

PRAYER
TIMINGS

Dhuhr 12:14pm
Asr 3:32pm
Maghrib 7:02pm
Isha 8:24pm
Fajr (Tomorrow) 3:54am

New natural park to be developed in Bausher Sands area of Muscat

The project, announced in coordination with Muscat Municipality and the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning, aims to transform one of Muscat's rare natural landscapes into a sustainable, eco-conscious urban space

Times News Service

MUSCAT: In a significant move toward sustainable urban growth, His Majesty the Sultan of Oman has issued Royal Decree No. 55/2025, officially designating a new public benefit project in the heart of the capital. The park will be developed in the Bausher Sands area of Muscat Governorate.



The project, announced in coordination with Muscat Municipality and the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning, aims to preserve and transform one of Muscat's rare natural landscapes into a sustainable, eco-conscious urban

space. According to the decree, the initiative will play a critical role in activating the national urban development strategy by aligning environmental stewardship with long-term urban planning. Key highlights of the project

include:

- Advancing the National Strategy for Urban Development through focused management of the natural environment and cultural heritage
- Repurposing the natural topography of Bousher Sands into a

driver of sustainable growth and recreation

- Safeguarding a unique ecological asset nestled in the capital city

According to the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning: "The Bousher Sands Park project is part

of Oman's national urban development strategy under the theme Natural Environment and Heritage Management. Its purpose is to safeguard the unique sandy terrain as a natural landmark, protect the site's environmental identity, ensure harmony between urban planning and nature, and link city landmarks through eco-friendly pathways."

The ministry added: "The Bousher Sands Park project reflects the vision of 'Greater Muscat' through 'Vital Muscat' and 'Productive Muscat'. Recreational activities and public spaces enhance Vital Muscat; domestic tourism and economic opportunities support Productive Muscat. Licensing will be leveraged for innovative environmental activities, and balanced development embodies the concept of sustainable development."

In this regard, Muscat Municipality has completed the design phase of the Bousher Sands Development Project, which is set to transform over 300,000 square metres in the Bousher Sands area of Muscat. The plan features a range of architectural elements, including a visitor centre, food and beverage outlets, car-related facilities, and multi-level parking.

With sustainability as a core goal, the project aspires to achieve LEED certification for its buildings, reflecting a commitment to eco-conscious urban expansion while enhancing the site's appeal as a recreational and tourism hub.

COMMENTARY

Oman's international line... When the phone rang to rescue the stranded in Iran



MOOSA AL FAREH*

Amid the escalating conflict between Iran and Israel, as fire was exchanged and tensions soared, hundreds of Arab and foreign nationals found themselves trapped in the heart of the crisis. Questions overwhelmed them, yet answers were nowhere in sight. Borders were sealed, flights grounded, and the sky loomed heavy with the fears of war. In such a moment, there was only one sound louder than the noise of uncertainty — the constant ringing of a phone.

But this was no ordinary phone call. It carried with it a code that became a lifeline for those seeking safety: 00968.

It was Oman's international line — not just a string of numbers, but a gateway to hope, a humanitarian window that

opened when most others had shut.

With its trademark calm and deeply rooted wisdom, the Sultanate of Oman moved into action — not driven by politics or profit, but by a profound sense of human duty.

Relevant authorities worked tirelessly. Embassies and consulates coordinated. Response teams were mobilized around the clock. The result: dozens of stranded individuals were brought to safety in Muscat, and from there, onward to their home countries.

Oman did not ask about nationalities, affiliations, or beliefs. It saw only people in need — and moved.

At a time when the sounds of missiles filled the air, a quieter but more powerful voice rose above them — the voice of compassion, from a land long known for peace.

Once again, Oman proved to the world that it is not only a haven of stability, but a beacon of human conscience.

And so the line kept ringing — not to request help, but to offer it.

*** The writer is a media personality and a visiting lecturer at the University of Cambridge**

'SOUT AL SHABIBA - TAMKEEN WA TA'THEER' FORUM

<FROM A1> Forum to host an impressive lineup of speakers

The day will feature two key panel discussions. The first panel, titled 'Cultivating Entrepreneurship & Innovation for Omani Youth', will include renowned industry experts including Eng. Abdulrahman Al Yahyai, CEO, Integrated Gas Company (IGC); Eng. Said Al Shanfari, CEO, Oman Convention and Exhibition Center (OCEC); Ali Ahmed Muqibal, CEO, Sharakah; Dr. Sulaiman Al Hasani, Deputy Dean Academic and Resources, Global College; Hamad Salim Al Harthi, Chief

of Small, Medium Enterprises, Micro Businesses and Portfolio Management, Oman Development Bank; Khalid Al Mahrooqi, Co-Founder & CEO, Qpay plus; Abdullah Nasser Al Saidi, a noted media professional as the moderator.

The second panel on 'Policy, Collaboration & Sustainability for Youth Empowerment', will bring together distinguished voices from across sectors including Hassan Haider Mohammed Jawad Al-Lawati, Chairman,

Oman Association for Persons with Disabilities; Ghassan Fadhal, Director, Tashgheel; Rumaitha Al Busaidi, Vice President, Environment Society of Oman (ESO); Eng. Abdallah Al Wahaibi, CEO, Tatweer Duqm; and Lawyer Omran Aljabri, CEO Deputy, Ahmed Al-Mugbali Advocate and Legal Consultants. The panel will be moderated by Khalfan bin Saeed Al Amri, noted media professional and Oman TV presenter.

The forum will also host an impressive lineup of speakers in-

cluding Dr. Ghalib bin Saif al Hosni, Chairman, OSHRM and Chief People Officer, Omantel; Eng. Amer Al Fadhil, Managing Partner, Competence HR; and Qasim Mohamed Alzadjali, Assistant Officer Customer Relationship Management, Oman Development Bank, who will share their professional insights to inspire and empower the audience.

For more information, please contact: hanaa@mmg.om / +968 9115 5585.

FOREIGN MINISTRY

Oman evacuates citizens, other nationals from Iran



Times News Service

MUSCAT: As part of the fifth phase of its national evacuation plan, the Oman Foreign Ministry, in coordination with relevant authorities in the Sultanate and Oman's diplomatic mission in Tehran, successfully repatriated 181 Omanis and several foreign nationals.

"The evacuees were transported from Mashhad in the Islamic Republic of Iran, transit-

ing through Turkmenistan. They arrived safely by air at Muscat International Airport today," the ministry added.

In a related effort, the Foreign Ministry announced the implementation of the fourth phase of its evacuation plan. Oman received 294 evacuated citizens at Muscat International Airport via the Republic of Turkiye, along with a number of nationals from other countries.

The Foreign Ministry ex-

presses its deep appreciation for the integrated efforts of all relevant national authorities, particularly the support teams and field committees, as well as the constructive cooperation with the friendly Turkish authorities, which contributed to the smooth and safe execution of this phase.

The Ministry also affirms its commitment to proceeding with the subsequent phases of the evacuation plan through continuous coordination with parties

concerned inside and outside Oman, ensuring the safety and secure return of citizens to their homeland.

With this phase, the total number of Omani citizens evacuated so far has risen to 1,188, while the number of other nationals whose return was facilitated stands at 281. This reflects Oman's humanitarian considerations and ongoing coordination efforts with brotherly and friendly nations.

MARITIME SECURITY CENTRE



Commercial vessel sinks off Salalah coast, all 20 crew rescued

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Maritime Security Centre announced the rescue of 20 crew members southeast of Salalah's coast after sinking of the commercial vessel

The Maritime Security Centre announced on Saturday the sinking of the commercial vessel

Phoenix 15, registered under the Comoros flag, approximately 20 nautical miles southeast of Salalah's coast.

The incident prompted an immediate response, and all 20 crew members aboard were successfully rescued by the nearby commercial ship Gulf Barka, which was in the vicinity at the time.

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COMMENTARY

What you need to know about driving legally in Oman: A guide for residents and visitors

Oman's Traffic Law ensures road safety by regulating vehicle use, driver behaviour, and licensing procedures. Speaking exclusively to the Times of Oman, a representative of Mohammed Ibrahim Law Firm, a leading law office in Oman, explained that all vehicles must be registered, insured, and comply with technical standards such as functioning brakes, lights, and mirrors. Drivers are required to obey traffic signs and speed limits and must avoid reckless behavior. Pedestrians should use designated crossings, while vehicles must not block roads or park illegally.

To obtain a driving license, applicants must be at least 18 years old. They must apply through the General Directorate of Traffic, pass a driving test, and pay the required fees. License types



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



Ibrahim Law Firm.

Another spokesperson from the law firm added that "tourists and foreign residents may use valid international licenses for up to three months. Learner drivers require a permit and must train at approved driving schools. Licenses must be carried at all times while driving



and renewed before expiry to avoid fines." He added that punishments are strict to deter violations. Offences such as driving without a license, using a phone while driving, or reckless overtaking can result in fines of up to OMR500 or imprisonment. Severe offences, such as driving under the influence (DUI), carry

harsher penalties, if the DUI causes death or permanent total disability, penalties including multi-year jail terms and fines of up to OMR3,000.

By adhering to these regulations, drivers not only avoid legal consequences but also contribute to safer roads for all. Vehicles may be impounded, and

licenses revoked for violations such as expired registration or illegal modifications. Always renew licenses on time, follow police instructions, and ensure vehicles meet safety standards. These rules protect everyone on Oman's roads, the expert said.

(Mohammed Ibrahim Law Firm (info@mohammedibrahim.net), (+968 244 87 600) was established 18 years ago and is serving clients through its offices in Muscat and Sohar, as well as operating on a request basis in other areas. It offers legal representation across a wide range of practice areas that include Labour Law, Corporate, Commercial, Contracts, Banking and Finance, International Trade, Foreign Investment, Insurance, Maritime Law, Construction and Engineering Contracts, International Arbitration, Intellectual Property and more).

Oman to enhance AI additions to economy

Cumulative investments in AI projects have reached approximately OMR60 million over the past four years, with plans to increase investment by 20% annually



Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman is actively working to enhance the contribution of artificial intelligence (AI) to the national economy by increasing the number of specialised startups and expanding research and scientific investment in this vital field.

In September 2024, the Council of Ministers approved the National Programme for Artificial Intelligence and Advanced Digital Technologies as part of a comprehensive strategic plan built on

three main pillars:

1. Promoting the adoption of AI across economic and developmental sectors
2. Localising AI technologies by supporting homegrown solutions and developing national capabilities so that Oman becomes a producer and developer of digital technologies
3. Governing AI applications with a human-centric vision, creating a flexible regulatory environment that ensures the ethical and effective use of emerging technologies.

Hassan bin Fada Hussein Al

Lawati, Head of the National Programme for AI and Advanced Digital Technologies at the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, highlighted that the programme benefits key economic, development, and service sectors that directly impact citizens' quality of life.

In a statement to the Oman News Agency, Al Lawati noted that Oman advanced five spots in the Oxford Insights Government AI Readiness Index, ranking 45th globally out of 193 countries in 2024, up from 50th in 2023. \

Regionally, Oman ranks 5th

in MENA and 4th among GCC states, with ambitions to join the global top 30. The programme targets a 20% annual increase in the number of AI-focused tech startups, which have already grown from fewer than 10 at the programme's inception to over 25 today.

Cumulative investments in AI projects have reached approximately OMR60 million over the past four years, with plans to increase investment by 20% annually.

