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ROYAL PARDON

HM pardons prisoners

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Supreme Commander, has issued a Royal pardon to 459 Omani and foreign prisoners convicted of different cases. The Royal pardon coincides with the Prophet Mohammed's (PBUH) Birth Anniversary. It also comes out of consideration for the families of the prisoners. – ONA

HM receives written message from Saudi Crown Prince **A5**

Holiday

There will be no edition of Times of Oman on Thursday on account of Prophet Mohammed's (PBUH) birth anniversary.

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN

Symposium on disease vector management

1 Dhofar Municipality is organising a two-day symposium on the management and control of disease vectors, notably mosquitoes. The symposium, which began yesterday in the Wilayat of Salalah, seeks to explore the latest scientific and practical methods in the field of vector control. It discusses successful local and regional experiences with a view to enhancing the role of municipalities and relevant authorities in this field. >A2

OMAN

Oman e-sports team secures third place

2 Oman's national e-sports team achieved a remarkable milestone at the FIFAe Continental Cup 2026 – Asia for the Rocket League discipline, concluding the tournament in third place before clinching the playoff match and securing qualification for the FIFAe World Cup 2026. >A3

MARKET

Pact inked for health sector investment

3 The Ministry of Health on Tuesday signed two memoranda of cooperation with the Development Bank and Sohar International, as part of the strategic direction to strengthen partnerships between the government sector and national financial institutions. >B1

OMAN, IRAN DISCUSS PLAN FOR SAFE PASSAGE IN STRAIT OF HORMUZ

Both the countries agreed to implement a joint project to clear the Strait of mines

MUSCAT: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister paid a working visit to the Islamic Republic of Iran on Tuesday, where he held constructive consultations with his Iranian counterpart Dr. Seyed Abbas Araghchi.

A joint statement between the Sultanate of Oman and the Islamic Republic of Iran following the consultations between the two ministers pointed out that the meeting focused on the importance both countries attach to the resumption of safe navigation through the Strait of Hormuz while preserving their sovereignty and sovereign rights.

The two ministers discussed a phased framework that could provide a practical and implementable basis for moving forward, in light of the current situation in the Strait resulting from the recent war and its tragic repercussions.

The proposed framework includes the establishment of a joint temporary navigational corridor through the Strait of Hormuz and an agreement to implement a joint project to clear the Strait of mines.

Technical negotiations between the two sides would continue with a view to agreeing on a permanent navigational corridor and future administration of the Strait, as well as a mechanism for information-sharing, traffic management, and the provision of relevant navigational and security services.

In this context, both sides underscored the importance of convening joint discussions with regional states bordering the waters of the Gulf. They further stressed the need to uphold applicable international law and respect the sovereign rights of the coastal states. -ONA

SUCCESSFUL PROPAGATION

Salalah's Royal Gardens and Farms cultivates diverse orchid varieties

SALALAH: The Royal Gardens and Farms at the Royal Court Affairs, has achieved successful propagation of both indigenous and imported orchid varieties, following years of sustained experimentation, developmental efforts and ongoing research. Initial cultivation of orchids commenced in 1982 at the nurseries of the Royal Gardens and Farms in Salalah, using imported seedlings.

This marked the beginning of subsequent phases dedicated to the propagation and production of orchids in an extensive array of colours, forms, and cultivars, carried out at the farms of Bir bint Ahmed and Qayrun Hayriti in Salalah.

The Governorate of Dhofar enjoys a climate particularly conducive to orchid propagation, with temperature and humidity levels that closely mimic the plant's natural requirements.

The species thrives in environments where temperatures range between 18 and 32 degrees Celsius, with relative humidity maintained at 60 to 85 percent.

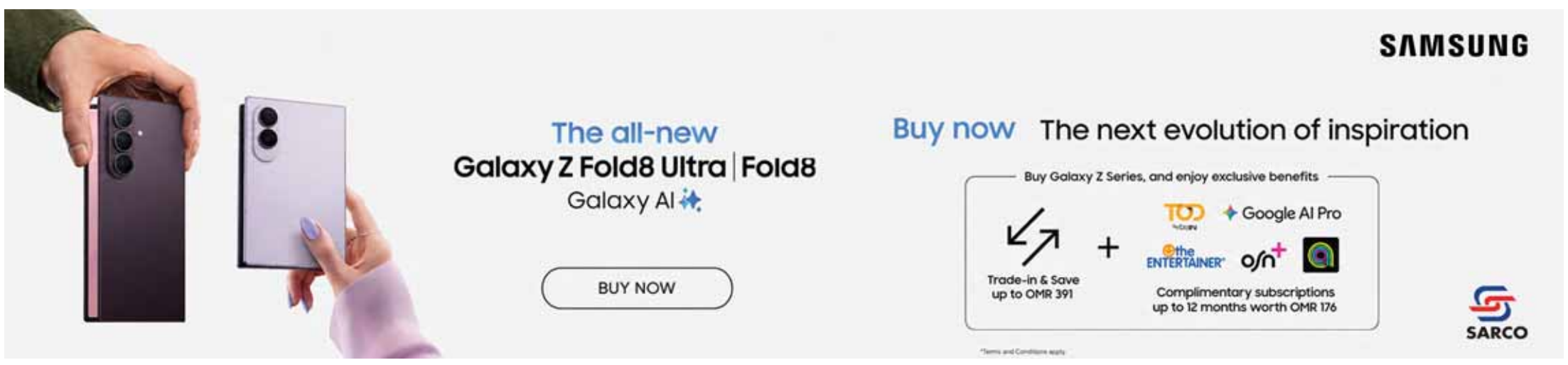
The Royal Gardens and Farms has devoted considerable attention to the multiplication of diverse orchid varieties, including the indigenous strain collected from Tawi Atayr in the east and the Dhalkut Mountains in the west.

This effort is underpinned by a commitment to conserving, nurturing and propagating this native variety, which is distinguished by its flower spike—reaching lengths of 1.5 to 2 metres—and its comparatively small blooms relative to hybrid cultivars. In addition, a second indigenous variety has been cultivated, characterised by a shorter stature, larger flowers and more vibrant colouration.

Elaborating on other cultivated varieties, Eng. Ibrahim Ahmed Quttan, Director of the Technical Support Department at the Royal Gardens and Farms in Salalah, stated that multiple orchid genera have been successfully propagated, including Dendrobium, Vanda, Arachnis (Aranda), Oncidium, Cattleya, and Phalaenopsis. Among these, Dendrobium has demonstrated the greatest adaptability to Dhofar's climatic conditions, followed by Oncidium.

He further explained that orchid propagation is carried out through several methodologies, including tissue culture, stem cuttings, offshoots, and lateral growths derived from the mother plant.

The roots are cultivated in specialised growing media such as charcoal, coir (coconut husk fibre), and the bark of certain trees, which collectively contribute to maintaining root cleanliness and moisture levels while providing effective protection against fungal and insect infestations. -ONA



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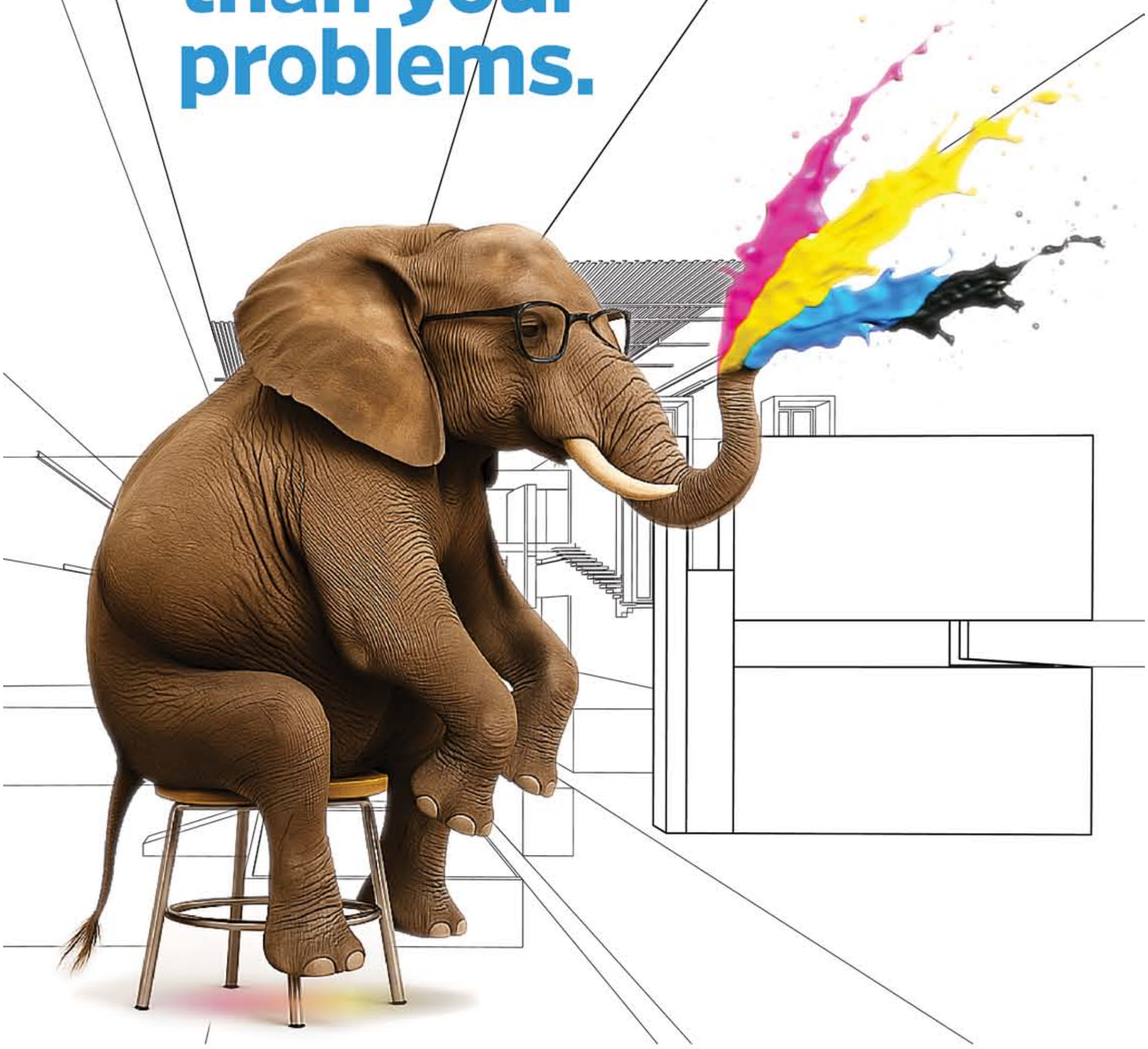

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OMAN

COMMENTARY

Oman's Construction Industry: Entering a New Era of Growth

The construction industry in Oman is witnessing rapid expansion and has emerged as the second-largest contributor to the national economy, surpassed only by the oil sector. Oman's construction market is projected to reach USD 7.27bn in 2026 and expand to USD 8.46bn by 2031.

The construction industry – the largest employer in the private sector – is witnessing significant growth, Industry forecasts indicate that Oman's construction market will continue its upward trend over the next four quarters. The construction sector is projected to maintain an average annual growth rate of 4.4% between 2026 and 2029, supported by sustained investments in renewable energy, transportation, and housing.

In February 2026, the Public Authority for Projects, Tenders and Local Content launched a USD 3.9 billion development pipeline, scheduling 10,000 future tenders across 57 government groups to stimulate the private sector. The Omani government has introduced a range of initiatives targeting the development of affordable housing, healthcare, transportation, renewable energy, and essential infrastructure.

Residential builds currently lead with over 32% of total market share. The government plans to construct over 60,240 new homes and nearly 6,000 hotel rooms by 2030 to accommodate urban migration and a targeted surge in tourism.

Infrastructure: Strong expansion, driven by national railway projects, road improvements, and new ports and logistics hubs.

Residential & Urban Development: Major city projects for 100,000 residents and initiatives for smart, sustainable cities are underway.

Energy & Utilities: Renewables are targeted to reach 30% of electricity generation by 2030 through major investments.

Tourism & Hospitality: Increased hotel construction and new tourism complexes are set to boost commercial building activity.

Key Trends in the Construction Sector: digital transformation, sustainability, and AI, BIM, alongside the rise of modular/prefabrication for faster, safer, and greener building, and increased focus on data management for efficiency.

Embracing Green Building Practices

Sustainable construction is becoming increasingly important within the sector.Notable practices include the incorporation of rainwater harvesting systems and the installation of solar panels, both of which contribute to reducing the overall carbon footprint of new developments.

Adoption of Modular and Prefabricated Construction

Another significant trend is the growing use of modular and prefabricated construction methods. These approaches offer considerable advantages, such as accelerating project timelines and improving quality control.

Advanced Engineering and Dewatering Solutions

The introduction of new dewatering technologies is making it possible to manage groundwater more efficiently during construction activities. These innovations are helping to ensure that projects are delivered on time and to a high standard, despite environmental and logistical challenges.

CORDIAL DISCUSSIONS

Al Nu'amani receives British Ambassador

MUSCAT: Gen. Sultan bin Mohammed Al Nu'amani, Minister of the Royal Office received in his office on Tuesday Liane Saunders, Ambassador of the United Kingdom to the Sultanate of Oman.

During the meeting, the two sides engaged in cordial discussions and reviewed the trajectory of bilateral relations, which continue to witness sustained progress across all domains, as well as means of further enhancing them to serve the joint interests.

The two sides also addressed a number of regional and international developments and issues of shared concern. -ONA

Discussion on ways to check disease vectors

The symposium seeks to explore the latest scientific methods in the field of vector control

SALALAH: Dhofar Municipality is organising a two-day symposium on the management and control of disease vectors, notably mosquitoes. The symposium, which began yesterday in the Wilayat of Salalah, seeks to explore the latest scientific and practical methods in the field of vector control. It discusses successful local and regional experiences with a view to enhancing the role of municipalities and relevant authorities in this field.

The symposium also highlights the role of artificial intelligence (AI) and modern technologies in vector control, in addition to consolidating the concept of integrated vector management (IVM).

The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of Dr. Said bin Hareb Al Lamki, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Health for Health Affairs.

Experts, specialists and academics from the Sultanate of Oman and abroad will elaborate on the symposium's 5 main themes, which are: Biological solutions and modern innovations in combating disease vectors; Integrated management of small biting insects; International experiences in integrated vector management; Common vector-borne diseases; and Partnerships in combating disease vectors.

The opening of the symposium included a visual presentation about the efforts of Dhofar Municipality in combating mosquitoes. -ONA

Ministry of Labour

Tender Announcement

The Internal Tender Committee at the Ministry of Labour announces the following tender:

Tender No.	Tender Name	Last date for electronic purchase	Date of submission of tender bids
32/2026	Project for Empowering and qualifying private sector employees (Subol Career Development Project)	Tuesday 1 September 2026	Thursday 10 September 2026

- Specialised companies can obtain the tender documents online through the link below from 8am, Sunday 23-8-2026 /https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om
- The opening of tender envelopes shall be at 11am, Thursday 10 September 2026.

(The lowest or any other tender shall not be binding to the ministry)

labour_OMAN

DIGITAL INNOVATIONS

Oman's youth shift towards flexible, AI-driven careers

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The rapid changes and transformations taking place in the modern world are giving rise to new forms of employment shaped by the realities of everyday life.

As the concept of a job shifts from its traditional path toward a more flexible space for innovation and self-created opportunities, young people are becoming more aware of how to engage with and adapt to this reality.

Moving beyond the traditional concept of employment while embracing global trends has encouraged young people to develop independent specialisations rather than wait for ready-made professions.

One of the factors contributing to this shift is the emergence of indicators pointing to opportunities that create jobs for individuals and provide different and non-fixed sources of income based on specific models.

