

Times
OF OMAN

50

YEARS OF
LEGACY

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HM IN GERMANY ON PRIVATE VISIT

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik left on Friday for the Federal Republic of Germany on a several day private visit. May Allah the Almighty protect His Majesty the Sultan wherever he might be and grant him good health, wellbeing and long life. — ONA

REGIONAL SECURITY, STABILITY

Foreign Minister holds talks with global counterparts

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman's Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr Hamad Al-Busaidi held a series of telephone discussions with several foreign ministers, reaffirming the Sultanate's commitment to preserving regional security, stability and dialogue-based solutions.
On Sunday, Sayyid Badr spoke with Jean-Noël Barrot, Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs of the French Republic. The call fo-

cused on regional developments, during which both ministers exchanged views on regional relations, the Iranian nuclear issue and ongoing efforts to support pathways toward de-escalation.
The discussions also stressed the importance of returning to the negotiating table to reach balanced and fair solutions to outstanding issues, in a manner that safeguards the legitimate rights of all parties and preserves regional stability. >A4

OMAN'S GDP GROWS BY 2% TO OMR9.9BN IN 3RD QUARTER OF 2025

This growth was mainly driven by a 2% increase in the added value of non-oil activities

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman's gross domestic product (GDP) at constant prices grew by 2 percent in the third quarter of 2025, reaching OMR9.9112 billion at market prices, compared to OMR9.7129 billion during the same period in 2024.
Preliminary data issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) showed that this growth was mainly driven by a 2 percent increase in the added value of non-oil activities, which amounted to OMR7.3032 billion by the end of the third quarter of 2025, compared to OMR7.1599

billion in the corresponding quarter of 2024.
At the level of economic activities, construction activities grew by 1.3 percent, reaching OMR1.0348 billion, while wholesale and retail trade activities increased by 1.3 percent to reach OMR830.5 million.
Public administration and defence activities also recorded growth of 1.5 percent, reaching OMR932.5 million during the third quarter of 2025.
Oil activities registered a growth of 1.9 percent, reaching

OMR3.0676 billion in the third quarter of 2025, compared to OMR3.0104 billion during the same period in 2024.
Within the oil sector, crude oil production increased by 2 percent, reaching OMR2.5548 billion in the third quarter of 2025, compared to OMR2.5057 billion in the corresponding quarter of 2024.
Meanwhile, natural gas activities grew by 1.6 percent, reaching OMR512.8 million in the third quarter of 2025, compared to OMR504.7 million during the same period last year.

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN
Jabal Akhdar records 9.1% rise in visitors

1 The Wilayat of Jabal Akhdar in the Governorate of Al Dakhiliyah recorded a total of 222,151 visitors during the period from January to December 2025, marking an increase of 9.1 percent. >A2

OMAN
Notable antioxidants found in Oman honey

2 A scientific study conducted by researchers at Sultan Qaboos University has found that several rare varieties of honey produced in Oman contain significantly higher levels of antioxidants. >A3

WORLD
Greenland row: EU weighing response

3 European Commissioner for Trade Maros Sefcovic said about the bloc's strategy for dealing with Trump's fresh tariff threat against European countries over Greenland. >A7

FOUR-DAY BREAK

From mountains to Muscat Nights, Oman returns to work after long break

Times News Service

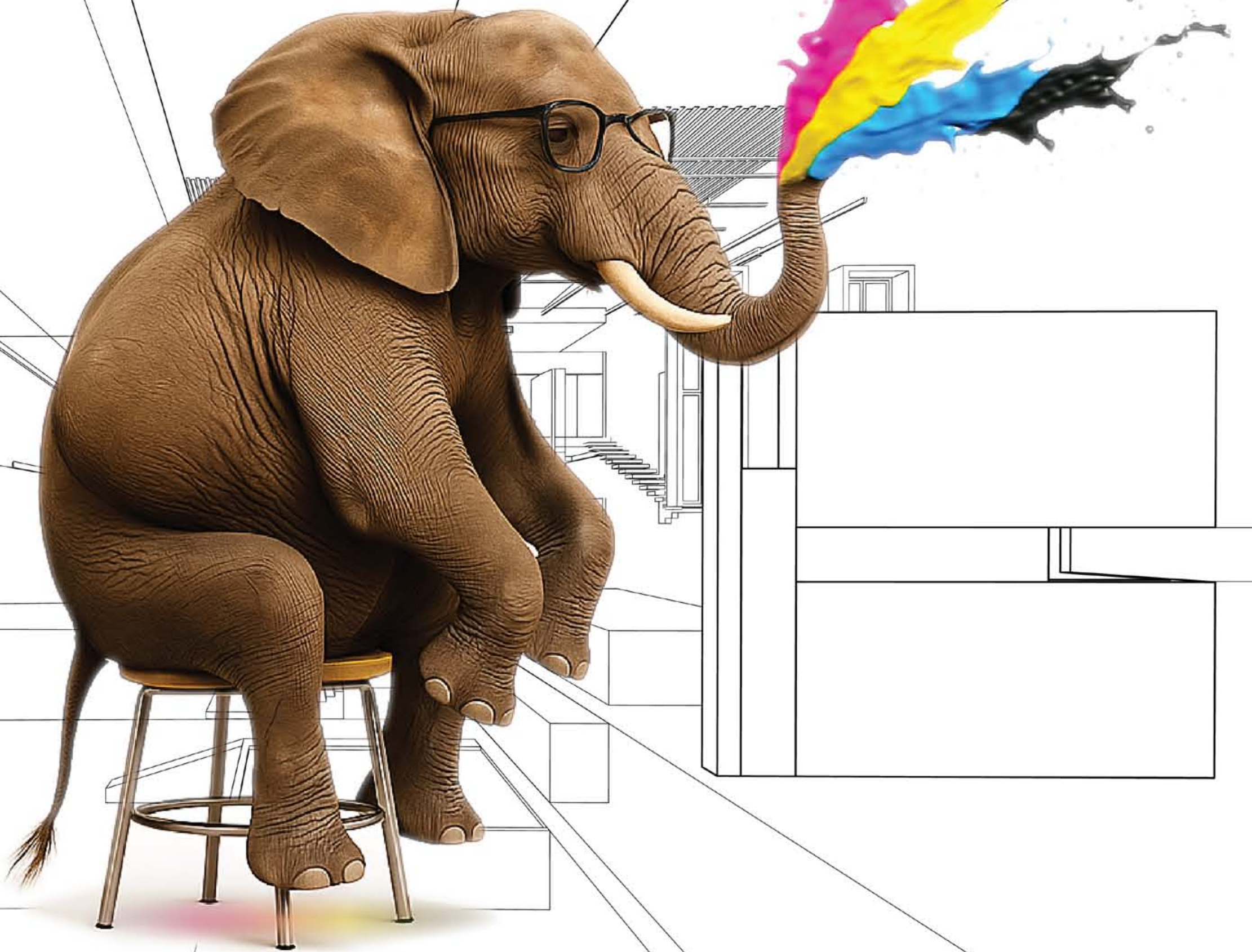
MUSCAT: The long weekend has come to an end, with citizens and residents across the Sultanate returning to work on Monday after a four-day break.
The extended holiday was observed as Accession Day that fell on Thursday, January 15, 2026, followed by the Isra wal Mi'raj holiday on Sunday, creating a long weekend when combined with Friday and Saturday.
Many people made the most of the break by attending Muscat Nights 2026, which witnessed a remarkable influx of visitors across its venues.
Crowds thronged popular locations including Qurum Park, Amerat Park and the Oman Automobile Association, enjoying a wide range of entertainment and cultural activities.
The festival, which blends modern technology with Omani heritage, is one of the capital's flagship

annual events aimed at promoting tourism and celebrating national identity.
Highlights this year include the innovative Siraj light festival, dazzling drone shows and synchronised water fountain displays. "Almost all the venues are teeming with people of all ages," an official from Muscat Nights said.
Beyond entertainment, the 2026 edition has placed strong emphasis on boosting the local economy by expanding opportunities for Omani job seekers and small and medium-sized enterprises. The festivities — featuring daily fireworks and cultural evenings that will continue until January 31. As temperatures dropped across

the Sultanate, the Al Hajar mountain range, particularly Jabal Akhdar and Jabal Shams, emerged as the preferred winter getaway for residents seeking cooler weather.
Jabal Shams, Oman's highest peak, recorded the lowest temperature in the country on Sunday, with mercury dipping to minus 0.8 degrees Celsius.
"It was a nice break to enjoy with my family at Jabal Shams as it was freezing cold," said Raj, a private-sector employee.
Confirming a sharp rise in visitor numbers, Jagdeep Thakral, General Manager of dusitD2 Naseem Resort, Jabal Akhdar, told Times of Oman: "We had an exceptional weekend."

For Mohammed Al Abri, a private-sector professional, the break offered valuable family time. "We spent the holidays in our village near Hamra. The climate in the mountains is very pleasant," he said. Shopping malls and supermarkets also witnessed a spike in footfall as residents stocked up on essentials ahead of the return to work.
"Such short breaks rejuvenate us physically and mentally. It feels good to be back at work after an extended weekend," said Altaf Al Balushi, a banking professional.
With four days off, staycations remained the preferred option for most expatriates. Hotel industry executives said occupancy surged across properties in Jabal Akhdar, Jabal Shams and Hamra due to the cooler climate.
Public parks and beaches recorded heavy weekend crowds, while cafés and restaurants did brisk business, particularly during evening hours.

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Jabal Akhdar records 9.1% rise in tourists during 2025: NCSI

The data revealed that the number of Omani visitors to Jabal Akhdar reached 82,142, while Saudi visitors numbered 14,957



JABAL AKHDAR: The Wilayat of Jabal Akhdar in the Governorate of Al Dakhiliyah recorded a total of 222,151 visitors during the period from January to December 2025,

marking an increase of 9.1 percent compared to 203,629 visitors during the same period in 2024, according to statistics issued by the

National Center for Statistics and Information.

The data revealed that the number of Omani visitors to Jabal Akh-



dar reached 82,142, while Saudi visitors numbered 14,957. Visitors from the United Arab Emirates totaled 1,588, Bahrainis numbered

699, Kuwaitis reached 1,441, and Qatari visitors were 779.

Visitors from other Arab nationalities amounted to 9,902, while

foreign nationalities constituted the largest share, with 110,643 visitors recorded.

Jabal Akhdar is considered one of Oman's most prominent tourist destinations, thanks to its mild summer climate and cold winter weather.

The availability of numerous hotels, rest houses, and tourist lodges, along with a variety of cultural and recreational events, has contributed to attracting visitors throughout the year.

The region is also recognized as a key area for eco-tourism and adventure tourism, offering activities such as valley trekking, cave exploration, and mountain climbing.

Visitors also have the opportunity to experience local village culture, enhancing the destination's appeal as a comprehensive tourist hub. **-OMA**

KNOWLEDGE-BASED ECONOMY

Study calls for restoring status of humanities in higher education

Times News Service

MUSCAT: A recent academic study has called for restoring the central role of the humanities within Oman's higher education system, describing them as a cornerstone for building a balanced, sustainable knowledge-based economy.

The study, authored by Dr. Maryam bint Ali Al-Hanaei, Associate Professor of Intercultural Communication, and Prof. Mohammed bin Ali Al-Balushi, Professor of Archaeology and Heritage Studies at Sultan Qaboos University, was published in the Journal of Arabian Studies under the title "Reimagining the Knowledge Economy: A Critical Call to Recentre the Humanities in Omani Higher Education."

The researchers argue that



prevailing narratives surrounding the knowledge economy often equate progress and innovation solely with scientific and technological advancement, overlooking the vital contribution of the humanities and social sciences in developing critical thinking, reinforcing ethical values, and preserving cultural identity.

The study highlights a discon-

nect between national strategic frameworks—such as Oman Vision 2040 and the Cultural Strategy 2021–2040, which emphasize identity, culture, and creativity—and the realities of higher education practices that tend to prioritise scientific, technical, and business disciplines.

Through an analysis of faculty distribution and student enrol-

ment patterns both inside and outside Oman, the study finds that while the humanities continue to hold a notable presence—particularly in education, community, and cultural fields—their share is gradually declining compared to engineering and technical disciplines, especially among students studying abroad.

The researchers stress that recentring the humanities is neither a luxury nor a purely cultural endeavour, but a strategic necessity for sustainable development.

They argue that cultivating informed, creative citizens requires ensuring that scientific and technological progress remains aligned with ethical, social, and cultural values. The study calls for educational and research policies that foster integration between the humanities and scientific disciplines

through interdisciplinary curricula, institutional and research support, and the embedding of humanities-based knowledge within national innovation systems—consistent with Oman's aspirations for a knowledge society rooted in identity and openness to the world.

According to the study, investment in the humanities equips future generations with both technical competence and ethical and cultural awareness, supporting comprehensive and balanced development in the Sultanate.

Dr. Al-Hanaei said the research forms part of a broader intellectual project launched in 2022 to reassess the position of the humanities and the knowledge-production system within Omani higher education. She explained that the study presents a methodological

critique of neoliberal approaches that frame education primarily as an economic tool measured by profitability rather than human or societal value—an approach that marginalises local and humanistic knowledge and creates ethical and epistemological gaps.

She added that academic experience reveals a clear contradiction between the principles of Oman Vision 2040—which stress identity, values, sustainability, and human development—and educational practices that prioritise technical and professional disciplines driven by market logic. This contradiction, she noted, raises fundamental questions about the purpose of education: whether it should merely supply labour-market skills or also nurture critical awareness, cultural belonging, and intellectual responsibility.

INNOVATIVE VISUAL EXPERIENCE

Al Buraimi Lights Festival illuminates heritage sites

Times News Service

AL BURAIMI: The state of Al Buraimi is currently hosting the Al Buraimi Lights Festival, which offers an innovative visual experience that highlights the governorate's historical and cultural landmarks through modern light and projection shows.

These displays have transformed several prominent sites into interactive platforms that reflect the cultural identity of the region in a contemporary artistic spirit.

The festival's events are spread across four main landmarks: Al Buraimi Gate, Al Hilla Fort, Al Khandaq, and Al Buraimi Oasis (city centre).

The festival is accompanied by a range of activities at Al Buraimi Oasis Square, including the "Wamdat Idarak" lighting exhibition, an open-air theater for artistic performances and folk groups, musical concerts, corners dedicated to productive families, electric and electronic games, face painting, and a food and restaurant corner—offering a comprehensive experience suitable for all age groups.

Ismail bin Hamad Al Balushi, director of the company implementing the light shows, explained that the festival resulted from integrated artistic and technical efforts using the latest lighting and projection technologies.

It was built on a vision to highlight historical landmarks in a modern style and to provide a visual experience that meets public expectations.