The Ministry has also launched the "AI Innovators" initiative in collaboration with the University of Technology and Applied Sciences to promote AI knowledge production and honor top researchers, scientific papers, and projects.

Additionally, Al-Lawati mentioned the "Engineer IT with AI" competition, designed to localise and encourage generative AI innovation, empower national talent, and increase economic returns through startup creation and performance benchmarks.

A specialised initiative titled "Humanising AI" has also been introduced to ensure a balanced approach that integrates technological empowerment with human-centred service delivery and inclusive access for all segments of society.

EXTRAORDINARY MEETING

Oman condemns Israeli attacks on Iranian territory

ISTANBUL: The Sultanate of Oman participated on Saturday in the extraordinary meeting of the Council of the League of Arab States at the ministerial level in Istanbul.

The Sultanate of Oman's delegation was headed by Sheikh Khalifa bin Ali Al Harthy, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for Diplomatic Affairs.

Flagrant violation

The meeting affirmed its condemnation of the Israeli aggression against the Islamic Republic of Iran, which constitutes a flagrant violation of the sov-

ereignty of a UN member state and a threat to regional peace and security.

He also stressed the need to halt this aggression and intensify regional and international efforts to reduce tensions and achieve a ceasefire and comprehensive calm.

Meanwhile, Rafael Grossi, Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), confirmed that the Israeli attacks on Iran caused a significant deterioration in security and safety at nuclear facilities, noting that a centrifuge building was damaged as a result of these attacks. -ONA



MINISTRY OF ECONOMY

Many programmes are in various stage of implementation

<FROM A1 The flagship initiative 'Makeen' has trained over 8,200 Omanis through 126 sessions and set the groundwork for Oman's future tech talent hubs.

Under the economic leadership and management priority, all the six associated programmes are currently being implemented. These include developing a more advanced and efficient public finance management system, establishing a national registry for government assets, creating an empowered and effective body responsible for coordinating economic decisions and preparing a national policy guide, and updating economic legislation to stimulate activity and enhance competitiveness.

Additionally, 60 out of 62 programmes under the economic diversification and financial sustainability priority have entered the implementation phase.

They include initiatives such as empowering startups in Fourth Industrial Revolution technologies, expanding national data centre and government cloud services, strengthening innovation and operational efficiency in public institutions, unified global software licencing management, reviewing government service fees, monitoring the performance and competitiveness of the logistics sector, and maximising local value in transport, communications, and IT projects.

Other notable initiatives include support for national industries and Omani products, modernisation of financial legislation in the mining sector, updating the Mineral Resources Law, promoting investment in mining, developing a digital mining platform, enhancing local company and SME participation in the energy and mining sectors, and advancing digital transformation in govern-

ment services.

Regarding the labour market and employment priority, 17 out of 18 programmes are being implemented. These focus on drafting the National Employment Strategy, improving labour policies and legislation, implementing an effective nationalisation (Omanisation) mechanism, rolling out replacement-linked training initiatives, offering specialised entrepreneurship programmes in cooperation with relevant agencies, and cultivating a culture of empowerment for national talent in the energy and mining sectors.

Under the Sustainable Environment pillar, a total of 56 programmes have been outlined, with 95% (53 programmes) already in implementation. These include key initiatives such as updating environmental policies and legislation, sustainable biodiversity management, a national strategy for chemical and agricultural soil

conditioner management, regulation of pesticides and fertilizers, enhancement of palm productivity, the establishment of a national environmental monitoring and control system, development of a national environmental information system to support decision-making, and programs to support fishing vessels and equipment.

In the governance and institutional performance segment, 54 programmes are aligned with its priorities. As of the first quarter of 2025, 87% are in execution. Notably, 13 out of 14 programmes in the legislative, judicial, and oversight areas have been launched—covering anti-corruption, public fund protection, oversight capacity-building, governance of national resources and projects, and improving civil aviation security in line with international standards.

Within the public administration governance segment, 34 out of 40 programmes are currently

active. These include ensuring governmental compliance, evaluating governance in state-owned enterprises, and developing legal, regulatory, and policy frameworks for the telecom and IT sectors.

Other ongoing efforts include establishing a national innovation and change management system, an innovation lab for performance improvement, integration of e-government services, performance measurement systems, and upgrading the infrastructure and technical support for national networks.

Regarding development projects currently being implemented during the Tenth Five-Year Plan (2021-2025), the Ministry of Economy said that notable progress has been made.

In the infrastructure sector segment, Phase 1 of Sultan Haitham City is 80% complete, with Phase 2 at 45% completion. 25% of the structural planning for Greater

Muscat, Salalah, Nizwa, and Haima have been completed.

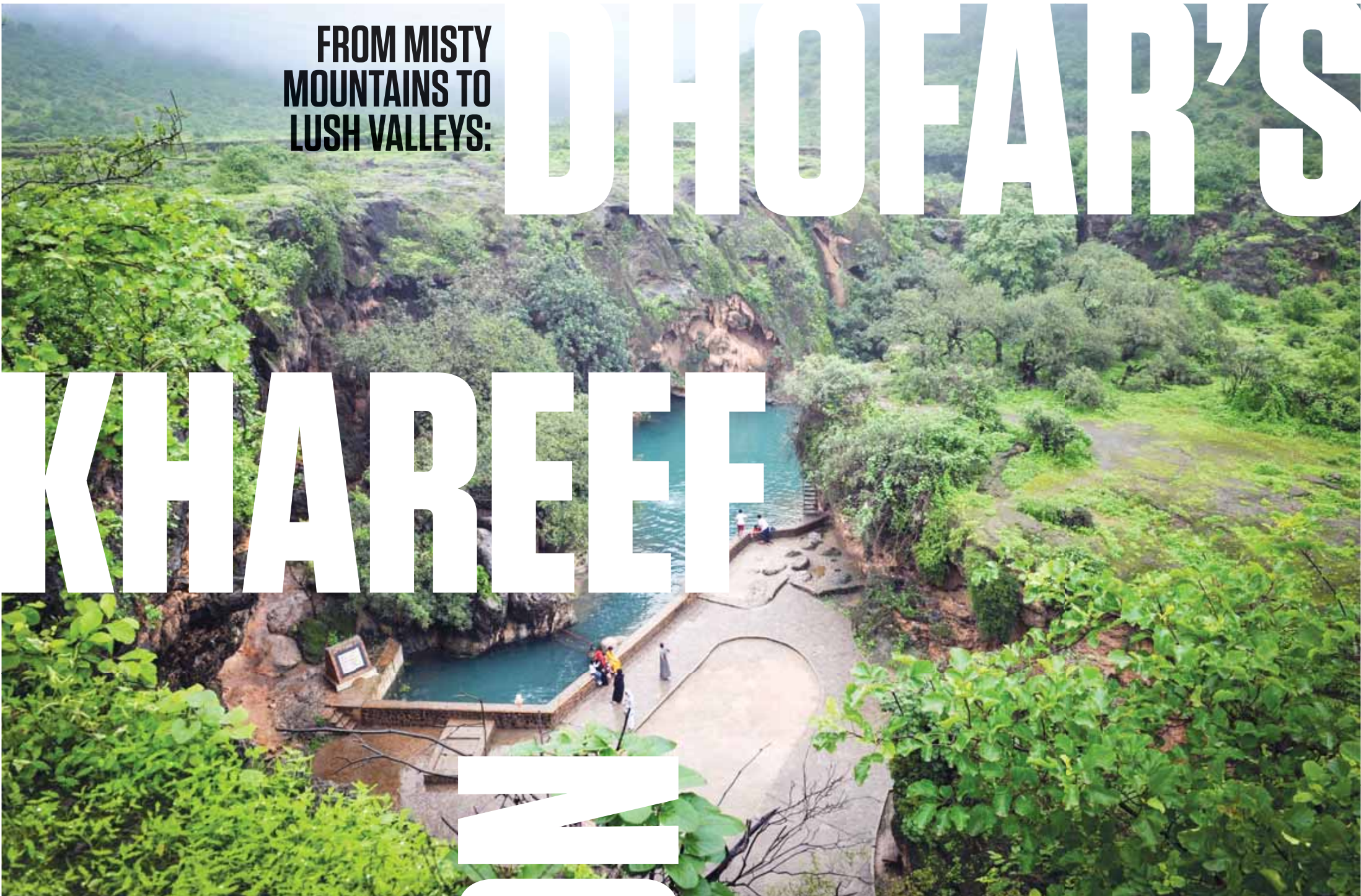
In the road sector projects indicated varied completion rates: Khasab-Daba-Lima road at 40%, Adam-Thumrait dualisation at 32%, Al-Amirat's Al-Joud Street at 79%, Dhofar's Darbat tunnel at 90%, Sultan Qaboos Street dualisation in Salalah at 81% and various other road projects ranging from 20% to 86%.

In the social services sector, construction of health facilities is progressing strongly: Sultan Qaboos Hospital (Salalah) is 58% complete, Madha Hospital 86%, Suwaiq Hospital 77%, and other facilities such as Wadi Bani Khalid, Samail, Falah, and Namah Hospitals are progressing between 3% to 82%. The new Infectious Diseases Lab has reached 91% completion.

In the education sector, 69 new schools are being built across the Sultanate, with an average completion rate of 50%. -ONA

FROM MISTY MOUNTAINS TO LUSH VALLEYS:

THE KHAREEF SEASON BEGINS



Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Khareef (monsoon) 2025 season in Dhofar officially began on Saturday, June 21, 2025 affecting the coastal wilayats of the governorate—from Dhalkut in the west to Mirbat in the east—due to the onset of seasonal winds and cloud formations flowing in from the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean. The season will continue until September.

The Khareef is renowned for its cloudy, drizzly weather and moderate temperatures, especially in the elevated mountainous areas, which are often blanketed in mist and light rain. This unique climate transforms Dhofar into a stunning green landscape, making it a top destination for both local and international tourists.

Throughout the season, water flow in the governorate's natu-

ral springs increases, with many becoming popular attractions, including Razat, Hamran, Jarziz, Sahalnoot, and Tabraq springs. Seasonal waterfalls like Darbat, Athum, Khor, Gogob, and Al-Hoota also flourish, depending on rainfall levels.

Dhofar's natural and historical landmarks—including its diverse coastal, agricultural, mountainous, and desert environments—draw significant attention. Its UNESCO-listed sites, such as Al-Baleed and Samharam archaeological parks, the Land of Frankincense Museum, and ancient forts in Rakhyut, Taqah, Mirbat, and Sadah, are popular attractions. The region also boasts dreamy beaches, scenic lagoons, and nature reserves that offer sanctuary to rare wildlife and endangered ecosystems.

During the Khareef, Salalah's shopping centres and markets ex-

perience high activity, especially in stores selling traditional Omani products such as frankincense, incense, silverware, pottery, Omani sweets, and local cuisine.

The Salalah Plain also produces a rich variety of tropical fruits, with coconut (nargil), bananas, papayas, and sugarcane being the most popular. In anticipation of the influx of tourists, both public and private sectors prepare annually to provide convenient services and facilities, especially with several regional airlines announcing direct seasonal flights to Salalah Airport.

Notably, Dhofar welcomed over 1,006 million visitors during the 2024 Khareef season—a 9% increase from 2023—with total visitor spending estimated at 120 million Omani rials, according to the National Centre for Statistics and Information.