This is taking place amid the growing role of modern technology, digital innovations and their governance, which are helping societies make better use of the capabilities they have developed.

This raises several questions about the impact of the digital economy in encouraging young people to develop independent specialisations, work toward designing professions and explore innovation to create jobs that do not yet exist, and genuinely seek occupations that meet the demands of the future and are currently absent from the labour market. It also highlights the motivations behind creating such professions, including personal curiosity, particularly in technology, the arts and artificial intelligence.

In this context, Talal bin Khamis Al Bahri, Senior Technician at the Educational Technologies Centre at Sultan Qaboos University, said that the concept of a "job" in its traditional form had become deeply rooted in the consciousness of Omani youth.

This attachment began in childhood, with employment viewed as a noble means of serving the nation, aligning academic and practical qualifications, and ensuring well-being and stability.

However, he noted that rapid global changes, the digital revolution and the intersection of cultures — regardless of geographical distance — have made communication and innovation increasingly prominent and brought about a fundamental shift in this concept, while the strong sense of national belonging remains firmly rooted.

Al Bahri added that Omani youth are no longer merely seeking traditional employment. They are now capable of successfully managing their own projects, relying on limited human resources and artificial intelligence tools that help them complete their tasks efficiently. He said young people are finding genuine enjoyment in this transformation, which meets the changing demands of the market and diversifies areas of creativity and production.

He pointed out that under the traditional model, an employee follows a single career path throughout their working life, largely characterised by routine, with advancement generally limited to gradual promotion to higher positions when opportunities arise. The innovative career path, by contrast, relies on horizontal skills and the ability to move between departments and specialisations, broadening employees' horizons and developing their integrated experience.

He explained that traditional thinking continues to place emphasis on lifelong job security because it provides psychological comfort and stability extending until retirement. However, security in a flexible career path is no longer tied to a particular position, but rather to acquired skills. Those who keep pace with modern technological developments and invest in artificial intelligence can strengthen their career stability and achieve sustainable success.

Regarding the traditional workplace structure, Al Bahri said leadership was once concentrated at the top of the hierarchy, with employees merely carrying out orders and remaining distant from decision-making. In a flexible environment, however, employees have become partners in decision-making and even decision-makers within their areas of work, transforming them from mere executors into successful innovators.

He also explained that the traditional "trial-and-error" culture had a negative impact, as employees came to believe that failure warranted punishment, creating a fear of taking risks. The flexible career model, by contrast, embraces learning from mistakes and encourages innovative solutions at the lowest possible cost, viewing failure as a step toward success.

On the financial front, he said major companies around the world are increasingly moving toward sharing profits with innovative employees in recognition of their contributions. This contrasts with the traditional system, which is limited to a monthly salary and an annual bonus, where applicable, creating a clear financial gap between the two models.

Al Bahri summarised the difference by saying that the modern career path provides an open working environment that promotes the flow of ideas and collaboration among teams, unlike the closed atmosphere of the traditional career path, which limits creativity and communication and isolates work from the spirit of innovation.

Regarding the digital economy and global trends encouraging young people to develop independent specialisations rather than wait for ready-made professions, Al Bahri said Omani youth are not isolated from the digital world.

Rather, they are adapting to the technological wave and the major digital transformation taking place globally. The international economic shift is encouraging young people to embrace self-reliance instead of traditional employment. The artificial intelligence and automation revolution has opened the door to new professions through which Omani youth can generate substantial income while managing projects from their mobile phones with the help of AI tools and in line with global trends.

He added that this has contributed to a shift in economic resources from those based on oil abundance, as he put it, toward resources based on human beings and their intellectual and mental capabilities. He also noted that the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated how digital businesses could provide greater resilience amid market fluctuations, while those relying on traditional employment witnessed layoffs.

He stressed that artificial intelligence and automation are increasingly penetrating different fields through big-data analysis, allowing young people to specialize in these areas and provide services across a wide range of disciplines.

Meanwhile, Rahma bint Said Al Rashidi, a graphic designer specialising in strategic communication and generative AI applications, said the future of work is no longer based on the random emergence of new jobs, nor are future professions necessarily built around separate specialisations. Instead, they are emerging from the reshaping of professional roles at the intersection of human knowledge and modern technologies.

Full story @ timesofoman.com/oman

Keralam expatriates gear up to celebrate Onam with fervour

With hearts filled with nostalgia for Keralam, thousands of expatriates here are eagerly getting ready to welcome the festive spirit of Onam

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The expatriate community from Keralam is gearing up to celebrate Onam with gaiety and fervour across the Sultanate of Oman on Wednesday.

This year, Thiruvonam falls on August 26 (Wednesday), with celebrations beginning on August 16 with Atham. All 10 days of the Onam celebration have their own significance. Also, the celebration marks the beginning of the New Year for the people of Kerala, popularly known as 'Kolla Varsham'.

With hearts filled with nostalgia for Keralam, thousands of expatriates here are eagerly getting ready to welcome the festive spirit of Onam.

Across the Sultanate, cultural organisations, Indian Social Club chapters, community associations and business establishments have lined up a variety of celebrations in the coming weeks. Preparations are already in full swing, with colourful events planned in different regions of Oman.

For Ashok PK, a longtime Indian expatriate living in Oman, Onam is a time to return to his roots and celebrate the festival with family and friends in Kerala.

Times Exclusive

Ashok is leaving Oman on Tuesday night to travel to India for the annual harvest festival, joining thousands of Malayalis who look forward to spending the festive season with their loved ones.

Madhu B Nambiar, working in the private sector in Muscat, said to *Times of Oman* that he was also returning home for Onam for this festive occasion after spending much of his life away from Kerala.

The festival, celebrated with traditional feasts, cultural programmes and family gatherings, holds a special place in the hearts of the Malayali community, including those living and working in Oman.

For expatriates, Onam provides an opportunity to reconnect with family, childhood memories and traditions while enjoying the celebrations in their hometowns.

The celebrations reflect the strong emotional connection many Indian expatriates in Oman maintain with Kerala, where Onam remains one of the most important occasions of the year.

10-day-long Onam festival

The concluding day of the 10-day-long Onam festival (Thiruvonam) is generally marked by gathering in their homes, enjoying the Onam feast and exchanging gifts.

Most of the hypermarkets and supermarkets in Oman are witnessing heavy crowds as families shop for flowers to create traditional floral carpets, known as Pookkalam. Expatriate families are also flocking to stores to purchase traditional attire, including kasavu sarees, mundus, and kurtas, as they wear traditional attire and give new clothes to family members and friends on this festive occasion. Onam celebrations are also associated with values such as equality, justice, and a prosperous society. Societal cohesion, the rulers' accountability to the people, and a more equal society are emphasised in the myths associated with Onam.

In Hindu tradition, it is believed that King Mahabali, the greatest king of Kerala, was banished from his own kingdom after the devas (gods) became envious of his popularity. To end Mahabali's rule, Lord Vishnu took the Vaman avatar (dwarf Brahmin) and tricked the king into giving away all his land.

After the King agreed to give everything to Vaman, King Mahabali was sent to a lower world, but he secured a boon from Lord Vishnu that he could visit his land once a year. The festival of Onam celebrates the homecoming of King Mahaballi.

BAGS 3RD PLACE

Oman e-sports team qualifies for FIFAe World Cup 2026

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman's national e-sports team achieved a remarkable milestone at the FIFAe Continental Cup 2026 – Asia for the Rocket League discipline, concluding the tournament in third place before clinching the playoff match and securing qualification for the FIFAe World Cup 2026.

Oman's campaign commenced in the FIFAe Nations Cup 2026, which featured three rounds of qualifiers across the West Asia region. The team delivered outstanding performances throughout the qualifying stages, accumulating sufficient continuity points to secure its berth in the continental championship and maintain its place among Asia's elite national teams.

The Omani squad comprised Sultan Al Balushi, Nooh Al Mahmoudi and Abdullah Al Amri, under the leadership of Dutch coach Overmeer. The trio represented the Sultanate of Oman in the Rocket League competition, held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, from 21 to 23 August 2026.

The team successfully advanced through the group stage and progressed to the knockout rounds, continuing its impressive run with a commanding 4–0 victory over India in the quarter-finals to reach the semi-finals, where they ultimately fell to Australia by a 4–0 scoreline.

In the third-place playoff, Oman staged a resolute comeback, securing a comprehensive 4–0 win over hosts Malaysia to claim the bronze medal and third place overall in Asia, while also earning the opportunity to compete for a World Cup berth through the playoff round.

The national team subsequently faced New Zealand in a decisive qualification playoff match. Oman secured a 4–2 victory, thereby officially sealing its place at the FIFAe World Cup 2026 in the Rocket League discipline.

This achievement represents the culmination of the team's journey, which began with regional qualifiers and continued through the continental championship, ultimately earning a spot on the global stage.

The Omani national team continues to assert its presence in international competitions, adding another distinguished accolade to the Sultanate's growing record in e-sports. -ONA

2026/2027 ACADEMIC YEAR

Sultan Qaboos Institute welcomes new students

MUSCAT: The Sultan Qaboos Institute for Teaching Arabic to Non-Native Speakers on Tuesday received its new batch of students from various countries around the world, as part of the 63rd course, which marks the first session of the 2026/2027 academic year.

The new batch comprises students representing 14 nationalities, namely the United Kingdom, France, Hungary, Ukraine, Mexico, Russia, Belarus, Poland, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, India, South Korea, Turkey and Tanzania.

This diversity reflects the Institute's commitment to cross-cultural engagement and its pivotal role in promoting the Arabic language and strengthening its global presence among non-native speakers.

In addition to formal language instruction, the Institute offers students the opportunity to explore Omani culture, society, heritage, customs, and traditions through a range of complementary cultural programmes and activities designed to enrich their educational experience.

The Institute provides specialised programmes in Arabic language education that integrate academic study with practical application and cultural activities, thereby fostering the development of students' linguistic competencies and deepening their connection to the Arabic language and its cultural heritage.

Through its successive courses, the Sultan Qaboos Institute for Teaching Arabic to Non-Native Speakers continues to fulfil its mission of delivering Arabic language education to non-native speakers and strengthening cultural dialogue between the Sultanate of Oman and nations across the globe. -ONA

IN DHOFAR GOVERNORATE

ICESCO delegation visits tourism, heritage landmarks

SALALAH: A delegation from the Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ICESCO) on Tuesday visited landmarks of tourism and heritage in the Governorate of Dhofar.

The tour, which also covered natural sites, was part of an ICESCO cultural programme codenamed "Bridges of Civilization" that is being hosted by the Sultanate of Oman until 28 August 2026.

The delegation was led by Dr. Salem Mohammed Al Malik, Director General of the ICESCO.

The programme aims to promote cultural communication among ICESCO and member states, showcase civilizational, cultural, heritage and tourism assets of Dhofar Governorate and to outline national experiences in preserving heritage and using it in the development of sustainable tourism.

The visit's programme included the "Land of Frankincense" sites, where the members of the ICESCO delegation were briefed about methods of frankincense production and the status of this industry in the cultural and economic heritage of the governorate.

The delegation members also learned about local crafts and products, markets, events and community experiences.

In addition, the programme covered natural sites like Wadi Darbat, Ain Razat, Wadi Nahiz, Ain Sahalnoot, the beaches of Al Mughsail and Al Dahariz and Jabal Samhan mountain.

Dr. Salem Hilal Al Habsi, Director of the Secretariat General of National Committees and Conferences at ICESCO, said that the "Bridges of Civilisation" programme embodies the organization's vision to enhance civilisational diplomacy and direct communication among member states, as well as opportunities for cooperation and joint initiatives.

For his part, Talal Humaid Al Khusaibi, Director General of Heritage and Tourism in Dhofar Governorate, said that the visit of the ICESCO delegation stems from Oman's keenness to consolidate cooperation with international organisations and institutions and to showcase Dhofar Governorate's heritage, cultural and tourism landmarks.

He underscored the significance of such visits in highlighting Oman's experiences in preserving heritage and using it in a sustainable manner.

The visit demonstrates the volume of integration among components of heritage, nature and tourism in Dhofar Governorate. This underlines the Governorate's position as a destination for sustainable cultural and natural tourism. It also contributes to enhancing the presence of Oman's heritage in the global arena. -ONA

OMAN

Oman's 32 nature reserves cover 5.76% area of country

Among the major challenges facing nature reserves are illegal hunting and climate change

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman has 32 nature reserves covering about 17,839.6 square kilometres, equivalent to approximately 5.76% of the country's total area, as part of its efforts to protect biodiversity and preserve natural habitats.

According to Zahra bint Khalf Al Shariqi, Head of the Nature Reserves Management Section at the Environment Authority, the role of protected areas extends beyond conservation to include scientific research, environmental monitoring, sustainable use of natural resources, environmental awareness and responsible ecotourism.

She said the Environment Authority is working to expand and strengthen the reserve network by studying proposed sites, updating management plans, developing monitoring programmes using modern technologies, strengthening national biodiversity databases and expanding scientific research. Greater participation by local communities in natural resource management is also being encouraged.

The next phase will focus on improving field management, developing reserve infrastructure, promoting sustainable ecotourism and expanding cooperation with international organisations, Al-Shariqi said.

Oman has made significant progress in nature conservation in recent years, including strengthening the legislative framework governing protected areas and expanding scientific studies and management plans. Jabal Akhdar and Al Sareen reserves were included last year in UNESCO's World Network of Biosphere Reserves, marking an international recognition of Oman's conservation efforts.

Six new reserves have also been announced over the past five years. The latest is the marine buffer zone reserve around the Hallaniyat Islands, aimed at protecting marine ecosystems, natural resources and associated species.

Al-Shariqi said habitat restoration, the reintroduction of some wild species and improved environmental monitoring have helped strengthen protection for endangered wildlife.

She stressed that protecting wildlife depends fundamentally on preserving the habitats needed for feeding, reproduction and movement. The Authority therefore conducts regular monitoring, uses camera traps and other modern technologies, maintains national species databases and monitors environmental threats.

Priority species include the Arabian leopard, Arabian oryx, Arabian gazelle, Arabian ibex, sea turtles, with conservation efforts guided by internationally recognised classifications

Priority species include the Arabian leopard, Arabian oryx, Arabian gazelle, Arabian ibex, sea turtles and birds of prey, with conservation efforts guided by internationally recognised classifications, including those of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

Among the major challenges facing nature reserves are illegal hunting and climate change. The Authority addresses these pressures through environmental legislation, environmental impact assessments, updated management plans, regulation of activities within reserves and enhanced field monitoring in cooperation with government agencies and local communities.

Climate change is also affecting ecosystems through rising temperatures, changing rainfall patterns, pressure on water resources and rising sea temperatures. These changes can alter wildlife distribution and affect coral reefs, mangrove forests and sea turtle nesting sites.

To address these risks, the Authority is integrating climate considerations into protected-area management plans, expanding long-term monitoring, restoring degraded habitats, increasing mangrove planting and using modern technologies to track environmental changes.

Al-Shariqi said nature reserves are also important to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals, supporting biodiversity, food and water security, climate resilience, scientific research and environmental education. They also contribute to Oman's commitments under international environmental agreements and support the global 30x30 goal, which seeks to protect 30% of the world's land and oceans by 2030.

She added that protected areas can contribute to the green economy by supporting ecotourism, creating employment opportunities for local communities and encouraging small and medium enterprises and traditional crafts.

Oman has adopted an approach in which ecotourism supports conservation. Visits to reserves are regulated through designated areas and routes, carrying-capacity limits, permits and restrictions on access to sensitive habitats, particularly during breeding and nesting seasons.

Investment projects inside reserves are also subject to environmental controls and specialised studies to ensure they remain compatible with conservation objectives.

Al-Shariqi concluded that nature reserves play a vital role in raising environmental awareness, protecting Oman's natural and cultural heritage and strengthening social responsibility, with local communities serving as key partners in the long-term success of conservation efforts.

