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TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN
Notable growth in
tea, coffee trade

The Sultanate of Oman's foreign trade in tea and coffee recorded notable growth over the past five years, with the value of imports of both products increasing between 2021 and 2025, according to the latest official statistics issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI). >A3

MARKET
Forum to highlight
marine investments

The Main Organising Committee for the "Blue Economy and Maritime Investment Forum" in the Wilayat of Sur, South Al Sharqiyah Governorate, scheduled to be held in coming December of this year, revealed the details and orientations of the forum on Tuesday. >B1

WORLD
Trump lauds Indian
electoral system

US President Donald Trump renewed his call for the passage of the Safeguard American Voter Eligibility (SAVE) America Act, citing India's election system and voter identification requirements. Trump demanded voter identification requirements in the US polls. >B4

SUPPORTS NUMEROUS SPECIES

Jabal Samhan Nature Reserve
protects Dhofar's rich biodiversity

Times News Service

SALALAH: Jabal Samhan Nature Reserve is one of the most important protected areas in Dhofar Governorate, preserving a vast and diverse ecosystem that is home to rare wildlife, birds, marine species and distinctive native vegetation. Established under Royal Decree No. 48/97, the reserve covers approximately 4,500 square kilometres, extending across parts of the wilayats of Mirbat, Sadah and Shalim, in addition to the Hal-laniyat Islands. The reserve's rugged mountain terrain, valleys, cliffs and surrounding coastal environment create a variety of habitats that support numerous species. Among the notable mammals found in the area are the Arabian leopard, Arabian wolf, striped hyena, Arabian gazelle, Nubian ibex, red fox, rock hyrax and honey badger. The Arabian leopard is particularly significant to conservation efforts, as the species is critically endangered and Jabal Samhan represents one of its important remaining habitats in the region. Protecting the mountain ecosystem is therefore essential to maintaining suitable conditions for threatened wildlife. The reserve's biodiversity extends beyond its mountains. Its



coastal and marine ecosystems provide habitat for dolphins, sea turtles and other marine organisms, linking the terrestrial and marine environments of Dhofar. Jabal Samhan is also an important area for birdlife. Species highlighted in the reserve include the black stork, eastern imperial eagle, Arabian bustard, little owl, osprey and houbara bustard, reflecting

the area's importance for resident and migratory birds. The vegetation of the reserve adds another distinctive dimension to its landscape. Baobab trees, Arabian fig, Arabian olive, frankincense trees and other local plants thrive in different parts of the reserve. These species are closely associated with Dhofar's unique mountain environment and contribute to the ecological balance of the region. The reserve also has growing importance for nature-based tourism, environmental education and scientific research. Its dramatic cliffs, mountain landscapes and diverse wildlife offer opportunities to promote responsible tourism while maintaining the protection of sensitive habitats. The Environment Authority's conservation efforts in Jabal Samhan form part of Oman's broader commitment to protecting biodiversity and safeguarding natural ecosystems. By preserving habitats and native species, the reserve contributes to the long-term protection of Dhofar's environmental heritage. With its combination of spectacular landscapes, rare wildlife, rich birdlife and distinctive flora, Jabal Samhan remains a vital natural treasure of Dhofar and one of Oman's most significant protected areas.



Oman Orbit programme takes youth into world of space

A3

OMAN'S SPORTS ACADEMIES NURTURE
NEXT-GENERATION OF YOUNG ATHLETES

The institutions are playing a vital role in identifying promising athletes, developing their abilities and preparing them for future

MUSCAT: Private sports academies are emerging as an increasingly important platform for discovering and developing young sporting talent in Oman, drawing on accumulated expertise to provide structured training and promote a culture of sports participation across different age groups.

Representatives of several sports academies said the institutions are playing a growing role in identifying promising athletes, developing their technical abilities and preparing them for progression to clubs and, ultimately, national teams. Jamal bin Hamoud Al Habsi, administrative direc-



tor of Al Habsi Academy, said the academy was established drawing on Captain Ali Al-Habsi's professional experience in Arab and European leagues. It aims to develop

young players aspiring to professional careers through scientific and practical training, with the broader goal of producing Omani footballers capable of competing

in international tournaments and representing international clubs. The academy targets children aged between 5 and 14, which Al Habsi described as a foundational stage before players move into youth teams at clubs. Training at this stage helps youngsters develop a professional mindset and sporting values that are important for those seeking a career in football. He said the academy has already produced several emerging talents who have represented Oman's youth and junior national teams. Al Habsi stressed that the academy's role extends beyond technical training to character development. >A5

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COMMENTARY

Youth in Mind: Owning Your Success

As we were roaming around, I gazed at Mohammed and said, do you know what? He spontaneously responded, what? as if the word had been besieged for a long time, waiting for the right moment to escape. I said, I've noticed that whenever the word leadership comes to mind, most people immediately think of leading others. Yet, before anyone can effectively lead others, they should learn how to be effective executives as Peter Drucker highlighted after all effectiveness can be leaned.

My friend Mohammed was taken aback. He asked, but isn't that actually the case? After all, everyone is already leading themselves. I replied, You're absolutely right. But the real question is: how effective are we in leading ourselves? He looked at me as if I had said something profound. After a brief pause, he said, I've never thought about it this way.

I guess you're right, he added. But what exactly do we lead when we lead ourselves? That is a powerful question my friend, I commented. Let me simplify the answer. Self-leadership is not about controlling every aspect of life. Rather, it is about intentionally directing our thoughts, emotions, attitudes, decisions, habits, and actions toward the

person we aspire to become. It means setting meaningful goals, focusing our energy on achieving them, and refusing to let distractions define our future.

This lesson is of paramount importance for young people as well. Whether they are university students preparing for their future, a graduate searching for a job opportunity, an employee striving to add value to their organization, entrepreneurs chasing their dreams or volunteers seeking to make a positive impact in their community, your greatest advantage is not merely your knowledge or talent, it is your ability to lead yourself consistently.

Let me narrate the saga of Abdullah and Saeed, identical twin brothers in our neighborhood. They were born into the same family, raised by the same parents, attended the same schools, and were blessed with similar talents and opportunities. From the outside, there was little to distinguish one from the other. Yet, as the years passed, their lives began to diverge.

Abdullah learned to lead himself. He sat clear goals, managed his time wisely, disciplined his emotions, and accepted responsibility for his choices. He was not perfect. On the contrary, he stumbled, made mistakes, and faced setbacks, but each experi-



ence became a lesson rather than an excuse for frustration and surrendering. Over time, his small, consistent decisions accumulated into remarkable results. People trusted him, opportunities came his way, and his confidence grew because it was built on learning how to lead himself rather than let the prevailing circumstance shape his destiny.

On the other hand, his brother Saeed drifted through life. He allowed distractions to dictate his priorities, emotions to govern his decisions, and circumstances to shape his future. He was a super procrastinator who kept postponing important tasks, blaming external factors when things went wrong, and waiting for extrinsic motivation to pacify him instead of cultivating discipline.

Although, like his brother, he possessed talent and potential, potential alone never transformed his life. He went astray because he had no clear goal to set his compass toward, a direction to navigate the turbulent currents of life, turn his potential into tangible reality, and create a positive change in his life.

Years later, people looked at the two brothers and assumed that Abdullah had simply been luckier. Few realized that the real difference was not luck, intelligence, or opportunity. The difference was the rewarding impact of self leadership. The gap between them was created one decision at a time, one habit at a time, one choice at a time.

The same principle applies to everyone around the globe, Omanis and expatriates alike. After all, as human beings, each

one of us has a dream, regardless of how small or big it may be. The only difference is that success is a prepaid business. As the maxim goes, no gain without pain.

We all need to set clear goals and remain laser focused as we strive to lead ourselves toward achievement. The journey is not easy, nor will it always be rosy. We are likely to fall, face challenges, and be captured by our inner cursor, yes, the whispering voice that wants us to believe that we are not capable, that we are not ready yet. The same voice narrates one lame excuse after another, trying to ensure that we give up and bid our dreams an eternal goodbye.

As the world celebrated International Youth Day on the 12th of August, let us salute the youth around the globe and acknowledge their dedication, hard work, creative ideas, and innovative solutions. Their efforts are truly commendable, and their aspirations are a source of hope for the future.

Likewise, our Omani youth should remember that they are the pulse of the nation, the leaders who will brilliantly navigate change and turn the wheel of development toward a promising future. They should realize that they are living in a VUCA world, where volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity

are part of the landscape. The university degree may open a door, but self leadership determines whether you walk through it. The well crafted résumé may earn you an interview, but your discipline, reliability, and willingness to keep learning determine whether you can build a successful career. Your technical skills may secure you a job, but your attitude, integrity, and ability to lead yourself will determine how far you can go. Even in volunteer work, your impact is measured not only by your desire to serve, but by your commitment, consistency, and sense of responsibility.

In the end, it is not simply what you know or what you have; it is how you lead yourself that determines what you can become. Keep learning to keep shining. Stay connected to the Holy Quran to find tranquility, inner peace, and a sense of balance. Learn from the wisdom of history, and adapt to the accelerating changes of your era by embracing a flexible mindset and a passion for lifelong learning. In other words, own your success and soar high in pursuit of your dreams and aspirations. After all, you are the captain of your own ship.

An Omani writer focusing on youth development and cultural issues.

ROP

Police air wing evacuates injured mountaineer to Khoula Hospital

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Royal Oman Police Air Wing carried out an air evacuation operation to transfer a citizen who sustained an injury while practicing mountaineering in one of the mountains in Al Sharqiyah Governorate.

The injured citizen was transported to Khoula Hospital in Muscat for medical treatment.



Two arrested

Two individuals have been arrested by the Royal Oman Police (ROP) for possessing more than 65 kilograms of crystal meth.

The Royal Oman Police said that a Yemeni national and an Asian national were arrested for possessing more than 65 kilograms of crystal meth with the intent to traffic and consume the substance.

HONOURED

Outstanding GED students felicitated in North Al Batinah

SOHAR: The Governorate of North Al Batinah yesterday held a ceremony in honour of students who excelled in the General Education Diploma (GED) exams for the 2025-2026 School Year. The ceremony was held under the auspices of Mohammed bin Sulaiman Al Kindi, Governor of North Al Batinah.

In a speech at the ceremony, the chief guest congratulated the students for their outstanding performance, noting that their accomplishments constitute the start of a new phase in which their ambitions and responsibilities would continue to expand. He urged them to uphold the high spirit of learning, develop their skills and dedicate their knowledge and abilities to serve their community and the nation at large.

Al Kindi pointed out that the youth represent a true asset in the Governorate's march of development. He added that the Governorate looks forward to the contribution of the youth in the fields



of science, innovation, entrepreneurship and the development of a more prosperous and sustainable future. He observed that the success of every outstanding student was credited to "dedicated hands" that lent them support.

The ceremony saw the honour-

ing of 31 male and female students who obtained a percentage of 99% or higher in the General Education Diploma. The event embodied the governorate's keenness to motivate students and encourage them to pursue their path of excellence and distinction. -ONA

Tender Announcement

ET15/2026/OPAZ

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Start of Tender Document Sale (Date):	Tuesday 18 th August 2026 (12:00 PM, Muscat Time)
End of Tender Documents Sale (Date):	Tuesday 1 st September 2026. (03:00 PM, Muscat Time)
Site showround / Visit (for all bidders):	Wednesday 2 nd September 2026. 9:00 AM at Oppsite Ibri Wali office
Tender Closing (Submission) and Opening of Technical Bids Date:	Sunday 18 th October 2026. (12:00 PM, Muscat Time)
Cost of Tender Documents:	OMR. 3,000 (Three Thousand Omani Rial only)

- All specialized and interested companies that are registered with the Tender Board participate and get the specification and conditions of the above tender from the following website:
<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>
- Bidders should submit their bids online on the given website Signed and Sealed. The Bidders shall submit Tender Bond electronically through the e-tendering system, which will verify the validity of the submitted bond and this Bid bond shall be issued from Local Bank in the Sultanate of Oman or it's accredited branches in Saudi Arabia of (2%) of the Tender Value, valid for (180) days from the Proposals submission date, addressed to H. E. THE CHAIRMAN, OPAZ Tender COMMITTEE (OTC).
- OPAZ is not bound to accept the lowest or any other bid, and reserves the right to accept or reject any offer without giving reasons.

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Oman’s active presence and enduring contributions to humanitarian efforts

This approach is embodied in the swift response to various humanitarian issues and circumstances, and the provision of aid and relief to those in need—reflecting an Omani paradigm in which assistance transcends its material value

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman will join nations around the world on Wednesday in observing World Humanitarian Day, reaffirming its active presence and enduring contributions to supporting humanitarian efforts. This commitment is rooted in its firm belief that solidarity, mutual support and standing by people in times of crisis are deeply ingrained values and an enduring extension of Omani society.

This approach is embodied in the swift response to various humanitarian issues and circumstances, and the provision of aid and relief to those in need—reflecting an Omani paradigm in which assistance transcends its material value to carry a humanitarian message founded on compassion, peace, cooperation and solidarity among peoples.

Badr Mohammed Al Zaabi, Acting CEO of Oman Charitable Organization (OCO), told Oman News Agency (ONA) that World Humanitarian Day serves as a reminder that regardless of the causes and locations of crises, the human being remains the focal point and ultimate purpose of any response. In a world witnessing escalating conflicts, disasters and humanitarian challenges, no single country or institution can operate in isolation, he affirmed.

He emphasized that international solidarity, the integration of efforts and the rapid delivery of aid to those entitled to it have become shared responsibilities. He further affirmed that Oman’s message is that humanitarian action should not be governed by geography or differences, but rather by human need, respect for human dignity and the extension of assistance at the time it is most needed.

He added that the Sultanate of Oman possesses a deeply rooted humanitarian approach, drawing its strength from a foreign policy based on peace, cooperation and mutual respect—a stance reflected in its regional and international humanitarian presence. What distinguishes this approach, he said, is its quietude and continuity, its focus on the humanitarian dimension and its commitment to reaching affected populations wherever they may be. Oman is keen to ensure that its aid is aligned with actual needs, transitioning from emergency response in times of crisis to supporting recovery and stability whenever feasible.