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Oman marks Hydrography Day with emphasis on ocean sustainability

Hydrography is the foundation of safe maritime navigation, providing accurate information about seabed topography, water depths, ocean currents

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Oman National Hydrographic Office, celebrated World Hydrography Day, which falls on June 21 of each year. This year's celebration was held under the theme "Seafloor Maps: Enabling Action for the Oceans," with the aim of highlighting the importance of hydrographic data in promoting environmental and economic development and achieving ocean sustainability.

Hydrography is the foundation of safe maritime navigation, providing accurate information about seabed topography, water depths, ocean currents, and navigational obstacles that may impede ship movement.

The International Hydrographic Organization (IHO) aims to develop hydrographic support for the safety and efficiency of navigation, especially in light of the rapid transformation of the maritime sector and the increasing reliance on smart systems and autonomous navigation.

This highlights the urgent need for up-to-date and accurate data that contributes to increasing operational efficiency and reducing risks.

The organisation is working to develop standards and specifications for hydrographic data to keep pace with progress in this field.

It also encourages relevant offices and entities to implement



them by updating nautical charts, expanding the scope of surveys using the latest technologies, and collaborating with technology companies to develop devices and systems capable of handling advanced data.

In this context, the organisation intends to launch the first package of layers of the new Global Hydrographic Data Model (S-100) in early 2026.

This represents a qualitative leap in marine data and digital products, meeting future requirements and contributing to a safe and integrated maritime environment that supports trade and maritime transport and achieves sustainable development goals.

The importance of hydrographic data goes beyond its traditional uses. It has become an essential tool in serving society and development projects, particularly in areas such as urban planning for coastal areas, designing infrastructure and ports based on water depth and bottom characteristics, studying the effects of climate change and sea level rise, responding to disasters such as oil spills and extreme weather events, protecting the marine environment, supporting food security, and coastal tourism.

This data also contributes to enhancing cooperation between the public and private sectors, in addition to supporting scientific

research that serves society.

In this context, the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO) has adopted the Marine Spatial Data Infrastructure (MSDI) project, which aims to make digital hydrographic data available to users in various fields.

The organisation has established a specialised working group for this project and issued a guide for its implementation.

In light of the challenges facing the oceans, such as pollution, climate change, and biodiversity loss, the importance of international cooperation based on data exchange and enhancing marine knowledge is highlighted.

One of the most prominent global initiatives in this regard is the GEBCO project, which aims to create a comprehensive and accurate map of the ocean floor by 2030.

This goal can only be achieved through the participation of countries and their commitment to responsible ocean sustainability.

Since the Sultanate of Oman's accession to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea in 1989 and the Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea in 1999, the Sultanate has been committed to the international community to providing hydrographic services in accordance with established standards.

The National Hydrographic

Survey was established in September 1992, and the following month, the Sultanate of Oman joined the International Hydrographic Organization.

In April 1995, the Oman National Hydrographic Office was established, tasked with producing nautical charts and marine products and carrying out surveys to ensure the highest levels of navigational safety.

In December 2011, Ministerial Resolution No. (215/2011) was issued to form the National Committee for Hydrographic Requirements.

It was entrusted with the responsibility of drawing maps and issuing marine publications, as well as managing the affairs of hydrographic survey work for the Royal Navy of Oman, and everything related to navigational safety in Omani waters, in addition to representing the Sultanate of Oman at the International Hydrographic Organization and regional organizations with regard to technical matters.

Today, the office is working to issue modern data and products using the latest surveying equipment and software, in accordance with the standards of the International Organization.

The Omani National Hydrographic Office has begun implementing the first phase of the

S-100 project, which supports advanced digital data sources compatible with marine geospatial standards.

In November 2024, the office was nominated to be the regional coordinator for the ROMPME Hydrographic Commission for the implementation of this model.

The office's plans are in line with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040, which seeks to diversify sources of income and enhance the contribution of the blue economy to the gross domestic product. The office has launched a study to establish a marine spatial data infrastructure project, which aims to collect and store all marine data within an integrated national database to meet the needs of Omani water users.

The office's role is not limited to ensuring navigational safety; it also includes providing technical support to various entities, offering hydrographic consultations, and supporting national claims for continental shelf extensions.

The office's official website is scheduled to be launched soon, providing access to a number of free electronic services, such as navigational announcements and warnings, reporting incidents, and submitting requests for charts and marine surveys. The website also includes informational sections highlighting the office's achievements and various roles.

The Omani National Hydrographic Office continues its active contribution to local, regional, and international projects and initiatives aimed at sustaining the seas and oceans and promoting the blue economy.

Celebrating World Hydrography Day 2025 is an opportunity to raise public awareness of this vital field and appreciate the pioneering role played by the Omani National Hydrographic Office in empowering national competencies and keeping pace with rapid developments in the field of maritime navigation.

In this context, this year's theme, "Seafloor Maps: Enabling Action for the Oceans," embodies the global trend toward harnessing hydrographic data to serve humanity, the environment, and the economy. Every accurate map produced, and every piece of marine information collected and analyzed, represents a fundamental building block in building a secure and sustainable future for the oceans.

The Sultanate of Oman affirms its commitment to continuing to develop its national capabilities and enhancing its regional and international cooperation, thus contributing to achieving the common goals of protecting the seas and enabling their responsible and sustainable use for present and future generations.

MINISTRY OF HERITAGE AND TOURISM

International recognition for Omani cuisine at Gourmand event in Lisbon

LISBON: Oman won two awards in the category of best book on "diplomacy of culinary" and in the category of the best book on immaterial cultural heritage of cooking at the Gourmand World Cookbook Awards, held in Lisbon city, Portugal.

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism participated in the activities for cookbooks. Prepared by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism in cooperation with Sultan Qaboos University, the book depicts Omani Cuisine.

The activities of Gourmand World Cookbook Awards kicked off on 18 June and lasted till 21 June.

The Gourmand World Cookbook Awards represent an international platform that sheds light on the best books in the field of culinary, its culture and fields.

The awards were announced in a ceremony attended by experts in culinary, worldwide.

Fatima bint Ali Al Lawati, Assistant Director of planning and member of the food tourism and art of culinary programme at the



Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, said that the Sultanate's achievement of the two awards reflects the international recognition and appreciation for the Omani Cuisine and showcases the Omani culinary art.

Asma bint Salim Al Hajri, expert in tourism promotion at the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, said that the Sultanate's participation in the event comes within the efforts of the Ministry

of Heritage and Tourism aimed to boost the Omani Cuisine at the regional and international level.

A video presentation on Omani cuisine was screened during the ceremony.

It is worth mentioning that Gourmand World Cookbook Awards were organised for the first time in 1995 with the purpose of honouring the best books related to culinary culture and food. — OMA

ROYAL CAVALRY

Omani riders qualify for 2026 World Endurance Championship

PARIS: Horse riders Saleh bin Salim Al Balushi and Hussain bin Ali Al Farsi from the Royal Cavalry have qualified for the World Endurance Championship 2026, scheduled in Al Ula City, Saudi Arabia. The duo has qualified in the competition at the French Compiegne Horse -racing organised by the World Equestrian Federation for 160km.

The race saw tough competitions and a wide participation of horse riders from different countries competing in six stages; the first for 32km, the second for 30km, the third for 28km, the fourth for 21km, fifth for 28 km and sixth for 21km.

Earlier two other horse riders; Mahmoud Al Foori and Hisham Al Farsi from the Royal Cavalry, have qualified for the upcoming World Endurance Championship, bringing the total number of RC horse riders qualifying for the World Endurance Championship 2026 to four. — OMA



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The last date for submission of offers is on **Sunday, 29th of June 2025 by 2359 PM**.

Any tenders received beyond the above closing time and date will NOT be considered. This publication is part of the tender documents.

GCC-STAT DATA

GCC visitors spending likely to reach \$223.7bn in 2034

MUSCAT: The latest data released by the Statistical Centre for the Cooperation Council for the Arab Countries of the Gulf (GCC-Stat) revealed that the expected spending by visitors to GCC countries is projected to reach \$223.7 billion in 2034, while the expected contribution of incoming visitor spending to total exports will reach 13.4 percent.

The Centre also indicated that GCC countries are achieving steady progress in many tourism-related indicators.

The data demonstrate that total international visitor spending in GCC countries amounted to \$135.5 billion in 2023, with a 28.9 percent increase compared to the figures recorded in 2019.

The GCC countries ranked first

in the Middle East and North Africa region's 2024 Safety and Security Index.

All GCC countries scored above the regional average of 5.86 points, taking into consideration that the index ranges from 1 to 7 points. They also ranked among the top 6 countries in terms of passport power in the Arab region.



— WAM



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IN GENEVA

Iran’s FM condemns Israel in address to the UN Human Rights Council

Mr. President,
Distinguished delegates,
I am Abbas Araghchi, Foreign Minister of Iran, a peace-loving nation inheriting one of the most ancient civilizations that has made significant contribution to human civilization, culture and ethics.

Now, this nation of 100 million populations is subject to an egregious act of aggression by a regime that has been committing a horrible genocide in Palestine for the past 2 years and that is occupying the lands of neighbouring countries.

Ladies and gentlemen,
I stand before this august body to remind you of the legal and ethical responsibility, each and every State member and observer of the Human Rights Council, has to stand up against this grave injustice.

Israel has launched an unprovoked aggression on Iran in stark violation of Article 2(4) of the Charter and in bold defiance of all the principles and rules that this

Council stands for.

This is an unjust war imposed on my people since early hours of Friday 13 June when Israel perpetrated a mix of unlawful and criminal operations against off-duty military personnel, university professors and ordinary people. Hundreds of my fellow Iranians have been killed and injured following Israel’s surprise armed attacks and terrorist operations on residential areas, public infrastructures, hospitals and health centres.

Our peaceful nuclear facilities have also been targeted despite their being under full monitoring of IAEA and despite the fact that attacking such facilities are absolutely banned under international law. Israel attacks on nuclear facilities are grave war crimes, given also the danger of environmental and health catastrophe as the result of radiological leakage.

Mr. President,
Iran, a founding member of the United Nations system, rightfully expects each and every one of you



to stand for justice, rule of law and basic tenets of humanity and ethics. Iran is under a merciless act of aggression. This crystal-clear fact must not be allowed to be twisted upside-down by Israel and its backers. Israel aggression on Iran cannot and must not be justified by any legal or moral standards. Any justification for this unjust and criminal war would be tantamount to complicity.

Iran is defending itself against

international humanitarian law, already badly undermined as a consequence of Israel’s relentless atrocities in occupied Palestine and elsewhere, is now under another extremely serious danger as Israel is committing grave violations of 1949 Geneva Conventions.

Mr. President,
Switzerland is the custodian of Geneva Conventions and Protocols on IHL and has an important responsibility in this regard. Indeed, every State party to 1949 Convention shall shoulder their responsibility under this Conventions, in particular Common Articles 1 and 3 of these Conventions.

Dear colleagues,
We were attacked in the midst of an ongoing diplomatic process. We were supposed to meet with Americans on 15 June to craft a very promising agreement for peaceful resolution of the issues fabricated over our peaceful nuclear program. It was a betrayal of diplomacy and an unprecedented blow to the foundation of international law and UN system.

Let me be clear:
If there is any use for the costly systems and mechanisms we’ve created for the past 8 decades to preserve human rights and dignity, now is the time to do it.

We need action now. Otherwise, the whole UN-based international law system would corrode badly.

