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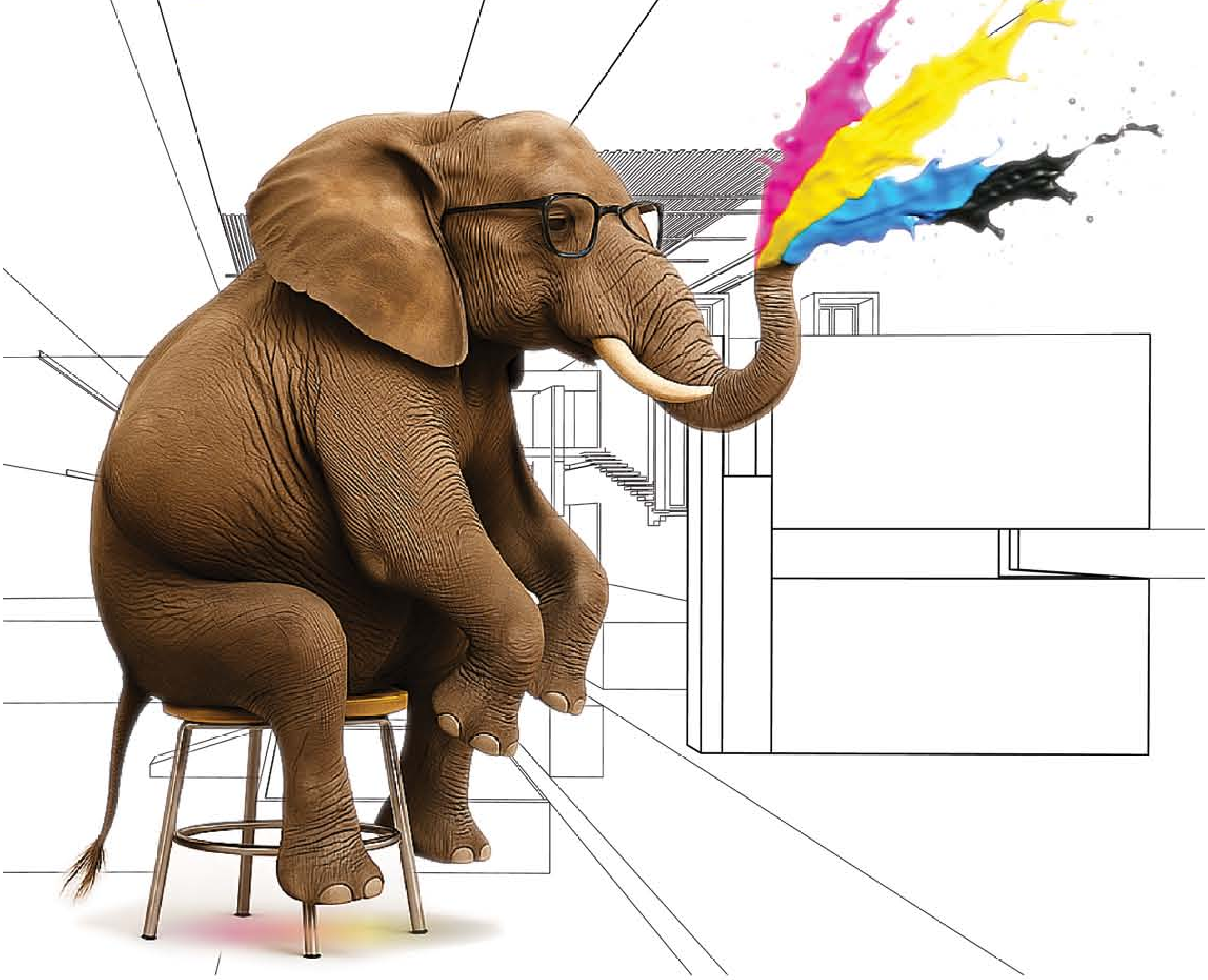

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Times of Oman

GOLDEN JUBILEE

51 YEARS OF LEGACY

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NEW PHASE IN RELATIONS

CEPA to boost Omani products' presence in Indian market

MUSCAT: The Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) between Oman and India marks a new phase in economic relations between the two countries, focusing on expanding bilateral trade, improving market access and encouraging investment.

The CEPA aims to increase the volume and diversity of goods and services traded between Oman and India while creating more favourable conditions for businesses and investors in both markets.

A key component of the agreement is the reduction or elimination of customs duties on qualifying products. Under the agreed tariff schedule, Indian-origin goods that satisfy the rules of origin and fall under Category A are eligible for customs-duty exemptions from the date the agreement entered into force.

For Category B products, duties will be phased out over five years, reaching zero on June 1, 2030. Category C products will undergo reductions over 10 years, with tariffs reaching zero on June 1, 2035. Certain special, prohibited and protected products remain outside the preferential tariff arrangements.

The tariff concessions are expected to lower trade costs and improve the competitiveness of products in both markets.

For Omani companies, the agreement provides preferential access to India's large consumer and business market, creating opportunities to increase exports and strengthen the presence of Omani products.

The CEPA also addresses non-tariff barriers through measures aimed at simplifying customs procedures, improving transparency and facilitating the movement of goods across borders.

Businesses seeking preferential treatment must provide the required supporting documents, including a commercial invoice, bill of lading, a request for preferential treatment and a valid certificate of origin issued in accordance with the agreement. Certificates of origin are generally valid for 12 months from their date of issue.

The agreement also sets out rules for the direct shipment and transit of goods. Products passing through third countries may retain preferential eligibility provided they remain under customs control, are not released for domestic consumption and are not substantially processed in the transit country, while meeting the required documentation conditions. Beyond trade in goods, the CEPA provides a broader framework for investment and cooperation in strategic areas, including energy, technology and manufacturing. >A3

CABLE

HM the Sultan congratulates President of Hungary

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Dr. András Baka of Hungary, on the occasion of his country's National Day.

In the cable, His Majesty extended his sincere felicitations and best wishes to President Baka and the people of Hungary. His Majesty wished the relations of cooperation between Oman and Hungary further progress across various domains. – ONA

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN

Oman Air seeks travellers contacts

1 Oman Air has introduced a new need for passengers to provide their own contact details with every booking so that travellers can receive timely updates directly from the airline during delays. >A3

SPORTS

India beat Sri Lanka by 165 runs in Galle Test

2 All-rounder Manav Suthar produced a match-winning spell as India secured a 165-run victory over Sri Lanka on the fifth day of the first Test at the Galle International Stadium. >A8

MARKET

Sohar port cargo handling increases

3 Sohar Port and Freezone, Oman's integrated port and freezone, delivered sustained operational performance during the H1 of 2026, recording total cargo throughput of 52MMT. >B1

OVER 33,000 SEATS OFFERED FOR ADMISSIONS IN THE FIRST ROUND

Cut-off scores for admissions at the Sultan Qaboos University were higher for females compared to males

MUSCAT: The Higher Education Admission Centre at the Ministry of Education on Wednesday announced the results of the first admission round for the 2026/2027 academic year for General Education Diploma holders and their equivalents.

A total of 33,031 students have received academic offers, representing 70.4% of the total successful applicants, which numbered 46,934. Students were notified of their results via SMS and directed to review their admission outcomes and the latest competitive cut-off scores for all programs to which they had applied through the student registration portal of the admission system, should they wish to do so.

Ahmed Mohammed Al Azri, Director General of the Higher Education Admission Centre, said that the indicators from this first admission round reflect a notable expansion in available admission opportunities for General Education Diploma graduates.

He noted that the total number of available academic seats reached 34,113, marking a year-on-year growth rate of 17%.

This expansion coincided with a rise in the number of students receiving offers—from 27,537 in the first round of last academic year to 33,031 this year, an increase of 5,494 offers and a growth rate of approximately 20%.

He said that over 7 out of every 10 eligible applicants securing an offer in the first round demonstrates the level of admission opportunities available, with continued competition for vacant seats in subsequent admission stages.

He explained that the admission offers were distributed across government higher education institutions, domestic scholarships and grants at private higher education institutions, and external scholarships and grants.

Government institutions claimed the largest share with 17,430 offers, accounting for 52.8% of the total, followed by domestic scholarships and grants with 14,950 offers (45.3%), and external scholarships with 651 offers (approximately 2.0%).

The Director General reported that the round's results left 1,082 seats unfilled, representing 3.2% of the total available seats, due to the insufficient number of applicants meeting the admission requirements for certain programmes. >A5

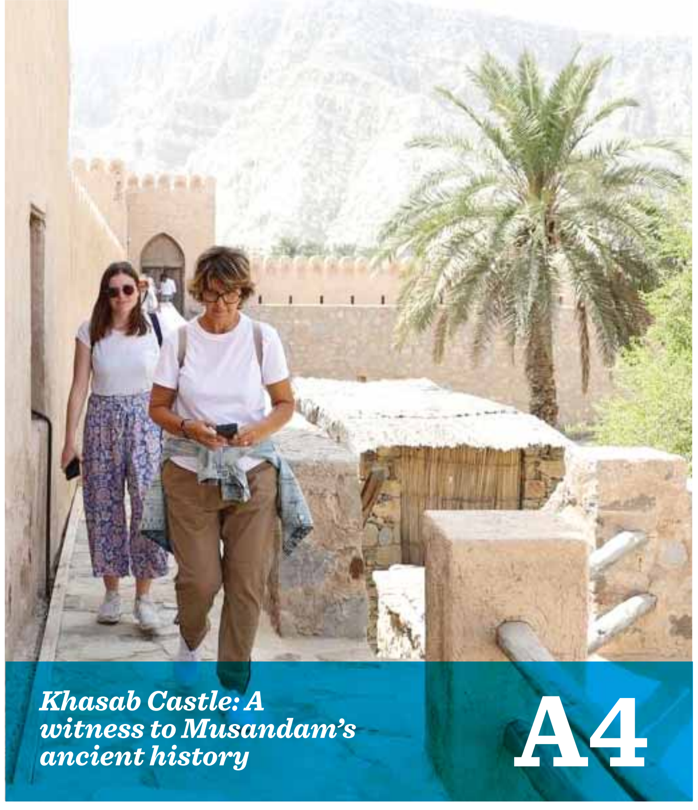
AIR SPORTS

Oman suspends paragliding activities after Dhofar mishap

MUSCAT: The Oman Air Sports Committee (OASC) has announced the immediate suspension of all paragliding and gliding activities across the Sultanate until further notice, following a tragic accident in Dhofar Governorate that claimed the lives of Captain Ahmed bin Hamdan Al Kalbani and his sister.

The committee said the decision was taken in coordination with the relevant government authorities and applies to all types of gliding operations at authorised locations across Oman.

OASC urged all practitioners, clubs and air-sports enthusiasts to fully comply with the suspension, stressing that the measure is aimed at ensuring public safety and adherence to the national regulatory framework governing air sports. In a statement, the committee expressed its condolences over the deaths of Captain Ahmed bin Hamdan Al Kalbani and his sister following the accident in Salalah. It prayed for God's mercy upon the deceased and patience and solace for their family. The suspension comes as Dhofar was hosting the week-long Air Sports Village event, which began on 12 August and ran until August 17, 2026. The event was organised by the Oman Air Sports Committee in cooperation with the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism.



Khasab Castle: A witness to Musandam's ancient history

A4

Omantel

OMAN TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMPANY (S.A.O.G)

Chairman's Report and Unaudited Condensed Consolidated Financial Results for the Period Ended 30 Jun 2026

Respected Shareholders,

We are pleased to present to you a summary of the results of the operations for the six-month period ended 30th June 2026.

The Group delivered broad-based Revenue growth of 5.7%, reaching RO 1705.8 million, with increases across key operating markets.

Group net profit after tax rose 73.5% to RO 292.8 million. The increase is primarily due to positive EBITDA performance and higher investment income from Zain Group. The net profit for the first half of 2026 includes gains of RO 159 million from strategic investments executed by Zain Ventures which manages Zain Group's investment portfolio.

Net profit attributable to shareholders of the Company for the period stood at RO 58.6 million compared to RO 36.6 million in 2025, an increase of 60.1%.

Earnings per share also improved to RO 0.078 for the first six months of 2026, compared to RO 0.049 in the same period last year, further reflecting the robustness of our financial performance.

At the domestic level revenues reached RO 357.2 Mn in the first six months ended June 2026 compared to RO 321.3 Mn for the corresponding period in 2025, an increase of 11.2%.

This growth was underpinned by strong performance across the core telecom business, ICT and Emerging Tech, reflecting consistent progress in implementing the TechCo strategy and diversifying income sources.

Normalized net profit attributable to shareholders of the Company for the six months ended 30 June 2026 stood at RO 31.8 million, compared to RO 34.7 million in the corresponding period of 2025.

The decline is primarily related to an increase in depreciation and amortization which reflects our robust capital and strategic investments that are aimed at supporting long-term growth, enhancing customer experience, strengthening operational resilience, and driving sustainable value creation.

During the first half of 2026, Omantel accelerated its strategic transformation, reinforcing its position as the primary catalyst for Oman's national digital ecosystem. Our commitment to disciplined execution and long-term value creation was recognized at the Oman Investment Authority (OIA) Excellence Awards, where the Company earned both the Performance and Financial Sustainability Award and the Social Investment Award.

To lead the Sultanate's digital transition, we operationalized the Omantel AI Centre of Excellence alongside the AI Startups Program. This framework acts as a commercial accelerator, driving practical AI adoption, nurturing local Omani tech ventures, and deploying market-ready intelligence across strategic sectors.

Furthermore, in alignment with national priorities, Omantel continues to partner with Enterprise customers to deploy Oman's modernized network, providing the high-bandwidth, low-latency foundation required for automated logistics, operational real-time tracking, and continuous modernization.

Thanks and Appreciation.

We take this opportunity to express our heartfelt gratitude to our shareholders and loyal customers for their continued support, which enabled us to achieve these excellent results. We also wholeheartedly appreciate the sincere contribution of executive management and employees to the company's performance in the market's challenging situation. With your support, we are confident that Omantel will continue its good performance and will be able to reach new heights of excellence.

On behalf of the Board of Directors and the staff, we are honored to express our sincere gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq for his visionary leadership. We pray to Almighty Allah to grant him long life, health, and welfare so that Oman and its people can achieve more progress, prosperity, and welfare.