INSTITUTIONAL INVESTMENT

Introductory workshops held on local government financial instruments

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Finance, in collaboration with the Central Bank of Oman, on Tuesday organised introductory workshops on local government financial instruments.

The aim is to enhance awareness of the importance of institutional investment in these instruments and their role in supporting and developing the local debt market.

The workshops addressed the most prominent local government financial instruments and their advantages, including government development bonds, local sovereign sukuk, and treasury bills, alongside a review of the role of investment therein in improving cash liquidity management, diversifying investment portfolios, and enhancing the efficiency of the local debt market.

The workshops also covered the mechanisms for bidding, subscription, and investment in government financial instruments, in addition to presenting the approved annual issuance plan for the year 2026.

These workshops are part of ongoing efforts to raise the level of awareness regarding government financial instruments and to enhance the participation of financial institutions in the local market, thereby contributing to the development of the debt market and the diversification of investment and financing channels. -ONA

BILATERAL COOPERATION

HM receives message from Saudi Crown Prince

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has received a written message from Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, Crown Prince and Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, pertaining to the enduring fraternal relations and bilateral cooperation between the two countries.

The message was received by Sheikh Khalifa bin Ali Al Harthy, Undersecretary of the Foreign Ministry for Political Affairs, during his meeting in Muscat on Tuesday with Ibrahim bin Saad bin Bishan, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the Sultanate of Oman. -ONA

3 TO 6 JANUARY 2027

Registration opens for Omani Song Festival

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth yesterday announced the opening of registration for the 13th edition of the Omani Song Festival, scheduled to take place from 3 to 6 January 2027.

The festival is a national artistic event dedicated to Omani music and singing, seeking to showcase Omani talents and voices, support musical creativity, and enhance the presence and evolution of the Omani song in step with artistic developments at both the local and regional levels.

The festival serves as a platform to celebrate Omani musical achievements, discover promising artistic talents, and strengthen connections between artists, musicians, and those with an interest in the arts—thereby enriching the Omani music scene and consolidating the standing of the Omani song on domestic and regional stages.

The Ministry has set forth the participation requirements for the festival. Omani talents in the field of singing are eligible to apply, with participants required to be between the ages of 18 and 39. Applicants must submit a video clip performing a song of their choice, through which they demonstrate their vocal and performance abilities, with the clip not exceeding two minutes in duration.

The deadline for receipt of submitted works has been set for 31 October. -ONA

GENERAL EDUCATION DIPLOMA

Dhofar Governor felicitates GED top performers

SALALAH: HH Sayyid Marwan bin Turki Al Said, Governor of Dhofar, on Tuesday felicitated outstanding students who excelled in exams of the General Education Diploma (GED) in the governorate this year.

A ceremony to this effect was held under the auspices of HH Sayyid Marwan and was attended by Dr. Mayzoon bint Bakheet Al Shahri, Director General of Education in the Governorate of Dhofar, in addition to the parents of the students.

HH Sayyid Marwan congratulated the outstanding students, noting that their success was the outcome of hard work and perseverance. He also commended the role of the students' families and the educational institutions that lent support to the students and encouraged them to excel.

HH Sayyid Marwan pointed out that the students' accomplishment opens broader vistas for greater achievements in the fields of knowledge and resourcefulness. "The outstanding sons and daughters of Dhofar Governorate represent promising energies that pave the way for development and serve the nation", he added.

The felicitation ceremony aimed to express support for the march of education and the culture of excellence.

It also underlined the importance of partnership between student families and educational institutions in nurturing promising talents. -ONA

GWM – Haval H9 Wins Best Brand in Customer Experience Award in SUV

GWM – Haval H9 was felicitated with the 'Times of Oman Best Brand in Customer Experience Award in SUV' at the Oman CX Awards 2026.

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

The recognition reflects the Haval H9's strong appeal among customers, combining comfort, capability, technology, and reliability to deliver a confident driving experience. Designed as a seven-seater SUV with 4WD, the H9 is built to handle both everyday journeys and challenging terrain.

The Haval H9 offers a spacious and thoughtfully designed interior, advanced technology, and features focused on safety and convenience. Its 214 HP powertrain, 380 Nm of torque and 4WD capability further reinforce its versatility for families and adventure seekers.

In Oman, OTE Group is the exclusive distributor for GWM–HAVAL, supported by a nationwide sales and service network. This strong combination of product capability and customer support continues to strengthen GWM's position in Oman's automotive market.

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

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OVERALL STANDINGS

ROP wins first place in open tactical shooting

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Royal Oman Police Special Operations team won first place in the overall standings of the International Open Tactical Shooting Championship for Special Operations teams, held at the Russian Special Forces University in Gudermes, Chechnya, from August 20-24, 2026.

The championship saw the participation of 11 teams from special forces units and elite teams, as well as military and security tactical teams from Chechnya, the Russian Federation, Belarus, and several Asian and Gulf countries.

The championship included 11 tactical competitions and events, encompassing shooting, field skills, and a number of scenarios simulating real-world operational conditions and tasks, in accordance with the nature of the work of special operations and tactical teams.

The Royal Oman Police team secured first place after a fierce competition that spanned the days of the championship. Participants achieved outstanding results in various events, ultimately clinching the top spot in the overall standings and winning several awards and trophies.

They outperformed participating teams from various international military and security agencies.

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Nama Dhofar Services invites the specialized companies to participate and submit their offers for the below said tenders:

Tender Number	Tender Name	Last Date for Collection of Tender Documents	Time & Last Date for Proposal Submission	Tender Fee (OMR) Including VAT (5%)
DISC/2026/085	UTILITY NETWORK EXTENSION Lot 08A/2026 –	09-September -2026	16-September -2026	105.000

- To purchase the tender document website via the link or the Barcode below: https://isupplier.nama.om:4443/OA_HTML/OA.jsp?OAFunc=XXTEN_TENDER_FLOAT_DISC_F
- Every company wishing to participate in this tender must attach with its bid a bid bond in the form of a bank guarantee from one of the banks operating in the Sultanate of Oman. Any bid that does not contain the bid bond will be disqualified.
- The original bid bond must be submitted in an envelope sealed with red wax and addressed to the chairperson of the minor tender committee and written on outside the Tender name and the Tender number and it should be paced in the tender box in Nama Dhofar Services in Salalah before 03:00 pm of the last day for submitting Bids.
- Bids shall be submitted online through using "isupplier portal". No hard copies are accepted.
- The Tender fees are not refundable. However, Tenderers who are holding "Riyada" card issued from public authority for SME development will be exempted from providing the tender fee and the Bid bond.
- The company is not obliged to accept the lowest or any other bid.
- In the event of receipt of the tender document on behalf of another company, the interested purchasers in the above tender document should provide details of the person's name and the company details.

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Royal Oman Police

NOTICE

The Royal Oman Police - Directorate of Relations and Security Information announces the holding of an electronic public auction on the ROP Auction Platform for the sale of a number of used vehicles through the online website (www.rop.mzadcom.om), starting from Sunday 6 September 2026.

The vehicles offered for sale can be inspected from 1 to 3 September 2026, 8:00 AM to 12:00 PM at the vehicle impound yard at the Directorate General of Transport at the Airport Heights.

Conditions:-

- Register on the online website (www.rop.mzadcom.om).
- A non-refundable insurance deposit of (500) five hundred Omani Rials must be paid through the electronic platform. This deposit will be forfeited if the successful bidder fails to settle the full purchase price of the purchased vehicle or to complete the vehicle's registration and transfer procedures within the specified period.
- Payment of auction's fees, which amount to (2%) of the vehicle›s value, plus (5%) VAT.
- The vehicle's value must be electronically transferred within 48 working hours
- The vehicle must be registered and shifted within three days following payment of its value as to avoid a fine at RO 5 (Five) for delay for each day following expiry of the specified period. Royal Oman Police shall not be held liable for the loss or damage of the vehicle.
- The ROP and the electronic auction website do not bear any responsibility for any discrepancy between the image or description of a displayed vehicle and its actual condition, nor do they guarantee the vehicle›s technical condition or soundness. The buyers shall themselves ensure the same during the days designated for inspection.
- **For more information, please visit the online website (www.rop.mzadcom.om) or call (98886154)**

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Chenling Zhang
Group Chief Operating Officer
One Road Group, UAE

Dr. Adhari Al Zaabi
Associate Professor
College of Medicine and Health Sciences

Shatha Salim Al Maskiry
Country Managing Director
Protiviti Oman

PANEL DISCUSSION

Beyond Expectations: Women at the Forefront of Progress

Mahira Al Raisi
Chief People Officer
Sohar International

Wafa Ibrahim Al Ajmi
AGM-Transaction and Government Banking
Bank Muscat

Eman Al Zakwani
Head of Corporate Performance – SCPP
Petroleum Development Oman

Dr. Nooreen Al Balushi
Director, Omani Center for Organ Transplantation
Ministry of Health

Hawraa Fida Hussain Al Lawati
Vice President Customer Experience
Al Mouj Muscat

Samah Al Rawahi
Communications Specialist
Moderator

Co-located with The Origin Forum

The Origin Awards 2026 celebrate remarkable women, organisations, and initiatives driving leadership, innovation, inclusion, and meaningful impact. Across diverse sectors, we honour those who lead with purpose, inspire change, and shape the future.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:
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US offers to lift Iran sanctions if Tehran reopens Strait of Hormuz

The proposal was directly delivered to Iranian officials by Pakistan's Army Chief Asim Munir during a high-level diplomatic visit to Tehran

TEHRAN: The United States has delivered a proposed diplomatic deal to Iran offering to lift blockades and economic sanctions in exchange for Tehran reopening the vital Strait of Hormuz and halting attacks carried out by its regional proxies, reported Al Arabiya English.

The proposal was directly delivered to Iranian officials by Pakistan's Army Chief Asim Munir during a high-level diplomatic visit to Tehran. The move follows a telephone conversation last week between US President Donald Trump and Munir to discuss the Iranian crisis prior to the envoy's departure.

During the visit, Munir held "clear and decisive" discussions with Mohsen Rezaei, secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council and representative of the Supreme Leader.

Munir firmly called for an immediate end to operations launched by Iranian-linked groups across the region and urged Iranian leadership to resume compliance under the framework of a 14-point Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed with Washington in June, reported Al Arabiya English.

Munir noted that both Washington and Tehran bear responsibility for disrupting prior bilateral understandings.

Washington offers to lift maritime blockades and economic sanctions if Iran guarantees freedom of navigation through the Strait of Hormuz and forces its proxy network to cease attacks across the region.

Munir firmly insisted on an immediate shutdown of operations executed by Iranian-aligned militant groups operating throughout the region.

Iranian leadership pushed back, demanding actionable changes from Washington. Mohsen Rezaei emphasised Iran's security management of the Strait of Hormuz and stated that the US "must change its behaviour and take practical steps to implement the terms of the memorandum of understanding."

Parliamentary Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf cited "numerous instances" of US breaches of commitments, asserting that American non-compliance has created deeper distrust and prevented regional stability.

President Masoud Pezeshkian warned Munir that American "coercion and bullying" would only complicate diplomatic processes, adding that Iran remains ready for peaceful economic, political, and security cooperation with neighbouring Islamic countries.

The US proposal comes as Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent announced that Washington is pursuing "quiet diplomacy" with nations maintaining economic ties with Tehran while simultaneously preparing expanded sanctions targeting Iran's digital assets, technology, and shipping sectors.

While the Trump administration plans to issue specific timelines for third countries to sever ties with Iran, it has so far stopped short of executing major new penalties as diplomatic channels remain active.

Trump claims Iran unable to pay "segments" of military, alleges killing of protesters

Meanwhile, in Washington, DC, US President Donald Trump on Tuesday alleged that Iran is facing a deepening financial and humanitarian crisis, claiming that the Islamic Republic is unable to pay "large segments" of its military while accusing its authorities of killing protesters related to the unrest that took place at the end of last year over economic hardships in the country.

Trump made the claims in a post on Truth Social, describing the situation as a humanitarian crisis of "epic proportions" and insisting that it "must be stopped, NOW".

"The failing Islamic Republic of Iran is not paying large segments of their military, while at the same time killing protesters, even when they are not protesting, at levels not seen before. It is a humanitarian crisis of epic proportions, and must be stopped, NOW," the post read.

Trump did not provide evidence in the post to substantiate his claims about military payments or the alleged killings.

Earlier on Monday, Trump claimed that Iran was "completely collapsing" as his administration intensified economic pressure on Tehran.

He also claimed that the United States and Republicans were "winning against EVERYONE", including Iran, which he described as being in an "economic and military death spiral".

— Agencies

REUTERS IPSOS POLL

Trump's popularity hits record low amid Iran war

WASHINGTON DC: US President Donald Trump's popularity has hit a record low as Washington remains engaged in the prolonged conflict with Iran, with the American public's approval of the conflict falling to its lowest level, a poll by Reuters Ipsos analysed on Monday.

The poll over a period of four days surveyed 1,215 American adults nationwide and had a margin of error of 3 percentage points in either direction.

It was reported that a mere 31% of Americans supported the US military action against Iran, a number which slid down from the previous Reuters Ipsos Poll in March that recorded 37% and another earlier this month at 34%.

As per the Reuters Ipsos poll, some 69% of Republican respondents support the war, compared with 77% in March.

The decline was driven by fewer self-identified Republicans backing the conflict.

Notably, some 83% of the country thought that the conflict with Iran would go on "for an extended period of time," the latest Reuters/Ipsos poll found, up from 80% earlier this month.

Meanwhile, independent voters in the poll favoured Democrats over Republicans - 33% to 19% - when they were asked as to whom they would vote for in congressional elections if the election were held today.

The fall in Trump's ratings comes as the President had campaigned for his victory run to the 2024 presidential election, riding the tide of controlling inflation and avoiding lengthy military conflicts.

Now six months into the war with Iran, US gasoline prices are more than a dollar higher per gallon than they were before the war, Reuters reported.

As developments follow in the region, the United States issued fresh wave of actions on individuals and entities which it said were involved in the Iranian regime's "weapons procurement; cyber intrusions into US energy, defence, and health infrastructure; and the illicit oil shipments that fund terrorism across the Middle East."

Tommy Pigott, Principal Deputy Spokesperson for the US Department of State called on the international community to join Washington in holding them to account.

— ANI

NEW RULES ANNOUNCED

Australia's music chart bars fully AI-generated music

SYDNEY: Australia's official music charts will no longer allow wholly AI-generated tracks to qualify, under new rules announced by the Australian Recording Industry Association (ARIA).

The changes take effect with the ARIA chart dated August 31 and distinguish between music generated primarily by artificial intelligence and recordings where AI is used only as a supporting creative tool.

Recordings made with generative AI can remain eligible if they are substantially human-made and do not raise concerns about manipulation of streams or chart positions.

ARIA will use an industry-wide distinction announced in July between: AI-generated music, where AI creates all or the main creative elements of a recording and an AI-assisted music, which remains substantially human-created but uses generative AI for some elements

ARIA chief executive Annabelle Herd said artists were already using AI creatively and the charts should allow room for that.

"This gives everyone who releases music in Australia a clear rule to work to. We call on all parties who have a role in deciding the music played and promoted to Australian audiences, particularly radio, to support human artistry and implement similar changes across their own codes," said Herd.

What happens if an AI track enters the charts?

ARIA can refuse to accept an ineligible recording, remove it from the charts either retrospectively or in advance, change chart positions and withdraw accreditations.

It can also revoke an ARIA No. 1 Award, while an ineligible track will not qualify for an ARIA Award. Artists and their representatives will be able to challenge exclusions and provide evidence that a recording meets the rules.

The move is part of a broader initiative led by the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry (IFPI), which represents the recording industry globally.

IFPI announced principles in July intended for use across official charts internationally.