Al Balushi expressed his gratitude to Dr. Hamad Ahmed Al Busaidi, Governor of Al Buraimi for his trust in the youth, his unlimited support, and for giving them the opportunity to create and present high-quality experiences that contribute to showcasing the governorate's identity in a unique and innovative way.

Visitor Abdullah bin Salem Al Rashidi praised the festival's diversity and the well-organised



sites, stressing that the program is comprehensive and suitable for all family members.

He noted that the attractive entertainment and cultural atmosphere, combined with free entry and complimentary access to games and activities, increased turnout and provided visitors with an enjoyable experience.

Meanwhile, Subaih bin Saleem Al Kaabi, owner of a small specialty coffee establishment, expressed his gratitude for the opportunity given to small and medium enterprises to participate and display their products at the festival.

He emphasised that these initiatives helped introduce local products to a wider audience,

stimulate sales, and build direct relationships with the public in a supportive regulatory environment for entrepreneurs.

The Al Buraimi Winter Festival comes after early preparations aimed at making the governorate a key tourist destination during the winter season.

The programme is characterised by diversity and comprehensiveness, with a focus on current events at Al Buraimi Park and the Al Buraimi Lights Festival, which have become major attractions for visitors.

The governorate is preparing to hold the Mahdah Car Championship as part of the Al Buraimi Winter Festival programme in the coming period.

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SULTAN QABOOS UNIVERSITY

Exceptional antioxidant levels in Omani honey varieties: Study

Times News Service

MUSCAT: A scientific study conducted by researchers at Sultan Qaboos University has found that several rare varieties of honey produced in the Sultanate of Oman contain significantly higher levels of antioxidants than well-known local and commercial honey types, highlighting their potential health benefits and market value.

The study was led by Dr. Haider A. J. Al Lawati from the Department of Chemistry at the College of Science, Sultan Qaboos University.

It evaluated the physicochemical properties and antioxidant content of eight rare Omani honey varieties, comparing them with popular local types such as Sidr and Sumur honey, as well as selected commercial honey samples.

Researchers examined key quality parameters, including pH, free acidity, electrical conductivity, sugar composition, and total antioxidant capacity.

The analysis employed an innovative paper-based analytical device developed by the research team, offering a faster and efficient alternative to traditional chromatography-based



techniques.

The results showed that most rare Omani honey samples contained sugar levels within the internationally accepted range of 45–75 percent.

However, one rare variety known as “Aitman” honey recorded a notably lower sugar content of 30.4 ± 1.0 percent. Across nearly all samples, fructose was identified as the dominant sugar, followed by glucose.

Regarding acidity, the free acidity levels of the rare honey samples were comparable to those found in Sidr and commercial honey, but lower than levels recorded in Sumur honey.

Most significantly, the total antioxidant content of the rare native honey varieties ranged between 116.9 and 325.4 milliequivalents of gallic acid per kilogram, substantially exceeding the

levels observed in Sidr, Sumur, and commercial honey samples, which ranged from 101.5 to 196.6 meq gallic acid/kg.

The researchers said these findings demonstrate the exceptional nutritional and functional properties of Oman’s rare honey varieties.

The study provides valuable scientific data that can support improved quality control, strengthen premium branding, and enhance the competitiveness of Omani honey in both domestic and international markets.

They added that this is the first known scientific study to document the physicochemical characteristics and antioxidant content of these rare honey types in Oman, representing an important step toward promoting the country’s unique natural products.

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Redefining the Concept of Quality Living

Muscat Bay Launches ‘Luma Residences’ with an Investment of OMR 20 Million

Redefining Quality Living through 240 Freehold Units in an Integrated Community that Reflects Oman Vision 2040

MUSCAT: Muscat Bay unveiled its latest residential development, Luma Residences, under the patronage of H.E. Dr. Khalfan bin Saeed Al Shueili, Minister of Housing and Urban Planning. With an investment of around OMR 20 million, this new project marks another milestone in Muscat Bay’s journey to create integrated, sustainable communities within one of Oman’s most prominent mixed-use residential and tourism destinations.

Luma Residences comprises 240 freehold units, including apartments, townhouses, and villas, spread across a built-up area of 37,000 square meters. The project is designed to enhance quality of life and blend seamlessly with the surrounding natural landscape while adhering to the highest standards of sustainability and modern urban planning.

The launch of Luma Residences represents a continuation of Muscat Bay’s steady development journey following the notable success of its previous residential projects within the resort village, most recently the Zen project, inaugurated in 2024, which achieved a 90 percent sales rate and is currently in the handover phase.

During the inauguration ceremony, Muscat Bay signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Ahli Bank to finance the Luma Residences project, alongside another agreement to provide housing finance options for buyers of various nationalities. These partnerships will expand accessibility and enhance the project’s appeal to a wider range of homeowners and investors.

H.E. Dr. Khalfan bin Saeed Al Shueili, Minister of Housing and Urban Planning, affirmed that the project reflects the principles of Oman Vision 2040 through the development of integrated and sustainable urban communities



and the strengthening of public-private partnerships. Such efforts contribute to balanced development and improved quality of life across the Sultanate.

Sheikh Hamood bin Sultan Al



Hosni, CEO of Muscat Bay, stated that the launch of Luma Residences marks a new chapter in the company’s growth, revealing that confirmed preliminary bookings have already exceeded 50



steadfast mountains and the flowing sea. Light is at the heart of both the architectural design and the residential experience, creating homes that embody harmony, openness, and warmth.

Aligned with Oman Vision 2040, Luma Residences supports the national objectives of balanced urban growth, enhanced quality of life, and sustainable community development. It also reinforces Oman’s broader commitment to environmental sustainability and carbon neutrality by 2050, incorporating energy-efficient design solutions, integrated water and waste management systems, and expanded green spaces that foster healthy, resilient communities.

For more information please contact: info@muscatbay.com, 96912291
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Al Wusta emerges as a key winter tourism destination

Haima is particularly distinguished by its nature reserves, which are unique in Oman for their rare wildlife

HAIMA: Al Wusta Governorate has become a prominent winter tourist destination, thanks to its soft sandy beaches, bird-rich coastal areas, vast acacia-covered plains, and nature reserves home to rare wildlife.

Bakhit bin Amer bin Suhail Al Amri, Director of the Heritage and Tourism Department in Al Wusta Governorate, said the region has established itself on the tourism map due to its geographical diversity and rich natural and cultural heritage. This has attracted various types of tourism during the winter season.

He added that this distinction is reflected in the increasing interest from visitors, who choose the governorate as an integrated destination for a peaceful and sustainable tourism experience. Tourists can enjoy a range of activities, especially in winter, including diving, boat trips, mountain walking, and photography.

Al Amri noted that the number of hotel establishments registered with the Heritage and Tourism Department in Al Wusta Governorate has reached 23, including hotels, hotel apartments, and guest houses, providing a total of 700 hotel rooms. These establishments are distributed across the governorate as follows: 6 in Mahout, 8 in Haima, and 8 in Duqm, in addition to hotel establishments supervised by the Special Economic Zone in Duqm.

He highlighted that Al Wusta is rich in investment opportunities along its 550-kilometre coastline, along with natural resources and a moderate climate, making it a promising destination for local and international investment in sectors such as oil, tourism, logistics, and fisheries.

The governorate draws significant attention from visitors due to its archaeological, natural, and tourist attractions, making it ideal for enthusiasts of marine and land sports, adventure tourism, mountain climbing, cave and valley exploration, and beach activities such as rowing and diving.

Al Amri explained that Haima is particularly distinguished by its nature reserves, which are unique in Oman for their rare wildlife, including gazelles and Arabian oryx, as well as its caves and springs.

Duqm, he said, is a major economic, commercial, and tourist



hub located between Muscat and Dhofar, offering excellent accommodation and tourist facilities. He noted that the Rock Garden is one of the most important geological tourist sites in Oman.

Al Jazir is characterized by its

diverse coastal, mountainous, and desert landscapes, with extensive coastlines, beaches, and inlets, while Mahout features numerous stunning beaches and bays, in addition to islands, valleys, and inlets.





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5	Indian School Al Ghubra (ISG)	CBSE	KG I – IX
6	Indian School Al Ghubra (ISG International)	CAMBRIDGE	KG I – IX
7	Indian School Bousher (ISB)	CBSE	KG I – IX
8	Indian School Al Seeb (ISAS)	CBSE	KG I – IX
9	Indian School Al Maabala (ISAM)	CBSE	KG I – IX

For the online application form and for more details about the admission process, please visit www.indianschoolsoman.com

A non-refundable processing fee of OMR 15/- will be payable on each application. The closing date of online registration for admissions will be 21 February 2026.

Admissions for children with special needs are open at Care and Special Education (CSE) which is located on the Indian School Muscat premises. Parents can approach the CSE administration directly for admission (www.cseoman.com)

Admissions are purely subject to availability of seats in the respective schools.



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— Indian School Salalah reserves the right to accept or reject any Tender. —

Last Date for submission of Sealed Tender is 29-01-2026 on or before 3 PM

Discussion reviewed bilateral cooperation

<FROM A1 In a separate call, Sayyid Badr held talks with Sergei Lavrov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. The discussion reviewed bilateral cooperation and ways to enhance it across areas of mutual interest, while also serving political consultation and coordination within regional and international frameworks to achieve shared objectives.

Additionally, Sayyid Badr held talks with Hakan Fidan, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye. The discussion reviewed bilateral relations and their positive development across various fields.

The ministers emphasised the importance of strengthening the strategic partnership between Oman and Türkiye, deepening cooperation and enhancing political consultation on regional and international issues. They also exchanged views on regional developments, affirming the need to support efforts that promote regional security and stability, encourage de-escalation, and adopt dialogue and diplomacy as a fundamental strategic approach.

Both ministers underlined the importance of adhering to diplomatic and peaceful solutions to safeguard stability and

Sohar Festival showcases handicrafts through interactive exhibitions

The handicraft industries are distributed across the festival grounds according to the environment they belong to—whether Bedouin, marine, agricultural, or others

Times News Service

SOHAR: The fourth edition of the Sohar Festival features a wide range of activities that encourage community participation, with daily interactive events that highlight the authenticity of Omani heritage through traditional handicrafts. Engineer Nasser bin Saeed Al-Maamari, Head of the Events Committee at the Sohar Festival,



told the Oman News Agency that the handicrafts displayed within the Omani Village cover a diverse selection of products and traditional crafts. He added that live demonstrations are provided to the public, showcasing the craftsmanship and introducing visitors to the essence of these traditional industries. “These crafts are presented and performed by local artisans who have inherited these skills from their forefathers,” Al-Maamari said. “Including them in the festival reflects the committee’s commit-

ment to preserving and highlighting authentic Omani heritage.” He noted that the handicraft industries are distributed across the festival grounds according to the environment they belong to—whether Bedouin, marine, agricultural, or others. This arrangement reflects the diversity of Omani environments in the governorate’s regions and their connection to traditional handicraft industries. Regarding the most prominent handicraft industries at the festival, Al-Maamari highlighted the



spinning and weaving industry, which attracts significant interaction from visitors. Performed by several women in the Bedouin village corner, this craft demonstrates how wool threads are made using traditional spinning tools, while educating visitors about the craft and its tools. “Another traditional craft is the making of fishing nets, showcased in the Maritime Village,” he added. “This craft is presented as part of maritime arts activities, accompanied by traditional sea shan-

ties, emphasising its importance in fishing. Visitors also learn the names of the tools used, and these activities receive a strong positive response.” Woodworking and palm frond crafts also feature prominently at the festival. These crafts are practiced by people of all ages—elderly and young, men and women—highlighting their continued relevance and demand, especially during summer seasons and holidays. Palm frond products remain widely used today and represent an element of environmental recy-

cling, as they are made from natural palm fronds. The festival also showcases the traditional rope-making industry. Al-Maamari emphasised the importance of handicrafts within the festival’s activities, noting their role in attracting tourists and reflecting the cultural identity of the governorate. He also stressed the role of participating craftsmen in transferring traditional skills to new generations, providing an interactive space that links the past with the present.

COMMENTARY

Understanding consumer rights under Oman’s Consumer Protection Law

Consumer rights form a fundamental pillar of fair and ethical commerce, establishing clear protections and standards for every transaction. These protections are set out under the Executive Regulation of Oman’s Consumer Protection Law, as amended up to Consumer Protection Authority Decision No. 1/2023. These safeguards are designed to balance the relationship between buyer and seller, promoting trust and accountability in the marketplace.

Speaking exclusively to the Times of Oman, Dr. Mohammed Ibrahim Al Zadjali, Founding Partner of Mohammed Ibrahim Law Firm, said “Consumer rights establish essential protections within the marketplace. These regulations ensure transparent transactions, requiring sellers to provide clear invoices detailing price, warranty, and product information. Concealing defects or employing misleading advertisements constitutes a violation of these standards.” He added, “Strong warranty provisions support these rights. For a wide range of goods, consumers are entitled to repair, replacement, or a refund for defective items. Requests for replacement or refund may be made within 15 days from receipt for goods covered by statutory warranty provisions, while the right to repair remains available throughout



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

the applicable warranty period. Notably, supplier-made conditions that attempt to waive these rights, such as “no return” policies, are legally invalid.” He further stated, “Safety remains a paramount concern. Products must meet safety standards, and suppliers are obligated to announce recalls upon discovering hazardous defects. Appropriate usage instructions and hazard warnings must be provided to prevent harm. Moreover, a formal complaint mechanism exists through the Consumer Protection Authority, which addresses grievances within a defined period. The right to seek compensation for damages resulting from substandard products or services is also protected.”



“Ultimately, a powerful framework of consumer rights upholds marketplace integrity, ensuring transactions are conducted with transparency, accountability, and a steadfast commitment to safety” he concluded.

(Mohammed Ibrahim Law Firm (info@mohammedibrahim.net), (+968 244 87 600) was established on 14th December 2006 and is serving clients through its offices in Muscat and Sohar, as well as operating on a request basis in other areas. It offers legal representation across a wide range of practice areas that include Labour Law, Corporate, Commercial, Contracts, Banking and Finance, International Trade, Foreign Investment, Insurance, Maritime Law, Construction and Engineering Contracts, International Arbitration, Intellectual Property and more).

IN MADRID

Oman to participate in FITUR toursim exhibition in Spain

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman will participate in the International Tourism Fair “FITUR 2026,” set to launch next Wednesday in Madrid, Spain. The participation aims to highlight global developments in the tourism sector, explore sustainable and innovative tourism concepts, and leverage the latest trends and technologies to support sustainable tourism development.

Oman’s participation will include representatives from tourism institutions, companies, hotel establishments, and strategic partners in the tourism sector. It seeks to showcase the latest developments in Oman’s tourism industry, promote local destinations and tourism products, and strengthen cooperation with Spanish and international tourism companies to increase tourist inflows to the Sultanate.