He explained that the Omani experience is built upon a critical equation: responding to immediate needs without overlooking the long-term requirements of individuals. Omani efforts combine urgent relief assistance with health, educational, housing and developmental programmes, thereby contributing to more sustainable impact. Omani humanitarian action is, by its nature, discreet, prioritizing the impact that reaches people over the accompanying visibility.

Regarding the launch of Oman Red Crescent and its significance for the development of the national humanitarian system, the Acting CEO of Omani Charitable Organization described it as a pivotal milestone in advancing the national humanitarian framework. This is achieved by introducing a specialized institutional structure that enhances Oman’s preparedness and capacity to respond to crises and disasters,



while opening broader horizons for volunteering, capacity-building and humanitarian cooperation, he pointed out.

He added that this step gains additional importance from the fact that Oman Red Crescent falls within the purview of Oman Charitable Organization and operates under its management, thereby preserving the Organization’s accumulated expertise and reinforcing integration in the management of humanitarian action.

On the external front, Oman Red Crescent represents a significant advancement in organizing and expanding Oman’s humanitarian presence, strengthening its relationships and partnerships with the international humanitarian system, and showcasing and institutionalizing the aid and humanitarian efforts that Oman provides across various regions of the world within a more prominent and integrated institutional framework.

He stated: “We aspire for Oman Red Crescent to serve as an active humanitarian arm within Oman Charitable Organization’s system, and to enhance the Sultanate of Oman’s capabilities in humanitarian response, emergency management and disaster relief—through capacity-building, field team training, the development of volunteer work and raising the level of preparedness and readiness for crises.”

He further observed that one of the key roles of Oman Red Crescent is to serve as a trusted humanitarian bridge and a platform for coordination and cooperation with international humanitarian institutions and organizations that view the Sultanate of Oman as a reliable partner through which humanitarian efforts and assistance can be facilitated to reach regions and countries affected by crises and conflicts. Oman’s consistent approach, balanced relations and humanitarian stances have contributed to building this trust—a valuable asset that can be built upon and developed in the forthcoming phase.

He affirmed that the establishment of Oman Red Crescent represents an important step in strengthening the connection between Oman’s humanitarian action system and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and international humanitarian organizations. While cooperation and coordination with many of these institutions have existed for years, the presence of Oman Red Crescent will provide these relationships with a more institutional and structured framework, opening broader avenues for developing partnerships, exchanging expertise and knowledge, and building capacities in disaster and crisis response, as well as volunteer and humanitarian work, he added.

He explained that practical



steps have already been initiated in this direction, through a number of coordination meetings with relevant stakeholders to discuss areas of cooperation, priorities objectives, and establish the foundations for the next phase. These efforts aim to build effective and sustainable partnerships and facilitate mutual benefit from expertise and capabilities. He noted that these partnerships are viewed as reciprocal relationships that allow Oman to benefit from international expertise and experiences, while in turn contributing its own accumulated humanitarian experience, balanced relationships and international credibility, as well as its potential role in supporting and facilitating humanitarian efforts in crisis-affected regions. Oman Red Crescent represents an institutional extension that reinforces Oman’s presence, partnerships and impact within the international humanitarian action system.

Regarding the most prominent humanitarian initiatives and programmes implemented by the Organization during the recent period, both domestically and internationally, and their impact on beneficiary communities, Badr Mohammed Al Zaabi, Acting CEO of Oman Charitable Organization, stated that the Organization con-

tinues to implement its humanitarian programmes within the Sultanate of Oman and abroad, with a focus on ensuring that aid reaches its intended beneficiaries and achieves direct and sustainable impact on their lives.

He noted that at the domestic level, the Organization’s programmes benefited more than 46,000 individuals across various governorates of the Sultanate of Oman during the first half of 2026, through an integrated package of programmes including food assistance, orphan sponsorship, cash aid, educational, medical, and housing support, in addition to emergency relief response.

He pointed out that at the international level, the Organization’s efforts during the same period extended to a number of countries, encompassing diverse humanitarian interventions tailored to each country’s needs, including relief and medical assistance, educational support, orphan sponsorship, and a range of other humanitarian programmes and projects. He emphasized that the success of humanitarian action is measured not only by the volume of what is provided, but by its ability to alleviate human suffering, empower individuals to overcome the circumstances they face, and gener-

ate an impact that extends to their lives, families and communities.

He added that the Organization has expanded its relationships and partnerships with national institutions and regional and international humanitarian organizations, driven by the conviction that addressing major crises requires the integration of capacities, expertise and resources, rather than operating in isolation.

Concurrently, efforts are underway to develop human and field capacities, strengthen the humanitarian action system, and enhance coordination and preparedness, particularly with the launch of Oman Red Crescent—contributing to the establishment of a humanitarian system that is more prepared, flexible, and capable of responding efficiently and swiftly to future changes and crises.

With regard to the contribution of partnerships with the private sector and civil society institutions in expanding the impact of Omani humanitarian initiatives, he affirmed that humanitarian action is a shared national responsibility, and its impact multiplies when the efforts of government, the private sector, civil society institutions, and individuals are integrated. Over the past period, the Organization has successfully

built a close relationship with private sector institutions, most notably through the “20% Corporate Social Responsibility” initiative, which mandates the allocation of no less than 20% of corporate social responsibility budgets to the Organization. He noted that significant commitment and cooperation from companies have been observed in this regard.

He explained that the Organization channels these contributions to eligible beneficiaries through its humanitarian and social programmes and projects, in line with priorities and needs. This partnership has brought about a significant transformation in enhancing the sustainability of aid and expanding its scope of impact.

He indicated that Oman Charitable Organization has entered a new phase of institutional development through the implementation of its comprehensive development plan for 2026–2028, which aims to build a more efficient, sustainable, and adaptive operational system capable of keeping pace with the rapid transformations in humanitarian action—moving from the isolated development of services and programmes to an integrated development encompassing various aspects of institutional and humanitarian work.

He stated that priorities for the upcoming phase focus on accelerating digital transformation and electronic service integration, enhancing the beneficiary experience, strengthening community partnerships, entrenching governance and transparency, investing in human capital, enhancing financial sustainability and diversifying funding sources, in addition to developing high-impact projects and programmes with sustainable humanitarian outcomes.

It is noteworthy that World Humanitarian Day is observed on 19 August each year, serving as a global occasion to highlight humanitarian efforts worldwide, honour the sacrifices of humanitarian workers, and reaffirm the importance of solidarity and international cooperation in addressing crises and disasters.

Young Ambassadors Programme aims at empowerment of youth

The programme encompasses a set of core components, including meetings that bring young participants together with diplomatic leaders



MUSCAT: The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth has announced the opening of registration for the fourth edition of the Young Ambassadors Programme, scheduled to take place in November of this year in the Governorate of Muscat.

This edition follows three highly successful iterations that witnessed significant interest from Omani and Arab youth and

contributed to delivering an integrated educational and training experience.

The programme enabled participants to explore a wide range of international issues and gain insight into the mechanisms of decision-making and voting procedures within United Nations meetings, through a diverse array of specialised events and activities.

The programme encompasses a set of core components, includ-

ing meetings that bring young participants together with diplomatic leaders, training workshops conducted in collaboration with the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), a specialised workshop on protocol and etiquette, a simulation session as part of the Model United Nations programme, a diplomatic dinner, a daily bulletin detailing session proceedings, as well as sightseeing and orientation tours

for participants.

Together, these elements provide a comprehensive experience that integrates knowledge acquisition, training, practical application, and networking.

Hilal Saif Al Siyabi, Director General of Youth at the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, stated that the Young Ambassadors Programme is one of the flagship specialized initiatives implemented by the Ministry in the field of

youth empowerment and capacity development.

He noted that the programme offers an integrated experience combining knowledge, training, and hands-on practice, and enjoys considerable attention and demand from young people—a trend reflected in the registration numbers recorded over the past three editions.

Regarding the fourth edition of the programme, he explained that it is expected to witness an expansion in the number of participants, with a target total of 160 participants, alongside an expansion in the scope of participating countries beyond the Sultanate of Oman.

He affirmed that the Ministry, through such programmes, seeks to create broader opportunities for young people to benefit from high-calibre experiences, develop their skills and capacities, and strengthen their presence and participation across diverse fields.

Malak Malik Al Musalmani, a participant in the third edition of the programme and a graduate of Sultan Qaboos University majoring in English Language and Lit-

erature, stated that she joined the programme out of a firm belief in the importance of dialogue, youth diplomacy, and a sense of responsibility toward issues and ideas.

She noted that the programme largely achieved its objectives, providing participants with an environment that simulates real diplomatic work, encouraging constructive debate, decision-making, and teamwork, while also fostering mutual understanding among youth from diverse backgrounds.

For her part, Aisha Khalid Al Buisaidi, a graduate of Sultan Qaboos University majoring in Political Science and a participant in the second edition of the Young Ambassadors Programme, explained that her involvement in the programme helped equip her with the necessary skills in diplomacy, dialogue, and decision-making.

She added that the programme reinforced her commitment to the principles of dialogue and teamwork, contributing to the development of a conscious and promising generation capable of showcasing the identity and essence of the Omani character in regional and international forums. -ONA

SPORTS ACADEMIES

Outstanding players are promoted annually to junior and youth clubs

<FROM A1 Players are encouraged to embrace values such as belonging, self-discipline, respect, responsibility and continuous improvement, creating a comprehensive system that also supports families in raising their children.

The academy has also introduced sports programmes for children with Down syndrome in cooperation with the Oman Down Syndrome Association. The initiatives seek to integrate children into sports activities, develop their motor and social skills, strengthen self-confidence and promote equal opportunities in sports.



Al Habsi said attracting qualified coaches is an important indicator of the academy's commitment to training quality. The academy is also seeking partnerships with clubs inside and outside Muscat Governorate to create a sporting bridge between academies and clubs and strengthen the supply of promising players to the national team.

He also stressed the importance of strengthening legislative regulations governing the establishment of sports academies, saying this would contribute to producing more competitive athletes.

Haitham bin Saeed Al Shanfari, director general of Rio International Sports Academy, said the academy's vision is aligned with efforts to support the sports sector and develop emerging talent through professional standards that prepare athletes for regional and international competition.

He said the academy seeks to shorten the pathway for talented players by providing opportunities to connect with international clubs and participate in professional assessments conducted by experienced international coaches.

Maintaining high-quality training programmes and attracting international expertise, however, requires substantial investment and high operating costs, Al Shanfari said. The academy therefore seeks to balance financial sustainability with its objective of developing sporting talent.

He added that the academy's approach includes partnerships with clubs, educational institutions, charities and rehabilitation centres, strengthening its community role and allowing its programmes to reach wider segments of society.

Expanding the network of sports academies, he said, would provide more opportunities for young talents who require guidance and support. It would also help distribute sporting development across more governorates instead of relying primarily on clubs, creating wider channels for talent discovery and increasing the long-term benefits of sports for young people.

Youssef bin Hashel Al Maskari, head of Global Talents Academy in the Wilayat of Ibra, said the academy follows a comprehensive programme aimed at developing players' technical, physical and mental abilities.

Outstanding players are promoted annually to junior and youth clubs, he said, helping ensure continuous development and refinement of talent.

The academy has also introduced a recreational sports programme for girls this year under the "Summer of Sports" programme, in cooperation with the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth. The initiative aims to broaden participation in sports and provide quality programmes for different age groups.

Al Maskari said the academy views sport as a means of education and character-building as much as competition. Training sessions are designed to promote values and ethics while developing leadership, cooperation and respect.

He said one of the most significant changes observed among participants is a shift from individualistic thinking towards teamwork. Players increasingly focus on collective success, appreciate their teammates' contributions and take greater responsibility for their own performance and role within the team.

According to Al Maskari, this process strengthens self-discipline, with players gradually developing a personal commitment to attending training, preparing properly and maintaining their physical fitness rather than simply following instructions.

He said parents have also observed positive changes in their children's behaviour at home and

outside the academy.

The academy's ultimate objective, Al Maskari added, is not limited to developing technical ability but also to building character and instilling a "champion's mentality". A successful athlete, he said, should combine sporting ability with values, commitment and responsibility.

Mohammed bin Ali Al Riyami, general supervisor of Najoum Bahla Sports Academy in the Wilayat of Bahla, said consistency in training is crucial to the development of young athletes.

Players who attend only seasonal programmes, he said, may not achieve the same level of development as those who participate consistently, as regular training is essential for building physical, technical and mental abilities and preparing athletes for more advanced stages.

The academy has sought to recruit national coaches holding Asian Football Confederation-accredited licences, Al Riyami said. This provides a continuous foundation for improving the technical and physical levels of young players and increasing the intensity of training, particularly during the early stages of development.

The academy has also helped provide opportunities for age groups that previously had limited access to football development programmes, particularly children aged 12 and under. Some participants have subsequently joined Bahla Sports Club, while others have progressed to local teams.

Al Riyami said the academy's role also extends to social responsibility, with players taking part in initiatives, events and workshops covering areas such as first aid and self-development.

Such activities have contributed to players' development both on and off the field, reinforcing the role of sport in building character, maintaining balance and encouraging regular participation.

"Academies are partners in shaping the future of Omani sports," Al Riyami said, describing them as an important link between players and clubs. Through its partnership with Bahla Club, the academy has helped provide talented players for the club's youth sector.

Bader bin Khalifa Al Salmi, supervisor of Al-Oud Football Academy in the Wilayat of Suwaiq, highlighted the importance of family support in developing young sporting talent.

He said the success of any sports project targeting young people begins at home, with families playing a central role in identifying children's interests, encouraging their participation, supporting commitment and perseverance, and providing psychological and moral support throughout their development.

Academies may have qualified coaches and advanced training programmes, Al Salmi said, but without family support young athletes may not be able to benefit fully from those resources.

At the same time, families seeking to develop their children's abilities need specialised institutions to provide training, development and skills refinement.

