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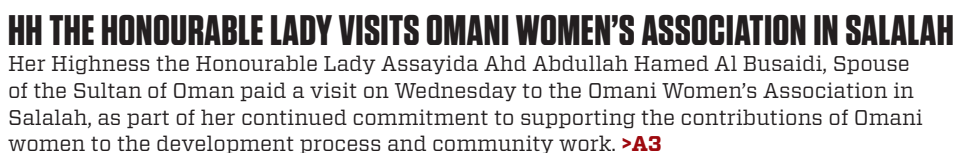
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Cyber resilience,  
cooperation and  
digital economy at  
heart of Oman's  
new strategy



governance and public trust, protecting society through knowledge and awareness, developing qualified national capabilities, building resilient digital infrastructure, expanding international cooperation and fostering a growing cybersecurity economy.

It is based on five key pillars: cybersecurity governance, cyber resilience, cyber capacity building and awareness, cyber cooperation, and cyber economy.

Among its key priorities are

strengthening cybersecurity governance, enhancing cooperation between the public and private sectors, updating relevant legislation and regulations, improving national preparedness to respond to cyber threats and developing specialised national expertise.

The strategy also aims to capitalise on investment opportunities in cybersecurity and encourage the growth of local capabilities and businesses operating in the sector. ➤A5

**3** Private deposits with commercial banks in Oman have risen. **>B1**

**Ibri Sennayah, Oman:** Muscat Pharmacy & Stores LLC, one of Oman's most established healthcare companies, has officially inaugurated its relocated branch in Ibri Sennayah, unveiling a modern and enhanced pharmacy experience designed around the evolving needs of its customers and the community. The inauguration was officiated by Sheikh Saud Bin Salem Al Mamari, Deputy Governor of Ibri, in the presence of Muscat Pharmacy's management, senior officials and staff.

With a legacy spanning 57 years, Muscat Pharmacy has grown alongside Oman's healthcare journey, building a reputation founded on trust, quality, professional care and service. The relocation represents the company's

continued investment in strengthening its retail network and creating pharmacy environments that are more accessible, convenient and relevant to today's customers.

The relocated branch introduces a refreshed and contemporary retail concept, bringing together medicines, healthcare, wellness, beauty, personal care, baby care and everyday health essentials within a modern, customer-focused environment. The move is part of Muscat Pharmacy's broader vision to redefine the role of the community pharmacy, moving beyond the traditional pharmacy model towards becoming a more comprehensive and trusted healthcare and wellness destination for customers across Oman.

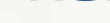
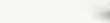
Commenting on the occasion **Ms. Vairali Mehta, COO, Muscat Pharmacy and Stores LLC**, said: “For 57 years, Muscat Pharmacy has been part of the lives of generations of families across Oman. That legacy carries with it both immense pride and an equally important responsibility to continue evolving, investing and raising the standard of how we serve our customers. This relocation is not simply about moving a pharmacy from one location to another. It represents the direction in which we are taking Muscat Pharmacy: more modern, more accessible, more customer-focused and increasingly connected to the healthcare and wellness needs of the communities we serve.”

