockpile in expectation of tariffs

Even before April, it was clear that changes were coming. “Tariffs



are going to make us rich as hell,” Trump announced upon entering his second term in January 2025.

US companies understood the message: Racing to fill warehouses before costs increased, they dramatically boosted their orders, bringing roughly 20% more goods into the country between January and March than the 2022–2024 average — equivalent to a plus of around \$184 billion.

Anticipating higher tariffs on gold bullion, for instance, the US imported roughly 50 times its usual volume in early 2025, totaling around \$72 billion — mostly from Switzerland, but also from an eclectic mix of new or unusual suppliers, including Uzbekistan, the Philippines, and Zimbabwe.

Big manufacturers across Asia also saw sharp increases, with Taiwan, Vietnam, and India all recording more exports to the US than usual.

April to July 2025: US companies shift to lower-tariff countries

The suspension period implemented on April 9 meant US importers had a three-month win-

dow in which to adjust to the new situation.

A study by Haishi Li and colleagues found that, overwhelmingly, companies attempted to shift their supply chains to countries with lower tariff rates. “Imports were like water, flowing from high-tariff countries to low-tariff countries,” Li told DW.

And from no other country did US imports shift away more than from China, which faced by far the highest, and most volatile, tariff threats of any. The US imported goods worth \$66 billion less from China between April and July 2025 than during the same period in previous years.

Canada, which was separately threatened with tariffs of 25%, also saw a significant drop in its exports to the US, to the tune of \$24 billion. However, the country appears to have successfully compensated for this drop by adjusting its trade with other countries: Canada’s overall exports in 2025 were only \$1.6 billion lower compared to 2024.

“The countries that benefited most from the tariff threat were the ‘10% countries,’ such as Aus-

tralia and Latin America countries,” said Li.

But some high-tariff countries also saw huge import surges from US companies: Vietnam, Thailand and Taiwan faced some of the steepest “reciprocal tariffs” — 46%, 36%, and 34% respectively — yet the US recorded an additional \$34 billion in imports from Taiwan alone between April and July.

US citizens bear the brunt of tariff costs

So far, the tariffs have not brought production back to the US, says Alex Durante, senior economist at the US-based think tank Tax Foundation, which has tracked the domestic impact of the tariffs. “This past year has been quite bad for manufacturing and employment,” he told DW. “In fact, the sectors that are growing tend to be ones relatively insulated from the tariffs because of exemptions like computers and AI-related products.”

And while US importers shifted where they bought from, the total value of imports returned to normal soon after the “Liberation Day” announcement on April 2.

One figure that has risen sharply is US customs revenue. In 2025, the US Treasury collected \$287 billion in customs duties and related taxes — roughly triple the amount in previous years. Early data suggests 2026 is on track to surpass even that total.

This revenue made up around 5% of all taxes collected in the US in 2025. Recent studies show that the higher tariffs have been almost fully paid by US importers, not foreign exporters.

As a result, US consumers have ended up bearing the brunt of the burden. “We estimated that the tariffs have effectively cost each US household around \$1,000 in 2025,” said Durante. “This is the cumulative effect of businesses having to raise prices, cut investment, cut employment, or reduce wages to adjust to the tariffs.”

Uncertainty plagues international exporters

Internationally, the months since August 2025 have been marked by hastily brokered — and quickly unraveled — trade deals, alongside fresh rounds of tariff threats aimed at individual countries or product groups.

Global trade, economist Li says, has become a lot more uncertain: “If you ask academics, US policy makers, anyone, what will happen this year — I don’t think anyone knows.”

The most recent shock to the precarious new normal of the US tariff landscape came in the form of February’s Supreme Court ruling which struck down the legal basis of Trump’s original “Liberation Day” tariffs. With a new 15% blanket tariff rate in place, and the US administration seemingly determined to find other ways to levy higher duties again, exporters and importers alike are left guessing what the coming months may bring.

To adapt to this uncertainty, Li says governments may focus on supporting companies to explore new markets outside of the US. “If they can diversify their supply chains, it will make them more resilient, which might be a silver lining.”

— **DW**

BILATERAL RELATIONS

Beijing envoy marks 76 years of diplomatic ties with India

NEW DELHI: China’s Ambassador to India Xu Feihong on Wednesday underscored the importance of stable and cooperative relations between Beijing and New Delhi as the two countries marked the 76th anniversary of diplomatic ties.

In a post on X, Xu said, “China and India are neighbours that cannot be moved apart,” emphasising that it is in the mutual interest of both countries to remain “good-neighbourly friends and partners that help each other succeed.”

He described such cooperation as key to realising the vision of a “Dragon-Elephant Tang.”

The ambassador noted that China stands ready to strengthen strategic alignment with India, deepen practical cooperation across sectors, and expand people-to-people exchanges. He also highlighted the importance of closer coordination in multilateral forums to advance the interests of the Global South.

Earlier on Tuesday, Consul General of the People’s Republic of China in Mumbai, Qin Jie, spoke about the future of India-China ties and expressed optimism as he recalled the meeting between PM Modi and President Xi Jinping.

The Consul General told reporters, “For the future of the relationship, we are moving in the correct direction in India-China relations under the leadership of our leaders. They have met each other twice in the last two years.”

Speaking about the BRICS Summit, which will take place in India this year, he added, “This year, the BRICS summit will be held in Delhi, and next year it will be held in China. This will give us special opportunities to deepen our connection and friendship and make progress for the benefit of our people and stability of the whole world...”

Earlier in March, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi called for enhanced cooperation between New Delhi and Beijing during a news conference held on the sidelines of the fourth session of the 14th National People’s Congress in Beijing. — **ANI**

IN BAGHDAD



US journalist Shelly Kittleson kidnapped

BAGHDAD: The Iraqi government has confirmed that a foreign female journalist has been abducted, sparking an extensive security operation to track down the perpetrators and ensure her safety. According to a report by The Hill, authorities are currently focused on locating the victim and securing her release following the evening kidnapping.

Iraq's Interior Ministry stated on Tuesday that security units engaged in a high-speed pursuit of the kidnappers. The chase resulted in the interception of a vehicle, which reportedly overturned as the perpetrators attempted to flee the scene.

Following the crash, security forces successfully apprehended one of the suspects and impounded a vehicle used in the crime. "The Ministry affirms that efforts are ongoing to track down the remaining individuals involved, secure the release of the kidnapped journalist, and take all necessary legal measures against all those involved in this criminal act, in accordance with the law," the ministry declared in an official statement.

While the Iraqi authorities did not officially disclose the identity of the journalist, Alex Plitsas, a non-resident senior fellow with the Atlantic Council and former Pentagon official, identified the

victim as US citizen Shelly Kittleson. In a post on the social platform X, Plitsas confirmed he is acting as her designated US point of contact, noting her extensive experience reporting from both Iraq and Syria.

"She's the sweetest person in the world, and she doesn't have a mean bone in her body," Plitsas told The Hill, adding that any information regarding her current location or state of health should be shared with law enforcement immediately.

In his initial disclosure, Plitsas suggested that a specific armed faction might be responsible for the disappearance. "I can confirm that my friend Shelly Kittleson was abducted and may have been taken hostage in Baghdad by Khatib [sic] Hezbollah," he wrote, stating that her "whereabouts and condition [are] unknown."

The group in question, Kataib Hezbollah, is a powerful militia with ties to Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). As highlighted by The Hill, the group previously held Israeli-Russian academic Elizabeth Tsurkov for over two years. Tsurkov, who was eventually liberated through US intervention, has since provided harrowing accounts of the torture and sexual assault she faced during her captivity.

Iran's president wants ceasefire, says Trump

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian told EU Council President Antonio Costa in a call that the Islamic Republic had the "necessary will" to end the war with the US and Israel, provided its enemies guaranteed it would not flare up again

WASHINGTON DC: Ahead of a national address related to the war against Iran, US President Donald Trump said on Wednesday that the Iranian president wants a ceasefire.

Iran's president "has just asked the United States of America for a CEASEFIRE!" Trump posted on his Truth Social platform.

"We will consider when Hormuz Strait is open, free, and clear. Until then, we are blasting Iran into oblivion or, as they say, back to the Stone Ages!!!" he added.

On Tuesday, Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian told EU Council President Antonio Costa in a call that the Islamic Republic had the "necessary will" to end the war with the US and Israel, provided its enemies guaranteed it would not flare up again.

However, at the top of Iran's



power structure is the Supreme Leader. After Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was killed, his son, 56-year-old Mojtaba Khamenei, was chosen as his successor.

Previously, President Donald Trump has asserted that it will take "15 to 20 years" for Iran to recover from the extensive US-Israeli military strikes, claiming the operation has effectively dismantled the country's strategic capabilities. Speaking from the Oval Office, the President maintained that the mission was designed to ensure a total degradation of the Iranian military apparatus.

The President reiterated that the primary objective of the military engagement was to ensure that Tehran had "no nuclear weapon". He declared that this specific mission had been successfully concluded, stating, "That goal has been attained. They do not have nuclear weapons."

Tehran rejects Trump's claim that it asked for ceasefire

Foreign Ministry spokesperson, Esmail Baghaei, says US President Donald Trump's comments about Tehran asking for a ceasefire are

"false and baseless," Iranian state TV reported.

Trump claimed in a post to his Truth Social platform earlier on Wednesday that "Iran's New Regime President" had made the request.

It was not clear to whom the US president was referring, given Iran still has the same president as it did before the war.

Trump said a ceasefire would only be considered "when Hormuz Strait is open, free, and clear. Until then, we are blasting Iran into oblivion."

The statement came ahead of a primetime presidential address due on Wednesday evening.

Separately, Iran's Revolutionary Guard issued a statement saying the Strait of Hormuz "is firmly and decisively under the control" of its forces. "This strait will not be opened to the enemies of this nation through the ridiculous spectacle by the president of the United States," it added.

Meanwhile, Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi had earlier dismissed the possibility of diplomatic breakthroughs with Washington, stating that the "trust level is at zero" between the two nations. In an interview with Al Jazeera,

Araghchi asserted that Tehran sees no "honesty" in US actions and has "never had a good experience from negotiations" with the American government.

In fresh message Mojtaba Khamenei extols sacrifice and martyrdom

Meanwhile, in Tehran Iran's Supreme Leader, Mojtaba Khamenei on Wednesday extolled the sacrifice and martyrdom of senior Iranian armed forces leaders as the conflict in West Asia enters into its second month.

In a series of posts shared on the account purportedly attributed to Mojtaba Khamenei, the Supreme Leader recalled the deaths of Hezbollah leaders Hassan Nasrallah and Hashem Safieddine to IRGC commanders like Qasem Soleimani as sacrifices against US and Israel.

He wrote on X, "Before any of the other fighters, the commanders of the Resistance offered their lives on this path, from Martyr Sheikh #Ragheb_Harb and #Sayyid_Abbas_Mousavi to the Master of the Martyrs of the Resistance, #Sayyid_Hassan_Nasrallah, and #Sayyid_Hashem_Safieddine." — Agencies

MEA OFFICIAL

About 598,000 passengers return to India amid West Asia conflict

NEW DELHI: About 598,000 passengers have returned to India amid the developing security situation in West Asia and the Gulf region, a senior government official said on Wednesday. He also shared that the incident caused by debris from an interception in Dubai on Tuesday, three Indian nationals sustained minor injuries, and the consulate is in close touch with them as it renders all assistance.

The authorities in Dubai confirm that the incident caused by debris from an interception that fell on houses in southern Dubai resulted in minor injuries to two Indian nationals, one Bangladeshi national, and one Sri Lankan national.

While addressing the inter-ministerial briefing on the latest developments in West Asia, Aseem R Mahajan, Additional Secretary (Gulf), Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), said that the overall flight situation continues to improve with additional flights operating from the region to various destinations in India.

"Since February 28th, around 5,98,000 passengers have returned from the region to India. Airlines continue to operate limited non-scheduled flights based on operational and safety considerations between the UAE and India," Mahajan noted.

He further added that around



90 flights are expected to operate from the UAE to India on Wednesday. "Around 90 flights are expected to operate from the UAE to India today. Flights are operating from various airports in Saudi Arabia and Oman to different destinations in India. With the Qatar airspace partially open, Qatar Airways is expected to operate around 8 to 10 flights to India today. Kuwait and Bahrain airspace remains closed. Jazeera Airways of Kuwait and Gulf Air of Bahrain have been operating non-scheduled commercial flights from Dammam airport of Saudi Arabia to various destinations in India," Mahajan further informed.