This is a historic moment for human civilization when a civilized nation has come under an unjust war of aggression.

The world, every State, every UN mechanism and body, has to be alarmed and has to act now to stop the aggressor, to end impunity, and to hold the criminals accountable for their unending atrocities and crimes in our region.

This is a call from someone who has allocated his whole life to dialogue and diplomacy, but who also, is a veteran of an imposed war by Saddam regime and knows how to defend his beloved mother land.

Thank you.

VOICE OF AMERICA

Trump admin slashes jobs at VoA

WASHINGTON DC: The Trump administration on Friday laid off 639 employees at US public broadcaster Voice of America (VoA) and its parent organisation, the United States Agency for Global Media.

Some 1,400 people have been fired at VoA and USAGM since March, Lake said. Many VOA staff have been on administrative

leave since March 15 amid legal proceedings. Trump has attacked publicly-funded news outlets like VoA and National Public Radio.

— DW

202 Palestinians killed in 48 hours



Local health authorities confirmed that the Palestinian death toll from the Israeli onslaught since October 2023 has risen to 55,908 fatalities, with an additional 131,138 people sustaining injuries

GAZA: At least 202 Palestinians were killed and 1,037 others were injured in the Gaza Strip over the last 48 hours as a result of the ongoing Israeli genocide in the region, according to medical sources.

Local health authorities confirmed that the Palestinian death toll from the Israeli onslaught since October 2023 has risen to 55,908 fatalities, with an additional 131,138 people sustaining injuries. The majority of the victims are women and children.

According to the same sources, the death toll since Israel’s resumption of the genocide on March 18 after a two-month truce has also climbed to 5,599, in addition to 19,097 others injured.

Emergency services are still



unable to reach many casualties and dead bodies trapped under the rubble or scattered on roads across the war-torn enclave, as Israeli occupation forces continue to target ambulance and civil defense crews, according to the health authorities.

Israel’s genocidal onslaught continues undeterred despite calls from the United Nations Security Council for an immediate ceasefire and directives from the International Court of Justice urging measures to prevent genocide and alleviate the dire humanitarian situation in Gaza.

EU warns Israel may be violating human rights commitments under bilateral agreement

The European Union’s diplomatic service has warned that there are signs Israel may be violating its human rights obligations under the EU-Israel Association Agreement, which governs relations between the two parties, according to a report cited by international media outlets.

Based on verified facts and assessments from independent international institutions, the EU report states that “there

are indications that Israel may have breached its obligations in the field of human rights under Article 2 of the Association Agreement.”

This comes amid growing concern across European capitals over Israel’s ongoing military offensive in Gaza and the deepening humanitarian crisis that has followed.

The EU report highlights that Israel’s continued restrictions on the delivery of food, medicine, medical equipment, and other vital supplies have affected the entire population of Gaza, especially in heavily impacted areas.

Last month, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Kaja Kallas confirmed that the Union would examine whether Israel remains in compliance with its agreement, following calls by over half of EU member states to conduct a formal review.

The EU-Israel Association Agreement, which took effect in 2000, stipulates that relations between the parties must be based on “respect for human rights and democratic principles.”

The report cites Israeli attacks on civilians, hospitals, and medical infrastructure, as well as forced displacement, denial of humanitarian aid, and a lack of accountability for violations.

It also addresses the deteriorating situation in the occupied West Bank, including colonist violence and military aggression against Palestinian communities.

The findings are expected to increase pressure within the EU to reevaluate political and economic relations with Israel, particularly as humanitarian conditions in Gaza and the West Bank continue to worsen. — WAPA



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Muscat Municipality invites Companies specialized in the field and registered with General Secretariat of Tender Board, to participate and obtain tender documents from the website via the following link: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) starting from the date of this announcement and until the end of deadline stipulated below.

Tender Number	Description of Tender	Last date to collect the tender	Tender return date
(PRE-24-192)	Redressing Data Center (Re-Call-2)	01/07/2025	13/07/2025
(PRE-25-042)	Consultancy Services To Provide Periodical Guideline to Evaluate Rental Prices For Various Types Of Units & Uses in Muscat Governorate(Re-Call-1)	29/06/2025	07/07/2025
(PRE-25-064)	Development of residential area in Al Wadi Al Kabir (Re-Call-1)	11/07/2025	03/08/2025
(PRE-25-079)	Construction and Maintenance of Roads side protections (Riprap, Gabions and Kerbs) (unit rate)	11/07/2025	03/08/2025
(PRE-25-080)	Renewal Kaspersky enterprise antivirus solution	11/07/2025	03/08/2025
(PRE-25-081)	Supply & Installation of Lighting for the Green Walk Project	11/07/2025	03/08/2025
(PRE-25-082)	Construction of the Public Park in Al Qurum	11/07/2025	03/08/2025
(PRE-25-083)	Material Testing for Muscat Municipality Projects	11/07/2025	03/08/2025
(PRE-25-084)	Renewal of Annual Maintenance Contract for IT Firewalls	11/07/2025	03/08/2025
(PRE-25-085)	Renewing IBM FILENET & CMS Licenses for Record and Document Management System	11/07/2025	03/08/2025
(PRE-25-086)	Legal Consultancy Services for Reviewing the Unified Municipal System Project Contract	11/07/2025	03/08/2025
(PRE-25-087)	Consultancy Services for Supervision of “Beautification of MBD Area” Project	11/07/2025	03/08/2025
(PRE-25-088)	Maintenance of Road Safety Barriers and Impact Attenuators (Unit Rate)	11/07/2025	03/08/2025

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Duckett, Pope lead England’s fightback after Pant’s heroics

Pant hammered a ton but a dramatic late collapse saw India fold at 471 in the first innings

HEADINGLEY: England clawed their way back into the contest on Day 2 of the first Test at Headingley on Saturday, reaching 107 for 1 at Tea in response to India’s 471, with Ben Duckett (52*) and Ollie Pope (48*) stitching together a fluent, unbeaten 103-run partnership.

The pair counter-attacked with intent after Jasprit Bumrah’s early strike saw Zak Crawley dismissed with the score just four to give India a promising start with the ball.

The stand of Duckett and Pope underlined England’s resilience, coming after a brilliant century by Rishabh Pant and a stunning collapse by the Indian batting order earlier in the day.

India began the day in a position



of dominance at 359 for 3, with Pant and Shubman Gill extending their overnight stand.

Both looked in control in the opening hour, capitalising on good batting conditions. Gill resumed

with elegant strokeplay and looked set for a big double-century. Pant, meanwhile, was at his belligerent best — reaching his hundred with a swept six off Shoaib Bashir, and following it with a celebratory



somersault that lit up Headingley.

The duo took India past 400 with ease, and a total in excess of 550 looked likely. However, fortunes turned swiftly after Gill fell for 147, top-edging a slog-sweep off Bashir to deep square leg.

His dismissal ended a 209-run fourth-wicket partnership and opened the door for England. Karun Nair, returning to the side, lasted just four deliveries, falling to a sharp catch by Pope off Ben Stokes.

Pant, undeterred initially, launched Bashir for another six and nearly fell to a stumping chance, only to be reprieved

by a fumble from keeper Jamie Smith. But his luck ran out soon after when he was trapped LBW shouldering arms to Josh Tongue — a rare misjudgment that proved costly.

The review couldn’t save him, and with his dismissal, the rest of the Indian innings unraveled.

Pant’s 134 comprised 12 boundaries and six sixes in his 178-ball knock.

From 430 for 4, India were bowled out for 471—a collapse of seven wickets for just 41 runs. It was the lowest total ever recorded in Test history by a side featuring three individual centuries in the same innings.

England’s bowlers, led by Stokes (4/66) and Tongue (4/86), exploited helpful overhead conditions expertly in the second session, wrapping up the innings just after lunch.

With the ball, India began well. Bumrah struck in his first spell, removing Zak Crawley with a beauty that took the edge to first slip. He continued to threaten, troubling both Duckett and Pope with pace and movement.

However, India were let down by sloppy fielding—Yashasvi Jaiswal and Ravindra Jadeja both putting down chances in the gully, giving Duckett reprieves.

England capitalised quickly. Duckett was aggressive on the sweep and cut, racing to his half-century with a boundary off Jadeja. Pope rotated the strike well and looked solid at the other end. The pair defied the conditions — cloudy skies, light rain, and an occasionally lively pitch — to bring England right back into the game with an assertive stand that had India searching for control by Tea.

Brief scores: India 471 all out (Shubman Gill 147, Rishabh Pant 134, Yashasvi Jaiswal 101; Ben Stokes 4-66, Josh Tongue 4-86) vs England 107/1 at Tea (Ben Duckett 52*, Ollie Pope 48*). - Agencies

ZIMBABWE TESTS

Maharaj replaces injured Bavuma as SA captain



JOHANNESBURG: South Africa captain Temba Bavuma has been ruled out of the two-Test series against Zimbabwe, which starts next Saturday. Keshav Maharaj will captain the team in Bavuma’s absence.

Bavuma has not recovered from the hamstring strain he suffered during the World Test Championship (WTC) final against Australia last week and will undergo further scans to determine the extent of the injury.

The squad features five un-capped players as South Africa rest several all-format players including Aiden Markram and Kagiso Rabada. Fast bowler Lun-



gi Ngidi is only available for the second Test.

South Africa’s next assignments after Zimbabwe, which Bavuma could be part of, are ODIs against Australia in August and England in September. Their next WTC campaign begins against Pakistan in October before a series in India in November.

Squad: David Bedingham, Matthew Breetzke, Dewald Brevis, Corbin Bosch, Tony de Zorzi, Zubayr Hamza, Keshav Maharaj (capt), Kwena Maphaka, Wiaan Mulder, Lungi Ngidi (second Test only), Lhuan-dre Pretorius, Lesego Senokwane, Prenelan Subrayen, Kyle Verreynne, Codi Yusuf. - Agencies

SRI LANKA VS BANGLADESH

Mathews’ farewell Test ends in draw

GALLE: Sri Lanka batted out 32 overs in the final session and ensured that the first Test in Galle ended in a draw on Saturday, that both sides will be content with, if not happy.

But it wasn’t a result without minor jeopardy, as Sri Lanka lost four wickets on the way before Dhananjaya de Silva and Kamindu Mendis shut up shop for good.

The teams shook hands with five overs left to play in the day, with the pair having played out 53 balls in their partnership. But reflection later on might leave Bangladesh with the one hanging question - could they have declared sooner?

Dhananjaya and Kamindu had come together after Sri Lanka had lost both Angelo Mathews and Dinesh Chandimal in quick succession, both to the excellent Taijul Islam who ended on figures of 3 for 23.

But despite Taijul and Nayeem Hasan’s best efforts, it was clear the remaining six wickets would not fall before the 37 overs were up. But what if Bangladesh had a further 13 overs to play? Would that have put more pressure on both Dhananjaya and Kamindu? Could they have grabbed one or two more?



All valid questions, but ones we may never get an answer to. As things panned out, After a roughly two-and-a-half hour rain interruption, Bangladesh played out 11 overs in the post-lunch session, added 48 runs and asked Sri Lanka to chase down a target of 296 off 37 overs - at a required rate of eight an over - if they wanted to steal an unlikely win.

Those 37 overs might have been more, but the primary goal of Bangladesh continuing to bat after the rain break seemed to be for

Najmul Hossain Shanto to get to his second century of the game - it was the third instance of a Bangladeshi batter scoring two centuries in the same Test, and the second time Shanto had accomplished the feat, the 15th batter ever to do the unique double.

