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TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN
Oil pollution threatens Ras Madrakah coast

1 Oil pollution affecting beaches in the Ras Madrakah area could extend along up to 40 kilometres of coastline, Oman's Environment Authority said in its latest update on the grounded vessel near Al Qibliyah Island in the Hallaniyat Islands archipelago. >A3

OMAN
Over 1.8mn vehicles registered in Oman

2 The total number of registered vehicles in Oman reached approximately 1,896,956. >A2

MARKET
Development Bank approves loans

3 Development Bank branch in Al Buraimi Governorate approved loans worth OMR2.7 million during 2025. >B1

Shaat Glass Viewpoint: A tourist experience soaring above Arabian Sea A4

SANAD SERVICE CENTRES PROCESS OVER 400,000 TRANSACTIONS

These centres are key gateway to government and private sector services in Oman

MUSCAT: Sanad Service Centres across Oman processed more than 400,000 transactions during the first half of 2026, reflecting their growing role in delivering government and private-sector services to citizens, residents, entrepreneurs and investors.

The number of authorised Sanad Service Centres reached 922 by the end of June, with the centres collectively offering around 400 services in cooperation with government and private entities. The network has also created more than 2,200 employment opportunities for Omani nationals.

The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion continues to implement its developmental programs and initiatives to elevate Sanad Service Centres through organisational expansion and digital transformation. This comes within the framework of its efforts aimed at enhancing the efficiency of these centres, raising the quality of services provided to beneficiaries, and expanding the scope of both government and private services.

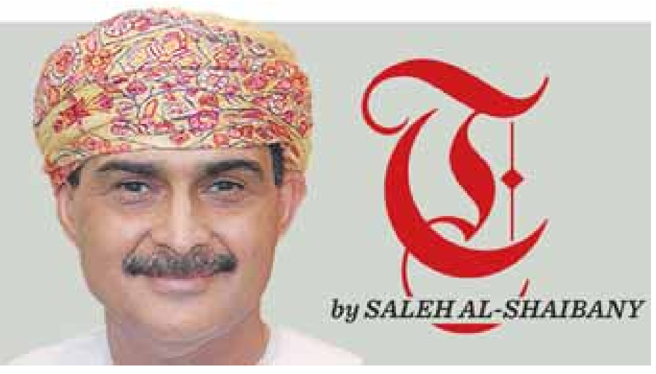
The Ministry highlighted the vital role these centres play in supporting the national economy, empowering small and medium enterprises (SMEs), and enhancing access to government and private services across the various governorates of the Sultanate of Oman.

Fathi Nasser Al Mahamouli, Assistant Director of Sanad Service Centres at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, stated that these centres serve as a platform for providing integrated government and private services, acting as a partner in digital transformation.

He pointed out that the centres have witnessed growth in the number of services provided, an increase in the number of electronically linked entities, and an expanded use of digital platforms, alongside an improvement in the quality of the services delivered. >A3

COMMENTARY

Why they are not building VIP Lounges in the graveyard?



It happened yet again when I was attending a burial of a VIP last week in a cemetery and I was among those who have been segregated by our social classes.

The coffin was carried by the working class and I was one of them. It was laid down next to the open grave and nothing happened in the next 15 minutes. We were all wondering why. It was hot and the summer heat in the middle of the day did not make the wait comfortable at all.

We were all sweating profusely and one kind soul started distributing cold bottles of water to cool our dry throats. People started to ask why but no one had an answer. Then, after we sweated buckets, we got the answer.

We heard a faint commotion on the left and we all turned towards the direction where it came from. About a dozen people walked slowly into the graveyard in one straight line and they were escorted in by two young men to chairs under the shade of trees.

Minutes later, the two young men pushed over two electric cooling fans to make sure they were comfortable. Needless to say that the rest of us were standing out in the open. A man next to me whispered that they were all VIPs but it was obvious to all of us who they were.

It was tempting for me to ask the two boys to roll out the red carpet for them. But I refrained from doing so and waited. After they seated comfortably, the coffin was lowered into the grave and the ritual started.

I looked at my mobile phone clock. We were waiting under the sun for nearly 20 minutes for the burial to start, thanks to the ceremonious arrangement of the VIPs. But that was not all. After the burial was completed, the VIP group were allowed first to leave to avoid the rush to the exit of the graveyard. No one said anything because the rest of us respected the feelings of the family of the deceased.

As I was walking to my car, someone asked me a question that was already in my head.

"Why don't they build a VIP lounge somewhere in the corner of each graveyard in the country?"

I patted him on the back but my silence was enough for him to understand that was exactly what was in my mind. There was no need for me to put it into words. It was outrageous for them to segregate mourners in terms of their bank balance or professional positions. So I decided to leave the place without quarrelling with anybody.

But I could not hold in me for too long. At a coffee shop a week later, I shared that burial experience with someone. He is not a person who would like to hold any grievances close to his heart. He let it straight out and say," so the VIPs would not be eaten by worms when they are dead?"

We both laughed in agreement but decided not to pursue the subject further. Instead, we sipped our coffee silently and watched the crowd of people walking around us. As they walked past, we could not tell which were VIPs and which were normal people. They were all there mingling in a social life regardless the size of their bank balance.

TWO-DAY EVENT

Plan to build national platform for innovative work environment

SALALAH: The activities of the sixth forum of the Omani Society for Human Resource Management commenced on Sunday in Salalah under the theme "People First: Impact Starts with People."

The two-day event features the participation of several executive leaders, experts, and specialists in the fields of leadership, human capital, institutional development, and digital transformation from within the Sultanate of Oman and abroad.

The opening of the forum was held under the auspices of HH Sayyid Marwan Turki Al Said, Governor of Dhofar.

In his speech, Faisal Hamoud Al Siyabi, Chief Executive Officer of the Omani Society for Human Resource Management, affirmed that the selection of the theme "People First" stems from a firm conviction that the human element is the most influential factor in the success of institutions.

He pointed out that the society continues its mission as a national platform that contributes to building innovative work environments.

The forum witnessed a panel discussion titled "How to Bring People Back to the Heart of Institutional Decisions," featuring the participation of HH Sayyid Marwan Turki Al Said, Governor of Dhofar; Taher Mabkhout Al Junaibi, Governor of A'Dhahirah; and Mohammed Sulaiman Al Kindi, Governor of North Al Batinah. The session was moderated by Dr. Ghalib Saif Al Hosni, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the society. It addressed the role of the human element in decision-making and the alignment between institutional development and future requirements.

The programme included the presentation of several working papers covering various topics. These included "Institutional Intelligence" by Said Abdullah Al Balushi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Labour for Human Resources Development; "Transitioning from the Digitalisation of Services to the Humanisation of Digital Systems and Services" by Dr. Ahmed Mohsen Al Ghassani, Chairman of the Dhofar Municipality; "Resilient Leadership in an Era of Transformation" by Hanan Abdulrahman Al Saif, General Manager of ZRG Partners Arabia Ltd.; and "Strategic Dialogues for the Future of Work and People" by Mohammed Othman Al Aiban, Senior Vice President of Human Capital at the Saudi Environment Fund.

Additionally, a paper on "Human Capacity Building from a Training Perspective" was presented by Faisal Abdullah Al Nahdi, Director of the Training and Development Center at the State Financial and Administrative Audit Authority.

This was presented alongside a paper titled "Human Capital: From an Operating Cost to a National Value" by Noura Abdulmohsen Al Raaidan, and another titled "The Family as the Core of Protection and Empowerment" by Radhiya Mohammed Al Mahrouqi, Director General of Social Protection Policies at the Social Protection Fund.

The forum aims to highlight the importance of investing in human resources, review the latest practices in developing the employee experience, and exchange expertise between the public and private sectors, in addition to discussing the impact of digital transformation on the future of work. -ONA

OMR28mn projects to enhance electricity supply in Al Wusta

These projects include connecting the electrical grid in the governorate's wilayats to the main grid, increasing the capacity and efficiency of the distribution network in the governorate

DUQM: Nama Electricity Distribution Company continues to implement a package of development projects in Al Wusta Governorate with a total cost exceeding OMR28,425,000.

These projects include connecting the electrical grid in the governorate's wilayats to the main grid, increasing the capacity and efficiency of the distribution network in the governorate, as well as enhancing its flexibility, thereby boosting the system's reliability, reducing losses, and achieving compliance with grid security standards.

This comes within the framework of Nama Electricity Distribution Company's strategic plans aimed at enhancing the reliability of the electrical grid and expanding its service scope to keep pace with the requirements of urban and economic growth in the governorate's wilayats.

Eng. Mohammed Rashid Al Qari, Director General of Major Projects at Nama Electricity Distribution Company, confirmed to Oman News Agency (ONA) that these projects fall within the development plans executed by the company to enhance the efficiency of the electrical grid and increase its capacity, in line with the urban expansion and rapid population and economic growth in the Wilayats of Duqm, Al Jazer and Mahout in particular.

He pointed out that the company is keen to execute its projects according to approved timelines, with full commitment to quality and operational safety standards, emphasising that these projects contribute to enhancing the stability of the electrical grid service and improving the quality of supply to subscribers of this essential service across various sectors.

Al Qari explained that the projects being implemented include the construction of three substations with feeders in the Wilayats of Al Jazer and Duqm at a cost of OMR12,388,256; the construction of the distribution system connected to the main station in the Wilayat of Al Jazer at a cost of OMR4,676,831; the construction of the Hij substation with feeders in the Wilayat of Mahout valued at OMR582,169; the construction of the Khaloof substation with feeders in the Wilayat of Mahout at a cost of OMR1,185,601; the construction of the Al Najdah substation with feeders in the Wilayat of Mahout at a cost of OMR3,641,689; in addition to the construction of the new Sarab substation with voltage feeders in the Wilayat of Mahout at a cost of OMR1,336,809; and the construction of the distribution system connected to the Duqm main station and Mahout main station at a cost of OMR4,614,561.

The Director General of Major Projects at Nama Electricity Distribution Company affirmed that these projects aim to connect the distribution network in these wilayats to the main electrical system and enhance supply reliability in Al Wusta Governorate, thereby supporting the economic and urban development process and meeting the needs of growing demand in the governorate's wilayats. -ONA

CFA INSTITUTE

SPF Investment unit gains GIPS verification

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Investment Unit of the Social Protection Fund (SPF) has obtained independent verification of compliance with the Global Investment Performance Standards (GIPS), issued by the CFA Institute.

This milestone reflects the Unit's commitment to adopting internationally recognised best practices in investment management and performance measurement, while strengthening transparency, governance, and the credibility of its investment reporting.

The GIPS standards are globally recognised voluntary standards that provide a standardised framework for calculating and presenting investment performance based on the principles of full disclosure and fair representation.

Widely adopted by leading asset owners and investment managers around the world, the standards enhance the reliability and comparability of investment performance reporting and support greater transparency for stakeholders.

Commenting on the achievement, the Head of the Investment Unit of the Social Protection Fund, Hamad bin Mohammed Al-Wahaibi, said: "Obtaining independent verification of compliance with the GIPS standards marks an important milestone in the Investment Unit's practices with internationally recognized standards and further strengthen governance in the management of the Fund's assets.

"This achievement enhances the credibility of our investment reporting, supports more informed investment decision-making, and reinforces stakeholders' confidence in our investment management practices.

"It also reflects our commitment to continuously adopting global best practices in asset management and investment performance measurement."

NCSI DATA

Total number of registered vehicles in Oman tops 1.8mn

MUSCAT: The total number of registered vehicles in the Sultanate of Oman reached approximately 1.89 million vehicles by the end of June 2026, marking an increase of 5.5 percent compared to the end of June 2025.

Statistics issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) revealed that the number of private vehicles reached 1,503,239, while commercial vehicles amounted to 281,217.

The number of rental vehicles stood at 44,817, and taxis reached 28,859, in addition to 11,764 government vehicles and 10,961 temporary vehicles.

Motorcycles recorded the highest growth rate among all registration types at 10.7 percent, bringing their total to 9,005 motorcycles by the end of June 2026, compared to 8,712 motorcycles at the end of June 2025.

Furthermore, the data indicated that the number of vehicles weighing less than 3 tonnes reached 1,720,196. Meanwhile, vehicles weighing between 7 and 10 tonnes accounted for 80,736, and those weighing more than 10 tonnes totaled 54,912 vehicles. — ONA

SECOND TIME

SQU programme receives international accreditation

MUSCAT: The Sultan Qaboos University's programme of Bachelor of Science in Biomedical Science (with Clinical Training) has received international accreditation for the second time after meeting the standards and requirements.

This constitutes the third consecutive international accreditation cycle for the aforementioned programme, conducted at the College of Medicine and Health Sciences at Sultan Qaboos University, during the 2025-2029 period.

The accomplishment was unveiled after an international external quality assurance assessment that was conducted by the Institute of Biomedical Sciences in United Kingdom.

It was officially approved by Oman Authority for Quality Assurance of Education on April 8, 2025. The Institute officially affirmed that the programme successfully met all the requirements for re-accreditation.

Prof. Dr. Rashid bin Khalfan Al Abri, Dean of the College of Medicine and Health Sciences, said, "This achievement reaffirms the college's commitment to academic excellence, its keenness on constant improvement and its dedication to the objectives of Oman Vision 2040 and the strategic plan of Sultan Qaboos University on enhancing the quality of education, learning and research."

For his part, Dr. Nasr Al Wahaibi, Head of the Department of Biomedical Sciences at the College of Medicine and Health Sciences, said, "This achievement has been realized after the preparation of the comprehensive self-assessment report on reaccreditation, as well as the field visit conducted by the team of the Institute of Biomedical Sciences last year."

Dr. Shadia Mohammed Al Bahlani, Head of the Unit of Quality Assurance and Academic Accreditation at the College of Medicine and Health Sciences, said, "This achievement represents a new milestone in the programme's journey in the field of international accreditation.

The programme has obtained accreditation for the first time for the period 2015-2019. Then the programme successfully completed the first reaccreditation cycle for the period 2020-2024. Now it has realized international reaccreditation for the second time for the period 2025-2029." -ONA

SECURITY UNIT IN MUSCAT

Royal Court Affairs receives new batch of recruits

MUSCAT: Acting in coordination with the Ministry of Labour, the Royal Court Affairs on Sunday received a new batch of citizens, at its Security Unit in Muscat, for training to work as soldiers in different departments.

After passing the stages of assessment and admission, the recruits will begin a military training programme that will qualify them to perform their missions in accordance with the requirements of the national duty.

The new batch will receive training at the Military Training Centre of the Royal Court Affairs' Security Unit. The programme includes Field Skills, Infantry Skills and Physical Fitness Skills.

The programme also includes a course about military discipline and knowledge of military rules, regulations and laws—to develop the cognitive level of the recruits and prepare them to practice their prescribed roles in an efficient manner.

Lt. Col. Saud Mohammed Al Harrasi, Director of the Military Training and Qualification Centre, said, "Extensive efforts have been made to help the members of the new batch of recruits garner military skills and proper knowledge before they join their colleagues in military units of the Royal Court Affairs.

Attention is also undertaken to ensure the diversity of the training programme in order to raise the military, physical and cognitive level of the soldier recruits." -ONA

2025–2026 SEASON

Camel Racing Festival in Jaalan Bani Bu Ali concludes

JAALAN BANI BU ALI: The competitions of the Sayh Al Ramth Camel Racing Festival for the 2025–2026 season concluded today in the Wilayat of Jaalan Bani Bu Ali, South Al Sharqiyah Governorate. The event was organized by the Camel Racing Committee of the wilayat.

The closing ceremony was patronized by Mohammed Humaid Al Ghabshi, Wali of Jaalan Bani Bu Ali, in the presence of Sheikh Said Saud Al Ghufaili, Chairman of Oman Camel Racing Association, alongside camel owners and a large gathering of enthusiasts of the sport.

The festival was held in recognition of the importance of supporting camel owners and encouraging their continued dedication to the sport, while also providing a competitive platform to showcase the capabilities of participating camels and reinforce the presence of camel racing among the Sultanate of Oman's sporting and heritage events.

The festival programme featured six races, in which competing camels vied for top honours in contests that reflected their readiness and the quality of their preparation. The organizing committee awarded vehicles to the winners of the first places across all six races.