He therefore stressed that sustainable success depends on integration between families and academies. When both share the same objective and maintain continuous communication, the results are more sustainable and effective.

Al Salmi also called for greater support from community institutions, schools and the media to promote awareness of the importance of sport and create an environment that encourages young people to participate.

When families, academies and the wider community work together, he said, the outcome goes beyond producing talented athletes to building a generation characterised by health, discipline, self-confidence, teamwork and commitment.

AL DAKHLIYAH GOVERNORATE

Consumer authority ensures settlement

Times News Service

MUSCAT: A homeowner in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate dreamed of giving his house a fresh new look. After careful planning, he signed an agreement with a construction company to carry out interior and exterior decoration and painting works.

The homeowner expected the work to be completed on time, while the company assured him that the project would be handled professionally. However, as the weeks passed, progress slowed. Deadlines were missed, and the agreed work remained unfinished.

Concerned about the delay, the consumer filed a complaint with the Consumer Protection Authority. The authority reviewed the case and brought both parties together

to discuss the issue. Rather than allowing the disagreement to escalate, they encouraged dialogue and cooperation.

During the discussions, the company acknowledged its inability to fulfill the agreement as originally planned. After negotiations, both parties reached an amicable settlement. The contract was terminated by mutual agreement, and the company committed to refunding the homeowner OMR 1,900.

The resolution brought the dispute to a peaceful conclusion. The homeowner recovered his money, and the company fulfilled its responsibility through the settlement process. The case became an example of how constructive communication and consumer protection mechanisms can help resolve conflicts fairly and efficiently.



INDIAN SCHOOL JALAN

P.O. Box- 045, P.C.416, Jalan Bani Bu Ali, Sultanate of Oman

Tel: 25554162; 99060725

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Tender no	Description	Tender fee (RO)Non-refundable	Tender documents Available from	Last date of Tender Submission
ISJ/Tend/01/2026	Seeking bids from specialized consultant firms who are having experience in the Concept Design, Site Survey, and Feasibility study report, Tender document preparation for the proposed construction of minimum five classrooms and required washrooms.	10	19 August 2026	31 August 2026

Tender to be addressed to President, School Management Committee, Indian School Jalan and must be submitted in a sealed envelope with the tender number mentioned without the company's name on the envelope.



شركة إسمنت عمان (س.أ.و.ج)

Oman Cement Company (S.A.O.G)

P.O. BOX 560, RUWI, POSTAL CODE 112, SULTANATE OF OMAN
[Factory Al Misfah West, Bausher, Tel. # 00968 24437070 ext. 102, Fax # 00968 24437777]

TENDERS

The company invites specialized companies to participate in the following tender:

Sl. #	Tender ID	Description	Tender Fee	Deadline for Request for Tenders	Deadline for Submission of Offers
1.	1012000112-26	MEDICAL INSURANCE	Free	03 rd September 2026 2359 Hours	08 th September 2026 2359 Hours
2.	1720000252-26	ASBESTOS SHEET REMOVAL & FIX NEW SHEET	Free	10 th September 2026 2359 Hours	15 th September 2026 2359 Hours

Tender documents can be obtained by scanning the barcode provided at the bottom of this advertisement. Bidders are required to complete all the requested information in the form to submit their request. Upon successful submission, the tender documents will be shared accordingly.

The last date for submission of offers is on Tuesday, 2359 hours, detailed date on the above table, accompanied by a bid bond issued by any local bank in Oman (equivalent to 1%) of the total tender value. The bid bond must be valid for 120 days from the last date of submission of offers, and the ORIGINAL bid bond must be submitted on the tender box at the reception of our Administration Building, Al Misfah West factory Site, Bausher, Muscat, Oman.

The Company's account is detailed below:

Account name: Bank Name: Account number: Account Type: SWIFT Code:

Oman Cement Company SAOG Bank Muscat SAOG 0423 01086 3070 017 OMR BMR SOMRX



For inquiries, please contact nasser.said@omacement.com & yaqub.tamtami@omacement.com
Contact details: Office number: +968 22705601, 22705566.

To request for tender documents, Please scan the code and fill the requirements.

Omani youth harness AI to drive innovation

A growing generation of young Omani innovators is using advanced technologies to develop practical solutions

MUSCAT: Artificial intelligence is emerging as a key force shaping the future of education, business and other sectors, as Oman accelerates its digital transformation and efforts to build a sustainable, knowledge-based economy.

Against this backdrop, a growing generation of young Omani innovators is using advanced technologies to develop practical solutions to real-world challenges, demonstrating that youth can play an active role in shaping the country's digital future rather than simply consuming new technologies.

Among these emerging talents is Noufbint Abdul Hamid Al Shamli, an Omani student at Sultan Qaboos University specialising in statistics, data science and computer science. She is also a founding partner of "Elmfy," an artificial intelligence-powered educational platform designed to personalise learning and improve academic efficiency for university students.

The platform has expanded beyond Oman through a number of pilot projects, reflecting the potential of locally developed digital solutions to compete at regional and international levels.

Speaking to the Oman News Agency, Al Shamli said her decision to combine statistics, data science and computer science was based on her belief that modern



technology depends on the integration of numbers, data and programming.

She explained that statistics enables her to understand data, identify patterns and predict trends, while computer science provides the tools needed to transform that understanding into practical technological solutions.

According to Al Shamli, this combination has shaped her approach to artificial intelligence, which she views as a system fundamentally built on data, statistical models and algorithms. Understanding these foundations, she said, is essential for developing reliable and meaningful AI applications.

She stressed that the real value of combining these disciplines lies in the ability to examine a problem from several perspectives, including the reliability of data, the accuracy of models and the scalability of technological applications.

Conscious use of AI

Al Shamli said AI skills should not be measured simply by a person's ability to operate available tools, as access to such technologies has become increasingly widespread.

Instead, she believes the real distinction lies in knowing when to use AI, how to direct it and what purpose it should serve.

She identified three characteristics of effective AI users: the ability to ask the right questions, strong knowledge of the field in which AI is being applied, and an ethical and responsible approach that ensures technology serves humanity rather than replaces it.

She added that professionals who develop these capabilities can improve productivity, identify opportunities more quickly and develop solutions that might not emerge through traditional approaches alone.

Data at the heart of decision-making

Al Shamli also highlighted the importance of data science, noting that data by itself does not create value. Its value emerges when it is collected accurately, sourced transparently and analysed in a way that supports decision-making.

She said effective data science can give institutions a more proactive understanding of emerging needs rather than relying solely on delayed responses.

Data-driven approaches can also contribute to more efficient allocation of resources by providing decision-makers with a clearer picture of actual requirements.

The idea behind Elmfy emerged from Al Shamli's own experience

of struggling to understand some academic material through conventional teaching methods.

The challenge prompted the idea of creating a learning experience capable of adapting to individual learners rather than requiring students to follow a single standard approach.

Working with her technical colleague, she developed the concept further and gained experience beyond her core academic specialisations, including marketing, branding, financial planning, budgeting and engagement with users, investors, reviewers and partners.

The platform participated in a number of local and international exhibitions and competitions, with each experience and feedback helping the team refine its concept.

One of the major milestones was representing Oman at the Falling Walls competition in Berlin last year, where the team had the opportunity to compare its idea with innovative projects from around the world.

Al Shamli said the experience helped the team gain a clearer understanding of what distinguishes Elmfy from other educational technology solutions.

She said the team hopes to contribute to the future of smart education in Oman by offering learning that adapts to students, using technology to facilitate rather than complicate education, and developing an authentic Arab educational model capable of competing internationally.

Understanding the problem before finding the solution

Al Shamli described winning the "Early Problem Detection" award as a turning point in her understanding of innovation.

She said innovation is often associated with developing a smart solution, but the most important stage may come before the solution itself: accurately identifying and understanding the underlying problem. -ONA



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



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IN IDLIB

Syria accuses Israel of airstrikes on military airbase

DAMASCUS: Syria on Tuesday held Israel responsible for the airstrikes on Abu al-Duhur military airbase in Idlib, accusing the Jewish state of violating Syria's sovereignty and attempting to undermine the efforts to avoid escalation of conflict in the region.

Four air strikes hit the Abu al-Zuhour military airport in the eastern countryside of Idlib province in northern Syria, in the first such attack on the facility since the fall of Bashar al-Assad's regime in December 2024, Al Jazeera reported. In an official statement released by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Damascus described the strikes as a "flagrant violation of Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity" and a dangerous escalation.

The ministry highlighted that Syrian authorities have exercised restraint and worked to consolidate national stability, warning that ongoing military operations by Israeli forces risk undermining these efforts.

"The continuation of these Israeli attacks since 8 December 2024, at a time when the Syrian state has exercised restraint and worked to consolidate its ability and avoid escalation, once again demonstrates the Israeli occupation's attempts to undermine

these efforts and drag the region towards further tension and instability," the Foreign Ministry stated. Holding the Israeli government fully responsible for the escalation, Damascus urged international bodies to step in.

The statement formally called on the United Nations Security Council and the broader international community to issue an immediate condemnation and take a firm stance against repeated breaches of Syrian sovereignty.

Reaffirming its position, the Foreign Ministry emphasised that Syria "will continue to defend its rights and national interests through the legitimate means guaranteed under international law and international norms".

Additionally, Jordan has strongly condemned recent Israeli airstrikes targeting the Abu al-Zuhour Military Airport in Syria's Idlib Governorate, labelling the attack an "unjustified aggression" and a clear violation of international law. In a statement, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs described the strikes as a flagrant breach of Syrian sovereignty and territorial integrity, warning that the military action violates both the United Nations Charter and international norms. - ANI



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Iranian Parliament Speaker draws red line for US amid West Asia crisis

Addressing the 180th open session of Iran’s 12th Parliament, Ghalibaf said the time had come for Iran’s military and diplomatic tracks to work together to respond to what he called the US “breach of covenant”

TEHRAN: Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf on Tuesday warned of a renewed military response to what Tehran describes as US violations of its commitments under the 14-point Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed in June, saying that Iran will keep the Strait of Hormuz closed until Washington fulfils key conditions, including lifting sanctions and the blockade as per the agreement. Addressing the 180th open session of Iran’s 12th Parliament, Ghalibaf said the time had come for Iran’s military and diplomatic tracks to work together to respond to what he called the US “breach of covenant”.



“As we predicted, the enemy - who had accepted the ceasefire agreement out of desperation -quickly reneged on its commitments to compensate for its heavy political defeat in practice. Therefore, the time has come for the military field to once again stand alongside the diplomatic field and provide a practical response to the enemy’s breach of covenant,” Ghalibaf said. In his strongest warning, the Iranian Parliament speaker, who is also the head of the negotiating team from Iran’s side, said that the Strait would not be reopened until the United States implemented its commitments under the MoU, which was signed to open technical talks to end the conflict in West Asia. “Until America’s commitments in the memorandum of understanding - including lifting the blockade, releasing frozen as-

sets, lifting oil sanctions, ending threats and military operations on all fronts, and other conditions to which America committed - are implemented, the ‘Strait’ will not be opened,” he said. The remarks place the reopening of the strategically vital Strait of Hormuz directly in the context of sanctions relief and other US commitments, effectively making access through the waterway part of Tehran’s broader diplomatic bargaining position as the conflict continues. Ghalibaf also warned that Iran was prepared for a further escalation if the US continued its actions. “The Islamic Republic of Iran is ready to impose a heavier defeat on the enemy in proportion to its actions and aggressions,” he said. His comments come amid severe strain over the 60-day diplomatic framework, which expired on Monday, with several key com-

mitments still unimplemented. Ghalibaf’s speech suggested that Tehran does not regard the ceasefire and accompanying memorandum as a settled political outcome and is prepared to combine military and diplomatic pressure if Washington fails to meet its obligations. Beyond the external confrontation, Ghalibaf devoted substantial attention to what he described as a new US strategy aimed at weakening Iran from within through economic pressure and social divisions. He said the enemy was seeking “economic pressure and the destruction of national cohesion” after failing to achieve its objectives through military and diplomatic means. According to Ghalibaf, Washington’s strategy is to create dissatisfaction and a rift within Iranian society and exploit domestic

economic difficulties. He warned that individuals or institutions whose actions or decisions weaken national cohesion could, “intentionally or unintentionally,” be operating in the interests of the enemy. The parliament speaker also issued an explicit warning against political infighting during the crisis, urging political and media figures to put national unity ahead of electoral or factional competition. “The matter of national war is not a scene for political and electoral competition,” he said, calling for what he described as “Sacred Unity” and urging Iranians to remain united around the Supreme Leader, Mojtaba Khamenei. Ghalibaf acknowledged that people’s economic grievances were legitimate but argued that the current circumstances required national cohesion. He called for measures to increase the purchasing power of households, including changes to Iran’s commodity coupon programme or an increase in its credit and also highlighted the sensitive issue of gasoline shortages and consumption, saying reducing consumption had become unavoidable but cautioning the government against simply raising fuel prices. “An increase in gasoline prices by the government is not a ‘calculated measure,’” he said, arguing that any reduction in consumption should minimise public dissatisfaction and be accompanied by efforts to convince public opinion. Ghalibaf further warned that Iran’s adversaries could seek to exploit domestic discontent by combining unrest with security operations.

He said, based on what he described as overt and covert information, the enemy was waiting for an opportunity to create chaos alongside military operations such as “assassinations and separatist actions”, supported by what he called “cognitive warfare”. He specifically warned that government measures over gasoline consumption could be exploited in such a scenario. The warning comes as Ghalibaf portrays the confrontation as having moved into a new phase in which information, economic pressure and domestic cohesion are as important as military capabilities. Concluding his address, Ghalibaf pledged that Iran would continue to pursue what it considers its national rights and hold the aggressor accountable. “Under the guidance of the Supreme Leader and before the nation of Iran, we pledge to use all our power to realise the rights of the Iranian people, repel aggression, punish the aggressor, and ensure the country’s pride,” he said. “We will not allow the enemy to target national unity, public presence, the resilience of the nation, and the motivation of officials,” Ghalibaf added, declaring that Iran remained “united, powerful, and vigilant.” His address combined a hard external message--with the threat of renewed military action and continued closure of the Strait of Hormuz--with an equally strong domestic appeal for economic relief, political restraint, and national unity as Tehran confronts a renewed US pressure campaign as the conflict continues.