On behalf of the Board of Directors

Chairman of the Board of Directors

Condensed Consolidated Interim Statement of Financial Position as at 30 June 2026 (Unaudited)

	Unaudited	Audited
	30 June 2026	31 December 2025
	RO '000	RO '000
ASSETS		
Current assets		
Cash and cash equivalents	**568,138**	409,498
Bank balances held in customers' account	**54,823**	52,014
Trade and other receivables	**1,644,108**	1,609,144
Contract assets	**164,538**	160,863
Inventories	**79,927**	87,498
Investment securities at amortised cost	**200**	200
Investment securities at FVTPL	**269,589**	111,541
	2,781,323	2,430,758
Assets classified as held for sale	**457,387**	402,429
	3,238,710	2,833,187
Non-current assets		
Contract assets	**109,736**	113,266
Investment securities at FVTPL	**16,780**	17,114
Investment securities at FVOCI	**17,300**	15,990
Investment securities at amortised cost	**600**	800
Investments in associates and joint venture	**188,663**	190,553
Other non-current assets	**85,041**	125,055
Deferred tax asset	**33,560**	32,167
Right of use of assets	**368,156**	369,671
Property and equipment	**2,061,071**	2,182,555
Intangible assets and goodwill	**2,985,155**	3,051,917
	5,866,062	6,099,088
Total Assets	**9,104,772**	8,932,275
LIABILITIES AND EQUITY		
Current liabilities		
Trade and other payables	**1,868,072**	1,979,856
Contract liabilities	**112,065**	109,657
Income tax payables	**48,057**	42,893
Bank borrowings	**450,821**	363,517
Lease liabilities	**65,583**	60,817
	2,544,598	2,556,740
Liabilities of directly associated with assets classified as held for sale	**113,579**	100,780
	2,658,177	2,657,520
Non-current liabilities		
Bank borrowings	**2,562,108**	2,489,230
Lease liabilities	**369,999**	396,808
Contract liabilities	**9,224**	37,270
Other non-current liabilities	**358,035**	365,748
	3,299,366	3,289,056
Equity		
Attributable to owners of the Company		
Share capital	**75,000**	75,000
Owns shares held by liquidity provider	**(99)**	(72)
Reserve on trading in liquidity shares	**(1,205)**	(909)
Reserves	**647,633**	643,388
	721,329	717,407
Non-controlling interests	**2,425,900**	2,268,292
Total equity	**3,147,229**	2,985,699
Total Liabilities and Equity	**9,104,772**	8,932,275

Condensed Consolidated Interim Statement of Profit or Loss – 30 June 2026 (Unaudited)

	Three months ended 30 June		Six months ended 30 June	
	2026	2025 (Restated)	**2026**	2025 (Restated)
	RO '000	RO '000	**RO '000**	RO '000
Revenue	**849,101**	806,775	**1,705,756**	1,614,215
Cost of operations	**(303,171)**	(277,144)	**(613,845)**	(564,430)
Operating and administrative expenses	**(252,500)**	(238,761)	**(512,474)**	(491,702)
Depreciation and amortization	**(149,484)**	(146,428)	**(300,575)**	(291,011)
Allowance for expected credit loss on financial assets	**(10,886)**	(16,414)	**(28,385)**	(27,597)
Interest income	**4,654**	2,864	**8,906**	5,054
Investment income	**110,359**	8,534	**157,657**	27,889
Share of results of associates	**916**	23,342	**1,605**	25,538
Other (expense)/income	**(3,972)**	(1,918)	**4,920**	(15,623)
Gain on disposal of subsidiaries	**-**	24	**-**	24
Finance costs	**(50,099)**	(51,389)	**(97,968)**	(100,641)
(Loss)/gain from currency revaluation	**178**	(908)	**(10,077)**	126
Net monetary gain	**5,586**	2,460	**7,893**	10,978
Profit before income taxes	**200,682**	111,037	**323,413**	192,820
Income tax expenses	**(15,876)**	(13,170)	**(30,653)**	(24,063)
Profit for the period	**184,806**	97,867	**292,760**	168,757
Attributable to:				
Owners of the Company	**37,664**	19,627	**58,544**	36,607
Non-controlling interests	**147,142**	78,240	**234,216**	132,150
	184,806	97,867	**292,760**	168,757
Earnings per share				
Basic and diluted RO	**0.050**	0.026	**0.078**	0.049

Note:
1. The consolidated financial statements are available in Muscat Stock Exchange and the Company's website.
2. The consolidated financial statement will be delivered to any shareholders or other interested party who requests them, within 5 days of the written request. The request must indicate preference for Arabic or English.
3.Request may be addressed to Secretay, Board of Diretors, Omantel P.O. Box 789, P.C. 112, Ruwi Sultanate of Oman, Fax: 242 40 586

COMMENTARY

Why Collective Regulatory Bans Harm Oman's Private Sector

MOHAMMAD AL ZADJALI
Chairman,
Muscat Media Group

Imagine a school with four children from the same family enrolled in different classes. Three of the siblings are top performers—scoring straight A's, adhering strictly to conduct codes, and setting exemplary records. The fourth child, however, is struggling in his class. Instead of guiding or disciplining the failing student directly, the school administration makes a damaging decision: they punish all four siblings. They freeze privileges, block records, and place the three top students on probation, operating under the flawed premise that collective pressure on the family will somehow transform the struggling student into an overnight scholar.

The outcome of such a strategy is predictable. It does not cure the struggling child's academic difficulties, but it deeply demoralizes, stresses, and threatens to fail the three innocent siblings who did everything right.

This schoolyard logic mirrors a growing frustration in Oman's business landscape. Under current Ministry of Labour enforcement mechanisms, when a single investor or minority shareholder has an authoritative role—such as authorized signatory —across multiple distinct Commercial Registrations (CRs) and just one entity struggles with its Omanisation quota, administrative blocks are applied across every company tied to that investor's Civil ID.

Ignoring Legal Autonomy
What makes this practice particularly damaging is that, by Omani commercial law, every single Commercial Registration (CR) is a legally autonomous entity. A company registered under Omani law possesses its own corporate personality, independent financial liability, and distinct operational obligations. Imposing sweeping blocks across all companies linked to an individual holding executive authority or partnership rights directly disregards this statutory independence, undermining legal protections designed to isolate commercial risk.

Guilt by Investment Association
When regulatory bodies apply group-level operational freezes based on shared authority or shareholding, the penalty lands heaviest on thriving, fully compliant enterprises:

Unfair Collateral Damage: Sister companies operating in completely different sectors—which maintain strong Omani employee rosters and observe full regulatory compliance—are suddenly blocked from issuing visas, renewing permits, or completing routine government transactions.

Jeopardizing Existing Omani Jobs: A healthy business unable to clear basic operational transactions loses revenue, directly endangering the stable livelihoods of the Omani workers it already employs.

Forcing Strategic Abandonment: Rather than driving compliance in the struggling business, this policy forces investors to give up their legal roles and authority altogether. To safeguard their healthy ventures, investors are coerced into resigning from management, surrendering authorized signatory status, or liquidating their shares in struggling firms. This leaves the troubled company stripped of experienced leadership and even less capable of ever rectifying its status.

Aligning Job Creation with Macroeconomic Strategy
National workforce development under Oman Vision 2040 is vital, but sustainable job creation cannot rely solely on punitive enforcement by labour regulators. Job creation is an economic outcome driven by business expansion, industrial growth, and commercial health.

Primary responsibility for driving real employment opportunities belongs under the strategic direction of the Ministry of Economy and the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP). When economic policymaking, trade incentives, and commercial development lead the way, genuine jobs naturally follow. Regulatory enforcement should respect legal entity autonomy, isolating non-compliant businesses individually while leaving successful enterprises and their leaders free to build Oman's economic future.

Oman Air seeks travellers' details for timely updates

Under the new advisory dated August 18, all bookings must include a valid and active personal email address and a mobile phone number with the international country code

Times Exclusive

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman Air has introduced a new requirement for passengers to provide their own contact details with every booking, a move aimed at ensuring travellers receive timely updates directly from the airline during delays, schedule changes and other disruptions.

Under the new advisory dated August 18, all bookings must include a valid and active personal email address and a mobile phone number with the international country code.

Passengers are also required to ensure that the contact details provided belong to the traveller or a designated contact person.

The national carrier has made clear that travel agencies or other third parties cannot provide their contact details in place of the passenger's personal information.

The requirement, effective from August 18, is particularly significant for passengers who book their tickets through travel agents. Previously, operational updates could be routed through an agency or intermediary, creating the risk that important information would not reach the traveller quickly.

With the new system, Oman Air will be able to communicate directly with passengers through channels including SMS, WhatsApp and email. This is expected to help travellers respond more quickly when flights are delayed, schedules are changed or alternative travel arrangements become necessary. For passengers, the advisory means that keeping booking information up to date is now more important than ever. A phone number without the correct international country code, an inactive email address or an agency contact in place of the traveller's details could prevent important notifications from reaching the passenger.

The move comes as airlines face growing pressure to provide faster and more direct communication during operational disruptions. For travellers, timely information can make a significant difference, particularly when a last-minute change affects connecting flights, airport transfers or other travel arrangements.

Oman Air is urging passengers to check their booking details and ensure that their personal mobile number and email address are correctly recorded.

The new requirement applies to bookings across the airline's channels and is intended to strengthen direct communication between Oman Air and its passengers, reducing the possibility of information being delayed or lost between the airline, travel agents and travellers.

CEPA

Pact is likely to boost Oman's efforts to diversify economy

< FROM A1

The agreement is also expected to support Oman's efforts to diversify its economy and strengthen non-oil sources of revenue. It is seen as an important instrument for expanding commercial exchange, enhancing regional economic integration and making Oman more attractive to international investors.

Oman's strategic location, ports and logistics infrastructure could further strengthen its role as a gateway between the Gulf, Asian and African markets. This could provide Indian companies with greater opportunities to access regional markets through Oman, while Omani businesses gain improved access to India.

Oman Customs has also introduced digital services enabling businesses to check applicable customs duties and import requirements, including preferential rates available under trade agreements. These services are intended to help companies determine applicable requirements before importing or exporting.

The implementation of the CEPA represents a significant step in the longstanding economic partnership between the two countries. With phased tariff reductions, streamlined customs procedures, preferential market access and expanded investment cooperation, the agreement is expected to strengthen bilateral economic ties and support Oman's broader diversification objectives under Oman Vision 2040.

As implementation progresses, businesses in both countries can make use of the agreement's preferential provisions, subject to applicable rules of origin, product classifications and other requirements.

The pact took effect on June 1, 2026, following Oman's ratification through Royal Decree No. 30/2026, issued on February 15, 2026.

It was signed in Muscat on December 18, 2025, under the patronage of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

CDAA

Fire under control in Al Rustaq

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority in South Al Batinah Governorate is continuing to monitor a fire that broke out among trees and weeds at the summit of a mountain in the Al Madrooj area of the Wilayat of Al Rustaq.

In coordination with the relevant authorities, teams confirmed that there are currently no visible flames at the site.

Field monitoring remains underway to ensure the fire does not reignite and to maintain safety in the area.

COMMENTARY

Oman E-Invoicing: A Defining Moment in the Sultanate's Digital Tax Journey

As Oman continues its ambitious journey toward economic diversification under Vision 2040, digital transformation is no longer confined to government services or private enterprises. It is now reshaping the country's tax ecosystem. The planned introduction of electronic invoicing (e-Invoicing/Fawtara) marks a significant milestone in modernizing tax administration and strengthening the nation's digital economy.

Across the GCC, governments are increasingly adopting technology-driven tax compliance frameworks. Saudi Arabia has successfully implemented e-Invoicing in multiple phases, while the UAE has announced its roadmap for implementation. Oman is now poised to join this regional transformation, reinforcing its commitment to transparency, efficiency, and international best practices.

E-Invoicing is much more than replacing paper invoices with PDF files. It is the structured, electronic generation, exchange, validation, and storage of invoices in standardized digital formats that enable seamless communication between businesses and tax authorities. Such systems improve the authenticity of transactions, reduce manual intervention, and create a reliable audit trail.

For businesses, the benefits extend well beyond regulatory compliance. Manual invoicing processes are often prone to errors, duplication, delayed payments, and reconciliation challenges. E-Invoicing automates these activities, enabling faster invoice processing, improved cash flow management, enhanced accuracy, and lower administrative costs. It also minimizes disputes by ensuring consistency and traceability across the entire procure-to-pay and order-to-cash cycles.

From a government perspective, e-Invoicing enhances tax transparency, reduces opportunities for tax evasion, and enables near real-time visibility into economic transactions. This not only strengthens revenue collection but also improves policymaking through access to reliable and timely economic data.

However, the success of e-Invoicing will depend not only on technology but also on organizational readiness. Many companies mistakenly view e-Invoicing as a simple IT project. In reality, it is an enterprise-wide transformation initiative involving finance, tax, procurement, sales, legal, operations, and information technology. Organizations will need to review invoice formats, master data quality, ERP configurations, business workflows, document retention policies, and integration with customer and supplier systems.

Large enterprises operating multiple ERP platforms or legacy applications may face additional complexity. Businesses with international operations will also need to align their global invoicing practices with Oman's regulatory requirements while maintaining consistency across jurisdictions.

Small and medium enterprises (SMEs), which form the backbone of Oman's economy, stand to gain significantly from e-Invoicing. Cloud-based solutions and software-as-a-service platforms are making digital compliance increasingly affordable and accessible. The transition presents an opportunity for SMEs to improve operational efficiency while embracing digital business practices that support long-term growth.

The implementation journey should begin well before regulatory deadlines. Organizations should conduct readiness assessments, evaluate existing invoicing processes, identify system gaps, engage technology partners, and establish governance structures for implementation. Employee awareness and training will be equally important to ensure successful adoption across business functions.

Technology providers, ERP vendors, tax consultants, and business advisors also have an important role to play in supporting organizations through this transition. Early preparation will minimize implementation risks, reduce business disruption, and allow companies to leverage e-Invoicing as a strategic business enabler rather than viewing it solely as a compliance obligation.

Ultimately, e-Invoicing represents a significant step toward a more connected, transparent, and digitally enabled economy. For Oman, it supports the broader objectives of Vision 2040 by fostering innovation, improving the ease of doing business, and strengthening investor confidence. For businesses, it offers an opportunity to modernize financial operations, improve efficiency, and build resilient digital capabilities.

As the Sultanate prepares for this next phase of tax digitization, organizations that invest early in preparedness will be best positioned to realize both compliance and competitive advantages. E-Invoicing should not be viewed merely as a regulatory requirement—it is a catalyst for business transformation and an important building block in Oman's evolving digital economy.

Khasab Castle: A witness to Musandam's ancient history

Khasab Castle is a historical landmark and is considered one of the most prominent cultural symbols embodying the identity of Musandam Governorate, with its associated maritime and commercial history and traditional social life, holding a special place in the memory of the local community

KHASAB: Khasab Castle represents one of the most prominent historical and heritage landmarks in Musandam Governorate and a living witness to the ancientness of its history, its strategic standing, and the transformations and events the region experienced across different historical eras, alongside what it embodies of cultural identity features and authentic Omani heritage.

Through its architectural details and multiple historical roles, the castle reflects a side of the governorate's history and the local community's connection to its heritage, customs, and traditions. Over various stages, it also contributed to fulfilling defensive, administrative, and social roles before transforming into one of the most prominent cultural and tourist landmarks documenting Musandam's history and heritage.

The standing of Khasab Castle as a historical, cultural, and tourist destination is highlighted by the turnout it receives from visitors.

Statistics from the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, according to the latest recorded data for 2025, indicated that the number of its visitors reached approximately 6,305 visitors until the end of October 2025, prior to its temporary closure to begin restoration and development works aimed at preserving its historical value and enhancing its museum facilities, with plans to reopen it during the first half of 2027, thereby enhancing its role in preserving heritage, introducing Musandam's history and cultural heritage, and consolidating its identity for future generations.

Naufal Mohammed Al Kumzari, Assistant Director of the Heritage and Tourism Department in Musandam Governorate, explained that Khasab Castle is considered one of the most important historical witnesses in the governorate due to its association with the region's history and its strategic role at the entrance to the Strait of Hormuz, noting that the castle underwent multiple historical stages that reflected the importance of Musandam and its location in Omani history.

He stressed that Khasab Castle is a historical landmark and is considered one of the most prominent cultural symbols embodying the identity of Musandam Governorate, with its associated maritime and commercial history and traditional social life, holding a special place in the memory of the local community as a witness to the various historical stages through which the governorate passed.

He pointed out that the castle received attention as part of efforts to preserve national heritage, having been restored in the early 1990s, and subsequently restored and developed again in 2006, converting it into an integrated museum containing a number of heritage and cultural components of Musandam Governorate, including traditional collectibles, handicrafts, maritime tools, and folk costumes that document aspects of the residents' lives across generations, affirming that this role contributed to enhancing the castle's standing as a cultural and tourist center reflecting the governorate's authenticity and heritage.

The Assistant Director of the Heritage and Tourism Department in Musandam Governorate said that the castle houses a museum displaying a side of the cultural and heritage legacy of Musandam Governorate.

It allows visitors to learn about the governorate's history, customs, traditions, and maritime and manual crafts, making it an attractive destination for tourists, researchers, and those interested in Omani heritage, in addition to its location in the city of Khasab and its proximity to several natural tourist assets, which enhances its role in supporting cultural tourism, introducing the civilizational heritage of the governorate, consolidating national identity, and preserving historical legacy for future generations.

Regarding the most prominent architectural and historical elements characterizing the castle, Naufal Al Kumzari explained that Khasab Castle is distinguished by its fortified walls and defensive towers that reflect the historical importance of the region, alongside the central tower, which is considered one of its most prominent architectural elements.

He pointed out that the castle contains internally a number of heritage exhibits documenting the life of Musandam's residents, their customs, and their traditions across generations, alongside unique Omani architectural models, most notably Bait Al Qufl (the lock house) and Al Areesh Al Mualaq (the suspended shade house), which reflect the traditional construction methods that characterized the governorate.

He added that the castle carries within its walls multiple historical stories linked to the stages through which Musandam passed, making it a living witness to the region's history and ancient heritage, and giving visitors an opportunity to learn about aspects of life lived by the governorate's inhabitants across different historical eras.