They require eligible AI-assisted recordings to remain substantially human-made, use lawful and authorised AI services and avoid artificial manipulation of streams.

— DW

IN SOUTH SUDAN

UN chief strongly condemns fatal attack on peacekeepers

NEW YORK: United Nations (UN) Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Monday condemned in the strongest possible terms an ambush on a patrol of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) in Jonglei State that killed two Ethiopian peacekeepers and injured seven others.

The attack, carried out by unidentified armed individuals on Monday, also left two South Sudan National Police Service personnel and two UNMISS civilian staff injured, according to the statement issued by the UN Spokesperson Stephane Dujarric attributable to the Secretary-General.

"The Secretary-General condemns in the strongest possible terms Monday's ambush by unidentified armed individuals on a United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) patrol in Jonglei State in South Sudan," the statement read.

Guterres expressed his deep condolences to the families of those killed and to their respective governments, while wishing those injured a swift and full recovery.

The UN chief also warned that the attacks against UN peacekeepers may constitute war crimes and called for all such attacks to be promptly investigated.

"All attacks on peacekeepers must be promptly investigated, and those responsible must be effectively prosecuted and held accountable," the statement added.

The UN Secretary-General reaffirmed the United Nations' commitment to stand with the victims and their families during what he described as a profoundly difficult time.

Earlier in the day, India also condemned the attack and called for an immediate and thorough investigation to bring those responsible to justice.

In a post on X, the Permanent Mission of India to the United Nations in New York paid tribute to the fallen Ethiopian peacekeeper and wished those injured a speedy recovery.

"We condemn the attack carried out on UN peacekeepers deployed with UNMISS on 24 August 2026. We pay tribute to the fallen Ethiopian Blue Helmet and wish an early recovery to the injured peacekeepers," the Indian Mission said.

India also underlined the importance of respecting the sanctity and inviolability of UN premises and personnel and called on all parties to ensure the safety and security of UN peacekeepers operating under UN Security Council mandates.

Indian Mission

The Indian Mission urged full adherence to UN Security Council Resolution 2589 on accountability for crimes against peacekeepers and called for a detailed probe into the attack.

"We call upon all parties to ensure the safety and security of UN peacekeepers, who operate under UN Security Council mandates," the Mission added, urging an immediate and thorough investigation and full accountability.

Meanwhile, UNMISS also strongly condemned the ambush on its patrol travelling to Pajut in Jonglei State.

UNMISS has deployed a Quick Reaction Force to secure the area and support the emergency response following the attack.

Anita Kiki Gbeho, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General and Head of UNMISS, described the deadly violence targeting UN personnel serving to support peace in South Sudan as unacceptable.

"I extend my deepest condolences to the families and loved ones of the peacekeepers who lost their lives and wish those injured a speedy recovery," Gbeho said in a statement.

She also called on the relevant authorities to conduct a thorough and prompt investigation to ensure that those responsible are brought to justice.

UNMISS reiterated that attacks against UN peacekeepers may constitute war crimes under international law.

The attack comes as UN peacekeepers continue to operate under a Security Council mandate in South Sudan, supporting efforts to protect civilians and promote peace and stability amid a severe displacement crisis driven by internal conflict, climate-related disasters and the continued influx of people fleeing the war in neighbouring Sudan. — ANI

SPORTS

Prasidh and Suthar share six to keep India in driver's seat

Sonal Dinusha fought a lone battle as the hosts still trailed India by 238 runs going into day four

COLOMBO: Sonal Dinusha was fighting a lone battle, unbeaten on 85, as play came to a close on day three on Tuesday; Sri Lanka still trailed India by 238 runs behind India's 503 for 9 declared, with just two wickets in hand.

At the crease alongside him was Lahiru Kumara, who had done well to hold his own during a 50-ball vigil for eight runs.

Dinusha's fifty was his third such score in this series as he showcased the resolve that had been sorely lacking across Sri Lanka's innings—he was one of only five batters to face at least 50 deliveries in the innings, two of whom were certified tailenders in Kumara and Keshara Nuwantha.

For India, Prasidh Krishna and Manav Suthar did the majority of the damage, with both picking up three wickets apiece.

Kamil Mishara received a spicy bouncer from Krishna, which he could only fend through to Dhruv Jurel behind the stumps, while on the second evening, both Lahiru Udara and Prabath Jayasuriya could claim bad light had impaired them.

But the rest of Sri Lanka's batters fell almost exclusively against the run of play.

Kamindu Mendis looked excellent until he swatted a pull straight to midwicket; Pasindu Sooriyabandara chopped on a non-threatening quicker one from Ravindra Jadeja, while Niroshan Dickwella tickled one down leg to Jurel for a three-ball duck.

Even Keshara, who had done so well to hang with Dinusha, lofted an ambitious inside out drive of Suthar to mid-off.

Amidst those moments, however, there were periods where Sri Lanka looked good. The most prominent of these was when Sooriyabandara was in the middle.

His 87-run stand for the fourth wicket with Kamindu was the best of the Sri Lankan innings, with both batters looking untroubled during their stay.

Having weathered Krishna's attacking early burst, the pair capitalised on India's lacklustre spin-bowling efforts.

Sooriyabandara in particular showed adeptness at using the depth of the crease, frequently cutting late, while also employing the sweep effectively.

Krishna delivered the breakthrough once again, persisting with a hard length as Kamindu picked out midwicket with acres of space around him.

Dhananjaya de Silva joined him after that but the Sri Lankan skipper arrived just as India got their act together after lunch. This period was far more focused and it led to a lovely Suthar delivery that kissed the outside edge on Dhananjaya's forward defence, a tough break for one of Sri Lanka's better players of spin.

This brought Dinusha to the crease, and once more Sri Lanka's batters looked in command, but after a 62-ball stand of 34, Sooriyabandara chopped one on from Jadeja.

At 94 kph, it was quicker than the deliveries that had preceded it, but Sooriyabandara, who had fought hard for his 80 off 133—especially having been out for a golden duck on his debut last time out—would have been miffed at being dismissed in such a manner.

Things went from bad to worse shortly after as Dickwella fell without bothering the scorers, and at 173 for 7 Sri Lanka were staring down the proverbial barrel of a gun. But in Keshara first and then Kumara, he seemed to have found some able bodies to hold off the visitors' attack—at least for now.

The Dinusha-Keshara pairing brought 57 off 137 deliveries, one which Sri Lanka would have been praying had carried on longer, but like those before him Keshara brought about his own demise.

Shortly after the tea interval Keshara skipped out and lofted Manav Suthar just straight enough of mid-on for four. Thirty-nine balls prior to that he had stepped out to Saransh Jain, on that occasion slamming him for six over long-on. Perhaps if he had waited another 39 balls to try it out, he might have still been out there in the middle.

But looking to take on Suthar again, this time Nuwantha found the fielder.

Fortunately for Dinusha, in Kumara he has found another batter capable of surviving, though the new ball had only just come into play before rain and bad light brought play to an early close.

Brief scores: Sri Lanka 265/8 (Dinusha 85*, Sooriyabandara 80, Prasidh 3-47) trail India 503/9 decl. by 238 runs. - Agencies

Jayasuriya reprimanded

COLOMBO: Prabath Jayasuriya has been handed an official reprimand and had a demerit point added to his disciplinary record for smacking "the boundary wedges with his bat" on his way back after being dismissed on the second day of Sri Lanka's ongoing second Test against India in Colombo.

The demerit point is Jayasuriya's first in a 24-month period.

The offence is a breach of Level 1 of the ICC's code of conduct for players and player support personnel, which relates to "abuse of cricket equipment or clothing, ground equipment or fixtures and fittings during an international match".

The incident took place when Jayasuriya, the night-watcher batting at No. 3, was headed back to the pavilion after being dismissed lbw by Manav Suthar off what turned out to be the last ball of the day's play—the broadcast also showed him throwing his gloves in the dressing room.

Jayasuriya became the third player to earn the match referee's ire during the Colombo Test after Yashasvi Jaiswal and Asitha Fernando were pulled up for an incident on the first day. - Agencies

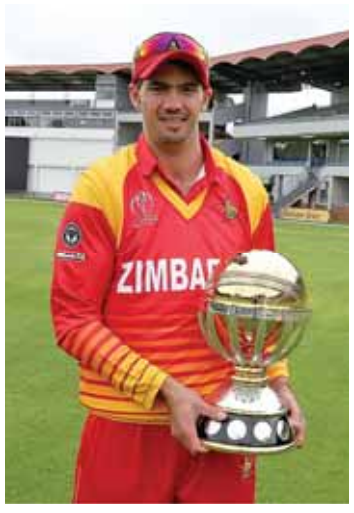
T20I TRI-SERIES

Zimbabwe recall veteran spinner Cremer

HARARE: Veteran spinner Graeme Cremer has been recalled to the Zimbabwe T20I squad for the first time since the T20 World Cup in February, for their tri-series against Namibia and South Africa. He has recovered from a left-arm injury and will be part of a 15-member squad led by all-rounder Sikandar Raza.

Fast bowler Richard Ngarava, who is Zimbabwe's Test and ODI captain, misses out on selection as he continues his recovery from a lower-back injury. Fast bowler Tanaka Chivanga has been ruled out too, having undergone surgery because of an Achilles tendon injury.

Batter Brendan Taylor has been left out of the side after not getting any game-time in their T20I series against Bangladesh and India this year. He last played a T20I against Oman in the World Cup. He continues to feature in the Test side, and played in their most recent game, a one-off Test against Bangladesh in June.



Cremer, 39, had not played for Zimbabwe in seven years when he made his comeback to play in the T20 World Cup, before a left-arm injury sidelined him from selection after the tournament.

Zimbabwe will also be monitoring Ngarava's recovery. If fit, he is expected to lead Zimbabwe for their ODI series against Australia in September.

For now, they take on Namibia and South Africa in a double round-robin format, which commences on August 28 and will take place in Windhoek. The top two sides advance to the final on September 6.

After the ODI series against Australia, Zimbabwe are also expected to play two Tests and three ODIs against Afghanistan in the UAE in November.

Squad: Sikandar Raza (c), Brian Bennett, Ryan Burl, Graeme Cremer, Ben Curran, Brad Evans, Innocent Kaia, Wessly Madhevere, Tadiwanashe Marumani, Wellington Masakadza, Kundai Matigimu, Blessing Muzarabani, Dion Myers, Newman Nyamhuri, Tafadzwa Tsiga. - Agencies

FAST BOWLER DROPPED

Root 'hacked off' at Carse incident

LONDON: England captain Joe Root says he is "hacked off" and "disappointed" at the incident involving fast bowler Brydon Carse at a Derby nightclub.

Carse, 31, was dropped from the squad for the second Test starting against Pakistan this week.

Images that appeared on social media on Sunday showed Carse, 31, in handcuffs outside a bar in Derby on Saturday night and he was briefly arrested and subsequently de-arrested.

"If I'm being brutally honest, I'm really hacked off, I'm really disappointed," Root said in the opening to a news conference.

"After last week's performance, we're sat here and we're talking about something that is not related to it at all."

The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) has referred the incident to the Cricket Regulator and Carse was replaced in the squad by Sonny Baker, with the Test starting at Lord's on Thursday. Carse was not on England duty at the time of the incident as he was released to play for Durham, but he is a centrally contracted player.

Root also said that he had spoken to his England teammate about the incident, and expressed his frustration at the "stupid mistakes" that are continually being made.

"I've spoken to Brydon, and when I first found out my main concern was him as a person," Root added. "I don't think I'm speaking out of turn by saying he's very upset, very apologetic and understands his actions. I'm sure that when he gets his chance he will say that himself.

"But I don't think it's the isolated incident itself, it's the fact that we keep making stupid mistakes away from the game and it's detracting from what we're doing on the field." - Agencies

EXHIBITION MATCHES

Federer returns to US Open, but a competitive comeback is off the table

NEW YORK: Roger Federer is actually nervous about his tennis.

The man who won five straight US Open championships during the height of his dominance of the sport is set to play again in Arthur Ashe Stadium on Tuesday night for the first time since 2019.

He is not quite sure how the game that perhaps nobody ever made look more elegant will appear now.

"I haven't played a singles set in, I don't know, (Hubert) Hurkacz at Wimbledon maybe, so it's been five years," Federer said on Monday, referring to his 2021 quarter-final loss in his last Grand Slam match.

"I don't know how it's going to go tomorrow. So there is a lot of uncertainty but a lot of happiness that I can return to Arthur Ashe, a place where I have had so many beautiful moments."

It's only one set of singles in an exhibition against Andy Roddick and one set of doubles with John McEnroe against Roddick and Andre Agassi. The winner of 20 Grand Slam singles titles should be fine for those.

But a return to tennis beyond that, competing in major tennis tournaments in his mid-40s like Venus and Serena Williams?

"No, no, no, no. No, not at all," Federer said during a news conference.

"Thanks for asking. I wasn't sure if the question was going to get asked, but I'm happy you did so I can clarify in case anybody thought."

At 45, Federer still looks fit, and said he enjoys working out in the gym. But he said he goes through long stretches where he is rarely on the court.

His lengthy absence from the US Open has done little to dampen his popularity, based on the number of people around the grounds who were mentioning his name.

The appearance of "Roger Federer" up on the big board for all to see again, ahead of his afternoon practice on Ashe, where Federer collected the trophy every year from 2004-08, was a welcome sight for his fans.

The trip to New York is a stop for Federer on his way to Newport, Rhode Island, where he will be enshrined in the International Tennis Hall of Fame on Saturday.

Federer never really had the chance to say goodbye to New York as a player, because there was no way to know his loss to Grigor Dimitrov in the 2019 quarter-finals would be his last match.

He had reached the French Open semi-finals and the Wimbledon final earlier that year, falling to Rafael Nadal in Paris and then Novak Djokovic in a fifth-set tie-breaker at the All England Club. - Agencies

MARKET
BUSINESS & FINANCE

OMAN OIL PRICE FALLS

MUSCAT: Oman Crude (October 2026 delivery) declined by $5.53 to $91.86 per barrel, said Gulf Mercantile Exchange. The average price of Oman Crude (August 2026 delivery) stabilised at $79.09 per barrel, $22.91 lower than July 2026 delivery. – ONA

MSX INDEX ENDS HIGHER

The MSX index closed at 7,502.53 points, up by 0.02% from previous close. The Sharia Index ended down by -0.08% at 603.78 points. Oman Chromite, up 3.71%, was the top gainer while, SMN Power Holding, down 2.56%, was the top loser. >B2

Two strategic pacts inked to enable investment in Oman's health sector

The Minister of Health affirmed that increasing local production rates of medical supplies and health products constitutes a core pillar for enhancing the resilience of the health sector

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Health on Tuesday signed two memoranda of cooperation with the Development Bank and Sohar International, as part of the strategic direction to strengthen partnerships between the government sector and national financial institutions, and to enable investment in the health sector.

The memoranda were signed on behalf of the Ministry by Dr. Hilal Ali Al Sabti, Minister of Health; on behalf of Development Bank by Mahmoud Abdullah Al Awaini, Secretary General of the Ministry of Finance and Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Development Bank; and on behalf of Sohar International by Abdul Wahid Mohammed Al Murshidi, Chief Executive Officer of the Bank.

The Minister of Health affirmed that increasing local production rates of medical supplies and health products constitutes a core pillar for enhancing the resilience of the health sector and building specialised national capacities.

He further stated that the Ministry seeks to attract sustainable investments that support domestic industry and ensure the security of medical supply chains.

He noted that the two memoranda establish an institutional implementation framework for this strategic direction, without compromising the rigorous technical and commercial evaluation of submitted proposals, and support the objectives of Oman Vision 2040, particularly with regard to building a sustainable health system and expanding access to services.