— ANI

SEABRIGHT STATE BEACH

Trump honours teen lifeguard who rescued Indian American boy

WASHINGTON DC: US President Donald Trump honoured a 16-year-old California lifeguard at the White House after he rescued an Indian American boy from dangerous ocean surf in a viral incident at Seabright State Beach in Santa Cruz. Trump met teenage lifeguard Ryder Williams, 16, and Nathaniel Rai, 10, along with their families, in the Oval Office on Monday. Trump praised Williams for rescuing Rai, who was swept into the ocean by a wave, saying, “It’s an honour to be with Ryder Williams.” “I understand he was a winner right from the time they first saw him as a lifeguard. He saved this young gentleman who I had a long talk with,” Trump said. “What you did was incredible, and everybody saw it,” Trump told Williams, adding that the teenager was an inspiration for young Americans. According to the New York Post, Williams rescued Rai from the treacherous surf at Seabright State Beach on July 25 as powerful waves repeatedly crashed

over them. Williams was on duty when Rai was pulled into the water and rushed to him before another lifeguard helped bring both of them back to shore. The rescue was captured on video and went viral, drawing the attention of Eric Trump before President Trump invited Williams to the White House, according to Fox News. Williams, who aspires to become a firefighter, said the rescue was a result of his training. “In those dangerous moments that we have, we always try to fall back on our training,” Williams told reporters. “We are trained so well by many to handle that situation as best we can.” “I hope that everybody can take away from this and try to help more people. Try to look out for everybody around you and just try to help everybody out as much as you can,” he added. Rai’s father, Sumit Rai, who was also present in the Oval Office, thanked Williams for saving his son, saying he was “beyond grateful” for the rescue. — ANI

BILATERAL MILITARY TIES

Indian army chief General Seth meets Nepal PM Balendra Shah

KATHMANDU: India’s Chief of Army Staff General Dhiraj Seth on Tuesday held a courtesy meeting with Nepal Prime Minister Balendra Shah as part of his four-day official visit to Nepal aimed at further strengthening bilateral military ties. General Seth met Prime Minister Shah, who also holds the defence portfolio at the Office of the Prime Minister and Council of Ministers in Singha Durbar. Indian Ambassador to Nepal Naveen Srivastava was also present during the meeting, according to a post by the Nepal Prime Minister’s Office on Facebook. “A courtesy meeting was held between Indian Army Chief General Dhiraj Seth and respected Prime Minister Balendra Shah. Army Chief General Seth held the courtesy meeting with Prime Minister Shah, who also serves as the Defence Minister, at the Office of the Prime Minister and Council of Ministers in Singha Durbar today. Indian Ambassador to Nepal Naveen Srivastava was also present during the meeting,” the post read. General Seth arrived in Kathmandu on Sunday at the formal invitation of Nepal’s Chief of Army



Staff General Ashok Raj Sigdel. His visit, from August 16 to 19, includes a series of engagements with senior Nepali officials, military leaders, officers and Indian Army veterans. Earlier on Monday, Nepal President Ram Chandra Paudel conferred the honorary rank of General of the Nepali Army on General Seth at an investiture ceremony at Sheetal Niwas. The honour reflects the longstanding tradition between the Indian and Nepali armies, under which the Army Chiefs of the two countries are conferred the honorary rank of General in each other’s armies. The tradition dates back to 1950.

Also on Monday, General Seth met his Nepali counterpart General Ashok Raj Sigdel for bilateral discussions. He also received and inspected a ceremonial Guard of Honour at the Nepali Army Headquarters in Kathmandu and laid a wreath at the Army Pavilion in Tundikhel. During his visit, General Seth is scheduled to receive a briefing from the Director General of Military Operations of the Nepali Army on issues of mutual strategic interest and interact with senior Nepali dignitaries on bilateral matters. On Tuesday, he is scheduled to address student officers at the Army Command and Staff Course in Shivapuri and interact

with instructors and foreign student officers. On the final day of his visit, August 19, General Seth will travel to Pokhara to attend an Ex-Servicemen Rally, where he will felicitate Veer Naris and gallantry awardees and interact with Indian Army veterans. The Ministry of Defence has highlighted the deep historical, social and cultural ties between India and Nepal, often described as the “Roti Beti Ka Rishta”. It said civilisational links, including Janakpur-Ayodhya and Lumbini-Bodhgaya, have contributed to the close relationship between the two countries. The visit is aimed at further consolidating the longstanding military relationship between the two armies and exploring avenues for enhanced cooperation, while reinforcing the broader bonds of friendship between India and Nepal. General Seth assumed office as Chief of the Army Staff of the Indian Army on June 30, 2026. An alumnus of the National Defence Academy, Khadakwasla, he was commissioned into the Armoured Corps in December 1986.

— ANI

UKRAINIAN PRESIDENT

Will definitely respond to this Russian strike: Zelenskyy

KYIV: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said that 10 people were killed after Russian forces launched a strike on a busy intersection in Pechenihy in the Kharkiv region on the morning of Tuesday. In a post on X, Zelenskyy said, “This morning, the Russians launched a brutal attack on a busy intersection in Pechenihy, Kharkiv region - a location with a post office and stores, surrounded only by residential buildings.” “As of now, 10 people have been reported killed. My condolences to their families and loved ones,” he said, adding that many people were injured and were receiving necessary medical care. Zelenskyy said first responders had extinguished the fire, and

emergency response services continued working at the site. “All the circumstances of this tragedy are being established,” he said. “We will definitely respond to this Russian strike,” Zelenskyy said, while calling on Ukraine’s international partners to increase pressure on Russia. “And it is equally important that our partners also complement our just kinetic responses with their own actions to put pressure on Russia and support Ukraine,” he added. The incident comes as earlier on Sunday, Russian air defence intercepted and downed 822 Ukrainian drones while at least six people were killed in Ukrainian-drone attacks, according to a series of reports by news agency TASS.



As per TASS, 822 Ukrainian fixed-wing drones over Russian regions and the Black and Azov Seas were intercepted and destroyed overnight, the Russian Defence Ministry said. “Russian air defense forces intercepted and destroyed 822 Ukrainian fixed-wing unmanned

aerial vehicles over Belgorod, Bryansk, Vladimir, Volgograd, Voronezh, Kaluga, Kursk, Lipetsk, Nizhny Novgorod, Oryol, Rostov, Ryazan, Tambov and Tula regions, the Moscow Region, the Krasnodar Region and the Republic of Crimea, as well as over the Azov and Black Seas, from 8 p.m. Mos-

cow time (5 p.m. GMT) on August 15 to 8 a.m. Moscow time (5 a.m. GMT) on August 16,” the Defence Ministry said. Meanwhile, two separate reports by TASS on that day mentioned that at least six people were killed and four injured in drone attacks in Rostov and Moscow. As per the report on Sunday, three people were killed, and one more was injured in a drone attack on southern Russia’s Rostov Region, Governor Yury Slyusar reported. “Last night, three people were killed as a result of an aerial attack on the Rostov Region, and one more has been hospitalised with injuries,” he wrote on the Max channel, according to TASS. The report further mentioned,

quoting the official, that more than 150 UAVs were destroyed over three cities and nine districts in the region in the Ukrainian attack, the official added. In another report earlier on that day, TASS mentioned that three people were injured in a drone attack near the Moscow Automobile Ring Road (MKAD), according to Mayor Sergey Sobyenin. “Defence Ministry air defence capabilities have downed another nine drones targeting Moscow. Three people were injured near MKAD; they are being given all necessary assistance. Emergency specialists are working at the scene where [drone] debris fell,” Sobyenin wrote on the Max channel, as per TASS.

— ANI



SPORTS

VS BANGLADESH

Aussies drop Weatherald, call up Renshaw for second Test

DARWIN: Jake Weatherald has been dropped for the second Test against Bangladesh in Mackay with Matt Renshaw called up in his place. It is the only change Australia have made to what remains a 13-player squad following the heavy defeat in Darwin.

Weatherald made 23 and 0 in the first Test, leaving him 224 runs at 20.36 from six matches having played throughout last season's Ashes. A tweaked technique was on display against Bangladesh, something he had worked on during an off-season playing county cricket, but he did not settle in either innings. He edged a drive against Hasan Mahmud on the opening day before dragging on against the same bowler in the second.

His omission was confirmed in a two-line statement by Cricket Australia. Officially, Australia's squad had been named to cover both Tests prior to the series.

Renshaw is in line to play his 15th Test, and his first since 2023, having been on standby for this series after



training with the squad in Brisbane. He averaged 49.90 in the Sheffield Shield last season with three centuries and has impressed on his introduction to Australia's white-ball sides. He was a late addition to the T20 World Cup squad earlier this year when he replaced Matt Short. Overall in Test cricket Renshaw averages 29.31 with a top score of 184 against Pakistan in early 2017.

Australia squad: Travis Head, Matt Renshaw, Marnus Labuschagne, Steven Smith, Cameron Green, Alex Carey, Beau Webster, Pat Cummins (capt), Mitchell Starc, Nathan Lyon, Josh Hazlewood, Josh Inglis, Scott Boland. - **Agencies**

Ex-Australia batter Warner fined

MELBOURNE: Former Australia batter David Warner has been fined A\$1,500 (£787) and ordered to have an interlock device fitted on his car after pleading guilty to drink-driving in Sydney in April.

The 39-year-old's blood alcohol reading was more than twice the legal limit as he failed a random breath test when driving his family home from a social function.

The court heard Warner stopped his car after spotting a roadside testing site and attempted to switch seats with a female passenger on Easter Sunday. Warner, who appeared before Waverley Local Court on Tuesday, must install the interlock device which will prevent



his car from starting if alcohol is detected in his system.

"I accept Mr Warner is unlikely to reoffend," judge Clare Farnan told the court. "But regrettably, drink-driving is still a significant factor in many crashes in New South Wales."

Warner, who retired from international cricket in 2024, scored 6,932 runs in 159 ODIs, including 22 centuries, while he made 8,786 runs with 26 hundreds in 112 Tests. - Agencies

Pant, bowlers put India on victory path in Galle

The wicketkeeper-batter's 66 off 69 put the visitors in command before Sri Lanka lost their top four on the fourth day of the first Test



GALLE: India were six wickets from winning the first Test in Galle after a fourth day on which they scored enough to leave Sri Lanka needing a record chase and their bowlers put together a relentlessly testing session for the hosts.

On a pitch that continued its progression towards the typical brute it becomes towards the end in Galle, Rishabh Pant's maverick innings of 66 off 69 made sure India batted the hosts out of the Test on Tuesday.

Mohammed Siraj, Manav Suthar and Prasidh Krishna then took the wickets to eliminate any thoughts Sri Lanka might have had of winning.

With India starting 178 ahead, this was always going to be a day that could be played on a simulating machine. While it reached the expected end, the game certainly took the scenic route.

Sri Lanka were better with their control with the ball, their fast bowlers bowled some heat in the middle session, and Pant had to pull out some specials to make sure India kept scoring at around four an over as they likely juggled thoughts of scoring quickly and also declaration with the rain always lurking in Galle.

In the end, they didn't need the declaration with Asith Fernando taking 4 for 31, the best figures by a Sri Lanka quick at home since Suranga Lakmal's 4 for 29 in 2019.

The first of those wickets wasn't the best delivery Asitha has bowled, getting Yashasvi Jaiswal on the cut, the seventh time Jaiswal has perished to that shot against pace. Since his debut, nobody has been dismissed when cutting fast bowlers as often as him.

Karnataka team-mates KL Rahul and Devdutt Padikkal added 65 breezy runs in a partnership that featured attractive runs and a hug and blown kiss from Rahul to Padikkal for convincing him to review an lbw given on the field.

Rahul didn't last too long after that reversal, and Sri Lanka put together testing periods of play

either side of lunch, getting the wickets of Rahul, Padikkal, Shubman Gill and Dhruv Jurel in relative quick succession.

Pant then turned the mundane into the exciting on a pitch that was not only turning but going up and down even with the old ball. Pant found unique ways to score runs, dancing down and flat-batting short balls down the ground but also sensationally pulling balls behind square by getting inside the line. One of those pulls brought up his fifty and his 100th career six. Only two have hit more.

By the time they were bowled out, India had a lead of 371 and four sessions to take the 10 wickets in. A brief rain interruption only underlined the uncertainty that India would have had to deal with, but they still had two and three-quarters of an hour to

make inroads.

And make inroads they did with the kind of collective performance captains love. Ten of the first 20 overs were bowled by fast bowlers, and produced 2 for 20 out of a score of 41 for 3 at that time.

Siraj bounced Nishan Madushka with the last ball of his fourth over and the latter failed to keep the hook down.

In came Pasindu Sooriyabandara, debuting in the middle of the Test as replacement for Dinesh Chandimal, who was concussed while diving in the field. Immediately he went out, caught on the crease to Suthar, who managed to bowl one that turned less than expected and went past the inside edge.

Prasidh followed up Siraj's spell with an impressive one of his own, which read 5-2-9-1 by the time he was done. Kusal Mendis was the man out to that duck.

A crouching gully worked for Suthar as Dhruv Jurel pulled off a low one to send back Lahiru Udana. When bad light stopped play at 6.08pm, a total of 280 overs had been bowled in the Test.