Naufal Al Kumzari affirmed that Khasab Castle received attention from the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism through the execution of periodic restoration and maintenance works aimed at preserving its authentic architectural character and ensuring its sustainability, noting that among the most prominent rehabilitation and development projects witnessed by the castle was the 2007 project, which included restoring buildings, addressing moisture, and updating several facilities.

He emphasized that the new restoration and rehabilitation works being witnessed by the castle come as part of ongoing efforts to preserve this historical landmark and maintain its architectural and heritage value, ensuring it remains a witness to Musandam's history and civilizational legacy for future generations.

He added that converting the castle into a permanent museum contributed to documenting the history and heritage of Musandam Governorate through displaying archaeological collectibles, traditional crafts, customs, and folk arts, alongside establishing models embodying aspects of traditional life in the governorate.

He pointed to the possibility of utilizing Khasab Castle to a greater extent in enhancing cultural tourism and introducing Omani heritage in Musandam Governorate by organizing heritage and cultural events that reflect the governorate's history, customs, and traditions, including folk performances, handicraft exhibitions, and heritage markets.

He added that holding exhibitions, seminars, and cultural activities at the castle would contribute to highlighting Omani identity, introducing the rich cultural heritage of Musandam Governorate, and enhancing the castle's standing as a prominent tourist and cultural destination.

He stated that Khasab Castle embodies an important aspect of Musandam Governorate's identity through the architectural models, heritage collectibles, maritime tools, traditional crafts, costumes, and folk arts it houses, which reflect the nature of life lived by the governorate's residents across generations.

Naufal Mohammed Al Kumzari explained that preserving Khasab Castle and developing its cultural role is not limited to preserving a historical building, but rather represents an investment in national memory and the protection of cultural identity, ensuring the continued transmission of this legacy to future generations in a living and sustainable manner.

PATRIOTIC FERVOUR

PSM celebrates Pakistan's 80th Independence Day

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Pakistan School Muscat celebrated Pakistan's 80th Independence Day with patriotic fervour, bringing together students, parents, Embassy officials and members of the Pakistani community in Oman.

Syed Naveed Safdar Bokhari, Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to the Sultanate of Oman, graced the ceremony as Chief Guest. He was accompanied by Bilal Hassan, Deputy Head of Mission; Captain Zia Ullah, Defence Attaché; Ishrat Hussain Bhatti, Commercial Attaché; Abdul Mannan Baig, Community Welfare Attaché; Salman Tariq, Visa Counsellor; and Liaquat Ali, Immigration Counsellor.

Addressing the gathering, the Ambassador highlighted the significance of independence and Pakistan's role in promoting regional and global peace.

He paid tribute to Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Pakistan's national leadership, armed forces, martyrs and people for their services and sacrifices.

Ameer Hamza, Chairman of the Board of Directors, spoke about the importance of Independence Day and encouraged the younger generation to contribute to Pakistan's unity, progress and prosperity.

Students presented patriotic songs, speeches and colourful tableaux highlighting the values of unity, faith and discipline. Their performances celebrated Pakistan's freedom and honoured the sacrifices of its founding leaders and martyrs.

The ceremony was attended by Senior Principal Abdul Rahim, Principal Gul Rahim, Vice Chairman Qaiser Nawaz and BOD Director Ms Hajira Khan. Guests of Honour Syed Fayyaz Ali Shah and Mian Muhammad Riaz, along with representatives of the Pakistan Social Club, minority communities and other prominent community members, also attended.

OPF members Akhmat Hayat Raja, Fahad Muneer and Imran participated in the celebration. The programme concluded with a cake-cutting ceremony and an energetic performance of the popular national song "Dil Dil Pakistan."

ZAD initiative to prepare students for study abroad

The initiative begins with a three-day Pre-Departure Orientation that takes place on 3 September until 5 September 2026 at the German University of Technology in Oman

MUSCAT: The Royal Academy of Management (RAM), in partnership with the Ministry of Education, has announced the opening of applications for the ZAD: Promising Omani Leaders Initiative, designed to prepare Omani students for the academic, personal and cultural transition to studying abroad. Applications will be open from 20 to 27 August 2026 to eligible students preparing to pursue their studies overseas.

The initiative begins with a three-day Pre-Departure Orientation that takes place on 3 September until 5 September 2026 at the German University of Technology in Oman (GUtech).

The orientation will provide students with an intensive and interactive introduction to the practical realities of studying and living abroad, helping them prepare for greater independence, new academic and social environments, and the responsibilities that come with beginning their university journey.

During the Pre-Departure Orientation, students will take part in interactive learning sessions and practical activities focused on areas including self-leadership, personal responsibility, decision-making, communication, cultural awareness, financial readiness and adapting to life abroad.

Students will also have opportunities to learn from relevant partners and the experiences of Omani students who have studied overseas.

The Pre-Departure Orientation forms the starting point of a wider learning journey that continues after students begin their studies. Through a blended model combining in-person and virtual learning, ZAD will provide students with continued opportunities to apply what they have learned, reflect on their experiences and strengthen the capabilities needed to navigate their first year of university life.

The initiative reflects the strategic partnership between the Royal Academy of Management and the Ministry of Education, bringing together the Ministry's experience in supporting students and their educational journeys with RAM's expertise in leadership and capability development.

Through this partnership, the initiative aims to strengthen students' readiness for studying abroad while supporting their longer-term personal and leadership development.

Eligible students can apply for the ZAD: Promising Omani Leaders Initiative from 20 to 27 August 2026 through the Royal Academy of Management's website, where further information on the initiative, eligibility requirements and participation arrangements is also available. -ONA

EXECUTIVE EDUCATION

AmCham Oman, Yale University sign pact to expand learning opportunities

Times News Service

MUSCAT: AmCham Oman, the official affiliate of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce in Oman, has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Yale School of Management.

Effective 1 August 2026, the partnership will connect AmCham Oman's 300+ member companies and the wider business community with professional development opportunities from the Yale School of Management Executive Education.

Through the partnership, professionals in Oman will be able to explore executive education programs across leadership, strategy, finance, sustainability, innovation, and global business.

Yale School of Management Executive Education offers online, blended, and in-person learning formats, including programmes delivered at Yale's campus in New Haven, Connecticut.

"Our priority is to create opportunities that bring real value to Oman's business community," said Ali Daud, Founder and Chairman Emeritus of AmCham Oman.

"This partnership gives business leaders and professionals in Oman greater access to the knowledge, ideas, and executive learning opportunities offered by the Yale School of Management.

"We are pleased to help make those opportunities more accessible and look forward to seeing how our members and the wider community benefit from them."

The Yale School of Management was founded with a mission to educate leaders for business and society.

Its Executive Education portfolio serves experienced professionals and senior leaders across a wide range of sectors and disciplines, while the School's broader alumni community includes more than 13,000 people.

The agreement forms part of AmCham Oman's wider work to deepen business, professional, and educational ties between Oman and the United States.

Alongside its trade and investment work, AmCham Oman is also supporting efforts to build stronger connections between Omani institutions and U.S. universities.

For AmCham Oman, the Yale School of Management partnership is a practical step toward bringing more international learning opportunities, ideas, and connections within reach of Oman's business community.

With more than 300 member companies, AmCham Oman works to strengthen commercial ties between Oman and the United States through business networking, trade and investment support, advocacy, and professional engagement.

Yale School of Management Executive Education offers programmes for experienced professionals and senior leaders, drawing on Yale faculty, research, and a cross-disciplinary approach to management and leadership.

Programmes are offered across online, blended, and in-person formats.

CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

Rajasthani Wing marks Teej Utsav

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Rajasthani Wing of the Indian Social Club, Oman, celebrated the festival of Teej with great warmth and enthusiasm through "Teej Utsav", held on 14th August 2026 at Centara hotel, Ghala Muscat.

The celebration brought together lady members of the Rajasthani Wing from across Oman, including Muscat, Barka, Salalah, Sohar and various other regions. Coming together from different parts of the Sultanate, the members created a joyful and welcoming atmosphere filled with laughter, friendship and the spirit of togetherness.

The event featured traditional,cultural activities and festive celebrations, with members beautifully dressed in colorful Rajasthani attire. The occasion offered everyone a chance to reconnect with their roots, enjoy cherished traditions and celebrate the special spirit of Teej together. The celebrations concluded with a sumptuous lunch.

"Teej Utsav" was a celebration of culture, friendship and community, reflecting the strong bond among the Rajasthani women in Oman and the Rajasthani Wing's continued efforts to keep the rich traditions of Rajasthan alive and bring the community closer together.

ADMISSION CENTRE

Vacant seats to be filled in subsequent admission rounds

< FROM A1 He clarified that the utilisation of available seats depends on the alignment of students' qualifications and preferences with programme-specific admission criteria, capacity limits, competitive cut-off scores, and ranking preferences—factors that may result in unfilled seats in some programs even while other students remain without offers in this stage.

He added that the Centre, in coordination with higher education institutions and relevant authorities, will work to fill available seats in subsequent admission rounds in accordance with approved regulations and procedures.

Regarding the most competitive programs, the Director General stated that the results indicated high competitive cut-off scores in medical, health, and education programs, as well as a number of external scholarship programmes.

He noted that the lowest competitive cut-off score for admission to the General Medicine programme at Sultan Qaboos University was 98.15% for males and 99.2% for females; at the National University of Science and Technology, 98.3%; and at Dhofar University, 97.9%. For Oral and Dental Surgery, the cut-off stood at 95.1% for males and 97.55% for females.

In education specialisations, the average lowest accepted competitive score at Sultan Qaboos University was 91.65% for males and 96.05% for females, while at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences it was 91.35% for males and 96.6% for females.

The external scholarship programmes STEM and ESAM recorded cut-off scores of 97.7% and 96.45%, respectively.

On the next steps following the announcement, the Director General urged students to promptly complete their registration procedures at the respective higher education institutions, in line with the mechanisms established for each institution or programme. The registration period begins on Thursday, 20 August, and continues until 12:00 PM on Monday, 24 August 2026.

The Centre advised students not to postpone the completion of their registration until the final hours and to monitor instructions posted on the Center's official website and social media accounts.

It emphasised that failure to complete registration within the specified period will result in forfeiture of the admission offer.

He further noted that the announcement of the first-round results does not mark the end of admission opportunities for students, as the Centre will continue executing subsequent rounds and services according to the approved timeline.

The preference modification service will be open from 27 to 30 August 2026, allowing students to compete for vacant seats that become available during this stage, subject to admission criteria, competitive scores, and approved regulations. The Centre will announce dates for the second round at a later time.

He also explained that the Centre will conduct independent placement processes for second-session students and holders of non-Omani certificates whose final results are released after the first round, ensuring their right to compete under the established mechanisms and procedures.

Regarding the self-financed admission system, he stated that for the second consecutive year, the Higher Education Admission Centre will activate the self-financed admission track, which regulates admission for students wishing to study on a self-financed basis at Sultan Qaboos University and in education specialisation programmes at private higher education institutions in the Sultanate of Oman. The Centre has issued a dedicated guide detailing available programs, conditions, and registration procedures, with registration open from 8 to 10 September 2026.

Al Azri further noted that this year's admission and registration season has witnessed several enhancements to the unified admission system, including streamlining student data management, improving the programme search function and the identification of eligible options, and providing more flexible means for ranking preferences.

These developments were accompanied by awareness and guidance efforts through manuals, visual materials, digital platforms, and various support channels—aimed at equipping students and their families with the necessary information and support throughout the decision-making throughout the registration and admission stages. -ONA

OMAN

MEETING

Oman, Türkiye highlight growing bilateral ties

MUSCAT: Sheikh Khalifa Ali Al Harthy, Undersecretary of the Foreign Ministry for Political Affairs, met yesterday with Musa Kulaklıkaya, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye.

During the meeting, they reviewed the growing bilateral relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Türkiye and ways to enhance and develop them, alongside discussing current developments in the region and exchanging views on a number of regional issues of mutual concern. The meeting was attended by Saif Rashid Al Jahwari, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Republic of Türkiye, Dr. Muhammet Hekimoğlu, Ambassador of the Republic of Türkiye to the Sultanate of Oman, and a number of officials from both sides. — ONA

JOINT COOPERATION

MoC signed to enhance investment awareness and empower SMEs

MUSCAT: Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) and the Oman Academy for Small and Medium Enterprises—affiliated with the SME Development Fund "Inma"—signed a memorandum yesterday to enhance joint cooperation in the fields of investment awareness, training, experience exchange, and supporting and empowering SMEs, thereby enhancing their readiness to leverage the opportunities provided by the Omani capital market. The memorandum comes within the framework of Muscat Stock Exchange's keenness to enhance capital market awareness and expand cooperation with entities supporting the SME and entrepreneurship sector, alongside strengthening the role of the capital market in providing options and opportunities that contribute to supporting the growth of private sector enterprises.

The areas of cooperation between the two sides include executing training programs and awareness workshops in the fields of investment, financial markets, and financial planning, alongside exchanging expertise and information related to financial markets and SMEs, contributing to delivering knowledge-based and practical content tailored to the needs of enterprises and entrepreneurs.

Cooperation also encompasses organising joint events and programs that contribute to elevating the readiness of SMEs and introducing them to the available opportunities in the Omani capital market. Badr Hamoud Al Hinai, Chief Operating Officer at Muscat Stock Exchange, said that this memorandum represents an extension of the exchange's efforts to enhance investment culture and expand the beneficiary base of the capital market ecosystem, including SMEs and entrepreneurs.

He noted that through it, the exchange seeks to foster an understanding of market mechanisms and the opportunities it offers to support enterprise growth and sustainability, as well as elevate their readiness to benefit from available financing and investment options.

He added that this cooperation with Oman Academy for Small and Medium Enterprises comes to exchange expertise and develop training and awareness programs suited to the needs of enterprises across their various growth stages, contributing to empowering them to make more informed financial decisions and enhancing their ability to expand and leverage the opportunities offered by the capital market. — ONA

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'FIG AND OLIVE'

Forum commences in Jabal Akhdar

JABAL AKHDAR: The inaugural "Fig and Olive" Forum commenced yesterday in the Wilayat of Jabal Akhdar, Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, as part of the "Jabal Akhdar Festival 2026" activities.

The forum, organised by the Governorate in partnership with Oman Memory Centre, spans two days and features the participation of a number of researchers and specialists from government and private sector entities.

The opening of the forum was held under the patronage of Dr. Khalfan Said Al Shuaili, Minister of Housing and Urban Planning.

The forum features the presentation of 25 research papers by 24 researchers. The sessions on the first day addressed the history, culture, and heritage of Jabal Akhdar, its documents and manuscripts, its geographical and geological characteristics, natural resources and ecotourism, alongside social, economic, linguistic, and jurisprudential studies.

The sessions on the second day will explore topics related to economy, development, agricultural heritage, natural resources, and tourism, with a particular focus on investment opportunities, local development, agricultural economics, and the integration of research and documentation with the distinctive attributes of Jabal Akhdar, thereby supporting sustainable development while preserving its natural resources.

The forum addresses a number of agricultural products associated with the Jabal Akhdar environment, including olives and pomegranates. One of the papers scheduled for the second day will examine the olive value chain and opportunities for enhancing its efficiency and maximising returns, alongside the integration of inherited local knowledge in the management of agricultural land, water, and natural resources with modern scientific methodologies.

On the sidelines of the forum, Dr. Khalfan Said Al Shuaili, Minister of Housing and Urban Planning inaugurated the accompanying exhibition, which will run for one month. The exhibition features photographs, manuscripts, and artefacts documenting various aspects of Jabal Akhdar's history, environment, architecture, agriculture, and cultural and social heritage, with contributions from a number of institutions and specialists.