The festival exemplifies the enduring presence of camel racing in society, representing a deeply rooted connection to the nation's cultural and sporting heritage, and embodying values associated with the care, training, and preparation of camels. -ONA

DIGITAL AWARENESS

Sanad centres create more than 2,200 job opportunities

< FROM A1

He affirmed that Sanad Service Centres have contributed to bringing services closer to the beneficiary and reducing the need to visit the relevant authorities directly, which has saved time and effort while cutting transportation costs.

The Ministry is also working on developing performance indicators that measure transaction completion times, first-visit completion rates, and beneficiary satisfaction levels to ensure continuous improvement.

He explained that in recent years, the segment of beneficiaries has expanded to include entrepreneurs, small and medium enterprises, and investors, alongside citizens and residents. Furthermore, the level of digital awareness among beneficiaries has increased, prompting them to seek more specialised, rapid, and high-quality services.

He pointed out that there are discrepancies between the centers regarding service quality, which are linked to the size of the center, the nature of the services, or operational density.

However, the Ministry is working to standardise the level of service through the implementation of a governance manual, training and qualification programs, institutional classification of the centers, and continuous monitoring. This ensures the delivery of a unified experience for beneficiaries in all governorates.

He added that the Ministry looks forward to seeing Sanad centers evolve into smart, multi-service hubs over the next five years.

This vision encompasses increasing the number of services provided, raising the percentage of digital services, applying artificial intelligence systems, launching a classification framework for the centers, and enhancing partnerships with the public and private sectors. Ultimately, this will raise operational efficiency and enhance the financial sustainability of the centres.

INDONESIA

His Majesty the Sultan sends a cable of greetings

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Prabowo Subianto of the Republic of Indonesia on his country's Independence Anniversary. In the cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his heartfelt sentiments and best wishes to Indonesia for continued progress and prosperity. His Majesty also wished the bilateral relations of cooperation and partnership further growth and expansion in a manner that serves mutual interests. -ONA

Oil spill affects up to 40km of Ras Madrakah coast

Satellite imagery, technical monitoring systems and numerical models are being used to track the movement and spread of oil slicks and forecast areas that could potentially be affected

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oil pollution affecting beaches in the Ras Madrakah area could extend along up to 40 kilometres of coastline, Oman's Environment Authority said in its latest update on the grounded vessel near Al Qibliyah Island in the Hallaniyat Islands archipelago.

The authority said specialised teams are continuing environmental monitoring, surveying and response operations in coordination with relevant authorities.

Satellite imagery, technical monitoring systems and numerical models are being used to track the movement and spread of oil slicks and forecast areas that could potentially be affected.

According to the latest monitoring results, several beaches in the Ras Madrakah area have already been affected by the pollution. Current models indicate that the affected coastline in the same area could extend for up to 40km.

The authority also warned that the southern coast of Masirah Island could be affected in the coming hours, with available data indicating a potentially impacted stretch of between 10km and 20km.

Specialised teams are continuing monitoring, follow-up and response operations, with measures being taken to contain the spread of pollution and minimise its potential environmental impact.

The authority said priority is being given to areas of high environmental sensitivity as response teams work to assess and address the effects of the oil pollution.

The Environment Authority urged fishermen, coastal visitors and members of the public not to approach, touch or handle any contaminated materials that may be found along affected areas.

Members of the public were also advised to report any contaminated materials to the relevant authorities. A family visiting the beach spotted several seabirds near the polluted water.

Remembering the official guidance, they did not approach the animals. Instead, they reported what they had seen through the emergency contact number provided by the authorities. Thanks to the combined efforts of the authorities and the public, the situation was managed effectively. The incident became a reminder that protecting the environment is a shared responsibility and that following official safety instructions can help keep both people and wildlife safe.

IMPORTANT GUIDELINES FOR MARINE AND COASTAL AREAS

- Stay away from the affected area and avoid touching oily substances or swimming in contaminated waters
- Do not attempt to clean up or remove the spill yourself, and do not interact directly with it
- Report immediately if you observe an oil spill, marine pollution, or affected marine organisms by calling: 93930088
- Follow the instructions issued by the competent authorities and rely on official information sources
- Avoid sharing unverified information.

Shaat Glass Viewpoint draws more than 50,000 visitors in Dhofar

A modern project has added an exceptional feature to the area's breathtaking natural landscape: a glass observation platform that offers visitors the chance to gaze

RAKHYUT: Shaat Glass Viewpoint in the Wilayat of Rakhyut, Dhofar Governorate, has unveiled a striking new identity that reinforces its standing as one of the governorate's premier tourist destinations. A modern development project has added an exceptional feature to the area's breathtaking natural landscape: a glass observation platform that offers visitors the chance to gaze upon steep mountain slopes and the Arabian Sea from a dizzying height, where the blue of the ocean meets the green of the mountains and the vast horizon beyond.

Situated on the slopes of Mount Sajer, part of the Qamar (Moon) Mountain range in Rakhyut, the Shaat Glass Viewpoint commands a view of the sea from an elevation exceeding 1,000 metres. It lies approximately 80 kilometres from the city of Salalah via the main highway connecting Salalah to the wilayats of Rakhyut and Dhalkhut.

The new project has imbued the location with a distinct touristic dimension, featuring a glass platform measuring 10 metres in length and 12 metres in width, complemented by viewing decks, seating areas, rest stops, pedestrian pathways, vehicle parking, service facilities, retail zones, a children's play area, and an open-air amphitheatre. Together, these amenities offer visitors a comprehensive experience that harmonizes the enjoyment of nature with ready access to essential services.

The glass platform is distinguished by its design, which allows visitors to stand suspended above the natural terrain and take in an uninterrupted panoramic view of the sea and mountains—an experience that blends exhilaration, contemplation, and photography. This comes as Dhofar Governorate continues to see growing interest in natural sites that combine geographical assets with modern tourism infrastructure.

Ahmed Said Baqi, owner of Sajer Investment Company, the project's developer, stated that the construction of the glass platform adhered to multiple engineering and technical specifications, encompassing structural and environmental studies, load and wind analysis, safety assessments, and risk management protocols. These were complemented by soil testing prior to construction, as well as testing of the steel framework and glass panels following installation.

He added that the structure underwent a load test of up to 40 tonnes, while the glass itself consists of three laminated layers with a total thickness of 43 millimetres. He stressed that these measures are designed to ensure the durability of the facility, the safety of visitors, and the delivery of an enjoyable and secure tourist experience.

He explained that the glass platform was executed in line with a vision set by Dhofar Municipality—the project's owning authority—aimed at leveraging the unique natural attributes of the Shaat site and offering visitors a novel experience that marries scenic beauty with safety and quality standards. He noted that the glass design was chosen to afford visitors an unobstructed field of vision, enabling them to appreciate the natural landscape from a fresh perspective, thereby enhancing the site's appeal and adding a distinctive landmark to Dhofar's tourism portfolio.

He further indicated that the project also provides a range of facilities and services designed to ensure visitor comfort and smooth site circulation, emphasizing that the development was holistically conceived in terms of infrastructure, tourist amenities, and viewing and rest areas. He added that the strong visitor turnout since the site's opening underscores the importance of developing such natural attractions and supports efforts to stimulate tourism and economic activity in Rakhyut and Dhofar Governorate at large.

The visitor experience at Shaat extends beyond the glass platform. The site also features designated areas for family-run businesses adjacent to the viewpoint, showcasing Omani products and traditional cuisine, along with incense, perfumes, and handicrafts—adding an economic dimension to the visit that supports local production.

The new vista has attracted large numbers of visitors since its inauguration. According to data published by Dhofar Municipality in early August, the site has received more than 50,000 visitors, with access to the platform regulated in groups of no more than 30 persons at a time, each for a limited duration, to manage foot traffic and enhance visitor safety.

The development of the Shaat Glass Viewpoint reflects a strategic approach to harnessing natural assets in the creation of novel tourism experiences while preserving the site's distinctive character. In 2025, Dhofar Municipality announced the implementation of the second phase of the site's development, comprising rest areas, public facilities, viewing points, car parks, and landscaping works, at a total cost exceeding RO 1 million.

With the project now fully realized, the Shaat Glass Viewpoint emerges as a model tourism destination that fuses natural beauty with innovative design, offering visitors to Dhofar Governorate a one-of-a-kind experience that places them at the heart of the scenery—standing above the glass, with the mountain's depth beneath their feet, the expanse of the Arabian Sea before them, and Dhofar's verdant mountains surrounding them during the khareef (monsoon) season.

Shaat Glass Viewpoint has also become a favoured photography location across the governorate, thanks to its sweeping panoramic views and the rich diversity of its terrain and landscapes. -ONA

ARAB CULTURAL PRESENCE

Oman participates in Istanbul International Arab Book Fair

ISTANBUL: Represented by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, the Sultanate of Oman is taking part in the 11th edition of Istanbul International Arab Book Fair, which runs from 15 to 23 August.

Oman's participation in the event reflects its keenness to enhance Arab cultural presence and showcase the features of the Omani cultural identity to a wide audience of intellectuals, researchers, publishers and visitors from various countries of the world.

Through its pavilion, the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth highlights a range of publications, programmes and cultural initiatives that reflect the depth of the Omani cultural scene and support efforts to spread to preserve cultural heritage and introduce it to new generations.

This year's exhibition takes the slogan "The Story Continues", which pertains to the continuity of the Arab cultural resourcefulness and the importance of books as a source of knowledge and human interaction.

The book fair showcases publications from more than 30 countries and more than 300 publishing houses. It also features cultural programmes on various literary spheres. -ONA

COMMENTARY

Modern regulations set the stage for Omani capital markets growth

The new framework that replaces 2009's Executive Regulations of the Capital Market Law aims to modernise Oman's capital market, strengthening investor protection, supporting financial innovation, and enhancing the sector's role as a key source of financing for the national economy.

The new regulations, published in the official Gazette on 26 July 2026 and immediately enforced, establish comprehensive, clear operational rules for exchanges, central securities depositories, clearing houses, and settlement systems, emphasising expanding financing options in the economy and enhancing flexibility to attract both domestic and foreign capital into the capital market.

It acts as a critical, foundational bridge that recognises 11 types of investment funds, including private equity and venture capital funds. It empowers the FSA to licence financial technology services and alternative investment instruments through a dedicated regulatory sandbox. It integrates strict mandates for capital adequacy, credit risk, market risk, and business continuity across all operating entities.

For financial institutions, commercial banks engaged in securities activities are required to legally separate those operations into independent subsidiaries within a three-year transitional period, with exceptions that allow banks to continue providing custody, trust, and underwriting services directly.

For the broader capital market, it implements an updated, unified rulebook that emphasises risk-based supervision, operational resilience, and enhanced market integrity, replacing fragmented guidelines, boosting fairness, integrity, and transparency, with a 6-month compliance window.

The new framework also introduces a dedicated regulatory regime for credit rating agencies to enhance transparency in risk assessment. Additionally, it overhauls capital market fees to reduce compliance burdens, favoring market competitiveness and encouraging broader participation from local and international investors.

Furthermore, the regulations formalise investment banking as a distinct activity, covering product structuring and research. This addition drives primary market liquidity, equipping financial institutions with the structural flexibility needed to stimulate ongoing capital market expansion.

By clarifying rules for primary market issuance, crowdfunding, and more, the framework provides favorable conditions for Oman's capital markets to grow and improve its appeal.

Aligned directly with the strategic objectives of Oman Vision 2040, the structure shifts the market further toward a globally aligned ecosystem. By introducing robust clearing architectures, internationally compatible settlement systems, and transparent governance, it builds the structural prerequisites demanded by foreign institutional investors and brings Oman's regulatory infrastructure closer to other mature global financial hubs.

· The writer is Oman-based coach and analyst in global financial markets

MUSCAT GOVERNORATE

CPA orders construction firms to pay OMR1,600

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Consumer Protection Authority (CPA) has issued a judgment involving three consumers and three commercial establishments operating in the construction sector in Muscat Governorate.

According to the CPA, the establishments failed to carry out agreed works, including the construction of service facilities and installation of equipment, in addition to poor workmanship and failure to comply with agreements concluded with the consumers. The establishments and their representatives were convicted of failing to provide the agreed services and were ordered to pay a total of OMR 1,600, in addition to the applicable legal costs. The judgment was issued on August 16, 2026.

Isuzu N-Series Wins Best Brand in Customer Experience Award in LCV

Isuzu N-Series was felicitated with the 'Times of Oman Best Brand Award in LCV' at the Oman Best Brands Awards 2026.

The awards presentation was co-located with the Oman CX Forum 2026, held at Kempinski Hotel Muscat. The premier event brought together over 325 senior CX leaders, business professionals, and industry experts from across Oman.

The recognition reflects the strong confidence customers across the Sultanate place in Isuzu N-Series, highlighting the brand's renowned quality, reliability, and long-standing commitment to delivering exceptional ownership experiences. As a leading name in the light commercial vehicle segment, Isuzu continues to build strong customer relationships through dependable vehicles and consistent service excellence.

Supported by a robust nationwide service network and a customer-first approach, Isuzu N-Series delivers vehicles engineered to meet Oman's demanding operating conditions. Its focus on reliability, operational performance, and long-term customer support has strengthened its position as a trusted choice among businesses and individuals across the Sultanate.

As the exclusive distributor of Isuzu vehicles in Oman, OTE Group operates an extensive network of sales, service, and parts facilities, providing comprehensive support to Isuzu customers. The Group's commitment to quality, operational excellence, and long-term customer relationships continues to reinforce the ownership experience.

A senior official from OTE Group expressed pride in the achievement, noting that the award reflects the collective commitment of Isuzu and OTE Group to delivering exceptional customer experiences. The recognition further motivates the team to continue enhancing service capabilities and every aspect of the customer journey.

The Best Brand in Customer Experience (CX) Awards are instituted by Times of Oman, in collaboration with Muscat Media Group, Gulf Leaders Circle and TEvents. They are presented to the leading brands that are ahead of the curve in meeting and exceeding the customers expectations. The winners are selected based on an extensive consumer survey conducted by the Times of Oman.

OMAN

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Advanced Scouts summer camp concludes in Dhofar Governorate

SALALAH: The summer camp for the stage of Advanced Scout, organised by the Ministry of Education, concluded in the Governorate of Dhofar on Sunday.

The camp, held under the theme "Our future lies in our values", saw the participation of about 300 scouts and scout leaders from different governorates of the Sultanate of Oman.

The camp aimed to invest in youthful energy, utilise innovative talents and equip participants with skills of self-reliance and time management, in addition to fostering teamwork, cooperation and initiatives.

The programme of the closing ceremony included a visit to a roadshow, a visual presentation featuring the most prominent activities implemented during the camp and the honouring of establishments and individuals who contributed to the success of the camp.

The closing ceremony was held under the auspices of Dr. Badr Hamoud Al Kharousi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education for Education, and attended by local dignitaries, government officials and representatives of private sector establishments.

— ONA

IN CAIRO

Youth tennis team wraps up training programme

CAIRO: The Omani national youth tennis team wrapped up its external training camp in the Egyptian capital, Cairo, at Smash Academy, as part of the association's plan to support national team players, focusing during this camp on players of the under-14, under-10, and under-16 national teams.

The total number of players participating in this training camp reached 13 male and female players. For the second consecutive year, the camp achieved its desired goals in honing national team players in preparation for upcoming external competitions.

Ahmed Al Balushi, head of the delegation, stated that the camp was successful and achieved its technical goals by developing players' performance levels, in addition to mental and nutrition lectures.

He added that the players played friendly matches with players from the academy and other academies, deriving great benefit from intensive training sessions conducted under the supervision of specialised coaches, expressing hope that this programme will contribute to achieving good results for national team players in upcoming external competitions and earning them more international ranking points.

— ONA

BAYT AL-GREIZA DEPARTMENT

Programme to foster pride in national identity among children launched

MUSCAT: The National Museum, represented by the Bayt al-Greiza Department, launched its "Omani Character" summer programme on Sunday at Bayt al-Greiza. The programme aims to instill dignity and decorum and foster pride in national identity, while promoting Omani character and authentic customs among children and young people through a cultural experience that combines learning, practical application and creativity.