Brief scores: Sri Lanka 284 and 84/4 (de Silva 31*, Siraj 1-11, Prasidh 1-13) need 288 runs to beat India 462 and 193 (Pant 66, Padikkal 44, Asitha 4-41). - Agencies



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Sinaw: 99890879, Ibra: 92855026, Salalah: 91357366

OMAN CRUDE PRICES RISE

MUSCAT: Oman Crude (October delivery) increased by \$2.40 to \$90.16 per barrel, said Gulf Mercantile Exchange. The average price of Oman crude (August delivery) stabilised at \$79.09 per barrel, \$22.91 lower than July delivery. — **ONA**

MARKET
BUSINESS & FINANCE



MSX INDEX ENDS HIGHER

The MSX index closed at 7,549.80 points, up by 0.12% from previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 0.30% at 603.26 points. Al Omaniya Non Convertible Bonds 2022, up 5.32%, was the top gainer while, Al Madina Investments, down 2.99%, was the top loser. **>B2**

ITC developments across Oman at an all-time high, says expert

Within the Integrated Tourism Complex sector, key developments include the remaining phases of Al Mouj, The Sustainable City – Yiti, AIDA, Jebel Sifah, Sultan Haitham City, Muscat Hills and Hawana Salalah

VINOD KUMAR PK
vinodkumar@timesofoman.com

Muscat: In terms of transaction activity, Oman's real estate market performed better during the first half of 2026 than it did during the same period last year, as well as during most of the past decade, according to an analyst.

"This is a very positive indication of the market's direction," said Ihsan Kharouf, Head of Oman at Savills Middle East adding that, "One of the standout trends is the number of Integrated Tourism Complex (ITC) developments currently available or being brought to market across the country, which is certainly at an all-time high."

Elaborating about the main



projects currently under development in Oman, Ihsan Kharouf said, "Within the ITC sector, key developments include the remaining phases of Al Mouj, The Sustainable City – Yiti, AIDA, Jebel Sifah, Sultan Haitham City, Muscat Hills and Hawana Salalah. Several other developments are also expected to be launched during 2026 and 2027.

Transaction volumes at the half-way point of 2026 were comparable with those recorded in 2018, although they remained below the levels reached in 2016. Nevertheless, the market continues to dem-

onstrate positive momentum.

Regarding the key trends across property sales, rentals and the office market, Ihsan Kharouf said, "We are seeing a growing number of projects being introduced to the market, with further launches potentially planned for the second half of 2026."

Developers are offering longer payment plans and additional incentives to attract buyers, while targeting a broad range of international markets to promote Oman and its real estate sector, he added.

"We are also seeing more devel-

opment within established communities. These projects benefit from existing infrastructure and buyers' familiarity with their locations. This differs from some newer, larger-scale ITCs, where infrastructure and supporting amenities, such as retail, education and healthcare, are still being developed," Ihsan Kharouf pointed out.

"Within the office market, there has been an increase in flexible spaces that can be combined, subdivided or used for co-working. This reflects the significant chang-



TIMES OF OMAN **EXCLUSIVE**

es taking place in corporate working cultures and occupiers' evolving requirements," he added.

Outside the ITC sector, several interesting projects are being developed across the city by companies including Tathmeer, Omnia and Wujha, which are active across both ITC and non-ITC developments.

Real estate transactions

Approximately 34,000 transactions were recorded during the first half of 2026, with a combined value of OMR 1.43 billion.

"Both figures increased compared with the same period in 2025. The total transaction value rose by approximately 5%, while the number of transactions increased by almost 7%," Ihsan Kharouf further said.

He pointed out that a detailed geographical breakdown of transaction volumes is not currently

available, making it difficult to assess which individual areas recorded the strongest sales activity.

Elaborating about the office market he said that "Muscat's office market remained broadly stable during H1 2026, with rental rates largely unchanged across key business districts and typically ranging between OMR 4 and OMR 6 per sq m per month for most units."

Al Khuwair and Shatti Al Qurum maintained stable rental rates of OMR4.5 and OMR6 per square metre per month, respectively, indicating balanced occupier demand.

Ghubrah and Azaiba were the strongest-performing office sub-markets, with rental rates increasing by 4% quarter-on-quarter to OMR5.75 and OMR6.25 per square metre per month, respectively. This reflects continued demand for space within established office locations.

Speaking about the main challenges currently facing the sector, Ihsan Kharouf said that regional instability has had a dual effect on the market. On the one hand, it has highlighted Oman's comparatively different risk profile relative to some other regional locations. On the other, it has had a short-term impact on certain investment decisions. However, we expect this effect to be temporary.

"Questions have also been raised about the alignment between future supply and demand, although it remains too early to determine how this may affect the market. We expect to see measured policies around new project launches to help ensure that future supply remains aligned with the level of demand the market can absorb."

BRIEFS

Gold extends gains to \$4,431.09 per ounce



SINGAPORE: Gold rose for a third straight session yesterday as fears of a US interest rate hike next month eased, with investors awaiting minutes from the Federal Reserve's latest meeting for fresh clues on the monetary policy path. Spot gold was up 0.4% at \$4,431.09 per ounce, while US gold futures for December delivery edged 0.3% higher to \$4,487.70. Among other metals, spot silver rose 0.8% to \$66.33 per ounce. Platinum inched 0.5% higher to \$1,779.50, while palladium was almost stable at \$1,332.50.

Dollar steady as monetary tightening expectations ease

SINGAPORE: The US dollar held near multi-month lows against most major currencies yesterday as traders walked back expectations of near-term monetary tightening. The euro fetched \$1.1581 in early Asian hours, not far from the two-month high of \$1.1614 it touched on Monday. Sterling was at \$1.3548, just shy of the three-month peak it touched in the previous session. The Japanese yen was stuck just below the 160 level against the dollar, with the latest trading at 159.46 per US dollar. The Australian dollar firmed 0.11% to \$0.71119, perched near its strongest level since early June.



European stocks open mixed



BRUSSELS: European stock indices opened mixed yesterday, amid caution in the markets as renewed tensions in West Asia pushed oil prices and government bond yields higher. In the major European markets, France's CAC 40 index on the Paris Stock Exchange fell by 0.05 percent, while Germany's DAX index on the Frankfurt Stock Exchange declined by 0.20 percent. Meanwhile, Britain's FTSE 100 index in London rose by 0.09 percent, while Italy's Milan Stock Exchange index fell by 0.38 percent.

Japanese stocks end five-session winning streak

TOKYO: Japan's Nikkei share average snapped a five-day winning streak yesterday. The Nikkei slid 2.5% to end at 67,460.73, after a 5.5% gain over the previous five trading sessions. The broader Topix lost 1.1% to 4,140.22. Growth stocks saw selling pressure, with electrical appliance makers' shares dropping 3.7%. Chip-making tool manufacturer Tokyo Electron and chip-testing equipment maker Advantest dived 6.2% and 5.1%, respectively. — **ONA**



WILAYAT OF SUR

Forum to highlight major investment opportunities for maritime activities

SUR: The Main Organising Committee for the "Blue Economy and Maritime Investment Forum" in the Wilayat of Sur, South Al Sharqiyah Governorate, scheduled to be held in coming December of this year, revealed the details and orientations of the forum on Tuesday.

This took place during the committee meeting held on Tuesday under the chairmanship of Sheikh Dr. Saif Mohammed Al Ghaithi, Wali of Sur.

The meeting highlighted the importance of marine sectors, projects, and capabilities in the governorate's wilayats, as well as economic diversification opportunities, in addition to boosting local investment.

The meeting aimed to exchange knowledge and expertise and ex-



plore domains that contribute to enhancing the economic value of the governorate's marine capabilities.

It also discussed the main themes, accompanying pro-

grammes and participating entities.

The Blue Economy and Maritime Investment Forum represents a space and promising investment opportunities for

maritime activities, given the economic capabilities and projects that characterise the governorate's wilayats in the economy sector.

— **ONA**

A COMPACT SUV

Drive home a Toyota Raize with exclusive Akeed benefits

MUSCAT: Toyota Akeed offers customers even more reasons to choose the Toyota Raize this season, a compact SUV that brings together efficiency and everyday capability, making it a natural fit for motor enthusiasts navigating the mix of city streets and open highways that define daily life in Oman. As part of the ongoing Toyota Akeed campaign, every qualifying purchase comes with a 5-year or 50,000 km service package, Thiqah Loyalty Points, and one year of complimentary registration, adding lasting value on top of an already dependable SUV, with the offer running until 7th October. Its agile footprint and dependable engineering gives everyone the confidence to handle busy urban routes on weekdays and venture further afield when the weekend calls.

Efficient power, confident handling

At the core of the Raize is a 1.0-litre turbocharged engine producing 96.5 horsepower and 14.28 kg-m of torque, paired with a Continuously Variable Transmis-



sion that simulates a seven-speed sequential shift for smooth low-speed response and refined highway cruising.

A lightweight yet rigid body structure works alongside a well-tuned suspension to deliver stable handling and a comfortable ride, while a tight 5.1-metre turning radius makes tight parking spots and city maneuvering effortless.

A cabin designed around the driver

Behind the wheel, the Raize offers a clear, commanding view of the road through a well-organized

instrument panel, with steering-mounted controls placing multimedia and vehicle functions within easy reach. An illuminated centre console adds a useful touch of convenience after dark, rounding out a cockpit built for everyday ease.

Space and features that work harder

The cabin is equally practical, with an 8-inch multimedia display and USB connectivity for effortless device integration, complemented by a four-speaker audio system for enjoyable in-car listening. Strong air conditioning keeps things com-

fortable through Oman's warmer months, while 60/40 split, foldable rear seats add flexibility for passengers and cargo whenever the trip calls for it.

Safety at every turn

The Raize comes equipped with a solid range of safety technologies, including dual front SRS airbags, Vehicle Stability Control, Anti-lock Braking System, Hill-start Assist Control, rear fog lamps and a Tyre Pressure Monitoring System, giving drivers and passengers added peace of mind on every journey.

Compact, efficient and thoughtfully equipped, the Toyota Raize remains a smart, versatile choice for drivers across Oman looking for an SUV that keeps pace with everyday life.

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MSX index ends higher

Al Omaniya Non Convertible Bonds 2022, up 5.32%, was the top gainer while, Al Madina Investments, down 2.99%, was the top loser

MUSCAT: The MSX index closed at 7,549.80 points, up by 0.12% from previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 0.30% at 603.26 points. Al Omaniya Non Convertible Bonds 2022, up 5.32%, was the top gainer while, Al Madina Investments, down 2.99%, was the top loser. Shares of Sohar International Bank were the most active in terms of number of shares traded as well as in terms of turnover.

A total number of 9,169 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating turnover of OMR50.28 million, with more than 190.32 million shares changing hands. Out of 73 traded securities, 23 advanced, 23 declined, and 27 remained unchanged. At the session close, domestic investors were net buyers for OMR1161,000 while foreign investors were net sellers for OMR1135,000, followed by GCC & Arab investors for OMR26,000 worth of shares.

Financial Index closed at 13,196.52 points, up 0.23%. Prices of Global Financial Investments, United Finance, Al Sharqia Investment, Bank Nizwa, Al Omaniya Financial Services

were up by 1.32%, 1.12%, 1.02%, 0.71%, 0.66% respectively. Prices of Al Madina Investments, Al Madina Takaful, Taageer Finance, OMINVEST, Bank Muscat were down by 2.99%, 0.89%, 0.86%, 0.47%, 0.25% respectively.

Industrial Index closed at 9,494.13 points, up 0.04%. Prices of Jazeera Steel Products, Al Maha Ceramics, Gulf International Chemicals, Al Anwar Ceramics, A'Saffa Foods were up by 2.27%, 2.01%, 1.45%, 0.74%, 0.67% respectively. Prices of Galfar Engineering, Oman Chlorine, Gulf Mushroom Products, Oman Flour Mills, Oman Cables Industry were up by 4.27%, 4.02%, 1.79%, 1.79%, 1.02% respectively. Prices of Dhofar Generating, Muscat Desalination, Musandam Power, Oman Oil Marketing, Phoenix Power were down by 2.50%, 1.14%, 0.87%, 0.83%, 0.71% respectively.

— United Securities

OMAN STOCKS															
INDICES															
Index	High	Low	Value	Prev. Value	Diff	Diff%									
MSX 30 INDEX	7,561.98	7,520.63	7,549.80	7,540.83	8.97	0.12%									
FINANCIAL INDEX	13,228.26	13,163.52	13,196.52	13,166.71	29.81	0.23%									
Industry Index	9,542.00	9,485.09	9,494.13	9,480.78	3.34	0.04%									
Services Index	3,035.40	3,021.78	3,030.67	3,022.61	8.06	0.27%									
MSX Shariah Index	603.40	601.14	603.26	601.54	1.80	0.30%									
MSX TR INDEX	11,699.25	11,635.29	11,680.42	11,666.44	13.88	0.12%									
FINANCIAL TR IDX	16,283.46	16,183.86	16,224.44	16,187.79	36.65	0.23%									
INDUSTRIAL TR IDX	12,220.88	12,147.99	12,159.57	12,155.29	4.28	0.04%									
SERVICES TR IDX	4,066.86	4,048.61	4,060.52	4,049.73	10.79	0.27%									
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								
190,329,593	50,277,110	9,169	38,337,190,970	23	23	27	73								
SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR TUESDAY, AUGUST 18															
SECURITY NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF (RD)	DIFF %	LAST PR	LAST BID	LAST OFFER	PUR VALUE	MARKET CAP
REGULAR MARKET															
OM0000003000	AI MAHA PETROLEUM PRODUCTS MARKETING	8,255	9,930	11	1,200	1,220	1,200	1,220	1,170	0.050	4,274	1,220	1,200	1,220	0.100

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Procurement, postgraduate 15+ yrs experience in Oman oil & gas, EPC, PEB & structural steel projects also has sound knowledge in import, customs clearance and freight & logistics.
Contact : 75123132

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WA/Call: +968 91117043

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PROCUREMENT & SUPPLY CHAIN PROFESSIONAL
18+ years' GCC experience in Procurement, Supply Chain, Warehousing & Logistics. Available for suitable positions in Oman.
Contact : 91257663

FINANCE

Chartered Accountant, 23 years' experience as Finance Head & Auditing firm in Oman. Well versed with Banking, IFRS and taxation, Banking & E-invoicing (basics) seeks suitable position.
Contact : 94274470

FINANCE

Experienced ICWA/CMA (India), M.Com & OACPA certified professional with 15+ years in Costing, Manufacturing Finance, Corporate Planning & Strategy, MIS and Budgeting.
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ACCOUNTS/FINANCE

Indian male MBA Finance, with +8 yrs of Accounting & finance experience seeks for as audit associate position. NOC available & DL. **Contact: 72420067**

Indian female CA inter, 3 yrs in accounts. **Contact: 94863876**, Email: id-j4jiniuonly@gmail.com

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

ACCOUNTS/FINANCE

Finance Manager, 32+ yrs expertise in accounting, taxation, financial management, and ERP implementation. Proven record in enhancing performance, ensuring compliance, and driving efficiency. Seeking suitable leadership position. **Contact: 94676186**

ADMINISTRATION

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

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 9 yrs experience looking for job. **Contact: 92392272**

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

Bangladeshi with 10 yrs experience looking job. **Contact: 78096017**

ENGINEER

Indian male, 35yrs old Mechanical engineer, PMV fleet engineer with 10 yrs of experience in Oman & valid D/L. **Contact : +96894002909**

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**

ENGINEER

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

IT

Indian male, MCA, experience in network admin, IT support, website and Odoo ERP. **Contact : 79701775**

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

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: 71073640**

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

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Donald Trump praises India’s electoral system, pushes for SAVE America Act

Referring to India’s last general election, Trump said, “India’s last Election had 646,000,000 Voters! Less than 1 per cent voted by mail, and every single Voter had to have a VALID Photo Identity Document”



WASHINGTON, DC: US President Donald Trump on Monday renewed his call for the passage of the Safeguard American Voter Eligibility (SAVE) America Act, citing India’s election system and voter identification requirements.