According to statistics from the National Centre for Statistics and Information, the number of visitors to Jabal Akhdar from January to the end of June 2026 reached approximately 101,608 visitors, compared to 89,780 visitors during the same period in 2025, representing an increase of 13.2 percent. — ONA

Iran's Ghalibaf stresses regional cooperation during visit to Iraq

Iranian Parliament Speaker called for greater cooperation among countries in the region, saying, "Islamic countries in the region should go after cooperation"

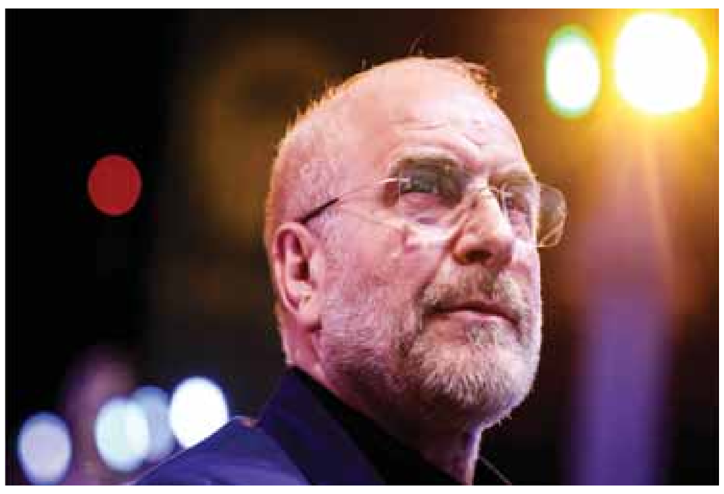
BAGHDAD: Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Ghalibaf on Wednesday said that the "resistance is now global" and called for greater cooperation among regional countries during his visit to the memorial site of Iranian General Qassem Soleimani and Iraqi commander Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis in Baghdad, Iranian news agency Press TV reported.

Ghalibaf said the site where Soleimani and al-Muhandis were killed had become a symbol of the confrontation between "truth and falsehood" and credited the two commanders with helping defeat ISIS in the region.

"The resistance is now global," Ghalibaf said, according to Press TV, adding that believers in Iran and Iraq would continue "the path of Soleimani and al-Muhandis".

He also called for greater cooperation among countries in the region, saying, "Islamic countries in the region should go after cooperation."

Ghalibaf said his visit to Iraq was aimed at advancing cooperation among regional countries without foreign interference.



"Relations between Iranian and Iraqi nations are historic, deep-rooted, and unbreakable," he said.

The Iranian parliament speaker added that Tehran and Baghdad would seek to strengthen security cooperation based on their ties, saying the two countries' "fates are interconnected."

As per the Press TV news report, Ghalibaf arrived in Baghdad on Wednesday at the head of a high-ranking parliamentary delegation for talks with senior Iraqi officials on bilateral relations, regional developments, border security, counterterrorism, and economic cooperation.

> Ghalibaf said his visit to Iraq was aimed at advancing cooperation among regional countries without foreign interference

He was received upon arrival by the First Deputy Speaker of the Iraqi Parliament, Adnan Fayhan.

During his visit, Ghalibaf is scheduled to meet senior Iraqi officials and other figures to discuss strengthening bilateral relations, border security, counterterrorism, economic cooperation, and the implementation of existing agreements.

Ahead of the visit, Ghalibaf said the relationship between Iran and Iraq was rooted in their shared experience as neighbouring countries and their support for each other during difficult periods.

"Our neighbourhood is founded on brotherhood in the most difficult times, resistance to foreign interference, and a belief in the shared destiny of the two countries. This instructive past will guide our future," he said.

Ghalibaf also said the delegation would take "practical and significant steps" to strengthen the two countries' security cooperation and promote the well-being of their populations. – ANI

CENSUS BUREAU

Trump claims over 24,000 noncitizens illegally voted in US

WASHINGTON DC: US President Donald Trump on Tuesday claimed that more than 24,000 noncitizens voted illegally in the 2020 election, citing an ongoing review by the US Census Bureau.

In a post on Truth Social, Trump said, "The Census Bureau has begun checking the Voter Records from 2020 against their Citizenship Records. On the first 128,000,000 Voters, the Census Bureau proves that over 24,000 Noncitizens voted illegally!"

Census Bureau

"The Census Bureau is going to analyse the next 32,000,000 Voters, and this number will explode," he added.

Trump also reiterated his claim about the 2020 election, saying, "I won the election!"

He further called for the passage of the SAVE America Act, saying, "We must pass THE SAVE America Act. Thank you for your attention to this matter!"

His remarks came after his endorsement of the proposed Safeguard American Voter Eligibility (SAVE) America Act, introduced in Congress on January 29, which aims to overhaul federal voting standards in the United States.

– ANI

JABAL AKHDAR

First Gulf Horse Riders Gathering kicks off

JABAL AKHDAR: The activities of the First Gulf Horse Riders Gathering kicked off yesterday in the Wilayat of Jabal Akhdar, organized by Al Dakhiliyah Governorate in cooperation with "Oman from Horse Backs" team.

Running until 21 August, the event features the participation of 22 male and female riders from the Sultanate of Oman, GCC countries, the Arab Republic of Egypt, and the United Kingdom.

Sheikh Mahmoud Rashid Al Saadi, Acting Governor of Al Dakhiliyah and chief guest of the occasion, confirmed that hosting the forum comes as part of the governorate's direction toward organizsng qualitative events that invest in the natural and cultural assets of the Wilayat of Jabal Akhdar to diversify the tourism product, and link tourism activity with villages, agricultural sites, and local products, thereby supporting economic activity and enhancing benefits for the local community.

He added that including the forum among the activities of Jabal Akhdar Festival enhances the presence of adventure and equestrian tourism within the wilayat's tourism program, and expands the scope of activities linked to nature, terrain, and agricultural and cultural heritage of Jabal Akhdar.

The forum focuses on equestrian tourism and associated cultural experiences through a program that combines horseback riding along mountain trails, adventure tourism, camping, and exploring a number of sites and villages in the wilayat.

The forum's program includes field routes starting from Al Ghaleel Park, passing through juniper and wild olive tree forests, up to a campsite at an altitude of nearly 2,400 meters, alongside visiting a number of villages and agricultural terraces, learning about essential oil production, and the participation of the riders in several activities of Jabal Akhdar Festival.

For his part, Saif Ali Al Rawahi, head of "Oman from Horse Backs" team, stated that the forum brings together male and female riders from the Sultanate of Oman, GCC countries, the Arab Republic of Egypt, and the United Kingdom, noting that holding it in Jabal Akhdar comes as an extension of the team's efforts to highlight the natural assets of the Sultanate of Oman through equestrian tourism and the exchange of expertise among participants.

The organisation of the First Gulf Horse Riders Forum comes as part of the Jabal Akhdar Festival 2026 programme, which features a range of tourism, cultural, and community events, aimed at supporting tourism activity and enhancing the participation of institutions and the local community. -ONA

STRENGTHENING INFRASTRUCTURE

Road projects enhance access to tourist sites in Dhofar Governorate

SALALAH: Road projects in Dhofar Governorate represent one of the primary pillars strengthening the infrastructure supporting the revitalisation of the tourism sector during the Khareef Dhofar (monsoon) season, by facilitating movement and access to natural, heritage, and entertainment sites while ensuring the highest traffic safety standards, supporting development and service projects, and boosting economic activity.

With expectations that the number of visitors to the governorate will exceed one million tourists during the Khareef Dhofar season 2026, the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, represented by the Directorate General of Roads and Land Transport in Dhofar Governorate, is implementing a number of projects and mountain roads connected to tourist sites to reduce congestion and improve traffic flow, particularly during the Khareef season.

Eng. Said Mohammed Tabook, Director General of the Directorate General of Roads and Land Transport in Dhofar Governorate, said that the Ministry worked on accelerating the implementation of road projects in the mountain strip across several wilayats of the governorate, serving citizens and residents and contributing to facilitating traffic movement for visitors and tourists.

He explained in a statement to Oman News Agency (ONA) that the execution of these projects falls within the Ministry's efforts to raise the efficiency of the road network and improve the quality of services provided to its users, alongside strengthening connectivity between wilayats and natural and tourist sites, thereby

supporting tourist and economic activity and keeping pace with the growing number of visitors.

Among the most prominent of these projects is the opening of traffic on the 20-kilometer dirt road connecting the Wilayats of Rakhyut and Dhalkut via the coast, which passes through several pristine natural and tourist areas, contributing to enhancing connectivity between the two wilayats and facilitating visitor access to tourist locations situated along the route.

He clarified that among the important projects aimed at facilitating traffic movement is the 33-kilometer Raysut–Al Mughsayl road dualization project, costing over RO 30 million, alongside the Al Mughsayl road and bridge project, which was opened to traffic in early July at a cost exceeding RO 9 million.

The Al Mughsayl road and bridge project includes parking lots, an illuminated walkway, and beautification works, as well as an underpass serving the waterfront in Al Mughsayl area and Al Marneef Cave area, with its famous natural features and water blowholes.

In the eastern part of Dhofar Governorate, rehabilitation and dualization works continue on the 21-kilometre Al Maamourah–Taqah road at a cost exceeding RO 1.5 million, with the project scheduled for completion by the end of the current year.

Additionally, the rehabilitation project for the 24-kilometre Taqah–Madinat Al Haq road is underway at a cost exceeding OMR1.5 million, with completion set for the end of this year.

Furthermore, rehabilitation works continue on the Madinat Al Haq–Yoor and Tawi Ater–Darbat roads, totaling 42 kilometers in length, at a cost exceeding OMR1.9 million, with project completion expected in mid-2027.

Meanwhile, the road network leading to natural sites has been completed, alongside the rehabilitation works of the 30-kilometre Tawi Ater–Rakah–Jibjat road project, costing over OMR1.2 million, which was handed over by the end of last year. -ONA

IN AL BURAIMI

Mineral production tops 5.5 million tonnes in 2025

AL BURAIMI: The mining sector in Al Buraimi Governorate is undergoing a tangible production surge exceeding 5.5 million tonnes in 2025, contributing to enhancing the governorate's standing as a promising logistical and mining hub within the targets of Oman Vision 2040 in economic diversification.

Speaking to Oman News Agency (ONA), Eng. Salim Khamis Al Sudairi, Director of the Department of Minerals in Al Buraimi, A'Dhahirah, and Musandam Governorates, said that the governorate houses 21 active licensed quarries and crushers, pointing out that their total production during 2025 reached approximately 5.59 million tonnes.

Al Sudairi indicated that the building materials sector topped production with a total exceeding 4.67 million tonnes, followed by limestone at more than 859,000 tons, then chrome ore at about 33.8 thousand tonnes, then plastic clay at 15.5 thousand tonnes, in addition to more than 5.2 thousand tonnes of marble, and about 3.9 thousand tonnes of gypsum.

Logistical advantages

He explained that the logistical advantages enjoyed by the governorate and its proximity to border crossings contributed to securing building material supplies for vital projects, most notably the railway project between the Sultanate of Oman and the United Arab Emirates, in addition to internal road projects, gas, water, electricity, and telecommunications lines, and the GCC interconnection grid project.

He noted that two mining concession areas were awarded in the governorate, which are in the exploration phase, while a third area is undergoing procedural completion. He pointed out that these areas will contribute to increasing production capacity in the future, alongside compliance with prohibiting the export of chrome ore containing a concentration of less than 36 percent, in addition to tasking Oman Mining Trading Company with managing and organising trades.

Al Sudairi explained that offering new mining opportunities is conducted via the "Taqa" platform according to a transparent bidding system, allowing an opportunity for fair competition among companies to explore and invest in metallic minerals, such as copper and chrome, in addition to public sites for industrial raw materials like marble and limestone.

Within the framework of environmental commitment and supervision, he clarified that the Ministry conducted 96 inspection visits during 2025 to verify technical requirements and curb emissions, with an emphasis on obligating companies to adhere to site rehabilitation plans and provide financial guarantees in cooperation with the Environment Authority.

He added that the Ministry attaches great importance to directing mining investments toward supporting the local community by encouraging the localization of technical and administrative jobs within operating companies and supporting community initiatives in the wilayats adjacent to mining sites. -ONA

SPORTS

JULY 3-8 IN 2028

Oman to host 2028 Beach Handball World Championships in Salalah

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Sixteen years after hosting the world championships, Oman won the rights once again to host 2028 IHF Men's and Women's Beach Handball World Championships in Salalah.

The championships will be staged from July 3 to 8, 2028.

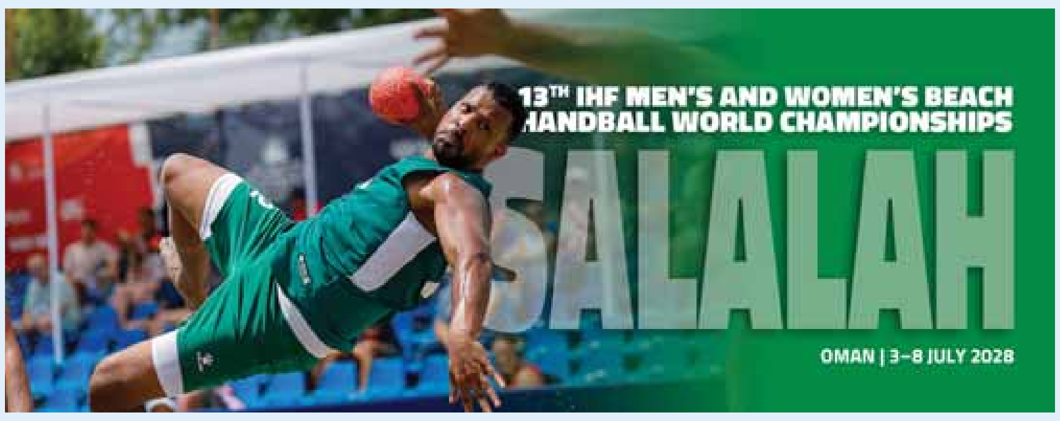
The International Handball Federation (IHF) announced the award of the hosting rights for the 2028 IHF Men's and Women's Beach Handball World Championships to the Oman Handball Association (OHA), following a decision taken by the IHF Council on August 13.

The 2028 edition will mark a return of the flagship beach handball competition to Oman, which previously hosted the World Championships at Mussanah Sports City in 2012.

It will also be the third time the event is held in Asia, following the 2024 edition in China, further reflecting the continued growth and global expansion of beach handball.

Salalah will provide a compact host-city concept, with the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex serving as the competition venue.

The proposed infrastructure includes four competition courts and two warm-up courts, while the central arena will accommodate 2,000 spectators.



High-quality white sand for the playing courts will be sourced from the coastal area of Shuwaimiyah, ensuring optimal playing conditions throughout the championships.

One of the key strengths highlighted during the evaluation process was Salalah's distinctive setting. Despite being located in the Middle East, the city enjoys a unique climate during July, offering favourable conditions for beach handball competition.

Combined with modern infrastructure, quality accommodation and efficient transport links, the bid presented a strong foundation for delivering another successful edition of the World Championships.

The Oman Handball Association has also committed to organising the Finals of the IHF Beach Handball Global Tour in both 2026 and 2027, providing valuable experience ahead of hosting the sport's premier event two years later.

Suthar's ten-for seals big win for India against Sri Lanka in Galle

The visitors showed patience to secure a 165-run victory on a slow pitch against the hosts in the first Test

GALLE: India displayed patience and persistence to secure a 165-run win against a resolute Sri Lanka middle order on a slow, new-ball pitch on the fifth and final day of the first Test on Wednesday.

Sonal Dinusha came to within 16 runs of a second hundred in the Test, Dhananjaya de Silva scored a half-century as well, and for long periods India looked content to keep a lid on the scoring so that they could do the job with the second new ball.

Once he got Dinusha out in the 76th over, though, Manav Suthar ran through the rest to end up four wickets in 10 balls, a second five-for in two Tests, and the new ball unneeded.

It will be a welcome win for a young transitioning team that has lost two out of its last three series in spin-friendly conditions, that too at home. They did win the big toss, but had to contend with dodgy weather through the Test, which did play a part in some of the shots their middle-order batters played in the first innings.

The bowling, though, was excellent with the continuous rise of Suthar, enough threat from Ravndra Jadeja, handy contributions from the seamers who combined for a lot of control and five wickets in the match, and slow progress of Kuldeep Yadav hopefully towards better rhythm.

On the final day, needing six wickets to win, India stayed with pace at one end. Mohammed Siraj and Jadeja kept testing Dinusha and de Silva, who made their ways to half-centuries.

The overnight pair saw off the first spells of these bowlers, but Jadeja came back after less than a half hour to get rid of de Silva. He went past the outside edge with one that turned big and then slowed the next ball down, drawing a top edge on the sweep.