The event will also witness the announcement of new partnerships and promotional programs implemented by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism in cooperation with its strategic partners. Haitham Mohammed Al Ghas-



sani, Director-General of Tourism Promotion at the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, stated that Oman’s participation in FITUR 2026 comes as part of ongoing efforts to enhance the development of the Sultanate’s diverse tourism assets. He noted that this is achieved by benefiting from international expertise, expanding Oman’s presence in global tourism markets, and building strategic partnerships that support the competitiveness and sustainability of the tourism sector.

He added that FITUR is distinguished by the wide range of tourism fields it covers and by showcasing innovative tourism technologies that offer new opportunities aligned with modern

tourism trends. The exhibition also provides in-depth market studies and analyses, which support future plans to target and attract new tourism markets to the Sultanate. Al Ghasani pointed out that the Sultanate of Oman is an attractive destination for Spanish tourists, with the number of visitors from Spain reaching approximately 10,749 between January and November 2025. He further noted that Madrid serves as a key aviation hub connecting Europe and Latin America, accounting for 16.5 percent of air traffic, making Spanish tourism companies an important gateway for attracting Latin American visitors to Oman.

ARRESTED

3 Asian expats held with drugs in Shinas



Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Directorate for Combating Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of North Al Batinah Governorate Police Command in cooperation with the Special Tasks Police Unit in the Wilayat of Shinas, has arrested three individuals of Asian nationality for smuggling large quantities of marijuana and tablets of psychotropic substances with the intent to traffic them.

African expats held
Thirty-two infiltrators of African nationality were arrested by North Al Sharqiyah Governorate Police Command in various locations in the Wilayat of Bidiyah for entering the country illegally. Legal procedures against the suspects are currently under way.

In Loving Memory of

Mohammed Ayoob C.C.

2nd Anniversary

It is with deep respect and affection that we remember Mr. Mohammed Ayoob, a valued member of the company, whose contributions and legacy continue to inspire us.

omanad Oman Advertising Agency (Management & Staff Members)

INVITATION FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (EOI) FOR DISTRIBUTOR IN RESIDENTIAL / COMMERCIAL SALES IN OMAN

beIN MENA announces for EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (EOI) to participate for “Distributor” in Residential / Commercial Sales in Oman. beIN is seeking for applicants who can demonstrate their ability to provide:

RESIDENTIAL - B2C DISTRIBUTOR	COMMERCIAL - B2B DISTRIBUTOR
- Franchise Module - Master Distributors - Sub-Distributors	- Exclusive - Non-Exclusive

- Exclusive Territory: Exclusive or Non-Exclusive Residential &/or Commercial Sales distributor rights for Oman.
- Market Leader: Partner with beIN, a dominant force in sports and entertainment broadcasting in MENA.
- Lucrative Market: Access to a growing and dynamic commercial market in Oman.
- Comprehensive Support: Benefit from beIN's brand recognition, marketing support, and a vast content library.
- Long-Term Partnership: Opportunity to forge a strategic and enduring relationship with beIN MENA.

WHO SHOULD APPLY:
We are seeking established companies or consortiums with:

- Proven track record in B2B, B2C sales, distribution, or media commercialization.
- Strong understanding of Oman market and business landscape.
- Robust sales infrastructure and a dedicated commercial team.
- Financial stability and capacity for significant investment.
- Commitment to upholding beIN's brand values and service excellence.

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (EOI):
Interested parties are invited to submit their Expression of Interest (EOI) to participate in the exclusive / Non-exclusive distributor selection process. The EOI should include:

- Company Profile and Registration Details
- Overview of relevant experience and market presence in Oman.
- Proposed business plan for residential / commercial sales in Oman.
- Financial capabilities and investment proposal.

All Clarifications and Submissions must be directed to the beIN Procurement Department via email: procurement@bein.com. The final submission deadline is at 23:59 Doha Time on January 31st 2026.

FOREIGN MINISTRY

Iran dismisses US claim of planned attacks on American bases

TEHRAN: Iran has rejected US allegations that it is preparing attacks on American facilities, alleging that Washington is attempting to escalate tensions in West Asia, Iranian state broadcaster Press TV reported.

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei made the remarks on Saturday after the US State Department, in a Persian-language post on X, claimed it had

received reports indicating Iran was working on options to target American bases.

"These statements and claims are in line with the United States' ongoing policy of fueling tensions in the region," Baghaei said, as cited by the state broadcaster.

Baghaei also said the Iranian Armed Forces remain focused on preserving and boosting the country's military and defensive

capabilities to safeguard Iran's sovereignty.

He further warned Iran would respond "firmly and decisively" to any act of aggression, Press TV reported.

In its post, the US State Department claimed that "all options remain on the table" and that any attack on US assets would be met with "very, very strong force."

Press TV also reported that pro-

tests which began late last month over economic concerns across Iran later turned violent, with vandalism and disorder encouraged through public statements by US and Israeli figures.

It added that during the unrest, foreign-backed mercenaries attacked cities, resulting in the deaths of security personnel and civilians, along with damage to public property. — ANI

NEPAL



Kathmandu's Mayor Balen Shah resigns to contest March 5 polls

KATHMANDU: Kathmandu Metropolitan City Mayor Balendra Shah resigned from his post on Sunday to contest the March 5 election. The rapper-turned-mayor is being projected as the next Prime Minister by the Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP).

Within an hour of submitting his resignation, the former mayor, nom-de-guerre Balen, reached the RSP headquarters and rang the bell alongside party president Rabi Lamichhane, while the crowd chanted his name. The former rapper, who won the 2022 local election from the Nepali capital, also assumed the charge of senior leader of the RSP on Sunday. In the letter addressed to Deputy Mayor Sunita Dangol, Shah mentioned that his move comes in accordance with the Constitution of Nepal 2015, the Local Government Operation Act 2017, and prevailing laws of the metropolis. "In accordance with the Constitution of Nepal 2072, the Local Government Operation Act 2074 and the prevailing legal provisions of Kathmandu Metropolitan City, I voluntarily submit my resignation from the post of Mayor of Kathmandu Metropolitan City with effect from 2082.10.04. (2026.01.18)," the resignation letter stated.

Further adding, "While hold-

ing this position, I have tried to work as honestly as possible for the benefit of Kathmandu Metropolitan City and the city residents. I wish that the leadership, service delivery and development journey of the metropolis will be more effective, transparent and result-oriented in the coming days, and I wish you and the municipal executive every success."

On December 28, Balen struck a deal with the Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP), under which it was agreed that he will be the party's next prime ministerial candidate.

As per the seven-point agreement, RSP chair Rabi Lamichhane will continue as the party's central chairman, while Shah will be presented as the party's parliamentary leader after the elections and its prime ministerial candidate.

The RSP emerged as the fourth-largest political force, winning 21 seats in the dissolved House of Representatives within a year of its establishment. With candidacy filing scheduled for Tuesday, Shah is preparing to contest from the Jhapa-5 constituency in the March 5 elections, with the declared aim of defeat from 2082.10.04. (2026.01.18)," the resignation letter stated.

Further adding, "While hold-

On Sunday, the government announced the capture of the strategic town of Tabqa, located about 55 kilometres (34 miles) west of the key city of Raqqa, held by the SDF

DAMASCUS: The Syrian army continues to dislodge the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) from areas in northern and northeastern Syria that the SDF have controlled for over a decade.

On Sunday, the government announced the capture of the strategic town of Tabqa, located about 55 kilometres (34 miles) west of the key city of Raqqa, held by the SDF.

According to the official SANA news agency, Information Minister Hamza Almustafa said, "The Syrian army controls the strategic city of Tabqa in the Raqqa countryside, including the Euphrates Dam, which is the largest dam in Syria."

Earlier, Syrian government troops drove Kurdish forces out of two neighborhoods in Aleppo last week. On Saturday, they also took control of an area east of the city.

On Friday, Mazloun Abdi, the



Syrian Kurdish leader and SDF chief, had committed to redeploying his forces from outside Aleppo to the east of the Euphrates River.

However, on Saturday, the SDF claimed that Damascus had "violated recent agreements and betrayed our forces," and clashes erupted with troops south of Tabqa.

Syrian army seizes oil, gas fields

Reports also emerged on Sunday that Kurdish-led forces had withdrawn from the Omar oil field, Syria's largest, in the eastern province of Deir Ezzor.

Rami Abdel Rahman, the head of the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, told AFP that the SDF "withdrew at dawn on Sunday from all areas under its control in the eastern Deir Ezzor countryside, including the Omar and Tanak oil fields."

According to Reuters, apart from the Omar oil field, Syrian troops also seized the Conoco gas field in eastern Syria.

The SDF has not confirmed the seizure of the oil and gas field. However, they did say that "fac-

tions affiliated with the Damascus government attacked our forces' positions," causing clashes in several towns on the east bank of the Euphrates.

The takeover of the oil fields east of the Euphrates River, a major source of revenue for the Kurdish-led forces, is a major blow to the SDF.

Ocalan sees 'sabotage' in clashes

Meanwhile, he jailed leader of the Kurdish militant group, Abdullah Ocalan, said that recent deadly clashes in Syria between government forces and Kurdish fighters seek to "sabotage" the peace process between Turkey and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

Ocalan, who has been leading the Turkish peace process from prison, "sees this situation in Syria as an attempt to sabotage the peace process in Turkey," according to a delegation from the pro-Kurdish DEM Party who visited him in prison on Saturday.

Last year, the leader of the PKK called for the group to lay down its weapons and disband after more than four decades of conflict that

claimed at least 50,000 lives.

Why are Syrian army and SDF clashing?

Fighting broke out between the Syrian army and Kurdish-led forces as negotiations stalled between Damascus and the SDF over an agreement reached in March 2025. The agreement aimed to integrate their forces and allow the central government to take control of institutions, including border crossings and oil fields, in the northeast.

It appeared that the Syrian government was extending its grip on Kurdish-run areas when President Ahmed al-Sharaa issued a decree on Friday declaring Kurdish a "national language" and granting official recognition to the minority group.

However, the Kurds said that Friday's announcement did not meet their expectations.

During Syria's civil war, the SDF was considered the United States' most important ally in fighting the extremist "Islamic State" group, but the Syrian government accuses the SDF of tolerating al-Asad loyalists and members of the banned PKK within its ranks. — DW

A GROWING FEUD

Port Assab becomes flashpoint for Ethiopia-Eritrea relations

ADDIS ABABA: Tensions between Ethiopia and neighbouring Eritrea have escalated after Ethiopian police said they had seized a lorry full of ammunition allegedly sent from Eritrea to Ethiopian Fano rebels based in Amhara state. Fano rebels have waged an insurgency against the Ethiopian military since 2023.

In response, Eritrea's Information Minister Yemane Gebremeskel told Reuters Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's Prosperity Party was looking for a pretext to attack Eritrea. He said the "regime is floating false flags to justify the war that it has been itching to unleash for two long years."

The latest development comes amid a growing feud between Eritrea and Ethiopia over landlocked Ethiopia's lack of sea access.

Eritrea's 1993 independence left Ethiopia without direct access to the Red Sea, which Ethiopian Prime Minister Ahmed sees as a defining strategic constraint for Africa's second-most populous country.

About 90% of Ethiopia's maritime trade now funnels through Djibouti, a dependence Ethiopian officials argue leaves the country exposed to rising costs, logistical choke points and shifting geopolitical alliances.

Eritrea-Ethiopia tensions reignite

Prime Minister Ahmed's public remarks over the past year have framed sea access as essential for Ethiopia's long-term economic



and security interests. Ethiopian officials insist the campaign is diplomatic and economic in nature. In Eritrea, however, the language has come as a warning siren — and caused considerable anger.

Asmara views Assab, just 75 kilometres (46 miles) from the Ethiopian border, as a core pillar of sovereignty earned through a long independence struggle, which included a war with Ethiopia between 1998 and 2000 that killed tens of thousands.

Earlier this week, Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki told state media that Ahmed's Prosperity Party had declared war on his country.

He said Eritrea did not want war, but added: "We know how to defend our nation."

Last year, Afwerki said any suggestion that Ethiopia might seek guaranteed access or influence over Eritrean ports is a challenge to that hard-won autonomy. Eritrean officials have also accused Addis Ababa of harboring expansionist ambitions, which Ethiopia denies.

However, Bayisa Wak-Woya, a former United Nations diplomat of Ethiopian origin, told DW despite the sharp exchanges, he does not believe conditions exist "for Ethiopia and Eritrea to go into an all-out

war at this stage."

Assab's significance

Assab's significance stretches far beyond bilateral history. It sits near the southern entrance of the Red Sea, and lies close to one of the world's busiest maritime corridors, a choke point linking Europe, the Middle East and Asia.

During Ethiopia's imperial and socialist eras, it served as a key outlet for Ethiopian trade. Since Eritrea's independence, commercial activity has been limited, but its geopolitical value has not diminished.

A communique published by the

Prosperity Party called Ethiopia's desire for sea access "just" and "legitimate" and that "sustained pressure has been exerted to seize Ethiopia's maritime territories and deny it access to the sea."

Analysts say Ethiopia's renewed desire for maritime access has pushed Assab back into the center of strategic calculations, even in the absence of formal territorial claims.

2018 deal a distant memory

With the optimism following the 2018 peace agreement between Ahmedy and Afwerki largely faded, Eritrea has accused Ethiopia of undermining regional stability, while Ethiopia has alleged that Eritrea supports armed groups hostile to Addis Ababa.

Eritrea's withdrawal from the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in mid-December 2025 was widely interpreted as a pointed rebuke, reflecting frustration with what Asmara sees as selective silence inside the regional trade bloc.

At the time, United Nations chief Antonio Guterres urged both nations to "recommit to the vision of lasting peace and the respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity" under the Algiers Agreement.

Political analyst Daniel Teklai says when issues touching directly on Eritrea's sovereignty were raised, the organisation remained "silent."

The standoff revives fears of renewed instability in a region only recently emerging from overlap-

ping conflicts, including Ethiopia's devastating war in Tigray.

A direct confrontation between Addis Ababa and Asmara would risk disrupting trade routes, security cooperation and fragile political transitions across the Horn of Africa.

A war for access to the Red Sea?

Wak-Woya noted that Assab remains deeply embedded in Ethiopia's political imagination, arguing the issue "will never disappear from the political arena," particularly among older generations who continue to struggle with the reality of Eritrea's independence.

A military takeover of Assab would be "illegal," Wak-Woya said.

Abiy, however, also told lawmakers a renewed conflict was not his intent.

"We have no intention of going to war, rather we firmly believe the issue can be resolved peacefully," he told Ethiopia's parliament in December 2025.

International affairs expert Paul Ejime says Ethiopia's influence within IGAD has long fueled Eritrean suspicion, reinforcing Asmara's belief that it has been sidelined within the bloc.