In a post on Truth Social, Trump recalled remarks attributed to India’s Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar earlier this month regarding voter identification requirements in the US.

“Earlier this month, India’s Chief Election Commissioner, Gyanesh Kumar, asked our Administration -- How can you have Elections in the US without a valid Photo ID?” Trump said.

Referring to India’s last gener-

al election, Trump said, “India’s last Election had 646,000,000 Voters! Less than 1 per cent voted by mail, and every single Voter had to have a VALID Photo Identity Document.”

Trump reiterated his call for Congress to pass the SAVE America Act, saying, “We need to pass THE SAVE AMERICA ACT, now!”

According to the White House, the legislation is aimed at ensuring that only US citizens participate in deciding federal elections.

“American citizens -- and only American citizens -- should decide American elections,” the White House said, describing the SAVE America Act as a “common sense,

bipartisan bill.”

The White House said the proposed legislation would require voters to provide valid identification before registering to vote in a federal election, along with proof of citizenship.

It also proposes restrictions on mail-in ballots, allowing them only in cases involving illness, disability, military service or travel. The White House said the Act would direct states to remove non-citizens from voter rolls.

“If you want to register to vote in the United States, you have to be a citizen in the United States,” the White House said.

The administration also com-

pared US election procedures with those in other countries, arguing that America lags behind other nations in enforcing what it described as basic election protections.

“India and Brazil tie voter ID to a biometric database, while the United States largely relies on self-attestation for citizenship,” the White House said.

“President Donald J Trump is absolutely correct!”: US Ambassador Sergio Gor backs SAVE America Act

Meanwhile, in New Delhi US Ambassador to India Sergio Gor on Tuesday endorsed President

Donald Trump’s renewed push for strict nationwide voter identification laws under the SAVE (Safeguard American Voter Eligibility) America Act.

Citing India’s 2024 general election as a global benchmark for voter authentication, Gor backed Trump’s stance that robust, universal photo identification is essential for maintaining election integrity and to revamp American election procedures by explicitly pointing to the scale and mechanics of India’s voting system.

In a post on X, Gor said, “President Donald J. Trump is absolutely correct! 646 MILLION voters, every single one required an ID in India’s last election. Congress should pass THE SAVE AMERICA ACT!”

Gor’s endorsement follows a post on Truth Social where President Trump cited a recent exchange involving India’s Chief Election Commissioner, Gyanesh Kumar. According to Trump, Kumar asked the US administration, “How can you have Elections in the U.S. without a valid Photo ID?”

The proposed Safeguard American Voter Eligibility (SAVE) America Act, introduced in Congress on January 29, aims to overhaul federal voting standards in the United States.

It mandates that state election authorities require physical proof of US citizenship (such as a passport or birth certificate) upon voter registration, alongside valid photo identification at the ballot box, limits mail voting strictly to specific exceptions, including illness, physical disability, active military service, or travel and directs US states to purge non-citi-

zens from federal voter registries using federal databases.

The White House and the Trump administration have drawn direct comparisons between election administration in both countries, asserting that the US relies heavily on self-attestation for citizenship relative to international peers.

India utilises the EPIC (Elector’s Photo Identity Card) system alongside biometric-linked identification (Aadhaar), ensuring almost 100% of the electorate proves identity before casting a ballot.

India’s 2024 Lok Sabha election spanned seven phases, recording over 642 million voters with an overall turnout of 65.79%.

The vast majority of votes are cast in person via Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs), with postal ballots reserved strictly for service personnel, essential duty staff, senior citizens, and persons with disabilities.

While US federal elections traditionally rely on state-by-state regulations and self-attestation of citizenship during registration, the White House is referencing India’s centralised, photo-verified voter database as an example of a system with stricter operational safeguards.

While administration officials view the legislation as a common-sense measure to secure elections, critics and Democratic lawmakers argue that strict documentary mandates create barriers for millions of eligible American citizens who lack immediate access to passports or certified birth certificates matching their current names. — ANI

VIOLATING PRIVACY LAWS



Meta trial over social media harm to children begins

CALIFORNIA: A landmark trial seeking to hold Meta accountable for the alleged harm its social media platforms cause children began in California on Tuesday.

Four US states, California, Colorado, Kentucky and New Jersey, argue the company misled the public about the safety of Instagram and Facebook and deliberately made the apps addictive for minors.

Lawyers for the states also allege Meta is violating privacy laws by routinely collecting data on children under 13 without their parents’ consent.

The states are seeking around \$200 billion (€173 billion) in damages as well as significant changes to Meta’s core platforms.

They are part of a coalition of 29 states that sued the tech giant in 2023 for allegedly building addictive features into its apps.

Opening statements were set to get underway in the federal court in Oakland, a short drive from San Francisco.

Among the star witnesses expected to testify during the proceedings is Meta founder and chief executive Mark Zuckerberg.

Former Meta employee and expert witness Arturo Bejar is also expected to testify, despite the company’s efforts to block his appearance.

According to court documents, lawyers for the states are to question him for three hours about Meta’s safety practices and whether the company publicly misrepresented what it knew.

Eight people are serving on an advisory jury, but the final decision in the case rests with Judge Yvonne Gonzalez Rogers.



What have both sides said about the case?

Kentucky Attorney General Russell Coleman described the case as “the largest consumer protection lawsuit in American history.”

“We’ll show a jury that Meta concealed what it knew about the harm its products cause young people because looking away was more profitable,” he said in a statement.

Meta, meanwhile, said it strongly disagreed with the allegations.

“We are proud of our record in protecting teens on our platforms and the amount of effort that we’ve put into developing protections over the years, even before these cases were ever filed,” the company said.

“We look forward to showing the judge and the jury those facts in court,” it added.

The trial is set to last six to eight weeks, with a verdict expected by October. — DW

ATENEO DE ZAMBOANGA UNIVERSITY

4 killed, 9 injured in shooting incident at high school in southern Philippines

MANILA: Four people were killed and nine others injured in a shooting incident at the Ateneo de Zamboanga University in southern Philippines on Tuesday, according to the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) in the region, according to a media report.

Asper the news report, the victims included two security guards and two high school students, including the suspected shooter, whose identities have been withheld.

The shooter was identified as a male fourth-year high school student whose father reportedly worked at the Zamboanga City Customs Office. He was armed with a Glock 9-millimetre assault rifle (M16).

The Department of Education said it was “gravely concerned” over the shooting and stood with the Ateneo de Zamboanga community during the difficult time, according to the Manila Times.

It said it was “ready to extend whatever support and assistance we can to the affected learners, families, school personnel, and



concerned authorities.”

“We are also coordinating with mental health partners to provide Psychological First Aid and psychosocial support to those affected,” the department said.

According to the news report, the department urged the public to refrain from spreading unverified information and sharing sensitive photos, videos or details about the incident, particularly as minors

were involved. Meanwhile, Ateneo de Zamboanga University said in a Facebook post that its Grade School students were with their class moderators and were safe and accounted for.

The school suspended classes for its Senior High School, while the situation in its Junior High School Department was under control.

The Philippine National Police

(PNP), in an initial report, said it was investigating the background of the Grade 9 shooter and how he managed to bring a pistol and rifle inside the campus.

PNP chief Gen. Jose Melencio Nartatez Jr ordered police to coordinate with school authorities and other concerned agencies to ensure the safety and orderly movement of students, faculty and school personnel.

“The situation is now under control. The PNP likewise encourages parents and guardians to remain calm and follow the school’s advisory, particularly on the designated time and arrangements for picking up their children,” Nartatez said in a statement.

“This will help ensure an orderly process and allow responding personnel to carry out their responsibilities without unnecessary congestion. Authorities are currently establishing the circumstances surrounding the incident,” he added, as per the Manila Times.

— ANI

MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

India, League of Arab States reaffirm commitment to strengthen partnership

CAIRO: Secretary (Consular, Passport and Visa and Overseas Indian Affairs) at the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), Sripriya Ranganathan, met Assistant Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, Amb Khalid Manzalawi, during which both sides reaffirmed their commitment to bolster the India-Arab partnership.

In a post on X, the Indian Embassy in Egypt stated on Monday, “Secretary (CPV and OIA) Ms Sripriya Ranganathan met H.E. Amb Khalid Manzalawi, Assistant Secretary-General of the League of Arab States. Discussions focused on advancing the Executive Programme 2026-28, adopted at the 2nd India-Arab Foreign Ministers’ Meeting, including through concrete initiatives in new and emerging areas of cooperation. Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to further strengthening the India-Arab partnership.”

Earlier, on Sunday, Secretary Ranganathan highlighted the key focus areas of India’s BRICS 2026 Chairship while addressing the



India-Egypt BRICS Partnership Conference. Detailing the engagement on X on Sunday, the Indian Embassy in Egypt stated, “Sripriya Ranganathan addressed the Inaugural Session of the India-Egypt BRICS Partnership Conference, organised by the Indian Embassy in Egypt in collaboration with the Indian Council of World Affairs, at the Diplomatic Club in Cairo.”

The Embassy added, “Secretary Ranganathan highlighted the priorities of India’s BRICS 2026

Chairship and underscored how the India-Egypt Strategic Partnership provides a strong foundation for closer cooperation within BRICS and for advancing the priorities of the Global South.”

Secretary Ranganathan is currently undertaking an official visit to Egypt, Palestine and Lebanon spanning August 16-21.

Outlining the schedule of the visit, the Ministry of External Affairs stated that Secretary Ranganathan will meet her counterparts

alongside key regional stakeholders. “The visit will focus on reinforcing India’s friendly ties with these countries and also offer an opportunity for discussions on regional developments and other issues of mutual interest,” the Ministry stated. The Ministry of External Affairs noted that this marks the Secretary’s maiden visit to the region in her current capacity, which is expected to deepen India’s engagement with these partner nations. — ANI

LIFESTYLE



Centuries-old hunger stones are emerging as Europe's rivers recede. Among the most famous is the Decin hunger stone in the Elbe River with its cryptic message

HUNGER STONES:

The history behind ‘if you see me, weep’

As Europe's rivers recede during periods of drought, long-hidden traces of the past have resurfaced. Alongside Nazi-era shipwrecks, unexploded World War II bombs and prehistoric mammoth remains, some rivers reveal history literally written in stone. One such inscription, in German, reads: "Wenn du mich siehst, dann weine" – "If you see me, weep." These words are etched on a hunger stone in the Elbe River near Decin in Czechia, close to the German border.

Why 'hunger'? Hunger stones, or "Hungersteine" in German, are riverbed boulders that usually stay underwater and hidden, but become exposed when river levels drop significantly during prolonged droughts. Unlike a high-water mark, which records the highest water level, the hunger stone marks the lowest. For centuries, communities carved dates or inscriptions onto these stones whenever the waters of rivers like the Elbe, Danube or Rhine receded dramatically. Some hunger stones bear lists of years, including 1616, 1746 and 1842. In a 2019 study "Extreme Droughts and Human Responses to Them: The Czech Lands in the Pre-Instrumental Period," Czech historian and climatologist Rudolf Brazdil and his colleagues drew on chronicles, administrative records and other documentary sources to examine how drought-affected communities lived long before systematic weather measurements. For people living along rivers such as the Elbe, low water created a host of problems. Barges carrying timber, grain and other goods struggled to navigate shallow channels, disrupting trade along one of Central Europe's vital transport routes. In severe cases, shipping had to be restricted or halted altogether. And drought also meant crop failure, rising prices – and hunger.

More than just drought memorials While hunger stones were often treated as symbolic reminders of drought, they've proven to be more than that. A 2020 study published in the journal *Climate of the Past* found that many of the dates and markings on Elbe hunger stones closely matched documented periods of exceptionally low water. The researchers concluded that many of the inscriptions were intended to record how low the river had fallen, rather than merely commemorate drought years. The study also documented drought year markings on the Decin stone dating back to at least the 16th century, underscoring that the famous inscription "If you see me, weep" of 1904 represents only one chapter in the hunger stone's much longer history.

A doomsaying stone? Yet, its fame lies mainly in its seemingly foreboding message. Even its sighting during the more recent European droughts of 2020 and 2022 inspired media coverage, describing its message as "chilling", "grim" or a "harbinger of hard times." In his 2019 study "Die Botschaft der Hunger-



steine" (or "The Message of the Hunger Stones"), Bernd Gross drew on newspaper reports, postcards and local historical records to reconstruct the history of the Decin hunger stone and noted that its inscription may have been inspired by an older one. Gross cited newspaper reports from the 1890s that described a hunger stone near Techovice, upstream from Decin, that reportedly bore German inscriptions such as: "We cried – We cry – And you will cry." The man most often associated with the Decin stone's inscription is F. Mayer, a local innkeeper and boatman and member of the Elbe shipping community. According to Gross, Mayer had the now-famous phrase carved onto the stone during the drought of 1904, dated July 18, along with his name.