Niroshan Dickwella played an unsettled innings, trying to reverse-sweep and sweep Kuldeep from well outside leg as he bowled around the wicket, looking for something from a new angle. Against Prasidh Krishna's short balls, he kept moving around the crease. Following some banter with Yashasvi Jaiswal, who was goading him to play the hook, Dickwella top-edged a cut, cramped by the line even after having backed away from the stumps.

Dinusha and Keshara Nuwantha hung in for 15 overs, but one mistake from Dinusha opened the floodgates. Suthar had gone around the wicket, pitched one outside leg, and he just turned the ball straight into the hands of the only catching man, the leg gully. The extra bounce probably played a part.

Suthar will be mighty pleased with the next three wickets because they were all a result of less turn than expected. All bowled quicker with a square seam rather than overspin with the seam pointing towards slip, which is his main weapon. Suthar showed he has the variation and exposed the other edge as well. Nuwantha was the last man out, bowled off the inside edge, with 2.2 overs still to go for the new ball.

Brief scores: India 462 (Padikkal 167, Rahul 82, Jayasuriya 4-109) and 193 (Pant 66, Asitha 4-31, Jayasuriya 3-43) beat Sri Lanka 284 (Dinusha 100, Dickwella 80, Suthar 4-76, Jadeja 3-57) and 206 (Dinusha 84, Dhananjaya 59, Suthar 6-55) by 165 runs. - Agencies

OMAN OIL PRICE RISES

The price of Oman crude oil has increased, with prices for delivery by October 2026 reaching $93. The price of Oman crude oil rose by $3 from the price of Tuesday, which was $90.16. -ONA

MSX INDEX ENDS LOWER

The MSX index closed at 7,546.51 points, down by -0.04% from previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 0.26% at 604.85 points. Barka Water & Power Company, up 8.97%, was the top gainer while, Oman Chromite, down 4.55%, was the top loser.

Sohar Port cargo throughput surges 52% to 52mn tonnes

The results reflect Sohar Port and Freezone's ability to respond to the requirements of both regional and international trade through its combined maritime, logistics and industrial ecosystem

SOHAR: Sohar Port and Freezone, Oman's integrated port and freezone, delivered sustained operational performance during the first half of 2026, recording total cargo throughput of 52 million metric tonnes, a 52% increase compared with the same period last year.

The results reflect Sohar's ability to respond to the requirements of both regional and international trade through its combined maritime, logistics and industrial ecosystem.

The port maintained solid performance across its diversified cargo portfolio during the first half of 2026. Ship-to-ship cargo handling reached 24.38 million metric tonnes, reflecting the demand for Sohar's maritime services. Container throughput increased by 40% to 545,000 twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs), primarily driven by higher transshipment activity, while breakbulk cargo nearly doubled to 1.24 million metric tonnes.

Although dry bulk volumes moderated during the period, the port handled 1,555 vessel calls, demonstrating operational resilience and reinforcing Sohar's role as a strategic gateway for regional and international trade.

Execution of existing and expansion projects progressed across Sohar's port and freezone during the reporting period, representing a combined investment value of OMR2.62 billion. These investments continue to advance SOHAR's industrial and logistics ecosystem by expanding infrastructure, increasing industrial capacity and enhancing long-term competitiveness.

Emile Hoogsteden, CEO of Sohar Port, said the first-half results reflect Sohar's ability to provide a platform for trade, industry, and investment in the international trading environment. He said: "The first half of 2026 demonstrates the adaptability of Sohar's integrated port and freezone model and the strength of our long-term strategy.

As trade continues to evolve, we remain committed to investing in world-class infrastructure, strengthening maritime connectivity, and enhancing operational excellence to ensure Sohar continues to create long-term value for customers, partners, and the wider economy. These investments ensure Sohar remains well positioned for future growth while reinforcing Oman's position as a logistics and industrial hub."

Sohar Freezone maintained investment momentum during the first half of 2026, further cementing its position as a strategic destination for industrial investment and regional trade.

Five new investment contracts, valued at OMR226.47 million, were signed during the reporting period, reinforcing Sohar Freezone's attractiveness to investors. Leased warehouse space reached approximately 37,000 square metres, up 19% year-on-year, reflecting continued demand for industrial and logistics facilities within Sohar Freezone.

Dr. Raid Mohammed Al Rubaiey, CEO of Sohar Freezone and Deputy CEO of Sohar Port, said Sohar continues to solidify its position as a preferred destination for high-value industrial investment.

He said: "Our ambition extends beyond attracting investment; it is about creating lasting economic value through high-quality industrial development. We remain focused on attracting industries that build on Oman's industrial base, deepen local and regional value chains, and contribute to sustainable economic growth. By continuously enhancing our investment environment, we are reinforcing Sohar's role as a catalyst for industrial development and economic diversification in line with Oman Vision 2040." -ONA

DIGITALLY ADVANCED BANK

BankDhofar leads Oman's shift to a cashless, digital first economy

MUSCAT: Oman's payments landscape is undergoing a rapid transformation under the guidance of the Central Bank of Oman (CBO), aligned with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040. Through modernised clearing systems, real time settlement infrastructure, and progressive regulatory frameworks, the CBO has strengthened the foundations of a secure, efficient, and increasingly cashless financial ecosystem.

Digital payments are now widely embedded across consumer, corporate, and public sector transactions, driven by the growing adoption of mobile wallets, contactless cards, and instant transfers. National initiatives such as the "Maal" payment card and fintech friendly regulatory sandbox environments continue to enhance interoperability, reduce transaction friction, and accelerate innovation across the financial sector.

Against this backdrop, BankDhofar has emerged as one of the most progressive and digitally advanced banks in the Sultanate, playing a key role in enabling the shift toward a digital first economy.

On the retail front, the bank has established a strong mobile first ecosystem, enabling QR payments, instant fund transfers, bill payments, and seamless account management via its mobile application. Early adoption of contactless and tokenised payments — including Dhofar Pay, Tap to Pay, and integration with global wallets such as Apple Pay and Samsung Pay — has reinforced its leadership in everyday digital payments.

Equally significant is BankDhofar's advancement in Corporate and Institutional Banking (CIB) digitisation. Its next generation Neo Corporate Internet Banking platform enables corporates, government entities, and large institutions to process high volume bulk transactions, including payroll, supplier payments, collections, and mass disbursements, with enhanced speed, control, and straight through processing.

A key differentiator is the bank's API based and Host to Host (H2H) connectivity, allowing seamless integration between corporate ERP or treasury systems and the bank's payment infrastructure.

This enables automated payment initiation, bulk file processing, real time transaction updates, reconciliation, and reporting — significantly reducing manual intervention and operational risk while supporting 24/7 transaction processing at scale.

BankDhofar has also strengthened its real time cash management and cross border payment capabilities, delivering faster settlements, improved liquidity visibility, and greater transparency for businesses operating locally and internationally.

Collectively, BankDhofar's digital capabilities across retail and CIB — spanning bulk payments, API driven integration, and real time processing — position the bank as a key enabler of Oman's cashless economy ambitions.

INTEGRATED DESTINATION

Automobile City project in full swing in Salalah, achieves progress rate of 45%

SALALAH: The Wilayat of Salalah is currently witnessing the implementation of the Automobile City project, scheduled to be a destination for the automobile sector and related services in the Governorate of Dhofar.

The project is being set up on an area of 53,000 square metres. The cost of the first phase is OMR6 million. It includes the stage of construction and development of infrastructure.

The project is being implemented by Al Amal Al Daem International Company in partnership with Dhofar Municipality. It covers various activities and facilities, including automobile showrooms, car agencies, maintenance centres, finance and insurance companies, banks and centres for supporting commercial services.

Faisal bin Alawi Al Dheeb, Managing Director of Al Amal Al Daem International Company, said that the project has achieved a progress rate of 45 percent. He added that the first phase is expected to be completed in May 2027.

Al Dheeb told the Oman News Agency that the project aims to serve as an integrated destination for the automotive sector and to bring together all customer needs in one place.

He explained that the wilayat of Salalah has been chosen as a destination for the project due to its diverse economic, demographic and tourism assets available in the Governorate of Dhofar, noting that Khareef Dhofar (monsoon) season sees high demand for car services.

Al Dheeb announced the start of booking of rental spaces for local and international companies wishing to establish businesses in the Automobile City in Salalah. He pointed out that the project is set to have a positive impact on a number of related sectors like contracting, supply services, technical services, construction, operation, employment, logistics, hospitality and marketing. -ONA

MARKET

MSX index ends lower

Barka Water & Power Company, up 8.97%, was the top gainer while, Oman Chromite, down 4.55%, was the top loser

MUSCAT: The MSX index closed at 7,546.51 points, down by -0.04% from previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 0.26% at 604.85 points. Barka Water & Power Company, up 8.97%, was the top gainer while, Oman Chromite, down 4.55%, was the top loser. Shares of Bank Muscat were the most active in terms of number of shares traded as well as in terms of turnover.

A total number of 7643 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating turnover of RO 49.07 million, with more than 153.86 million shares changing hands.

Out of 68 traded securities, 23 advanced, 22 declined, and 23 remained unchanged. At the session close, foreign investors were net sellers for RO 723K while domestic investors were net buyers for RO 516K, followed by GCC & Arab investors f

Financial Index closed at 13,231.74 points, up 0.27%. Prices of Global Financial Investments, National Finance, DIDIC, Al Madina Takaful, Oman United Insurance were up by 5.52%, 2.33%, 1.86%, 1.80%, 1.59% respectively. Prices of Ominvest, Al Madina Investments, Al Omaniya Financial Services, Oman & Emirates Investment, Sohar International Bank were down by 3.98%, 1.54%, 1.32%, 0.78%, 0.55% respectively.

Industrial Index closed at 9,516.56 points, up 0.24%. Prices of Construction Materials, Galfar Engineering, Oman Cement were up by 6.15%, 2.00%, 0.35% respectively. Prices of Oman Chromite, Raysut Cement, Gulf International Chemicals were down by 4.55%, 2.26%, 1.43% respectively.

Services Index was down by -0.05% before closing at 3,029.21 points. Prices of Barka Water & Power Company, Muscat Desalination, Dhofar Generating, Dhofar Generating, Abraj Energy were up by 8.97%, 3.45%, 1.28%, 1.28%, 0.75% respectively.

Prices of Ooredoo, Sembcorp Salalah, Al Jazeera Services, Phoenix Power, Musandam Power were down by 0.94%, 0.78%, 0.77%, 0.71%, 0.59% respectively.— United Securities

OMAN STOCKS

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE

INDICES

Index	High	Low	Value	Prev . Value	Diff	Diff %
MSX 30 INDEX	7,563.98	7,531.56	7,546.51	7,549.80	-3.30	-0.04 %
FINANCIAL INDEX	13,247.81	13,182.25	13,231.74	13,196.52	35.21	0.27 %
Industry Index	9,522.01	9,489.08	9,516.56	9,494.13	22.44	0.24 %
Services Index	3,041.61	3,024.46	3,029.21	3,030.67	-1.46	-0.05 %
MSX Shariah Index	605.38	602.35	604.85	603.26	1.59	0.26 %
MSX TR INDEX	11,702.35	11,652.20	11,675.32	11,680.42	-5.10	-0.04 %
FINANCIAL TR IDX	16,287.49	16,206.89	16,267.73	16,224.44	43.29	0.27 %
INDUSTRIAL TR IDX	12,195.28	12,153.11	12,188.30	12,159.57	28.74	0.24 %
SERVICES TR IDX	4,075.19	4,052.21	4,058.57	4,060.52	-1.95	-0.05 %
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
153,868,466	49,067,686	7,643	38,353,615,449	23	22	23	68

SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 19

REGULAR MARKET

ISIN	SECURITY NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR.	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF (RO)	DIFF %	LAST PR	LAST BID	LAST OFFER	PAR VALUE	MARKET CAP
OM0000003141	BARKA WATER AND POWER	100	16	1	0.158	0.158	0.158	0.158	0.145	0.013	8.966	0.158	0.150	0.158	0.100	25,280,000
OM0000003125	GLOBAL FINANCIAL INVESTMENT HO.	5,014,261	1,586,524	139	0.311	0.330	0.311	0.325	0.308	0.017	5.519	0.325	0.325	0.325	0.100	65,000,000
OM0000001509	DHOFAR INT'L DEVELOPMENT & INVEST	34,126	9,325	12	0.269	0.279	0.269	0.274	0.269	0.005	1.859	0.274	0.272	0.274	0.100	135,919,383
OM0000004768	MADINA TAKAFUL	782,431	86,529	89	0.111	0.113	0.110	0.113	0.111	0.002	1.802	0.113	0.111	0.113	0.100	19,775,000
OM0000010120	ASYAD SHIPPING	3,422,308	824,174	579	0.239	0.243	0.239	0.243	0.239	0.004	1.674	0.243	0.242	0.243	0.000	1,265,724,860
OM0000001087	OMAN UNITED INSURANCE	22,215	7,077	4	0.315	0.320	0.315	0.320	0.315	0.005	1.587	0.320	0.317	0.320	0.100	33,600,000
OM0000004420	BANK NIZWA	103,011	14,665	28	0.141	0.143	0.141	0.143	0.141	0.002	1.418	0.143	0.143	0.143	0.100	319,884,284
OM0000008934	ABRAJ ENERGY SERVICES	5,560,997	2,207,096	405	0.399	0.401	0.392	0.401	0.398	0.003	0.754	0.401	0.401	0.401	0.100	308,850,200
OM0000001152	OMAN NAT'L ENGINEERING & INVEST	30,353	4,609	2	0.151	0.152	0.151	0.152	0.151	0.001	0.662	0.152	0.147	0.156	0.100	22,800,000
OM0000009759	OQ EXPLORATION AND PRODUCTION	11,475,690	5,494,267	308	0.478	0.481	0.477	0.481	0.478	0.003	0.628	0.481	0.481	0.481	0.010	3,848,000,000
OM0000009908	OQ BASE INDUSTRIES (SFZ)	25,642,123	6,525,172	1,320	0.254	0.256	0.253	0.255	0.254	0.001	0.394	0.255	0.254	0.255	0.040	882,170,167
OM0000001749	OMAN CEMENT	16,300	9,452	6	0.580	0.580	0.578	0.580	0.578	0.002	0.346	0.580	0.578	0.580	0.100	191,906,172
OM0000001483	NATIONAL BANK OMAN	2,000,650	954,308	7	0.474	0.477	0.474	0.477	0.476	0.001	0.210	0.477	0.474	0.480	0.100	775,576,411
OM0000003026	OMAN TELECOM	2,188,073	3,088,797	76	1.409	1.415	1.407	1.410	1.408	0.002	0.142	1.410	1.410	1.410	0.100	1,057,500,000
OM0000001707	OMAN CABLES INDUSTRY	284	937	2	3.298	3.298	3.298	3.298	3.298	0.000	0.000	3.298	3.220	3.400	0.100	295,830,600
OM0000002176	JAZEERA STEEL PRODUCTS	27,370	24,631	10	0.902	0.902	0.898	0.900	0.900	0.000	0.000	0.900	0.898	0.900	0.100	112,408,164
OM0000002267	GULF MUSHROOM PRODUCTS	1,322	567	3	0.429	0.429	0.429	0.429	0.429	0.000	0.000	0.429	0.429	0.439	0.100	21,596,880
OM0000002549	BANK DHOFAR	40,430	8,813	41	0.218	0.218	0.217	0.218	0.218	0.000	0.000	0.218	0.206	0.218	0.100	662,676,080
OM0000003661	VOLTAMP ENERGY	119,705	20,846	21	0.175	0.175	0.173	0.174	0.174	0.000	0.000	0.174	0.174	0.174	0.010	174,000,000
OM0000004248	SMN POWER HOLDING	5,801	1,104	4	0.200	0.200	0.190	0.190	0.190	0.000	0.000	0.190	0.190	0.200	0.100	37,930,764
OM0000004925	ALBATINAH POWER	5,180	958	1	0.185	0.185	0.185	0.185	0.185	0.000	0.000	0.185	0.183	0.200	0.100	124,854,175
OM0000002796	BANK MUSCAT	35,021,359	13,663,475	1,100	0.392	0.392	0.389	0.391	0.392	-0.001	-0.255	0.391	0.390	0.391	0.100	2,935,001,251
OM0000003224	RENAISSANCE SERVICES	168,174	46,287	13	0.277	0.277	0.275	0.275	0.276	-0.001	-0.362	0.275	0.274	0.275	0.100	65,012,750
OM0000009072	OQ GAS NETWORKS	24,168,517	5,500,455	1,489	0.227	0.229	0.226	0.226	0.227	-0.001	-0.441	0.226	0.226	0.226	0.100	978,721,006
OM0000004933	AL SUWADI POWER	14,034	2,599	5	0.188	0.188	0.184	0.184	0.185	-0.001	-0.541	0.184	0.183	0.189	0.100	131,450,767
OM0000003398	SOHAR INTERNATIONAL BANK	23,553,240	4,305,662	1,222	0.182	0.184	0.181	0.182	0.183	-0.001	-0.546	0.182	0.165	0.182	0.100	1,397,033,032
OM0000007811	MUSANDAM POWER	18,270	6,212	5	0.340	0.340	0.340	0.340	0.342	-0.002	-0.585	0.340	0.340	0.342	0.100	23,932,600
OM0000005963	PHOENIX POWER	89,450	25,022	16	0.281	0.282	0.276	0.278	0.280	-0.002	-0.714	0.278	0.275	0.278	0.100	406,603,206
OM0000002226	ALJAZEERA SERVICES	7,399	1,905	3	0.258	0.258	0.257	0.257	0.259	-0.002	-0.772	0.257	0.252	0.265	0.100	11,010,649
OM0000001681	OMAN EMIRATES HO.	2,100	267	2	0.127	0.127	0.127	0.127	0.128	-0.001	-0.781	0.127	0.121	0.126	0.100	16,252,031
OM0000004735	SEMBCORP SALALAH	517,950	130,954	36	0.254	0.254	0.252	0.253	0.255	-0.002	-0.784	0.253	0.251	0.253	0.100	241,506,703
OM0000003968	OOREDOO	585,091	184,133	25	0.317	0.318	0.313	0.315	0.318	-0.003	-0.943	0.315	0.315	0.320	0.100	205,047,432
OM0000002077	AL OMANIYA FINANCIAL SERVICES	31,200	4,680	4	0.150	0.150	0.150	0.150	0.152	-0.002	-1.316	0.150	0.145	0.155	0.100	47,312,550
OM0000001533	OMINVEST	3,011,486	1,234,718	4	0.427	0.427	0.410	0.410	0.427	-0.017	-3.981	0.410	0.391	0.410	0.100	460,370,105
OM0000002523	JAZERAH SER-P	1,000	629	1	0.629	0.629	0.629	0.629	0.786	-0.157	-19.975	0.629	0.000	0.629	0.100	22,240,828
Total	35	143,682,000	45,976,863	6,983												