He also said that due to flight

restrictions and airspace closure, the travel of Indian nationals is being facilitated from Iran through Armenia and Azerbaijan to India, from Israel through Egypt and Jordan to India, from Iraq through Jordan and Saudi Arabia to India, and from Kuwait and Bahrain through Saudi Arabia to India.

In his remarks, he underlined that the Ministry of External Affairs continues to closely monitor the evolving situation in the Gulf and West Asia region and noted that the dedicated special control room is operational to assist Indian nationals and their families, with the missions and posts across the region working round the clock and remaining in close touch with

the local governments.

He informed that in attacks yesterday in Dubai, three Indian nationals sustained minor injuries and that they are receiving medical treatment at local hospitals, and one has since been discharged.

"In attacks yesterday in Dubai, three Indian nationals sustained minor injuries. They are receiving medical treatment at local hospitals, and one has since been discharged. Our consulate is in close touch with the injured Indian nationals and their families and is rendering all assistance to them," Mahajan said.

"Our consulate is in close touch with the injured Indian nationals and their families and is rendering all assistance to them," he added.

He also informed that the mortal remains of the two Indian nationals- one who passed away on March 11 in an incident on MT Safe Sea Vishnu off the coast of Iraq, and another in Kuwait on March 29th have arrived earlier in India.

"We have been in regular touch with their families and express our deepest condolences to them at this difficult time", he added.

His remarks come as the conflict between US-Israel and Iran has now entered into its second month now with ripple effects across the region and an impact on energy supplies globally. — ANI

'THIS IS NOT OUR WAR'



War will affect our country, says UK Prime Minister

LONDON: UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer on Wednesday has warned that the ongoing Iran conflict will "affect the future of our country," while insisting that Britain is prepared to endure the economic fallout, saying, "no matter how fierce this storm, we are well-placed to weather it."

The British Prime Minister also reiterated that "this is not our war" and that the UK will not be drawn into it because "that is not in our national interest".

Addressing concerns over rising living costs, Starmer said, "The most effective way we can support the cost of living in Britain is to push for de-escalation in the Middle East, and a reopening of the Strait of Hormuz, which is such a vital route for energy."

He stressed ongoing diplomatic efforts, stating, "To that end, we're exploring each and every diplomatic avenue that is available to us."

Starmer announced that Foreign Secretary Yvette Cooper will convene international partners, saying, "And today I can announce that later this week, the foreign secretary will host a meeting that brings those nations together for the first time, where we will assess all viable diplomatic and political measures that

we can take to restore freedom of navigation, guarantee the safety of trapped ships and seafarers, and resume the movement of vital commodities."

He added that the UK has already coordinated widely, noting, "The foreign secretary and the chancellor have met their counterparts in the G7. The defence secretary has been in the Middle East speaking to our partners, and the UK has now brought together 35 nations around our statement of intent to push as one for maritime security across the Gulf."

Highlighting domestic measures, Starmer said, "Just look at what's happening today. Today, your energy bills will be cut because of the action that we took in the budget. And whatever happens in Iran, that price is now fixed until July."

Earlier, Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, in his address to the nation, also said that the months ahead might not be easy.

Albanese said that on Monday, the National Cabinet adopted the National Fuel Security Plan, which would help Australians in case supplies are seriously disrupted over the long term.

— ANI

OVER CRIMEA

29 killed in Russian military plane crash

MOSCOW: Twenty-nine people have perished after a Russian military aircraft crashed over the Crimean Peninsula, which lies on the Black Sea coast.

Officials from Russia's Ministry of Defense announced today that search and rescue teams have located the wreckage of the aircraft, confirming that six crew members and twenty-three passengers were

killed in the disaster.

According to preliminary reports, the crash is believed to have been caused by a technical malfunction, with no indication of external factors having played a role.

The Ministry of Defense had earlier reported losing contact with the AN-26 aircraft, though it refrained from disclosing further details regarding the flight. — ONA



SPORTS

15-TIMES MAJOR CHAMPION

Tiger Woods to ‘step away and seek treatment’ after crash

FLORIDA: Tiger Woods said on Tuesday that he is “stepping away for a period of time to seek treatment and focus on my health” following an arrest after a car crash. The 50-year-old was arrested and charged with driving under the influence after clipping a truck and rolling his car in Florida on Friday. He was also charged with property damage and refusal to submit to a lawful test. The 15-times major champion submitted a written plea of not guilty via his lawyers on Tuesday. That came after a police report earlier on Tuesday detailed his behaviour after the crash.

It said Woods had two hydrocodone pills in his pocket - an opioid used to treat severe pain - and that officers observed him acting “lethargic and slow” while “sweating profusely” with “extremely dilated” pupils. Speaking about the incident for the first time, Woods wrote on X: “I know and understand the seriousness of the situation I find myself in today. “I am stepping away for a period of time to seek treatment and focus on my health. This is necessary in order for me to prioritise my well-being and work toward lasting recovery.” Prior to the crash, Woods had not



ruled out playing in next month's Masters - though he has not competed at a major since missing the cut at The Open in July 2024.

“I’m committed to taking the time needed to return in a healthier, stronger and more focused place, both personally and professionally,” his statement added. “I appreciate your understanding and support and ask for privacy for my family, loved ones and myself at this time.” Regardless of whether Woods was to play at the Masters, he was expected to be in attendance on the Sunday for the unveiling of The Patch - a revamped public golf course he has worked on with the Augusta National club. He was also expected to attend Rory McIlroy’s champion’s dinner on the Tuesday night.

“Augusta National Golf Club and the Masters Tournament fully support Tiger Woods as he focuses on his wellbeing,” said Masters chairman Fred Ridley. “Although Tiger will not be joining us in person next week, his presence will be felt here in Augusta.” ‘A legend of our sport but a person above all else’ The PGA Tour also issued its first comment on Woods following the golfer’s statement. “Tiger Woods is a legend of our sport whose impact extends far beyond his achievements on the course,” it said. “But above all else, Tiger is a per-

son, and our focus is on his health and wellbeing. Tiger continues to have our full support as he takes this important step.” The golf body’s chief executive, Brian Rolapp, added: “Tiger Woods is one of the most influential figures the sports world has ever known. “Over the last year, I have come to deeply appreciate Tiger not only for his impact on the game, but for his friendship and the perspective he has shared with me as I joined the golf industry. “My thoughts are with him and his family as he takes this step, for which he has my full respect and support.” - Agencies

BILATERAL SERIES

Zimbabwe to host India for 3 T20Is in Harare this July

MUMBAI: Zimbabwe will host India for a three-match T20I in Harare in July, Zimbabwe Cricket (ZC) announced on Wednesday. This, India’s first tour to Zimbabwe since July 2024, when they played five T20Is, comes close on the heels of the announcement of Zimbabwe’s tour of India, for three ODIs in January 2027, which will be their first visit to India for a bilateral series since 2002. India and Zimbabwe met most recently in the Super Eight stage of the T20 World Cup, when India won by 72 runs in Chennai after putting up 256 for 4. All games at Harare Sports Club from 1pm local time. Givemore Makoni, the ZC managing director, said the series against India presented a significant opportunity for both the players and the fans in Zimbabwe. “Matches against India always generate enormous interest and this is a fantastic opportunity for our players to test themselves against the world champions on home soil,” he said in a statement.

“Following our encouraging performances at the ICC Men’s T20 World Cup, this series gives us a strong platform to build momentum and continue growing as a competitive force in international cricket.” Zimbabwe’s tour of India after more than two decades is also reason for excitement at ZC. “It is a landmark moment for Zimbabwe to be touring India again for a bilateral ODI series after more than two decades,” Makoni said. “India is one of the premier destinations in world cricket and this tour represents both an honour and a valuable opportunity for our players. “We are looking forward to competitive and high-quality cricket and we believe this engagement will further strengthen the relationship between the two cricketing nations while providing invaluable exposure for our team.” **Series fixtures:** July 23: 1st T20I, July 25: 2nd T20I, July 26: 3rd T20I. - Agencies



Super cool Connolly takes first step towards leaving a legacy

An IPL debut to remember at Mullanpur for the young Australian who blended flair with composure under pressure in PBKS’ win

MULLANPUR: On a night that swung from routine to tense, Cooper Connolly, the young Australian, stepped up with a debut innings of rare composure and authority, steering Punjab Kings (PBKS) to a three-wicket win over Gujarat Titans (GT). Cooper’s unbeaten knock was nothing short of spectacular. PBKS captain Shreyas Iyer described it as a masterclass in balance—a display of audacity and composure that immediately marked the young Australian as a player to watch. Chasing 163, Punjab Kings were given a foundation that oscillated between comfort and crisis, but Connolly’s unbeaten 72 off 44 balls from No. 3 ultimately proved decisive. What stood out was not just the result, but the method—a blend of calculated aggression and composure well beyond his experience. Connolly walked in as early as the second over after Priyansh

Arya’s dismissal, at a time when the pitch was still sluggish. Connolly, along with Prabhsimran Singh (37 off 24), were the two bright spots in Punjab’s batting. A light drizzle soon altered conditions, quickening the surface and forcing batters to adjust. Connolly did just that. After a cautious start—five off his first six balls—he began to open up, first with a mistimed loft off Mohammed Siraj and then a more assured boundary through midwicket that hinted at what was to come. The confidence grew quickly. He took on Kagiso Rabada with a clean strike over long-off and showcased his sharp hands against raw pace, dispatching a 143kph delivery from Ashok Sharma for a flat six. Raised on the quicker pitches of Perth, Connolly looked increasingly at ease against pace. The real test, however, lay in spin. That examination arrived in the form of Rashid Khan. Hav-

ing never faced him before, Connolly was initially beaten. But the adjustment was swift and emphatic. A short-of-length ball was punched for four, and when Rashid dropped short again, Connolly pounced—pulling him into the second tier for a 103-metre six. “It was unbelievable,” Iyer said. “One of the best bowlers in the IPL, and to hit him so clearly and neatly, it was simply phenomenal.” Connolly took 22 runs off 12 balls against Rashid, disrupting Gujarat’s control through the middle overs. At 110 for 2 after 12 overs, the chase seemed straightforward. Then came the twist. Prasidh Krishna triggered a collapse, removing Iyer, Shashank Singh and Marcus Stoinis in quick succession. From 110 for 2, Punjab slumped to 118 for 6, and the momentum flipped dramatically. What followed underlined Connolly’s temperament. With 42 needed off 30 balls, he steadied the innings before counterattacking—striking Rabada for a boundary and a six to ease the pressure. He continued to find gaps and, fittingly, finished the game himself, whipping Washington Sundar through the covers for four with just two runs required. Named Player of the Match, Connolly’s innings carried added significance given his recent struggles. After a bright start to

the Big Bash League season, his form had dipped, and he endured a lean run in international cricket. A back issue has also ruled him out of bowling duties early in the IPL, placing greater emphasis on his batting contributions. “I had a couple of weeks at home just to refresh and reset... and go into the IPL fresh,” Connolly said. That reset was evident in both his clarity and execution. He struck five sixes—more than Gujarat managed as a team—but insisted power is not his primary focus. “I am more of a tempo player... I like to feel the flow,” he explained, crediting head coach Ricky Ponting for subtle technical tweaks. It may be just one innings, but the impact has already resonated within the squad. Team-mate Yuzvendra Chahal believes Connolly “could be one of the finds of the season.” For a player who arrived with the ambition of “leaving a legacy at Punjab”, this was a compelling first step—and perhaps a sign of much more to come. **Brief scores:** Gujarat Titans 162/6 (Shubman Gill 39, Jos Buttler 38; Vijaykumar Vyshak 3-34, Yuzvendra Chahal 2-28) lost to Punjab Kings 165/7 in 19.1 overs (Cooper Connolly 72*, Prabhsimran Singh 37; Prasidh Krishna 3-29). (With inputs from ESPNcricinfo.com)

OMAN CRICKET AGM HELD ON TUESDAY

OC inducts three new board members amid strong growth phase

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman Cricket (OC) signalled a new phase in its administration with the unanimous election of Chaitanya Khimji, Damodar Katti and Varun Khimji as board members at its Annual General Meeting held at Oman Cricket headquarters in Al Amerat on Tuesday. The three replace long-serving outgoing members Kiran Asher, Dilip Mehta and Maqbool Moosa Al Lawati, as the governing body looks to build on a period of sustained growth for the sport in the Sultanate. OC Chairman Pankaj Khimji underlined the progress made over the past year, calling it “a truly remarkable year for cricket development in Oman.” “We have witnessed participation from over 3,000 players across more than 60 corporate teams, 40 junior teams and eight Omani



teams, reflecting the growing strength and reach of the sport in the country,” he said. Highlighting the men’s team’s consistency on the global stage, he added: “Being the only Associate nation to qualify for the ICC Men’s T20 World Cup four times in the last decade is a phenomenal achievement.” The OC chief said: “We are in the race for Qualifiers in the ICC

Cricket World Cup League 2 for the 2027 World Cup, which highlights the consistent progress and competitive spirit of the team.” He paid tribute to former head coach Duleep Mendis and said: “His leadership over the past decade has been instrumental in shaping the team’s success,” and expressed confidence in his continued role as Chief Development Officer.