With respect to the partnership with the Development Bank, the memorandum provides for the enhancement of joint efforts to identify investment needs in the health sector and to familiarise project owners with financing requirements, thereby supporting projects that align with Oman's health priorities and meet the quality and licensing standards approved by the Ministry.

This step comes amid growing health investment opportunities that extend beyond hospitals to encompass medical industries, outpatient care services, diagnostics, rehabilitation, long-term care, and digital health.

Accumulated expertise

The Board Chairman of the Development Bank stated that the Bank has approved financing for 230 loans in the health sector during the period from 2023 through July 2026, which has provided the Bank with accumulated expertise in meeting the financing needs of this sector.

He noted that the value added of the health sector recorded growth of 7.3 percent during the first quarter of 2026, affirming that this partnership complements the Bank's role in diversifying the national economy and achieving the objectives of Oman Vision 2040.

With regard to the localisation of medical industries through the partnership with Sohar International, the memorandum aims to establish a framework for evaluating and referring projects eligible for financing. The partnership aspires to raise the share of locally manufactured health products to no less than 30 percent over the next three years, compared to the current level of approximately 9 percent across 20 existing factories, while imports currently account for 91 percent of market needs.

The memorandum seeks to enable investors wishing to establish new factories or expand existing facilities. Under the agreement, the Ministry of Health conducts the preliminary feasibility assessment of projects, then refers applications that meet the criteria to the Bank for evaluation and financing decisions, in coordination with the Ministry.

Regarding this partnership, the Chief Executive Officer of Sohar International stated that financing becomes more effective when directed toward building productive capacities that yield economic and social benefit—a principle embodied by the health industries.

— ONA

STATISTICAL DATA EXCHANGE

Training workshop organised in Salalah

SALALAH: A training workshop on "Using Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange (SDMX) for Reporting on Sustainable Development Goals in GCC Countries" commenced on Tuesday in Salalah, Governorate of Dhofar.

The three-day event is organised by the Statistical Centre for the Cooperation Council for the Arab Gulf States (GCC-Stat), in collaboration with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and the United Nations Statistics Division.

The workshop programme encompasses a range of training modules, including an assessment of the status of GCC indicator data against the databases of the Gulf Statistical Centre, an evaluation of the current reporting status between the Centre and member states, as well as training on SDMX concepts, the Sustainable Development Goals Data Structure Definition (SDG DSD) and the fundamentals of the SDMX conversion tool.

The training agenda further includes sessions on customising national data structures to suit the needs of GCC member states, workshops on structural metadata, data flows, and content constraints, advanced training on the SDMX conversion tool, and practical exercises for transforming national data into standard SDMX formats.

The workshop aims to introduce participants to the international SDMX standard, equip them with the requisite skills for reporting on SDG indicator data, and thereby contribute to enhancing data accuracy and quality, improving reporting mechanisms, and fulfilling the requirements of national, regional, and international entities and organisations—ultimately supporting the ongoing monitoring of progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals. — ONA

PORT OF DUQM SET TO RECEIVE ONE OF WORLD'S LARGEST RORO VESSEL

With a capacity of up to 9,200 vehicles, the Port of Duqm is preparing to receive the BYD Changsha, one of the world's largest RoRo vessels. BYD Changsha is set to arrive at Port Of Duqm, marking a significant milestone for Oman's automotive and logistics sector. With a vessel capacity of 9,200 vehicles and more than 1,200 vehicles planned for handling at Port of Duqm, this arrival highlights the port's growing capabilities in handling automotive shipments. In collaboration with Saud Bahwan Group, Port of Duqm is ready to welcome BYD Changsha and connect global automotive supply chains with Oman and the wider GCC markets. — Times News Service

AMID IRAN WAR, HIGHER OIL PRICES

Dry bulk freight rates surge 36% to three-year high

NEW DELHI: Dry bulk freight rates surged around 36 per cent between February and July 2026, reaching their highest level in three years, amid higher international oil prices, geopolitical tensions and robust demand for commodities, according to a report by Bank of Baroda Research.

The report said freight rates across dry bulk carriers witnessed significant upward pressure during the period of the US-Iran war, with the Baltic Dry Index rising about 36 per cent between February and July.

Baltic dry index

"Baltic dry index has risen by ~36% to reach levels highest in past 3 years," the report said.

The sharpest increase was recorded in the Supramax index, which rose around 44 per cent during the period. Supramax carriers are primarily used for transporting bulk commodities such as grains, coal, fertilizers, cement, clinker, steel products and alumina.

The Capesize index, which tracks freight rates for the largest dry bulk ships, also increased around 38 per cent, while the Panamax index rose about 22 per cent. Capesize vessels are typically used for transporting commodities including coal and iron ore, while Panamax carriers transport commodities such as coal and grains.

The report attributed the rise in dry bulk freight rates to higher operating costs arising from elevated oil prices and geopolitical tensions, along with strong demand for agricultural and infrastructure-related goods.

"There are 2 key drivers of this trend. One, rise in international oil prices, and geopolitical tensions, which increase operating costs, and second, robust demand for agricultural goods, infrastructure goods and electricity," it said.

The increase in freight costs has also started feeding into global commodity prices, with the report noting that commodity prices were rising partly because of higher freight expenses and input costs.

"As a result, global commodity prices are also inching up, partly due to freight cost and partly due to higher input costs," the report said.

The Bank of Baroda Research report also highlighted significant changes in tanker freight rates since the outbreak of the US-Iran conflict.

The report said tensions around key shipping routes, including the Strait of Hormuz and Bab-al-Mandeb, have forced some vessels to take longer routes via the Cape of Good Hope, adding pressure on freight rates.

Domestic road freight rates have also increased since February, with truck freight rates from Delhi to Chennai and Delhi to Dehradun rising 5.3 per cent and 15 per cent, respectively, between February and July. The report said rates in several major cities were at their highest levels in five years.

The report further noted that air cargo volumes were affected by the conflict and elevated aviation fuel prices. International air freight volumes fell 53 per cent between February and June, compared with a 13 per cent decline in domestic freight volumes, as international airline routes were curtailed.

Going forward, the report expects freight and commodity prices to remain elevated in the near term as oil price volatility persists.

— ANI

MARKET

MSX index ends higher

Oman Chromite, up 3.71%, was the top gainer while, SMN Power Holding, down 2.56%, was the top loser, at the end of trading session

MUSCAT: The MSX index closed at 7,502.53 points, up by 0.02% from previous close. The Sharia Index ended down by -0.08% at 603.78 points. Oman Chromite, up 3.71%, was the top gainer while, SMN Power Holding, down 2.56%, was the top loser. Shares of Sohar International Bank were the most active in terms of number of shares traded as well as in terms of turnover.

A total number of 8,285 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating turnover of OMR23.07 million, with more than 82.77 million shares changing hands. Out of 62 traded securities, 19 advanced, 20 declined, and 23 remained unchanged. At the session close, GCC & Arab investors were net sellers for OMR260,000 while foreign investors were net buyers for OMR137,000 followed by domestic investors for OMR123,000 worth of shares.

Financial Index closed at 13,340.90 points, up 0.16%. Prices of Muscat Finance, Taageer Finance, National Bank Oman, Bank Muscat, Bank Nizwa were up by 3.03%, 2.61%, 2.48%, 1.75%, 0.70% respectively. Prices of OMINVEST, Al Madina Investments, National Finance, Al Madina Takaful, Oman & Emirates Investment were down by 2.20%, 1.52%, 1.40%, 0.91%, 0.78% respectively.

Industrial Index closed at 9,513.10 points, up 0.28%. Prices of Oman Chromite, Gulf International Chemicals, Al Maha Ceramics, Al Anwar Ceramics, Gulf Mushroom Products were up by 3.71%, 2.94%, 1.96%, 1.45%, 0.94% respectively. Prices of Jazeera Steel Products, National Detergent were down by 0.22%, 0.15% respectively.

Services Index was down by -0.15% before closing at 3,004.45 points. — **United Securities**

OMAN STOCKS

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE

INDICES

Index	High	Low	Value	Prev. Value	Diff	Diff %
MSX 30 INDEX	7,518.44	7,479.62	7,502.53	7,501.05	1.49	0.02 %
FINANCIAL INDEX	13,399.70	13,273.58	13,340.90	13,319.01	21.90	0.16 %
Industry Index	9,513.10	9,464.38	9,513.10	9,486.48	26.61	0.28 %
Services Index	3,013.93	2,996.37	3,004.45	3,009.02	-4.57	-0.15 %
MSX Shariah Index	605.79	602.30	603.78	604.28	-0.50	-0.08 %
MSX TR INDEX	11,631.90	11,571.84	11,607.28	11,604.99	2.30	0.02 %
FINANCIAL TR IDX	16,474.23	16,319.18	16,401.95	16,375.02	26.92	0.16 %
INDUSTRIAL TR IDX	12,183.86	12,121.47	12,183.86	12,149.77	34.09	0.28 %
SERVICES TR IDX	4,038.10	4,014.57	4,025.40	4,031.52	-6.12	-0.15 %
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
82,779,668	23,070,136	8,285	38,258,126,248	19	20	23	62

SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR TUESDAY, AUGUST 25

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
OM0000001483	NATIONAL BANK OMAN	115,045	56,559	15	0.490	0.495	0.489	0.495	0.483	0.012	2.484	0.495	0.495	0.495	0.100	804,843,446
OM0000002796	BANK MUSCAT	12,028,115	4,831,395	1,577	0.400	0.408	0.400	0.407	0.400	0.007	1.750	0.407	0.407	0.407	0.100	3,055,103,604
OM0000002226	ALJAZEERA SERVICES	6,300	1,589	5	0.252	0.255	0.252	0.255	0.251	0.004	1.594	0.255	0.251	0.255	0.100	10,924,963
OM0000004735	SEMBCORP SALALAH	112,715	28,492	14	0.252	0.255	0.250	0.255	0.252	0.003	1.190	0.255	0.251	0.255	0.100	243,415,847
OM0000002267	GULF MUSHROOM PRODUCTS	470	201	1	0.428	0.428	0.428	0.428	0.424	0.004	0.943	0.428	0.424	0.428	0.100	21,546,537
OM0000009908	OQ BASE INDUSTRIES (SFZ)	11,646,100	2,856,465	1,498	0.247	0.249	0.244	0.249	0.247	0.002	0.810	0.249	0.247	0.249	0.040	861,413,222
OM0000005963	PHOENIX POWER	802,615	220,543	45	0.274	0.278	0.272	0.278	0.276	0.002	0.725	0.278	0.278	0.277	0.100	406,603,206
OM0000004420	BANK NIZWA	71,598	10,228	7	0.143	0.143	0.142	0.143	0.142	0.001	0.704	0.143	0.142	0.146	0.100	319,884,284
OM0000003224	RENAISSANCE SERVICES	15,540	4,274	2	0.275	0.276	0.275	0.276	0.275	0.001	0.364	0.276	0.275	0.276	0.100	65,249,160
OM0000007811	MUSANDAM POWER	510	173	1	0.340	0.340	0.340	0.340	0.339	0.001	0.295	0.340	0.331	0.340	0.100	23,932,600
OM0000003026	OMAN TELECOM	1,561,947	2,142,570	99	1.371	1.376	1.370	1.371	1.370	0.001	0.073	1.371	1.507	1.371	0.100	1,028,250,000
OM0000001707	OMAN CABLES INDUSTRY	1,469	4,995	4	3.400	3.400	3.400	3.400	3.400	0.000	0.000	3.400	3.400	3.730	0.100	304,980,000
OM0000001749	OMAN CEMENT	1,112	661	2	0.594	0.594	0.594	0.594	0.594	0.000	0.000	0.594	0.580	0.594	0.100	196,538,390
OM0000002374	UNITED FINANCE	2,338,500	205,788	5	0.088	0.088	0.088	0.088	0.088	0.000	0.000	0.088	0.088	0.089	0.100	31,339,202
OM0000002804	ASAFFA FOODS	100	75	1	0.750	0.750	0.750	0.750	0.750	0.000	0.000	0.750	0.740	0.750	0.100	90,000,000
OM0000003661	VOLTAMP ENERGY	76,405	13,171	14	0.171	0.174	0.171	0.172	0.172	0.000	0.000	0.171	0.171	0.172	0.010	172,000,000
OM0000004925	ALBATINAH POWER	298,404	54,481	15	0.184	0.184	0.182	0.184	0.184	0.000	0.000	0.184	0.183	0.184	0.100	124,179,287
OM0000008710	BARKA DESALINATION	20,000	3,280	2	0.164	0.164	0.164	0.164	0.164	0.000	0.000	0.164	0.164	0.164	0.100	12,385,608
OM0000010120	ASYAD SHIPPING	1,237,244	293,120	582	0.237	0.238	0.235	0.237	0.237	0.000	0.000	0.237	0.237	0.237	0.000	1,234,472,394
OM0000002176	JAZEERA STEEL PRODUCTS	7,000	6,296	2	0.900	0.900	0.898	0.898	0.900	-0.002	-0.222	0.898	0.888	0.899	0.100	112,158,368
OM0000008934	ABRAJ ENERGY SERVICES	2,555,960	1,037,948	530	0.410	0.411	0.405	0.408	0.409	-0.001	-0.244	0.408	0.410	0.408	0.100	314,241,600
OM0000003968	OOREDOO	116,984	37,328	16	0.320	0.320	0.319	0.320	0.321	-0.001	-0.312	0.320	0.313	0.320	0.100	208,302,154
OM0000002549	BANK DHOFAR	230,166	50,828	41	0.222	0.224	0.219	0.221	0.222	-0.001	-0.450	0.221	0.219	0.220	0.100	671,795,476
OM0000003398	SOHAR INTERNATIONAL BANK	31,325,822	5,695,411	1,610	0.181	0.183	0.180	0.181	0.182	-0.001	-0.549	0.181	0.182	0.181	0.100	1,389,357,027
OM0000001509	DHOFAR INT'L DEVELOPMENT & INVEST	16,679	4,602	7	0.276	0.278	0.275	0.276	0.278	-0.002	-0.719	0.276	0.276	0.276	0.100	136,911,495
OM0000001681	OMAN EMIRATES HO	1,000	128	1	0.128	0.128	0.128	0.128	0.129	-0.001	-0.775	0.128	0.124	0.130	0.100	16,380,000
OM0000004768	MADINA TAKAFUL	56,924	6,250	17	0.111	0.111	0.109	0.109	0.110	-0.001	-0.909	0.110	0.110	0.110	0.100	19,075,000
OM0000009072	OQ GAS NETWORKS	5,000,441	1,098,591	1,424	0.220	0.221	0.218	0.218	0.220	-0.002	-0.909	0.218	0.218	0.218	0.100	944,076,015
OM0000004933	AL SUWADI POWER	305,861	55,725	17	0.183	0.184	0.182	0.182	0.184	-0.002	-1.087	0.182	0.183	0.184	0.100	130,021,954
OM0000009759	OQ EXPLORATION AND PRODUCTION	6,558,173	3,084,682	257	0.475	0.475	0.468	0.468	0.474	-0.006	-1.266	0.468	0.468	0.468	0.010	3,744,000,000
OM0000001152	OMAN NAT'L ENGINEERING & INVEST	8,327	1,238	3	0.150	0.150	0.148	0.148	0.150	-0.002	-1.333	0.148	0.146	0.148	0.100	22,200,000
OM0000001533	OMINVEST	72,321	30,605	12	0.407	0.427	0.400	0.400	0.409	-0.009	-2.200	0.400	0.400	0.409	0.100	449,141,566
OM0000004248	SMN POWER HOLDING	8,260	1,594	2	0.195	0.195	0.190	0.190	0.195	-0.005	-2.564	0.190	0.190	0.190	0.100	37,930,764
Total	33	76,598,107	21,839,286	7,828												