Parallel Market

ISIN	SECURITY NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR.	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF (RO)	DIFF %	LAST PR	LAST BID	LAST OFFER	PAR VALUE	MARKET CAP
OM0000001368	CONSTRUCTION MATERIAL INDUSTRIES	6,754	414	2	0.060	0.069	0.060	0.069	0.065	0.004	6.154	0.069	0.061	0.070	0.100	4,312,500
OM0000007084	MUSCAT CITY DESALINATION	325	29	1	0.090	0.090	0.090	0.090	0.087	0.003	3.448	0.090	0.085	0.090	0.100	13,999,536
OM0000002648	NATIONAL FINANCE	500	110	1	0.220	0.220	0.220	0.220	0.215	0.005	2.326	0.220	0.212	0.220	0.100	143,152,987
OM0000003521	GALFAR ENGINEERING & CONTRACTING	113,550	17,115	20	0.150	0.153	0.149	0.153	0.150	0.003	2.000	0.153	0.152	0.155	0.100	31,056,926
OM0000001178	MUSCAT GASES	500	71	2	0.140	0.142	0.140	0.142	0.140	0.002	1.429	0.142	0.136	0.139	0.100	4,260,000
OM0000007910	AMAN REAL ESTATE	15,391	1,154	3	0.075	0.075	0.075	0.075	0.074	0.001	1.351	0.075	0.070	0.075	0.100	15,000,000
OM0000007407	DHOFAR GENERATING	16,000	1,258	2	0.078	0.079	0.078	0.079	0.078	0.001	1.282	0.079	0.079	0.085	0.100	17,556,960
OM0000010823	OMAN GATEWAY FUND	2,800	2,892	3	1.033	1.033	1.033	1.033	1.026	0.007	0.682	1.033	1.033	1.042	0.000	28,329,862
OM0000003711	SOHAR POWER	9,752	2,155	5	0.222	0.222	0.221	0.221	0.220	0.001	0.455	0.221	0.221	0.240	0.100	4,420,000
OM0000001160	NATIONAL GAS	181,527	19,675	23	0.108	0.109	0.108	0.108	0.108	0.000	0.000	0.108	0.107	0.108	0.100	9,180,000
OM0000001806	MUSCAT INSURANCE	656	331	1	0.505	0.505	0.505	0.505	0.505	0.000	0.000	0.505	0.505	0.000	1.000	5,567,648
OM0000002168	AL ANWAR CERAMIC	833,247	114,200	75	0.137	0.139	0.135	0.136	0.136	0.000	0.000	0.136	0.136	0.137	0.100	29,920,000
OM0000004776	TAKAFUL OMAN	105	7	1	0.063	0.063	0.063	0.063	0.063	0.000	0.000	0.063	0.060	0.063	0.100	15,750,000
OM0000008447	OMAN REIT FUND	61,074	6,586	22	0.108	0.108	0.107	0.108	0.108	0.000	0.000	0.108	0.106	0.108	0.100	90,905,753
OM0000008868	THE PEARL REIF	1,210,825	217,094	20	0.182	0.184	0.179	0.184	0.184	0.000	0.000	0.184	0.184	0.199	0.100	108,824,386
OM0000009569	JABAL REIF	18,000	1,872	4	0.104	0.104	0.104	0.104	0.104	0.000	0.000	0.104	0.103	0.104	0.100	18,096,000
OM0000011151	OMIFCO	6,063,081	1,241,445	370	0.205	0.206	0.204	0.204	0.204	0.000	0.000	0.204	0.204	0.204	0.000	1,364,632,500
OM0000005260	OMAN ARAB BANK	365,205	96,409	39	0.263	0.264	0.263	0.263	0.264	-0.001	-0.379	0.263	0.263	0.263	0.100	526,721,497
OM0000002028	GULF INTERNATIONAL CHEMICALS	71,400	4,944	6	0.070	0.070	0.069	0.069	0.070	-0.001	-1.429	0.069	0.068	0.069	0.100	1,449,000
OM0000001962	AL MADINA INVESTMENT HOLDING	55,000	3,520	2	0.064	0.064	0.064	0.064	0.065	-0.001	-1.538	0.064	0.064	0.064	0.100	2,758,400
OM0000001020	OMAN CHROMITE	363,370	1,144,700	21	3.300	3.300	3.150	3.150	3.300	-0.150	-4.545	3.150	3.000	3.150	1.000	11,434,500
Total	21	9,389,062	2,875,981	623												

BILATERAL TRADE

India-Japan trade at $27.5bn still a fraction of potential

NEW DELHI: Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Tuesday said bilateral trade between India and Japan stood at around $27.5 billion in 2025-26 but remained only a fraction of the potential between the two countries.

Addressing a Japanese delegation at the UP-Japan Investment Meet 2026, Goyal said the bilateral relationship was backed by a target of 10 trillion yen in Japanese investment in India over the next decade."Our bilateral trade stands at around USD 27.5 billion in FY 2025-26, still fraction of our potential," Goyal said.

"It is indeed a great honour to welcome our friends from Japan this evening - a country that is not only admired for its culture of excellence and harmony but also cherished as one of India's closest partners in our shared journey of peace, progress and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific with institutional depth few bilateral relationships in the world can claim. Our friendship is reflected in the simplest of traditions, sharing of tea, ancient India shared chai with the world, Japan transformed this ocha into sadou - the tea ceremony where every encounter is treasured and every moment is valued," he said.

Highlighting the future areas of cooperation, the minister said the proposed investments would cover technologies and industries such as artificial intelligence, semiconductors, critical minerals, batteries, energy and next-generation mobility.

"Warmth and trust are at the heart of our relationship, and it is matched by strategic ambition with a clear number: 10 trillion yen of Japanese investment in India over the next decade, in technologies and industries that will shape our future, from AI & semicons to critical minerals, batteries, energy & next-generation mobility," he said.

Goyal said the India-Japan partnership already had a visible presence through projects such as the Mumbai-Ahmedabad High-Speed Rail and Japanese-assisted metro systems in Delhi, Ahmedabad, Bengaluru and Chennai. -ANI

INKS PACT

ahlibank unites community partners to support more than 5,000 students through 2026/2027 Back to School initiative

MUSCAT: Reinforcing its commitment to investing in people and expanding access to quality education, ahlibank has announced the signing of an agreement to launch its 'Back to School' initiative for the 2026/2027 academic year, in collaboration with Al Rahma Association for Motherhood and Childhood, and a network of charitable associations and volunteer teams across the Sultanate of Oman.

This partnership represents the largest initiative of its kind ever undertaken by the bank, making it one of the most impactful community initiatives within the banking sector.

This year's initiative will support more than 5,000 children from orphaned and underprivileged families across the Sultanate's governorates and wilayats by providing essential school supplies, enabling them to begin the new academic year with confidence, dignity, and equal opportunity. By easing the financial burden on families and empowering children to pursue their education, the initiative reflects the bank's belief that education is one of the most powerful drivers of long-term social and economic progress.

The agreement was signed during an official ceremony attended by representatives from charitable organizations, strategic partners, and volunteer teams from across the Sultanate, reaffirming the importance of unified national efforts and cross-sector collaboration in delivering meaningful and far-reaching community impact. Through this initiative, ahlibank continues to leverage its extensive branch network to connect charitable organizations with local communities, ensuring support is delivered efficiently, effectively, and where it is needed most.

While the Back-to-School initiative has become one of ahlibank's flagship annual community programs, this year's edition represents an exceptional expansion in scale, geographic reach, and strategic collaboration. Bringing together a wider network of charitable partners than ever before, the initiative reflects the progress of the bank's corporate social responsibility strategy, from implementing individual community initiatives to building an integrated national platform for collaboration that delivers sustainable, long-term impact.

Commenting on the collaboration, Jumana Aflah Al Hashmi, AGM – Head of Marketing & Corporate Communications, said: "At ahlibank, we believe that meaningful investment begins with people, and that education remains one of the most powerful enablers of a prosperous and sustainable future. This year's Back to School initiative reflects a broader vision, one founded on the belief that lasting impact is achieved when institutions unite toward a shared national purpose. Reaching more than 5,000 children would not have been possible without the trust, commitment, and enduring partnerships we have built with Al Rahma Association and our valued charitable organizations across the Sultanate. We extend our sincere appreciation to all our partners for their continued collaboration and their shared commitment to creating meaningful opportunities for future generations."

She added: "This initiative goes beyond providing school supplies; it is an investment in the aspirations and potential of thousands of children. By helping them begin the academic year with confidence and equal opportunity, we are investing in a brighter future while reaffirming our belief that financial institutions have a fundamental role to play in advancing sustainable social development alongside economic growth."

The initiative will be implemented with the active participation of ahlibank employees through the 'ahli Cares' volunteer team, in coordination with ahlibank and ahli Islamic branches across the Sultanate. School bags, uniforms, and essential stationery kits will be distributed based on the needs of beneficiary families, working closely with partner organizations to ensure support reaches the largest possible number of deserving children across Oman.

Through initiatives of this scale, ahlibank continues to strengthen its long-standing partnerships with civil society organizations, driven by its faith that sustainable development is best achieved through collective action. By fostering strategic collaboration across sectors, the bank seeks to maximize community impact, enhance quality of life, and contribute to the human development and community empowerment objectives of Oman Vision 2040.

The Back-to-School initiative builds upon ahlibank's longstanding legacy of delivering impactful community programs that create lasting social value.

As a responsible financial institution, ahlibank remains committed to placing community wellbeing at the heart of its strategy; empowering individuals, strengthening partnerships, and creating opportunities that leave a positive and enduring impact on future generations.

ENHANCE TRAVEL EXPERIENCE

Shanghai launches 100 AI-powered tourist services amid inbound tourism surge

SHANGHAI: East China's Shanghai launched 100 AI-powered tourist service terminals across the city, aiming to enhance the travel experience for the growing number of summer tourists, local authorities said.

The terminals are powered by a dedicated AI agent named Hu Xiaoyou, capable of offering services from navigation and real-time translation to attraction recommendations and ticket booking. They can also generate personalized travel itineraries for users.

Operators said the terminals' database contains more than 84,000 entries on cultural activities, tourist attractions and sports events in Shanghai, and is directly connected to 14,000 booking and shopping links.

The machines support 10 languages - Chinese, English, Japanese, Korean, French, German, Spanish, Thai, Russian and Arabic - and accept payments in more than 120 currencies.

Located in major hotels, tourism information centres, event venues, key business districts and scenic spots across the city, the terminals will also be staffed with volunteers to assist visitors with additional needs.

The terminals' functions will be upgraded and their footprint expanded over time to form a citywide service network, said Zhong Xiaomin, director of the Shanghai Municipal Administration of Culture and Tourism. -Xinhua

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JOB WANTED

ENGINEER
MECHANICAL ENGINEER (Indian)
B.Tech with 14 yrs of Oman experience as an Estimation Engineer, specializing in steel sheet metal fabrication. Currently in India, available for immediate joining.
WA/Call: +968 95945230, +91 7356745478
Email: arungopalakrishnan85@yahoo.com

VIDEO EDITOR
An Indian video editor with 6 months experience and proficiency in **ADOBE PREMIERE PRO** and **ADOBE AFTER EFFECTS** is looking for suitable job.
Contact: +968 97411676

PROCUREMENT
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

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

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

TEACHER
Lady teacher, Assistant professor MBA, B.Ed, Ph.D. (Management studies) pursuing 2nd yrs, with 16 yrs' experience, seeks teaching position in Oman. Immediate joining.
Email: mohammediyasmeen5@gmail.com
Contact: +968 77866559

FINANCE
Experienced ICWA/CMA (India), M.Com & OACPA certified professional with 15+ years in Costing, Manufacturing Finance, Corporate Planning & Strategy, MIS and Budgeting.
Email: harindranath.7891@gmail.com
Contact : +968 96098863

SALES & MARKETING
Seeking a suitable position in
SALES, MARKETING
having 16 yrs of experience in Oman & 25 yrs of total experience in the field of Infrastructure, Industrial and Building material products. BE Mechanical, DIM, Valid D/L
Contact: 9497 6056

QS MANAGER
Senior QS, B. Sc in Civil, 15+ yrs of Oman experience, Pre & Post Tendering, Contracts Management, FIDIC, Value Engg, Cost Control & Budgeting. Available in Oman for immediate joining. Email: qsprofessionalsk@gmail.com
WA/Call: +968 91117043

JOB VACANCY

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A reputed construction company in Oman looking for Labour sub-contractors for their projects at Sur, Sohar, Muscat, Mahoot, Khasab, etc.

Approximate quantities in each location are;

- **Hollow Block Works** - 8,000m^2
- **Internal Plaster (Machine)** - 16,000m^2
- **External Plaster (Machine)** - 8,000m^2
- **Porcelain Tile Flooring** - 7,000m^2
- **Internal Painting** - 20,000m^2
- **External Painting** - 8,000m^2
- **Construction of Compound Wall** - 500Rmt

Interested sub-contractors may please contact via WhatsApp message.
WhatsApp: 95890803

JOB WANTED

AVAILABLE
Fleet of + 1,000 LV/HV and machinaries as per PDO, OXY, BP, Daleel, Namaa.... etc- Spec - competitive, flexible lease. Contact: 95070748

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

Looking for Accountant job, with driving license. Contact: 92092486

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MEDICAL
Looking for Sr. Nurse job. Contact: 96611267

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

Pentagon mulls reducing US military presence in Gulf after Iran war ends

A key area being assessed by the Department of War is whether to pull back troops from the Arabian Gulf, where America's large overseas military bases have been battered by months of Iranian strikes

WASHINGTON DC: With the conflict between the US and Iran dragged on for months now, the Pentagon is evaluating its military footprint in West Asia, aiming to reduce its presence, The Washington Post reported on Tuesday, citing eight officials familiar with the matter.