The programme will be held in two stages. The first stage, taking place from 16 to 20 August 2026, is designated for children aged 5–7, while the second stage, from 23 to 26 August 2026, will cater to young people aged 8–12. Its activities have been designed to suit the respective age groups of the participants, enabling them to learn through practice, experience and discovery.

The programme explores a number of practices associated with Omani character, including the etiquette and traditions associated with welcoming and bidding farewell to guests, in accordance with Omani heritage, as well as the protocols of banquets and hospitality. It also introduces national symbols, while exploring the artistic aesthetics of Arabic calligraphy, decorative motifs and royal gardens. These themes are explored through a series of art workshops, practical activities and interactive experiences that connect participants with elements of Omani culture in practical contexts relevant to their interests.

The programme also includes interactive activities that foster a spirit of adventure and discovery, including treasure hunts and map-reading activities. These enable participants to practice what they have learnt in a lively environment, transforming Bayt al-Greiza into an educational and cultural space through which they can explore aspects of Omani heritage and its social and behavioural values.

— ONA

51 killed, thousands evacuated after quake strikes Indonesia

Indonesian Deputy Health Minister Benjamin Paulus Octavianus reported that 36 people were seriously injured in the earthquake that struck East Nusa Tenggara province, while 77 others sustained minor

JAKARTA: Indonesian authorities announced yesterday that at least 51 people were killed and about 5,000 were evacuated after a 7.7 magnitude earthquake struck off the coast of Flores Island in eastern Indonesia.

Indonesian Deputy Health Minister Benjamin Paulus Octavianus reported that 36 people were seriously injured in the earthquake that struck East Nusa Tenggara province, while 77 others sustained minor injuries.

Deputy chief of Sikka Simon Subandi said, "Almost all of Sikka's residents didn't dare stay indoors, so they slept on a porch or a tent outside."

Indonesian Cabinet Secretary Teddy Indra Wijaya said that more than 3,500 military and police personnel have been deployed to the region to assist with relief efforts and disaster response.

The disaster mitigation agency (BNPB) reported that most of the missing were trapped under rubble, more than 1,300 homes were damaged, and 20 gas stations had stopped operating due to power outages.

Indonesia and its neighboring countries lie within the Pacific Ring of Fire, a seismically active region that stretches from Japan through Southeast Asia and the Pacific basin, making the archipelago frequently vulnerable to earthquakes and tremors.

A 6.2 magnitude earthquake struck eastern Indonesia in early July, without causing casualties or major damage.

Following the initial tremor, the Meteorology, Climatology, and Geophysics Agency (BMKG) issued a Tsunami Early Warning, which was officially lifted at 7:30 AM (local time) after monitoring confirmed no dangerous sea-level rise along affected coastal areas.

Earlier, Indonesia was struck by the third earthquake within hours on Saturday night as the country continues to reel from the devastation of the natural calamity.

Sharing the details in a post on X, the National Center for Seismology said that the earthquake of magnitude 6.0 struck the Gulf of Tomini on Saturday night.

As per the NCS, the earthquake occurred at a depth of 68 kilometres at 21:55 IST.

It said, "EQ of M: 6.0, On: 15/08/2026 21:55:18 IST, Lat: 0.174 N, Long: 120.312 E, Depth: 68 Km, Location: Gulf of Tomini."

This comes as a magnitude 6.5 quake struck Indonesia on Saturday afternoon, hours after a devastating 7.7-magnitude quake in the morning. According to the US Geological Survey (USGS), the earlier earthquake struck Indonesia's Flores region at 5:58 am (local time), with its epicentre located roughly 68 kilometres north-northwest of Ende city in East Nusa Tenggara province. Several aftershocks followed the initial quake. The head of the Maumere Search and Rescue Agency, Fathur Rahman, said rescuers continued searching for two villagers believed to be buried under mud following a landslide triggered by the earthquake.

East Nusa Tenggara Police Chief Rudi Darmoko said the earthquake caused severe damage and collapsed buildings. Power outages in cities and villages disrupted communication and hampered search and rescue operations.

Footage on local television showed patients being evacuated from several hospitals as a precaution. Hospital staff moved equipment, including beds, IV stands, and oxygen cylinders, outdoors and established temporary treatment areas. — Agencies

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140 KILOMETRES EAST OF BUDAPEST

Polish bus crash kills 12 in Hungary

BUDAPEST: At least 12 people have died after a Polish coach crashed into a ditch and overturned in eastern Hungary, police said on Sunday.

According to emergency services, 47 people were injured in the incident, 10 seriously.

The accident occurred on the M3 motorway near Mezokeresztes, around 140 kilometres east of Budapest, according to police in the district capital, Miskolc.

Budapest Police said they believe the driver fell asleep at the wheel during the overnight journey into Sunday. He was subsequently arrested.

Poland's PAP news agency reported that the bus had been carrying a group of pilgrims from Podkarpackie province in the far southeast of Poland.

The group, said to number 59 people, including two drivers, had been returning from Bosnia-Herzegovina, PAP said.

Fourteen ambulances were deployed to the scene of the crash, reports said.

Hungary's National Directorate for Disaster Management said that several of the passengers had been trapped under the vehicle when it overturned.

Condolences from Hungary, Poland

Hungarian Prime Minister Peter Magyar has voiced his condolences to the families of the crash victims in a Facebook message and thanked emergency and rescue services.

Polish President Karol Nawrocki said he was deeply shaken. "In the face of this unimaginable tragedy, which affects us all, my thoughts and prayers go out to the families and loved ones of the victims," the 43-year-old wrote on X. — DW

Tigers roar, Aussies stumble! Bangladesh script history

The visitors' sensational victory came after Mehidy five-for on day four left them just 57 runs to win against the heavyweights

DARWIN: Bangladesh shook up world cricket with their nine-wicket win against Australia in the Darwin Test on Sunday.

It was their first Test win in Australia in only their third attempt, although they were playing a Test in the country for the first time in 23 years. Bangladesh had beaten Australia in a Test at home nine years ago, too, but this victory was as comprehensive as it gets. The visitors absolutely trounced the much-vaunted No.1 team in the world.

After Australia were bowled out for 284 in the second innings, Bangladesh were set a target of 57 runs on the fourth afternoon.

Mominul Haque knocked the winning runs at 2.36pm local time. It left a full day of celebration for the players and support staff, and for the small group of fans, who made enough noise in an almost empty Marrara Oval on a Sunday.

The win is a huge moment for Bangladesh, especially in a year when they missed the T20 World Cup for political reasons. They have, however, won significantly since March, culminating in this massive Test win.

Hasan Mahmud taking nine wickets in the match, and Tanzid Hasan scoring his maiden century was complemented by Mehidy Hasan Miraz's half-century and five-wicket haul later in the game.

Captain Najmul Hossain Shanto starred with the bat, and as a captain too.

What made this win so unbelievable was Bangladesh's form in the lead-up to this match. They crashed to 54 all out in the warm-up fixture against CA XI just the week before, and they were missing their new pace sensation Nahid Rana in the Test series.

Still, Bangladesh bowled out Australia for less than 300 runs in both innings, while their rickety batting line-up stood up ramrod straight in the Test.

Bangladesh's final victory push began on the third afternoon when they went 228 runs ahead of Australia in the first innings.

On the fourth morning, when Australia were still trailing by 67 runs and four down, Mehidy tied up his end with plenty of dot balls, before Alex Carey played down the wrong line to be caught behind for 30. That was the opening Bangladesh needed.

Mehidy then got one to drift away beautifully from Beau Webster and the ball knocked over his off stump. Pat Cummins fell to the off-spinner with an inside edge to short leg, where Shadman Islam took the catch.

Taskin Ahmed got Mitchell Starc after lunch, before Cameron Green rushed to his third Test century. He batted solidly for his 104, but found little support at the other end.

Green kept the visitors at bay by batting for nearly five hours for 201 deliveries that saw only four fours. Soon after Starc's wicket, Green unleashed a mighty six over mid-wicket off Taskin, who put down the batter next ball, although off a tough return chance.

Shanto brought back Mahmud, who rewarded him with Green's wicket, though the ball kept low to hit the stumps after taking an under edge.

Mehidy got Nathan Lyon lbw to end the innings, which gave him his third five-wicket haul in an overseas Test and 15th overall.

Brief scores: Bangladesh 426 (Tanzid 101, Shanto 84, Mehidy 65, Hazlewood 6-89) and 57 for 1 (Mominul 30*, Shadman 25*) beat Australia 198 (Smith 71, Mahmud 6-55, Ebadot 2-39) and 284 (Green 104, Smith 44, Mehidy 5-66, Mahmud 3-56) by nine wickets. - Agencies

'They outplayed us in all facets': Cummins

DARWIN: Australia captain Pat Cummins looked shell-shocked as he sat down for the post-match press conference at Marrara Stadium.

He's experienced losing Tests as captain before, albeit only nine times out of 39. He's experienced shock defeats at home before, too, including against West Indies at the Gabba in 2024.

But this loss to Bangladesh is different. An Australia team that was full strength, that had won 11 of their last 13 Tests, was top of the World Test Championship table having made the last two finals, wasn't just beaten, they were humiliated. "They deserved the win," Cummins said. "They were a much better side than us this week. I thought they outplayed us in all facets, really. They were really patient. Just didn't really let us back in. Held onto their catches. "No Test match loss feels great. I think the standards we hold is a bit higher than what we played this week." "I thought our preparation was really excellent," Cummins said. "We spent six weeks or so up in Brisbane. I thought we pretty much got that bang on." - Agencies

Shanto: 'Biggest win so far in any format'

DARWIN: Bangladesh captain Najmul Hossain Shanto has unequivocally called their historic victory over Australia in the first Test in Darwin their "biggest win so far in any format."

Bangladesh, ranked ninth in Tests, shocked the world No.1 Test side in their backyard in all departments and took an unassailable 1-0 lead in the two-match series.

"This is the biggest win so far for Bangladesh in any format," Shanto said at the presentation. "Going forward, we will do something special in the future.

"Very happy and proud of myself and the way the boys played. We did lot of hard work and very happy to win."

Shanto especially heaped praise on his fast bowlers, who took all 10 wickets in the first innings to bundle Australia for 198 before a five-for from Mehidy Hasan Miraz helped wrap up the hosts for 284 in the second attempt that gave Bangladesh a target of just 57.

"That [the rise of fast bowlers] is the biggest change in Bangladesh cricket in the Test format," Shanto said. "Normally, five-six years ago, the pace bowlers didn't want to play Test cricket since we didn't play enough Test cricket. But in the last two-three years we've been playing lots of Test matches and

the boys are giving importance to Test format.

"They now want to play, they want to perform because they want to be world-class. That is the mindset they now have. Especially the senior guys, like Mushfiqur Rahim and Mominul Haque, they helped them a lot to encourage to play more Test cricket. So those are the areas they think and mindset."

Bangladesh's memorable win was also set up by opener Tanzid Hasan's 101 in the first innings. This was only the second Test for Tanzid, who is 25 and made his debut in the format earlier this year at home against Pakistan.

"He's exciting, if you look at his white-ball game, he always plays attacking cricket but in this Test match he showed his character, he was very calm and played according to the merit of the ball," Shanto said of Tanzid. We all know he has that ability to play Test cricket and as top-order batsmen we want someone to [make an] impact for the team and he delivered in this match."

Fast bowler Hasan Mahmud was named the Player of the Match for finishing with nine wickets that included a six-for in the first innings. "Before the match in every practice session we've been doing our best every day, in every session and we were focusing on the fact that whatever happens just believe in your process and don't think about the outcome," he said. "Whatever happens we have to play for five days and then the results will come. Our bowlers have done very well, with patience and they followed the process, hitting the line and length, and we knew the results would come."

'Something we dreamed of'

Former players and fans hailed Bangladesh's first-ever Test win in Australia as the country's biggest achievement in the five-day game, saying it could be a turning point for their cricketing ambitions. "This is, I think, the biggest achievement for Bangladesh cricket in Test matches," former captain Akram Khan said.

"It was something we dreamed of but perhaps none of us expected Bangladesh to dominate and win like this. We are extremely happy and proud."

Former spinner and national selector Abdur Razzak said the victory strengthened Bangladesh's case for more Test opportunities against Australia. "If you look at this Test and our position in the World Test Championship, there is no reason why we should not get more opportunities," he said.

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman congratulated the team on a video call with the players. "We're all eagerly waiting to welcome you home," he said on social media. - Agencies

FIRST TEST: INDIA VS SRI LANKA

Nuwantha, Jayasuriya share seven but India well ahead

GALLE: Sri Lanka's Keshara Nuwantha gave a much better account of himself on his second day of Test cricket, but India still made their way towards a formidable first-innings total on another rain-hit day in the first Test on Sunday.

Devdutt Padikkal converted his overnight 131 into 167, Dhruv Jurel scored an inconspicuous little half-century as India reached 460 for 9 in the 43 overs possible after rain took out the first half of the day.

Three of the first four wickets on the second day fell to Nuwantha, who bowled an unbroken 16-over spell, before Prabath Jayasuriya added three to his one wicket overnight.

Possibly worried about the time lost already and the forecast during the rest of the Test, India's batting had a sense of adventure resuming on 288 for 2.

Rishabh Pant hit a four off the first ball he faced, but with the pitch progressing towards more turn and Nuwantha holding his length, Pant soon holed out to a good catch at wide mid-off.

The turnaround for Sri Lanka came when they took the second new ball as soon as it became available, seven overs into the day.

They stuck with Nuwantha with the new ball, who found sharp turn and natural variation to go with better accuracy. After Pant, he had KL Rahul, back after cramps paused his innings on day one, caught at bat-pad with a sharp offbreak. For Ravindra Jadeja, the natural variation came in handy as he trapped the allrounder lbw.

Padikkal, meanwhile, continued from where he left off, using the depth of the crease against spin and then brought up his 150 with a nonchalant flick off Asitha Fernando.

He looked to dominate Jayasuriya again, but the spinner had his own back with a delivery that held its line and left his stranded outside the crease.

At 377 for 6, any hopes Sri Lanka had of restricting India were put paid to by a 55-run stand between Jurel and Manav Suthar.

Jurel hardly looked like he was there but you looked up at the scorecard and he was bringing up his fifty with another nudged single. The two disdainful pulls for four off Lahru Kumara stood out, though.

In a fashion that would have only encouraged India, Jayasuriya got one to turn from leg for a stunning slip catch for Dhananjaya de Silva soon after Jurel brought up his fifty. India then promoted Mohammed Siraj, possibly looking for quick runs, who hit Nuwantha for a big six before falling to a slower ball from Asitha. Suthar immediately hit Jayasuriya straight to long-on in the dying moments of the day.

Brief scores: India 460 for 9 (Padikkal 167, Rahul 82, Jurel 51, Jayasuriya 4-109, Nuwantha 3-175) vs Sri Lanka. - Agencies

A'SAFFA FOODS EXPANSION

A'Saffa Foods has successfully completed its latest production expansion project, increasing its annual broiler growing capacity from 48 million to 60 million birds and its daily slaughtering capacity from 160,000 to 200,000 birds.

MSX INDEX ENDS HIGHER

The MSX index closed at 7,534.98 points, up by 0.35% from previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 0.84% at 603.96 points. Al Omaniya Non Convertible Bonds 2022, up 8.05%, was the top gainer while, Galfar Engineering, down 2.53%, was the top loser.

Oman's leading integrated energy group's net profit tops OMR199mn

This revenue growth is attributed to the increased sales volume of crude oil and condensates, which reached 11.6 million barrels, in addition to an 8 percent increase in the average realised oil price, reaching $80.9 per barrel

MUSCAT: OQ Exploration and Production (OQEP) achieved a 19.4 percent growth in its net profit during the first half of 2026, reaching OMR199.02 million.

This surpassed the revenue growth rate of 12 percent, reflecting the company's efficiency in controlling costs despite the increase in production levels.

This revenue growth is attributed to the increased sales volume of crude oil and condensates, which reached 11.6 million barrels, in addition to an 8 percent increase in the average realised oil price, reaching $80.9 per barrel.

The company also achieved a 14.1 percent year-on-year increase in adjusted cash flow from operating activities, reaching OMR331.2 million in the first half of 2026, driven by higher commodity prices and increased sales volume.