Chaitanya Khimji



Varun Khimji



Damodar Katti

The chairman also pointed to the rise of the women’s team, which has climbed from 74th to 34th in the ICC Women’s T20I rankings after winning 10 of its last 12 matches. “This is a testament to their dedication and the growing momentum of women’s cricket in Oman,” he said. Khimji extended deep gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Haitham

bin Tarik and His Highness Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham bin Tarik, for their continued patronage, and thanked the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth for their unwavering support. On behalf of Oman Cricket, the chairman expressed thanks to the outgoing board members for their invaluable contributions, commitment, and vision in guiding the organisation forward.

Khimji welcomed the newly elected board members and said: “Together, we move ahead with renewed determination to take cricket in Oman to even greater heights.” **Oman Cricket Board:** Chairman: Pankaj Khimji, Vice chairman: Paul Sheridan, Secretary: Madhu Jesrani, Treasurer: Alkesh Joshi, Members: Syed Anwar Ahsan, Ali Moosa Yousuf, Chaitanya Khimji, Damodar Katti and Varun Khimji.

OIL JUMPS OVER 1%

Oil prices rose more than 1% yesterday, with Brent futures extending gains after a record monthly rise in March, as Middle East volatility kept markets jittery despite reports that the US-Israeli war on Iran may be nearing an end.

MARKET
BUSINESS & FINANCE



MSX INDEX ENDS HIGHER

The MSX index closed at 8,190.29 points, up by 0.27% from previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 0.26% at 647.83 points. Raysut Cement, up 10.94%, was the top gainer while, Salalah Mills, down 8.97%, was the top loser.

Oman, Belarus discuss ways to enhance investment cooperation



The meeting reflected the two-countries' keenness to enhance bilateral cooperation and open up vista for partnership in various fields, notably in the sectors of industry, agriculture, health and tourism

MUSCAT: Oman-Belarus Joint Committee for Cooperation and Investment, established in May 2025, held its first meeting in Muscat on Wednesday. The meeting discussed ways to enhance economic and investment cooperation between the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Belarus.

The Omani side was headed by Abdulsalam bin Mohammed Al Murshidi, Chairman of Oman Investment Authority (OIA), and Maxim Ryzhenkov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus.

The meeting reflected the two-countries' keenness to enhance bilateral cooperation and open up vista for partnership in various fields, notably in the sectors of industry, agriculture, health and tourism. It also explored means of developing commercial exchange, facilitating the flow of investments and supporting economic diversification.

Al Murshidi said in a statement that the first meeting embodies the approach of economic diplomacy espoused by the two countries' wise leaderships. He pointed out that the committee constitutes an institutional platform for devel-

oping partnerships and building long-term relations based on mutual interests.

He added that Oman lays emphasis on boosting international partnerships and attracting quality investments.

He noted that cooperation with the Republic of Belarus will open up prospects for achieving economic diversification.

For his part, Maxim Ryzhenkov said that the two countries possess promising potential for enhancing cooperation, given Belarus's industrial capabilities and Oman's attractive investment environment and advanced infrastructure.

He pointed out that bilateral relations will get further impetus from the facilitation of traffic and direct flights, the streamlining of visa procedures and the completion of diplomatic representation.

Oman-Belarus Joint Committee for Cooperation and Investment was established as a strategic step forward to enhance cooperation in the fields of economy, trade, education, culture and energy, with special focus on developing joint investment projects and exchanging expertise. -ONA



REPORT

Rupee breaches 95, bond yields cross 7% as India markets enter 'regime shift'

NEW DELHI: India's financial markets are undergoing a significant shift in trading dynamics amid escalating global war-related risks, with the rupee breaching key levels and bond yields hardening, according to a report by Union Bank of India (UBI).

The report noted that the last trading session of FY26 marked a "regime shift" across currency and rates markets, with the rupee breaching the Rs 95 per dollar mark for the first time and the 10-year government bond yield moving above the 7 per cent threshold.

On an annual basis, the rupee depreciated nearly 10 per cent in FY26, while the benchmark bond yield rose by 45 basis points despite a 100 basis point rate cut by the Monetary Policy Committee during April-December 2025, indicating tightening financial conditions.

UBI said the rupee is acting as a "shock absorber" amid war-driven external pressures, but added that the burden of adjustment is likely to be shared, with markets showing increasing tolerance for higher interest rates in the coming months.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has also stepped in with regulatory measures to stabilise the currency, including capping banks' net open position in the rupee at USD 100 million in on-shore forward markets. The move is aimed at curbing speculative and arbitrage trades that have been amplifying volatility.

However, despite these measures, pressure on the rupee persists due to elevated crude oil prices and global risk aversion linked to geopolitical tensions, the report said.

UBI indicated that policymakers may increasingly turn to unconventional and macro-prudential tools, drawing parallels with the 2013 "taper tantrum" period



when the RBI deployed a mix of liquidity tightening, rate measures and regulatory interventions to stabilise the currency.

Among the short-term measures suggested are a special dollar swap window for oil marketing companies, curbs on gold imports, and revival of FCNR deposit schemes to attract foreign currency inflows.

Over the medium term, the report emphasised the need to promote rupee-based trade settlement, strengthen foreign exchange swap lines with major economies, monitor rising FDI outflows, and encourage oil price hedging to reduce vulnerability to external shocks.

The report also highlighted that the RBI infused nearly Rs 15 lakh crore of liquidity during FY26 through measures such as CRR cuts, open market operations and forex swaps, underscoring the scale of policy response to stabilise markets.

Despite adequate foreign exchange reserves, UBI cautioned that conserving buffers and deploying targeted measures would be critical amid continued uncertainty in global markets. -ANI

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

Experts review main issues shaping current artificial intelligence applications

MUSCAT: The activities of the International Conference on Artificial Intelligence and its Applications commenced on Wednesday in the Wilayat of Nizwa, Al Dakhiliyah Governorate.

The two-day event is organised by the University of Nizwa, represented by the Information Systems Department at the College of Economics, Management and Information Systems, in partnership with the University of Technology and Applied Sciences in Ibri, the Higher School of Economics (HSE University) in the Russian Federation and Fudan University in the People's Republic of China.

The opening of the conference was held under the auspices of Eng. Omar Hamdan Al Ismaili, CEO of the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority. The event was attended by Dr. Ahmed Khalfan Al Rawahi, Chancellor of the University of Nizwa.

The event saw the participation of numerous experts, researchers, academics, and specialists in the fields of artificial intelligence and cybersecurity from 25 countries.

The conference's scientific programme encompasses 16 working sessions that discuss approximately 80 research papers, meticulously selected from a total of 361 submissions. These sessions address the latest research and emerging trends in the field of smart systems and artificial intelligence, alongside its role in shaping the future of technology.

Furthermore, the sessions discuss best research practices and provide constructive feedback that contributes to developing performance quality and achieving beneficial scientific exchange among the participating parties.

Dr. Salim Said Al Abri, Dean of the College of Economics, Management and Information Systems and Chairman of the Supervisory Committee of the conference, stated that organising this event aligns with the university's plans and programmes in the field of artificial intelligence and its applications. It aims to deepen the understanding of the areas and challenges associated with the



development and utilisation of artificial intelligence across various sectors, as well as to explore modern trends in this domain.

He added that the conference features an elite group of keynote speakers from the Sultanate of Oman, the United States of America, Russia, and Australia.

These speakers, who are pioneers in their respective fields with prominent contributions, will share pioneering visions regarding the latest developments and

trends in artificial intelligence.

He pointed out that the programme includes discussion panels where experts review the main issues shaping current artificial intelligence applications and its future directions, alongside workshops designed to enhance the skills of the participants, and specialized sessions focusing on the conference's core themes.

The conference covers a wide spectrum of research and applied issues in the fields of artificial in-

telligence. Most notably, these include big data analysis, cybersecurity, and advanced applications such as converting natural language into database queries utilizing large language models.

The event also explores the analysis of legal texts according to ethical frameworks, the development of models for content evaluation and sentiment analysis, in addition to topics related to the healthcare sector, energy, smart cities, quantum computing, smart systems and robotics, and emerging technologies.

The conference is expected to conclude with a set of recommendations, most prominently emphasizing the enhancement of knowledge and expertise exchange among researchers and specialists. The recommendations are also anticipated to call for the support and development of innovative technological solutions that contribute to addressing contemporary challenges and achieving sustainable development.

Furthermore, the outcomes aim to build effective partnerships between academic and industrial institutions to foster cooperation and the exchange of expertise, while working on developing joint research in collaboration with relevant entities. -ONA

MARKET

MSX index ends higher

Raysut Cement, up 10.94%, was the top gainer while, Salalah Mills, down 8.97%, was the top loser



MUSCAT: The MSX index closed at 8,190.29 points, up by 0.27% from previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 0.26% at 647.83 points. Raysut Cement, up 10.94%, was the top gainer while, Salalah Mills, down 8.97%, was the top loser. Shares of OQBI were the most active in terms of number of shares traded as well as in terms of turnover.

A total number of 6476 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating turnover of RO 59.46 million, with more than 18948 million shares changing hands. Out of 77 traded securities, 40 advanced, 19 declined, and 18 remained unchanged. At the session close, foreign investors were net buyers for RO 1370K while domestic investors were net sellers for RO 922K, followed by GCC & Arab investors for RO 449K worth of shares.

Financial Index closed at 12,800.01 points, down -0.39%. Prices of Muscat Finance, DIDIC, Oman & Emirates Investment, Al Anwar Investment, National Finance were up by 8.57%, 8.28%,

4.35%, 3.95%, 3.59% respectively. Prices of Global Financial Investments, Al Omaniya Financial Services, Al Sharqia Investment, Al Madina Investments, Sohar International Bank were down by 6.67%, 6.32%, 3.54%, 2.38%, 1.31% respectively.

Industrial Index closed at 9,891.30 points, up 0.15%. Prices of Raysut Cement, Galfar Engineering, Gulf International Chemicals, Gulf Mushroom Products, Al Maha Ceramics were up by 10.94%, 7.33%, 2.60%, 1.83%, 1.51% respectively. Prices of Salalah Mills, Oman Cables Industry, Voltamp Energy were down by 8.97%, 4.49%, 0.53% respectively.

Services Index was up by 2.77% before closing at 3,258.59 points. Prices of Al Batinah Power, Phoenix Power, Al Suwadi Power, Sembcorp Salalah, Majan College were up by 10.00%, 10.00%, 9.57%, 6.14%, 5.74% respectively. Prices of OQ Exploration & Production, Renaissance Services were down by 0.83%, 0.76% respectively.— **United Securities**

OMAN STOCKS

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE

INDICES

Index	High	Low	Value	Prev. Value	Diff.	Diff%
MSX 30 INDEX	8,199.58	8,108.43	8,190.29	8,168.40	21.90	0.27
FINANCIAL INDEX	12,846.55	12,709.46	12,800.01	12,849.85	-49.85	-0.39
Industry Index	9,935.83	9,778.06	9,891.30	9,876.83	14.47	0.15
Services Index	3,260.30	3,165.35	3,258.59	3,170.69	87.90	2.77
MSX Shariah Index	649.94	645.44	647.83	646.16	1.66	0.26
MSX TR INDEX	12,660.60	12,519.86	12,646.26	12,551.80	94.46	0.75
FINANCIAL TR IDX	15,762.52	15,594.31	15,705.42	15,580.74	124.67	0.80
INDUSTRIAL TR IDX	12,725.28	12,523.22	12,668.25	12,638.00	30.25	0.24
SERVICES TR IDX	4,356.61	4,229.73	4,354.33	4,236.86	117.46	2.77
FIXED INCOME INDEX	1,209.68	1,209.68	1,209.68	1,209.68	0.00	0.00

Trading Summary

Volume	Turnover	Trades	Market Cap	Up	Down	Equal	Sec. Traded
189,483,155	59,459,692	6,476	37,968,482,106	40	19	18	77

SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR WEDNESDAY, APRIL 1

ISIN	SECURITY NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR.	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF (RD)	DIFF %	LAST PR.	LAST BID	LAST OFFER	PAR VALUE	MARKET CAP
REGULAR MARKET																
OM0000004925	ALBATINAH POWER	1,261,119	258,408	122	0.195	0.209	0.195	0.209	0.190	0.019	10.000	0.209	0.209	0.209	0.100	141,051,473
OM0000004933	AL SUWADI POWER	1,490,103	303,001	121	0.192	0.206	0.192	0.206	0.188	0.018	9.574	0.206	0.206	0.206	0.100	147,167,706
OM0000003968	OOREDOO	1,830,083	671,154	46	0.367	0.375	0.363	0.375	0.361	0.014	3.878	0.375	0.370	0.375	0.100	244,104,086
OM0000009072	OQ GAS NETWORKS	26,160,825	7,114,533	948	0.268	0.275	0.268	0.272	0.268	0.004	1.493	0.272	0.268	0.272	0.100	1,177,929,706
OM0000001087	OMAN UNITED INSURANCE	100,613	36,221	5	0.380	0.384	0.380	0.384	0.359	0.005	1.393	0.384	0.380	0.382	0.100	38,220,000
OM0000002804	ASAFFA FOODS	5,499	4,617	4	0.840	0.840	0.830	0.840	0.830	0.010	1.205	0.840	0.804	0.840	0.100	100,800,000
OM0000002374	UNITED FINANCE	469,122	40,719	49	0.086	0.088	0.086	0.087	0.086	0.001	1.163	0.087	0.087	0.088	0.100	30,983,075
OM0000002226	ALJAZEERA SERVICES	19,000	4,328	8	0.226	0.230	0.226	0.229	0.227	0.002	0.981	0.230	0.230	0.230	0.100	9,811,045
OM0000002168	AL ANWAR CERAMIC	46,412	8,369	12	0.183	0.193	0.179	0.181	0.180	0.001	0.556	0.181	0.180	0.181	0.100	29,830,000
OM0000001483	NATIONAL BANK OMAN	105,888	40,979	55	0.387	0.387	0.387	0.387	0.386	0.001	0.259	0.387	0.387	0.389	0.100	629,241,239
OM0000003026	OMAN TELECOM	3,569,838	5,541,117	279	1.552	1.560	1.550	1.552	1.551	0.001	0.064	1.552	1.706	1.552	0.100	1,164,000,000
OM0000002176	JAZEERA STEEL PRODUCTS	1,000	830	1	0.830	0.830	0.830	0.830	0.830	0.000	0.000	0.830	0.835	0.830	0.100	103,665,307
OM0000008934	ABRAJ ENERGY SERVICES	1,192,394	541,377	289	0.455	0.459	0.451	0.455	0.455	0.000	0.000	0.455	0.455	0.465	0.100	350,441,000
OM0000003661	VOLTAMP ENERGY	11,280	21,068	23	1.710	1.900	1.710	1.890	1.900	-0.010	-0.526	1.890	1.890	1.890	0.100	189,000,000
OM0000004420	BANK NIZWA	930,379	143,038	49	0.154	0.155	0.153	0.154	0.155	-0.001	-0.645	0.155	0.155	0.155	0.100	344,490,767
OM0000003224	RENAISSANCE SERVICES	48,159	19,001	13	0.396	0.396	0.394	0.394	0.397	-0.003	-0.756	0.394	0.394	0.398	0.100	93,145,540
OM0000004768	MADINA TAKAFUL	145,091	18,054	32	0.125	0.125	0.124	0.125	0.126	-0.001	-0.794	0.125	0.125	0.126	0.100	21,112,800
OM0000000796	BANK MUSCAT	14,664,474	7,069,340	287	0.485	0.485	0.480	0.482	0.486	-0.004	-0.823	0.482	0.482	0.482	0.100	363,083,384
OM0000001533	OMINVEST	317,211	123,831	83	0.365	0.395	0.365	0.395	0.400	-0.005	-1.250	0.395	0.360	0.395	0.100	443,527,296
OM0000003398	SOHAR INTERNATIONAL BANK	31,591,895	7,120,020	557	0.225	0.227	0.225	0.226	0.229	-0.003	-1.310	0.226	0.230	0.226	0.100	1,495,497,657
OM0000002440	AL SHARQIA INVESTMENT HO.	2,133,950	229,207	132	0.109	0.110	0.106	0.109	0.113	-0.004	-3.540	0.109	0.109	0.117	0.100	9,810,000
OM0000001707	OMAN CABLES INDUSTRY	9,200	26,194	4	2.850	2.850	2.722	2.722	2.850	-0.128	-4.491	2.722	2.722	2.850	0.100	244,163,400
OM0000003125	GLOBAL FINANCIAL INVESTMENT HO.	214,973	66,233	5	0.305	0.315	0.305	0.308	0.330	-0.022	-6.667	0.308	0.308	0.324	0.100	61,600,000
Total	23	86,318,509,29	401,639	3,124												

Parallel Market

OM0000005963	PHOENIX POWER	3,291,385	674,022	147	0.193	0.209	0.193	0.209	0.190	0.019	10.000	0.209	0.208	0.209	0.100	305,683,705
OM0000001590	MUSCAT FINANCE	442,373	32,686	42	0.072	0.076	0.072	0.076	0.070	0.006	8.571	0.076	0.074	0.077	0.100	23,343,121
OM0000001599	DHOFAH INTL DEV'NT & INVESTMENT	5,892,281	1,966,820	245	0.317	0.340	0.317	0.340	0.326	0.028	8.280	0.340	0.341	0.340	0.100	168,658,968
OM0000004735	SEMBCORP SALALAH	1,232,399	289,620	76	0.215	0.243	0.215	0.242	0.228	0.014	6.140	0.242	0.230	0.250	0.100	231,006,412
OM0000001897	MAJAN COLLEGE	15,300	1,943	7	0.123	0.129	0.123	0.129	0.122	0.007	5.738	0.129	0.126	0.129	0.100	12,771,000
OM0000007084	MUSCAT CITY DESALINATION	15,500	15,301	31	0.093	0.097	0.093	0.097	0.092	0.005	5.435	0.097	0.097	0.097	0.100	15,088,389
OM0000001160	NATIONAL GAS	1,060,917	112,533	101	0.103	0.108	0.103	0.107	0.102	0.005	4.902	0.106	0.106	0.112	0.100	9,995,000
OM0000007407	DHOFAH GENERATING	2,636,830	252,361	153	0.091	0.098	0.091	0.095	0.091	0.004	4.396	0.095	0.094	0.095	0.100	21,112,800
OM0000001681	OMAN EMIRATES HO.	2,250,528	289,864	126	0.116	0.122	0.116	0.120	0.115	0.005	4.348	0.120	0.120	0.121	0.100	14,626,000
OM0000001772	ALANWAR INVESTMENT	1,427,437	229,039	93	0.152	0.165	0.152	0.158	0.152	0.006	3.947	0.158	0.158	0.156	0.100	47,171,363
OM0000002648	NATIONAL FINANCE	10,550	2,415	3	0.211	0.231	0.211	0.231	0.223	0.008	3.587	0.231	0.224	0.234	0.100	150,310,636
OM0000008710	BARKA DESALINATION	219,068	38,249	26	0.174	0.180	0.173	0.180	0.174	0.006	3.448	0.180	0.173	0.185	0.100	13,593,960
OM0000003141	BARKA WATER AND POWER	18,428	3,154	7	0.169	0.172	0.169	0.172	0.167	0.005	2.994	0.172	0.170	0.172	0.100	27,520,000
OM0000004669	SHARQIAH DESALINATION	1,321	231	2	0.175	0.175	0.175	0.175	0.170	0.005	2.941	0.175	0.175	0.180	0.100	17,115,378
OM0000004776	TAKAFUL OMAN	289,383	20,325	21	0.070	0.072	0.070	0.072	0.070	0.002	2.857	0.072	0.071	0.072	0.100	18,000,000
OM0000002038	GULF INTERNATIONAL CHEMICALS	52,539	4,152	11	0.079	0.080	0.079	0.079	0.077	0.002	2.597	0.079	0.077	0.084	0.100	1,650,000
OM0000009908	QO BASE INDUSTRIES (SEZ)	58,970,099	17,330,823	856	0.290	0.296	0.290	0.296	0.290	0.006	2.069	0.296	0.296	0.296	0.100	1,024,009,292
OM0000002267	GULF MUSHROOM PRODUCTS	80,219	31,427	27	0.380	0.394	0.380	0.389	0.382	0.007	1.832	0.389	0.350	0.394	0.100	19,583,185
OM0000002200	AHLI BANK	100,000	19,400	5	0.194	0.194	0.194	0.194	0.191	0.003	1.571	0.194	0.175	0.210	0.100	525,119,263
OM0000005005	ALMAHA CERAMICS	8,200	2,181	4	0.269	0.269	0.264	0.269	0.265	0.004	1.509	0.269	0.270	0.269	0.100	14,795,000
OM0000002549	BANK DHOFAH	398,506	78,041	120	0.195	0.198	0.195	0.198	0.196	0.002	1.020	0.198	0.196	0.198	0.100	601,880,109
OM0000001749	OMAN CEMENT	11,863	6,571	11	0.335	0.339	0.335	0.339	0.335	0.004	0.748	0.339	0.335	0.339	0.100	178,340,391
OM0000001178	MUSCAT GASES	69,000	10,156	11	0.150	0.150	0.147	0.147	0.146	0.001	0.685	0.147	0.147	0.147	0.100	441,000
OM0000001384	FINANCIAL SERVICES	923	175	1	0.190	0.190	0.190	0.190	0.189	0.001	0.529	0.190	0.172	0.207	0.100	3,800,000
OM0000001083	OMAN GATEWAY FUND	14,141	15,480	6	1.119	1.119	1.100	1.110	1.105	0.005	0.452	1.110	1.105	1.110	0.000	29,781,855
OM0000001020	OMAN CHROMITE	140	471	1	3.364	3.364	3.364	3.364	3.364	0.000	0.000	3.364	3.220	3.364	1.000	12,211,320
OM0000001152	OMAN NATL ENGG & INVESTMENT	38,300	5,706	8	0.159	0.159	0.148	0.150	0.150	0.000	0.000	0.150	0.150	0.150	0.100	22,500,000
OM0000001426	OMAN REFRACTION	12,581	16,775	2	1.335	1.335	1.300	1.300	1.300	0.000	0.000	1.300	1.300	1.350	0.100	65,000,000
OM0000001426	MUSCAT GASES	33,075	19,184	1	0.580	0.580	0.580	0.580	0.580	0.000	0.580	0.580	0.580	0.580	0.100	7,584,000
OM0000002275	SHELL OMAN MARKETING	500	775	7	0.750	0.750	0.750	0.750	0.750	0.000	0.000	0.750	0.726	0.750	0.100	7,250,000
OM0000002572	OMAN OIL MARKETING	900	954	2	1.060	1.060	1.060	1.060	1.060	0.000	0.000	1.060	1.060	1.095	0.100	6,945,500
OM0000002580	OMAN EDUC & TRAINING INVESTMENTS	100	165	1	1.650	1.650	1.650	1.650	1.650	0.000	0.000	1.650	1.520	1.650	0.100	115,500,000
OM0000003281	TAGEERAH FINANCE	1,000	124	1	0.124	0.124	0.124	0.124	0.124	0.000	0.000	0.124	0.121	0.126	0.100	33,177,657
OM0000008447	OMAN REIT FUND	12,383	12,050	21	0.130	0.134	0.103	0.104	0.104	0.000	0.000	0.104	0.103	0.104	0.100	67,643,598
OM0000008868	THE PEARL REEF	25,518	4,291	2	0.190	0.190	0.170	0.180	0.190	0.000	0.000	0.190	0.185	0.190	0.100	10,494,956
OM0000009073	EXPLORE OIL AND PRODUCTION	12,518,973	5,800,473	528	0.485	0.485	0.479	0.485	0.485	0.000	0.485	0.485	0.479	0.479	0.100	1,000,000,000
OM0000009569	JABAL REIF	3,214,263	327,899	21	0.103	0.103	0.102	0.103	0.101	0.001	0.971	0.102	0.100	0.102	0.100	17,749,000
OM0000001020	ASAF SHIPPING	620,048	1,233,534	432	0.302	0.305	0.297	0.298	0.301	0.003	0.997	0.298	0.298	0.298	0.100	1,552,205,000
OM0000001962	AL MADINA INVESTMENT HOLDING	138,592	5,682	17	0.041	0.041	0.041	0.041	0.042	0.001	2.381	0.041	0.039	0.041	0.100	3,485,000
OM0000002077	AL OMANIYA FINANCIAL SERVICES	40,000	7,120	3	0.178	0.178	0.178	0.178	0.170	0.012	4.316	0.178	0.178	0.180	0.100	56,144,222,000
OM0000004248	SMN POWER HOLDING	438,683	100,643	64	0.220	0.238	0.228	0.231	0.263	0.022	4.696	0.231	0.231	0.235	0.100	46,115,824
OM0000001889	SALALAH MILLS	1	999	999	0.999	0.999	0.999	0.999	0.999	0.000	0.999	0.999	0.999	0.999	0.100	44,348,778
Total		40,780	6,649,839,633	3,244												



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

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

FINANCE

Expat, M.com Icw (Inter) 25 yrs experience in finance, accounts, budget, tax , payroll, banking and MIS reports looking for senior position in finance and accounts. Available to join on short notice.