As per the report, the analysis, according to officials and others familiar with the matter, was not yet a formal review and will include whether to rebuild bases battered by strikes. A key area being assessed by the Department of War is whether to pull back troops from the Arabian Gulf, where America's large overseas military bases have been battered by months of Iranian strikes, two people familiar with the ongoing analysis said.

According to the Post, the damage to these facilities has prompted a once-in-a-generation chance for the Pentagon to reconsider its presence in the region. The Department of War has already signalled that it might not rebuild its bases as they were before the conflict. The outlet reported that the evaluation is being led by the Pentagon's policy office, and a senior Pentagon official, speaking on the condition of anonymity, said that the Joint Staff and US Central Command were also studying the issue.

The official informed that Secretary of War Pete Hegseth had not yet ordered a formal review of US posture in the region. Instead, the official cast the analysis as "prudent planning" that could eventually inform how the administration addresses whether to rebuild the bases damaged during the war.

"Decisions are going to have to be made on some of this stuff," the official said. As per The Washington Post, the US Central Command normally stations about 40,000 troops across almost 20 sites.

Since early this year, the military has surged warships, fighters, air defence assets and other military equipment to the region to defend American forces and carry out more than 13,000 strikes against Iran, it mentioned.

Allies in the region have long depended on American forces for their defence. Any regional drawdown could leave states unable to defend themselves against Iranian attacks. It is to be noted that investing in domestic capabilities or partnering with other powers to offset the shortfall could take months to years.

Meanwhile, people familiar with the Pentagon's analysis said the issue is likely to intensify a debate between camps within the administration that support military interventions and others that have argued the Pentagon should curtail some of its security commitments to refocus on defending the American homeland or deterring more powerful adversaries. According to The Post, the discussions have also involved Admiral Bradley Cooper, the head of US Central Command, who supports deliberations about potentially moving American troops west from the Arabian Gulf, as per a US official.

However, a spokesperson for the US Central Command declined to comment. Notably, before the start of the conflict in February, the US Central Command evacuated many of its bases, judging them too vulnerable to Iranian missile and drone attacks to maintain normal staffing levels. Some of the shifts away from the major Gulf facilities might last after the war, a person familiar with the posture adjustments said.

"Iran thinks we are in the traditional places," the person said, declining to specify the changes so as not to put US service members at risk. "And we are not." However, multiple people familiar with the Pentagon's analysis cautioned that any permanent changes to American posture were still distant and would require the approval of senior administration officials.

The development comes as the Pentagon has publicly estimated that the war's cost will reach about $37.5 billion by the end of September, The Washington Post reported, but that amount does not account for the money it will take to rebuild bases in the region. — ANI

SCHOOLS MEALS INITIATIVE

German Africa Prize awarded to Kenyan social entrepreneur

NAIROBI: The German Africa Foundation (DAS) is presenting the German Africa Prize to Wawira Njiru — a woman whose initiative has transformed schools meals throughout Kenya.

In the beginning, Njiru started by feeding a regular meal to 25 schoolchildren; at that time, she was only a student with a dream to scale up her operation and provide a daily meal to 100 children.

Today, her work reaches more than 660,000 children at over 1,900 schools across Kenya.

Through her social enterprise, Food4Education (F4E), Njiru has "transformed a charitable idea into a functioning school-feeding system that reaches children, engages families, and strengthens local economic cycles," said Claus Stäcker, chair of the independent Africa Prize jury and director ofprograms for Africa at Deutsche Welle (DW), which serves as the media partner of the annual event.

Stäcker referred to the F4E approach as "an African solution to a global problem," adding that in honoring her out of "dozens of outstanding individuals," the German Africa Foundation had "once again recognized an extraordinary young woman, who tenaciously pursues her dreams and convictions, serving as an example for thousands of committed and innovative Africans."

Creating a sustainable supply chain for school meals

School meals in Kenya typically rely on a combination of funding: Parents cover part of the costs, which are supplemented by donations and government funds.

With F4E, that model extends to including local sources: about 80% of the food distributed by the organization comes from small-scale farmers.

This way, school meals are freshly sourced — and farmers have a reliable market for selling their produce.

For a long time, school meals were viewed as charity. We've proven that it's economic infrastructure," said 35-year-old Njiru.

'Stubborn' with a vision

Njiru told DW that receiving the award is "an incredible honor for me and for all of Food4Education, our 6,000 staff who wake up every day to make sure that kids are fed," a job that has taken a great deal of dedication and perseverance through the years.

"I'm stubborn. Once I figure I want something, I try and work towards it. And, you know, it's hard to tell me something is not possible", she explained. — DW

LEBANON

Over 850,000 displaced return amid lack of services, widespread disruption

GENEVA: Amid continued tensions in West Asia, a report by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has observed that about 850,000 displaced persons have returned to areas of origin; however, the crisis remains far from over as humanitarian agencies remain underfunded, thereby posing challenges to restoring livelihoods and rehabilitating infrastructure.

In a post on X on Tuesday, the UNHCR underlined that, despite declared ceasefire arrangements, fresh Israeli airstrikes in south Lebanon over the weekend triggered a new wave of displacement, with hundreds of families fleeing northward in search of safety. These movements add to an already protracted displacement crisis, increasing uncertainty for communities attempting to make their way home.

"Around 860,000 people are reported to have returned to their areas of origin, while some 360,000 people remain displaced, including at least 22,000 people living in collective shelters. Others report living with relatives or in overcrowded rented apartments," UNHCR said.

There were more than 1 million people displaced inside Lebanon during the peak of the conflict. Many families remain unable to return to their homes due to extensive debris, insecurity, lack of access to their communities, and widespread damage to infrastructure, resulting in strained or nonfunctioning health, water and electricity services.

The organisation has highlighted how humanitarian agencies are also facing severe resource shortages, limiting their ability to assist displaced people and those attempting to return.

"The revised Lebanon inter-agency Flash Appeal of $639.9 million is only 48 per cent funded. The inter-agency appeal includes some $94.2 million for UNHCR relief efforts.

Overall, UNHCR's Lebanon operation is only 24 per cent funded against total requirements of US$472.3 million for 2026," the post said.

Noting how many people undertake repeated "go-and-see" visits before deciding whether return is safe or feasible, while others continue to move between areas of displacement and origin, the UNHCR said that as a result, the distinction between those who have returned and those who remain displaced has become increasingly blurred.

Underlining the fragile security situation in Lebanon, the UNHCR said that the humanitarian needs of hundreds of thousands of people remain immense. It said that despite a decrease in the intensity of hostilities, airstrikes continue to put many lives at risk with movement restrictions, military activity and risks related to explosive remnants of war continuing to affect large parts of southern Lebanon and the Bekaa, posing threats to safety and preventing sustainable solutions for conflict-affected communities.

The UNHCR urged for sustained support as displaced families, returnees and affected communities face significant challenges in rebuilding homes, restoring livelihoods, rehabilitating infrastructure and achieving sustainable recovery. — ANI

SUMMERTIME EXERCISES

US, South Korea cut short joint drills after Trump criticism

SEOUL: South Korea and the United States will cut short their ongoing annual war games by about half, the two nations said on Wednesday, after US President Donald Trump deemed the drills "inappropriate and hostile" and ordered a substantial reduction in his country's participation.

The summertime exercises began on Monday and were slated to run till August 27.

The drills will now end on August 21, South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said in a statement, adding that the decision was made "at the suggestion of the US side".

The two allies also agreed on partial adjustment to the scope of the drills, including downsizing some joint field training exercises, the Chiefs of Staff said.

On Sunday, Trump announced on his Truth Social platform that he had directed the Pentagon to scale back the exercises, saying it was too late to cancel them altogether.

Trump said that the drills were not only costly but "send a signal that is totally inappropriate and hostile" to Seoul's arch-rival North Korea, which he said has been "unthreatening and respectful" to Washington as long as he has been President.

Trump also highlighted his "good relationship" with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.

Trump ended his Sunday statement noting that South Korea had refused to help the US in actions against Iran.

"I recently asked the president of South Korea if they would like to join us in the denuclearisation of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and they said, 'No thanks!'" the US President said.

North Korea rails against rills

On Wednesday, North Korea's state media denounced the drills as s a "most immediate and open threat", but did not mention Trump's overture.

A commentary published by Pyongyang's official news agency KCNA called the US and South Korea "warmongers" raising tension on the Korean peninsula.

"Our exercise of its right to self-defense will continue to completely neutralise the enemies' military threat," the commentary said.

South Korea's President Lee Jae Myung has said that the exercises were defensive in nature and Seoul had no intention of using them to attack North Korea or heighten tension in the region.

What are the US-South Korea joint military exercises?

The Ulchi Freedom Shield is largely a computer-simulated command post drill designed to prepare for a possible attack by North Korea.

It was reported to have two phases, the first focused on defending against potential threats from the north and was scheduled to go till Friday.

The second phase of the drills, which has reportedly been scrapped, would have seen the participants practicing a counteroffensive until August 27. — DW

With heat records continually being broken and southern summers getting hotter, travelers are heading north. Fragile ecosystems are paying the price

COOLER DESTINATIONS ARE DRAWING TOURISTS — CAN NATURE COPE?

A ridge with sweeping views across Jotunheimen, a mountain region in southern Norway, seemed like the perfect hiking route for tour operator Georg Sichelschmidt to bring visitors. Then locals informed him it was home to nesting eagles.

The trail remained open. But Sichelschmidt didn't want to disturb the apex predators at home in the massive peaks, dotted with turquoise lakes and glaciers.

"We decided not to use this trail anymore. We had to find another solution," said Sichelschmidt, who runs nature-based tourism company JVB travel.

Norway's right-to-roam rules, known as allemannsretten, give people broad access to nature regardless of land ownership, but also require them to respect it. For Sichelschmidt, who moved from Germany to Norway 16 years ago for its nature, the decision was an easy choice.

But with climate change reshaping summer travel, protecting nature will require far more than individual decisions. According to a 2026 OECD tourism trends report, longer and more intense heat waves across Southern Europe are helping drive interest in cooler destinations. That shift is raising concerns about whether nature in countries like Norway can withstand growing visitor numbers.

Is heat changing the way we travel?

The travel industry has coined the term "coolcation" to promote the shift in summer travel habits. It's too early to know how widespread the trend is, said Daniel Scott, a professor specialising in climate and tourism at Canada's University of Waterloo.

Booking companies, hotels and airlines don't publish data showing how many travelers switch destinations because of heat alone, he said. Still, he added, "we know that people are thinking about it. Some say they are acting on it."

Sichelschmidt said he's seeing the trend firsthand. Partner tour operators offering trips to Mediterranean and the Nordic regions report growing interest in "active" northern vacations, such as hiking and biking, during summer.

"It is difficult to go hiking in France, Spain or Italy in July and August when it is 40 degrees [Celsius, 104 Fahrenheit] plus. The Nordics are a good option to escape from that," he said, adding that Mediterranean travel is shifting to spring and autumn.

More visitors, more pressure on nature

Northern Norway already offers a glimpse of what rising visitor numbers can mean for fragile environments.

Lofoten, with its dramatic cliffs, deep fjords and wild beaches, is home to around 25,000 people. In 2025, it recorded more than 807,000 commercial guest nights, according to Statistics Norway. Increased interest in cooler vacations could add to existing pressure on nature there.

The archipelago is home to hundreds of bird species, including a colony of puffins that could be disturbed by growing visitor numbers. Nesting birds are vulnerable in late summer. But other wildlife can be impacted too, including reindeer during calving season in May and early June, said Elina Hutton, a tourism researcher at UiT The Arctic University of Norway.

Lofoten's coastal heathland, bogs and alpine vegetation are also highly vulnerable to foot traffic. When hikers walk on wet ground, they can damage roots and strip away the thin soil covering mountain bedrock.

Using satellite data, Hutton tracks how growing visitor numbers are affecting trails on Lofoten. Along the route to Kvalvika Beach, an isolated bay only reachable by foot, the worst trails have widened to about 20 metres (65 feet), destroying surrounding vegetation. Northern ecosystems recover slowly from damage.

"That kind of damage is pretty much permanent here," said Hutton, who urges visitors to stick to established trails rather than seeking out "hidden gems" to post on social media.

Managing tourism, not just promoting it

Sichelschmidt believes tour operators can help reduce environmental harm by steering visitors onto well-managed trails, while avoiding the most sensitive areas.

"When we're talking about a large number of people, we need to direct them to where they can go so that the trails can be maintained without destroying nature," he added.

But decisions like Sichelschmidt's to avoid the eagle's nest cannot be left entirely to tour operators. Destinations will have to decide where visitors should go, which areas need greater protection, and how much pressure nature can sustain.

Norway is already experimenting with ways to manage tourism. Under a new law, communities facing particularly high tourism pressure will be allowed to charge a 3% accommodation tax starting in 2027. Hutton said the tax would not reduce visitor numbers but could help in other ways.

"At least it gives us a bit more tools, a bit more money to build better trails, to build better toilets and have better infrastructure to receive this number of tourists," she said.

Some countries are offering ecotourism initiatives that involve visitors in nature conservation work. In the Faroe Islands, for example, the "Closed for Maintenance" initiative invites volunteers to repair trails and maintain natural areas before they reopen to visitors.

Still, destinations, municipalities and tourism businesses need to consider how many visitors they can accommodate and spread tourism evenly throughout the year, Hutton told DW. "It's not good for anybody if we just get more tourists."

Even 'cool' destinations are warming

But as humans continue to burn the fossil fuels heating the planet, the search for reliably cool destinations is becoming harder. Daniel Scott shared preliminary findings from an unpublished study with DW examining how heat risk is changing across Euromonitor's top 100 global city destinations.

The research suggests tourists will increasingly be exposed to higher temperatures and more frequent heat-related risks.

According to the analysis, only nine cities, including Dublin, Auckland and San Francisco, averaged fewer than 10 days per year with temperatures of 32 Celsius (90 Fahrenheit) or higher between 2015 and 2025.

By the 2050s, that number is projected to fall by more than half, highlighting how even traditionally cooler destinations are expected to become significantly warmer.

Hutton finds it concerning to see destinations welcome tourism business opportunities created by Europe's extreme heat. "The same climate change impacts us too in one way or another, and no destination is going to be a winner when the situation evolves like this," she said.

As more vacationers seek cooler weather, Sichelschmidt has decided not to use the term "coolcation" in his company's marketing.

"We don't want to use this situation for promotion," he said. "It's a real situation, but it's sad that we have to talk about it — or that we realize that we are destroying our planet and things change so fast." -DW

Three-medal haul caps Oman paddlers West Asia campaign

A silver and two bronze medals were won by the national TT team players at the event in Jordan

Times News Service

MUSCAT: A three-medal haul capped a promising campaign for Oman at the West Asia Table Tennis Championships in Jordan, with the Sultanate's young players returning home with one silver and two bronze medals after seven days of intense regional competition.

The results underlined the growing strength of Oman's youth table tennis programme, with players making their mark across the team and doubles events against some of the region's leading young talents.

The standout performance came from Ahmed al Rawahi and Iyad al Jasasi, who secured silver in the boys' U19 doubles.

The Omani pair battled past Qatar's Taqi Al Din Najadat and Jad al Baisani 3-2 in a closely fought semi-final to reach the title decider.

They pushed hard again in the final but narrowly went down 3-2 to Qatar's Ahmed Qarni and Rawad Al Nasser, settling for a well-earned runners-up finish and Oman's first medal of the championships.

Oman's girls then added two bronze medals in the U13 events.

Talia al Rawahi, Salma al Nasri and Fatma al Balushi claimed bronze in the girls' U13 team event after a competitive campaign.

Oman defeated Qatar 3-1 but suffered narrow 3-2 and 3-1 defeats against Jordan and Bahrain respectively, before losing 3-0 to Kuwait. Bahrain won the gold, with Kuwait taking silver and Qatar finishing fourth.

The third medal came in the girls' U13 doubles, where Salma al Nasri and Talia al Rawahi reached the semi-finals following a series of encouraging performances. Their run ended with a 3-1 defeat against Qatar's Kinda Mahmoud and Hessa, earning the Omani pair another bronze.