Parallel Market

OM0000001020	OMAN CHROMITE	3,131	11,215	8	3.156	3.630	3.156	3.630	3.500	0.130	3.714	3.630	3.150	3.630	1.000	13,176,900
OM0000001590	MUSCAT FINANCE	31,017	2,057	7	0.066	0.068	0.066	0.068	0.066	0.002	3.030	0.068	0.067	0.072	0.100	20,885,950
OM0000002028	GULF INTERNATIONAL CHEMICALS	97,127	6,709	5	0.069	0.070	0.069	0.070	0.068	0.002	2.941	0.070	0.066	0.070	0.100	1,470,000
OM0000003281	TAAGEER FINANCE	100	12	1	0.118	0.118	0.118	0.118	0.115	0.003	2.609	0.118	0.114	0.118	0.100	33,475,513
OM0000005005	ALMAHA CERAMICS	15,000	3,900	4	0.260	0.260	0.260	0.260	0.255	0.005	1.961	0.260	0.251	0.260	0.100	14,300,000
OM0000002168	AL ANWAR CERAMIC	75,044	10,359	19	0.137	0.140	0.137	0.140	0.138	0.002	1.449	0.140	0.140	0.140	0.100	30,800,000
OM0000011151	OMIFCO	4,978,139	1,004,389	262	0.202	0.204	0.200	0.203	0.201	0.002	0.995	0.203	0.202	0.203	0.000	1,357,943,125
OM0000009569	JABAL REIF	619	65	1	0.105	0.105	0.105	0.105	0.104	0.001	0.962	0.105	0.104	0.105	0.100	18,270,000
OM0000001426	OMAN REFRESHMENT	5,000	5,500	1	1.100	1.100	1.100	1.100	1.100	0.000	0.000	1.100	1.050	1.100	0.100	55,000,000
OM0000003521	GALFAR ENGINEERING & CONTRACTING	66,381	9,795	11	0.149	0.149	0.147	0.149	0.149	0.000	0.000	0.149	0.147	0.153	0.100	30,244,980
OM0000005260	OMAN ARAB BANK	428,125	111,187	57	0.260	0.260	0.259	0.260	0.260	0.000	0.000	0.260	0.258	0.260	0.100	520,713,267
OM0000007084	MUSCAT CITY DESALINATION	9,000	792	1	0.088	0.088	0.088	0.088	0.088	0.000	0.000	0.088	0.000	0.092	0.100	13,688,435
OM0000007910	AMAN REAL ESTATE	2,850	211	2	0.074	0.074	0.074	0.074	0.074	0.000	0.000	0.074	0.067	0.075	0.100	14,800,000
OM0000008447	OMAN REIT FUND	51,572	5,432	12	0.107	0.107	0.105	0.106	0.106	0.000	0.000	0.106	0.105	0.116	0.100	89,222,313
OM0000010823	OMAN GATEWAY FUND	1,300	1,331	2	1.024	1.024	1.024	1.024	1.025	-0.001	-0.098	1.024	1.024	1.025	0.000	28,083,038
OM0000003265	NATIONAL DETERGENT	481	312	1	0.649	0.649	0.649	0.649	0.650	-0.001	-0.154	0.649	0.000	0.649	0.100	12,980,000
OM0000001160	NATIONAL GAS	42,089	4,535	10	0.109	0.109	0.107	0.109	0.110	-0.001	-0.909	0.109	0.109	0.109	0.100	9,265,000
OM0000002648	NATIONAL FINANCE	128,004	27,360	12	0.215	0.215	0.212	0.212	0.215	-0.003	-1.395	0.212	0.213	0.212	0.100	137,947,424
OM0000001962	AL MADINA INVESTMENT HOLDING	6,086	398	6	0.069	0.069	0.065	0.065	0.066	-0.001	-1.515	0.065	0.065	0.065	0.100	2,801,500
Total	19	5,941,065	1,205,561	422												

SPECIAL FELICITATION CEREMONY

KR Shipping celebrates debut author Anwar Abdulstar Al Blushi

MUSCAT: KR Shipping, part of the Khimji Ramdas Group, hosted a special felicitation ceremony at its Head Office to celebrate the literary achievement of Omani author Anwar Abdulstar Al Blushi and the release of his debut novel, Shaheen.

The ceremony was attended by Dr. Abdullah Ali Al Shanfari, Group Chief Officer, Corporate Affairs & Human Resources; Vijayakumar Ramasamy Manickam, General Manager, KR Shipping; Anwar Abdulstar Al Blushi, author of Shaheen; along with KR Shipping team members and invited guests.

Through this felicitation, KR Shipping aimed to celebrate the maiden work of the author.

With initiatives such as this, the organisation seeks to celebrate individual accomplishments, inspire young people to pursue their aspirations, and contribute to an environment where creativity, ambition and talent are encouraged and valued.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Abdullah Ali Al Shanfari, Group Chief Officer, Corporate Affairs & Human Resources, said: "At Khimji Ramdas, we believe in recognising and encouraging the talent and achievements of Omani youth. Anwar's journey as a debut author is a wonderful example of the creativity, determination and ambition that we are proud to see among Oman's youth. We are delighted to celebrate this important milestone with him and hope that this recognition encourages him to continue pursuing his creative aspirations and inspiring others along the way."

Vijayakumar Ramasamy Manickam, General Manager, KR Shipping, added: "It is a pleasure to celebrate Anwar's achievement and the dedication that has gone into bringing his first novel to life. At KR Shipping, we believe that supporting talents mean recognising their accomplishments and encouraging them to pursue their dreams. We hope this small gesture serves as a source of encouragement for Anwar as he continues his journey as an author."

Speaking about his debut, Anwar Abdulstar Al Blushi, author of Shaheen, said: "Writing Shaheen has been a deeply meaningful journey for me. The story explores the strength it takes to stand for the truth when circumstances and society seem to stand against you. I am grateful to KR Shipping and the Khimji Ramdas team for celebrating this milestone and for the encouragement they have shown me as a new author. This recognition makes the journey of bringing Shaheen to readers even more special."

Through initiatives that celebrate achievements such as these, KR Shipping continues to uphold a culture of encouragement, recognition and empowerment, particularly among Oman's emerging generation of talent.

By acknowledging the dedication and creativity of young Omanis, the organisation seeks to contribute to an environment that inspires them to pursue their ambitions and make their mark in their chosen fields.

Headquartered in Muscat, the Khimji Ramdas (KR) Group is one of Oman's leading diversified business groups, with operations across Lifestyle, Consumer Products, Projects and Logistics, and Infrastructure. With a longstanding presence in the Sultanate, KR is committed to contributing to Oman's growth and development and supporting the aspirations of the nation's people and its future generations.

OMAN'S MOST TRUSTED SEDANS

Own a Toyota Corolla this season with added Akeed benefits

MUSCAT: Toyota Akeed brings added value to one of Oman's most trusted sedans this season, as the Toyota Corolla continues to set the benchmark for comfort and reliability on the country's roads. Customers who purchase the Corolla during the Toyota Akeed campaign enjoy a 5-year or 50,000 km service package, Thiqah Loyalty Points and one year vehicle registration — added benefits on top of the sedan's proven reliability. The offer runs until 7th October, 2026.

Since its debut, the Corolla has grown into a global icon — a symbol of trust, versatility and exceptional driving performance. That reputation continues in Oman, where the sedan combines sophisticated driving dynamics with everyday practicality, giving drivers the confidence to express their own style on the road.

Sleek styling, a spacious cabin, advanced technology and strong fuel efficiency all come together to make every mile effortless and enjoyable, whether it's the daily city commute or a long-distance drive. It's this blend of elegance, innovation and enduring reliability that keeps the Corolla ahead in the world of sedans.

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Passenger comfort and convenience sit at the heart of the Corolla's refined cabin design. The interior offers generous legroom, premium seating support, and rear AC vents to keep everyone cool during warmer days. A spacious layout with wide armrests and an expansive boot makes storage effortless, while the modern dashboard features an 8-inch display audio system, a 4.2-inch multi-information screen, and a six-speaker audio setup. Standard cruise control and an available moonroof add to the overall sense of comfort and openness on every drive.

Engineered with family protection in mind, the Corolla is built on a robust safety framework designed for confidence on every road. It comes equipped with four SRS airbags along with active safety technologies including Vehicle Stability Control (VSC), Anti-lock Braking System (ABS), and Brake Assist. Electronic Brakeforce Distribution (EBD) and a Tyre Pressure Monitoring System (TPMS) further support vehicle control in a range of driving conditions.

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WORLD

US plans mass visa revocation for up to 200,000 asylum seekers

The State Department is expected to announce the revocations in the coming weeks, targeting so-called B1 and B2 visas issued between 2016 and 2026 to holders who have sought or are now seeking asylum. These visas are generally issued

WASHINGTON DC: United States President Donald Trump's administration is preparing to revoke the business and tourism visas of foreigners who applied for or are currently seeking asylum in the country, the State Department said in a statement on Monday.

It didn't say how many visas would be affected, but the Associated Press put the number at up to 200,000, citing State Department documents and two US officials. If carried out, it would be the largest single mass revocation of visas in US history.

What did the State Department say about revoking visas?

The State Department is expected to announce the revocations in the coming weeks, targeting so-called B1 and B2 visas issued between 2016 and 2026 to holders who have sought or are now seeking asylum. These visas are generally issued for business travel, tourism, family visits or medical care.

"We are coordinating with DHS to identify and revoke the non-immigrant visas of foreigners who have come to the United States claiming to be short-term visitors, but then file for asylum to stay here permanently," State Department spokesman Tommy Pigott said, referring to the Department of Homeland Security.

He declined to give a specific number, saying the count "remains dynamic and will be done on a rolling basis." Officials said the revocations would not necessarily lead to immediate deportation. Most people with pending asylum cases would instead be re-categorised, losing their status as business or tourism travelers, according to officials who spoke to AP on condition of anonymity.

Trump official slams visa use

Deputy Secretary of State Christopher Landau criticized the use of tourist and business visas as a path to asylum claims.

"People in the US and all over the world are fed up with bogus asylum claims," he wrote on social media platform X, adding, "Asylum isn't supposed to be a loophole to circumvent immigration law."

He separately alleged that the US immigration system "has long been swamped by frivolous asylum claims" and cited the case of a Colombian national who entered the US on a tourist visa in 2015 before applying for asylum. Applicants for B1 and B2 visas are currently required to affirm they will not seek asylum and to demonstrate intent to return to their home countries. It remains unclear how many current visa holders have actually filed for asylum.

Who has been impacted by Trump's immigration crackdown?

The move is the latest in a series of visa restrictions under Trump's second term, which has included expanded social media vetting, new bond requirements, and outright bans on visa issuance for citizens of certain countries.

The State Department said it has revoked roughly 175,000 visas over the past 18 months, citing reasons ranging from criminal convictions to public criticism of US policy, particularly regarding the Middle East. The administration has also targeted "birth tourism," and has repeatedly sought to end birthright citizenship. Courts, including the Supreme Court, have rejected those efforts.

Rights groups have criticised the broader immigration crackdown, arguing it has infringed on free speech and due process rights while creating an unsafe environment, particularly for ethnic minorities who could face racial profiling. The administration maintains the crackdown is intended to strengthen domestic security.

Despite campaigning largely on illegal immigration, the administration has also tightened legal immigration pathways, including through new, costly fees for certain work visa applicants. Several aspects of the crackdown are facing ongoing legal challenges.

US proposes additional $103,265 fee for H-1B cap-subject visa petitions

Meanwhile, The US has proposed an additional $103,265 fee for all H-1B cap-subject petitions, including those eligible for the advanced degree exemption, according to an official press release issued by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

According to the release, issued on Monday, the proposed fee would be paid at the time of filing and imposed on top of all other applicable fees or payments. DHS estimates the fee would generate approximately USD 8.8 billion annually, based on a projected 85,000 H-1B cap-subject petitions.

"The proposed H-1B fee is intended to recover the costs incurred across the federal government to adjudicate, vet, and support lawful immigration programs that otherwise must be funded by taxpayers," said US Citizenship and Immigration Services spokesperson Zach Kahler.

DHS said the revenue would help recover federal government costs related to "adjudication of immigration benefits, fraud detection and national security vetting, systems modernization, records and fee collection operations, immigration court operations, consular visa processing, labor standards enforcement, and interagency coordination."

As per the release, the additional fee would not apply to H-1B petitions that are not subject to the cap, including petitions filed by certain nonprofit research organisations, government research organisations and institutions of higher education.

The move follows a federal judge's decision in June to strike down the Trump administration's previously proposed $100,000 fee for H-1B visa applications, The Hill reported.

US District Judge Leo Sorokin ruled that it was unlawful to implement a tax on visa applications, saying Congress has the authority to set immigration policy and taxes. — Agencies

BRICS SUMMIT

Chinese President Xi Jinping likely to visit India next month

NEW DELHI: Chinese President Xi Jinping is likely to visit India next month for the BRICS summit in New Delhi, potentially marking his first visit to the country in seven years, Reuters reported, citing Indian officials familiar with the preparations.

India is scheduled to host the BRICS summit on September 12–13. According to the report, Chinese officials have been working on hotel bookings and security arrangements in anticipation of Xi's possible attendance. He could be accompanied by a delegation of around 400 officials, significantly larger than the fewer than 200 officials who travelled with him to India in 2019.

China has not officially confirmed Xi's travel plans. Its Foreign Ministry said Beijing attaches great importance to BRICS cooperation and supports India in hosting the summit, but said it had no information to provide about Xi's arrangements.

The potential visit follows an invitation from Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation summit in Tianjin in August 2025. Xi reportedly accepted the invitation and expressed support for India's BRICS presidency.

A visit would be Xi's first to India since the 2019 informal summit in Mamallapuram. Bilateral relations deteriorated sharply following the Galwan Valley clash in June 2020, in which 20 Indian soldiers and four Chinese soldiers were killed. The confrontation led to a prolonged military standoff along the disputed Himalayan border. A disengagement agreement reached in October 2024 helped ease tensions.

Diplomatic engagement has since gradually resumed. Modi visited China last year for the first time in seven years, while direct commercial flights have resumed and some visa restrictions have been eased. China also took part in India's AI Impact Summit earlier this year.

Ahead of the BRICS meeting, India's National Security Adviser Ajit Doval travelled to Beijing for talks with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, with the border dispute among the key issues discussed.

The BRICS summit is expected to bring together leaders of the expanded grouping, including Russian President Vladimir Putin and Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian. The meeting comes amid global trade tensions and conflicts in West Asia, increasing pressure on emerging economies to strengthen economic and diplomatic cooperation.

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar has stressed that stable India-China relations depend heavily on peace along the border, saying that tranquillity in the border areas is a prerequisite for broader bilateral ties.

If confirmed, Xi's visit would represent one of the most significant India-China diplomatic engagements since the Galwan crisis and could provide an important opportunity for both sides to further stabilise relations. — Agencies

TOWN OF POMAS

Tornado in southwestern France damages homes, injures dozens

PARIS: A tornado damaged dozens of homes and injured around 40 people after tearing through a village in southwestern France, officials said.

The town of Pomas in the foothills of the Pyrenees mountains, home to around 1,000 people, was hit the hardest.

The tornado damaged approximately 300 homes in the village, uprooting trees and ripping the roofs off some buildings.

Fifteen of the injured, including a pregnant woman whose house collapsed while she was inside, were brought to hospital, AFP reported.

More than 120 firefighters and emergency personnel were sent to the scene to help with clean-up efforts, local officials said.

Emergency shelters have been set up for people whose homes were damaged.

What else do we know about the tornado in southern France?

Meteo-France, the national weather service, said the storm packed winds as high as 117 kilometres (73 miles) per hour in the nearby village of Arquettes-en-Val.

French authorities had issued orange storm alerts for much of the country's south and southwest. Several areas were affected by power cuts and severe transport disruption.

Without power

Around 2,800 households were still without power on Monday evening, officials said.