He says tensions are likely to persist because Ethiopia and Eritrea are contiguous, divided by what he describes as "almost artificial boundaries," and warns that without sustained diplomatic engagement, confrontation could harden into something more dangerous. — DW

Greenland row: EU weighing response to Trump tariff plan

European Council President Antonio Costa said the EU was weighing a joint response to a 10% tariff plan announced by President Donald Trump on European nations that oppose his push to acquire Greenland

BRUSSELS: European Commissioner for Trade Maros Sefcovic, who attended the EU-Mercosur dealsigning ceremony in Paraguay, told DW's Rosie Birchard about the bloc's strategy for dealing with Trump's fresh tariff threat against European countries over Greenland.

"There is consultation among the leaders going on. First and foremost, we again stayed very, very, clear on our principles for us, territorial sovereignty, integrity and international law are absolutely key principles," Sefcovic said.

Sefcovic said the new US tariffs could trigger a "very dangerous downward spiral" and European leaders should "simply avoid this

type of development."

Some European lawmakers, such as Manfred Weber of the center-right European People's Party, have said the European Parliament may not be able to ratify the US-EU trade deal that was reached last summer. That deal would see EU goods face a 15% tariff coming into the US, with US goods not facing any levies in the EU. Sefcovic told DW that the path to ratifying the deal will be "very complicated."

He noted that the new EU-Mercosur agreement "should help us more than offset, the negative consequences from the increased tariffs imposed by the United States."

The new EU deal with the Latin



American trading bloc Mercosur will massively reduce trade barriers between the two sides.

Sefcovic also said the EU conducts the most global trade, bigger than China and the US.

"We are predictable. We always look for mutual advantages, deals and we are simply biggest trading bloc on this planet with a huge consumption power with very solid clientele and world class compa-

nies," Sefcovic said. Leading US House Democrat offers resolution to block Trump's tariffs

US House Representative Gregory Meeks of New York said he will offer a resolution to "terminate" Trump's "illegal and absurd tariffs immediately."

"I'm here in Copenhagen and in every conversation I've had, officials have made clear: Greenland is not for sale," Meeks, the top Demo-

crat on the US House Committee on Foreign Affairs, said in a statement posted on X.

"Trump is manufacturing a foreign crisis and sabotaging our closest alliance — all while ignoring the real crisis the American people actually care about: affordability," the statement added, referring to cost-of-living struggles Americans face.

It's unclear if such a resolution would pass if brought to the floor

of the Republican-majority US House of Representatives.

Some Republicans in Congress have also criticized Trump's plans to acquire Greenland, such as US Representative Don Bacon of Nebraska.

Following Trump's announcement of fresh tariffs on Denmark, Germany, France and several other US allies, Bacon posted on Facebook that "Congress must reclaim tariff authorities."

"There's a reason James Madison put tariff authorities under Article One," Bacon posted on X, referring to Article I of the US Constitution. Madison was one of the framers of the Constitution and served as president from 1809 to 1817,

Article I, Section 8 of the US Constitution reads: "The Congress shall have power to lay and collect Taxes, Duties, Imposts and Excises."

The US Supreme Court is currently deliberating the constitutionality of Trump's tariffs on US trading partners. In its second term, the Trump administration has invoked the International Economic Powers Act of 1977 to implement the duties and bypass Congress. — DW

LOCATED IN CENTRAL PROVINCE

Indian Army successfully builds third 120-foot-long Bailey bridge in Sri Lanka

COLOMBO: The Indian Army's Engineer Task Force has successfully constructed the third Bailey Bridge, measuring 120 feet, at KM 15 on the B-492 Highway in Sri Lanka.

The bridge, located in the Central Province, reconnects the Kandy and Nuwara Eliya districts, restoring a critical lifeline that had remained disrupted for over a month following the devastation caused by Cyclone Ditwah.

Taking to social media X, the Indian Army posted, "The Indian Army's Engineer Task Force, after successfully launching two critical Bailey bridges in the Jaffna and Kandy regions, has constructed the third Bailey Bridge of length 120 feet at KM 15 on the B-492 Highway in Sri Lanka's Central Province." "Linking the Kandy and Nuwara Eliya districts, the bridge will restore a vital lifeline which was cut off for over a month in the aftermath of Cyclone Ditwah. This effort reaffirms India's steadfast commitment to Sri Lanka and the Neighbourhood First policy," the post read.

This achievement follows the earlier successful launch of two Bailey bridges in the Jaffna and Kandy regions. Collectively, these engineering efforts have restored road connectivity, improved access to essential services, and provided much-needed relief to communities affected by the cyclone.

Cyclone Ditwah, which struck Sri Lanka late last year, triggered widespread flooding, landslides, and large-scale infrastructure damage, overwhelming local disaster-response mechanisms.

Operation Sagar Bandhu, launched in November 2025, enabled India to provide urgent Hu-



manitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR), including restoration of roads, bridges, and essential services. By swiftly reestablishing connectivity along the B-492, the Indian Army has not only facilitated daily life for affected communities but also strengthened bilateral ties and goodwill between India and Sri Lanka.

This effort reaffirms India's steadfast commitment to Sri Lanka and the Neighbourhood First policy. Under its 'Neighbourhood First' policy, Government is committed to developing friendly and mutually beneficial relations with all its neighbours.

India is an active development partner and is involved in several projects in the following countries - Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka. India's policy of 'Neighbourhood First' focuses on creating mutually beneficial, people-oriented, regional frameworks for stability and prosperity. India's engagement with these countries is based on a consultative, non-reciprocal and outcome-oriented approach, which focuses

on delivering benefits like greater connectivity, improved infrastructure, stronger development cooperation in various sectors area, security and broader people-to-people contacts. Strengthening India's ties with Sri Lanka, earlier, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla met Sri Lanka Parliament Speaker Jagath Wickramaratne on the sidelines of the 28th Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of the Commonwealth (CSPOC) held in New Delhi. They discussed close parliamentary cooperation and recalled the time-tested bonds of friendship, mutual support, and shared democratic traditions between India and Sri Lanka.

"Recalled our earlier interactions and the strong, time-tested bonds between India and Sri Lanka, rooted in close friendship, mutual support, and shared democratic traditions. Our discussions highlighted close Parliament-to-Parliament cooperation, including regular exchanges, formation of friendship groups, and collaboration in policy and programme design," Om Birla said in a post on X.

— ANI

'TIME FOR DENMARK TO GIVE BACK'

Trump threatens to impose tariffs on European countries

WASHINGTON DC: US President Donald Trump on Saturday threatened to impose tariffs on Denmark and other European countries unless they agree to sell Greenland to the US.

In a post on Truth Social, Trump claimed the move is necessary for national security, citing China's and Russia's interest in the territory. He's offering to negotiate but warns of escalating tariffs: 10% from February 1, 2026, and 25% from June 1, 2026.

He threatened 10% tariffs on several European nations, escalating to 25% if they opposed the acquisition, stating it was "time for Denmark to give back" after years of US support.

"Starting on February 1st, 2026, all of the above mentioned Countries (Denmark, Norway, Sweden, France, Germany, The United Kingdom, The Netherlands, and Finland), will be charged a 10% Tariff on any and all goods sent to the United States of America. On June 1st, 2026, the Tariff will be increased to 25%. This Tariff will be due and payable until such time as a Deal is reached for the Complete and Total purchase of Greenland," Trump posted.

Trump has been adamant about acquiring Greenland, a semi-autonomous territory of Denmark, citing national security concerns. He's even threatened to impose tariffs on countries opposing the move, sparking protests in Denmark and Greenland. The US claims Greenland's strategic location and mineral resources are vital to its security, but Denmark and Greenland's leaders have rejected the idea, emphasising their right to self-determination.



"We have subsidised Denmark, and all of the Countries of the European Union, and others, for many years by not charging them Tariffs, or any other forms of remuneration. Now, after Centuries, it is time for Denmark to give back -- World Peace is at stake! China and Russia want Greenland, and there is not a thing that Denmark can do about it. They currently have two dogsleds as protection, one added recently. Only the United States of America, under PRESIDENT DONALD J. TRUMP, can play in this game, and very successfully, at that! Nobody will touch this sacred piece of Land, especially since the National Security of the United States, and the World at large, is at stake," said Trump.

He also commented on several European countries sending military personnel to Greenland as part of a NATO exercise called "Arctic Endurance", a move amid tensions between the US and Denmark over Greenland's strategic importance and mineral resources.

"On top of everything else, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, France, Germany, The United Kingdom, The Netherlands, and Finland have journeyed to Greenland, for purposes unknown. This is a very dangerous situation for the Safety, Security, and Survival of our Planet. These Countries, who are playing this very dangerous game, have put a level of risk in play that is not tenable or sustainable. Therefore, it is imperative that, in order to protect Global Peace and Security, strong measures be taken so that this potentially perilous situation end quickly, and without question," posted Trump.

Germany, Sweden, France, Norway, the Netherlands, and Finland have sent small numbers of military personnel to Greenland, with Denmark increasing its own military presence. The situation has sparked concerns about the potential impact on NATO, with some European leaders warning that a US attempt to seize Greenland could lead to the alliance's demise.

— ANI

BRANCH OF LAW ENFORCEMENT

How are ICE agents recruited in the US and who are they?

WASHINGTON DC: Once a relatively obscure branch of law enforcement, US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents have fast become the sharp point of Donald Trump's mass deportation initiative.

Since Trump took office a year ago, the number of ICE agents has jumped from 10,000 to 22,000, thanks largely to a Department of Homeland Security (DHS) recruitment drive to sign up what they call "qualified patriotic Americans from across the country."

The Trump administration said it deported 605,000 people between January 20 and December 10, 2025, and 1.9 million immigrants had "voluntarily self-deported."

Such a significant upscaling of a branch of law enforcement is unusual — and unprecedented in the history of ICE, which was

formed in 2002. The effort raises questions about screening and the suitability of candidates, of which DHS said there were 220,000 in the last year.

ICE training has been cut from 16 to eight weeks in the drive. The requirement to learn some Spanish, the language of most of the country's unauthorised immigrants, has also been axed. ICE did not respond to a series of questions from DW on its recruitment.

Concerns about the training of agents and the perceived politicisation of ICE have grown in the wake of the death of Renee Nicole Good, which has sparked country-wide protests across and lead to the resignation of a dozen federal prosecutors in the state of Minnesota on Wednesday.

"ICE does seek candidates who meet specific eligibility and suitability requirements, including



citizenship, fitness standards, background investigations and, for some roles, law enforcement training or experience," Melissa Hamilton, an American lawyer and a former police and prison officer, told DW.

"At the same time, recent federal recruitment initiatives have emphasised volume alongside quality,

with significant funding aimed at filling tens of thousands of positions and offering incentives to attract large applicant pools rapidly."

Hamilton, who is currently a professor of law and criminal justice at the University of Surrey in England, said elements of ICE's recruitment strategy, such as visiting job fairs or posting ads on federal

job sites, are typical of law enforcement, but that the organisation is also employing some unusual methods.

"Where ICE's recent approach differs is in the scale and intensity of the media push, with unusually high-budget advertising campaigns and broad public outreach aimed at generating large applicant pools," she said.

This media and social media push, which uses recruitment tools that lean heavily on key Trump messaging, has proved controversial. This has included featuring Uncle Sam, a personified symbol of the US government most notoriously used to recruit soldiers during World War I, on the ICE careers webpage and posting the painting "American Progress," often criticised for showing white settlers travelling towards their manifest destiny while Native

Americans retreat from view, on official social media pages.

The advertising bill for what the DHS has described as a "wartime recruitment" drive in 2026 is \$100 million (£86 million), according to a 30 page document seen by The Washington Post newspaper. The pace looks set to at least continue, given that Trump's "Big Beautiful Bill" handed ICE a \$170 billion budget over the next four years for border and interior enforcement.

Ads target Trump base

But more than posters or slogans, it seems to be "data-driven outreach efforts," as the DHS calls them, that are making the most impact.

Many observers believe ICE is using modern methods to target groups that share Trump's ideology. Hamilton points to the practice of geofencing. — DW

SPORTS

THIRD ODI

New Zealand outplay India by 41 runs to clinch ODI series in Indore

INDORE: Daryl Mitchell and Glenn Phillips struck counter-attacking centuries as New Zealand thwarted a spirited Indian fight-back from Virat Kohli and Harshit Rana in the third and deciding one-day international (ODI) to win by 41 runs on Sunday and clinch their first ODI series in India.

Chasing 338 to win, India stuttered again and were down to 71/4 in the 13th over. An 88-run fifth wicket partnership between Nitish Kumar Reddy (53) and Kohli put the hosts back on track but the exit of Reddy and Jadeja in quick succession put India on the backfoot.

A gritty knock from Kohli and a valuable seventh-wicket stand of



99 runs with Harshit Rana raised India's hopes but once Rana (52) and Kohl departed, India were out for 296. Kohli's ton came off 91 balls

and his knock of 124 off 108 balls was studded with ten boundaries and three sixes. Rana's 52 included four boundaries and four sixes.



Zak Foulkes and Kristian Clarke took three wickets each while Jaydon Lennox claimed a couple. Earlier, Phillips and Mitchell's

centuries lifted New Zealand to 337-8 after the visitors slipped to 5-2 and then 58-3. After being invited to bat first in Indore, the Kiwis fought back through Mitchell and Phillips who put on 219 runs for the fourth wicket.

Mitchell made 137 and Phillips hit 106 off 88 balls to take the attack to the opposition bowlers.

The in-form Mitchell picked up where he left off from his match-winning 131 not out in the previous match, which levelled the series at 1-1. Mitchell reached his ninth ODI ton with a single of Ravindra Jadeja, letting out a scream and celebrating with his partner.

Arshdeep finally got Phillips

caught behind to end the marathon stand and Mitchell soon followed after falling to Mohammed Siraj.

New Zealand wobbled with four more wickets but captain Michael Bracewell hammered an unbeaten 28 off 18 balls to boost their total.

Left-arm quick Arshdeep struck in the first over when he bowled Henry Nicholls for a first-ball duck and Rana removed Devon Conway for five in the next over. Rana stuck again to remove Will Young for 30 but Mitchell and Phillips then rebuilt the innings.

The series will be followed by five T20Is ahead of the T20 World Cup in India and Sri Lanka between February 7 and March 8. - Agencies

Yalla Shabab Giants clinch title

In a thrilling final played at the Oman Cricket Academy ground, YSG defeated Oman Development Team by four wickets to lift the Oman D20 Super League trophy

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Yalla Shabab Giants (YSG) capped a flawless campaign by lifting the Oman D20 Super League trophy, defeating the Oman Development Team (ODT) by four wickets in a gripping final that went down to the final over at the Oman Cricket Academy ground recently.