For Oman's coaching staff, the medal tally was encouraging evidence of the progress being made, while the closely contested matches also highlighted areas that need further work. National team coach Omid Shams Shahrbabaki praised the players for their efforts and said the results reflected the continued development of Omani table tennis.

"These achievements reflect the progress made by our players, both boys and girls. We were hoping to win more medals, but some of our players suffered defeats in several closely fought matches," Shahrbabaki said.

He stressed that the championships offered valuable international exposure for Oman's young players, allowing them to gain experience against strong regional opposition.

The competition also provided the coaching team with an opportunity to assess the players' performances and identify areas for improvement ahead of upcoming tournaments.

OMAN SAILING CHAMPIONSHIP

Young stars crowned champions at Ras Al Hadd

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Mohammed Al Qasmi, Abdulrahman Khalid Al Hadi, Mohamed Abdul Kareem and Ali Husain Al Sadi were crowned champions as the Oman Sailing Championship wrapped up after five days of intense racing in Ras Al Hadd, Sur.

The four sailors topped the Optimist, ILCA 4, ILCA 6 and ILCA 7 fleets respectively as 56 competitors battled challenging conditions and completed up to 12 races off the coast of South Al Sharqiyah.

The championship featured 43 Omani sailors from Oman Sail's national network, alongside competitors from the UAE and Sri Lanka, providing the country's emerging sailors with valuable international competition.

In the Optimist fleet, the largest of the championship, Al Qasmi held off a closely fought challenge to claim overall honours, with Khaled Yahya Al Suraihi taking silver and UAE sailor Theyab Almheri finishing third.

Mohammed Sulaiman Al Balushi added the Under-12 title, while Abeer Khalil Al Zakwani finished as the top-ranked girl to win the Optimist girls competition.

The ILCA 4 title went to Abdulrahman Khalid Al Hadi after another fiercely contested 12-race series. Hassan Nassar Al Wahaibi finished runner-up, while Aws Maher Al Busaidi secured third place.

Mohamed Abdul Kareem claimed the ILCA 6 crown, finishing ahead of Elias Badr Al Fadhli, with Zakaria Mohammed Al Ghafri completing the podium.

Ali Husain Al Sadi took the ILCA 7 title after another tight battle, with Asalem Ali Al Hamdani finishing second and Almoatasem Al Farsi third.

The championship marked the culmination of Oman Sail's High-Performance Summer Training Camp, with sailors putting weeks of intensive preparation into practice under demanding racing conditions.

The closing and prize-giving ceremony was attended by Dr Khamis Al Jabri, CEO of Oman Sail, who presented the medals, and Mohammed Juma Al Mukhaini, Senior Manager of Communication and Community Affairs at Oman LNG.

The event also underlined Oman Sail's growing focus on developing a strong national pathway from youth sailing to high-performance competition, while giving local athletes the opportunity to test themselves against international rivals.

Abdulaziz Al Shidi, Acting Director of Sailing at Oman Sail, said the conclusion of the training camp and championship represented an important milestone in the national sailing calendar.

"Seeing our national sailors execute high-level tactics alongside international competitors underscores the strength of our youth pathway and high-performance development," he said.

He also welcomed the participation of sailors from the UAE and Sri Lanka, saying their presence reflected the championship's growing stature as a regional training and competitive event for international sailors, coaches and teams.

UNUSUAL EVENT

Real Madrid officially present José Mourinho in a closed-door ceremony

MADRID: In an unusual ceremony closed to the media and fans, Real Madrid officially presented coach José Mourinho on Tuesday.

The event took place at the club's headquarters in Madrid, with president Florentino Pérez welcoming the coach.

The only images of the presentation were provided by Real Madrid TV and the club's website and social media accounts.

"I'm one of you," Mourinho said in a message to fans in a video released by the club. "And not just today, but since I arrived in 2010 and after I left in 2013, always with you. ... To return to Real Madrid is to return home."

Madrid said the coach was signed for three seasons until June 30, 2029.

After the signing, Madrid said Mourinho received a replica of the stadium, a watch and a jersey with his name.

Madrid have been revamped after a second consecutive season without a major title. In addition to Mourinho, who replaced Álvaro Arbeloa, the club also brought in players such as Marc Cucurella, Ibrahima Konaté, Denzel Dumfries, Bernardo Silva and Yan Diomande.

Kylian Mbappé, Vinícius Júnior and Jude Bellingham will lead the squad again as they try to keep Barcelona from winning a third straight La Liga title.

Mourinho was hired in June and officially took over in July at the start of the preseason.

He is back for a second stint with Madrid some 13 years after he left the club.

He was in charge from 2010-13, winning a Spanish league and a Copa del Rey.

He was more remembered for his confrontational personality that ended up splitting his own squad and alienating all but the most hardcore fans, as well as a large part of the local media. — Agencies

Premier League chief: Infantino hit 'self-destruct' with World Cup plan

UEFA has been a vocal critic of Infantino and England's Football Association has also withdrawn its support for the FIFA president

LONDON: Premier League chief executive Richard Masters says under-fire FIFA president Gianni Infantino pressed the "self-destruct button" over his botched plan to bring private investment into the World Cup.

Kevin Lamour, who broke ranks with senior directors at world football's governing body last month and issued a scathing statement criticising Infantino over the plans, left his job as FIFA's chief operating officer on Monday.

UEFA has been a vocal critic of Infantino and England's Football Association has also withdrawn its support for the FIFA president.

"This is a problem of FIFA's making," Masters told the BBC.

"This is a self-inflicted wound. The organisation has pressed the self-destruct button, and the consequences of that flow now into the solutions that need to be found.

"I don't think FIFA should ever contemplate selling off a stake in the World Cup.

"They're a not-for-profit organisation. They should really be holding that competition in trust for the future of football."

Masters added: "I think it's a bad idea, and the FA has taken the right position regarding Gianni."

As for a possible rival to Infantino, up for re-election next year, Masters said: "I think an emerging unity candidate should have on his or her agenda reform of FIFA, and perhaps even reform of the president's role and how it interacts with those things."

Elsewhere, Norway's football federation president on Tuesday accused FIFA of fear tactics for removing a senior official who publicly opposed FIFA leader Gianni Infantino's now-withdrawn World Cup sell-off plan.

Lise Klaveness, who heads the Norwegian Football Federation since 2022, said that the firing of FIFA's chief operating officer Kevin Lamour was "unacceptable" and urged other senior leaders to resist potentially damaging orders.

Lamour's exit late Monday came 17 days after his statement criticising Infantino's $20 billion private equity project, which was withdrawn just hours later.

"Now he is thrown out and we are supposed to move on. It's unacceptable, it's management by fear," Klaveness said in a telephone interview, describing Lamour as "the best football administrator I have ever met." - Agencies

FORMER WORLD CUP WINNER

Senegal hire Vieira as coach to replace fired Pape Thiaw

DAKAR: Senegal hired Patrick Vieira as their new coach on Tuesday to replace Pape Thiaw, who was fired after the team was eliminated from the World Cup in the round of 32.

Senegal announced the news in a post on Instagram, without giving any details of the length of the 50-year-old Vieira's contract.

Vieira won the World Cup with France as a player during a glittering club career with Inter and AC Milan, Arsenal and Manchester City.

His coaching career has not been anywhere near as successful, however.

Vieira has previously coached New York City FC, Nice, Crystal Palace and Strasbourg.

His last job was in charge of Genoa, but — despite an initially positive start — he was fired after less than a year with the team in last place in Serie A.

Senegal were eliminated from the World Cup by Belgium despite leading 2-0 with about five minutes of regulation time remaining.

The team also came close to elimination in the group stage after losses to France and Norway.

Thiaw and his technical staff were dismissed less than two weeks later.

Thiaw, 45, was appointed in 2024 and led the West African nation to a disputed continental title in Morocco this year before the victory was overturned by the Confederation of African Football. Senegal's appeal to the Court of Arbitration for Sport will be heard on October. 8. - Agencies

PRE-SEASON FRIENDLIES

Bayern midfielder Musiala reveals 'neurological' issue after collapse during game

MUNICH: Bayern Munich midfielder Jamal Musiala said he's dealing with a neurological issue but doing well despite collapsing during a pre-season game on Tuesday at Heidenheim, three days after a similar incident against Leipzig.

The 23-year-old Germany international went down shortly after entering Tuesday's friendly as a substitute in the second half. Players from both teams made a circle around Musiala as he received medical treatment. He was then helped as he walked off the pitch.

Musiala had collapsed on Saturday during a friendly against Leipzig. German news agency DPA reported he had left the field on his own but still appeared dazed.

After Tuesday's game, Musiala posted a message on his Instagram account, explaining that he had been diagnosed with temporary "but easily treatable absence seizures" caused by a neurological problem.

"These can lead to the moments that happened recently, such as against Leipzig or even now in Heidenheim," Musiala wrote.

Bayern, in its report on Tuesday's game, only said of the incident: "There was a setback when Jamal Musiala had to be subbed off with a knock minutes after coming on."

Musiala said he's "very optimistic" and is receiving excellent medical treatment.

"The important thing is that there is no additional health risk," he wrote.

"In close coordination and regular communication with experts, it has been my personal wish to face the challenge and, with the endorsement of the neurological specialists, to devote myself to what helps me most in recovery: to simply live my everyday life and keep up with my passion of playing football," Musiala added.

Bundesliga champions Bayern face Borussia Dortmund on Saturday in the German Supercup, the traditional curtain-raiser for the season. - Agencies

SPAIN CAPTAIN

Rodri hails Barcelona's values after a 'tough decision' to leave Man City

MADRID: Barcelona made official the signing of Spain captain Rodri on Tuesday, with the midfielder celebrating his arrival to a club that understands "the values" of football and saying it was a "tough decision" to leave Manchester City.

The midfielder who helped Spain secure their second World Cup title transferred from Man City to join a squad already filled with world champions such as Lamine Yamal, Dani Olmo, Pau Cubarsí, Gavi and Pedri.

The 30-year-old Rodri's contract will run to 2030, Barcelona said.

The announcement was made after the midfielder underwent a medical and the clubs finalised transfer details.

"It's a very special day, a very important new chapter in my career," he said. "

It was a tough decision. First, because I'm leaving Manchester City, a club that has given me everything and where I've been incredibly happy. I'll be eternally grateful," Rodri said.

"I'm also grateful that they understood it was a good time to leave. Barcelona is a fantastic club, a global reference for its approach to football and the values it represents. It was a tough decision, but Barcelona was my first choice."

Rodri, who had one year left on his City contract, said upon arriv-

ing in Barcelona on Monday that it was "a dream to play" for the Catalan club.

"When offers came in, the first step was understanding that a chapter at my club had ended and it was time to look for a way out. It took me a while to process that. It was the most special club I've ever been at," Rodri said Tuesday. "I studied and analysed the offers, they were from very important clubs. Together with my family and friends, we made the decision we thought was best."

Barcelona agreed to a transfer worth 76.5 million euros ($88.5 million), according to a person with knowledge of the transaction. The person spoke on the condition of anonymity because the details of the deal have not been made public.

Barcelona, chasing a three-peat in La Liga, have already boosted its 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.

Rodri won the Golden Ball as the World Cup's best player and was crucial for Spain's title-winning campaign.

"I've been with many of my team-mates for almost two months now, and it's been a warm welcome," Rodri said. "It's a very young dressing room, eager to do important things. I hope to contribute to what they've brought me here for. I'm joining a tight and enthusiastic dressing room."

Rodri spent seven years at City, making 298 appearances, scoring 28 goals and helping the English club win 14 trophies.

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.

Rodri had joined City from Atletico Madrid. He previously played at Villarreal.

His departure further weakens City's midfield, with Bernardo Silva having left for Real Madrid this off-season. - Agencies

ROUND-UP

iCAUR Summit Escape 2026 takes customers on unforgettable journey to scenic Jabal Akhdar

The journey reflected the brand's "Born to Play" philosophy, offering customers a chance to explore Oman's dramatic mountain landscapes while experiencing the capability and versatility of their iCAUR vehicles firsthand

MUSCAT: iCAUR Oman successfully hosted the iCAUR Summit Escape '26, an exclusive weekend customer getaway from Muscat to Jabal Akhdar.

Designed to celebrate the brand's growing community in Oman, the retreat brought together iCAUR owners for a weekend of scenic convoy drives, off-road adventures and memorable experiences that captured the true spirit of the iCAUR lifestyle.

The journey reflected the brand's "Born to Play" philosophy, offering customers a chance to explore Oman's dramatic mountain landscapes while experiencing the capability and versatility of their iCAUR vehicles firsthand.

The convoy made its way through Jabal Akhdar's stunning mountain scenery, stopping at the historic Bayt Al Ridaydah Fort before heading to a dedicated off-road venue, where participants put their iCAUR vehicles to the test across challenging terrain. The activities showcased the brand's engineering strength and all-terrain versatility, with drivers experiencing firsthand the confidence and performance that define the iCAUR range. The day concluded with a lively evening gathering, featuring a BBQ dinner, entertainment, and networking under the stars, where customers shared their ownership experiences and forged deeper connections with the brand.

A highlight of the evening was the presentation of the Recognition Award – iCAUR Brand Advocate, honoring a customer whose passion and enthusiasm best represented the spirit of iCAUR. The award, along with heartfelt customer testimonials shared throughout the evening, underscored the strong sense of community and loyalty growing within Oman's iCAUR ownership base. The iCAUR Summit Escape '26 not only celebrated the adventurous, premium character of the brand's vehicles but also reinforced iCAUR Oman's commitment to building lasting relationships with its customers, ensuring every iCAUR journey remains defined by excitement, connection, and exploration.

Backed by Chery's deep manufacturing heritage and cutting-edge innovation, iCAUR targets the young — and the young at heart — through its integrated "Category + Ecosystem + Culture" brand model. Oman represents a key strategic market for iCAUR in the Middle East. The brand is exclusively represented in the Sultanate by the New World Autos.

SUPPORT

Meethaq Islamic Banking sponsors Saih Al Ramth Camel Racing Festival in Wilayat of Jaalan Bani Bu Ali

MUSCAT: Meethaq Islamic Banking from Bank Muscat, participated as a sponsor of the Saih Al Ramth Camel Racing Festival, held at the Saih Al Ramth racetrack in the Wilayat of Jaalan Bani Bu Ali, South Sharqiyah Governorate.

The festival was held under the patronage of Sheikh Mohammed Humaid Al Ghabshi, Wali of Jaalan Bani Bu Ali and Chairman of the Festival Organising Committee, in the presence of dignitaries, visitors, camel owners and enthusiasts of the sport.

This sponsorship reflects Meethaq's continuous support for authentic heritage and sporting events that celebrate Oman's national identity, while contributing to engagement and local economic activity across the Sultanate.

Saih Al Ramth is one of the prominent camel racing festivals in the Sultanate of Oman, attracting around 10,000 visitors this year from South Sharqiyah and neighboring governorates. Held over two days, 15 and 16 August, the festival featured 20 races across various camel categories, reflecting the important place camel racing holds in Omani society.

Commenting on the occasion, Sami Bait Rashid, Assistant General Manager – Meethaq Retail Banking, said: "We are pleased to support the Saih Al Ramth festival, which celebrates the richness of Omani heritage and efforts of the people of Jaalan Bani Bu Ali to preserve these traditions for future generations. This sponsorship reflects Meethaq's approach in supporting initiatives that create meaningful community impact, strengthening our connection with the communities we serve."

Through this sponsorship, Meethaq Islamic Banking continues to contribute to events that stimulate local economic and tourism activity across the wilayats, and by providing valuable opportunities for camel owners and participants. This complements the objectives of Oman Vision 2040, to diversify sources of national income and enhance the contribution of non-oil sectors, including sports and heritage tourism, to the national economy.

Meethaq operates the largest Islamic banking branch network in the Sultanate, comprising 30 branches across various governorates, supported by more than 64 ATMs and CDMs.

In addition, Meethaq customers have access to over 900 Bank Muscat ATMs and CDMs and multifunctional kiosks, located across the Sultanate, ensuring customers enjoy convenient access to banking services and financial solutions.


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The 'Workable' Peace – Diplomacy or a Tactical Trap?
OMR3.3bn investments in logistics
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