Roads were closed due to fallen trees, and trains were delayed, while airports in Bordeaux, Marseille, Nice and Toulouse, as well as Paris, reported flight delays and cancellations, Transport Minister Philippe Tabarot said.

The third stage of the Vuelta a Espana, due to take place in the Aude department, was canceled after a hailstorm interrupted the cycling race. — DW

PORT-AU-PRINCE

Gang members kill at least 40 in Haiti

PORT-AU-PRINCE: At least 40 people were killed after gang members attacked displaced persons sheltering inside a church outside Haiti's capital city, Port-au-Prince, the local mayor and the United Nations said Monday.

"We have counted around 40 bodies. Searches are continuing. Some people are still missing," Kenscoff mayor Massillon Jean told the AFP news agency.

Several of those killed on Sunday night had already fled violence earlier this year, Jean said. "The bandits raided a displaced persons camp located in a church. They executed several people. There are fatalities and dozens of wounded. Some people were abducted by the criminals," Jean said.

What do we know about the attack near Haiti's capital city?

The UN said the attack had left at least 47 people dead and more than 22 injured and warned that casualty estimates could still change.

Rights group RNDDH said between 30 and 40 people were killed and 15 to 20 were injured during the attack, which started at around 10:30 p.m. on Sunday.

In a statement, the office of Prime Minister Alix Didier Fils-Aimé condemned the "heinous attack," adding that security forces were on the highest alert and reinforcements were being deployed.

Residents have called for the local police chief to resign amid allegations that police failed to protect people sheltering in the church, which is just minutes away from the police station. Kenscoff lies in the hills outside the Haitian capital and has been plagued by gang violence for months. Early last year, gang attacks resulted in more than 260 people being killed and 200 homes destroyed or set ablaze, displacing 3,000 people, according to the UN. At least 10 more attacks have taken place since.

Kenscoff is in a strategic location overlooking several routes into Port-au-Prince.

"Kenscoff will not be abandoned. Haiti will not be handed over to bandits. The Republic will prevail," the statement said.

What is the security situation in Haiti?

Haiti's capital and the surrounding regions have increasingly come under the control of an alliance of criminal groups in recent years.

Attempts by the international community to support Haiti's ill-equipped police force have failed to rein in the violent gangs.

Haiti is the poorest nation in the Americas. The Caribbean country suffers from deep-seated political instability, corruption, natural disasters and gang violence.

The UN estimates that nearly 1.5 million Haitians are currently displaced out of a total population of 11 million people. More than five million face severe food insecurity.

The violence worsened in 2024, after criminal groups sparked a wave of violence that culminated in the unelected prime minister resigning.

The last time Haiti held an election was in 2016. Its previous president, Jovenel Moise, was assassinated in 2021 and has not been replaced. — DW

LIFESTYLE

AI HELPING CREATE POPULAR MOBILE SPORTS GAMES

After the World Cup and before the domestic season, many fans still crave more football. Amateur coders are helping to fill this gap

After the World Cup and before the domestic football season begins, the world's most popular sport tends to enjoy a relatively quiet period. For some though, the need for football remains.

This summer that demand has been met by the creation of a raft of mobile sports games in which players can dive into nostalgia and storytelling. This craze has seemingly been inspired by the viral 82-0 basketball game in which players can draft an all-time NBA starting five by spinning a random wheel for teams and decades.

Inspired by this, Deniz Sancar, a hobbyist coder who works in advertising, created 38-0-0. Sancar told Mobilegamer.biz that despite having no previous coding experience, he built the game overnight with Claude Code, an advanced AI assistant that is designed to help with coding. The game was No. 1 in the UK App Store games charts in June.

Destiny Eleven: From TikTok to France and the world

Another example is Destiny Eleven. Maxence Pigne, a PSG fan and a project manager, was inspired by a game he saw on TikTok that allowed players to play out the career of a professional footballer. After the 2026 World Cup, Pigne released his version, also created with the help of AI assistant Claude, which took the original idea further by offering more variety and choices in the career.

The man who specialises in computer science told French weekly Le Point that the decision to publish the free game earlier than planned paid off because by the end of July, the game had over 1 million players with 14 million careers having been created. Leverkusen striker Martin Terrier is reportedly a fan of the game, which has seen many variations in different languages emerge in the weeks since its arrival.

Mobile games are big business

It's clear mobile games have come a long way since Nokia released "Snake" back in 1997. They are now big business. According to digital market intelligence platform Sensor Tower, approximately 50 billion mobile games were downloaded in 2025, generating $82 billion (€71 billion) in in-app purchases. According to Game, the German games industry association, revenue in Germany in 2025 was approximately $3.12 billion, with 28.1 million players.

"This clearly indicates that mobile gaming in Germany is no longer a niche topic, but rather a serious genre with significant purchasing power," Kyle Kuscu, chairman of the German Mobile Gaming Association, told DW.

"This is also relevant for the esports sector: Germany has a broad player base, and mobile gaming is the largest platform in the country in terms of user numbers."

This summer, the emergence of sports-drafting games has clearly benefited from a World Cup summer but also because of game design.

"The World Cup or tournament effect only amplifies this, but it doesn't fully explain the hype on its own," Kuscu said.

"Such games satisfy a fundamental human need shared by many users: control, optimization and imagination in a very compact format — in other words, the feeling of having it all in your own hands, of building the perfect team or career, without a long learning curve or complex controls."

What counts is the 'idea and final execution'

AI has been involved in video game creation for years, but with smarter and faster AI in 2026 comes an even more financially efficient approach for game developers. This is particularly important in the tough economic conditions in which free-to-play mobile games operate.

"The trend toward smaller, faster-to-develop games with AI support is likely to continue and may even grow. But I don't believe that every viral success story will be repeated," Kuscu said.

"Based on our own experience and confirmed by external sources, we know that AI has long been used extensively and intensively in game development, especially for coding, prototyping, research and repetitive tasks. At the same time, many people remain skeptical about quality, dependencies and creative limitations. Even if we advocate for the use of AI-assisted programming, what ultimately counts is the idea and the final execution of a game, and that won't change."

Short shelf life a key problem in a competitive market

The challenges for such games to maintain their success remains a major challenge though, especially given the overall gaming market remains a far from profitable industry. More teams can release more games, but that makes competition stiffer than ever.

"The biggest hurdle is no longer just production, but the business model behind it: Mobile games are extremely dependent on user attention, repeat usage, and, above all, in-app purchases," Kuscu said.

"A viral launch does not yet equate to a viable, let alone successful, business. They must get a handle on session duration, community building, update frequency and monetization very quickly. This is precisely where the crux of the matter lies, because otherwise the hype will fizzle out before the game can become a sustainable title."

Whether it's the immersive storytelling nature of these games or the ease with which a virtual world can be reached, it's clear that these games have found a gap in the market. History suggests they might not be popular for long, but even if this summer is their moment in the sun, their emergence appears a significant reminder of the challenges the mobile game industry will face with the increased involvement of AI. - DW

SPORTS

Rogers shines on debut as Chelsea edge past Fulham in a thriller

The Blues have spent more than US$408mn on new players and are one of the early favourites to challenge champions Arsenal

LONDON: Chelsea record signing Morgan Rogers scored on his debut while beating Fulham 3-2 to give new coach Xabi Alonso a perfect start to the Premier League season on Monday.

Rogers signed from Aston Villa last month and scored four minutes before halftime when he slotted home a sweet cutback from Maxence Lacroix.

Brazilian João Pedro gave Chelsea the lead after 32 seconds, only for Josh King to equalise midway through the first half.

Cole Palmer, one of Chelsea's outstanding performers on the night, made it 3-1 with 49 minutes gone when he fired home from a tight angle after running on to João Pedro's pass.

Fulham cut the deficit almost immediately — Gonzalo García heading down and into the net after Sanchez could only parry Timothy Castagne's low shot — and it poured forward in search of a winner, but it was not to be.

Instead, Chelsea's front three took the plaudits with a dazzling performance that coach Alonso called "a good first day."

"It is a great combination and great quality," he said.

"We know that if we reach them in a good position then they have this talent to create special things. Today I am happy that all three scored."

The fixture matched Alonso against his former Real Madrid and Spain team-mate Álvaro Arbeloa, who was also making his first appearance in the Fulham dugout.

"We deserved a little bit more, but football is not about what you deserve; it's about what you take," a disappointed Arbeloa said, although he added he was pleased with his players' attitude.

"This is how we're going to play no matter who is in front of us."

Both men managed Real Madrid for periods last season but moved to England after being relieved of their duties at Santiago Bernabeu Stadium, and Alonso won out in an entertaining game at Craven Cottage.

Chelsea have spent more than US$408 mn on new players and is one of the early favourites to challenge champions Arsenal. - Agencies

Attacking trio can be team's heart: Alonso

LONDON: Chelsea manager Xabi Alonso has said that the team's attacking trio of Cole Palmer, Morgan Rogers, and Joao Pedro can be the heart of their Premier League campaign this season.

All three players found the scoresheet as the Blues started their season with a 3-2 win at local rivals Fulham on Monday.

"They are going to be a very important part to build around them, to build the team with them," the Spaniard told reporters. "They need to take responsibility. They need to lead the rest. They need to inspire the rest because if they do great, the others will follow."

Alonso was particularly pleased by the performance of Palmer, who struggled with injuries last season and managed just 10 goals and one assist.

"I'm very happy for Cole because I have really enjoyed seeing him playing with this dynamism, with this freedom, with this responsibility, helping the team, feeling important, and we need that for the team," Alonso said.

"If Cole feels this way, we'll have a better team, a better Chelsea." - Agencies

INFANTINO UNDER PRESSURE

'Enough is enough' and 'change is necessary' at FIFA: Former players

LONDON: A number of current and former footballers have united against under-pressure FIFA president Gianni Infantino, stating "change is necessary" at the head of the global governing body.

Former Manchester United and France defender Mikael Silvestre, who sits on FIFA's Players' Voice Panel, issued a statement on X, on Monday in a post he titled "Enough is Enough!".

The statement has been shared on social media by the likes of England defender Lucy Bronze, France's 1998 World Cup winner Emmanuel Petit, and former England goalkeeper David James.

It follows Infantino's controversial plan to sell stakes in competitions, including the World Cup, to private investors, with the statement saying players "share the exact same concerns as the millions of fans around the world".

Criticising how the governing body operates, it added: "We have watched the game we love drift away from its core values under FIFA's current leadership.

"For too long we've seen major decisions taken without players being consulted or considered, and without any regard for the fans who sustain the sport."

The statement continued: "Change is necessary. Power has blurred the current leadership's ability to distinguish between its own interests and what is best for football.

"Recent events have made silence impossible."

It also called for unity from "grassroots to the top of the game" in support of "structural change" at FIFA, with players and fans getting a "real, direct say" in how the sport is run.

Silvestre's involvement represents a challenge from within FIFA itself, with the 16-strong Players' Voice Panel having been formed by the governing body to monitor and advise on tackling racism in football.

Infantino has, however, found support from former Barcelona striker Samuel Eto'o, president of the Cameroonian Football Association, who doesn't believe the FIFA leader has "done anything wrong".

"I remain convinced that for us as Africans, this project was something that could have been incredible," Eto'o told CNN, on Monday.

"It would have reset the balance of power in football to ensure that our talent doesn't disappear and end up playing for other nations.

"Infantino has changed football. He's given opportunities to nations that didn't have those opportunities to take part in the most beautiful tournament, the World Cup He enabled smaller nations to get seats at these competitions. He has helped our continent. He's helped our federations to develop much more quickly, and we need to acknowledge that." - Agencies

EUROPEAN LEAGUES

Malen hits hat-trick for Roma; Gattuso makes winning start

ROME: Donyell Malen continued his outstanding goal-scoring run for Roma with a hat-trick in their first Italian Serie A match of the season, a 4-0 win over Fiorentina, on Monday.

Malen combined with teammate Paulo Dybala to great effect as the Argentina attacking midfielder set up all three of his goals.

Malen, who joined the Roman side in January from Premier League side Aston Villa on loan before moving permanently in the summer, has now scored 17 goals in 19 appearances for the club.

For Roma, Malen converted three passes from Dybala to score in the 27th, 52nd and 60th minutes and make Roma one of nine clubs with full points after the Serie A opening weekend.

Substitute Niccolò Pisilli completed the rout four minutes from time to hand new Fiorentina manager Fabio Grosso the worst possible start to life with the club.

Meanwhile, Gennaro Gattuso had a good start to life in Serie A with Lazio as it defeated Bologna 1-0 with a goal from Davide Frattesi.

Gattuso's first competitive match with Lazio had ended in an Italian Cup defeat to second division Mantova.

Frattesi, who is on loan from Inter Milan, scored the winner midway through the second half after coming on as a substitute.

In a game that featured few chances and eight yellow cards, five in the first half, Frattesi's cool finish from Boulaye Dia's superb backheeled pass.

All square in Spain

In Spain, Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang scored for the second consecutive game but it was not enough to give Deportivo A Coruna all three points against Malaga in a contest between promoted sides.

Aubameyang, who got his name on the scoresheet in last week's 1-1 draw against Elche, took a superb throughball from Luismi Cruz and skipped round a static goalkeeper to put the home side ahead after 21 minutes. However, Chupete equalised from the penalty spot 13 minutes later when Rafita Garrido was brought down by Lucas Noubi.

Earlier, Osasuna drew 0-0 with Levante. Levante's first point of the season followed an opening weekend defeat by Espanyol.

Late comebacks in Germany

In the German Cup, Wolfsburg needed penalties to avoid a shock exit at the hands of fourth-tier Altglienicke. The Bundesliga club came from behind three times to leave it 3-3 after extra time and then scraped through 6-5 on penalties.

Schalke also survived a scare at fourth-tier Hallescher. The sides were tied 2-2 after 90 minutes but Schalke, newly returned to the Bundesliga after a three-year absence, scored three times in extra time to progress to the second round. Cologne and Hamburg both won at third tier sides, Cologne beat Würzburger Kickers thanks to a brace from Isak Johannesson and Hamburg easily overcame Verl 3-0. - Agencies

TRANSFERS

Al Hilal in advanced talks to sign Arsenal's Martinelli

LONDON: Arsenal are in advanced talks with Saudi Arabian club Al Hilal over the sale of Gabriel Martinelli for at least £50m.

The Brazil international, 25, is free to leave the club this summer, with manager Mikel Arteta making it clear the attacker is not in his plans. Discussions between the clubs have intensified in the last 24 hours, with a deal now close.

If a final agreement is reached, it will be up to Martinelli to decide whether he wants to play in the Saudi Pro League. The wage package Al Hilal are offering is also understood to be significantly more than his reported £180,000-per-week deal at Arsenal.

Martinelli, who joined Arsenal from Brazilian side Ituano in 2019, has 12 months remaining on his deal at Emirates Stadium.

He made 53 appearances in all competitions last season, scoring 11 goals, as the Gunners won the Premier League title.

But he was left out of the squad for their league opener against Coventry, which the Gunners won 3-0. Al-Hilal's interest in Martinelli runs alongside a move for Aston Villa striker Ollie Watkins.

Man City agree deal for Palmeiras winger Allan

Manchester City have agreed to sign winger Allan Elias from Palmeiras in a deal worth up to £34.2m.

The 22-year-old Brazilian will come in as a replacement for compatriot Savinho, who looks set to join Tottenham.

City are set to pay a fixed fee of £32m, plus £2.2m in add-ons, and a medical is scheduled to take place in the coming days.

They remain in advanced talks to sell Egypt forward Omar Marmoush to Spurs, and sources with knowledge of the situation say there is a "good chance" the deal gets completed before the 1 September transfer deadline.

Discussions are ongoing between the two clubs and there are some details yet to be agreed.