The showpiece event brought together the top four teams from the Oman D20 League, with the Oman Development Team — a combined side of players from the fifth and sixth placed teams — assembled and managed by Oman Cricket to provide elite competitive exposure to emerging talent.

Asked to bat first, the Oman Development Team produced an all-round batting effort to post 162



for 4 in 20 overs. National team captain Jatinder Singh led from the front with a calm, unbeaten 54 off 50 balls, anchoring the innings with maturity and control.

He found valuable support from Ashish Odedra, who played fluently for 44 off 29 deliveries, while late-order impetus came through Jiten Ramanandi (30 off 17) and Mohammad Nadeem (26 off 22), ensuring the total remained competitive.

For the Giants, Shakeel Ahmed stood out with the ball, delivering an economical and incisive spell of 2 for 23 from four overs, applying



the brakes during the middle phase.

Chasing 163 for the title, Yalla Shabab Giants displayed depth and composure to reach 163 for 6 in 19.3 overs, sealing the championship with three balls to spare.

The chase was shaped by multiple key contributions rather than a single dominant knock. Zohaib Amanat (29 off 22) provided early momentum, while Anfal PA (30 off 17) ensured the asking rate stayed in check during the middle overs.

At the heart of the chase were twin knocks of 39 — Mohammad Sami (39 off 29) and Leo Fransisco (39 off 27) — whose timely part-

nerships kept the Giants in control despite regular breakthroughs.

The Development Team fought back admirably with the ball, led by Samay Shrivastava (2/31) and Yashas GL (2/33), but the Giants' batting depth ultimately proved decisive.

Perfect campaign crowned

The victory completed a perfect 5-from-5 run for Yalla Shabab Giants in the Super League, underlining their consistency and balance throughout the tournament.

Beyond the result, the final underlined the growing strength of Oman's domestic cricket pathway, with the Oman Development Team's strong showing reinforcing the value of Oman Cricket's initiative to fast-track emerging players through high-intensity competition.

For Yalla Shabab Giants, however, it was their night — a championship triumph earned through teamwork, temperament and a campaign executed to perfection.

Stand-in skipper Jay Odedra and regular captain Saishiv Narayan, who missed the final due to illness, received the trophy from Oman Cricket Chief Development Officer and national team head coach Duleep Mendis.

Brief scores: ODT 162/4 in 20 overs (Jatinder Singh 54 n.o., Ashish Odedra 44, Mohammad Nadeem 26, Jiten Ramanandi 30; Shakeel Ahmed 2/23) lost to YSG 163/6 in 19.3 overs (Zohaib Amanat 29, Anfal PA 30, Mohammad Sami 39, Leo Fransisco 39; Samay Shrivastava 2/31, Yashas GL 2/33).



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Images shown are for illustrative purpose only.

INDIA A KEY GROWTH ENGINE
India continues to remain a key growth engine for the global economy, with its economic performance staying strong and resilient, according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

MARKET
BUSINESS & FINANCE



BANK MUSCAT NET PROFIT
Bank Muscat posted a net profit of OMR 255.54 million for the period compared to OMR 225.58 million reported during the same period in 2024, an increase of 13.3 per cent.

Oman’s refinery output rose by 11.4%

The data indicated that the production of 91 octane gasoline rose by 17.5 percent to reach 15.64 billion barrels, while the production of 95 octane gasoline increased by 21.1 percent to 13.182 billion barrels



MUSCAT: The total production of refineries in the Sultanate of Oman recorded an increase of 11.4 percent by the end of November 2025, reaching approximately 76.992 billion barrels, compared to 69.113 billion barrels during the same period in 2024, according to data issued by refineries and petroleum industries.

The data indicated that the production of 91 octane gasoline rose by 17.5 percent to reach 15.64 bil-

lion barrels, while the production of 95 octane gasoline increased by 21.1 percent to 13.182 billion barrels. Gas oil (diesel) production also grew by 11.7 percent, reaching 31.639 billion barrels by the end of November 2025.

Meanwhile, jet fuel production declined by 9 percent, recording 9.5 billion barrels, while liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) production increased by 14.5 percent to reach 7.033 billion barrels

during the same period.

In the petrochemicals sector, polypropylene production surged by 81.6 percent, reaching 327,000 tonnes, while paraxylene production increased by 10.8 percent to 535,000 tonnes. Benzene production recorded a marginal growth of 0.9 percent.

Regarding domestic sales, gas oil sales increased by 7.1 percent to 13.875 billion barrels, while sales of (95) octane gasoline rose by 2.1

percent and (91) octane gasoline by 1 percent. In contrast, jet fuel sales declined by 3.5 percent during the same period.

On the export front, exports of (95) octane gasoline surged by 166.4 percent, reaching 1.526 billion barrels, while exports of liquefied petroleum gas rose by 127.9 percent. Conversely, exports of (91) octane gasoline decreased by 15.8 percent by the end of November 2025. -ONA

CONVENTIONAL COMMERCIAL BANKS



Credit granted by banks in Oman rises by 8.5%

MUSCAT: The total credit granted by conventional commercial banks in the Sultanate of Oman at the end of November 2025 recorded an increase of 8.5 percent, while credit granted to the private sector increased by 5.8 percent to reach OMR21.9 billion.

Regarding the investment front, the total investments of conventional commercial banks in securities witnessed an increase of 7.4 percent, reaching approximately OMR6.4 billion by the end of November 2025.

Within this, investment in government development bonds (GDBs) recorded an increase of 9.5 percent compared to the same period last year to reach OMR2.2 billion, while the investments of these banks in foreign securities decreased by 4.4 percent to

reach OMR2.3 billion by the end of November 2025.

On the liabilities side, total deposits with conventional commercial banks recorded an increase of 6.3 percent to reach OMR26.4 billion by the end of November 2025.

Within total deposits, government deposits with commercial banks recorded an increase of 7.6 percent to reach approximately OMR5.8 billion, while deposits of public sector institutions decreased by 25.6 percent to reach approximately OMR1.9 billion during the same period.

Private sector deposits recorded an increase of 9.5 percent to reach OMR17.8 billion in November 2025, constituting 67.2 percent of total deposits with conventional commercial banks. -ONA

MAIN INDEX

Muscat Stock Exchange index rises 97 points in weekly trading



MUSCAT: The main index of the Muscat Stock Exchange rose 97 points last week and closed at 6,223 points, benefiting from the atmosphere of optimism that prevailed among investors with the announcement of the preliminary financial results of public shareholding companies whose fiscal year ended last December.

Preliminary financial results showed good performance for many publicly listed companies on the Muscat Stock Exchange. OQ Exploration and Production recorded the highest profits at OMR293.1 million, although its profits during the past year recorded a decline of 10 percent compared to the net profits recorded in 2024, which amounted to OMR326.5 million. Bank Muscat ranked second with net profits of OMR255.5 million compared to OMR225.5 million in 2024 and the net profits of Bank Sohar International remained stable at OMR100 million.

The net profit of the National

Bank of Oman (NBO) rose to OMR70.2 million compared to OMR63.1 million in 2024, and the profit of Ahli Bank increased from OMR41.6 million to OMR46.3 million. The profit of Oman Cables Industry rose to OMR24.2 million compared to OMR22.6 million in 2024, and the net profit of Voltamp Energy jumped from about OMR6.1 million to OMR14.2 million. Energy companies performed well, with the net profit of most companies that announced their financial results rising.

During the week, the prices of 57 securities rose, which positively impacted the stock exchange indices and the market capitalisation jumped to OMR33.25 billion, recording weekly gains of OMR318.5 million.

Sectoral indices recorded a positive performance, led by the industrial sector index, which rose 335 points, supported by several industrial companies, most notably Al Jazeera Steel Industries,

Voltamp Energy, Oman Cables Industry, and Gulf Mushroom Production. The financial sector index rose 79 points, the services sector index rose 43 points, and the Sharia index rose 13 points.

During the week, the Muscat Stock Exchange witnessed a decline in the value of trading and the number of executed transactions. The value of trading decreased from OMR266 million to OMR174.6 million, and the number of transactions executed decreased from 26,686 transactions to 20,231 transactions.

OQ Exploration and Production topped the list of most traded companies in terms of trading value with OMR36.6 million, representing 21 percent of the total trading value. Bank Sohar International came in second with OMR25.7 million, Bank Muscat came in third with OMR25.1 million, Asyad Shipping came in fourth with OMR16.5 million and OQ Gas Networks came in fifth with trades

MSX delivers another positive performance

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Omani stock market delivered another week of positive performance, rising by 1.60% and maintaining solid momentum above the 6,000-point level, according to an industry analyst. “Market sentiment remained buoyant, showing notable resilience against recent regional geopolitical developments,” said Milad Azar, Market analyst at XTB MENA.

“The Q4 earnings season provided support as several heavyweight stocks saw positive earnings, banks in particular. Furthermore, positive projections for economic growth, driven by government programs and non-oil sector expansion, are keeping expectations high for corporate performance outside the energy sector,” he further added.

Additionally, the market could find support in the medium-term from monetary policy easing. While the Federal Reserve is expected to keep



its interest rates unchanged in the short term, two interest rates cut are anticipated later this year.

The momentum generated by the International Financial Centre announcement continued to support the market. This comprehensive ecosystem is projected to be a major driver for foreign capital inflows and financial innovation, significantly advancing Vision 2040's economic diversification goals and creating high-value jobs to cement Oman's position as a leading regional financial hub.

Performance across all sectors was positive this week,

with the Industrial sector leading the market and recording gains of over 4%. OQ Base Industries contributed to this rise, climbing 1.06%. Voltamp Energy also saw strong momentum, rising 7.63%, while Gulf Mushroom Products surged 8.86%.

The Services sector also maintained upward momentum, closing 1.75% higher. OQ Gas Networks advanced 2.49% on the back of favorable Q4 numbers, while OQ Exploration and Production rose 2.11%. Among other key players, Asyad gained 2.09% following a 9% earnings improvement, and Abraj Energy climbed 3.47% after posting positive results.

The Financial sector also posted gains, rising by 0.75%. Bank Muscat advanced 2.64% following strong results that highlighted a 13.3% improvement in net profit, while Bank Dhofar climbed 2.92% on the back of a 17.1% profit increase. In contrast, Sohar International Bank dipped 0.61%.

GULF-STAT

GCC international tourism revenues surge to \$120.2 billion

MUSCAT: International tourism revenues in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states rose to \$120.2 billion in 2024, up 39.6 percent from 2019 and 8.9 percent from 2023, the Statistical Centre for the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (Gulf-Stat) said.

This reflects the continued strong performance of inbound tourism to the GCC countries in 2024, recording notable growth in visitor numbers, revenues, and employment, thereby reinforcing the sector's role as one of the key drivers of economic diversification and support for GDP.

In its “Travel and Tourism in the GCC Countries 2024” report, Gulf-Stat said international tourist arrivals to the region reached 72.2 million in 2024, up 51.5 percent from 2019 and 6.1 percent from 2023, taking the GCC's share of global tourism to 5.2 percent.

This performance reflects a recovery exceeding pre-pandemic levels, driven by expanded air connectivity, visa facilitation measures, and the diversification of tourism products.

By source market, the Middle East accounted for 18.8 percent

of inbound tourists, followed by Europe at 14.6 percent and Asia-Pacific at 14.5 percent, it said.

Intra-GCC travel made up 41.3 percent of total international tourists, with an average annual growth rate of 51.2 percent between 2019 and 2024, Gulf-Stat said, citing

greater mobility and joint events.

Tourism infrastructure expanded alongside demand, with hotel establishments in the GCC reaching 11,200 properties, comprising about 711,500 rooms. Tourism employment rose to 1.7 million workers in 2024, up 33.0 percent from 2020.

MARKET

Bank Muscat’s net profit rises 13.3% to OMR255.54 million

Net interest income from conventional banking and net income from Islamic financing stood at OMR 413.01 million for the year ended 31 December 2025 compared to OMR 397.70 million for the same period in 2024, an increase of 3.8 per cent

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat, the flagship financial institution in the Sultanate, announced its preliminary unaudited results for the year ended 31 December 2025. The Bank posted a net profit of OMR 255.54 million for the period compared to OMR 225.58 million reported during the same period in 2024, an increase of 13.3 per cent. The key highlights of the results for the year are as follows:

- 1) Net interest income from conventional banking and net income from Islamic financing stood at OMR 413.01 million for the year ended 31 December 2025 compared to OMR 397.70 million for the same period in 2024, an increase of 3.8 per cent.
- 2) Non-interest income was OMR 174.18 million for the year ended 31 December 2025 as compared to OMR 145.00 million for the same period in 2024, an increase of 20.1 per cent due to

growth in business volumes and higher investment income. 3) Operating expenses for the year ended 31 December 2025 was RO 222.88 million as compared to OMR 209.26 million for the same period in 2024, an increase of 6.5 per cent. 4) Net impairment losses on financial assets for the year ended 31 December 2025 was OMR 60.97 million as against RO 64.41 million for the same period in 2024. 5) Net Loans and advances including Islamic financing receivables increased by 4.8 per cent to OMR 10,731 million as against OMR 10,237 million as at 31 December 2024. 6) Customer deposits including Islamic Customer deposits increased by 6.7 per cent to OMR 10,430 million as against OMR 9,777 million as at 31 December 2024. The full results for the year ended 31 December 2025 along with the complete set of unaudited financial statements will be released following the approval of the Board of Directors of the Bank at its meeting scheduled later during January 2026.



2026 Oman International Drifting Championship concludes with wide international participation

MUSCAT: The 2026 Oman International Drifting Championship, organised by the Oman Automobile Association under the patronage of His Excellency Azzan bin Qasim Al Busaidi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism for Tourism, concluded on Saturday evening, featuring over 50 racers from more than 20 countries. The championship, recognised as one of the most prestigious drifting events worldwide, highlighted Oman's position as a regional and international hub for motorsports, thanks to its professional organization, top safety standards, and large spectator turnout. The results saw Ahmed Daham



claim first place in the international category, followed by Tommy Kelly in second and Jack Shanahan in third. In the local category,

Ahmed Al Amri took first place, followed by Tarek Al Shehane and Ali Al Balushi. The two-day championship was



held at Muscat Drift Arena at the Oman Automobile Association headquarters as part of the Muscat Nights 2026 events, offering a highly competitive atmosphere, comprehensive logistical arrangements, and attracting a large and enthusiastic audience.