It took 50 deliveries after the restart for Shanto to get to the milestone, during which Bangladesh had scored just 19 runs and lost the wickets of Litton Das and Jaker Ali - both succumbing to the growing turn on offer, and frustra-

tion with defensive lines down leg. In the next 17 balls though, Bangladesh ransacked 29 - including a trio of sixes from Shanto down the ground off the spinners.

Brief scores: Sri Lanka 485 (Nissanka 187, Kamindu 87, Nayeem 5-121, Mahmud 3-74) and 72 for 4 (Nissanka 24, Taijul 3-23, Nayeem 1-29) drew with Bangladesh 495 (Mushfiqur 163, Shanto 148, Litton 90, Asitha 4-86, M Rathnayake 3-39) and 285 for 6 decl (Shanto 125*, Shadman 76, Rahim 49, T Rathnayake 3-102). - Agencies

ENGLAND PACER

Wood targets fifth India Test match for potential comeback

LONDON: Mark Wood has said that he could yet make an appearance in England’s Test series against India as he steps up his rehabilitation after knee surgery.

Wood, the 35-year-old, limped out of the Champions Trophy earlier this year with medial ligament damage in his left knee, and underwent an operation in March.

The initial prognosis was for a four-month recovery period, which effectively ruled him out of featuring in the five Tests against Shubman Gill’s India, which began at Headingley on Friday.

However, Wood has now revealed he could be in with a shout for the final Test, at the Kia Oval, which begins on July 31.

It is understood he will make his competitive comeback for Durham in their County Championship fixture away to Somerset, a round with the Kookaburra ball in use, which begins on July 22.

“Rehab is going well,” Wood told BBC Test Match Special on Friday. “I’ve just started bowling very lightly, so I’m on the comeback trail now officially.

“I’m hoping still to play a part in this series, so I get to have a look at some of the players here who I might come up against. I’m still targeting probably the last Test.



Anything before that is maybe a bit too soon. The last Test, I might not get there, but at the minute that’s still my focus that I might play a part.

“It’s been a bit slow [coming back] to start with. I haven’t been able to do a lot, but starting to speed up now, getting some bowling in, hopefully not too much longer. [I am] still hoping that I can play a part right at the end of the series, but I’ll just wait and see.”

England will be cautious with Wood given the Ashes tour of Australia on the horizon, and the fact their pace options have been

limited by injury. Olly Stone’s own knee injury ruled him out of the entire Test season, while Gus Atkinson was not available for the first India Test after suffering a hamstring strain against Zimbabwe.

Meanwhile, Jofra Archer’s carefully managed return continues, with the England management optimistic he could be available for the second Test in Birmingham, starting on July 2, whetting the appetite for a potential Test comeback after four years out battling stress fractures of the back and right elbow. - Agencies

AUSTRALIAN CRICKETER

‘Emotions got to me’: Konstas keen to settle into Test cricket

KINGSTON: For Australian cricketer Sam Konstas, the biggest challenge in his early taste of Test cricket wasn’t the batting - it was managing the emotion of playing in front of a huge crowd at the MCG last December.

At just 19, he is learning to steady his breath, trust his game, and find calm in the chaos of the international stage.

“It was my first few Test matches, and the emotions probably got to me with the crowd,” Konstas told reporters in Barbados on Friday, reflecting on his debut series against India which started with his 60 off 65 balls at the MCG.

“But having a bit of time off to reflect and strengthen my game has helped.”

Konstas is a confirmed starter for Australia’s first Test against West Indies in Bridgetown, beginning June 25, with selectors announcing he and Josh Inglis will return to the side.

Marnus Labuschagne was dropped while Steven Smith was ruled out with a dislocated finger.

This will be his third Test cap after not playing in Sri Lanka, where Travis Head opened in a tactical switch, and narrowly missing out



on the XI for the World Test Championship final when Labuschagne was promoted.

With a week to prepare for the Barbados Test after landing in the Caribbean, Konstas spoke about his personal diary, which he started at school, becoming a key tool to revisit the basics.

“The diary’s been important,” Konstas, who has Test cap No. 468 tattooed on his forearm, said. “Just reflecting on games, going back to my checkpoints, especially when you’re overseas. It helps me

get grounded again.”

He also credited much of his early learning to the senior players in the Australian squad. “I’m just trying to control my breath and have a good relationship with my batting partner to talk about things and how to go through, especially heated moments, when the game changes,” he said.

“I always try to get advice from Uzi [Usman Khawaja], Marnus, Smith, just seeing how they go about things. I’m lucky to be around them, especially at 19. Playing for your country, travelling the world, it really is a dream come true.”

“For me, I just hope to grab an opportunity because it’s such a strong side. I’m very grateful for that.”

It is expected that Konstas, who is favoured to open although the batting order has yet to be confirmed, will have all three Tests against West Indies to try and bed himself into the side ahead of the Ashes later this year after a period where Australia have had a revolving door of openers since David Warner’s retirement.

After the first Test in Bridgetown, the series will move to Grenada for the second Test from July 3 and then to Jamaica for the third Test from July 12. - Agencies

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INSURED SALES VOLUME
Credit Oman's total insured sales of Omani non-oil exports during the first quarter of this year reached about OMR61,196,000, registering a growth of 6 percent compared to the same period in 2024, which amounted to OMR57,752,000.

MARKET

BUSINESS & FINANCE



MSX TRADING VALUE RISES
Investors on the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) were keen to buy shares during the week, taking advantage of opportunities after the declines witnessed in stocks over the past two weeks.

Investments in Mahas Industrial City surpass OMR41 million

Eight new projects were localised in the city during 2024, attracting investments worth OMR2,515,000

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn) has successfully completed the infrastructure and road construction project in Mahas Industrial City, located in the Wilayat of Khasab in Musandam Governorate. Spanning a total area of 1.5 million sqm, the project comes along



the lines of Madayn's continued efforts to advance development in Musandam and promote investment in line with Oman Vision 2040 objectives, particularly the priority of 'Development of Governorates and Sustainable Cities'. Mubarak bin Salim Al Ghailani, Acting Director General of Mahas Industrial City, stated that eight



new projects were localised in the city during 2024, attracting investments worth OMR2,515,000 and covering an area exceeding 499,000 sqm. This brings the total investment volume in Mahas Industrial City to OMR41,742,750 by the end of 2024, with a total leased area reaching 229,558 sqm. The city currently provides employ-

ment to 320 individuals.

"In 2024 alone, three building permits were issued, along with several approvals for project maps, six work permits, and eight plan drawings (kroki), all processed in line with Madayn's high standards of efficiency and regulatory compliance," Al Ghailani said.

Al Ghailani highlighted the full

completion of the city's infrastructure and road project, which includes the construction of a 7-km road network built to international standards, with sidewalks, side parking, and sustainable solar-powered lighting. The project also features a 2,000-cubic metre main water tank with an advanced pumping system, a 500-sqm sewage treatment unit, a main security gate at the city entrance, and fully integrated road, water, and wastewater networks. Additionally, the project includes a 70-sqm main bridge and a 3-km flood protection canal along the main wadi course in Mahas.

He added that work is currently underway on establishing the Madayn Entrepreneurial Complex, which aims to support entrepreneurs and the SMEs. The complex, being developed over an area of 10,000 sqm, will include ten ready-built factories of 500 sqm each (expandable), outdoor parking areas, and a fully equipped entrance gate to facilitate operations.

Al Ghailani pointed out that Mahas Industrial City targets projects in food security, logistics, and light to medium-scale industries. The city benefits from its strategic location overlooking the Strait of Hormuz and its proximity to key local and regional markets such as the UAE and Iran. Moreover, the availability of ready infrastructure enhances operational efficiency and service quality for investors and entrepreneurs. Mahas Industrial City is also conveniently located near Port of Khasab, Khasab Airport, and import-export points.

As the largest industrial city in northern Oman, Mahas plays a central role in Madayn's objectives to expand its network of industrial cities, strengthen the Sultanate's position as a competitive regional and global investment hub, stimulate sustainable industrial development, support local products, generate employment opportunities – all contributing to comprehensive and sustainable economic growth.

PIONEER NEXT-GENERATION NETWORK SOLUTIONS

Omantel, FiberHome launch joint research and development centre

MUSCAT: As part of its broader research and development strategy, Omantel has partnered with FiberHome, a leading Chinese technology provider, to establish a joint research and development centre dedicated to advancing intelligent solutions in next-generation fibre networks and telecommunications technologies. This strategic collaboration supports Omantel's vision to bridge industrial expertise with academic research, fostering a dynamic ecosystem for innovation and technology entrepreneurship in Oman. The initiative plays a vital role in driving the nation's digital transformation and enabling a knowledge-based economy.

Commenting on the partnership, Talal Al Mamari, CEO of Omantel, said: "Omantel continues to expand its investments in R&D across the technology and digital sectors, recognising the importance of staying ahead in a fast-changing digital landscape. We are committed to embracing global innovation and developing future-ready solutions that fuel our sustainable growth and meet the evolving needs of our customers. This joint center is a testament to that commitment. It will serve as a high-tech platform to design and test forward-looking solutions for Oman and the wider region. Partnering with a global leader like FiberHome enhances our capa-



bilities to build smarter, more efficient networks and deliver commercially viable technologies. We are confident this initiative will strengthen our position both regionally and globally."

Joe Cai, Vice President of FiberHome, said: "We are proud to join forces with Omantel in launching this innovation centre, which marks a new milestone in FiberHome's long-term engagement with Oman

and the Middle East. The lab will leverage our global R&D strength to develop advanced smart network solutions, including next-generation technologies like 50GPON and AI-powered network management. This partnership also promotes talent development and deeper collaboration between academia and industry, both essential pillars for sustainable digital growth."

The center will serve as an integrated platform, bringing together academic insight and real-world expertise. It will link Chinese institutions such as Wuhan University and FiberHome's research hubs with Omantel's operational capabilities and local partners to accelerate the development and deploy-

ment of intelligent solutions.

As part of the collaboration, the two companies have successfully conducted a live trial of 50GPON technology, achieving speeds of up to 50 gigabits per second – ten times faster than current fibre technologies. The trial highlights the potential for delivering ultra-high-speed connectivity to support edge computing, artificial intelligence, smart cities, and Industry 4.0 applications, cornerstones of the digital economy. The centre will focus on developing intelligent solutions for the operation and maintenance of telecom networks, emphasizing the creation of functional prototypes ready for real-world deployment in local and regional markets.