What's app: 0096895392251
Gmail: regi.lukose@gmail.com

FINANCE

Dedicated Indian woman having 15+ years of experience in Finance and accounting, Tally ERP, SAP, MS Excel & Office proficiency seeking employment in Muscat. Hardworking and reliable. Ready to join immediately.

Contact: +968 95494566

OFFICER

Banking - Credit & Risk

Indian lady-BTech Holder, Currently working at Nationalized Bank in India as Credit & Risk Officer Since 2011 looking suitable role in Oman

Mobile : 92652137 - Mail: sibylbol@gmail.com

GENERAL MANAGER

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

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

SALES & MARKETING

Seeking a suitable position in **SALES, MARKETING** having 16 yrs of experience in Oman & 25 yrs of total experience in the field of Infrastructure, Industrial products: BE Mechanical, DIM, Valid Omani D/L

Contact: 94976056

ADMINISTRATION

ADMINISTRATOR / BUSINESS COORDINATOR

Graduate / P.G with 10+ yrs experience. In administration, operations, business coordination, documentation & office management.

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3) **Structural Engineer**
Master degree in Structural Engineering

4) **Planning Engineer**
Bachelor degree in Civil Engineering

5) **Quantity Surveyor**
Degree /Diploma in Civil or Quantity survey

6) **Material Engineer**
Bachelor degree in Civil Engineering

7) **Land surveyor**
Diploma in Civil Engineering/Surveying

8) **Site Inspector**
Diploma in Civil Engineering

9) **Material Inspector**
Diploma in Civil Engineering

Please forward the CV to recruitmentamec9@gmail.com

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JOB VACANCY

MECHANICAL TECHNICIAN

Omani MEP Co. need HVAC Chiller Technicians 4 Nos. WhatsApp : 0096899760596

ACCOUNTS/FINANCE

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

ACCOUNTS/FINANCE

Looking for an **accounts** job with hands-on knowledge of tally and excel. dedicated and detail-oriented. Contact: +96896246456

ADMINISTRATION

Document controller 8 yrs experience urgently seeking job opportunity in a reputed company, currently in Muscat on visit visa. Contact: 95226332, Email: mdhasnuddin1990@gmail.com

WAREHOUSE/LOGISTICS

Experienced Store/ Warehouse In-Charge seeking suitable position with 14 yrs of experience in warehouse and store management within the furniture industry, along with hands-on involvement in site installation work in Oman having valid D/L. Contact: 79994705

PURCHASE/ PROCUREMENT

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

JOB WANTED

ACCOUNTS/FINANCE

Indian male MBA Finance, with +9 yrs of Accounting & Finance experience seeks for as Finance Treasurer Position. NOC available & DL. Contact: 72420067

MBA Finance with 13 years of GCC experience as a senior accountant, with expertise up to finalization. Mob 98869499

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

Indian male, 4 yrs Oman experience in oil & gas (sales & logistics). valid Oman D/L. Contact: 78992297

MANAGER

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

Procurement engineer 19 yrs experience construction and trading. Whatsapp: +96895839964

Experienced accounts professional with B.Com, MBA seeks Immediate Placement. Contact: 78581435

Indian male, M.com (finance) 10 yrs accounting experience in Oman. Noc & D/L available Contact: 99859141

Seeking a job opportunity with solid background of finance and accounts for more than 20 yrs of experience in Oman. Contact: 92824146 / 94953826

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

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

SALES/ MARKETING

Indian, MBA, 20yrs of experience in Sales (FMCG / retail) with D/L seeks suitable placement. Contact : 95548480

Finance Manager, Indian, 26 yrs of experience, looking job change. Contact: 98006226

Indian male accountant, 10 yrs experience in Muscat. valid Oman D/L .locally available. Contact: 79774800

ADMINISTRATION

Indian male, 15 yrs experience in Oman seeks job for admin, secretary or proj-coordinator. Holding Oman D/L M: 94019955

IT

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

MEP construction manager, Gulf experience 28 years, own visa, Oman DL. Mob. No: 79809590

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

Indian (M) - 30 Accountant with overall exp 4yrs valid DL. Contact: 78624277

Indian male 21 years of exp. in Oman as Accounts Manager/ Sr. Accountant with D/L seeking immediate opportunity cont. 91391103

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

ENGINEER

Female software engineer full stack developer also expert in digital marketing with 7 yrs experience. Contact: 74102443

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

Indian Male, BBA, 20 yrs experience in Sales & Marketing in Oman. Holding valid Oman driving license seeks suitable placement. Contact No : 93011232 Email: jitinjoshua920@gmail.com

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

Indian male, Bcom, MBA finance, 14 yrs of Oman and Indian experience, seeking suitable jobs in accounts. Have valid Oman D/L. Mob: 97436925.

Office Manager to MD, CEO or COO's office/ Executive Secretary Available, experience 20 yrs Oman based, availability 1 month notice period, valid until July. Contact 92080631

Civil quantity surveyor - Civil male. 10 yrs of exp in construction and Telecom. 93801057

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

Sales & Service Engineer (Indian), 3+ yrs Technical sales & operations Oil & Gas. Valid D/L. Mob: 98211984

Indian male with a BCA degree and one year of experience in sales and marketing. GSM: 95387638

Sales & logistics coordinator (Oil & Gas, 4 yrs Oman exp.); total 11 yrs GCC exp. Indian male, holding Oman D/L. Contact: 78992297

Court orders Trump to halt \$400mn White House ballroom construction

Trump's ballroom was planned for the White House's East Wing, which was demolished last year to make way for the new structure. The US president has said the ballroom is a necessary addition to the White House complex



WASHINGTON DC: A US judge ruled that President Donald Trump cannot build a ballroom on White House grounds without congressional approval. Trump's \$400 million (€346 million) ballroom was planned for the White House's East Wing, which was demolished last year to make way for the new structure. The US president has said the ballroom is a necessary addition to the White House complex. The nonprofit organisation National Trust for Historic Preservation brought the lawsuit to federal court, alleging that Trump had exceeded his authority with the project.

US District Judge Richard Leon, an appointee of Republican former President George W. Bush, granted a request for a preliminary injunction, which would put the construction of the ballroom project on hold until the legal matter can be resolved. "The President of the United States is the steward of the White House for future generations of First Families. He is not, however, the owner!" Leon wrote in the court order. "Where does this leave us? Unfortunately for Defendants, unless and until Congress blesses this project through statutory authorization, construction has to stop!" he added.

'Left wing lunatics' The Trump administration was given 14 days to appeal the decision, which it filed right away, shortly after the ruling came out. "This is a win for the American people on a project that forever impacts one of the most beloved and iconic places in our nation," the preservation group's CEO Carol Quillen said in a statement. Trump has hit back at the National Trust for its legal challenge against his ballroom. In a post on his social media site Truth Social, he referred to the National Trust as a group of left-wing "lunatics" and defended his ballroom as "under budget, ahead

of schedule, being built at no cost to the Taxpayer, and will be the finest Building of its kind anywhere in the World." The group has also brought up a legal challenge against the Trump administration over its move to overhaul the Kennedy Center performing arts venue in Washington, a place that Trump unilaterally renamed as the Trump Kennedy Centre. **Trump move to bar funding for NPR, PBS stopped by court** A federal judge Tuesday blocked the Trump administration from halting funding to National

Public Radio (NPR) and the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS). US District Judge Randolph Moss ruled that President Donald Trump's executive order, signed last May, was unlawful. Trump signed an executive order last May instructing the Corporation for Public Broadcasting to cease funding to NPR and PBS, either directly or indirectly. Trump and his supporters argue that their news reporting promotes liberal bias and shouldn't be supported by taxpayers. The president also signed a package in July that canceled about \$1.1 billion in funds earmarked for public broadcasting. It's therefore still unclear how Moss' ruling will affect the media outlets' operations as the ruling is likely to be appealed and the damage to the public-broadcasting system runs deep. **Trump order violates First Amendment, judge rules** Moss said the 2025 executive order ran counter to the First

Amendment, which he said "does not tolerate viewpoint discrimination and retaliation of this type." "It is difficult to conceive of clearer evidence that a government action is targeted at viewpoints that the President does not like and seeks to squelch," wrote Moss, who was nominated to the bench by President Barack Obama. White House spokesperson Abigail Jackson said Moss' decision is "a ridiculous ruling by an activist judge attempting to undermine the law." In a separate ruling on Tuesday, an appeals court panel suspended a federal judge's order for the Trump administration to bring hundreds of Voice of America employees back to work from paid leave. US District Court Judge Royce C. Lamberth had previously ruled that the administration's actions to place more VOA employees on leave was unlawful. But the appeals court's decision delays the implementation of that ruling.

- DW

MEDIA REPORT



Brazil's Lula criticises UN Security Council

SAO PAULO: Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva has criticised the functioning of the United Nations Security Council, stating that its institutional weaknesses have contributed to rising global instability and the escalation of armed conflicts across regions, according to an opinion article published in *Folha de S.Paulo* and cited by *Brasil 247*. The Brazilian leader cautioned that repeated violations of international law are encouraging further breaches, asserting that every instance of non-compliance sets a precedent for future violations. He pointed to ongoing crises in Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Libya, Syria, Ukraine, Gaza and Venezuela as indicators of a deteriorating global order. Lula argued that the distinction between lawful and unlawful actions in international affairs has become increasingly unclear, blaming what he described as the passive or complicit stance of the Security Council. He also criticised the conduct of its permanent members, suggesting that their approach has undermined the credibility of the multilateral system. According to *Brasil 247*, the president said the veto power has been misused, at times serving as protection and at other times as a tool of political leverage, without alignment to the UN Charter. This, he noted, enables key decisions to be taken without accountability to global stability, even as millions suffer the consequences of prolonged conflicts. Lula further observed that, unlike in the past when efforts were made to legitimise international interventions through the UN framework, current global dy-

He pointed to ongoing crises in Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Libya, Syria, Ukraine, Gaza and Venezuela as indicators of a deteriorating global order

namics reflect a more overt use of power with little regard for institutional norms. He warned that this trend is gradually weakening multilateral institutions. Highlighting the broader implications, Lula linked the rise in conflicts now at levels unseen since World War II to systemic failures in global governance. He stressed that without renewed commitment to multilateralism, the world risks descending into widespread insecurity. The Brazilian president also expressed concern over the role of emerging technologies in warfare, particularly the use of artificial intelligence in target selection without established ethical or legal standards. He criticised increasing global military expenditure, noting that vast financial resources are being diverted from essential social needs. Lula concluded by calling for structural reforms within the UN, including a reassessment of the privileges held by permanent Security Council members. - ANI

BILATERAL TIES

Chinese FM conveys praise, support for Pakistan's efforts for West Asia peace

BEIJING: Minister of Foreign Affairs of China Wang Yi conveyed his country's appreciation and support to Pakistan's active diplomatic role and efforts to end the conflict and promote peace in West Asia. The bilateral ties and regional developments were discussed in a meeting between Wang Yi and Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar, who paid an official visit to Beijing on March 31-April 1, 2026, at the invitation of his Chinese counterpart. The meeting was marked by traditional warmth and cordiality. Both dignitaries exchanged notes on the regional developments in West Asia and bilateral relations, according to a Foreign Office press release. Deputy Prime Minister Dar briefed Foreign Minister Wang Yi in detail on the efforts Pakistan continued to make towards the cessation of conflict and the resumption of dialogue, including the recent meeting in Islamabad among foreign ministers of Paki-



stan, Saudi Arabia, Türkiye and Egypt. Both sides reviewed the regional security environment and expressed deep concern over its serious socio-economic repercussions on developing countries. In this context, both sides launched a five-point initiative for restoring peace and stability in the Gulf and the Middle East. Both ministers reviewed with

satisfaction the growing momentum in bilateral relations, while underscoring the pursuit of high-quality development and strategic cooperation under CPEC 2.0, and enhancing high-level exchanges and communication during the year marking the commemoration of 75th anniversary of bilateral relations. Deputy Prime Minister Dar ex-

pressed his sincere gratitude to Foreign Minister Wang Yi for the warm welcome and exceptional hospitality extended to him and his delegation. They also exchanged views on Afghanistan and the importance of peace, stability, and the critical importance of countering terrorism effectively, besides reaffirming to remain in regular contact. - AFP