A celebrity of its time At the time, newspapers referred to it as the Bodenbach or Tetschen hunger stone, after the neighbouring towns that today form part of Decin. They reported on the exposed stone and its message, while contemporary accounts described thousands of visitors who went to see it. Postcards featuring the hunger stone also circulated widely, spreading awareness of the site far beyond the Elbe Valley. The *Reichenberger Zeitung*, in circulation from 1860 to 1938, reported on August 28, 1904: "Day after day, groups gather on the rock; everyone wants to set foot on it at least once. However, the markings carved into the sandstone are likely to lose their visibility due to this frequent trampling." Visitors were reportedly intrigued not only by the inscription but also the earlier dates carved into the rock, recording drought years stretching back centuries.

The stone that nearly disappeared Ironically, the drought of 1904 that put the Decin stone and its inscription on the map very nearly caused its destruction. Local river authorities decided to remove rocks and other obstacles from the Elbe to improve navigation, and Gross' study states that there were concerns that the Decin hunger stone could be removed as well. Following the intervention of the Tetschen Boatmen's Cooperative, which petitioned the imperial authorities, the stone was spared. News reports stated that officials agreed to route planned river works around it in order to preserve what was already regarded as a historic landmark of the Elbe. And while other obstacles were removed from the river, the Decin hunger stone survived. The stone's story did not end there. When another severe drought exposed it in 1911, Mayer's famous inscription was reportedly carved again, this time more deeply. Later in 1938, a Czech inscription was added alongside the older markings. Together, these dates and inscriptions chart centuries of the stone's history and its role as a marker of exceptionally low water levels on the Elbe. - **dw**



Zverev escapes late drama to fend off Atmane in Cincinnati

The 29-year-old German sealed victory in two hours and nine minutes against the Frenchman

CINCINNATI: Alexander Zverev advanced to the fourth round at the Cincinnati Open Monday, when he navigated a late twist to overcome Terence Atmane 7-6(4), 7-6(8).

The top seed held two match points at 6/4 in the second-set tie-break. Atmane erased the first with a blistering ace out wide, and Zverev committed a double fault on the second one to level the tie-break at 6/6.

The 29-year-old, however, steadied himself, reeling off the next two points to seal a straight-sets victory in two hours and nine minutes.

The 2021 champion was pushed to three sets by Cameron Norrie in his opening match at the ATP Masters 1000 event but avoided the trend against Atmane, even though Frenchman disrupted Zverev's rhythm with his lefty forehand and solid serving.

But Zverev's ability to stay composed in the key moments proved decisive. The German improved to 2-0 in the pair's head-to-head series with the win.

"Really a step up from my first match," Zverev said. "Atmane played amazing tennis, incredibly aggressive, unbelievable serve, hitting forehands all over the court. I am happy to be through in straight sets."

Zverev, the No.3 player in the



ATP Rankings, suffered an opening-round exit to Tallon Griekspoor at the Masters 1000 event in Montreal two weeks ago and is aiming to bounce back from that disappointment in Cincinnati.

The German has reached at least the semi-finals in each of his past four appearances at the tournament.

Atmane, who made a surprise run to the semi-finals in Cincinnati last year, was seeking the biggest win of his career.

The 24-year-old was also aiming to earn the fourth Top-10 victory of his career.

The next test for Zverev in Cincinnati will be a fourth-round clash with American Tommy Paul. The 18th-seeded Paul rallied past Adolfo Daniel Vallejo 3-6, 6-3, 6-4 in two hours and 17 minutes.

With the triumph, the 29-year-old advanced to Round of 16 at the Masters 1000 level for the second time this season, following his run to the last eight in Miami.

In other action, Arthur Fils survived a major test from Jiri Lehecka to upset the ninth seed 6-1, 6-7(7), 6-3.

Fils held a match point at 7/6 in the second-set tie-break before Lehecka fended it off to force a third set. The Frenchman eventually overcame the wobble to seal the win in two hours and one minute. With the victory, Fils improved to 4-2 in the pair's rivalry, having earned three of those victories this year.

Fils will next face fifth seed Alex de Minaur, who also survived some drama of his own earlier in the day to defeat Arthur Fery 7-5, 7-6(3).

In a match that was thrice disrupted by rain delays, the Australian held a comfortable 5-1 lead in the second set, before Fery reeled off six consecutive games to go ahead 6-5. But De Minaur held his nerve and stormed through a watertight tie-break to seal a straight-sets triumph.

Spanish teen Rafael Jodar dom-

inated Alejandro Tabilo of Chile 6-2, 6-1 and next faces Roland Garros finalist Flavio Cobolli.

The Italian rallied from a break down in the third set to beat Alexander Blockx 7-5, 4-6, 7-5.

"A Masters 1000 is something I dreamed of as a kid," 12th-seeded Jodar said. "I'm grateful for the position I'm in now."

Argentine Thiago Tirante, who ousted Novak Djokovic earlier, defeated Spain's Martin Landaluce 7-6 (7/5), 7-6 (7/4). - Agencies

CINCINNATI OPEN



Rybakina struggles past Frech; Swiatek rallies past Sakkari

CINCINNATI: Elena Rybakina needed two hours on court plus two one-hour rain interruptions to defeat Magdalena Frech 6-4, 7-6 (2) on Monday and reach the fourth round at the ATP-WTA Cincinnati Masters.

The second-seeded Kazakh admitted she struggled to close out a match which dragged on for much of the afternoon. The players were forced off court after nine games of the first set and again in the seventh game of the second.

Upon the second return at the start of a week when rain is repeatedly forecast, two-time Grand Slam champion Rybakina was unable to wrap it up on three match points against the Frech serve in the 12th game.

With the Pole holding serve, the match went to a tie-breaker, where the seed finally got the job done on her fourth chance to get off court barely 10 minutes before

more weather arrived. "It was a crazy day, to be honest, coming out every time into clouds and humidity," Rybakina said. "I felt that I was on top of the ball in the tie-break, but it was a difficult one."

"I had the opportunities on the three match points but when you are tired it's difficult to keep concentration."

"I'm happy the tie-break went my way, I just tried to win as many points as I could."

Former world No.1 and defending champion Iga Swiatek was able to go through hours before the poor weather, turning the tables after losing the first set in defeated Maria Sakkari 4-6, 6-1, 6-1.

The Polish seventh seed, who won the Toronto title last week, improved to 6-4 over her Greek opponent, heading to the changing rooms after dropping the first set and returning as if another player.

Swiatek, winner of six Grand Slam titles including the US Open four years ago, only lost two more games after her remarkable turnaround.

The seventh seed needed two hours to complete her reversal in form, saving seven of eight break points while breaking Sakkari five times. The Greek hit the net with a return on Swiatek's first match point. "It's hard to analyse this match," Swiatek said. "I was playing good in the first set but I lacked precision, I was playing too much to her."

"After that I wanted to push her and not give so many opportunities. I'm happy it started working in the second set I played a bit better. "She made mistakes and the momentum changed a little bit."

Swiatek moved into a match against Diane Parry, winner of an all-French battle with Lois Boisson 4-6, 6-4, 6-3. - Agencies

Williams sisters lose on doubles return

CINCINNATI: Serena and Venus Williams lost a thriller at the Cincinnati Open in their first doubles match together for four years.

The American pair were beaten 6-2 1-6 10-8 by Marta Kostyuk and Peyton Stearns in front of a packed crowd.

The sisters last played together at the 2022 US Open, which was Serena's final tournament before she "evolved away" from tennis.

However, the 44-year-old made her return first in doubles in June before playing singles at Wimbledon as a wildcard.

Serena picked up a knee injury in her first-round loss to Maya Joint at SW19, ruling her out of a planned doubles return with Venus.

"We've waited a long time to get back on the doubles court. Eventually, we find our way to each other," Venus, 46, said.

"We give each other so much grace and encouragement."

"This is our first time playing together in forever, and I think we're really getting [into] our stride."

Serena was playing her first match since Wimbledon, while Venus has played singles and doubles at three hard-court events in recent weeks.

The pair made a poor start against Ukraine's Kostyuk and American Stearns before shaking off what Serena called "a



little rust" in the second set.

They quickly went down 6-0 in the deciding 10-point tie-break but fought back impressively.

Serena produced two service winners to force the tie-break back on serve, but Kostyuk and Stearns held firm before securing victory on a double fault from Venus.

"I thought it was fun, it was special, it was good," Serena said.

"We were starting to feel it. It was really cool to be able to do this again."

The sisters would need wildcards to play either singles or

doubles at the US Open, which begins on Sunday, August 30.

Serena - who described her knee injury as "a little traumatic experience, but what doesn't kill you makes you stronger" - has only played one singles match since her return.

Venus has lost her past 13 singles matches but has had more success in the doubles, reaching the quarter-finals of the women's tournament in New York last year.

At their peak, they won 14 Grand Slam doubles titles together and three Olympic gold medals. - Agencies

FFE PLANS

Top FIFA official sacked after Infantino plan criticism

ZURICH: FIFA's chief operating officer (CEO) Kevin Lamour has been sacked by the governing body, less than three weeks after he strongly criticised its president Gianni Infantino's aborted plan to sell stakes in competitions to private investors.

In a statement, a FIFA spokesperson would only confirm that "the working relationship between FIFA and Kevin Lamour as Chief Operating Officer has ended on 17 August 2026."

"FIFA thanks Kevin for his two

years of service and wishes him the best of luck for the future."

FIFA's staff were informed of the news in an email by its secretary general Mattias Grafstrom on Monday evening, who told them the organisation and Lamour had "agreed to part ways".

Last month, Lamour described the controversial FIFA Forward Enterprise (FFE) plans as "the project of one person", and said "the time has now come for football political leaders to ask themselves the right questions and



make the right decisions".

He added FIFA's own administration was "deceived" about the now abandoned project.

"Our mission - the mission of the hundreds of passionate, dedicated, and exemplary FIFA employees - is to serve football", he said.

"A president must bring people together, unite them, and inspire them. Today, we are experiencing the opposite."

Lamour acknowledged he had a duty of loyalty to his employer but also to "certain values" and sup-

porting his colleagues.

"If that means I lose my job, then so be it," he added. "I will understand and respect that decision. At least I'll sleep well tonight."

Lamour joined FIFA in November 2024, having previously served as deputy general secretary at UEFA, and was two layers of management below Infantino.

Earlier this month, Infantino received the backing of senior executives in a meeting in Morocco, but BBC Sport was told Lamour was not invited. - Agencies

LETTER CRITICISING FIFA PRESIDENT

Rift deepens as Asia football chief hits back at Qatar in Infantino saga

KUALA LUMPUR: Asian Football Confederation President Sheikh Salman bin Ebrahim Al-Khalifa on Tuesday rejected the Qatar Football Association's assertion that he had exceeded his authority by joining UEFA and CONCACAF in criticising FIFA President Gianni Infantino.

In an unusually forthright letter, the Bahraini administrator also slammed the Qatari federation's decision to prioritise "technicalities" over the defence of the sport, deepening the growing rift within Asian football.

Infantino, who is seeking reelection next year, has faced open revolt after UEFA, the AFC and CONCACAF attacked his conduct and called on him to quit over his aborted bid to bring private investment into FIFA events, including the World Cup.

Last week, Qatar Football Association (QFA) president Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani wrote to the AFC saying neither he nor the federation had been consulted before the three confederations issued their open letter.

Responding to Al Thani, Sheikh Salman said he "categorically denied" he had overstepped his mandate.

"I have both the authority and the responsibility to act decisively to safeguard the AFC and Asian football's position when matters of fundamental importance to ... Asian football arise," he said.

"This is in line with the legal mandate given to me in the AFC's constitution ... Its president has a responsibility to protect the interests and values of the sport.

"In circumstances such as those giving rise to the joint statement,



it would be inconsistent with that responsibility for the AFC to remain silent."

In his letter last week, Al Thani, an AFC Executive Committee member and FIFA Council member, asked the AFC to explain on

what basis it considered itself authorised to speak for its 47 member associations.

Sheikh Salman pointed out that he and other AFC presidents had previously issued public statements on matters of significance

to Asian football, including backing Qatar as the host of the 2022 World Cup in the face of global pressure.

"I do not recall the QFA previously raising any procedural objection when the established protocol served its immediate interests," the 60-year-old added.

"I therefore find it difficult to reconcile the sudden and selective criticism contained in the QFA Letter with the QFA's historical acceptance of this general practice in other circumstances and its benefit from the same."

Qatar and 2030 World Cup co-hosts Morocco were among six Arab national football associations who declared their support for Infantino this month amid FIFA's crisis following the failed private investment proposal. Morocco is not governed by the AFC, but

by the Confederation of African Football (CAF), which has backed Infantino.

Sheikh Salman said the QFA's stance and actions in recent weeks served to "disrupt the unity of Asian football" and undermine the AFC.

"Your admission that your main concern is strictly confined to the process confirms that you have prioritised procedural technicalities over the critical defence of Asian and world football's interests," he added.

Sheikh Salman was voted AFC President in 2013 after a caretaker administration ran the region in the wake of the resignation of Mohammed bin Hammam, a Qatari. Bin Hammam was banned from football activities for life in 2012 for breaking seven articles of FIFA's ethics code. - Agencies

PREMIER LEAGUE

Coventry sign striker Awoniyi from Forest



LONDON: Coventry signed Nigeria striker Taiwo Awoniyi from Nottingham Forest in a deal worth a reported £9 million (\$12 million) on Monday. Awoniyi will link up with Frank Lampard's side in time for their opening game of the Premier League season at champions Arsenal on Friday.

He is Lampard's latest recruit following the signings of Gus Hamer, Carl Rushworth, Loum Tchouaou, Aurele Amenda and Caleb Yirenkyi.