Startups play pivotal role in accelerating tourism sector growth in Ras Al Khaimah

RAS AL KHAIMAH: Ras Al Khaimah has witnessed remarkable growth in its tourism sector, alongside broad service diversification and increasing competition among tourism companies, positioning it as the fastest-growing sector in the emirate. This growth is reflected in leisure projects that draw on Ras Al Khaimah's geographic and environmental diversity, leveraging the striking views of the majestic Hajar Mountains, a 64-kilometre stretch of sandy beaches, and golden desert dunes. Together, these elements deliver distinctive tourism experiences and provide startups operating in the sector with a wide range of ideas, activities, and initiatives that stimulate visitor demand, with a focus on desert safaris, mountain tours, and water sports, supported by world-class services offered by



hotels, resorts, and restaurants. The Government of Ras Al Khaimah continues to work diligently to reinforce the emirate's position as a leading destination for sustainable tourism. In 2024, the emirate welcomed 1.28 million visitors, recording a 12 percent increase in tourism revenues and a notable 15 percent growth in visi-

tor numbers within the meetings, incentives, exhibitions, and conferences (MICE) sector. During the first half of 2025, Ras Al Khaimah registered a record number of visitors exceeding 654,000, as it advances steadily toward its goal of attracting more than 3.5 million visitors annually by 2030.

In addition, Ras Al Khaimah was selected as the Gulf Tourism Capital for two consecutive years, 2020 and 2021, by tourism ministers and officials of the GCC countries. The sixth edition of the World's Coolest Winter campaign, launched under the slogan "Our Winter Is Entrepreneurial," and implemented by the Ministry of Economy and Tourism in cooperation with relevant tourism, culture, and heritage entities across the UAE, aims to highlight the role of startups operating in the tourism sector in showcasing natural beauty and tourism destinations across the country's emirates. Tourism companies play a vital role in promoting Ras Al Khaimah by marketing diversified packages that include mountain adventures, water activities, and cultural heritage experiences.

WEF economists expect global economic conditions to weaken in 2026 over mounting debt, geopolitics

WEF economists expect global economic conditions to weaken in 2026 over mounting debt, geopolitics

DAVOS: Around 53 per cent of World Economic Forum chief economists who were surveyed expect global economic conditions to weaken in the year ahead, down from 72 per cent in September 2025, even as they acknowledge the relative resilience of the global economy amid turbulence. The global economic outlook has improved modestly but remains uncertain, with asset valuations, mounting debt, geoeconomic realignment and rapid artificial intelligence deployment creating both opportunities and risks, according to the World Economic Forum's latest Chief Economists' Outlook, published on January 16. Although 53 per cent of chief

economists expect global economic conditions to weaken in the year ahead, this marks a significant improvement from the 72 per cent who held this view in September 2025. Uncertainty around technology remains high, with 52 per cent expecting AI-related stocks to decline and 40 per cent expecting gains. When it comes to the potential expected returns from AI, there is wide variation across regions and sectors. Roughly four in five chief economists expect productivity gains within two years in the US and China. Chief economists expect the information technology sector to adopt AI fastest, with nearly three-quarters anticipating imminent productivity gains.



Financial services, supply chain, healthcare, engineering and retail follow as "fast-movers", with one to two-year timelines.

On growth, expectations diverge by region, with economists expecting strong momentum in South Asia and East Asia and weak to

moderate growth in Europe. On macroeconomics, nearly a third of respondents are concerned about sovereign debt crises in advanced economies and nearly half in emerging economies; over 60 per cent expect governments to rely on higher inflation and tax revenues to manage elevated debt. "The Chief Economists survey reveals three defining trends for 2026: surging AI investment and its implications for the global economy; debt approaching critical thresholds with unprecedented shifts in fiscal and monetary policies; and trade realignments," said Saadia Zahidi, Managing Director, World Economic Forum. Global trade and invest-

ment are adjusting to a new, competitive reality. Chief economists expect import tariffs between the US and China to remain mostly stable, though competition could intensify in other domains. Some 91 per cent expect US tech export restrictions to China to remain or increase; 84 per cent anticipate the same for Chinese critical mineral restrictions. The World Economic Forum's 56th Annual Meeting, taking place on 19-23 January 2026 in Davos-Klosters, Switzerland, will convene leaders from business, government, international organizations, civil society and academia under the theme, A Spirit of Dialogue. -ANI

INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND



India a key growth engine for global economy

NEW DELHI: India continues to remain a key growth engine for the global economy, with its economic performance staying strong and resilient, according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF). IMF spokesperson Julie Kozack, who also heads the Communications Department (COM) at the IMF, highlighted India's growing importance during a media briefing on Thursday. She noted that the latest economic data from India has come in stronger than expected, reinforcing the country's role as a major driver of global growth. She stated, "So what we have seen in India is that India is a key growth engine for the world. India's growth in 2025, when we did our Article IV staff report, we had estimated growth for fiscal year 25-26 at 6.6 per cent, which is based on the strong consumption growth". She further pointed out that since the release of the Article IV report, India's third-quarter growth has turned out to be stronger than anticipated. This development has increased the likelihood that the IMF may revise its growth forecast for India upwards in the near term. "What we have seen since then is that the third quarter growth

in India came out stronger than expected, and that makes it likely that we will be upgrading our forecast going forward," Kozack said. She added that the IMF is set to release its January real update in the coming days, during which a revised growth number for India will be announced. "We have our January real update coming in the next few days, so we will have a revised growth number for India at that time," she stated. Highlighting the broader picture, Kozack said that the IMF's overall assessment of India remains positive. According to her, the country has consistently played a key role in supporting global growth, even amid challenging international economic conditions. "The bottom line for us on India is that it has been a key driver of global growth, and growth has been quite robust in India," she said. The IMF's latest remarks reflect continued confidence in India's economic fundamentals, with strong domestic consumption acting as a major pillar of growth. The upcoming update is now keenly awaited, as it may further strengthen India's position as one of the fastest-growing major economies in the world. -ANI



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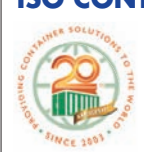
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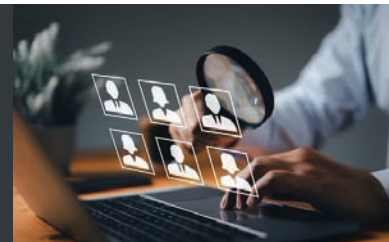


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Indian male, Bcom, MBA finance, 14 yrs of Oman and Indian experience, seeking suitable jobs in accounts. Have valid Oman D/L. Contact:97436925. Email : sandeep_as@yahoo.com

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

Accountant looking for job. Contact: 75024166

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

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

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

ACCOUNTS/FINANCE

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

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

ADMINISTRATION

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

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

Indian male, 29 yrs, MBA with NEBOSH certified with 2+ yrs experience in administration looking for safety or administration jobs. Contact: +968 74105832, email: ashikthahir@gmail.com

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

Highly skilled accounting and administrative professional with diverse experience in technical and office administration roles Contact: 90473476. Email: kpsanjay202@gmail.com

ARCHITECT

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

EDUCATION/TRAINING

Indian female, completed MCA and also having experience in teaching, available in Oman on family visa, looking for a suitable job. Contact: +91 79090343/ +968 94117967, Email: induchandran01@gmail.com

IT

Indian male MCA graduate with 1+yrs experience as an IT support, Contact- 9471 8569- Email- syedfarhansj2002@gmail.com

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

ENGINEER

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

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

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

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

ENGINEER

Dedicated Female Civil Engineer specializing in Quantity Surveying seeking suitable career opportunities. Mob. No. 9724774, email: kalakalesh159@gmail.com

Electrical engineer with experience 19 yrs in Oman. Tel: 98148034

LOGISTICS

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

Senior Logistics Coordinator with 8 yrs of professional experience in import and export clearance, seeking career opportunities in Oman. Contact: 97869393

MANAGER

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

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

PURCHASE/ PROCUREMENT

Store Manager & Quality Controller with 12 yrs experience (Oman). Diploma in Warehouse & Procurement Management, B.Com graduate. Skilled in inventory, procurement, and compliance. Seeking a suitable position. Email: rajeshkumarktm@gmail.com Ph: +968 90218550

PURCHASE/ PROCUREMENT

PDO-approved professional with MBA in Operations Management and 20+ yrs in oil & gas/manufacturing, seeking senior leadership in procurement, logistics, or contracts. Contact: 92422764

Store incharge/ transportation incharge/ camp boss with 3 yrs Gulf experience with Oman driving license. Contact: 98336406

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

Procurement Engineer 19 yrs experience construction and trading. whatsapp: +96895839964

SALES/MARKETING

Indian male, 15+ yrs Sales exp. (IT/Software). Open to Sales/BD roles in any industry. Valid Oman D/L. Contact: 94110178

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

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

B.com graduate with 2 years marketing experience looking for a job , contact: 91447565

Indian male (35) MBA in Oman 10 yrs exp in marketing in FMCG, pharma Contact - 79755795



Oman Football

Academy League





OMAN FOOTBALL ACADEMY LEAGUE



MATCH RESULTS

نتائج المباراة

Friday 16 January 2026

Group A - MCT 2017	Pitch 1 - Muscat	Group A - MCT 2013	Pitch 2 - Muscat	Group A - MCT 2016	Pitch 3 - Muscat
 Al Seeb Academy	6	 Al Seeb Academy	0	 Juventus Oman	3
 Egypt	0	 Al Hosen	3	 Egypt	0

Group A - MCT 2015	Pitch 4 - Muscat	Group A - MCT 2014	Pitch 1 - Muscat	Group A - MCT 2013	Pitch 2 - Muscat
 Al Seeb Academy	2	 PLFA Oman	1	 Etifaq	1
 Catalunia	0	 All Star	2	 Juventus Oman	3

Group A - MCT 2015	Pitch 3 - Muscat	Group A - MCT 2013	Pitch 4 - Muscat	Group A - MCT 2014	Pitch 1 - Muscat
 Mahaj	2	 Champions	0	 Egypt	1
 Juventus Oman	0	 Golden Boy	3	 Etimad	3

Group A - MCT 2013	Pitch 3 - Muscat	Group A - MCT 2015	Pitch 4 - Muscat	Group A - MCT 2012	Pitch 1 - Muscat
 Mohtaref	3	 Alegria	0	 Alegria	15:00
 Golden Boy	0	 Al Mohtaref	3	 Egypt	

Group A - MCT 2011	Pitch 3 - Muscat	Group A - MCT 2012	Pitch 1 - Muscat	Group A - MCT 2011	Pitch 3 - Muscat
 Catalunia	15:00	 Al Noor	3	 Juventus Oman	0
 Al Noor		 PLFA Oman	0	 Al Noor	2

Saturday 17 January 2026

Group A - MCT 2009	Pitch 1 - Muscat	Group A - MCT 2009	Pitch 1 - Muscat	Group A - MCT 2009	Pitch 1 - Muscat
 All Star	0	 Egypt	2	 Alegria	0
 Al Noor	2	 Alegria	0	 All Star	4

Group A - MCT 2009	Pitch 1 - Muscat	Group A - MCT 2011	Pitch 1 - Muscat
 Qernas	2	 Juventus Oman	0
 PLFA Oman	0	 Al Seeb Academy	1





LIFESTYLE

INJECTION
TURNS
SLEEPING
TUMOUR
IMMUNE
CELLS
INTO
CANCER
FIGHTERS:
STUDY

WASHINGTON DC: The Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology (KAIST) researchers have developed a way to reprogram immune cells already inside tumours into cancer-killing machines.

A drug injected directly into the tumour is absorbed by macrophages, prompting them to recognise and attack cancer cells while activating nearby immune defences.

This eliminates the need for lab-based cell extraction and modification. In animal models, the strategy significantly slowed tumour growth and sparked strong anticancer immune responses.

KAIST (President Kwang Hyung Lee) announced that a research team led by Professor Ji-Ho Park from the Department of Bio and Brain Engineering has developed a new treatment approach.

When a drug is injected directly into a tumour, macrophages already present in the body absorb the drug and begin producing CAR (a cancer-recognising device) proteins. This process converts them into anticancer immune cells known as “CAR-macrophages.”

Why Solid Tumours Are So Hard to Treat

Solid tumours, including gastric, lung, and liver cancers, form dense structures that block immune cells from entering or functioning effectively because of this physical and biological barrier, many existing immune cell therapies struggle to work well against these types of cancers.

CAR-macrophages have emerged as a promising next-generation immunotherapy. Unlike some immune cells, macrophages can directly engulf and destroy cancer cells. They also stimulate nearby immune cells, helping to amplify the body’s overall anti-cancer response.

Despite their potential, current CAR-macrophage therapies rely on extracting immune cells from a patient’s blood, growing them in the lab, and genetically modifying them before reinfusion. This process is slow, expensive, and difficult to scale, which limits its practicality for many patients.

Reprogramming Immune Cells Directly Inside the Body

To bypass these challenges, the KAIST team focused on “tumour-associated macrophages” that naturally gather around tumours. The researchers developed a method to reprogram these cells directly inside the body rather than modifying them outside it.

Their approach uses lipid nanoparticles -- engineered to be easily taken up by macrophages -- loaded with both mRNA that carries cancer-recognition instructions and an immune-activating compound.

As described by the researchers, this method creates CAR-macrophages by “directly converting the body’s own macrophages into anticancer cell therapies inside the body.”

Strong Tumour Suppression in Animal Studies

When the treatment was injected into tumours, macrophages quickly absorbed the nanoparticles and began producing proteins that identify cancer cells.

At the same time, immune signalling was activated. The resulting “enhanced CAR-macrophages” showed much stronger cancer-killing ability and stimulated surrounding immune cells, leading to a powerful anticancer response.

In animal models of melanoma (the most dangerous form of skin cancer), tumour growth was significantly reduced. The researchers also found evidence that the immune response could extend beyond the treated tumour, suggesting the potential for broader, body-wide immune protection.

A New Direction for Cancer Immunotherapy

Professor Ji-Ho Park said, “This study presents a new concept of immune cell therapy that generates anticancer immune cells directly inside the patient’s body.” He added that “it is particularly meaningful in that it simultaneously overcomes the key limitations of existing CAR-macrophage therapies -- delivery efficiency and the immunosuppressive tumour environment.”

Study Details and Funding

The study was led by Jun-Hee Han, PhD, from the Department of Bio and Brain Engineering at KAIST as the first author. The findings were published on November 18 in ACS Nano, an international journal focused on nanotechnology.

The research was supported by the Mid-Career Researcher Program of the National Research Foundation of Korea. **ANI**

Sabalenka, Zverev get off to winning starts in Melbourne

World No.1 Belarusian is chasing a third Melbourne crown in four years

MELBOURNE: An error-strewn Aryna Sabalenka made a stodgy start to her Australian Open title charge with a 6-4, 6-1 win over French wildcard Tiantsoa Rakotomanga Rajaonah while world No.3 Alexander Zverev dropped a set before reaching the Australian Open men's second round in a shaky start to his bid to make another final at the season-opening Grand Slam on Sunday.

Sabalenka, the world No.1, who is chasing a third Melbourne crown in four years, faces Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova of Russia or Chinese qualifier Bai Zhuoxuan next. The 27-year-old Belarusian, fresh from winning the season-opening Brisbane International, made a sloppy start in losing the first three points of the match when serving.