The audited financial results indicated that the company invested OMR132 million as capital expenditure since the beginning of the current year. This includes OMR128 million in oil and gas assets investments, and OMR3.5 million in exploration expenditures, reinforcing the company's growth strategy and the execution of further future works.

The return on capital employed rose to 67.0 percent, compared to 51.5 percent in the first half of 2025, representing an increase of 30 percent. This confirms the profit growth and the efficiency of capital allocation adopted by the company.

For the first time, the company obtained an investment-grade credit rating of (BBB-) with a stable outlook from the rating agencies Standard & Poor's and Fitch.

Mahmoud Abdullah Al Hashimi, Chief Executive Officer of OQ Exploration and Production, stated that the company's operational and financial results during the first half of the current year achieved a remarkable increase across the company's various business sectors. This was supported by the continued implementation of the growth strategy and the safe and deliberate execution of its operations, alongside the improvement in commodity prices, increased production, and higher oil prices. This enabled the company to achieve higher profits and cash flows, enhance its financial position, and increase its ability to deliver long-term sustainable value to shareholders.

He pointed out that the company committed to strong performance in the areas of Health, Safety, Security, and Environment (HSSE) at a stable and consistent level, while continuing to execute safe and well-planned operations, committing to improving emission intensity, and completing the HSSE action plan ahead of schedule.

He added that total production rose to 228,200 barrels of oil equivalent per day during the first half of 2026, comprising 53 percent oil and 47 percent gas. This represents an increase of 2.7 percent compared to the same period in 2025, resulting from its commitment to achieving operational performance across the company's asset portfolio.

He noted that the company maintained discipline in cost control, keeping the operating cost per barrel below $10 per barrel of oil equivalent.

He affirmed that the comprehensive periodic maintenance work for the gas processing plant in Block 60 was completed within 8 days, which is seven days ahead of schedule, recording more than 45,000 safe working hours without any injuries or incidents.

He explained that the exploration achievements in Blocks 60 and 48 contributed to supporting near-term production growth. Furthermore, the company made significant progress in exploration operations across Blocks 11, 18, 47, and 54 during the first half of 2026.

Regarding the Marsa LNG project, he confirmed that the project made remarkable progress during this period, exceeding 55 percent completion in construction works, which supports the company's long-term strategy for integrated growth in the gas sector.

The CEO of OQ Exploration and Production stated that the Exploration and Production Sharing Agreement (EPSA) for Block 9 was also amended, adding revised financial terms in favour of the company, which allows for investment opportunities and higher production.

The company's investment portfolio grew through the acquisition of a 35 percent stake in Block 27 and the signing of agreements for offshore Block 80 in partnership with the Turkish Petroleum Company, in addition to entering offshore Block 18 in partnership with Petronas.

The company continues to enhance global growth by studying and evaluating investment opportunities based on Memoranda of Understanding with national and international oil companies, which supports its ambitions for long-term sustainable growth and enhances value creation for shareholders.

It is noteworthy that the company's Board of Directors proposed dividend distributions, subject to shareholder approval, to include base dividends for the second quarter of 2026 amounting to OMR57.7 million, scheduled to be paid in September 2026. -ONA

DUQM SUMMER SERIES

Four Omani women to lead discussion on AI adoption and women's role in shaping technology's future

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Women have caught up with men in their use of AI chatbots. They have not yet caught up in how often they use them, how confident they feel or how much value they believe the technology brings to their work. That distinction will frame "Intelligent Machines", the opening session of the 2026 Duqm Summer Series at Crowne Plaza Duqm, 7:30pm, Sunday 23 August.

The session brings together four Omani women working across computer science, data and intelligent systems: Dr. Fatima Al Raisi from the Department of Computer Science at Sultan Qaboos University; Amna Al Sinani of Future Data; Beylasan Al Ruzaiqi of Onsor; and Dr. Aziza Al Zadjali of Star Labs.

Research published by Pew Research Center in June found that 47% of women now use AI chatbots, close to the 50% recorded among men. In 2024, women trailed men by 11 percentage points. Women have closed that gap in two years. The more interesting question is what they are doing with the technology now that they have access to it. Men remain more likely to use chatbots every day, at 27% compared with 20% of women. Among employed adults, 40% of men use them for work. For women, the figure is 35%.

The widest difference concerns productivity. Thirty-five per cent of men believe chatbots make them more productive, compared with 25% of women. Confidence may help explain why. Only 15% of women describe themselves as very or extremely confident using chatbots. Twenty-two per cent of men say the same.

Using AI regularly gives people time to work out where it helps and where it falls short. They learn how to ask better questions and how to challenge an answer that does not look right. The benefit comes less from opening a chatbot than from knowing what to do with it. Without that confidence, equal adoption can conceal an unequal return.

Women also have greater reservations about the future of AI. Pew found 68% believe it is developing too quickly. Only 17% expect it to affect them positively over the next 20 years, while 33% expect a negative effect. Their hesitation should not be brushed aside as a lack of enthusiasm for technology. It raises legitimate questions about who is included when AI systems are designed and who has influence when they enter the workplace.

"AI is often presented to employees as something already decided. A new tool arrives with an expectation that people will adapt to it. Those expected to use the system may have had little say in the problem it was built to solve. Increasing the number of women using AI is only part of the work. Women also need the confidence to test it and the authority to question how it is used," remarked Hanan Al Siyabi of the Special Economic Zone at Duqm and organizer of the Duqm Summer Series.

"Intelligent Machines" will bring that discussion to Duqm through the experiences of women already building careers in technology.

SUPPORTING NATIONAL ECONOMY

Development Bank approves OMR2.7mn loans in Al Buraimi

AL BURAIMI: The total value of loan approvals at the Development Bank branch in Al Buraimi Governorate reached approximately OMR2.7 million during 2025, through the extension of 170 development loans aimed at supporting the national economy, financing high-yield investment projects and stimulating self-employment initiatives.

This was achieved through a package of facilities and innovative financing solutions tailored to meet the aspirations of various business segments, ranging from micro-enterprises to large corporations.

Yahya Rashid Al Riyami, Director of the Development Bank branch in Al Buraimi Governorate, stated that loan approvals at the branch during 2025 totalled approximately 170 loans valued at OMR2.7 million. He noted the diversity of these loans, which encompassed micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises, in addition to operational and seasonal financing facilities.

He further indicated that these loans are distributed across multiple sectors, including manufacturing, agriculture, livestock, industry, education, health, tourism, logistics, and home-based projects.

Al Riyami added that the branch's lending portfolio has surpassed the OMR7 million mark, reflecting a 15 per cent increase compared to 2024. -ONA

RESPONSIBLE FINANCIAL PLANNING

BankDhofar's Youth Account helps young adults build smart money habits at early stage

MUSCAT: As young people take their first steps toward financial independence — whether beginning university, entering the workforce, or launching their careers — the importance of developing sound money management skills has never been greater.

Recognising this need, BankDhofar is encouraging the next generation to embrace responsible financial planning through its dedicated Youth Account, a banking solution designed to help young adults save, spend, and manage their finances with confidence.

Available to Omani nationals and expatriate residents aged between 18 and 23, the Youth Account combines everyday banking convenience with practical savings tools and lifestyle benefits, giving young customers the opportunity to establish healthy financial habits that can support them well into adulthood.

Unlike conventional savings accounts, the Youth Account has been tailored specifically to the needs of young adults. Customers enjoy the freedom of banking without worrying about minimum balance fees, allowing them to manage their finances without unnecessary charges. Unlimited free transfers through BankDhofar Mobile Banking also make it easier than ever to move money between local banks anytime, anywhere, supporting an increasingly digital and cashless lifestyle.

Beyond convenience, the Youth Account places strong emphasis on cultivating a savings mindset. Customers have access to a range of flexible savings and deposit options suited to different financial objectives, whether saving for education, travel, future investments, or other personal milestones. Dedicated daily, weekly, and monthly savings plans help users build consistent saving habits, while a Retirement Savings Plan encourages long-term financial planning from an early age - an approach that can significantly strengthen future financial security.

The account also offers a personalized vertical Mastercard debit card, providing secure access to funds while unlocking a range of exclusive offers and discounts across shopping, dining, beauty, lifestyle, and leisure outlets. These merchant benefits are designed to complement the lifestyles of younger customers while helping them maximize the value of their everyday spending.

Supporting these features is BankDhofar's comprehensive digital banking platform, which enables secure 24/7 banking through mobile and internet channels. Customers can also take advantage of convenient cardless cash withdrawals, ensuring uninterrupted access to their money even when they leave their physical debit card at home.

The Youth Account reflects BankDhofar's broader commitment to promoting financial literacy and empowering the country's younger generation with practical financial tools that prepare them for greater independence.

MARKET

MSX index ends higher

Al Omaniya Non Convertible Bonds 2022, up 8.05%, was the top gainer while, Galfar Engineering, down 2.53%, was the top loser

MUSCAT: The MSX index closed at 7,534.98 points, up by 0.35% from previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 0.84% at 603.96 points. Al Omaniya Non Convertible Bonds 2022, up 8.05%, was the top gainer while, Galfar Engineering, down 2.53%, was the top loser. Shares of OQBI were the most active in terms of number of shares traded as well as in terms of turnover.

A total number of 8786 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating turnover of RO 55.49 million, with more than 199.94 million shares changing hands. Out of 70 traded securities, 28 advanced, 13 declined, and 29 remained unchanged. At the session close, foreign investors were net buyers for RO 211K while GCC & Arab investors were net sellers for RO 123K, followed by domestic investors for RO 88K worth of shares.

Financial Index closed at 13,143.01 points, down -0.09%. Prices of Takaful Oman, Al Madina Investments, Oman & Emirates Investment, Ominvest, Al Madina Takaful were up by 5.00%, 4.84%, 3.85%, 0.94%, 0.90% respectively. Prices of National Finance, Sohar International Bank, United Finance, Al Sharqia Investment, Oman Arab Bank were down by 2.27%, 2.16%, 1.12%, 1.01%, 0.75% respectively.

Industrial Index closed at 9,537.58 points, up 0.21%. Prices of Al Anwar Ceramics, Muscat Thread Mill, Jazeera Steel Products, Gulf Mushroom Products, Oman Cement were up by 2.14%, 1.35%, 1.16%, 0.47%, 0.35% respectively. Prices of Al Maha Ceramics, Galfar Engineering, Gulf International Chemicals were down by 6.04%, 2.53%, 1.43% respectively.

Services Index was up by 0.48% before closing at 3,023.87 points. Prices of OQ Gas Networks, Oman National Engineering, Musandam Power, Musandam Power, OQ Exploration & Production were up by 3.74%, 2.01%, 1.47%, 1.47%, 1.06% respectively. Prices of Renaissance Services were down by 0.72% respectively.— United Securities

OMAN STOCKS

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE

INDICES

Index	High	Low	Value	Prev . Value	Diff	Diff %
MSX 30 INDEX	7,539.63	7,495.51	7,534.98	7,508.77	26.21	0.35 %
FINANCIAL INDEX	13,178.91	13,108.22	13,143.01	13,154.73	-11.73	-0.09 %
Industry Index	9,582.59	9,517.70	9,537.58	9,517.70	19.88	0.21 %
Services Index	3,023.87	2,999.95	3,023.87	3,009.50	14.37	0.48 %
MSX Shariah Index	604.12	598.21	603.96	598.91	5.06	0.84 %
MSX TR INDEX	11,664.67	11,596.41	11,657.49	11,616.94	40.55	0.35 %
FINANCIAL TR IDX	16,202.79	16,115.87	16,158.64	16,173.06	-14.42	-0.09 %
INDUSTRIAL TR IDX	12,272.87	12,189.76	12,215.22	12,189.76	25.46	0.21 %
SERVICES TR IDX	4,051.41	4,019.37	4,051.41	4,032.16	19.26	0.48 %
FIXED INCOME INDEX	1,253.83	1,253.83	1,253.83	1,253.83	0.00	0.00 %

Trading Summary

Volume	Turnover	Trades	Market Cap	Up	Down	Equal	Sec. Traded
199,945,355	55,487,840	8,786	38,255,869,675	28	13	29	70

SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR SUNDAY, AUGUST 16

ISIN	SECURITY NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR.	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF (RO)	DIFF %	LAST PR	LAST BID	LAST OFFER	PAR VALUE	MARKET CAP
REGULAR MARKET																
OM0000001681	OMAN EMIRATES HO.	9,000	1,228	4	0.136	0.137	0.135	0.135	0.130	0.005	3.846	0.135	0.130	0.140	0.100	17,275,781
OM0000009072	OQ GAS NETWORKS	25,272,898	5,453,720	1,503	0.214	0.222	0.214	0.222	0.214	0.008	3.738	0.222	0.219	0.222	0.100	961,398,510
OM0000009908	OQ BASE INDUSTRIES (SFZ)	64,206,589	16,474,179	2,038	0.254	0.260	0.253	0.260	0.254	0.006	2.362	0.260	0.260	0.260	0.040	899,467,621
OM0000001152	OMAN NATL ENGINEERING & INVEST	18,692	2,782	5	0.148	0.152	0.148	0.152	0.149	0.003	2.013	0.152	0.135	0.152	0.100	22,800,000
OM0000003000	Al MAHA PETROLEUM PRODTS MRKTNG	5,853	6,963	5	1.190	1.190	1.170	1.170	1.150	0.020	1.739	1.170	1.170	1.195	0.100	80,730,000
OM0000007811	MUSANDAM POWER	20,117	6,940	2	0.345	0.345	0.345	0.345	0.340	0.005	1.471	0.345	0.338	0.345	0.100	24,284,550
OM0000002176	JAZEERA STEEL PRODUCTS	57,718	50,160	8	0.865	0.870	0.865	0.870	0.860	0.010	1.163	0.870	0.870	0.874	0.100	108,661,225
OM0000009759	OQ EXPLORATION AND PRODUCTION	14,327,181	6,767,051	542	0.470	0.475	0.470	0.475	0.470	0.005	1.064	0.475	0.474	0.475	0.010	3,800,000,000
OM0000001533	OMINVEST	7,250	3,096	4	0.426	0.429	0.426	0.429	0.425	0.004	0.941	0.429	0.383	0.420	0.100	481,704,330
OM0000004768	MADINA TAKAFUL	182,021	20,380	25	0.113	0.113	0.111	0.112	0.111	0.001	0.901	0.112	0.112	0.112	0.100	19,600,000
OM0000005963	PHOENIX POWER	335,072	94,115	38	0.280	0.282	0.279	0.282	0.280	0.002	0.714	0.282	0.282	0.285	0.100	412,453,612
OM0000004925	ALBATINAH POWER	203,000	37,353	15	0.185	0.185	0.184	0.184	0.183	0.001	0.546	0.184	0.184	0.190	0.100	124,179,287
OM0000001772	ALANWAR INVESTMENT	2,000	380	1	0.190	0.190	0.190	0.190	0.189	0.001	0.529	0.190	0.180	0.207	0.100	58,426,809
OM0000002267	GULF MUSHROOM PRODUCTS	15,039	6,453	10	0.424	0.430	0.424	0.429	0.427	0.002	0.468	0.429	0.429	0.429	0.100	21,596,880
OM0000004735	SEMBCORP SALALAH	661,983	168,141	16	0.253	0.255	0.253	0.255	0.254	0.001	0.394	0.255	0.254	0.255	0.100	243,415,847
OM0000001749	OMAN CEMENT	28,148	16,271	6	0.578	0.580	0.578	0.580	0.578	0.002	0.346	0.580	0.578	0.580	0.100	191,906,172
OM0000001483	NATIONAL BANK OMAN	2,020,000	957,480	7	0.474	0.474	0.474	0.474	0.473	0.001	0.211	0.474	0.471	0.477	0.100	770,698,572
OM0000001509	DHOFAR INTL DEVELOPMENT & INVEST	5,972	1,598	8	0.271	0.279	0.264	0.273	0.273	0.000	0.000	0.273	0.264	0.273	0.100	135,423,326
OM0000001707	OMAN CABLES INDUSTRY	24,944	82,315	7	3.299	3.300	3.299	3.300	3.300	0.000	0.000	3.300	3.000	3.300	0.100	296,010,000
OM0000002077	AL OMANIYA FINANCIAL SERVICES	200	30	1	0.151	0.151	0.151	0.151	0.151	0.000	0.000	0.151	0.152	0.166	0.100	47,627,967
OM0000002549	BANK DHOFAR	66,968	14,340	49	0.215	0.215	0.212	0.215	0.215	0.000	0.000	0.215	0.208	0.215	0.100	653,556,684
OM0000002804	ASAFFA FOODS	150	108	1	0.720	0.720	0.720	0.720	0.720	0.000	0.000	0.720	0.720	0.730	0.100	86,400,000
OM0000003125	GLOBAL FINANCIAL INVESTMENT HO.	26,000	7,804	7	0.300	0.304	0.300	0.304	0.304	0.000	0.000	0.304	0.300	0.304	0.100	60,800,000
OM0000003141	BARKA WATER AND POWER	500	79	1	0.158	0.158	0.158	0.158	0.158	0.000	0.000	0.158	0.153	0.171	0.100	25,280,000
OM0000003661	VOLTAMP ENERGY	126,615	22,027	27	0.171	0.175	0.171	0.175	0.175	0.000	0.000	0.175	0.173	0.175	0.010	175,000,000
OM0000003968	OOREDOO	417,508	133,413	22	0.322	0.322	0.318	0.322	0.322	0.000	0.000	0.322	0.318	0.322	0.100	209,604,042
OM0000004420	BANK NIZWA	186,990	25,971	19	0.138	0.139	0.138	0.139	0.139	0.000	0.000	0.139	0.139	0.145	0.100	310,936,471
OM0000004933	AL SUWADI POWER	141,966	26,040	16	0.183	0.184	0.182	0.184	0.184	0.000	0.000	0.184	0.180	0.200	0.100	131,450,767
OM0000008934	ABRAJ ENERGY SERVICES	2,824,460	1,120,256	267	0.398	0.398	0.393	0.398	0.398	0.000	0.000	0.398	0.397	0.398	0.100	306,539,600
OM0000002796	BANK MUSCAT	19,533,030	7,673,454	998	0.394	0.396	0.390	0.393	0.394	-0.001	-0.254	0.393	0.393	0.393	0.100	2,950,014,045
OM0000010120	ASYAD SHIPPING	2,020,150	471,683	534	0.235	0.236	0.230	0.234	0.235	-0.001	-0.426	0.234	0.235	0.234	0.000	1,218,846,162
OM0000001087	OMAN UNITED INSURANCE	6,140	1,922	3	0.315	0.315	0.313	0.313	0.315	-0.002	-0.635	0.313	0.313	0.315	0.100	32,865,000
OM0000003224	RENAISSANCE SERVICES	25,387	7,040	6	0.278	0.278	0.277	0.277	0.279	-0.002	-0.717	0.277	0.276	0.277	0.100	65,485,570
OM0000003026	OMAN TELECOM	2,869,996	4,109,674	97	1.436	1.438	1.420	1.424	1.435	-0.011	-0.767	1.424	1.420	1.424	0.100	1,068,000,000
OM0000002440	AL SHARQIYA INVESTMENT HO.	78,378	7,688	6	0.100	0.100	0.098	0.098	0.099	-0.001	-1.010	0.098	0.095	0.108	0.100	8,820,000
OM0000002374	UNITED FINANCE	141	12	1	0.088	0.088	0.088	0.088	0.089	-0.001	-1.124	0.088	0.088	0.097	0.100	31,339,202
OM0000003398	SOHAR INTERNATIONAL BANK	53,861,069	9,797,594	1,538	0.184	0.185	0.180	0.181	0.185	-0.004	-2.162	0.181	0.181	0.181	0.100	1,389,357,027
Total	37	189,589,125	53,569,737	7,837												
Parallel Market																
OM0000004776	TAKAFUL OMAN	30,114	1,879	12	0.063	0.063	0.062	0.063	0.060	0.003	5.000	0.062	0.062	0.062	0.100	15,750,000
OM0000001962	AL MADINA INVESTMENT HOLDING	29,645	1,911	9	0.068	0.068	0.063	0.065	0.062	0.003	4.839	0.065	0.064	0.065	0.100	2,801,500
OM0000002168	AL ANWAR CERAMIC	3,009,254	440,402	300	0.146	0.151	0.143	0.143	0.140	0.003	2.143	0.143	0.143	0.143	0.100	31,460,000
OM0000002036	MUSCAT THREAD MILLS	1,000	225	1	0.225	0.225	0.225	0.225	0.222	0.003	1.351	0.225	0.205	0.230	0.100	4,163,590
OM0000011151	OMIFCO	6,240,108	1,254,599	443	0.200	0.203	0.200	0.202	0.200	0.002	1.000	0.202	0.201	0.202	0.000	1,351,253,750
OM0000009569	JABAL REIF	16,745	1,740	4	0.104	0.104	0.103	0.104	0.103	0.001	0.971	0.104	0.103	0.104	0.100	18,096,000
OM0000008868	THE PEARL REIF	20,609	3,725	8	0.180	0.181	0.180	0.181	0.180	0.001	0.556	0.181	0.181	0.185	0.100	107,050,075
OM0000010823	OMAN GATEWAY FUND	3,769	3,867	6	1.026	1.026	1.026	1.026	1.023	0.003	0.293	1.026	1.026	1.030	0.000	28,137,888
OM0000001160	NATIONAL GAS	154,726	16,362	25	0.107	0.108	0.105	0.108	0.108	0.000	0.000	0.108	0.106	0.108	0.100	9,180,000
OM0000001426	OMAN REFRESHMENT	1,000	1,150	1	1.150	1.150	1.150	1.150	1.150	0.000	0.000	1.150	1.150	0.000	0.100	57,500,000
OM0000001897	MAJAN COLLEGE	13,500	1,833	4	0.135	0.136	0.135	0.135	0.135	0.000	0.000	0.135	0.131	0.140	0.100	13,365,000
OM0000002333	SALALAH PORT SERVICES	30	16	1	0.528	0.528	0.528	0.528	0.528	0.000	0.000	0.528	0.528	0.528	0.100	94,954,147
OM0000002341	OMAN CHLORINE	3,173	498	2	0.157	0.157	0.157	0.157	0.157	0.000	0.000	0.157	0.000	0.172	0.100	11,226,888
OM0000002580	OMAN EDUCATION & TRAINING INVEST	1,189	2,172	2	1.950	1.950	1.800	1.800	1.800	0.000	0.000	1.800	1.800	1.950	0.100	126,000,000
OM0000003281	TAAGEER FINANCE	154	18	1	0.116	0.116	0.116	0.116	0.116	0.000	0.000	0.116	0.113	0.116	0.100	32,908,131
OM0000007084	MUSCAT CITY DESALINATION	5,500	490	2	0.089	0.089	0.089	0.089	0.089	0.000	0.000	0.089	0.081	0.089	0.100	13,843,986
OM0000007910	AMAN REAL ESTATE	4,200	315	3	0.075	0.075	0.075	0.075	0.075	0.000	0.000	0.075	0.072	0.075	0.100	15,000,000
OM0000008447	OMAN REIT FUND	1,810	194	2	0.107	0.107	0.107	0.107	0.107	0.000	0.000	0.107	0.106	0.108	0.100	90,064,033
OM0000005260	OMAN ARAB BANK	318,000	83,937	34	0.265	0.265	0.263	0.264	0.266	-0.002	-0.752	0.264	0.263	0.264	0.100	528,724,240
OM0000002028	GULF INTERNATIONAL CHEMICALS	118	8	1	0.069	0.069	0.069	0.069	0.070	-0.001	-1.429	0.069	0.067	0.070	0.100	1,449,000
OM0000002648	NATIONAL FINANCE	86,800	18,679	10	0.217	0.217	0.215	0.215	0.220	-0.005	-2.273	0.215	0.214	0.215	0.100	139,899,510
OM0000003521	GALFAR ENGINEERING & CONTRACTING	75,256	11,680	21	0.157	0.158	0.154	0.154	0.158	-0.004	-2.532	0.154	0.152	0.154	0.100	31,259,913
OM0000005005	ALMAHA CERAMICS	12	3	1	0.249	0.249	0.249	0.249	0.265	-0.016	-6.038	0.249	0.249	0.291	0.100	13,695,000
Total	23	10,016,712	1,845,700	893												

STRENGTHENS PRODUCTION CAPABILITIES

A'Saffa Foods completes major expansion, reaching 60 million birds annual production capacity

THUMRAIT: A'Saffa Foods, Oman's leading fully integrated poultry producer, has successfully completed its latest production expansion project, increasing its annual broiler growing capacity from 48 million to 60 million birds and its daily slaughtering capacity from 160,000 to 200,000 birds.

The milestone was formally marked on 12 August at the company's production complex in Thumrait, in the presence of the Chairman of the Board of Directors, members of the Board, senior management and the company's managers.

The expansion represents another significant step in A'Saffa Foods' long-term growth journey and reinforces its commitment to supporting Oman's food security objectives, meeting the growing demand for locally produced poultry, and strengthening operational efficiency and competitiveness.

The project included the construction of five new poultry farms comprising 45 poultry houses, increasing the total number of poultry houses to 225. The new facilities are equipped with advanced automated systems for temperature, humidity and feeding control, supporting improved production efficiency, biosecurity and product quality.

The expanded facilities enable A'Saffa to increase production while maintaining its focus on food safety, quality and operational excellence. The additional capacity will also provide greater flexibility to respond to market demand and strengthen the Company's ability to serve customers across Oman.

Eng. Ali bin Hilal Al Kuwari, Chairman of A'Saffa Foods, said: "This project represents an important milestone in A'Saffa Foods' growth journey and reflects our continued commitment to investing in Oman's food sector. By expanding our production capabilities and adopting advanced technologies, we are strengthening our ability to meet the growing demand for national products while contributing to Oman's food security objectives."

He added: "Our objective is to build a stronger, more competitive and sustainable company capable of creating long-term value for our customers, shareholders and the national economy."

Muhammad Rafique Chaudhry, Chief Executive Officer of A'Saffa Foods, said: "The completion of this expansion marks another important milestone in A'Saffa Foods' development. Over the past two decades, the Company has consistently invested in expanding its production capacity, improving automation and technology, and strengthening every stage of its integrated value chain."

"With annual production capacity now reaching 60 million birds and daily slaughtering capacity increasing to 200,000 birds, we are better positioned to meet market demand, improve operational efficiency and achieve greater economies of scale. We will continue to focus on innovation, sustainability, food safety and operational excellence as we move into the next phase of A'Saffa's growth."

The increased capacity also strengthens A'Saffa's commercial platform, providing greater flexibility to expand its product portfolio, enhance distribution capabilities and serve customers more efficiently across the Sultanate. The Company will continue to strengthen its relationships with retail and commercial partners while responding to evolving consumer demand for high-quality locally produced food products.

From a financial perspective, the expansion is expected to improve asset utilisation and generate economies of scale, supporting revenue growth and profitability over the coming years.

A'Saffa Foods, established in 2001 and commencing commercial operations in 2004, has grown into Oman's largest fully integrated poultry producer. The Company's continued investment in production capacity, technology, human capabilities and operational efficiency reflects its long-term commitment to sustainable growth and its role as a key national food producer.

The company reaffirmed that the latest expansion is not only an increase in production capacity, but also an investment in the future of Oman's poultry industry strengthening local production, supporting food security and creating a stronger platform for sustainable growth.

SHOWCASING TALENT

CBSE Oman Cluster Football Championship kicks off at Indian School Muladha

MUSCAT: The CBSE Oman Cluster Football Championship (Boys) 2026–27, featuring the Under-14, Under-17 and Under-19 categories, commenced with an impressive inaugural ceremony at Indian School Muladha (ISML) on Thursday, 13 August. Indian School Muladha is hosting the five-day championship from 13 to 17 August, bringing together 38 teams from 16 Indian schools across Oman.

The inaugural ceremony, held at 2:30 pm at the school ground, was attended by Khalid Nasser Fadhil Al-Braiki, National Football Team Player, Oman, as the chief guest. The event was attended by members of the School Management Committee, Principal, Coordinators, Heads of Departments, teachers, students and parents of Indian School Muladha, participating teams and officials from various schools, along with the Omani national referees appointed to officiate the championship.

The programme began with the assembly of the participating teams, followed by a warm welcome to the Chief Guest. The National Anthems of Oman and India were played, setting a solemn and patriotic tone for the occasion. Dr Nayer Iqbal, Principal, ISML, delivered the welcome address and extended a warm welcome to all participating schools, teams and officials. Dr Ajeeb Palakkal, Treasurer and Chairperson- Finance Subcommittee of the School Management Committee presented a bouquet to the Chief Guest.

The Oath-Taking Ceremony was led by Muhammed Shezin of XII C, Sports Captain, reaffirming the values of discipline, fair play, teamwork and sportsmanship. The Chief Guest was subsequently felicitated. As part of the felicitation, Shameer Ahammed, Chairperson, Sports and Co-Curricular Subcommittee presented a T-shirt, as a token of appreciation and in celebration of the spirit of football. Ashifa Asif, Convener and Chairperson-Academic Subcommittee of the School Management Committee presented a memento.

The Chief Guest then formally declared the tournament open. He was introduced to the participating teams and officials before performing the ceremonial kick-off. A group photograph with the teams and officials followed, marking the beginning of the tournament.

The first day of the tournament witnessed eight Under-14 matches. The five-day tournament will continue with eight matches on each of the next three days. On the second day, 14 August 2026, there will be eight matches comprising two Under-14 semi-finals and six Under-17 matches. The third day, 15 August 2026, will feature eight matches, including five Under-17 matches including the two semi-finals and three Under-19 matches. The fourth day, 16 August 2026, will have eight Under-19 matches, including the two semi-finals. The championship will culminate on 17 August 2026 with three finals—the Under-14 final, Under-17 final and Under-19 final—followed by the closing ceremony. The matches are being officiated by Omani national referees, whose professional and impartial conduct is ensuring the smooth and fair progress of the competition.

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48 yrs male Manager in Accounts (23 yrs exp). Contact : 91410602

Indian female CA inter, 3 yrs in accounts. Contact: 94863876, Email: id-j4jinuonly@gmail.com

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Male Indian MBA finance accountant 7 yrs Oman experienced with Oman D/L looking for suitable position. Contact: 95819242, 71099237 Email: Shemeejvp@gmail.com

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ADMINISTRATION
Cleaning supervisor, 18 yrs GCC experience with UAE licence. Contact : 96332056

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Indian male graduate with 20 yrs experience seeks job for executive secretary, admin or any other suitable post. Presently available in Muscat. Contact 91410074.