Midfielder Nico Gonzalez may also depart Etihad Stadium before the end of the transfer window, with strong interest in the Spaniard from Newcastle. - Agencies

Al Harthy targets Nürburgring fightback after Spa heartbreak

Refreshed after a two-month break, the Oman Racing's driver is determined to reignite his GT World Challenge Europe podium challenge

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Ahmad Al Harthy is targeting a return to the GT World Challenge Europe podium when the endurance season resumes at Germany's Nürburgring on Sunday, with the Omani driver determined to turn the disappointment of his Spa retirement into a strong championship fightback.

After a two-month break from racing, Al Harthy returns to action alongside Calan Williams and Javier Sagrera for the penultimate round of the 2026 Endurance Cup, where the Oman Racing by Century Motorsport trio will be chasing another Bronze Cup podium in their BMW M4 GT3 EVO.

Nürburgring holds particular significance for Al Harthy, who is making his first return to the circuit since 2024. It is also a home event of sorts for BMW, with the Omani racing the German marque's machinery for a third season.

"We've been working hard behind the scenes and focusing on delivering the best car and set-up we can for this weekend's action," said Al Harthy.

"I'm delighted to be back in Germany again; Nürburgring is a special place and a track that is, of course, very important for BMW."

The three-hour race offers Al Harthy and his Century Motorsport team-mates an opportunity to build on the promise they showed earlier in the season.

They opened their Endurance Cup campaign with a top-six Bronze Cup finish at Paul Ricard in France before producing their standout result of the season so far at Monza in May.

Starting eighth in class and 47th overall, the Oman Racing trio fought their way through the field to secure third in the Bronze Cup and finish just outside the outright top 10 — delivering the first podium for the new Oman Racing by Century Motorsport partnership.

That result remains a benchmark for the team as it heads into the final two rounds of the campaign.

Biggest setback

The biggest setback came at the CrowdStrike 24 Hours of Spa in July, where early damage forced the crew into recovery mode. Al Harthy, Williams, Sagrera and fourth driver Pedro Ebrahim fought back strongly, only for further contact later in the race to end their challenge and force retirement.

"Spa was disappointing, but the effort and performance the whole team produced was incredible and we can all be proud of the teamwork we delivered," Al Harthy said.

Now the focus is firmly on Nürburgring.

The 5.1km, 15-corner Grand Prix circuit will provide another stern test of the BMW, with Al Harthy eager to convert the team's pace and consistency into championship points.

"Hopefully we can be back challenging for the podium and pull some points back in the championship," he said. "One thing is for sure, we'll be working as hard as we can and aiming to give everyone back home in Oman something to celebrate!"

Testing begins on Friday, followed by two further practice sessions on Saturday. Qualifying is scheduled for 9.45am local time on Sunday, with the three-hour race getting underway at 3pm.

One in 322 billion! Club golfer defies birdie odds

LONDON: An ordinary round of golf turned into an extraordinary masterclass as an English amateur defied astronomical odds to card eight birdies across just nine holes, BBC Sport reported.

Allan Harrison started his round at Fairhaven Golf Club with four dropped shots on the front nine before a "pasty and a drink" at the halfway house gave him a burst of life.

The 64-year-old then fired seven consecutive birdies and eight in nine holes - a run of form rarely seen in professional golf, let alone at an amateur level.

Harrison has some prowess as a former foursomes partner of Tommy Fleetwood at Southport and Ainsdale Golf Club.

England Golf calculated the odds across all amateur golfers for making eight birdies in nine holes as an astonishing one in 322 billion.

For Harrison, whose 0.4 handicap signals a high level of ability, the odds were said to be one in 455,000.

The leader in birdie average on the PGA Tour typically records around 4.8-5.0 birdies per 18 holes, which equates to 2.5 per nine holes.

"I was four over after the front nine," Harrison said.

"I went into the halfway house, had a pasty and a drink, and the lads laughed when I said I'd start the back nine fresh."

Had he run up nine consecutive birdies, Harrison would have achieved the same tally as the PGA Tour's record - with nine having been achieved by American Mark Calcavecchia at the 2009 Canadian Open and fellow US player Kevin Chappell at the Greenbrier in 2019.

But he just missed out on a place in the record books despite almost holing his tee-shot at the 157-yard par-three 17th.

"My playing partner pointed out the pitch mark and said I must've nearly holed out - but it ran six feet past and I misread the putt," said Harrison of his only par on the back nine.

Harrison led the Silver Pheasant tournament on 40 points after the first round, but he could not replicate his heroics on the second day as he finished second overall.

Although England Golf's calculations point to an extraordinarily high unlikelihood of an amateur golfer having eight birdies in nine holes, Harrison is not alone in having achieved the feat in 2026.

Only last month, Australian Amelia Harris, 18, had eight in nine on her back nine, in the first round of the US Girls' Junior tournament in Durham, North Carolina. - Agencies

2026 CAMPAIGN ENDS

DeChambeau proud of what LIV has achieved

INDIANAPOLIS: American star Bryson DeChambeau has said he is "proud" of what LIV Golf has achieved as the breakaway league faces questions about its future following the final event of the season in Indianapolis.

The league, which launched in 2022 as an alternative to the PGA Tour, has faced an uncertain future since Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund (PIF) withdrew its financial backing in April.

Last week, its season-ending Team Championships in Michigan was cancelled, meaning the event in Indianapolis concluded the 2026 campaign.

LIV Golf CEO Scott O'Neil has said new investors have been secured for next season but has been tight-lipped on the league's future plans and structure.

DeChambeau, who led a selection of star players in joining LIV Golf four years ago, said although the breakaway league has not been perfect, it has "a lot of potential moving forward".

"It has been an interesting ride, that's for sure, everything we've gone through, and the tough moments we've had. It's made us stronger," said DeChambeau.

"As much as we are transitioning from LIV 1.0 to LIV 2.0, I have great thoughts about what could happen next year. I wish I could be more upfront about it.

"Ultimately I'm proud of the fact of what we've done, the good and some of the bad that we've unfortunately had, things that have occurred; I'm going to be real with it, not everything was perfect.

"But for the most part we've done a solid job and if there's one thing I could say, we did something different in the game of golf and I'm proud of that."

At the end of the interview, DeChambeau added: "I think there's something fun coming."

Last week, Rory McIlroy said it could be a "tough road back" to the PGA Tour for those who leave LIV Golf. LIV spent £3.7bn, luring players like DeChambeau with lucrative contracts and significant prize money.

Spain's Jon Rahm, who has been crowned the league's individual champion for a third consecutive year, has faced speculation about his future with LIV but says it has not affected his performances.

"There's been a lot that has surrounded all of us pretty much since we joined. At the end of the day, once you step on the golf course it's just golf," said Rahm.

"All the problems and theories go away and you compete. It hasn't been any harder or easier. That is the life of a pro athlete, you deal with things like that."

American rookie Michael La Sasso pipped Rahm to win the event in Indianapolis, carding a final-round 65 to finish on 18-under-par. Rahm finished one shot behind on 17-under, with DeChambeau and Spain's Sergio Garcia tying for third a further shot back.

La Sasso, 22, executed a perfect chip on the final hole before a tap-in birdie to become the youngest winner of a LIV Golf event. - Agencies

THURSDAY MEETING

Olympic 800m champion Hodgkinson withdraws from Zurich Diamond League

LONDON: Keely Hodgkinson has withdrawn from the women's 800 metres at Thursday's Diamond League meeting in Zurich because her "body is not quite ready".

Olympic champion Hodgkinson was set to go head-to-head with Switzerland's Audrey Werro, who beat the Briton to gold at the European Championships in Birmingham earlier this month.

"Unfortunately the body isn't quite ready to race again after the European Championships," Hodgkinson said in a statement.

"We've made the decision to skip this race and get ready for the next one. Sad to miss it, hopefully see you next year!"

The race will feature world 400m hurdles champion Femke Broeders-Bol, who has stepped up to the 800m this season, and Hodgkinson's training partner Georgia Hunter-Bell, who won 800m gold at the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow last month.

World 800m champion Lilian Odira of Kenya, who beat Hodgkinson and Hunter-Bell to gold in Tokyo last year, has pulled out of the race after suffering from illness and weakness since the Commonwealth Games.

While Diamond League organisers said they were looking forward to Hodgkinson's "highly anticipated race against Audrey Werro", they "fully respect" the Briton's decision and "hope to see her back in Zurich in the future".

After suffering hamstring and knee injuries over the past few years, Hodgkinson skipped the Commonwealth Games to prioritise the European Championships amid a busy summer schedule.

"I signed myself up for Zurich because I knew everyone was in it but me. I want to be in with the best and I think that's going to bring out the best in me," Hodgkinson said in Birmingham earlier this month.

Before winning 800m gold at the London Diamond League on 18 July, Hodgkinson said she was feeling "definitely a lot better than I was".

Thursday's meet in Zurich is the penultimate Diamond League event of the season, with the final to take place in Brussels over two days on September 4-5. - Agencies

ROUND-UP

With new school year approaching, plan for your child's education with BankDhofar's financial solutions

Through its Education Savings Plan, the bank is helping parents build a secure financial foundation to support their children's educational journey

MUSCAT: As families prepare for the new school year, BankDhofar is reinforcing its role as a partner in social development and individual empowerment by offering innovative financial solutions that help Omani families plan for their children's future. Through its Education Savings Plan, the bank is helping parents build a secure financial foundation to support their children's educational journey.

The initiative reflects BankDhofar's ongoing commitment to promoting financial literacy while encouraging prudent financial planning and long-term saving habits. The Education Savings Plan provides families with a practical and disciplined way to prepare for the costs of higher education and university studies.

The plan enables parents and guardians to establish an education fund for their children through monthly deposits starting from just OMR 10. Savings continue until the beneficiary reaches the age of 18 and offer an interest rates of up to 5%, depending on the deposit period. This allows families to steadily grow their savings while working towards their children's educational aspirations. As part of its commitment to making the plan accessible to a wider segment of society, BankDhofar has linked the program to the Child Benefit received from the Social Protection Fund, broadening access to sustainable savings solutions that benefit students and families alike.

BankDhofar encourages parents to take advantage of the Education Savings Plan as a proactive step towards securing a brighter educational future for their children. Customers can learn more by visiting any of branches or through the BankDhofar website. BankDhofar is the second-largest bank in terms of branch network in Oman, with more than 145 branches strategically located across the country. Through its extensive network, the Bank offers a wide range of banking solutions tailored to serve all segments of society, including women, youth, children, minors, and high-net-worth individuals. In addition, BankDhofar also provides specialised wealth management services for its affluent clients and their families, ensuring that their assets are managed securely, prudently, and with the highest level of confidentiality.

GREATER REASSURANCE

Changan UNI Series now comes with attractive EMIs and six-year unlimited manufacturer's warranty

MUSCAT: Changan is making its distinctive UNI Series more accessible to motorists in Oman with an attractive new offer featuring monthly instalments starting from OMR144 for six years.

Customers purchasing selected UNI Series models can also benefit from a six-year unlimited manufacturer's warranty, adding greater reassurance to the ownership experience.

Available through Arabian Gulf Automobiles and Equipment (AGAE), the offer covers four specific variants, the UNI-V 2.0T Luxury, UNI-T Sport, UNI-S 4WD Royal and UNI-K 4WD Trend, giving customers a choice across different body styles, performance levels and driving requirements.

The offer includes:

UNI-V 2.0T Luxury – EMI from OMR 148 for six years

UNI-T Sport – EMI from OMR 150 for six years

UNI-S 4WD Royal – EMI from OMR 144 for six years

UNI-K 4WD Trend – EMI from OMR 150 for six years

The EMI for the models is calculated based on a 20% down payment and a six-year loan tenure and is subject to bank credit approval. The offer applies to vehicles purchased for personal use. Specifications may vary according to the model variant and terms and conditions apply.

UNI-V 2.0T Luxury combines style and performance

Designed for motorists looking for a sporty and sophisticated driving experience, the UNI-V 2.0T Luxury combines distinctive coupe-inspired styling with strong performance. Its exterior features a panoramic glass roof, hidden door handles and a power spoiler that reinforce its dynamic character. Inside, ventilated sporty leather seats are complemented by ambient lighting, a 10-inch instrument cluster, a 10.25-inch infotainment screen and wireless charging. Driver assistance features include a 360-degree HD camera, adaptive cruise control, forward collision warning, automatic emergency braking and lane departure warning. Its 2.0-litre turbocharged engine develops 232 hp and is paired with an eight-speed automatic transmission. Under the new offer, customers can drive home the UNI-V 2.0T Luxury with monthly instalments starting from OMR 148 for six years.

UNI-T Sport delivers a dynamic drive

With its striking design and performance-focused character, the UNI-T Sport is aimed at drivers who want their SUV to stand apart. Among the UNI-T's signature design features are its distinctive borderless parametric grille and aerodynamic V-shaped rear spoiler. Hidden door handles and a bold quad exhaust design further enhance its sporty and futuristic appearance. Inside, the smart cockpit features an intelligent dual-screen design with CarPlay and voice control for a more connected driving experience. The Sport variant is powered by a 2.0-litre turbocharged engine producing 232 hp, paired with an eight-speed automatic transmission and 2WD configuration. It is available with monthly instalments starting from OMR 150 for six years.

UNI-S 4WD Royal adds versatility and capability

For customers seeking the added confidence of four-wheel drive, the UNI-S 4WD Royal combines everyday practicality with contemporary technology and comfort. Exterior highlights include 19-inch alloy wheels, intelligent high beam, a panoramic sunroof and an electric tailgate with sensor activation. Inside, it features a 14.6-inch centre screen, wireless charging, driver and passenger seat memory, multi-colour ambient lighting and dual-zone automatic air conditioning. Its comprehensive driver assistance package includes forward collision warning, active emergency braking, integrated adaptive cruise control, blind spot detection and automatic parking assistance. It features a 1.5-litre turbocharged engine producing 185 hp, a seven-speed dual-clutch transmission and 4WD. Under the current offer, the UNI-S 4WD Royal is available from OMR 144 per month for six years.

UNI-K 4WD Trend brings premium SUV comfort

The UNI-K 4WD Trend offers a spacious and refined SUV experience together with the added capability of four-wheel drive. Its distinctive exterior is characterised by trident daytime running lights and starship-inspired headlights that give it a strong road presence. An airship-shaped rear spoiler and hidden door handles further contribute to its streamlined and contemporary design. With a 2890 mm wheelbase and flexible rear seating, the UNI-K also offers generous practicality, with luggage capacity expanding from 518 litres to 1412 litres when the rear seats are folded. Powered by a 2.0-litre turbocharged engine developing 233 hp and paired with an eight-speed automatic transmission, it combines confident performance with the UNI Series' distinctive design approach. Customers can own the UNI-K 4WD Trend with monthly instalments starting from OMR 150 for six years.

An AGAE spokesperson said, "The UNI Series has been created for customers who value distinctive design, strong performance, advanced technology and everyday comfort. With attractive monthly instalments across four popular UNI variants, together with a six-year unlimited manufacturer's warranty, this offer gives customers an excellent opportunity to experience the UNI range with greater convenience and peace of mind."

Customers can visit Changan showrooms in Qurum, Mawaleh, Nizwa, Sohar, Salalah and Ibri, as well as sales centres in Barka and Sur, to explore the models, arrange a test drive and obtain complete details of the offer.

About AGAE

Arabian Gulf Automobiles and Equipment (AGAE) offers state-of-the-art showrooms located in Al Qurum, Mawaleh, Sohar, Ibri, and Salalah, along with additional new showrooms in Nizwa, Barka and Sur. In addition, AGAE has established fourteen service centres across Oman, including its main service centre in Azaiba, Muscat, providing comprehensive maintenance and repair services. For more information, contact Changan Oman at the toll-free number 80050800, via WhatsApp at 96628909, or visit the newly launched showroom in Al Qurum. Customers can also visit www.changanoman.com to book test drives, request a callback

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