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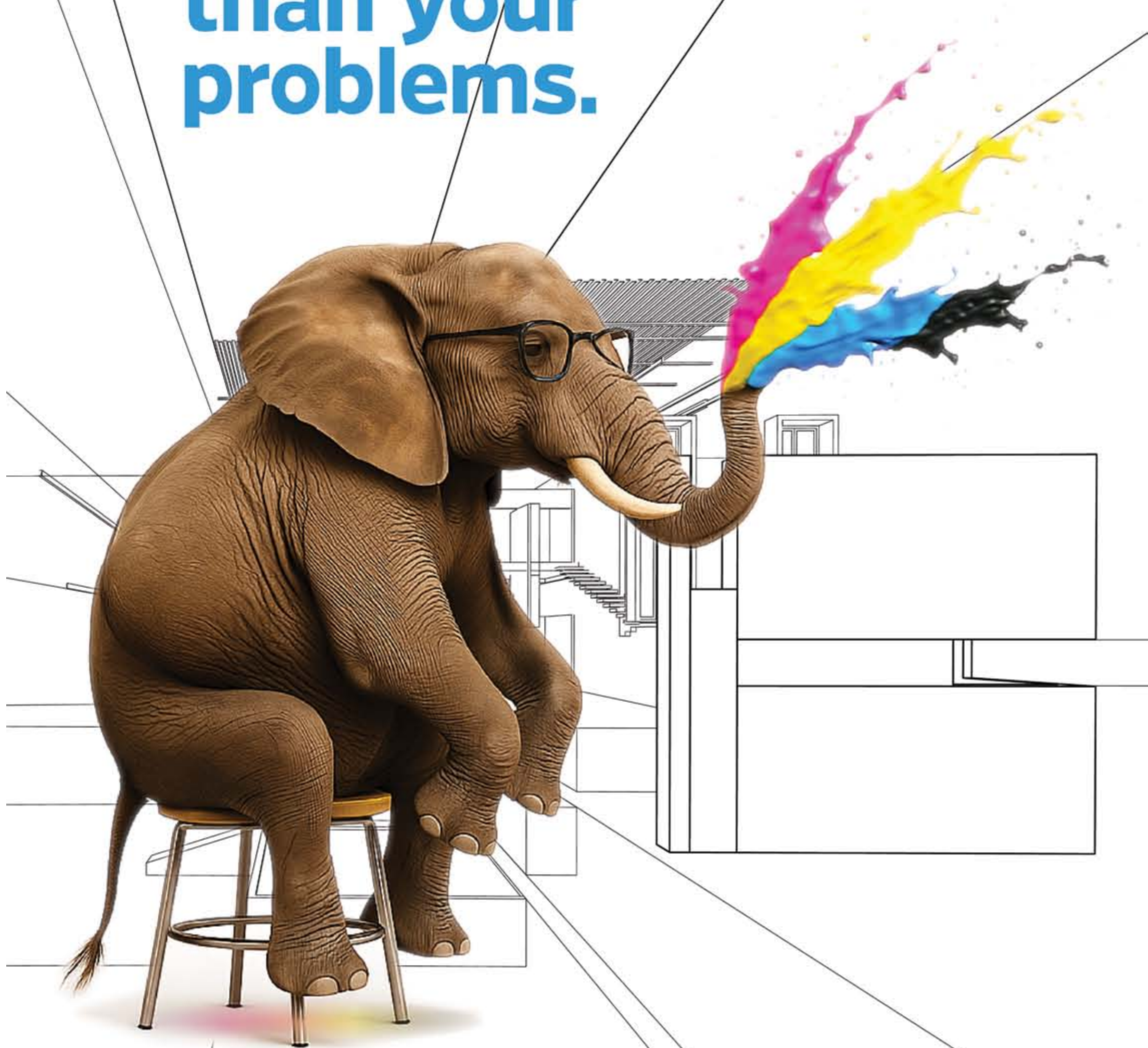
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OMAN

COMMENTARY

# How Oman’s Cybercrime Law Safeguards Electronic Payment Means

The Cybercrime Law issued under Royal Decree 61/2026 contains a dedicated chapter on offences involving electronic payment means, defined as any tool that enables a person to obtain money, goods, or services, or to make payments and money transfers through information technology means, such as smart cards or electronic money storage cards.

Speaking to the Times of Oman, Dr. Mohammed Ibrahim Al Zadjali, Chairman of Mohammed Ibrahim Law Firm, explained that “the law provides for three separate offences involving electronic payment means, each targeting a distinct form of mis-



use. The first applies to whoever uses a website, information system, or information technology



means to obtain or seize the data of an electronic payment means without a legitimate basis, with

the intention of providing it to another or facilitating obtaining it.”

“The second applies when someone uses a website, information system, or information technology means to obtain or seize payment data with the intention of obtaining, without a legitimate basis, the services provided by the electronic payment means, whether for themselves or for another person. The third category covers whoever uses a website, information system, or information technology means to forge an electronic payment means,” he said

He further stated that “the penalties differ between the

three offences. The first carries imprisonment from 01 year to 02 years and a fine from OMR 1,000 to OMR 5,000, or either penalty; the second carries imprisonment from 01 year to 03 years and a fine from OMR 3,000 to OMR 10,000, or either penalty; the third carries imprisonment from 01 year to 03 years and a fine from OMR 5,000 to OMR 10,000.

He concluded by stating that these provisions reflect Oman’s commitment to protecting individuals and businesses from electronic payment crime, establishing clear criminal accountability for each category of offence.

(Mohammed Ibrahim Law Firm (info@mohammedibrahim.net), (+968 244 87 600) was established on 14th December 2006 and is serving clients through its offices in Muscat and Sohar, as well as operating on a request basis in other areas. It offers legal representation across a wide range of practice areas that include Labour Law, Corporate, Commercial, Contracts, Banking and Finance, International Trade, Foreign Investment, Insurance, Maritime Law, Construction and Engineering Contracts, International Arbitration, Intellectual Property and more).