DESIGNER/AUTOCAD D/MAN
Interior Designer with 15+ yrs Oman experience in Interior fit-out, AutoCAD, 3D visualization, shop drawings & site visits with sales. D/L. Contact: 95060377

DRIVER
Experienced driver heavy and light 20 yrs of driving experience. Contact: 97412505, 78385517

Driver with 12 yrs experience looking for job. Contact: 76383815

Bangladeshi with 10 yrs experience looking job. Contact: 78096017

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Cep electrical engineer. Contact : 94768845

Mechanical engineer 11+ yrs experience in Oman HVAC /MEP, projects, facility management. Ready to join immediately. Contact: 91690765

Mechanical HVAC Engineer 4+ yrs Oman experience. Design, execution, commissioning for oil & gas and commercial projects. ASHRAE associate member. with valid D/L Seeking a suitable job. Contact: +968-75020107

Sri Lankan, Quantity Surveyor with 12+ yrs Oman & GCC experience seeking position in a reputed firm. Call 96039602, ympr2026@gmail.com

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Indian male B.Sc., 20+ yrs Oman IT exp, seeks IT specialist, system administrator position. Immediate joining. Contact: 93642216

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Finance Manager with 7+yrs Oman experience in accounts & finance, ERP knowledge, MIS reporting, VAT, audit, budgeting and financial management. Seeking suitable placement. 92368095

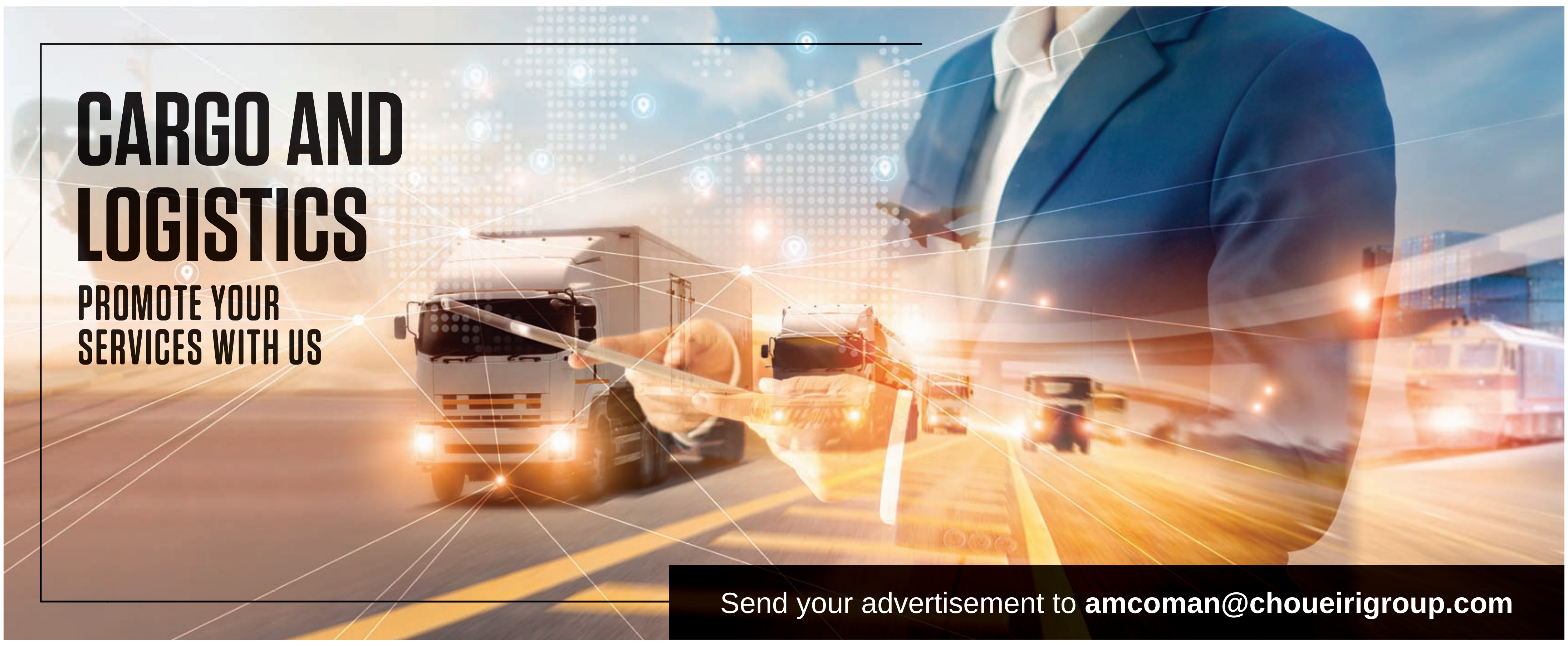
MISCELLANEOUS
Indian male looking for job, building watchman, office boy, personal driver(house,office). Currently in Oman, speak English & Hindi.Contact 96781899

PURCHASE/ PROCUREMENT
Indian male (36), MBA, 13+yrs exp in procurement & logistics, valid Oman D/L ready to join immediately. contact: 92536194

SALES/MARKETING
Sales, contracts & tendering, MBA 7 yrs Oman experience,D/L Contact- 75227433

Indian young male having 3 years Experience (sales & admin). Contact-78855168

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



Hundreds flee as Belgium battles with wildfire at German border

The fire has approached to within 3 kilometres of the German border, causing authorities in Germany to warn of smoke danger

BRUSSELS: Belgium is battling its largest wildfire on record which has burned around 2,700 hectares (6,700 acres) in the eastern High Fens nature reserve near the German border.

The fire has approached to within 3 kilometres (2 miles) of the German border, causing authorities in Germany to warn of smoke danger.

On Saturday, the European Union deployed three helicopters and two water bombers as Belgium deployed additional firefighters in a bid to bring the massive blaze under control.

Authorities ordered around 600 residents in parts of Waimes, Sourbrodt and Buetgenbach to evacuate as shifting winds and heavy smoke raised concerns that the fire could reach homes. Tourists were also advised to leave the area.

"You can't see a thing anymore, there's smoke everywhere," David Rodolfs, a restaurant owner in Waimes, told the AFP news agency.

A gymnasium in a neighbouring municipality was opened up to offer shelter.

How have firefighting efforts fared?

The blaze, which broke out on Friday, has spread rapidly across peatlands and pine forests. Belgian Interior Minister Bernard Quintin told AFP he was "shocked" at the fire's speed and extent of the destruction.

"There is a risk that the fire could reach homes, but we are deploying all available resources to protect them," Nicolas Yernaux, a spokesperson for the regional authorities in Wallonia, said.

Difficult terrain has hampered firefighting efforts, with operations relying heavily on aerial resources and forcing firefighters to allow difficult-to-access areas to burn, according to Yernaux.

Meanwhile, Belgium activated the EU's civil protection mechanism, bringing in three helicopters and two water-bombing aircraft from the Czech Republic, Sweden and the Netherlands.

Firefighters from Germany and Luxembourg have also joined the response, while farmers have helped emergency crews by wetting down the area.

Residents in Germany's Monschau warned of possible evacuation

Authorities in the German town of Monschau in the Eifel region, which is located just 2 kilometres from the border, have warned residents to prepare for possible evacuation.

They also warned of health dangers from smoke and have advised people living in three districts of the town to temporarily seek accommodation elsewhere if possible.

However, the local fire brigade has said it does not expect the fire to enter German territory any time soon.

"We are continuing to monitor the situation," Philipp Krüger, the operations manager of the Monschau fire brigade, told the DPA news agency.

Monschau, a major tourist attraction in the Eifel region, has some 12,000 residents. It is particularly known for its picturesque Old Town with its half-timbered houses.

It is located just some 23 km from the site of another major blaze in Germany's Eifel region that forced some 2,000 people from their homes on Thursday.

Climate change making wildfires spread faster

Belgium has experienced another spell of extreme heat this week, with temperatures reaching 37 degrees Celsius (98.6 Fahrenheit) in parts of the country.

Scientists say human-caused climate change is increasing the likelihood of hot and dry conditions that allow wildfires to spread faster and burn longer.

European Commissioner Hadja Lahbib called the blaze the latest sign of the "climate upheaval" affecting the continent.

"Never before has the wildfire season started so early in the year and reached such northern latitudes," she said. — DW

YONHAP NEWS AGENCY

Pyongyang snubs Seoul's peace proposal

SEOUL: North Korea on Sunday maintained complete silence regarding South Korean President Lee Jae Myung's overture to end the 1950-53 Korean War officially, even as details emerged that South Korean forces fired warning shots past the border following a brief crossing by North Korean soldiers, according to reports by South Korea's Yonhap News Agency.

South Korea's military fired warning shots last week after multiple North Korean soldiers crossed the Military Demarcation Line (MDL) inside the eastern sector of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). Following the warning protocol, the North Korean troops promptly retreated to their side of the inter-Korean land boundary, with military officials stating the soldiers appeared to be on routine patrol operations.

The incident marks the first recorded border violation and warning-shot response by the South Korean military along the MDL this year, following similar brief line crossings by North Korean personnel in 2025 during border fortification work.

Border military tension

The border military tension coincides with Pyongyang ignoring a fresh diplomatic proposal from Seoul. During his address marking the 81st anniversary of Korea's liberation from Japanese colonial rule on Saturday, South Korean President Lee Jae Myung offered to restart inter-Korean dialogue to formally replace the 1953 armistice agreement with a permanent peace regime and pursue peaceful coexistence. Lee, had became South Korean president last year after his predecessor Yoon Suk Yeol was impeached for attempting to declare martial law.

Lee expressed hope that the two nations "will sit face-to-face for peaceful coexistence and mutual growth."

However, North Korean official state media, including the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) and the Rodong Sinmun newspaper, offered no coverage or response to President Lee's address on Sunday morning. Instead, state outlets focused entirely on internal celebrations of Liberation Day, including public pledges of loyalty at monuments honouring past leaders Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il, reported Yonhap.

North Korea has continually tested ballistic missiles capable of carrying nuclear warheads, which has been perceived in Seoul and nearby Japan as an attempt to intimidate and project power. Pyongyang declared itself a military power in the year 2022

Because the 1950-1953 Korean War concluded with an armistice rather than a formal peace treaty, the two Koreas technically remain in a state of war, with over 250 kilometres of heavily fortified border separating the two nations.

The diplomatic standstill comes amid heightened military readiness across the Korean Peninsula ahead of the annual US-South Korea joint military exercises, Ulchi Freedom Shield, set to begin on Monday. Pyongyang routinely condemns these joint manoeuvres as invasion rehearsals and has pledged enhanced nuclear and military deterrence against Washington and Seoul.

Meanwhile, the Russian ship Pallada arrived at Wonsan port for a goodwill visit on Saturday tied to the liberation anniversary. — ANI

IN RUSSIA'S SAMARA REGION

Ukraine hits Russian aerospace, energy targets in major deep-strike operations

KYIV: Ukraine on Saturday launched a series of successful long-range operations targeting key Russian aerospace, military, and energy infrastructure hundreds of kilometres behind the border.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy confirmed the development in a post on X, revealing that the forces deployed long-range "Flamingo" missiles to strike the Progress Rocket Space Centre in Russia's Samara region, a major Roscosmos enterprise involved in electronics production.

"Today, there are new significant results from our deep strikes. In Russia's Samara region, one of the key enterprises within Roscosmos - the Progress Center, which was involved, among other things, in electronics production - was hit. Flamingo missiles were used. A good achievement. The distance from our border is about 900 kilometers," he wrote.

He noted that Ukraine's long-range actions also struck the Savasleyka airbase and inflicted intentional damage on an oil facility in Ust-Luga.

"Our long-range sanctions also reached the Savasleyka airbase, where the carriers of Russian missiles that strike our cities and villages are based - about 700 kilometres from Ukraine. We also have confirmation of the damage we were aiming to inflict at an oil facility in Ust-Luga - more than 800 kilometres from our border," he added.

Further, emphasising Ukraine's broader strategy, Zelenskyy described the deep-strike campaign as a "plan of long-range sanctions" aimed at systematically dismantling Moscow's war potential and forcing a shift in Russian public opinion.

"The long-range sanctions plan is being implemented, and there are more and more of our mid-range strikes as well. In fact, we have succeeded in blocking off Russia's south. Our sanctions against Russian oil refineries and other facilities in Russia's oil sector, our mid-range strikes against Russian military logistics, and our operation in the waters of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov - all of this is working to limit Russia's war potential," Zelenskyy said in a video address shared on X.

Announcing new domestic sanctions, Zelenskyy urged international partners to expand global sanctions against Russia's defense industry, financial networks, and trade intermediaries, warning that many war-supporting enterprises currently remain unsanctioned.

"Today, there is a Ukrainian sanctions package targeting companies and vessels that are transporting grain and other goods stolen from the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine. We are preparing new sanctions packages against Russia's war industry, financial chains, and intermediaries. Unfortunately, a significant number of Russian enterprises working for the war are still not under international sanctions, and this must be corrected during August and September. We will raise this with leaders at all working levels," he added.

Addressing Ukraine's long-term defense requirements, the President pledged to continue working with allies to secure air defense systems, specifically anti-ballistic capabilities and Patriot batteries, while expanding domestic arms production.

"All of this will happen. It is not easy, but all of this will happen. Throughout the war, we have already spoken many times about weapons, capabilities, and equipment that we were initially told were supposedly impossible for us to obtain. Then we heard that Ukrainians supposedly would not be able to do it because it would take decades to become capable of it. F-16s, the production of millions of drones a year, specialized missile technologies - we did it," Zelenskyy stated. — ANI

EUROPEAN UNION

EU asylum applications drop 22%

BRUSSELS: First-time asylum applications in the European Union (EU) fell to 42,525 in May 2026, down 22 per cent from a year earlier and 2 per cent from April.

The total covered non-EU citizens applying for international protection, a term used for people seeking asylum or similar protection, the EU statistics office said in a statement.

A further 8,050 people were counted as subsequent applicants -- meaning they had applied before -- a figure virtually unchanged from May 2025 but 12 per cent lower than in April 2026.

Venezuelans were the largest group of first-time applicants in May, with 4,465 people, followed by Afghans (3,425), Bangladeshis (2,860) and Sudanese (1,690).

Italy recorded the highest number of first-time applicants at 10,660, followed by Spain (7,945), France (7,180) and Germany (5,965), together accounting for about three-quarters of the EU total.

There were 9.4 first-time asylum applicants per 100,000 people across the EU in May 2026, Eurostat said.

Greece recorded the highest rate at 34.8 per 100,000, ahead of Italy (18.1) and Ireland (17.8), based on national populations as of 1 January 2026.

The EU recorded 945 first-time asylum applications from unaccompanied minors in May 2026, Eurostat said, referring to children applying without a parent or guardian.

The largest numbers came from Somalia (205), Sudan (110), Afghanistan (95), Egypt (85) and Venezuela (40).

Germany received the most asylum applications from unaccompanied minors in May, with 220, followed by the Netherlands (195), Greece (135), France (80) and Spain (75). — DW

LIFESTYLE

CAN A DRUG HELP PREVENT TRAUMA?

STUDY WITH MICE SUGGESTS SO

Researchers in Munich and Stockholm blocked the lifelong social cost of early adversity in mice with a single compound. The catch: it only worked when given during the trauma, not after

Trauma is usually treated as something you carry, manage, work through and sometimes ease. Rarely as something that could be stopped before it takes hold. That is what a group of researchers in Munich and Stockholm set out to test.

They began by making the first days of life hard. Mother mice were given far less nesting and bedding material than normal. That was enough to make mothers erratic, and the first days of life unpredictable. The mice raised in that hardship grew up looking perfectly healthy — with no obvious illness or anything visibly wrong.

Then researchers put them in groups and watched what happened. Repeatedly, these mice ended up at the bottom. Pushed into the lowest ranks of their social hierarchies, first as adolescents, then again as adults. A difficult infancy had left no visible mark — but it had set the position they would occupy for the rest of their lives.

When the researchers gave some of them a drug, the pattern disappeared.

The study, published in June, was led jointly by Mathias Schmidt at the Max Planck Institute of Psychiatry in Munich and Juan Pablo Lopez at the Karolinska Institutet in Stockholm.

How does childhood trauma affect the brain and body?

Start with cortisol, the body's main stress hormone. When something stressful happens, cortisol floods the system. This is a standard, protective response.

What matters just as much is the off switch. The body needs to register that the danger has passed and wind the response back down. It does this through cortisol receptors — the parts of cells that detect the hormone and signal the system to stand down.

A protein called FKBP51 controls how sensitive those receptors are. Early hardship, the research suggests, causes the body to produce too much of it. That makes the receptors harder to trigger, so the signal to stand down never fully lands, and the stress response stays switched on far longer than it should.

Schmidt's point is that none of this is something a person can feel.

"Your cortisol response is something you don't feel," he said. "You may think you're very stress resilient, but your body is pumping out cortisol, and you don't know."

Can a drug block the effects of a difficult childhood?

The researchers used a compound called SAFit2, which blocks FKBP51. Given to the mothers during the stressful period, it reached the offspring through breast milk.

The treated mice went on to perform identically, within their social groups, to mice that had experienced no adversity at all — the social cost of a hard start erased.

The effect showed up in the brain as well as in behavior. The team screened gene activity across six stress-related regions and found that early adversity had left a broad imprint across them. The drug largely reversed it, most clearly in two: the medial prefrontal cortex and the nucleus accumbens, regions involved in emotional control and reward.

Can childhood trauma be reversed?

Not on this evidence.

In the Munich study, the compound was given during the stressful period itself, not after. What the study demonstrates is prevention, not repair.

Other studies have shown behavioral effects when the drug is used in adult animals, but full reversal of trauma already in place remains unproven. And prevention only works if you can identify who's at risk before the harm is done — a problem this research doesn't address.

Would this drug actually work on humans?

It's too early to say.

The study tested male mice only, so it is not yet known whether the same holds in females. And SAFit2 remains a research compound 3 effective in animals but not yet developed or safety-tested for human use. Still, Schmidt sees a realistic path toward clinical application within the next decade, noting that stress mechanisms are "very, very similar in animals and humans."