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MARKET

MSX trading value rises to OMR64.9mn in weekly trading

The week saw the prices of 47 securities decline, while the prices of 17 securities rose and 23 securities remained unchanged. The number of transactions executed during the week rose to 9,389, compared to 6,065 in the previous week

MUSCAT: Investors on the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) were keen to buy shares during the week, taking advantage of opportunities after the declines witnessed in stocks over the past two weeks. The number of transactions executed during the week rose to 9,389, compared to 6,065 in the previous week. The trading value rose substantially from OMR39.3 million to more than OMR64.9 million. The Muscat Stock Exchange was affected last week by the political situation in the region, and this was reflected in stock prices and the main index. The week saw the prices of 47 securities decline, while the prices of 17 securities rose and 23 securities remained unchanged. Muscat Stock Exchange indices recorded a collective decline last week. The main index declined for the second consecutive week, closing at 4,506 points, down 36 points. The industrial sector index recorded the largest declines,



at 174 points. The financial sector index fell 48 points, while the services sector index lost 17 points. The Sharia index also declined by 12 points, closing at 429 points. The market capitalisation of the Muscat Stock Exchange was not affected by the declines witnessed by stocks, rising by the end of the week to OMR28.221 billion, recording weekly gains of OMR132.9 million. This was on the back of the listing of the ninth Sovereign Sukuk Issue, with a volume of OMR100 million, divided into one million sukuks, each worth OMR100, with an annual profit rate of 4.65 percent. This listing contributed to the rise in the market capitalisation of the bonds and sukuk market by the end of the week's trading to OMR4.545 billion. The overall value of the Muscat Stock Exchange also benefited from the rise in OQ Exploration and Production shares to 322 baisas, up 10 baisas during the week. The company is the largest company in terms of market capitalisation listed on the Muscat Stock Exchange at OMR2.576 billion. During the week it recorded gains in its market capitalisation estimated at OMR80 million. Investors focused on OQ Basic Industries, which saw trades

worth OMR14.7 million, accounting for 22.6 percent of the total trading value. OQ Gas Networks saw trades worth OMR10.4 million. Bank Muscat also attracted investors with trades worth OMR9.881 million, representing 15.2 percent of the total trading value. OQ Exploration and Production saw trades worth OMR7.289 million, while Abraj Energy Services saw trades worth OMR6.629 million, representing 10.2 percent of the total trading value. Dhofar International Development and Investment Company topped the gainers, rising 3.8 percent to close at 270 baisas. Oman Fisheries Company rose 3.4 percent to close at 30 baisas. OQ Exploration and Production climbed 3.2 percent to 322 baisas. Phoenix Energy rose 2.9 percent to close at 69 baisas. Muscat Desalination City also rose 2.9 percent to close at 69 baisas. Al Anwar Ceramic Tiles was the biggest loser, declining 10.8 percent to close at 165 baisas. Al Jazeera Services fell to 170 baisas, recording a 9 percent decline. Salalah Mills fell to 441 baisas, a 8.1 percent decline. Oman Financial Services fell 7.1 percent to close at 130 baisas. Al Maha Ceramics fell to 277 baisas, recording a 6.4 percent decline. - ONA

Geopolitical tensions weigh on Oman stock market

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The stock market of Oman experienced its second consecutive week of losses, continuing a correction that followed a recent period of recovery and gains, according to industry expert. "The market's downturn was primarily influenced by external factors, mirroring the performance of its regional counterparts," said Abdullah Mahfoodh Al Wahaibi, Coach and analyst in global financial markets. "Escalating tensions between Israel and Iran, and the potential for US involvement, heightened regional risks, prompting a flight of investors to safe-haven assets," he further added. While these geopolitical risks caused a surge in oil prices, driven by concerns over a potential closure of the Strait of Hormuz, the increase was insufficient to shield the market from the prevailing negative sentiment. The anxieties surrounding the conflict impacted markets across the entire region, diminishing investors' risk tolerance, he said. "A potential recovery for the Omani and other regional markets hinges on a deescalation of the military conflict, a possibility that may materialise if negotiations resume, an outcome many countries are actively seeking to facilitate," Al



Wahaibi said. "However, the correction in the Omani stock market over the past two weeks appears less severe than in other regional markets," he further added. All sectors recorded negative performances during the week, with the Industrial sector being the worst performer, declining by 2.70%. Al Anwar Ceramics and Al Maha Ceramics both experienced significant losses, falling by 10.81% and 6.42% respectively, erasing a portion of the strong gains they had recently accumulated. Additionally, OQ Base Industries, the most traded stock in terms of both volume and value, was down by 1.61%. Oman Flour Mills also closed the week lower, with a decrease of 2.13%. The Services sector also registered a decline, falling by 1.11%. Within the sector, Abraj Energy Services decreased by 2.01%, OQ Gas Networks declined by 0.64%, and Al Jazeera Services saw a significant drop of 9.09%.

Credit Oman total insured sales volume grows by 6%

MUSCAT: Credit Oman's total insured sales of Omani non-oil exports during the first quarter of this year reached about OMR61,196,000, registering a growth of 6 percent compared to the same period in 2024, which amounted to OMR57,752,000.

Petrochemical Khalil bin Ahmed Al Harthy, CEO of Credit Oman, explained that the volume of insured export sales in the building and construction materials sector witnessed a growth of 24 percent, with a total value of OMR27,162,000. The petrochemical and plastics sector also recorded a 45 percent increase in sales volume, with a total value of OMR9,185,000. The mining sector witnessed a growth of 150 percent, with a value of OMR570,000, in addition to the agricultural sector, which recorded a remarkable growth of 96 percent, with a value of nearly OMR5 million. He stated that some sectors had witnessed a significant decline, including the packaging, fisheries, and garment industries, stressing that these results reflect the progress and growth witnessed by the national economy and the government's ongoing efforts to drive economic development. He pointed out that Credit Oman is making significant efforts to support Omani manufacturers and exporters, contributing to boosting their sales both locally and internationally by offering a range of insurance services and overcoming the challenges associated with Omani products entering global and new markets. It is noteworthy that Omani non-oil exports rose by 8.6 percent in the first quarter of 2025, reaching OMR1.618 billion, compared to OMR1.49 billion in the same period in 2024. - ONA

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ST. PETERSBURG INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC FORUM

Oman showcases investment ambitions at SPIEF 2025

Times News Service

ST. PETERSBURG, RUSSIA: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, concluded its participation in the 28th St. Petersburg International Economic Forum (SPIEF), reaffirming its commitment to global economic dialogue and cross-border investment engagement. Oman spotlighted its integrated business ecosystem and priority sectors under Oman Vision 2040, which aims to foster a resilient and diversified economy. SPIEF 2025 attracted approximately 20,000 participants from 140 countries, maintaining robust international engagement. The Forum featured more than 150 events, ranging from thematic panels and plenary sessions to business breakfasts and bilateral dialogues. High-profile attendees included Russian President Vladimir Putin, Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto, Chinese Vice Premier Ding Xuexiang, Bahraini royal Sheikh Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa, and South African Deputy President Paul Mashatile — alongside senior officials from nearly 50 countries, including Vietnam, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and the Central African Republic. Their presence underscored SPIEF's role as a pivotal platform for fostering multipolar economic cooperation. The Omani delegation was led by Ibtisam bint Ahmed Al Farooji, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion for Investment Promotion, who spearheaded a series of high-level meetings and sector-focused engagements. The delegation's program included participation in key forum sessions, bilateral meetings with institutional investors, and exploratory visits to major corporate pavilions. This year, Oman's focus centred on promoting investment in four high-potential sectors: luxury tourism, logistics, food security, and mining — each aligned with national efforts to position Oman as a competitive and future-ready



investment destination. As part of its engagement, Oman organized a dedicated roundtable with leading Russian companies active in these sectors. The session provided a platform to present the Sultanate's competitive advantages, regulatory reforms, and infrastructure readiness, while facilitating direct dialogue with potential investors and strategic partners. "Oman is focused on high-value investment, enabling enterprise through streamlined digital platforms, and scaling public-private partnerships — an area where we bring over two decades of institutional experience. Our business climate continues to strengthen, supported by policy clarity, legal reform, and competitive market access." She highlighted Oman's upgraded credit rating by Standard & Poor's in 2024 as a signal of fiscal stability and investor confidence, adding that the Sultanate is actively translating these gains into tangible investment momentum across key sectors—from green hydrogen and advanced manufacturing to integrated tourism and logistics.

Trade and economic cooperation between Oman and Russia continues to deepen. As of February 2024, the bilateral trade volume reached RO 30.9 million. Notably, Omani exports to Russia surged from RO 582,602 in 2022 to RO 3.35 million in 2023 — a remarkable 475% increase. Imports from Russia totalled RO 188.4 million, highlighting the scale and diversification of commercial ties between the two countries. Oman's participation in SPIEF 2025 aligns with its broader strategy to enhance investor outreach in key international markets, particularly in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. By leveraging global platforms such as SPIEF, Oman is actively cultivating a network of institutional investors and strategic partners to catalyse sustainable development and high-impact investment. As part of the official business program, Oman participated in the SPIEF session titled "Greater Eurasia: Drivers for the Formation of an Integrated Investment Market." Al Farooji joined global investment leaders to explore policy tools that can accelerate cross-border capital flows.

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OBESITY CONTRIBUTES TO ANXIETY,



LIFESTYLE

To probe the connections between obesity, cognitive function and anxiety, the researchers designed a series of experiments using a mouse model that develops many of the same obesity-related issues seen in humans

A new study suggested that obesity and anxiety may be connected through interactions between the gut and the brain.

The study links diet-induced obesity with anxiety-like symptoms, alterations in brain signalling and differences in gut microbes that may contribute to impaired brain functioning.

“Several studies have pointed to a link between obesity and anxiety, though it is still unclear whether obesity directly causes anxiety or if the association is influenced by societal pressures,” said Desiree Wanders, PhD, associate professor and chair of nutrition at Georgia State University. “Our findings suggest that obesity can lead to anxiety-like behaviour, possibly due to changes in both brain function and gut health.”

While it is well established that obesity can lead to conditions like type 2 diabetes and heart disease, the potential impacts on brain health are less clear. To probe the connections between obesity, cognitive function and anxiety, the researchers designed a series of experiments using a mouse model that develops many of the same obesity-related issues seen in humans.

The study included 32 male mice. From 6 to 21 weeks of age--a period equivalent to adolescence into early adulthood in humans--half of the mice were fed a low-fat diet and half were fed a high-fat diet. By the end of this period, mice on a high-fat diet weighed significantly more and had significantly more body fat than those fed a low-fat diet.

In behavioural tests, the researchers found that the obese mice displayed more anxiety-like behaviors, such as freezing (a defensive behavior mice exhibit in response to a perceived threat), compared with lean mice. These mice also showed different signaling patterns in the hypothalamus, a region of the brain involved in regulating metabolism, which could contribute to cognitive impairments.

In addition, the researchers observed distinct differences in the makeup of gut bacteria in obese mice compared with lean mice. These findings align with a growing body of evidence pointing to the role of the gut microbiome in regulating behavior.

While recognising that research in mice does not always translate directly to humans, Wanders said that the results provide new insights that underscore the importance of targeting multiple systems in understanding and potentially treating obesity-related cognitive impairments.

“These findings could have important implications for both public health and personal decisions,” said Wanders. “The study highlights the potential impact of obesity on mental health, particularly in terms of anxiety. By understanding the connections between diet, brain health and gut microbiota, this research may help guide public health initiatives that focus on obesity prevention and early intervention, particularly in children and adolescents.”

Wanders also noted that the carefully controlled conditions used in the study lend rigor and credibility to the results but added that the real world is much more complex.

“While our findings suggest that diet plays a significant role in both physical and mental health, it is important to remember that diet is just one piece of the puzzle,” said Wanders. “Environmental factors, genetics, lifestyle choices and socioeconomic status also contribute to the risk of obesity and its associated health outcomes. Therefore, while these results are important, they should be considered in the context of a broader, multifactorial approach to understanding and addressing obesity-related cognitive impairments and mental health issues.”