Coventry are back in the Premier League for the first time in 25 years after winning the Championship last season.

"I am very excited about this season, and I can't wait to get started," Awoniyi said.

"I'm really looking forward to working with my new teammates. I have seen how amazing they have been last season, coming up from the Championship.

"They were incredible and now I am just excited to join them."

Awoniyi, capped 10 times by Nigeria, said farewell to the City Ground when he was given a guard of honour by the Forest players during their pre-season friendly against Brest on Sunday.

The 29-year-old spent four seasons at Forest, scoring 23 goals in 103 games in all competitions before losing his place for much of last term.

He was placed in an induced coma in May 2025 after rupturing an intestine when he collided with a post during a game against Leicester.

"Taiwo will always have a special place in the history of Nottingham Forest," the club's owner Evangelos Marinakis said. "He has been one of the defining figures in our journey and given our supporters moments of great joy that will never be forgotten." - Agencies

Aubameyang scores but Deportivo held



Deportivo are back in the top flight for the first time since being relegated, when Clarence Seedorf was the coach, in 2017-18



MADRID: Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang scored on debut but Deportivo La Coruna was held to a 1-1 home draw by Elche as they returned to Spanish La Liga after an eight-year absence on Monday.

Deportivo are back in the top flight for the first time since being relegated in 2017-18, when Clarence Seedorf was the coach.

The 1999-00 La Liga champions, who also reached two Champions League quarter-finals and one semi-final in the early 2000s, have also since spent four seasons languishing in the third tier.

They were promoted last term as La Liga 2 runner-up.

Aubameyang scored Deportivo's first goal back in fine style midway through the opening half, killing fellow new signing Lorenzo Amatuucci's long ball over the top with a magnificent touch before drilling a left-footed strike into the bottom corner.

The 37-year-old former Arsenal and Barcelona striker joined the club from Marseille in July and could be key to their hopes of preserving their La Liga status.

Deportivo could not hang on for victory, though, as Marc Aguado's 76th-minute header grabbed Elche a point.

Espanyol off to a flier

Earlier, Espanyol got off to a good start by beating Levante 3-0 in the Spanish league with a pair of goals from Roberto Fernández in the first weekend of action across Europe's top domestic leagues on Sunday.

La Liga was the first of the main five leagues in Europe to start, less than a month after its national team won the World Cup.

Fernández scored first-half goals and English forward Tyrhys Dolan sealed Espanyol's opening victory at home with a late score.

Also, Racing Santander made

their return to the top flight after a 14-year absence with a 2-2 draw against Villarreal, the third-place finisher last season behind champions Barcelona and second-place Real Madrid.

Barcelona and José Mourinho's Real Madrid won't start their campaigns until next weekend because they had players return late from the World Cup.

Racing led 2-0 at home before Villarreal evened the match with goals a minute apart late in the first half.

Espanyol finished 11th in the league last season after a strong start that kept them near the top of the table early on. They later endured an 18-game winless streak that left them in danger of relegation. Levante barely escaped demotion last season, finishing in 16th place.

Another game had been scheduled for Sunday, Celta Vigo against Osasuna, but it had to be postponed because of a fungus outbreak on Celta's Balaidos field. It was rescheduled to August 27 despite complaints by Osasuna.

Two games took place on Saturday. Alaves defeated 10-man Getafe 3-0 and Sevilla rallied to beat Rayo Vallecano 2-1. - Agencies

SPANISH LA LIGA CHAMPIONS



Rodri: 'It's a dream to play for Barca'

MADRID: Spain's World Cup-winning captain Rodri arrived in Barcelona on Monday to seal his transfer from Manchester City, saying it's a dream to play for the Catalan club.

Rodri was expected to undergo a medical on Tuesday as Barcelona and City exchanged documentation to finalise the agreement.

Spanish La Liga champions Barcelona agreed to a deal worth 76.5 million euros (\$88.5 million).

"Very happy to arrive. There have been some very intense days, but I'm happy that everything has been resolved," Rodri told reporters briefly. "For me it's a dream to play for Barcelona. I'm excited about being with my teammates, many of them I already know. Now it's time to get to work and give my best."

The 30-year-old Rodri helped Spain secure their second World Cup title last month and will join international team-mates Lamine Yamal, Dani Olmo, Pau Cubarsí, Gavi and Pedri at Barcelona.

Rodri won the Golden Ball as the World Cup's best player. He had one year left on his contract at City. His deal with Barcelona reportedly will go until 2030.

Real Madrid were also reportedly interested in signing Rodri, and he had loudly praised the Barcelona rival in the past.

Hansi Flick's Barcelona, chasing a three-peat in La Liga, have already boosted their squad with England forward Anthony Gordon, who will help to make up for the departures of Robert Lewandowski and Ferran Torres, who scored the winning goal in

extra time in the World Cup final against Argentina.

The club is also set to add defender João Cancelo in the next few days.

Rodri joined City from Atletico Madrid in 2019. He scored the winning goal in the Champions League final victory over Inter Milan in 2023, and won the Ballon d'Or as the world's best player the following year after being part of Spain's European Championship-winning team.

His departure further weakens City's midfield, with Bernardo Silva having left for Real Madrid this off-season. Rodri did not play on Sunday in City's 3-0 defeat to Arsenal in the Community Shield. He is recovering from minor back surgery he underwent after the World Cup. - Agencies

ROUND-UP

Sohar International establishes inovation hub at Terminal 11 to support fintech growth as the exclusive banking partner

The agreement was signed at Sohar International’s headquarters by Abdulwahid Al Murshidi, Chief Executive Officer of Sohar International, and Abdullah Al Badi, Chief Executive Officer of Terminal 11

MUSCAT: Sohar International has signed a strategic partnership agreement with Terminal 11 – an innovation hub that connects startups, corporates, investors, and government to develop, test, and scale solutions across regional and global markets. Initiated by the private sector in partnership with the Oman Investment Authority. The agreement was signed at Sohar International’s headquarters by Abdulwahid Al Murshidi, Chief Executive Officer of Sohar International, and Abdullah Al Badi,



Chief Executive Officer of Terminal 11, in the presence of executive management representatives from both organisations. Through this partnership, the bank is establishing Sohar | Innovation Hub at Terminal 11 to empower fintech ventures with the banking enablement, strategic partnerships, and institutional support needed to transform bold ideas into market-

ready solutions. Commenting on the initiative, Abdulwahid Al Murshidi, Chief Executive Officer of Sohar International, said: “The future competitiveness of economies will increasingly be defined by their ability to cultivate innovation, foster collaboration, and create enabling ecosystems where ideas can evolve into scalable businesses.

As Oman advances its ambitions under Vision 2040 to become a regional center for innovation and digital finance, partnerships such as this play a pivotal role in building a vibrant fintech ecosystem that attracts talent, accelerates entrepreneurship, and strengthens the nation’s digital economy. Realising this vision requires strong collaboration between financial

institutions, government entities, investors, regulators, and entrepreneurs to collectively shape an ecosystem where innovation can thrive. By supporting fintech innovation today, we are helping build a more resilient, diversified, and globally competitive financial sector for the future. At Sohar International, we see our role extending beyond banking to serving as a strategic enabler of innovation, empowering entrepreneurs with the capabilities, partnerships, and financial infrastructure needed to transform ideas into solutions that deliver lasting value for Oman.” At the heart of the initiative is Sohar | Innovation Hub, a dedicated space designed to bridge the gap between innovation and financial services. More than a physical workspace, it is a co-creation environment where fintech founders, technology entrepreneurs, and emerging ventures gain direct access to banking expertise, regulatory guidance, financial infrastructure, and institutional collaboration. By working alongside innovators from the earliest stages of product development, the bank aims to simplify market entry, accelerate growth, and strengthen the commercial readiness of new financial solutions. Supporting ventures from early-stage startups to growth-stage fintechs, the hub provides a collaborative platform where entrepreneurs can fast-track product development through expert guid-

ance, scale with tailored banking solutions, connect with regulators, investors, and strategic partners, and launch innovative solutions with the confidence of an established financial institution behind them. This reflects Sohar International’s commitment to enabling innovation not only through financial services, but through meaningful partnerships that foster sustainable growth across the fintech ecosystem. Terminal 11 represents an important milestone in strengthening Oman’s innovation landscape by creating an innovation hub that connects startups, corporates, investors and government to develop, test and scale solutions into regional and global markets. By bringing together the public and private sectors, innovators, and industry leaders under one roof, the initiative reinforces the Sultanate’s commitment to building a more agile, technology-driven, and globally competitive economy. Applications to join Sohar | Innovation Hub are now open, inviting fintech founders, startup entrepreneurs, and technology innovators to become part of a collaborative ecosystem designed to accelerate growth, foster partnerships, and shape the future of financial innovation in Oman. Together with Sohar International, innovators will gain access to a platform that empowers them to transform ideas into impactful solutions.

NEW CAR ARCHITECTURE

The all-new BMW iX3 brings the Neue Klasse to Oman

MUSCAT: Al Jenaibi International Automobiles, the official importer for BMW in Muscat, Oman today unveiled the all-new BMW iX3, the first series-production model of the Neue Klasse, a new car architecture that will underpin the next generations of BMW models. The name is intentional: in 1962, the original Neue Klasse defined the modern sports sedan and shaped BMW’s identity for the next six decades. Today, the all-new BMW iX3, a fully electric Sports Activity Vehicle (SAV), opens a new chapter of Sheer Driving Pleasure with a distinctive new design language that reflects the technological progress of the Neue Klasse. Built on sixth-generation BMW eDrive technology, the iX3 offers up to approximately 805 km of range (WLTP) and a peak charging rate of 400 kW, roughly ten minutes of charging is enough for a further 300–370 km. A new electronic architecture built around four high-performance “superbrain” computers processes data up to 20 times faster than before, while the all-new BMW Panoramic iDrive projects key information across the base of the windscreen for every occupant. “The iX3 represents far more than one single model,” said Rachid Zamani, Managing Director of Al Jenaibi International Automobiles “It marks the beginning of a new era, and a reminder that reinvention, for BMW, is earned. BMW built the Neue Klasse before. For our customers in Oman, that means the excitement of something genuinely new, with the confidence of a brand whose promises have lasted decades.” Sustainability is engineered in rather than added on: the iX3 is made up of around one-third secondary (recycled) materials, part of BMW’s circular-design approach across the vehicle’s life cycle. On the road, the new “Heart of Joy” control unit and BMW Symbiotic Drive bring more than



a century of driving-dynamics expertise into the electric era. The Heart of Joy looks after drivetrain and driving dynamics management. This high-performance control unit is responsible for the drivetrain, brakes, energy recuperation and steering subfunctions, and processes information up to ten times faster than conventional control units. In this way, the potential of electric mobility in terms of instantaneous power delivery, smooth power transfer, agility, stability and efficiency is utilised to the full. Together with the BMW Dynamic Performance Control software stack developed fully in-house, the Heart of Joy calculates all the driving dynamics parameters with a new level of speed and precision. Here, the decades of experience of BMW in the field of driving dynamics control come

to the fore. The driver and passengers in the new BMW iX3 experience a uniquely harmonious and BMW-typical driving feeling whatever the situation and speed. Every movement of the accelerator, brake pedal and steering is executed directly and with assurance and precision. Supreme traction and – thanks to the unique Soft Stop function – the smoothest stopping process ever achieved by a BMW are among its other attributes. In addition, the efficiency of the new BMW iX3 is optimized by the integrated management of drivetrain, braking system and energy recuperation. In everyday driving, 98 per cent of braking maneuvers are carried out using recuperation only, i.e. without application of the friction brakes. For more information, visit the BMW Oman showroom in Qurum or call 80050008.

STRATEGY REPORT

India’s capital inflows to rise around \$120 billion in FY2027

NEW DELHI: India’s capital account flows could rise sharply to around \$120 billion in FY2027 from just \$2 billion in FY2026, led largely by higher banking capital and external commercial borrowings, according to a Kotak Institutional Equities strategy report. “We estimate capital account flows to jump sharply from \$2 bn in FY2026 to around \$120 bn in our base case in FY2027,” the August 16 report said. Kotak expects banking capital to account for the bulk of these flows, with \$80 billion projected under this category, including \$70 billion through Foreign Currency Non-Resident Bank, or FCNR(B), deposits. External commercial borrowings (ECBs) are estimated at \$20 billion. The increase would be “largely led by (1) \$80 billion in banking capital (\$70 billion in FCNR (B) deposits) and (2) \$20 billion in ECBs,” the report said. Kotak said the sharp improvement in capital flows could help offset pressure from India’s weaker current account and support the country’s overall balance of payments (BoP) position in FY2027. The sharp increase in capital flows could strengthen India’s overall balance of payments position. In its base-case scenario, Kotak estimates India could post a BoP surplus of \$61 billion in FY2027, even as the current account deficit widens. “India’s BoP may be paradoxically quite strong in FY2027, through an improvement in capital flows, that may offset the weak CAD,” the report said. The report estimates India’s current account deficit at 1.2 per cent of GDP in its base-case scenario for FY2027, compared with 0.6 per cent, or \$25 billion, in FY2026. The base case assumes an average crude oil price of \$85 per barrel. While capital account flows are expected to rise sharply, Kotak said India’s net foreign direct investment flows could remain subdued. “India’s net FDI flows may remain soft, amid (1) likely elevated PE/VC outflows and (2) likely high overseas investment by Indian companies,” the report said. The report’s data showed that



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net FDI inflows have moderated sharply in recent years as gross outflows increased. Net FDI inflows stood at \$6.9 billion in FY2026, compared with \$44 billion in FY2021. Foreign portfolio investment flows, meanwhile, could remain volatile. “FPI flows may remain volatile, depending on the relative risk-reward of India versus other markets,” Kotak said. However, it noted some improvement in FPI flows to India over the past two months, led by debt flows on expectations of inclusion in the Bloomberg Global Aggregate Index and moderate equity inflows. Kotak’s broader assessment is that the improvement in capital flows could provide support to India’s external position at a time when higher energy import costs and a wider current account deficit remain risks to the economy. – ANI



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