How is trauma treated now, and why doesn't it always work?

Existing treatments for stress-related disorders, including PTSD and trauma-linked depression, rely heavily on selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors, or SSRIs. These drugs target serotonin pathways. They work for many patients, but the mechanism is not fully understood, and a significant portion of patients don't respond at all.

By contrast, targeting FKBP51 would mean treating the pathology at its source. "We would actually not only be treating the symptoms, but also the cause of the disorder by acting directly [on] a stress mechanism," said Schmidt. "These types of drugs are currently not on the market."

Longer-term, Schmidt envisions a more targeted approach: identifying individuals who are genetically vulnerable to stress, whose FKBP51 expression is already elevated, and treating that group specifically after acute traumatic events.

On the other end of the spectrum are people who, through genetics or prior experience, prove remarkably resilient even under extreme conditions, and may not need medication at all. Understanding who does need it, Schmidt said, and reaching them in time, is where the research is heading next.

What are the signs of unresolved trauma?

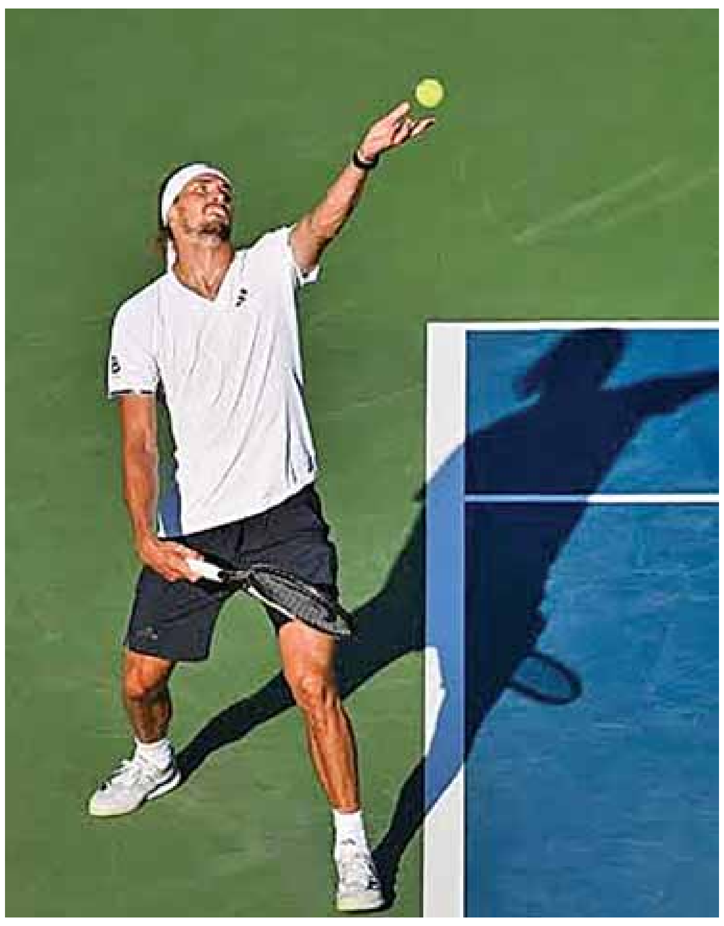
Schmidt is careful that trauma is highly individual, psychologically and physiologically. The rough guide he offers is duration, not intensity.

A strong stress reaction immediately after a car crash or a violent event is considered normal — the body doing its job. What concerns clinicians is when the response persists well beyond that: still unable to cross a street a month later, still unable to sleep six weeks on. Those are his illustrative examples rather than diagnostic thresholds, but the principle holds. If a stress response isn't fading, it's advisable to speak to a doctor.

That remains practical guidance for now. The drug, if it ever exists, is at least a decade away — and on current evidence, it would need to come before the damage, not after. - DW

SPORTS

Serbian Djokovic feels the heat in defeat to Argentine Tirante



The former world No.1 played his first match since the semi-final loss in the Wimbledon and was affected by hot and humid conditions

MASON: Novak Djokovic's stay at the Cincinnati Open was a short one. It also might be his last.

The 24-time major champion fell to Thiago Agustin Tirante 2-6, 6-4, 6-4 on Saturday in a second round match that took 2 hours, 44 minutes in hot and humid conditions.

A 25-year-old from Argentina, Tirante is ranked No.50 in the world. Djokovic — a three-time Cincinnati champion and No.5 in the rankings — was playing for the first time since his loss to top-ranked Jannik Sinner in the semi-finals at Wimbledon.

Up next for Djokovic is the US Open, which starts August 30 in New York.

Djokovic appeared to struggle physically in the heat and had his 10-match winning streak in Cincinnati snapped.

The 39-year-old told reporters that an unspecified health condition made it difficult for him to play in hot and humid weather.

"It's just a condition that I have, health-wise, that has been bothering me for the past couple of years," Djokovic said.

"A lot of issues, especially when it is humid and it is hot. I did anticipate it (would be humid), but there are all these things, like nerves and everything involved that make it worse, and that's what happened."

Djokovic has had plenty of success in Cincinnati, with a 45-13 record and titles in 2018, 2020 and 2023. But he wasn't sure he would return. "I certainly hope so, but it looks more likely not, unfortunately," Djokovic said.

"But let's see what the future brings."

Djokovic saved 13 of the 15 break points he faced. Tirante broke Djokovic's serve in the ninth game of the final set and then served it out. "I think this is the best win of my career," Tirante said.

"I think I really did a good job inside the court. I managed very well the nerves of playing against a legend like Novak."

After losing to Jannik Sinner in the Wimbledon final, Zverev — the French Open champion — returned to play in Montreal and fell to Tallon Griekspoor in his opener.

Seventh seed Flavio Cobolli, runner-up at the French Open, defeated Miomir Kecmanovic 6-1, 4-6, 6-3.

Martin Landaluce beat Matteo Arnaldi 6-4, 4-6, 6-4 to reach a third-round clash against Tirante.

Zverev wins all-nighter

Top-seeded Alexander Zverev, the French Open champion who fell to Sinner in the Wimbledon final, was more fortunate, squeezing out an opening 3-6, 6-3, 6-3 victory over Cameron Norrie in a match that took two hours and 45 minutes and ended at 2:15 am.

Britain's Norrie has now lost all eight of his matches against the German, winner of the Cincinnati title five years ago who is hoping a return to Ohio will help him shake off an abrupt exit in Canada last week. Norrie had wrapped up the opening set before Zverev began to find his footing to level the match.

Norrie saved six break points in a 12-minute game to begin the deciding set but was broken twice as Zverev advanced.

"I needed to get a match rhythm," Zverev said. "The confidence was not there after Canada. "The first set was not great, but the other two were at a high level and I'm happy about that." - Agencies

CINCINNATI OPEN

Eala and Pegula advance

MASON: Philippines sensation Alexandra Eala advanced to the third round of the ATP-WTA Cincinnati Masters 6-1, 3-0 on Saturday as injured Elena-Gabriela Ruse quit their match during a weather delay.

The Romanian had received treatment on her right ankle just before play was halted by a thunderstorm.

During the 90-minute delay, Ruse pulled the plug on her effort, sending ninth seed Eala through.

Eala, the emerging WTA star who captured her first WTA title in Washington this month, will next play Amanda Anisimova after the American ninth seed beat Turk Zeynep Sonmez 6-2, 6-3.

As always, world No.20 Eala was supported by a vocal crowd of compatriots, with Philippines flags displayed in abundance.

The 21-year-old has enjoyed similar support around the world - in her run to the second week of Wimbledon, her breakthrough win in Washington and at this months' 1000 event in Toronto, where she was beaten in the fourth round by Swiss veteran Belinda Bencic. Eala and Ruse swapped breaks in the first two games before Eala ran off six straight games to pocket the set.

They got through three more games in the second before the weather threat sent them indoors.

Also, American Jessica Pegula beat Simona Waltert 6-3, 6-2, improving her record to 25-6 on hard courts in 2026. The third-ranked Pegula won the title in Cincinnati in 2024. - Agencies

PAN PACIFIC CHAMPIONSHIPS

Double world record for American swimmer Douglass in one day

IRVINE: Kate Douglass continued her assault on the 50m freestyle world record on Saturday, clocking a stunning 23.19sec to win Pan Pacific Championships gold with her second world record of the day. The American knocked three-tenths of a second off the world record of 23.49sec she set hours earlier in the heats at Irvine, California.

"I was doubting myself, questioning my ability to do the triple," she said. "My coaches and my teammates just really had a lot of faith in me and they really gave me a lot of energy." That broke the world record of 23.55sec set by fellow American Gretchen Walsh on June 28 in Rome - where Walsh broke the world mark that Douglass had set on June 19.

Walsh took silver in 23.74sec while Australia's reigning world champion Meg Harris was third in 23.89. It's the third time Douglass has lowered the world mark in the sprint race. She first did it on June 19 at the TYR Pro Swim Series meet in Indianapolis, posting a time of 23.59. Nine days later, Walsh lowered it again.

Douglass, 24, is a five-time Olympic medalist. She earned silver in the 50 free at the 2024 world championships but didn't compete in the event at the 2024 Paris Games. It was the second individual world record set at the meet that includes swimmers from the US, Australia, Canada, Japan and China, among others.

Douglass returned 25 minutes later to finish second in the 200 breaststroke. She rallied from third down the stretch but couldn't catch Alexanne Lepage of Canada, who led the entire race and touched in a lifetime best of 2:21.73. Douglass finished in 2:22.57.

"I feel like I'm just a little bit shocked," Lepage said.

Also, Lani Pallister of Australia stunned Katie Ledecky with her first international loss in the 800m freestyle event. Pallister was under world-record pace for much of the race and touched in 8 minutes, 6.10 seconds to erase Ledecky's championship record from 2018.

"I was just so locked in and I've been really focused on what I want," Pallister said. "The 800 is my favourite event."

Ledecky took silver in a season-best 8:07.26. Ledecky is the four-time Olympic champion in her pet event. The American's lone previous defeat in an 800 free final since 2010 came in a small domestic meet in February 2024 against Summer McIntosh of Canada. - Agencies

ST. JUDE GOLF CHAMPIONSHIP

Scheffler builds a two-shot lead over Burns and Im

MEMPHIS: Scottie Scheffler settled in after a rough start on Saturday for a 2-under 68, giving him a two-shot lead over Sam Burns and Sungjae Im in the FedEx St. Jude Championship going into a final round where so much is at stake from the top to the bottom of the leaderboard.

Scheffler is trying to break a streak of five runner-up finishes and five other top 4s since his lone victory this year in his first tournament of 2026.

He was at 13-under 197 and will be in the final group with Burns, his closest friend in golf, who got back into the mix with a 62. His year has been marked by close calls in the US Open and British Open, but Burns has no victories to show for it. This will be the first time they are paired together in the final group.

"It's always a little weird just because I want him to have success so much and I think he wants the same for me," Scheffler said. "Tomorrow we'll go out there and play our game and see where things finish up at the end of the day. It will be competition like normal.

"It will be fun being out there with your friend but it's also a bit weird at the same time."

And it's not just the two of them. Im shot 67 and was tied with Burns at 11-under 199. The next closest to Scheffler was FedEx Cup champion Tommy Fleetwood (68) and Jake Knapp (67), both five shots behind.

Jordan Spieth took another step back and gave himself another Sunday at the TPC Southwind filled with high stress. Spieth is at No.54 in the FedEx Cup, and only the top 50 advance to the BMW Championship next week in the FedEx Cup playoffs.

The top 50 is the magic number this week because those players are assured to getting into all the $20 million signature events next year.

Going into the final day, Im is the only player projected to move into the top 50 — he started at No. 53 and held his own in the final group Saturday with Scheffler. "I just want to focus on each shot," Im said. "Every shot matters."

Burns is thinking only about winning, and that starts with making up a two-shot deficit on the No. 1 player in the world. The only other time they've played together on a Sunday was the 2021 Tour Championship — both out of contention — though Burns did beat Scheffler with a long birdie putt in a playoff at Colonial in 2022.

"Scottie is obviously playing great, as he always does. He's not going to lay down," Burns said. "He's going to play great tomorrow. So you're going to have to go out there and put a really good round together and see if you can catch him." - Agencies

Hunt clinches third gold as Asher-Smith makes history

GB women dominated the 4x100m relay at the European Championships

BIRMINGHAM: Amy Hunt won her third gold medal of a potential historic quadruple and Dina Asher-Smith earned a spot in the record books as Great Britain's 4x100m relay stars put on a show at the European Championships.

Britain's new sprint sensation Hunt celebrated her third title in six days, following triumphs in the 100m and 200m, as the GB women's quartet claimed the hosts' second gold medal in a spectacular ending to Saturday's action in Birmingham.

The 24-year-old, who described her team-mates as "superwomen" and a "privilege to race with", will now attempt to become the first athlete to win four gold medals at a single edition in the event's 92-year history when the mixed 4x100m relay takes place on Sunday night. Team-mate Asher-Smith, meanwhile, achieved her seventh gold at the championships - 10 years after capturing her first. With that, the 30-year-old matched the record tally also held by Norway's Jakob Ingebrigtsen and Croatian discus thrower Sandra Elkasevic.

Following her 200m bronze on Thursday, Asher-Smith also equalled Polish sprinter Irena Szewinska's overall record tally of 10 medals at the championships.

In an utterly dominant performance, Imani-Lara Lansiquot completed the job for a GB team which also featured 21-year-old student midwife Success Eduan, crossing the line in 42.05 seconds - more than a second clear of fellow medallists Switzerland (43.12) and Poland (43.15).

Asher-Smith, a world champion over 200m and British record holder over both sprint distances, has amassed 22 senior international medals since making her debut in the women's 4x100m squad at the 2013 World Championships.

She was the last athlete to

achieve a sprint treble at the European Championships in 2018, 12 months before completing her rise to the top of an individual global podium. Hunt told BBC Sport: "I am stood next to the real life GOAT [greatest of all time]. She [Asher-Smith] is the most decorated European athlete in history.

"I am stood next to some amazing women. This girl [Eduan] is a midwife, she brings babies into the world. This girl [Lansiquot] wrote a play. We're all amazing.

"That was stunning to come together. I had the time of my life."

"It's such a privilege to be able to step on the track with these ladies and the individual superpowers that we bring," said Hunt.

"It's no joke. We were all superwomen together out there, and it was so much fun." Just 15 minutes earlier, 100m gold medallist Romell Glave stormed down the home straight to bring the men's quartet home for gold in 38.45 seconds, ahead of Germany (38.64) and Belgium (38.70).

The men's team also led for most of the final, with Jeremiah Azu, Louie Hinchliffe and then 200m silver medallist Zharnel Hughes safely guiding the baton around to huge cheers inside Alexander Stadium. That was Hughes' fifth European gold, taking the former world 100m medallist level with Matthew Hudson-Smith, Mo Farah and Roger Black as the most successful British man at the championships. The two relay successes took Britain's medal tally to 12 - including six golds - as the hosts remained in hot pursuit of table-topping Italy heading into the final day of competition.

Great Britain's 40-year wait to win the men's 1,500m title continued despite Jake Wightman and Jake Heyward leading on the final bend. Wightman faded to sixth (3:37.18) behind team-mates Heyward (3:36.40) and Arlo Ludewick (3:36.65), who narrowly missed out on the medals in fourth and fifth respectively. Gold was won by fast-finishing Dutchman Stefan Nillessen in three minutes 35.70 seconds, ahead of Sweden's Samuel Pihlstrom and Ireland's Andrew Coscoran.

Katarina Johnson-Thompson finished 21st overall in the heptathlon, with British team-mate Jade O'Dowda 13th, as Ireland's Kate O'Connor backed up her Commonwealth title with European gold. Norway's Henriette Jaeger took a dominant victory in 49.04 seconds in the women's 400m final.

Morgan Lake cleared 1.88 metres for eighth in the women's high jump final, won by Yaroslava Mahuchikh after Ukraine's Olympic champion produced a first-time clearance over 1.97m. - Agencies

TRANSFER DEALS

PSG sign winger Godts from Ajax

PARIS: Champions League titleholders Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) strengthened their attack even further by signing left winger Mika Godts from Dutch club Ajax on a five-year deal.