NO IMPACT ON THE ENVIRONMENT

QatarEnergy confirms missile attack on oil tanker, crew members on board safe



DOHA: QatarEnergy has confirmed that the *Aqua 1*, a fuel oil tanker on charter to QatarEnergy, has been the subject of a missile attack in the northern territorial waters of the State of Qatar in the early morning hours of Wednesday. QatarEnergy says none of the crew members on board were injured, and there is no impact on the environment as a result of this incident. Meanwhile, the UK Maritime Organisation (UKMTO) reported that it had received a report of an incident 17NM north of Ras Laffan, Qatar. The Company Security Officer reported the tanker has been hit by unknown projectile on the port side causing damage to the hull above water line. UKMTO said that the crew was reported as safe and there was no environmental impact. UKMTO further said that could confirm the vessel was struck by two projectiles. One caused a fire which was later extinguished. The

other remained unexploded within the vessels engine room. UKMTO said it was unable to confirm the source of the projectiles and said that it was continuing to investigate. Earlier, Missile attacks on Qatar's Ras Laffan Industrial City significantly disrupted global energy supplies, reducing the country's liquefied natural gas (LNG) export capacity by 17 per cent and raising concerns for import-dependent nations. In an official statement, QatarEnergy said the strikes, which occurred on March 18 and early

March 19, 2026, caused extensive damage to key production facilities and are expected to result in an estimated loss of USD 20 billion in annual revenue. The company added that repairs could take up to five years, forcing it to declare long-term force majeure on some LNG contracts. As per official statement by Qatar, the attacks damaged two liquefied natural gas (LNG) producing Trains 4 and 6 totaling 12.8 million tons per annum (MTPA) of production, representing approximately 17 per cent of Qatar's ex-

ports. Train 4 is a joint venture between QatarEnergy (66 per cent) and ExxonMobil (34 per cent), and Train 6 is a joint venture between QatarEnergy (70 per cent) and ExxonMobil (30 per cent). The attacks also targeted the Pearl GTL (Gas-to-Liquids) facility, a production sharing agreement operated by Shell, that converts natural gas into high-quality cleaner burning drop-in fuels and produces base oils used to make premium engine oils and lubricants, and paraffins and waxes.

- ANI



The pleasure of books in the digital age



The digitisation of global literature has brought vast libraries to our fingertips. But the quiet power of a physical book offers a rare escape from constant digital noise

Germany’s federal commissioner for culture and media, Wolfram Weimer, was heavily criticised recently when he rejected the expansion of the German National Library in favor of digital archiving. Although the former journalist has since indicated that the expansion might proceed, his initial decision has sparked debate about the role of books in a digital world.

Today, we are bombarded with text and information. Podcasts, social media posts, comments, emails, the latest online news — everything is immediately available, any time and anywhere. Yet something important is lost amid the digital clutter: The act of deeply engaging with a thought.

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media, a physical book demands attention. It has weight, is larger than a smartphone, does not have to be powered, and its pages cannot be dismissively swiped away.

‘A pleasure for the senses’

Author and cultural scholar Frank Berzbach describes the special relationship between people and books, which he sees as a mindful alternative to digital media.

“They are a delight to hold, a treat for the senses... we respond to them with an aesthetic sensation,” he writes of books in his essay, “The Art of Reading.”

What exactly is this sensation and what fascinates us about books? It’s not just the story to be found within their pages, but the whole package.

It’s comparable to a vinyl re-

cord: carefully removing it from its sleeve, placing it on the turntable, gently lowering the needle and hearing the soft crackle before the first notes sound.

Holding a real book in your hands is also an exclusive pleasure because it offers a moment to pause, to enjoy that rare commodity: time.

“In an age of calculated TV plotlines and endless gaming, reading a 19th-century classic novel is revolutionary,” writes Berzbach in his essay.

The idea of savouring a novel like Emily Bronte’s “Wuthering Heights” can be incongruous on a digital device. The beauty of the language, the vocabulary and sentence structure requires a conscious, thoughtful approach to reading.

The same applies to nonfiction books that are carefully and thoroughly researched. When con-

sumed as a hardcover book there is no algorithm to intervene, no feed to distract, no push notification to interrupt.

Libraries as spiritual places

The backlash against Weimer’s initial preference for a digital as opposed to a physical library indicates a yearning to maintain these meditative public spaces. When you enter one of these temples of books, a special silence surrounds you. You hear only soft murmurs, whispers, the rustling of pages. You are immersed in a world where time seems to stand still.

And together with others leafing through old and new books or magazines, you form a small, close-knit community with those who believe they can find more answers here than on the internet.

In this sense, libraries can be seen as spiritual spaces.

You can take this experience home to your own bookshelf, the place that has helped develop our own unique ideas. From well-worn paperbacks to rare antiquarian finds, these are the books that we’ve read multiple times or still haven’t quite finished; all of which have shaped us along the way.

Perhaps that is the biggest difference from the digital world: A physical book does not disappear into a digital folder but remains on the shelf. And at some point, you reach for it again — out of curiosity, longing or simply because it’s there.

Berzbach has a simple phrase for this identity that’s formed through consuming literature: “Those who live with books always have a home.”

-DW

SPORTS

New low as Italy fail again



Four-time winners, the Azzurri, failed to qualify for a third consecutive World Cup after they suffered a play-off defeat on penalties to Bosnia and Herzegovina on Tuesday

ZENICA: One of football's historic powers has reached a once-unfathomable low. Four-time world champions Italy failed to qualify for a third World Cup in a row after a devastating 4-1 penalty shootout defeat by Bosnia-Herzegovina at Stadion Bilino Polje on Tuesday.

No previous winner of the tournament has missed three consecutive instalments of the competition, after they also failed to reach Russia in 2018 and Qatar 2022.

The latest ouster means that the 1934, 1938, 1982 and 2006 champions will go at least 16 years without playing a match at football's biggest event.

Pio Esposito - who fired over - and Bryan Cristante - who hit the underside of the crossbar - missed spot-kicks in the shootout after Gennaro Gattuso's 10 men had held on amid a barrage of Bosnian

troubled us. I'm sorry, this is football and I'm proud of my boys."

Gravina insisted he would not step down but admitted Italian football had now reached a "profound crisis".

Italy led when Moise Kean provided a fine finish from the edge of the area after Nicolo Barella pounced when Bosnia goalkeeper Nikola Vasilj misplaced a pass in the 15th minute.

But the home side's hopes of a comeback were enhanced when Italy defender Alessandro Bastoni was sent off for hacking down Amar Memic with the Bosnia winger clean through on goal five minutes before the break.

Italy keeper Gianluigi Donnarumma was forced into a string of second-half saves but when he pushed out Edin Dzeko's header from Amar Dedic's 79th-minute cross, Haris Tabakovic managed to turn home the rebound to force extra time.

The hosts were then perfect from the spot with Benjamin Tahirovic, Tabakovic, Kerim Alajbegovic and Esmir Bajraktarevic scoring to secure their place in the summer tournament.

"Italian children will see another World Cup without Italy," said tearful winger Leonardo Spinazzola. - Agencies

Why is Italian football struggling?

ZENICA: When Italy beat France in the 2006 final, they did so with what was arguably the greatest team in the country's history.

The foundations of that success were laid a decade earlier when Cesare Maldini's under-21 side won three consecutive European Championships between 1992 and 1996.

The depth of talent then was aided by a ruling in Serie A that prohibited clubs from having more than three non-European players on the pitch at one time.

But that all changed in 1995 when the Bosman ruling - a case that fought to improve the rights of European players - significantly altered the landscape of football on the continent.

That all led to an influx of overseas players heading to Serie A towards the end of the century, which made it harder for young Italian players to get first-team football with top clubs in their homeland.



European football expert Julien Laurens told BBC Sport: "The academies in Italy are not producing enough players, or players who are fit to play in their first team. The way they spend their money is not what we are used to from Italian clubs."

None of Italy's big clubs feature in the top 10 in Deloitte's list of the world's top revenue-generating clubs.

Premier League clubs benefit

from ever-increasing TV deals and other European leagues attract heavy investment.

Many Italian sides have also failed to modernise their stadiums, which impacts commercial revenue. Some of the league's top clubs have reported substantial losses in recent years, which hurts their investment in the future.

Former Italy forward Del Piero told CBS before the World Cup play-offs: "Problems? Stadiums. We know you have to perform better outside of the pitch [to improve] that. Youth systems as well."

There feels like there is a lot to fix for Italy to return to where it once was on the international stage.

Italian football writer Emmet Gates told BBC Sport that The Azzurri were "scarred" from the play-off defeats by Sweden and North Macedonia over the past decade. They can now add this night to that. - Agencies

STRAWBERRY ARENA

Gyokeres the hero as Sweden edge Poland

STOCKHOLM: It was chaos at Strawberry Arena. Chaos in the Poland penalty area, chaos as yellow shirts streamed away from it and chaos in the stands.

Lucas Bergvall's shot was saved, Besfort Zeneli's lobbed effort came back off the post but there was Viktor Gyokeres, six yards out with the goal at his mercy.

One shot, lashed high into the net, was enough to banish memories of Sweden's dismal qualifying campaign and send Graham Potter's side to the World Cup as they won 3-2 on Tuesday.

Twice the home fans in Stockholm dared to believe their side had scored the goal to take them to this summer's tournament, twice Poland struck back.

But having mustered precious little in the second half, Sweden finally sparked into life in the final 10 minutes, and after substitute Gustav Lundgren wriggled into the box to create the opening, it was third time lucky.

The crowning moment belonged to Gyokeres. Anonymous for much of the evening, the Arsenal striker showed up when it mattered most and having scored a hat-trick in the play-off semi-final on Thurs-



day, no Sweden player has done more to ensure their World Cup qualification. They will begin their campaign against Tunisia in Guadalupe, Mexico, on June 15 (03:00 BST) before facing Netherlands and Japan in Texas.

"I'm going to have a drink and then think, 'Wow, we're going to Dallas. I'll have to dust off my cowboy hat, won't I?'" Potter said.

That they have made it at all is somewhat remarkable following a qualifying campaign in which they failed to win any of their six games.

Manager Jon Dahl Tomasson

was sacked once automatic qualification from the group became impossible with Potter the man tasked with turning things around.

Potter, 50, has struggled in his past two Premier League jobs at Chelsea and West Ham but remains highly thought of in Sweden following his seven-year spell in charge of Ostersunds.

He took the side from northern Sweden from the fourth tier to the top division and won the Swedish Cup in 2017, earning qualification to the Europa League in the process. - Agencies

EUROPEAN QUALIFIERS PLAY-OFF

Czech Republic overcome Denmark on penalties

PRAGUE: The Czech Republic reached the World Cup for the first time in 20 years by beating Denmark on penalties 3-1 in their play-off final in Prague on Tuesday.

Denmark were undone by a dire display in the shootout, as they missed the target with two spot-kicks and had another saved.

Rasmus Hojlund, the striker on loan at Napoli from Manchester United, was among those to miss for the Danes, hitting the bar with his attempt.

Christian Eriksen was the lone Denmark player to convert a penalty, while Tomas Chory, Tomas Soucek and Michal Sadilek scored for the Czech Republic. Ladislav Krejci was the only player to miss for the hosts.

Pavel Sulc had earlier given the hosts a third-minute lead with a thumping strike, rifling into the back of the net from the edge of the area after a corner was headed partly away.

The opener set the tone for an exciting game, with chances at each end throughout the first half.

Denmark searched for an equaliser, stretching the Czech Republic with numbers and working good passes to striker Hojlund, while the hosts continued to press in the final third.



However, after the break, the game went in a completely different direction as the Czech Republic were forced to sit back and face constant waves of attacks.

Denmark's persistence eventually paid dividends as Joachim Andersen equalised by heading home a Mikkell Damsgaard free-kick. To their credit, the Czech Republic set up well to stymie Denmark's attempts, remaining compact and covering spaces to try to keep their opponents out.

Having kept energy in reserve,

the Czechs were much improved once extra time began and got back in front as Krejci sent an effort in off the boot of Denmark defender Alexander Bah.