Next, the researchers hope to explore further the mechanisms by which diet-induced obesity affects the brain and behaviour by digging deeper into the changes in the gut microbiome and expanding their study to include female mice and different age groups. Wanders added that it would be useful to determine whether weight loss interventions could reverse the impacts. - ANI



COGNITIVE IMPAIRMENT: STUDY

SPORTS

THUNDERSTORMS AND HEATWAVE

Weather conditions causing increasing concern at Club World Cup

ORLANDO: Weather concerns continue to shape the FIFA Club World Cup after a fourth game was delayed because of thunderstorms - while a heatwave is expected next week.

The second half of Benfica's Group C game against Auckland City kicked off over two hours late because of heavy rain and storms in Orlando on Friday.

The kick-off for Mamelodi Sundowns against Ulsan HD in the same city had been delayed for over an hour.

And there were long pauses in the second halves of Palmeiras v Al-Ahly in New Jersey (40 minutes) and Salzburg v Pachuca in Cincinnati (90 minutes).

Campaign group Fossil Free Football say 10 matches are due to be played in the next week with either a major or extreme heat risk, as temperatures could reach 41C.

This comes just a year out from the World Cup which is being co-hosted by the United States, Canada and Mexico.

"Many of the players expecting to compete in 2026 are already getting a taste of what's to come," said Dr Chris Tyler, an environ-



mental physiologist from the University of Roehampton and an authority on heat stress in elite sports.

"Such conditions will be commonplace with many of the fixtures scheduled for before 5pm to maximise TV audiences.

"Extreme heat could become the tournament's most formidable opponent."

A statement from the world governing body read: "FIFA will continue to monitor the weather conditions in coordination with the venue teams to ensure a safe and enjoyable experience for everyone involved."

Fossil Free Football say: "Particular concern is for the fixtures in the no-shade stadium in Charlotte where a heat index of 38C

take place in 41C in Nashville at a ground with limited cover.

Matches in Philadelphia, New York, Cincinnati and Washington DC will also be played in the anticipated heatwave.

After Atletico's 4-0 defeat by Paris St-Germain in 32C in Pasadena, Marcos Llorente said it was "terribly hot" and added "my toes were sore, my nails were hurting... it's incredible".

Fans spoke of having to leave that game because of the heat - and complained about long queues and restrictions of water when arriving at the stadium.

A FIFA statement read: "FIFA's top priority is the health of everyone involved in football, and FIFA's medical experts have been in regular contact with the clubs participating to address heat management and acclimatisation."

The governing body added there will continue to be cooling breaks in the 30th and 75th minute where needed - and that fans are allowed to bring empty clear bottles of up to one litre into stadiums.

Chelsea, who are one of two English teams competing along with Manchester City, beat Los Angeles FC in their opener but then lost 3-1 to Flamengo on Friday.

"It's not easy because of the temperature," said boss Enzo Maresca. "We're going to try to rotate players."

Fans at several games - including Palmeiras v Al-Ahly - have had to leave their seats and go inside the stadium during storms.

As well as the danger posed by the heat to players, staff and supporters, from a scheduling point of view there will be concerns about the delays to games.

Four of the first 21 games faced waits ranging from 40 minutes to two-and-a-half hours for thunder and lightning storms and heavy rain.

Broadcasters will not be happy with the potential for overlapping matches at the 2026 World Cup.

Benfica v Auckland City was due to conclude an hour before Chelsea's match against Flamengo started - but ended up finishing well after the final whistle had been blown in the Blues' defeat.

"We played as well as we could. The temperature made it very difficult," said Benfica coach Bruno Lage. - Agencies

Bayern, Flamengo reach last 16

Benfica boosted their hopes of qualifying into next round with a rout of Auckland City in the FIFA Club World Cup

NEW YORK: Bayern Munich and Flamengo booked their places in the last 16 of the FIFA Club World Cup on Friday with wins over Boca Juniors and Chelsea, while Benfica boosted its hopes of advancing after routing Auckland City.

Esperance also kept alive their knockout-stage chances by edging past Los Angeles FC, which joined Auckland in exiting the tournament.

In Philadelphia, Brazil's Flamengo moved three points clear at the top of Group D after recovering from a goal down to overcome Chelsea 3-1.

Portuguese winger Pedro Neto put Chelsea ahead when he capitalised on Wesley Franca's miscued clearance to dribble almost half the length of the pitch before calmly shooting past Argentine goalkeeper Agustin Rossi.

Flamengo equalised just after the hour through Bruno Henrique, who tapped home after Gonzalo Plata flicked on Gerson's cross.

The Rio de Janeiro outfit suddenly had the momentum, and Henrique turned provider three minutes later as his header set up Danilo to



volley home at the far post.

Chelsea were reduced to 10 men in the 68th minute after Nicolas Jackson was shown a straight red card for a studs-up challenge on Lucas Ayrton.

Wallace Yan put the result beyond doubt by playing a slick one-two with Plata before firing in from the edge of the six-yard box.

"We always believed that we had a chance," Flamengo manager Filipe Luis said afterwards.

"I'm very proud because after our mistake in giving away the first goal, we didn't drop our heads. We continued to play the same way. We gave our all until the end and that warms my heart."

In Orlando, Angel Di Maria and Leandro Barreiro scored twice apiece as Benfica romped to a 6-0



victory over Auckland City.

Benfica initially struggled to breach the New Zealand club's five-man defence but Di Maria broke the deadlock from the penalty spot just before halftime.

It was all one-way traffic thereafter, despite a two-hour delay due to a storm alert.

Vangelis Pavlidis, Renato Sanches, Barreiro and Di Maria were all on target in the second half as Benfica registered their first win of the tournament.

The Portuguese club are now second in Group C with four points while Auckland City are last with 16 goals conceded in two matches.

"This is the longest game of my career," Benfica head coach Bruno Lage said. "A special thanks to our fans, who have been here for five hours supporting the team. We

NEW SIGNINGS

Liverpool sign Leverkusen's Wirtz in £116m deal

LONDON: New Liverpool signing Florian Wirtz said he wants to "win everything every year" at Anfield after the Germany playmaker joined from Bayer Leverkusen for a club record £116m on Friday.

The 22-year-old has signed a long-term deal with the Reds, understood to be five years, which will keep him on Merseyside until at least 2030, after completing a medical at the club's training ground on Friday.

The deal, which includes a guaranteed £100m and a further £16m in add-ons, tops Liverpool's previous club record signing of Virgil van Dijk for £75m in 2018.

Should those add-ons be achieved, Wirtz's move to Anfield would become a British transfer record to beat the £107m Chelsea paid Benfica for Argentina midfielder Enzo Fernandez in 2023.

Wirtz, who scored 57 goals in 197 Leverkusen appearances, is Liverpool's second major signing of the summer and the club's second from the Bundesliga runners-up following the arrival of Dutch right-back Jeremie Frimpong for £29.5m last month.

"I would like to win everything every year. First of all, we have to do our work," said Wirtz, whose



shirt number will be announced later in the summer.

"Last season they won the Premier League so my goal is for sure to win it again and also to go further in the Champions League. I'm really ambitious.

"I'm really excited to have a new adventure in front of me. This was also a big point of my thoughts: that I want to have something completely new, to go out of the Bundesliga and to join the Premier League.

"I will see how I can perform there. I hope I can do my best.

"I spoke also with some players who played there and they told me that it's perfect for me and every pitch is perfect, you can enjoy every game. I'm really looking forward to playing my first game."

Liverpool agree £40m deal to sign Kerkez

Also, Liverpool have agreed a £40m deal to sign left-back Milos Kerkez from Bournemouth.

The 21-year-old Hungary international is set to join the Premier League champions after two seasons with the Cherries.

Bournemouth have already signed Adrien Truffert from Rennes as his replacement.

Liverpool's deal for Kerkez comes with the Reds close to completing a club-record £116m move for Bayer Leverkusen attacking midfielder Florian Wirtz.

They have also signed Dutch right-back Jeremie Frimpong from the German club for £29.5m.

Serbia-born Kerkez began his senior career at Hungarian side



Gyor before a move to Italian club AC Milan.

He failed to make an appearance for the Serie A outfit before a switch to Dutch team AZ Alkmaar in January 2022.

He helped AZ Alkmaar finish fourth in the Dutch top flight in 2022-23 when he scored five goals and provided seven assists in 52 appearances.

Kerkez joined Bournemouth in summer 2023 when Liverpool sporting director Richard Hughes worked for the Cherries. He played all 38 league games last season as Bournemouth finished ninth with a club-record 56 Premier League points, with Kerkez contributing two goals and six assists. Kerkez has made 23 appearances for Hungary. - Agencies

PREMIER LEAGUE

Forest boss Nuno signs new contract

LONDON: Nottingham Forest boss Nuno Espirito Santo on Saturday signed a new three-year deal at the City Ground.

The Portuguese guided Forest to seventh in the Premier League last season to qualify for Europe for the first time since 1995-1996.

"I am delighted to be able to continue our journey at this fantastic football club," Nuno said.

"Since we arrived at Forest, we have worked extremely hard to create a special bond between the players, the fans and everyone at the club, which helped us achieve great things last season."

Nuno replaced Steve Cooper in December 2023 and kept Forest up, the club surviving on the final day of the 2023-24 season. They suffered a four-point deduction for breaching profit and sustainability rules but finished 17th.

Forest were last season's surprise package as they challenged for the Champions League spots and sat in the top four for the majority of the campaign.

They dropped out of contention after two wins in their final seven games but qualified for the Europa Conference League play-off stage.



Former Wolves and Tottenham head coach Nuno also took them to the FA Cup semi-finals for the first time since 1991, where they lost 2-0 to Manchester City.

Forest owner Evangelos Marinakis said: "Nuno has made a great impact and performed very well during his time with us so far.

"He has demonstrated that he maximises player performance and is an expert at developing players, whilst also embedding our young talent into the first team set-up.