PSG announced the transfer late on Saturday without giving any financial details. Sports daily L'Equipe estimated the fee to be 55 million euros ($64 million) including bonuses.

It was the second signing of the day after Spain's World Cup-winning forward Ferran Torres joined from Barcelona for a reported fee of 50 million euros.

Inter Milan sign England's Spence from Tottenham

Inter Milan completed the signing of England full-back Djed Spence from Tottenham on Saturday.

Spence has signed a five-year deal with the Serie A champions, who are reportedly paying a fee of around 30m euros, (£25.6m) for the 26-year-old. He is the second England player to join Inter this summer with John Stones moving to the San Siro after his Manchester City contract expired.

Spence had all but confirmed the transfer earlier on Saturday, when he posted a farewell message to Spurs supporters across his social media accounts.

In them he wrote: "A special chapter comes to an end, It's been some journey, with plenty of memories, moments and experiences that I'll carry with me for forever, especially that night in Bilbao.

"Thanks to all the staff members who've helped me along the way, the players who've become family and most importantly thank you to the fans.

"Time for a new chapter now, but Spurs will always have a place in my heart."

Spence featured in all eight of England's games at the World Cup as Thomas Tuchel's side finished third. He made 44 appearances for Spurs in all competitions during the 2025-26 campaign, however, first-choice right-back Pedro Porro signed a new deal in June and left-back Andy Robertson has been brought in from Liverpool.

Also, Sunderland have agreed a £25.6m fee to sign left-back Dayann Methalie from Toulouse.

The 20-year-old French defender is expected to undergo a medical after a verbal agreement was reached for an initial £23.9m, with a further £1.7m in potential add-ons. Methalie made 28 appearances for Toulouse in Ligue 1 last season, scoring twice in his final three games, as they finished ninth.

The deal follows a prolonged pursuit by Regis Le Bris' side as Sunderland look to strengthen their defence before the start of their Premier League campaign at Ipswich Town next Saturday.

MLS

Messi misses penalty as Inter Miami suffer 1-4 loss

WASHINGTON: Lionel Messi missed yet another penalty and was booked as Inter Miami suffered a 4-1 loss at Nashville on Saturday in a top-of-the-table MLS clash.

England's Sam Surridge and Germany's Hany Mukhtar scored second-half goals for the hosts in a showdown between the Major League Soccer overall leaders.

Argentina and Miami captain Messi was denied from the penalty spot in the first half and issued a yellow card in the 59th minute but also assisted Inter's lone goal.

Messi struck both posts in second-half stoppage time.

Nashville lead MLS with 43 points and a record of 13-2 with four drawn while Inter Miami are second on 38 points.

Nashville had already knocked Miami out of this year's CONCACAF Champions Cup in the round of 16.

Defending MLS champion Miami, which had been a league-best 8-1-1 on the road, saw a seven-match undefeated MLS run snapped as Nashville remained unbeaten at home in the MLS campaign.

Honduran defender Andy Najar scored with a header in the 17th minute to give Nashville a 1-0 lead.

Miami had a chance to equalise with a Messi penalty kick in the 23rd minute but Nashville goalkeeper Brian Schwake saved his weak effort.

Messi's record from the penalty spot is poor by his sky-high standards, including missing twice at the World Cup.

The visitors netted the equaliser three minutes into first-half stoppage time when Venezuelan Telasco Segovia blasted in a right-footed shot off an assist by Messi.

Mukhtar, the 2022 MLS Most Valuable Player, put Nashville back in front in the 49th minute.

Surridge gave Nashville a 3-1 lead and Mukhtar added his second in the 63rd for extra insurance as the hosts pulled away.

Messi started his first game since the death of his father, Jorge, on August 8 at age 68. He played in the second half of Inter Miami's 3-2 loss to Club León on August. 12, but did not start the game.

PREMIER LEAGUE

Maguire wants 'huge threat' Rashford to stay at Man Utd

WROCLAW: Manchester United defender Harry Maguire said on Saturday that he hopes Marcus Rashford will stay at Old Trafford because he can improve the team.

Rashford came on as a second-half substitute in his first game for United since December 2024 in the 4-2 pre-season defeat by AC Milan in Wroclaw on Saturday.

He produced one moment of skill by the corner flag and also came close to scoring after being given the number nine shirt by Michael Carrick.

United officials stressed the number is not regarded as permanent on a day when striker Benjamin Sesko - who had been expected to take the nine shirt this season - was unavailable due to injury.

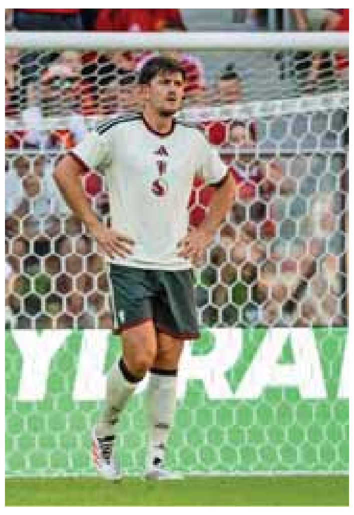
However, this underlines the uncertainty around Rashford's future before the September 1 transfer deadline.

Carrick could not say last week whether the England forward will stay, and Maguire is equally unsure of his team-mate's future. However, he wants him to remain at Old Trafford.

"Obviously the transfer window is still open," said Maguire.

"As players, we hope he stays because if he does, he is a big asset to have. He can improve us for sure.

"You saw when he came on, he threatened the backline really



well. He could have scored. He's a huge threat.

"I've played with Marcus for numerous years and I know that playing against him and playing with him in training is going to help us."

The disappointment was Rashford's return coinciding with what Maguire accepted was Manchester United's "worst" pre-season performance, a week before their Premier League opener at Hull.

Skipper Bruno Fernandes missed a penalty for the second game running, which would have made it 2-1 at half-time, although there were encouraging signs in his link-up play with Youri Tielemans as both completed the full 90 minutes for the first time.

"We're wanting to play much further up the pitch, be more aggressive and more on the front foot," said Maguire.

"This was the only game where I didn't feel we did ourselves justice in that aspect. We had a lot of high regains and created a lot of chances from that, but we didn't sustain our pressure anywhere close to enough."

In a long, five-week, six-match pre-season, Maguire took on the captain's duties in the early games, when Fernandes was missing. That is an indicator he could be the vice-captain this season, although that is yet to be confirmed. - Agencies

Bank Muscat announces 20 new winning sports teams under Green Sports Programme 2026

The latest edition of the programme saw a strong competition among sports teams from various governorates across the Sultanate, bringing the total number of beneficiary teams since the programme's launch to 243, while the total number of beneficiaries has exceeded 70 ,000 members of these community teams

MUSCAT: In a continuation of its leadership journey in corporate social responsibility and sustainability and building on the remarkable success of its Green Sports Programme in supporting local sports teams across the Sultanate, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, has announced the names of the 20 winning sports teams selected under the 2026 edition of the programme.

The announcement was made during the semi-final match of "Cheer Your Team" amateur football tournament which took place al Al Seeb Stadium in Al Khoudh. The event witnessed a huge turnout from fan and enthusiasts of the local sports sector.

The latest edition of the programme saw a strong competition among sports teams from various governorates across the Sultanate, bringing the total number of beneficiary teams since the programme's launch to 243, while the total number of beneficiaries has exceeded 70 ,000 members of these community teams.

This year's edition attracted applications from 96 sports teams, reflecting the programme's growing popularity and the strong interest among local teams in benefiting from the support it offers. The overwhelming response underscores the continued success of the Green Sports Programme and its positive impact on community sports. Bank Muscat remains committed to implementing this initiative on an annual basis while closely monitoring each project through to completion to ensure the desired outcomes are achieved.

The winning teams for the 2026 edition are as follows:

Lighting Category: Zakiyt Sports & Cultural Team in wilayat of Izki, Al Shabab Team in wilayat of Al Hamra, Bidbid Sports Team in wilayat of Bidbid, Saih Al Ma'ashi Sports and Cultural & Social Team in wilayat of Bahla, Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, Al Awan Sports & Cultural Team in wilayat of Al Khaboura, Al Mabra Sports & Cultural Team in wilayat of Suwaiq, Al Nasr Sports & Cultural Team in wilayat of Sohar, Al Ittifaq Sports & Cultural Team in wilayat of Saham, Harmoul Sports & Cultural Team in wilayat of Liwa, Al Batinah North Governorate, Al Misfah Sports Team in wilayat of Rustaq, Soor Al Sahel Team in wilayat of Al Musannah, Al Batinah South Governorate, and Al Hosn Sports Team in wilayat of Bousher, Muscat Governorate.

Natural Turf Category: Shabab Al Nahdah Sports Team in Wilayat of Seeb, Muscat Governorate, Al Shabiba Sports and Cultural & Social Team in wilayat of Samail, Al Irtibat Sports Team in wilayat of Al Jabal Al Akhdar, Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, Al Nujoom Sports & Cultural Team in wilayat of Shinas, Al Batinah North Governorate, Al Hijr Sports & Cultural Team and Al Hayyal Sports & Cultural Team in wilayat of Ibri, Al Dhahira Governorate, and Al Ittihad Sports & Cultural Team in wilayat of Al Mudhaibi, Al Sharqiyah North Governorate.

Water Desalination Category: Al Junaynah Team in wilaya of Barka, Al Batinah South Governorate.

Commenting on the announcement, Talib bin Saif Al Makhmari, Head – Community & and Media Relations at Bank Muscat, indicated that the Green Sports Programme represents one of Bank Muscat's strategic community initiatives through which we reaffirm our long-standing commitment to supporting Omani youth and strengthening the role of sports in community development. He added: "The support given for 20 new sports teams reflects the Bank's continued investment in sustainable initiatives that create long-term social impact by providing integrated and safe sporting environments that nurture young talent and develop their potential. We firmly believe that enhancing the infrastructure of sports teams extends beyond improving sporting activities; it also strengthens social cohesion while promoting teamwork, belonging and community engagement. Bank Muscat will continue to expand the programme in line with its vision of advancing sustainable development and contributing to the objectives of Oman Vision 2040 through impactful community partnerships and initiatives.". Al Makhmari indicated that this year edition winners list includes the first sports team from Al Jabal Al Akhdhar, which reflects the programme's wide geographical reach and enables us to build sustainable partnerships with community sports teams across all willayats, allowing us to better serve community.

Since its launch in 2012, Bank Muscat's Green Sports Programme has gained widespread recognition and popularity, demonstrating its pioneering role in supporting Omani youth and developing local sports teams across the Sultanate. The programme is one of the Bank's flagship corporate social responsibility initiatives, designed to empower talented Omani youth in both sports and cultural fields. The programme provides support in key areas including natural turf installation, artificial turf installation, sports field lighting and water desalination systems.

Over the years, the Green Sports Programme has achieved significant milestones and has undergone continuous development, further strengthening Bank Muscat's leadership in corporate social responsibility. Since its inception, the programme has attracted broad participation from community sports teams, becoming one of the Sultanate's most prominent CSR initiatives. It has supported numerous outstanding teams that have contributed to developing young athletes' skills, encouraging greater participation in sports and fostering community initiatives, while helping improve sports infrastructure and expand green spaces across community sports grounds in different wilayats throughout Oman.

FOR LAUNCH OF FAWTARA IN OMAN

IITC and SunTec Business alliance is now approved as ASP service provider by Oman Tax Authority

MUSCAT: International Information Technology Co. (IITC), one of Oman's most established system integrators, and SunTec Business Solutions, a leading global provider of digital compliance solutions and e-invoicing products, announced a strategic alliance to help businesses and organisations across the Sultanate of Oman prepare for the implementation of the e-invoicing system, scheduled to launch in August 2026, following the alliance's approval as an accredited service provider by the Oman Tax Authority. Under the alliance, SunTec and IITC will collaborate to deliver an accredited access point that serves as a secure gateway for compliant e-invoice exchange within Oman's Fawtara ecosystem.

The collaboration brings together SunTec's SunTec Xelerate e-Invoicing product and its tax and regulatory compliance expertise with International Information Technology Co. (IITC), a subsidiary of Oman International Holding (OHI), specializing in providing government and enterprise IT solutions and services. Together, the companies will help organisations achieve compliance with evolving e-invoicing regulations while advancing their broader digital transformation goals through a secure, scalable, and future-ready invoicing solution.

Oman's e-invoicing program, Fawtara, is set to introduce a Peppol-based five-corner CTC framework to modernize tax compliance, enabling the electronic exchange of invoices with direct oversight by the tax authorities. The phased rollout will begin in August 2026 and expand to all VAT-registered businesses by 2028.

Together, the companies will help organisations achieve compliance with evolving e-invoicing regulations while advancing their broader digital transformation goals

"e-Invoicing is rapidly becoming a cornerstone of the digital economy, driving transparency, efficiency, and compliance. SunTec has supported major compliance transformations across the GCC and partnered with more than 45 banks globally, including nine banks in Oman as part of their VAT compliance transformation initiative. Together with IITC, we are well positioned to help organizations embrace the Fawtara mandate and turn compliance into a catalyst for long-term digital transformation," said Amit Dua, President, SunTec Business Solutions.

"e-Invoicing is not just a regulatory milestone — it is an investment in the financial infrastructure of our clients and the broader Omani economy. As CFO of OHI Group, I see this alliance with SunTec as a natural extension of our commitment to building businesses that are compliant, efficient, and positioned for sustainable growth. We are proud that IITC is at the forefront of this transformation," said Praveen Kumar, CFO, OHI Group.

"We are pleased to partner with SunTec to support businesses and organizations in the Sultanate of Oman as they transition to e-invoicing through the Fawtara program. By combining IITC's deep local IT solutions and services expertise and customer-engagement experience with SunTec's advanced technology capabilities, we are enabling businesses to adopt a reliable and compliant digital billing framework. At IITC, we strongly believe in the transformative impact of FinTech in Oman, and this initiative is a key step toward accelerating financial digitization, enhancing transparency, and supporting the Sultanate's broader digital transformation ambitions," said Parag Gurumukhi, General Manager of IITC.

INDIAN SCHOOL DARSAIT

ISD celebrates India's 80th Independence Day with patriotic fervour

MUSCAT: Indian School Darsait celebrated India's 80th Independence Day on 15 August in the Senior School Auditorium with immense patriotic fervour, pride and enthusiasm. The President of the School Management Committee, Shalimar Moideen attended the occasion as the chief guest.

The function was attended by the members of the School Management Committee, the principal, vice principals, coordinators, heads of departments, teachers, students, parents and well-wishers. The programme was a stirring tribute to India's unity in diversity, rich cultural heritage and indomitable spirit of patriotism.

The programme commenced with the National Anthem, followed by a warm welcome address by Aryan Pradeep, Head Boy.

The Chief Guest read out excerpts from the address to the nation by the President of India, Droupadi Murmu. The address highlighted India's remarkable progress, inclusive development, women's empowerment, the pivotal role of youth and the importance of national security and called upon citizens to work collectively with renewed determination towards building a prosperous, self-reliant and developed India by 2047, while upholding democratic values, unity and patriotism. The Chief Guest also announced a new academic initiative launched by the Board of Directors to provide free training to students for competitive examinations.

The cultural programme that followed offered a captivating blend of patriotic songs and dances, infusing the celebrations with colour, energy, and vibrancy. A special highlight was the video presentation, '80 Years - Celebrating India', which took the audience on an inspiring journey through the nation's history-from the sacrifices of its valiant freedom fighters to the remarkable achievements of a modern, progressive India. Each performance struck a chord with the audience, beautifully capturing and reinforcing the enduring spirit of national pride, unity, and patriotism.

The meticulously planned programme seamlessly blended solemnity, creativity and patriotic spirit, leaving a lasting impression on the young minds and hearts of the students. The celebration concluded with the Vote of Thanks proposed by Nakshatra Rajesh, Head Girl.


10:38
Times OF OMAN
GOLDEN JUBILEE
51 YEARS OF LEGACY
Made in Oman, for Oman.
Maal
The National Payment Card
'SERIOUS NEGOTIATIONS NOW NEEDED FOR A LASTING PEACE'
The 'Workable' Peace — Diplomacy or a Tactical Trap?
OMR3.3bn investments in logistics
A5