Denmark levelled in the 111th minute as substitute Kasper Hogh glanced a header into the top corner, only to flounder when it came to spot-kicks. The result means the Czech Republic are heading to the World Cup, having last appeared on the global stage in 2006, while Denmark will be absent for the first time since the 2014 tournament. - Agencies

DEFEATED KOSOVO

Turkiye reach first World Cup in 24 years after narrow win

PRISTINA: Turkiye reached their first World Cup in 24 years as Kerem Akturkoglu's goal gave them a narrow 1-0 win in their play-off with Kosovo at Stadiumi Fadil Vokrri on Tuesday.

Turkiye had not qualified for the tournament since finishing third in the 2002 edition but will now face Australia, Paraguay and co-hosts the United States in Group C this summer.

In a tense match in Pristina, Kenan Yildiz cut the ball back for Orkun Kokcu whose mis-hit shot was turned in at the back post by Fenerbahce striker Akturkoglu in

the 53rd minute. Opponents Kosovo were hoping to reach their first major tournament since their FIFA and UEFA memberships were accepted in 2016.

They hit the bar in the first half when Turkiye goalkeeper Ugurcan Cakir tipped Fisnik Asllani's effort onto the woodwork.

But Turkiye, who only had one other shot on target besides their goal, held on to reach their third World Cup.

The victory ended a run of five straight failed qualification campaigns.

Four years ago, they were two



games away from a place in the World Cup but were beaten by Portugal in their play-off semi-final.

Turkiye had won four of their first six World Cup 2026 qualifying games but missed out on an automatic spot to Spain, who finished three points above them in their group.

Brighton's Ferdi Kadioglu helped Turkiye to a 1-0 win over Romania in their path C semi-final on Thursday which set up their winner-takes-all tie in Kosovo.

Led by stars Arda Guler of Real Madrid and Inter Milan's Hakan Calhanoglu, Turkiye were the

heavy favourites, ranked 23rd in the world, 55 places above Kosovo.

Turkiye have recent tournament pedigree having reached the quarter-finals of the 2024 Euros, losing to the Netherlands in the last eight.

Defeat ended Kosovo's dream of a first World Cup appearance less than 10 years after they played their first ever World Cup qualifier. The Balkan nation, which declared independence from Serbia in 2008, were allowed to play their first match by FIFA in March 2014 - a 0-0 draw with Haiti.

Their second was a 6-1 loss to Turkiye. - Agencies

Lions of Mesopotamia secure historic return after 40 years

Iraq edged past Bolivia 2-1 to seal the final FIFA World Cup 2026 spot after 40 years to complete tournament lineup with extra-time win

MONTERREY: Iraq became the 48th and final team to secure a spot at the 2026 World Cup with a 2-1 win over Bolivia in an intercontinental playoff Tuesday, overcoming last-minute logistical problems to return to the finals after a 40-year absence.

Aymen Hussein steered home a second-half winner to see the Iraqis qualify for the tournament in Canada, Mexico and the US.

Ali Al Hamadi handed Iraq a



10th-minute lead at the Monterrey Stadium but Bolivia was level at the break through Moises Paniagua. Iraq, also known as Lions of Mesopotamia, will compete in Group I at the June 11 to July 19 World Cup along with France, Norway and Senegal.

Iraq, the ninth team from Asia to qualify, was quickly out of the blocks and Bolivia goalkeeper Guillermo Viscarra made a finger-

tip save to push Amir Al Ammari's curling free kick onto his crossbar.

But from the resultant corner, Al Hamadi, who plays for Luton Town in League One, got ahead of the Bolivia defence to head home the opener.

Bolivia slowly recovered from the shock of the early setback and by the break were deservedly level.

The equaliser came when Ramiro Vaca's forward pass, which

looked initially to be a shot on goal, found Paniagua, who then had time to turn and slam the ball home from close range.

Iraq went ahead again in the 53rd minute as substitute Marko Farji's cross found Hussein, who reacted quickest and got ahead of his marker to steer home.

Mohanad Ali had a chance to score a third for Iraq and finish off the game near full time but

squandered the opportunity.

Bolivia forced several late corners as they desperately bid to take the game into extra time, but Iraq finished the fresher of the two sides. The Iraqis were seeded straight into the playoff decider while Bolivia first had to get past Suriname in Monterrey last Thursday.

Iraq, coached by Australian Graham Arnold, will return to the global tournament for the first

time since Mexico 1986, where they lost all three group games.

The Iraqi campaign kicks off Tuesday, June 16 against Norway at Foxborough, followed by games against France on June 22 at Philadelphia and Senegal at Toronto on June 26.

Bolivia, who reached the final playoff with a win over Suriname, were aiming to qualify for its second World Cup. - Agencies

INTERNATIONAL FRIENDLIES



Portugal ease past US; Japan stun England

LOS ANGELES: Bruno Fernandes picked apart the United States defence to hand Portugal a 2-0 win on Tuesday over the FIFA World Cup co-hosts, who again failed to deliver against a top-tier opponent ahead of this summer's tournament.

Manchester United playmaker Fernandes had two assists, setting up Francisco Trincao with a cool backheel, before finding a totally unmarked Joao Felix from a corner to double the lead.

For the US, it was a second underwhelming friendly loss in three days at Atlanta's Mercedes-Benz Stadium, after a 5-2 thrashing by Belgium at the weekend.

In his final game before picking his tournament squad, coach Mauricio Pochettino's experiment of playing Christian Pulisic as a striker fizzled out, as the US talisman missed several chances before being substituted at the break.

Elsewhere, Brighton winger Kaoru Mitoma's 23rd-minute goal gave Japan an impressive 1-0 victory at Wembley as England suffered their first loss to an Asian nation.

Also Scotland slumped to a second 1-0 friendly defeat in four days as Nicolas Pepe's early goal claimed victory for Ivory Coast at Everton's Hill Dickinson Stadium. - Agencies

INTERCONTINENTAL PLAY-OFF

DR Congo defeat Jamaica to qualify

GUADALAJARA: The Democratic Republic of Congo defeated Jamaica 1-0 after extra-time in an intercontinental play-off on Tuesday to seal their first World Cup appearance in 52 years.

Burnley defender Axel Tuanzebe scored the game's only goal at the Akron Stadium near Guadalajara to send the African side to this summer's finals, where it will face Portugal, Colombia and Uzbekistan in Group K.

Tuanzebe bundled in a close-range finish from an in-swinging corner in the 100th minute to settle a lacklustre game played in hot and humid conditions.

The goal completes a dramatic qualification campaign for the Leopards, who eliminated African football giants Nigeria and Cameroon on their way to Tuesday's playoff in Mexico.

It means the central African nation will be playing at the World Cup for the first time since the 1974 finals in West Germany, when the team competed as Zaire and was beaten by Scotland, Yugoslavia and Brazil.

Tuesday's game went to extra-time after the two sides finished 90 minutes deadlocked at 0-0, with DR Congo dominating possession but failing to find the breakthrough against a dogged Jamaican defence.

The Congolese looked the more threatening side from the kick-off and had the ball in the net after



just five minutes when Real Betis striker Cedric Bakambu tucked away a low finish from Meschack Elia's cross, only for it to be ruled offside.

Bakambu threatened again soon afterwards, but his looping header was comfortably gathered by Jamaica goalkeeper Andre Blake.

Elia shot into the side netting after collecting a clever chested layoff from Bakambu in the 23rd minute, and threatened again 10 minutes later when he burst down

the right flank and forced a near-post save from Blake.

The only Jamaican chance of note came midway through the half but Kasey Palmer's deflected shot drifted wide.

The pattern continued after half-time, and Bakambu again nearly opened the scoring on 47 minutes when his curling shot from outside the area was parried away at full stretch by Blake.

That was as good as it got though for Congo until a flurry of

chances in the final minutes of regulation time.

Bakambu saw a second goal ruled out after Theo Bongonda was offside in the build up in the 85th minute, and two minutes later substitute Edo Kayembe saw a long-range effort whizz past the post.

The breakthrough finally came in extra-time when Tuanzebe met a corner in the six-yard box to put Congo ahead and seal their World Cup return. - Agencies

ZAMBIA FRIENDLY

Messi on target as Argentina triumph

BUENOS AIRES: Lionel Messi scored one goal and set up another as Argentina thrashed Zambia 5-0 on Tuesday in the South American nation's final game on home soil before launching the defence of its World Cup crown.

Messi, restored to the starting line-up by coach Lionel Scaloni after Argentina's lacklustre win over Mauritania last Friday, made an immediate impact in friendly at La Bombonera in Buenos Aires.

The 38-year-old superstar set up the opening goal for Julian Alvarez before bagging his 116th goal for Argentina with an individual strike just before half-time.

The Inter Miami playmaker once again demonstrated his enduring influence on the Albice-



leste with a typically decisive contribution in a comfortable win.

Alvarez fired Argentina into the lead after just four minutes when Messi effortlessly controlled a lofted pass on the edge of the area and then threaded a pass into the feet of the Atletico striker to score.

Messi doubled Argentina's lead

with the 902nd goal of his career two minutes before half-time, working a clever one-two with Liverpool midfielder Alexis Mac Allister before tucking a finish past Zambia goalie Willard Mwanza.

Messi could have added to his goals tally just after half-time when Argentina was awarded a penalty following Albert Kangwanda's foul on Thiago Almada.

But rather than take the spot kick himself, Messi handed the ball to Nicolas Otamendi, and the 38-year-old made no mistake from the spot for a 3-0 lead. An own goal from Dominic Chanda in the 68th minute put Argentina 4-0 up, before Valentin Barco completed the scoring in stoppage time to make it 5-0. - Agencies

WORLD CUP TUNE-UP

Brazil score twice late to rout Croatia

ORLANDO: Brazil routed Croatia 3-1 in a World Cup warm-up in Orlando on Tuesday, with Igor Thiago converting a late penalty and Gabriel Martinelli adding a stoppage-time goal to seal the win.

The match at Camping World Stadium served as Brazil's final chance to assess their options before coach Carlo Ancelotti names his World Cup squad, while the game marked their first meeting with Croatia since their quarter-final defeat at Qatar 2022.

Brazil, who lost 2-1 to France last week, created their first clear chance in the 20th minute when Danilo's effort was blocked by Dominik Livakovic.

The Croatian goalkeeper denied Joao Pedro with a low save before



producing an outstanding stop to keep out Matheus Cunha as Brazil continued to press. Croatia offered little in response, with Andrej Kramaric's tame effort gathered by Bento, who later made a fine save to deny Luka Vuskovic's header.

Brazil finally made their pressure count shortly before halftime.

Matheus Cunha released Vinicius Jr, who drove forward past three defenders before setting up Danilo for a composed first-time finish.

Croatia had more of the ball after the break and equalised in the 84th minute when Lovro Majer slipped between defenders to meet Toni Fruk's cross and guide the ball past goalkeeper Bento. The equaliser sparked Brazil into action and they restored their lead four minutes later when Thiago converted from the penalty spot after Endrick was brought down in the box.

Martinelli then sealed the win in stoppage time with a low finish.

Brazil will face Egypt in a friendly in June before kicking off its World Cup campaign in Group C against Morocco. - Agencies

PREMIER LEAGUE

Seven games to save Tottenham's season: De Zerbi named Spurs boss

LONDON: Tottenham have appointed Roberto de Zerbi as their new head coach after the Italian signed a five-year contract with the club on Tuesday.

The former Brighton boss has seven games to save the club from relegation to the Championship.

If they do go down, he does not have a relegation clause that would allow him to walk away.

In two months' time, Spurs'

third boss of the season will have either secured his place as a hero at the club, or be forever connected to one of the worst campaigns in their history.

He said: "I am delighted to be joining this fantastic football club, which is one of the biggest and most prestigious in the world.

"In all my discussions with the club's leadership, their ambition for the future has been clear - to

build a team capable of reaching great achievements, and to do that playing a style of football that excites and inspires our supporters. I am here because I believe in that ambition and have signed a long-term contract to give everything to deliver it.

"Our short-term priority is to climb the Premier League table, which will be the complete focus until the final whistle of the last game of the season."



De Zerbi replaces Igor Tudor, who officially left the club by mutual consent over the weekend.

De Zerbi has been the overwhelming first choice to become the club's new permanent head coach given his prior Premier League experience, perceived tactical acumen and reputation for playing attacking football.

While De Zerbi was always open to taking the Spurs position, it is

understood he initially showed a reluctance to accept the job before the end of the season.