"We enjoy a strong and solid relationship together and, above all, we share the same dream and ambition of writing a new history for Nottingham Forest." - Agencies

IN PICTURES



Warsaw Pets Day held in Poland
A dog plays with a frisbee during the Warsaw Pets Day held in Warsaw, Poland. *Xinhua*



Aamir Khan and Salman Khan at the screening of the film 'Sitaare Zameen Par'
Actors Aamir Khan and Salman Khan at the screening of the film 'Sitaare Zameen Par', in Mumbai. *ANI Photo*



Fire breaks out in Pisak, Croatia
Firefighters spray water to extinguish the fire in Pisak, Croatia. *Xinhua*



Women's Volleyball Nations League: Thailand vs. the Czech Republic
Magdalena Jehlarova (R front) of the Czech Republic competes during the Pool 5 match between Thailand and the Czech Republic at the Women's Volleyball Nations League (VNL) 2025 in Hong Kong, south China. *Xinhua*



Highlight of Tianjin Fashion Week
Models present creations during Tianjin Fashion Week in Tianjin. A show presenting both Chinese and foreign costumes was held here as part of this year's Tianjin Fashion Week. *Xinhua*

Highlight of ABB FIA Formula E World Championship
Racers compete during the the ABB FIA Formula E World Championship in Jakarta, Indonesia. *Xinhua*



Hainan Eld's deer at Bangxi provincial nature reserve in S China
This picture shows a group of Hainan Eld's deer at the Bangxi provincial nature reserve in Baisha Li Autonomous County, south China's Hainan Province. The Hainan Eld's deer, which is native to Hainan, is a national first-class protected animal and is categorised as endangered by the International Union for Conservation of Nature. *Xinhua*



People take part in yoga session across world to celebrate Int'l Day of Yoga
People take part in a mass yoga session at Independence Square in Colombo, Sri Lanka on the occasion of the International Day of Yoga. *Xinhua*

ROUND-UP

Sohar Oil wins ‘Best Brand in Customer Experience’

This award based on nationwide consumer voting and CX excellence benchmarks, celebrates Sohar Oil's commitment to customer satisfaction, quality



har Oil's commitment to customer satisfaction, quality, and its ability to evolve with customer needs while staying rooted in heritage. The Oman CX Forum provided a platform for visionary discussions on AI in service, loyalty programs, customer first cultures, and transforming digital touchpoints, key themes that align perfectly with Sohar Oil's consumer-centric journey. As one of the most widely consumed edible oils in the country, Sohar Oil has remained a staple in Omani kitchens for over 40 years, blending nutritional excellence, product consistency, and emotional resonance to win the hearts of generations. Organised by Muscat Media Group in collaboration with Infoline and supported by Gulf Leaders Circle, the Oman CX Forum 2025

brought together over 250 C-level executives and customer experience professionals from across sectors including banking, insurance, retail, telecom, automotive, utilities, FMCG, consumer electronics, food & beverages, tourism, manufacturing, real estate and more. Eng. Salem Al Bortmany, CEO of AVOD, expressed pride in the achievement: "This award is not just a milestone, it is a reflection of a brand philosophy built over decades. At AVOD, we believe that great customer experience is not limited to service or availability, it begins with product integrity, evolves with innovation, and matures through trust. Sohar Oil is a part of Omani households, part of their daily lives, their celebrations, and their memories. "Winning the Oman CX Award

for Customer Experience validates our efforts in listening to, engaging with, and growing alongside our consumers." He added, "Whether through product innovation, fortified health benefits, or culturally rooted branding, Sohar Oil is committed to exceeding expectations at every touchpoint. With this accolade, Sohar Oil reinforces its position not just as a heritage favourite, but as a modern, responsive, and consumer-first brand." The Oman CX Awards 2025 spotlighted 25 top performing brands across various categories, honouring their ability to build emotional connections, inspire loyalty, and deliver exceptional service. Sohar Oil stood out for its legacy driven branding, consumer trust, and AVOD's focus on holistic wellness and community impact. Backed by rigorous R&D, Sohar Oil continues to lead the way in quality and innovation, being the first in Oman to fortify oils with vitamins A & D. Alongside sister brands such as Minara, Khafeef, Jabal Akhdar, and Muscat Margarine, Sohar Oil represents AVOD's enduring promise delivering health, happiness, and trust through every drop.

LITERATURE WORKSHOPS



Youth Sada, bp Oman conclude Reading Family programme

MUSCAT: In partnership with bp Oman, Youth Sada concluded its sixth Reading Family programme in Al Dhahirah, which aimed to instil the culture of reading and literature within the Omani community by nurturing the children's enthusiasm in reading, developing the local youth capabilities in delivering literature workshops and raising awareness in the community on educational methods to encourage reading among the future generations. This edition of the programme benefitted over 1,000 people with more than 400 children, approximately 100 parents and over 400 students. The programme came as part of bp Oman's social investment programmes in Al Dhahirah region and this year the Reading Family programme focused on seven main activities which are the 'Rawafid' Training Programme, My Child Reads sessions, the Reading Family Forum, a picture story telling competition, workshop on self-learning intelligence, 'Dehleez' sessions and 'Hakawati' sessions. 'Rawafid' Training programme targeted the young Omanis to develop their skills in child literature by understanding the writing styles aimed at children, as well as how to create compelling content for children to meet their intellectual and psychological

needs and equip the trainers with innovative tools to design and implement reading programmes. My Child Reads sessions on the other hand targeted the mothers and parents and taught them the essential skills in how to deal with children and develop their reading skills. In addition, the Reading Family Forum included a series of challenges, fun competitions and educational workshops in various topics. Qais Al Maqrashi, CEO of Youth Sada, commented saying: "At Youth Sada, we continuously strive to promote a culture of reading and literature on a wide scale. Over the past six cycles of the programme, we have reached more than 4,500 beneficiaries of all ages, including children, parents, and school students, reflecting on our commitment to contribute to building a culture of reading." Ibrahim Al Hinaï, Social Investment Manager at bp Oman, Kuwait, and Qatar, commented: "We're committed to supporting education at bp Oman, and the Reading Family programme doesn't just target children but also Omani youth, and parents, contributing to spreading the culture of reading and literature among a wider group of our society. Over the last 6 cycles of the programme, we have benefitted 1188 mothers with more than 30 sessions delivered for various age groups."

EXCLUSIVE DISCOUNTS

Sohar International, Sohar Islamic partner with SalamAir

MUSCAT: In a move to drive cross-sector collaboration and enhance customer experience, Sohar International, together with its Islamic banking window Sohar Islamic, has partnered with SalamAir, Oman's low-cost airline, to offer exclusive discounts on domestic travel for their customers. As part of this strategic alliance, credit cardholders will benefit from a 40% discount, while debit cardholders will receive a 15% discount on the price of all SalamAir domestic flights. The offer, valid for travel between 01 July and 31 August 2025, is available exclusively to Sohar International and Sohar Islamic cardholders. Bookings must be made online via SalamAir's official website using the promo codes provided by Sohar International and Sohar Islamic for both their debit and credit card holders, subject to the offer's terms and conditions.



The partnership was formally signed during a signing ceremony held on June 17, at Sohar International's head office. The joint initiative reflects both entities' commitment to delivering integrated lifestyle benefits and enriching customer value, and to Oman's national development objectives by promoting domestic tourism and

enhancing air travel accessibility. Abdul Qadir Al Sumali, Chief Retail & Premier Banking Officer of Sohar International, stated: "Today, banking is no longer just transactional; it must be transformative. At Sohar International, our strategy is rooted in a clear and impactful philosophy—to enrich the lives of those we serve by build-

ing integrated ecosystems where finance intersects seamlessly with lifestyle. Our partnership with SalamAir, a leading national low-cost carrier that caters to the travel needs of a broad and diverse customer base, brings this vision to life—delivering everyday value through enhanced convenience, satisfaction, and integrated experiences. More than just a customer offer, this initiative contributes to stimulating domestic air travel, supporting local tourism, and reinforcing our role in advancing Oman's economic diversification agenda in line with Oman Vision 2040." Steven Allen, Chief Commercial Officer of SalamAir, added: "We are proud to collaborate with Sohar International on this meaningful initiative. SalamAir remains deeply committed to supporting the local economy, infrastructure, and financial ecosystem of Oman."

PROMOTION

Chery unveils exciting summer campaign with attractive EMIs

MUSCAT: New World Autos, the distributor for Chery vehicles in Oman, recently announced an exciting Chery Summer Campaign under the theme 'Enjoy Summer Drives with Cool Vibes'. As families prepare for scenic road trips and memorable getaways, Chery brings more value, safety and innovation to every journey with attractive benefits for customers purchasing any Chery vehicle this summer. The benefits include Free AAA Roadside Assistance, Free Service up to 6 Years/60,000 kms (whichever is earlier), an unparalleled 10 year/1,000,000 km engine warranty (not applicable on Arrizo 5), Free Insurance, Walk-in and Win Raffle with a chance to win a Samsung Galaxy S25 Ultra 5G and Test Drive & Win exciting prizes. Also available is attractive EMI options across the full range. This exclusive campaign that began on 18th May 2025 will last until 17th July 2025. (Prospective buyers may be advised that the benefits vary between model variants, model year and manufacturing year. Terms & Conditions apply.



ply. Customers can visit any Chery showroom for exact details.) Chery has established itself as one of the most forward-thinking automotive brands globally, backed by strong investments in research and development, including five R&D centers worldwide. Chery's vehicles reflect the brand's commitment to intelligent mobility, safety, energy efficiency and driving comfort. With numerous international awards and patents, Chery's range in Oman represents a fusion of cutting-edge engineering, refined aesthetics, and exceptional

value. The range in Oman includes all-new Tiggo 9, Tiggo 8 Pro Max, Tiggo 7 Pro Max, Tiggo 4 Pro, Arrizo 8, Arrizo 6 Pro and Arrizo 5. The flagship SUV in the Chery range, the Tiggo 9 is equipped with a 2.0-litre turbocharged engine, finely tuned to offer a harmonious blend of power and efficiency. Paired with an advanced 8-speed automatic transmission and all-wheel drive capability, it delivers a smooth, confident and exhilarating driving experience across Oman's diverse terrain. Inside, the Tiggo 9 offers a sanctuary of calm and so-

phistication. Its seven-seat configuration caters to modern families and adventurers alike, while the multi-layer noise reduction cabin, ventilated leather seats, front seat massage, driver headrest speakers and multi-zone climate control elevate passenger comfort to new levels. A dual 12.3-inch digital display, AR navigation and voice control headline its tech-forward interior, bringing convenience and luxury together in perfect balance. The Tiggo 9 is also available with an auto parking feature. The Tiggo 8 Pro Max is powered by a 2.0L turbocharged engine paired with a 7-speed Dual Clutch Transmission (DCT), delivering robust performance and efficiency. The Tiggo 8 Pro Max is available with EMI starting from RO 112. Blending bold design and practical versatility, the Tiggo 7 Pro Max comes with a 1.6L turbocharged engine mated to a 7-speed DCT for smooth, responsive drives. Inside, the SUV features a sleek digital cockpit, intelligent voice command system and a panoramic

sunroof. Safety is enhanced with 6 airbags, 360-degree cameras and rear cross-traffic alert, making it ideal for tech-savvy families. The Tiggo 7 Pro Max is available with EMI starting from RO 95. Compact yet packed with features, the Tiggo 4 Pro is equipped with a 1.5L turbocharged engine and CVT transmission, offering a smooth urban driving experience. The interior offers surprising spaciousness, a floating touchscreen, wireless phone charging and multiple drive modes. With key safety features like Electronic Stability Control, Hill Assist and reverse sensors, it is a smart companion for everyday journeys. The Tiggo 4 Pro is available with EMI starting from RO 79. A stylish sedan built for refined comfort, the Arrizo 8 houses a 1.6L turbocharged engine and a 7-speed DCT, offering spirited acceleration and stable handling. The interior is designed with an executive mindset, soft-touch materials, multi-colour ambient lighting and dual 12.3" screens for infotainment and instrumentation. Safety comes

standard with ADAS, auto emergency braking and lane departure warning. The Arrizo 8 is available with EMI starting from RO 115. Delivering strong value in the midsize sedan segment, the Arrizo 6 Pro is powered by a 1.5L turbo engine paired with a CVT, ensuring fuel efficiency and dynamic performance. Inside, the car features comfortable fabric seats, a wide touchscreen display and ample cargo space. Safety is upheld with ABS with EBD, TPMS and rear parking sensors. The Arrizo 6 Pro is available with EMI starting from RO 79. Perfect for first-time buyers, the Arrizo 5 offers an economical 1.5L engine with a CVT, designed for daily commutes and reliability. The interior is simple yet functional, offering a touchscreen infotainment system, manual AC and practical storage solutions. Safety essentials include dual airbags, traction control and stability assist, making it a trustworthy entry-level option. The Arrizo 5 is available with EMI starting from RO 61.

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