In front of the watching Roger Federer, Sabalenka clawed back to deuce but then misfired again to fall a game down in front of a shocked Rod Laver Arena.



Sabalenka, who is the favourite to add a fifth Grand Slam title to her career haul, pulled back level, but if she expected the spirited world No.118 to melt away, it did not immediately happen. The reigning US Open champion offered an apology to her underdog opponent at 4-4 when she unleashed a forehand into the 20-year-old's head.

Sabalenka's error count was rising, but she finally broke Rakotomanga Rajaonah's resistance to claim the first set, then eased home in the second. Sabalenka

was stunned in the Melbourne final by Madison Keys of the United States a year ago.

Shaky Zverev

Germany's Zverev, who lost in three sets to Jannik Sinner in the 2025 tournament decider, ground past 41st-ranked Canadian Gabriel Diallo 6-7 (1/7), 6-1, 6-4, 6-2.

It put him into round two at Melbourne Park for a 10th straight year as he looks to disrupt the domination of Sinner and World No. 1 Carlos Alcaraz, who

have shared the last eight major titles. But he had to work hard to tame the lanky 24-year-old, who showed his potential with a maiden ATP title last year.

"Definitely wasn't happy when I saw the draw," he said. "He's very talented and unbelievably aggressive. It was hard to find my rhythm."

Zverev was broken early and slumped 1-4 behind in the opening set, struggling with the Canadian's booming serve.

Diallo went 40-0 up on his own

serve with a chance to take a 5-2 lead, but the German dug deep to haul himself back to 4-4. He saved a set point at 4-5 and it went to a tiebreak, where it was all Diallo.

Zverev regrouped at the change-over and came out firing, racing 4-0 clear with a double break to power through set two in 31 minutes and dial up the pressure.

Zverev scored a crucial break in the seventh game of set three when Diallo fluffed a forehand from the baseline and took control as his opponent's error count surged.

Another break on Diallo's first service game in set four set Zverev on his way to sealing the match.

His reward is a clash next with either Australian World No. 49 Alexei Popyrin or 50th-ranked Frenchman Alexandre Muller.

Should he finally triumph in Melbourne on his 40th Slam appearance, Zverev will go second on the Open era list for most attempts before winning a Grand Slam title.

Goran Ivanisevic holds the record, winning Wimbledon in 2001 on his 48th attempt. - Agencies

AUSTRALIAN OPEN



British qualifier Fery stuns 20th seed Cobolli

MELBOURNE: Briton Arthur Fery did his tennis-mad mum proud on Sunday after she jetted over from Europe when he came through qualifying at the Australian Open to witness him upset 20th seed Flavio Cobolli.

The 23-year-old, ranked 185 and in his main draw debut at Melbourne Park, blasted past the Italian 7-6 (7/1), 6-4, 6-1 on John Cain Arena.

"Very satisfying. I was already happy to qualify here for my first time, and now obviously coming through qualies and winning a round, I'm proud of it," he said.

Fery's only other Grand Slam second-round appearance came at Wimbledon last year, where he

also beat a 20th seed in the first round—Australian Alexei Popyrin.

When he successfully negotiated qualifying in Melbourne, his mum, Olivia, who played in the 1991 Roland Garros women's doubles, was quick to jump on a plane to Australia and support him.

"When I won that last round (of qualifying), she asked me if she could come," he said.

"I was like, 'Of course, it would be nice to have you here.' It's obviously a long way, but at least I made it worth it. She can see at least two matches—hopefully more."

Defeat was a big setback for Cobolli, who appeared to be battling a stomach issue throughout the match.

He made the Wimbledon quarterfinals last year, before falling to Novak Djokovic, and won two ATP titles at Bucharest and Hamburg.

Elsewhere, Jasmine Paolini powered into the Australian Open second round with a straight-sets demolition to kickstart the action in a hot and sunny Melbourne on Sunday.

The seventh-seeded Italian outclassed Belarusian qualifier Aliaksandra Sasnovich 6-1, 6-2 at Rod Laver Arena. Paolini faces Poland's Magdalena Frech or Veronika Erjavec of Slovenia next. In another match, Maria Sakkari beat Leolia Jeanjean from France 6-4, 6-2 to open the tournament on a commanding note. - Agencies

CONCLUDED IN SAUDI ARABIA

Al Attiyah claims sixth Dakar car crown, Benavides takes bike title

YANBU: Qatar's Nasser Al Attiyah secured his sixth Dakar Rally car title in Saudi Arabia on Saturday, with Luciano Benavides scraping home by two seconds to claim the bike title.

"We've worked very hard since last year. I might not be showing much emotion yet, but it's there, deep down. We are so happy to win," said Al Attiyah at the finish.

Al Attiyah, at the wheel of a Dacia, only had to avoid a final day slip-up to top the podium after bringing his career tally of stage wins to 50 on Friday. The 55-year-old, who took clay pigeon shooting bronze at the 2012 London Olympic Games, was adding to his previous Dakar wins in 2011, 2015, 2019, 2022 and 2023.

With Belgian co-driver Fabian Lurquin, Al Attiyah took control of the overall standings early on in the motorsport marathon.

After placing ninth on the 13th and final stage in Yanbu on the Red Sea, he had almost 10 minutes in hand over second-placed Nani Roma (Ford). Roma's Swedish teammate Mattias Ekstrom won the final stage to complete the car podium in third overall.

For Romanian car manufacturer Dacia, this was its first Dakar victory at only its second attempt.

Al Attiyah already had the second-most overall victories in the car section of the rally. He moved two ahead of Finn Ari Vatanen and Spaniard Carlos Sainz, who are tied for third with four each. Frenchman Stephane Peterhansel won a record eight times in cars between 2004 and 2021, to go with his car six victories in the bike category.

"This is my sixth victory. I still need to break Peterhansel's record," said Al Attiyah



Last year's champion, Saudi Yazeed Al Rajhi, was forced to pull out with mechanical problems last week.

Earlier, Argentina's Luciano Benavides took the bike honours by a mere two seconds. Second in the 13th and closing stage was enough for the 30-year-old KTM rider to deny Honda's American two-time champion Ricky Brabec and secure a debut Dakar crown. "I've dreamed of this moment my whole life," said the winner.

Brabec, winner in 2020 and 2024, was on target for a third title but lost time when he went the

wrong way close to the finish of the 105km ride around Yanbu.

"Even yesterday, it seemed impossible, but I still felt it could happen, and today Ricky took the wrong line, and I took the right one," Benavides said.

"It was a glimmer of hope. "I saw it was him and that he had to pull a U-turn to get back on the right line because crossing between the two was impossible. I saw the opening, and I went for it." Edgar Canet won the bike stage, with Spain's Toshia Schareina (Honda) finishing third and also taking the number-three spot in the overall standings.

Benavides' older brother Kevin won the marathon race in 2021 and 2023.

Benavides said he had given his all "from start to finish today".

"I'd told everyone before the start that this Dakar was mine," he added. "Nine years in the Dakar and my first win. My brother and I are making history.

"He won by 43 seconds, and I've won by two. I think I have him beaten on that front! It's a dream come true." - Agencies

MADSEN TO LEAD

Former SA player Smuts in Italy's T20 World Cup squad

MILAN: Wayne Madsen has been named captain of Italy's squad for the 2026 T20 World Cup in India and Sri Lanka - their maiden appearance at a World Cup.

The 15-member squad also includes former South African international JJ Smuts, and two pairs of brothers: Harry Manenti and Benjamin Manenti, and Anthony Mosca and Justin Mosca.

Italy had been led by former Australian international Joe Burns during their qualification campaign but he was removed from the captaincy and dropped from the team late last year.

They made it by finishing sec-

ond, behind Netherlands, in the Europe Regional Qualifier in July last year. Italy's coaching staff comprises head coach John Davison and assistant coaches Kevin O'Brien and Dougie Brown.

Italy are in Group C at the 2026 T20 World Cup along with Bangladesh, England, Nepal and West Indies. They play their first game against Bangladesh in Kolkata on February 9, then make a trip to Mumbai to play Nepal on February 12, and back to Kolkata to take on England on February 16 and West Indies on February 19.

The 2026 T20 World Cup in India and Sri Lanka begins on Feb-



ruary 7 and ends on March 8. The tournament comprises 20 teams divided into four groups of five each in the first round, after which the top two teams from each group make it to the Super Eight stage. In that round, the eight teams are further divided into two groups of four, from which the top two qualify for the semi-finals.

Italy squad: Zain Ali, Marcus Campopiano (wk), Ali Hasan, Crishan Kalugamage, Wayne Madsen (capt), Harry Manenti, Gian Piero Meade, Anthony Mosca, Justin Mosca, Syed Nagvi, Benjamin Manenti, Jaspreet Singh, JJ Smuts, Grant Stewart, Thomas Draca. - Agencies

Nigeria edge past Egypt in shoot-out to claim bronze



DEFEATED EGYPT

Ademola Lookman converted the spot-kick that gave Nigeria a 4-2 victory on penalties after a 0-0 draw on Saturday in the Africa Cup of Nations third-place play-off

CASABLANCA: Ademola Lookman converted the spot-kick that gave Nigeria a 4-2 penalty shoot-out victory over Egypt after a 0-0 draw on Saturday in the Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) third-place play-off.

Victory for the Super Eagles in Casablanca followed the disappointment of losing shoot-outs that cost them chances to compete at the 2026 World Cup and in the 2025 AFCON final.

Nigeria lost on penalties to the Democratic Republic of Congo last November in a play-off for a place in the World Cup intercontinental play-offs. Then, three days ago, they lost another shoot-out to fail against host Morocco in an AFCON semi-final.

Success maintained a perfect Nigerian record in third-place AFCON matches after seven previous play-offs victories.

Before Lookman scored, Fisayo Dele-Bashiru missed the Eagles' first kick, then Akor Adams, captain Moses Simon, and Alex Iwobi scored.

Premier League pair Mohamed Salah and Omar Marmoush both had kicks saved by Stanley Nwabali before Ramy Rabia and Mahmoud Saber scored.

Egypt made six changes and Nigeria five to the teams that started semi-final losses to Senegal and host Morocco, respectively, three days ago.

Captain Salah started for the Pharaohs while traditional first choices in goalkeeper Mohamed El Shenawy and forward Marmoush were among the substitutes.

Attackers Victor Osimhen and Lookman, both former winners of the annual African player of the year award, sat on the bench for Nigeria.

Most Moroccans in a crowd that nearly filled the 45,000-capacity Stade Mohammed V backed Nigeria. They whistled whenever Egypt gained possession and when coach Hossam Hassan was shown on the big screen.

This support for the Super Eagles was attributed to the great rivalry between Morocco and Egypt, both at the national team and club levels.

Goals disallowed

Nigeria initially, then Egypt had spells of dominance in a goalless opening half on a cold, cloudy evening in the Moroccan commercial capital. Paul Onuachu thought he had broken the deadlock on 36 minutes as he deflected the ball with his head past goalkeeper Mostafa Shobeir.

However, a VAR review by the Moroccan referee revealed Onuachu had accidentally struck Hamdy Fathy with an elbow. The goal was disallowed, and the Nigerian was yellow-carded.

Lookman was introduced by coach Eric Chelle for the second half, replacing Onuachu, and he had the ball in the net in the opening minute of the second period. However, the goal was ruled out for offside.

Nigeria started after the break with a series of attacks. Following a largely uneventful first half, Shobeir - the son of former Egypt goalkeeper Ahmed Shobeir -- was forced to make several saves.

Salah seldom threatened, and when he did cut in with the ball, the potential danger was quickly averted. Marmoush came on as the play-off passed the hour mark to try and boost a blunt strike force.

But as the match entered the final 10 minutes, there was no sign of Osimhen being brought on, suggesting he might not have been fully fit.

In quick succession, Adams and then Marmoush threatened to score, but neither could deliver the finishing touch under pressure from opponents. Salah disappointed with his effort when offered a scoring opportunity from a free-kick outside the box. He hit the ball straight into the wall, and it was swiftly cleared. - Agencies

DEFEATED MAN CITY



Carrick urges consistency from 'fantastic' United after derby win

LONDON: Manchester United interim manager Michael Carrick has challenged Manchester United to match the standards it set in a dominant 2-0 win over local rival Manchester City on Saturday, giving him a dream start to his reign as interim boss.

The Red Devils were inspired by the change in management as goals from Bryan Mbeumo and Patrick Dorgu inflicted a huge blow on City's Premier League title chase.

United also had three goals ruled out for marginal offside calls and was denied by a string of fine saves from City goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma.

"Great start. No getting away from that," said Carrick. "The boys were fantastic."

Just a second win in eight games in all competitions lifted United into fourth in the table ahead of the later kick-offs.

Carrick's men face another stiff test when they travel to leaders Arsenal next week but this season it is often against the weaker teams they have disappointed.

They failed to beat Wolves, Bournemouth, West Ham and Everton at home under Ruben Amorim, who was sacked earlier this month.

"Consistency is the key to any success," said Carrick. "If you could find that, then you're onto a winner. "That's our challenge - we've got to find a way to do that. Big one next week obviously, another tough one, but on the back of today, we've got a good foundation".

Well beaten by 'better' Man United: Guardiola

Man City head coach Pep Guardiola, admitted Manchester City was outplayed by an inspired Manchester United in their defeat that



further dented its Premier League title challenge on Saturday.

City are yet to win in four league games this year.

"The better team won," said Guardiola. "We weren't at the level required to win this game. In many departments, we weren't there. They were better. They had an energy we didn't have."

The course of the game could have been different had Diogo Dalot been sent-off inside the opening 10 minutes for catching Jeremy Doku on the knee with his studs. Dalot escaped with a yellow card, but Guardiola said his side could not use that decision as an excuse. "Was it a red card? Yes. But it would be poor for me as a manager to blame the red card," added Guardiola.

"Would it have changed the game? Who knows. If the players have that as an excuse, then we have a big problem." - Agencies

GERMAN BUNDESLIGA

Bayern defeat Leipzig

LEIPZIG: Substitute Michael Olise scored once and grabbed a hat-trick of assists in a stunning second-half cameo as Bayern Munich fought back to beat RB Leipzig 5-1 on Saturday and maintain their unbeaten Bundesliga record.

Fourth-placed Leipzig led the league leaders 1-0 at half-time courtesy of a 20th-minute strike from Romulo Cruz. But Serge Gnabry equalised for Bayern five minutes after the break, before Olise's 56th-minute introduction helped the visitors power to win.

The France winger assisted Harry Kane, Jonathan Tah and Aleksandar Pavlovic before curling home Bayern's fifth goal two minutes from time.