The club tried to bring him in after Thomas Frank left in February, but it was deemed too soon given De Zerbi left Marseille on the same day. Tottenham are 17th in the Premier League, just one point outside of the relegation zone and without a win in the competition in 2026. - Agencies

ROUND-UP

Chery Tiggo 4 Pro: Smartest compact SUV in Oman now available with exclusive benefits

With the festive campaign officially ending on April 11, this is the best and final chance to own the Chery Tiggo 4 Pro accompanied by a comprehensive package of exclusive festive benefits

MUSCAT: The Chery Tiggo 4 Pro is rapidly redefining the compact SUV segment across Oman, setting a new trend for drivers who demand a perfect fusion of global style, smart technology, and rugged performance.

As it continues to gain popularity on the Sultanate's roads, the window is now closing on a special opportunity for new owners. With the festive campaign officially ending on April 11, this is the best and final chance to own the Chery Tiggo 4 Pro accompanied by a comprehensive package of exclusive festive benefits.



For those looking to stay ahead of the trend, the Tiggo 4 Pro is currently available with highly attractive monthly installments. To ensure a truly rewarding ownership experience, this final offer includes a free service package for 3 years or 30,000 km, free insurance

(Oman only) for private vehicles, and free registration. Every new owner also receives three years of AAA roadside assistance and a RO 100 fuel card to help manage daily driving costs. Furthermore, every purchase during this period provides a grand opportunity to win

the flagship 2026 Tiggo 9 PHEV in an exclusive raffle draw. (Terms and Conditions Apply)

The trend-setting appeal of the Tiggo 4 Pro begins with its "global" design concept. Its exterior features an avant-garde starry diamond front grille and sleek au-

tomatic headlights that create a dynamic presence. The muscular body is accented by 17-inch five-spoke mirror dynamic wheel hubs, while the rear is finished with a stylish three-dimensional light band and chrome dual exhaust styling. Inside, the vehicle offers

a wide-body wrap-around layout featuring a 10.25-inch ultra-clear floating LCD screen and a digital instrument cluster, providing a seamless blend of communication and entertainment.

Performance and safety are equally central to its success. The Tiggo 4 Pro offers two advanced power options: a 1.5TCI engine delivering 115 kW for those seeking a spirited drive, and a highly efficient 1.5L version that achieves an impressive fuel consumption of just 6.9 liters per 100 kilometers. Built with an integrated cage-type body using ultra-high-strength steel, the vehicle also comes standard with advanced safety features including Cruise Control and Blind Spot Monitoring (BSM).

With the April 11 deadline approaching, this is the definitive moment to join the growing community of Tiggo 4 Pro owners in Oman. Interested buyers are encouraged to visit their nearest showroom today to experience this trend-setting SUV firsthand and secure these exclusive festive benefits before they conclude.

Chery's global reputation continues to grow, as reflected in recent accolades: Ranked as the best Chinese global brand builder in cars and 14th overall in the 2023 Kantar & Google Chinese Global Brand Builders report, Secured first place among all Chinese automotive brands in the J.D. Power 2023 China Initial Quality StudySM (IQS).

REINFORCING 45 YEARS OF SAFETY LEADERSHIP



Douglas OHI wins RoSPA Gold Medal for 9th time

MUSCAT: Douglas OHI has been awarded the prestigious RoSPA Gold Medal for the ninth time, recognising sustained excellence in health, safety, and wellbeing and reinforcing the company's position as a leading regional safety-focused construction and engineering business.

The ninth Gold Medal reflects consecutive years of achieving RoSPA Gold standard performance and demonstrates Douglas OHI's long-term commitment to embedding safety as a core business value, operational discipline, and leadership priority across all projects and operating locations.

The achievement comes as Douglas OHI marks 45 years of operations in the GCC, highlighting a legacy built on responsible delivery, workforce wellbeing, and consistent investment in robust safety systems, leadership engagement, and proactive risk management across Oman, the UAE, and Saudi Arabia, alongside a growing regional presence.

The RoSPA Awards are among the most respected international benchmarks for occupational health and safety. Gold Medal status is reserved for organisations that demonstrate sustained excellence, mature management systems, and a deeply embedded culture focused on protecting people and supporting operational resilience.

Aaron Hennessy, Managing Director of Douglas OHI, added:

"Achieving our ninth RoSPA Gold Medal in our 45th year is a significant milestone and a clear reflection of our long-term commitment to safety excellence. Strong health and safety performance is fundamental to operational reliability, project delivery, and client confidence. As we continue to grow across Oman, the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, while strengthening our wider GCC presence, we remain focused on raising standards, supporting our people, and delivering projects responsibly and sustainably."

Peter Baker, Regional HSSE Manager at Douglas OHI, said: "This ninth RoSPA Gold Medal reflects the collective ownership of safety across our projects. It is the result of disciplined planning, strong leadership visibility, and the commitment of our teams and partners to doing the right thing every day. Our focus remains on strengthening proactive reporting, learning from experience, and ensuring everyone goes home safe."

Douglas OHI continues to strengthen its safety performance through leadership engagement, behavioural safety programmes, workforce training, and structured risk management processes. The company's approach integrates health, safety and wellbeing into every stage of project delivery, supporting both operational excellence and long-term sustainable growth across the region.

LIMITED TIME

Changan UNI-V 2.0T takes centre stage with performance and ownership offer

MUSCAT: Changan Oman is bringing value to the spotlight with a special offer on the UNI-V 2.0T, a sporty coupe-inspired sedan designed to combine exhilarating performance with intelligent technology. The limited-period retail campaign, running until April 8 is designed to make upgrading to the UNI-V more convenient and rewarding for customers.

Powered by a 2.0-litre turbo-charged engine delivering 232 hp and 390 Nm of torque, the UNI-V is paired with an 8-speed automatic transmission and 2WD drivetrain, delivering strong acceleration and refined driving dynamics. The UNI-V is available with EMIs starting from OMR 142, calculated on a 20 per cent down payment over a six-year loan tenure and subject to bank credit approval, making ownership more accessible for customers.

Offer benefits for UNI V

Customers purchasing the UNI-V 2.0T during the campaign period will receive:

Free first-year vehicle registration for private (yellow plate) registration. Customers opting for commercial (red plate) registration will pay the applicable difference.

Free first-year comprehensive insurance valid in Oman and the UAE for private registration.

Assured free service package of 5 years or 105,000 km, covering periodic maintenance services only and excluding wear and tear components.

Assured gifts including complimentary window tinting and ceramic paint protection, applied at authorised Changan service centres.

5 per cent VAT included within the vehicle price during the offer period. No cash alternative or discount is applicable.

Manufacturer's warranty of 6 years with unlimited mileage on 2025 and 2026 new-style UNI-V models, subject to standard manufacturer terms and conditions.

Fleet, government, taxi, driving school and key account purchases are not eligible under this retail promotion.

Stylish UNI-V 2.0T

The UNI-V 2.0T stands out with its sporty fastback design and bold,

aerodynamic styling. Powered by a 2.0T engine, it delivers strong performance with smooth and responsive driving dynamics.

The model features a premium, driver-focused interior with advanced infotainment, connectivity and intelligent driver-assistance systems, creating a refined and engaging driving experience. With its blend of design, technology and performance, the UNI-V offers a dynamic yet practical drive.



RECOGNITION

Bank Muscat named top brand in Oman

MUSCAT: In recognition of the its pioneering role in developing the banking sector and providing diverse customer-centric banking services, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, has been awarded the "Top Brand in Oman" title based on a survey conducted by Alam Iqtisad Wa Aamal (AIWA) published by the United Media Services (UMS).

The Bank was recognised at the high-profile ceremony recently held at the Intercity Hotel, under the patronage of Qais Mohammed Al Yousef, Chairman of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones, along with senior officials and CEOs from various corporations. The award was presented to Saleh Mohammed Al Maaini, Deputy General Manager of Capital Regions at Bank Muscat.



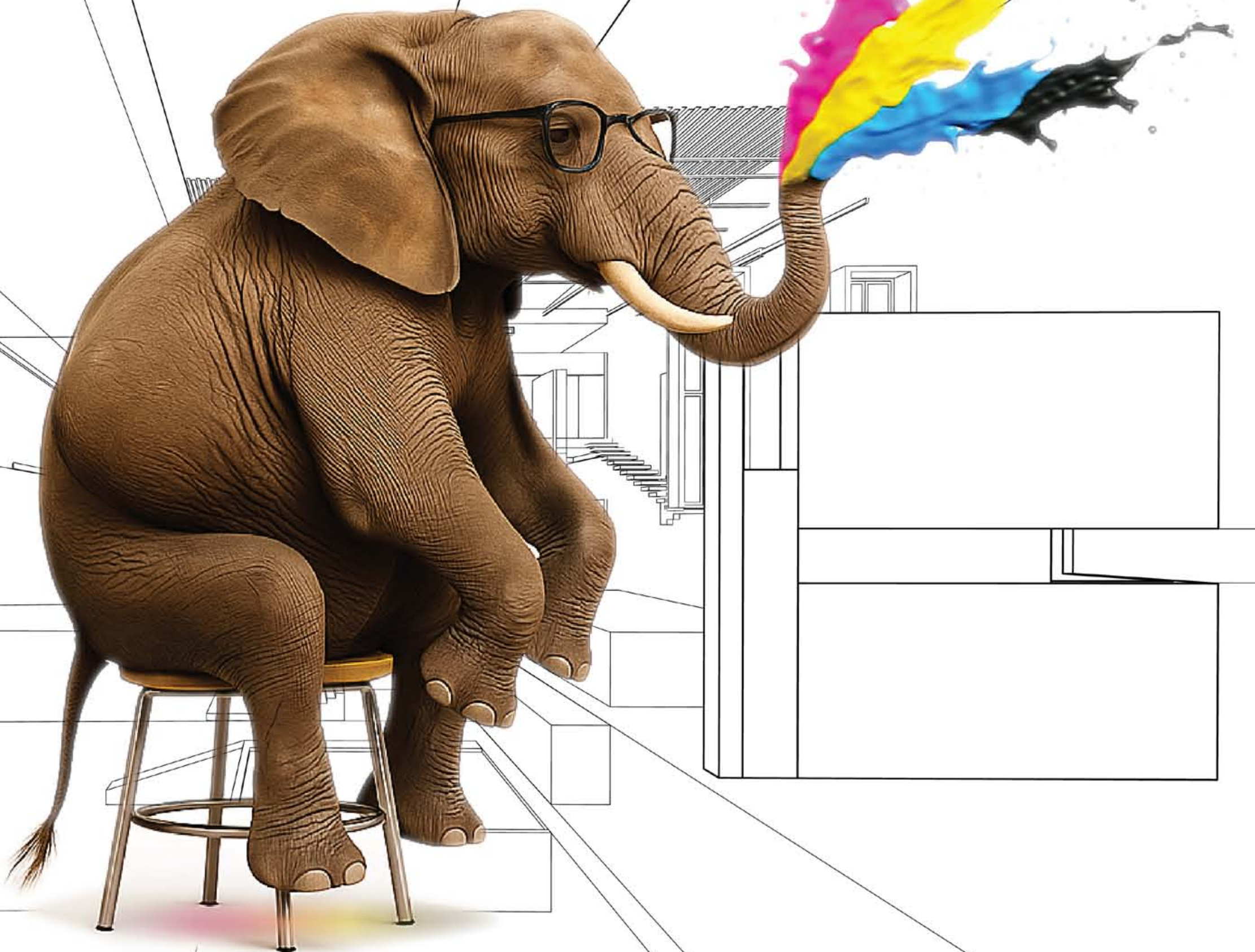
On this occasion, Saleh Mohammed Al Maaini, Deputy General Manager of Capital Regions at Bank Muscat, expressed his pride in the Bank's achievement of winning the prestigious "Top Brand in Oman" Award. He said: "We would like to deliver special thanks to United Media Services for this well-deserved recognition, a testa-

ment to the Bank's customer-centric strategy aiming to enhance the banking experience of customers, as well as its unwavering dedication to offering sustainable community programmes for over four decades. The tribute of winning the award demonstrates the efforts made across various fields and the Bank's role in delivering the best

banking services in line with the latest global developments in the banking sector."

Bank Muscat's brand is one of the prominent and recognized brands at local, regional, and global levels, attributed to the various strategic plans and programmes which the Bank executed to promote its corporate vision of "To serve you better, every day." Additionally, the Bank annually implements community-driven initiatives that contribute to the development of society, especially in areas like economic, sports, and cultural fields, with focus on programmes targeting the Omani youth. The Bank's brand reflects its successful partnership with customers and the entire community, driving it to continue its journey of excellence and progress in alignment with its vision.

We make your Business bigger than your problems.



We get you ahead on

- Booth production
- Event conceptualisation
- Event management

Wait, there's more

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