Manager Vincent Kompany named Olise on the bench for the match at Red Bull Arena as Bayern geared up for the first of three games in six days.

Leipzig eventually got the goal their dominance deserved as Cruz finished a cross David Raum. Gnabry equalised in the 50th minute, before Olise assisted Kane for his 32nd goal of the season 17 minutes later.

The former Crystal Palace winger added two more assists when Tah and Pavlovic dispatched his crosses in the 83rd and 85th minutes. - Agencies

SPANISH LA LIGA

Mbappe scores in Arbeloa's first Real Madrid win

MADRID: Real Madrid manager Alvaro Arbeloa believes fan protests at the Bernabeu came from "people who don't like" the club as his side beat Levante 2-0 to move to within one point of La Liga leaders Barcelona on Saturday.

Madrid supporters waved white handkerchiefs before kick-off on Saturday and then aimed boos and whistles at players - in particular Jude Bellingham, Vinicius Jr and Federico Valverde - as well as president Florentino Perez.

"I know the source of these chants and campaigns. They come from people who don't like Real Madrid," said Arbeloa. The former Liverpool and Real Madrid defender - who replaced Xabi Alonso as manager on Monday - was also targeted during the game.



Second-half goals from Kylian Mbappe and Raul Asencio helped the 15-time European Cup winners seal a 2-0 victory. After managing only one shot on target in the first half, Arbeloa shuffled his pack at the break and called upon Arda Guler and Franco Mastantuono for the second half.

In the 58th minute, Mbappe broke the deadlock from the penalty spot after drawing a foul from Adrian de la Fuente. The France forward - who is La Liga's top scorer this season with 19 goals - was one of a few players, along with 21-year-old forward Gonzalo Garcia, not to be jeered by the Real fans. Defender Asencio added a second for the hosts seven minutes later when he climbed highest to head home Guler's corner. - Agencies

PREMIER LEAGUE

Arsenal miss chance to extend lead at the top

LONDON: Arsenal had a penalty appeal turned down as they missed the chance to extend their lead at the top of the Premier League table to nine points in a frustrating draw at Nottingham Forest on Saturday.

With 10 minutes left at the City Ground, the Gunners claimed for a spot-kick when Ola Aina brushed the ball with his arm as he and team-mate Elliot Anderson tried to clear.

But referee Michael Oliver gave nothing - and the video assistant referee ruled the ball had hit Aina's shoulder first, while his arm was in a natural position.

The Gunners still ended Saturday seven points clear at the summit after second-placed Manchester City were beaten at Manchester United. Aston Villa - in third - play on Sunday.

Both Forest and Arsenal struggled to create much in the first half - with neither side able to get a shot on target. The best chance fell to Gabriel Martinelli, who poked the ball wide from inside the six-yard box. Gunners boss Mikel Arteta, who had made three changes to his starting XI, introduced Bukayo Saka as a second-half substitute and Forest keeper Matz Sels had to produce an excellent save to keep out a header from the England winger.

It was a valuable point for Forest, who had their gap to the relegation zone cut to four before kick-off by West Ham's last-gasp



victory at Tottenham Hotspur.

This was Arsenal's third away match in succession and the Gunners have been in good form on their travels. They had scored three goals in each of their previous three away games during a run of five victories.

Also, Chelsea won Liam Rosenior's first Premier League match as head coach as they secured a battling 2-0 home victory over Brentford. Joao Pedro's powerful first-half strike and Cole Palmer's penalty after the break gave Rosenior a second win in three matches as Blues boss.

In another match, Marcus Edwards scored a second-half equaliser as Liverpool were held 1-1 to a frustrating draw by struggling Burnley at Anfield.

Florian Wirtz gave Arne Slot's side the lead in the first half with an emphatic strike, 10 minutes

after Dominik Szoboszlai had hit the bar from the penalty spot.

Liverpool dominated possession throughout but failed to take their chances, with the hosts having 32 shots and Burnley keeper Martin Dubravka making eight saves. And Edwards punished the home side with a superb finish past Alisson in the 65th minute after he was played through by Florentino Luis.

Liverpool pushed hard for a late winner but could not find a second goal and this will go down as two points dropped against a side who are 19th in the table.

Saturday's result extended the Reds' unbeaten run to 12 games in all competitions, although this was a fourth straight league draw.

Other results: Leeds United 1 Fulham 0, Sunderland 2 Crystal Palace 1, Tottenham Hotspur 1 West Ham United 2. - Agencies

ROUND-UP

Lulu launches Dream Drive 2026

Running from January 11 to March 21, Dream Drive 2026 brings excitement, gratitude and celebration to shoppers nationwide

MUSCAT: Lulu Hypermarket Oman has ushered in the New Year with the launch of its much-anticipated Dream Drive 2026, a campaign aimed at rewarding customers while celebrating moments of national pride and togetherness across the Sultanate.

Launched in the spirit of Oman's renewed Renaissance, the campaign coincides with the fifth Accession Day of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and leads into the holy month of Ramadan. Running from January 11 to March 21, 2026, Dream Drive 2026 brings excitement, gratitude and celebration to shoppers nationwide.

As part of the campaign, customers stand a chance to win eight MG RX9 Luxury 4WD vehicles (2026 model) as grand prizes, along with 40 other attractive gifts, including smart TVs, cooking ranges, refrigerators, washing machines and air



fyers from Ikon. The promotion is valid across all Lulu outlets in Oman as well as on Lulu's online platform.

Participation is simple and convenient. Customers who spend OMR 10 or more in a single bill can automatically enter the electronic raffle by providing their mobile number at checkout. Eligible shoppers receive confirmation via WhatsApp or SMS, and raffle coupons can be viewed through the Lulu App under the e-bills section. A total of eight electronic draws will be held during the campaign period.

Commenting on the launch, Shabeer K.A., Director of Lulu Hypermarkets – Oman, said the campaign reflects Lulu's strong

bond with the people of Oman. "Dream Drive 2026 holds special significance as it coincides with the fifth Accession Day of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, symbolising Oman's continued progress and stability. As a brand that has grown alongside the nation, we are honoured to celebrate this important occasion with our customers. As we approach Ramadan, the campaign also reflects the values of gratitude, generosity and togetherness."

Adding to the festive atmosphere, Lulu will introduce a wide range of special Ramadan offers and promotions, with attractive discounts on daily essentials such as beverages, frozen foods, fresh produce and grocery staples. Specially curated Ramadan Kits, featuring essential household items at affordable prices, will also be available to make Ramadan shopping easier and more convenient for families.

Customers can further benefit through the Lulu Happiness Loyalty Rewards Program, which offers instant savings, exclusive member-only prices and reward points on every purchase. Lulu has also upgraded its online shopping app, ensuring a smoother and more rewarding shopping experience, with all offers available both in-store and online.

With Dream Drive 2026, Lulu once again reaffirms its commitment to celebrating national milestones while delivering quality, value and happiness to communities across Oman.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Indian schools strengthen academic excellence through strategic collaborations, capacity building and inclusive education initiatives

MUSCAT: The Board of Directors of Indian Schools in Oman continues to reinforce its commitment to academic excellence, faculty empowerment, and holistic student development through a series of strategic initiatives and system-wide reforms.

Syed Ahmad Salman, Chairman, Board of Directors of Indian Schools Oman, while addressing the media hailed the Board's ardent commitment towards enhancing the systematic development of one of the finest schooling systems in the world that has been in existence over the past 50 years.

As part of its focus on global best practices and professional advancement, Indian Schools in Oman have entered into academic and developmental collaborations with premier institutions in India, including the Entrepreneurship Development Institute of India (EDII), Indian Institute of Technology-Delhi (Abu Dhabi) and the National Institute for the Empowerment of Persons with Intellectual Disabilities (NIEPID). These collaborations aim to enhance student enrichment programmes, leadership development, entrepreneurship orientation, and specialized faculty training, particularly in the area of inclusive and special education.

Ahmad Salman laid greater emphasis on the role of empowered educators as the cornerstone of quality education. With this objective in mind, the Indian School system has undertaken an extensive internal staff training programme. Over a period of two months, 106 structured training sessions were conducted across the entire school system, accounting for more than 23,000 man-hours of professional learning. These programmes directly benefited 5,760 participants, including teachers and academic leaders, focusing on pedagogy, leadership, assessment reforms, well-being, and institutional effectiveness.

He also elaborated on the

initiatives taken on two distinct facets of our daily life i.e., Financial Literacy and Artificial Intelligence. Separate courses on Financial Literacy and Artificial Intelligence with a structured syllabus for students from class V to VIII have successfully been rolled out in the first half of the current academic year in all Indian Schools. In keeping with emerging global trends, Artificial Intelligence (AI) training for educators has been introduced to enable teachers to integrate technology meaningfully into classroom instruction, assessment, and personalized learning. These initiatives are designed to prepare educators and students alike for the rapidly evolving digital and knowledge-driven economy.

Parallel to academic development, the Board has prioritized infrastructure development projects across various Indian Schools in Oman. These projects include the enhancement of classrooms, laboratories, libraries, digital learning facilities, sports infrastructure, and student support services, ensuring safe, modern, and future-ready learning environments.

Special emphasis continues to be placed on Care and Special Education, which remains a core focus area of the Indian School system. Currently, over 350 students are enrolled in Care and Special Education programmes across various schools. Comprehensive facilities, trained special educators, therapy support, and individualized education plans are provided to enhance students' abilities, independence, and overall well-being. In addition, Indian Schools in Oman actively promote inclusive education, enabling students with special needs to learn alongside their peers in supportive and nurturing environments. The Press Conference was attended to by Harshendu Shah – Vice Chairman, Krishnendhu S – Academic Director, and Vinoba MP – Edn Advisor to the Board.

WELL-BALANCED VEHICLE

Kia Carens: A practical 7-seater MPV built for everyday business mobility

MUSCAT: As small and medium enterprises continue to grow and diversify, the need for reliable, flexible and cost-effective mobility has never been greater. The Kia Carens 7-Seater MPV is designed to meet these everyday business demands, offering practicality, space and efficiency in a single, well-balanced vehicle.

With its spacious three-row layout, the Kia Carens adapts easily to multiple business applications. It is well-suited for SMEs, warehouses, coffee shops, bakeries, laundries, and service-based businesses that require dependable transportation for staff movement or goods delivery.

The flexible seating configuration also makes it an ideal solution for school children pick-up and drop services, ensuring comfort and safety during daily commutes.

The Carens combines passenger comfort with functional cargo capacity, allowing businesses to configure the vehicle according to operational needs. Its refined ride quality, ease of driving and efficient performance make it suitable for frequent city use, while maintaining low running and maintenance requirements – a key consideration for cost-conscious businesses.



To further enhance its value proposition, Kia is offering the Carens under a Year-End Big Saving Offer, making it an even more attractive choice for businesses planning to expand or upgrade their fleet, offer benefits - Cash gift ranging from OMR 300 to OMR 1,100, Free Insurance and Registration & a Free service package up to 30,000 / 3 years KMS.

This limited-time offer significantly reduces the overall cost of ownership, allowing businesses to invest confidently in a vehicle that supports both daily operations and long-term growth.

With its versatile design, practical features and strong value benefits, the Kia Carens 7-Seater MPV stands

out as a reliable mobility partner for businesses across sectors – delivering space, efficiency and peace of mind, every working day.

The vehicle's flexible seating layout adds to its appeal for business use. The rear two rows of seats can be folded to create ample cargo space, allowing owners to carry supplies, packages or essential materials with ease. When required, the Carens can be configured back into a full 7-seater, making it equally suitable for personal or family use.

In addition to its business utility, the Kia Carens offers comfort and convenience for everyday driving. Features such as steering-mounted audio controls, a

rear-view camera, smart key, roof-mounted AC vents and remote engine start contribute to a relaxed driving experience for both drivers and passengers.

Inside the cabin, the Carens is equipped with practical storage and connectivity features designed for daily use. These include dashboard pop-out cup holders and trays, an 8-inch audio display system with Android Auto, Apple CarPlay and Bluetooth, along with USB and Type-C charging points. Auto Cruise Control enhances driving comfort, while safety features such as Anti-lock Braking System, Rear Parking Assist System and Downhill Brake Control support confident driving.

SWISS PHARMA COMPANY

Roche inaugurates new Muscat office

MUSCAT: F. Hoffman La Roche, the Swiss pharma company, officially inaugurated its new commercial representative office in Muscat in a ceremony held under the patronage of Sulaiman bin Nasser Al Hajji, Undersecretary for Administrative and Financial Affairs at the Ministry of Health. The milestone event was marked by a ribbon-cutting ceremony led by Sulaiman Al Hajji, alongside the Swiss Ambassador, Roche Gulf Cluster head, and Roche Middle East Area Head.

The establishment of this office serves as a tangible symbol of Roche's unwavering commitment to the Sultanate of Oman. By establishing this local hub, Roche aims to demonstrate its high regard for the nation's advancements and its role as a long-term strategic partner in the healthcare ecosystem, directly supporting the Oman Vision 2040.

Sulaiman Al Hajji, remarked: "The Ministry recognizes that the representative office of Roche in Muscat is a strategic link between the company and local health and regulatory authorities. It will facilitate the provision of innovative health solutions and ensure that



medicines reach patients effectively and in full alignment with our national health policies."

Ahmed Tawfik, General Manager of Roche Gulf Cluster, stated: "This office is far more than just a new space; it is a testament to our commitment to partnering with Omani authorities to bring scientific excellence to patients here. It will serve as a hub deeply rooted in the Omani community, allowing us to respond to national healthcare priorities and support a leading healthcare system with international standards."

Olfat Berro, Head of Roche Middle East, highlighted the strategic

synergy: "When I look at Oman Vision 2040, I see a mirror of our own aspirations at Roche. Our strategy is centered on being a Partner and a Problem Solver, co-creating sustainable healthcare systems and investing in local talent to ensure Omani patients have rapid access to life-saving innovations."

H.E. Dr. Thomas Oertle, Swiss Ambassador to Oman, added: "Roche's legacy is built on precision and strong international ties. We are honored to witness this expansion, which strengthens the economic bonds between Switzerland and the Sultanate while contributing to Oman's goal of build-

ing a knowledge-based economy."

The new office, located in Bousher, will focus on accelerating access to global breakthroughs and facilitating Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) to improve efficiency and social development.

Founded in 1896 in Basel, Switzerland, as one of the first industrial manufacturers of branded medicines, Roche has grown into the world's largest biotechnology company and the global leader in in-vitro diagnostics. The company pursues scientific excellence to discover and develop medicines and diagnostics for improving and saving the lives of people around the world. To provide the best care for each person, we partner with many stakeholders and combine our strengths in Diagnostics and Pharma with data insights from the clinical practice.

In the Middle East, Roche offers comprehensive pharmaceutical and diagnostic expertise through the relevant and appropriate channels in 12 countries: Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen.



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