# Investment opportunities worth OMR1.95bn unveiled

The opportunities include a range of projects across real estate development and eco-tourism



Times News Service

**MUSCAT:** The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion’s (MoCIIP) has announced five strategic investment opportunities in Dhofar Governorate through its digital platform, Invest Oman, with a total investment value of approximately OMR1.95 billion. The opportunities are being offered in coordination and cooperation with the government entities that own them.

The opportunities include a range of projects across urban development, real estate development, eco-tourism and marine tourism, in cooperation with Dhofar Governorate, represented by Dhofar Municipality, the Environment Authority, the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, and the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning. The projects seek to capitalise on the natural, tourism, environmental and urban assets that distinguish the governorate.

The Invest Oman platform enables investors to explore investment opportunities and access key information on their scope and potential, helping facilitate access to suitable opportunities, connect interested investors with the entities offering them, and maximise the benefits of Dhofar Governorate’s competitive advantages by transforming them into value-added investment projects.

### Suhoul Al Radhadh project

The opportunities offered through the platform include the Suhoul Al Radhadh project, in cooperation with Dhofar Governorate, represented by Dhofar Municipality. The integrated urban development project is located in the Ateen area in the Wilayat of Salalah and covers approximately 470,000 square metres, with an estimated investment value of around OMR40 million, including OMR15 million in government investment. The project aims to develop an integrated destination featuring hospitality, retail, entertainment and business facilities, alongside public spaces and amenities. It is expected to enhance the attractiveness of the Ateen area, provide diverse options for residents and visitors, and support economic and tourism activity in the governorate.

### Botanical Memory Garden

In the field of eco-tourism and biodiversity conservation, the platform offers an investment opportunity to develop the Botanical Memory Garden in Razat Plain, in cooperation with the Environment Authority. The project covers approximately 1.5 million square metres and has an estimated investment value of around OMR4 million.

The project combines the conservation of rare and endangered Oman’s plants with scientific research, education and eco-tourism. It aims to promote the sustainable use of Dhofar Gov-



ernorate’s rich plant and natural diversity while providing an experience that brings together environmental, scientific and tourism aspects.

### Eco-lodge, Visitor Centre project

The opportunities offered through the platform also include the Eco-lodge and Visitor Centre project at KhorSenaq, located in the Hasik area within the JabalSamhan mountain range. The project covers approximately 47,000 square metres and has an estimated investment value of around OMR3.9 million.

The project includes an eco-lodge, a visitor centre, wellness experiences and a range of outdoor activities, alongside sustainable solutions such as renewable energy and low-impact environmental systems. These features are designed to complement the site’s natural and environmental characteristics, contributing to the development of sustainable tourism products that utilise and preserve the governorate’s natural assets.

### Diving Club

In the marine tourism sector, the platform, in cooperation with the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, showcases the Diving Club project in the Al Hallaniyat Islands. The project covers approximately 5,000 square metres and has an estimated investment value of around OMR1.5 million.

The project aims to develop a specialised destination for diving tourism and marine activities, featuring facilities for diving instruction, equipment rental and marine excursions, alongside environmentally friendly accommodation.

Capitalising on the unique marine biodiversity of the Al Hallaniyat Islands, the project is expected to diversify tourism products and experiences in Dhofar Governorate and create investment opportunities related to diving, adventure tourism and marine activities, thereby supporting the sustainable economic utilisation of the governorate’s marine assets.

### Future Salalah City

In the real estate development and urban development sector, the Invest Oman platform, in co-



operation with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning, is offering the Future Salalah City opportunity, the largest of the five in terms of investment value, with a total value of approximately OMR1.9 billion and an area of up to 10 square kilometres.

The project involves the development of an integrated urban masterplan combining residential, commercial, healthcare, educational, recreational and hospitality uses.

It will provide multiple investment opportunities for the private sector, support urban and economic growth, and contribute to enhancing the quality of life in Dhofar Governorate.

The five opportunities reflect the diversity of Dhofar Governorate’s investment potential, including its coastal locations and waterfronts, nature reserves, biodiversity and distinctive natural environments, alongside its tourism and urban assets. These advantages provide a range of opportunities for local and international investment across urban development, real estate development, eco-tourism, marine tourism and the green economy.

### Dhofar as an attractive investment destination

Dr. Ahmed bin Mohsin Al Ghasani, Chairman of Dhofar Municipality, stated that Dhofar Governorate possesses diverse natural, geographical and economic advantages that position it as an attractive investment destination across several sectors, particularly tourism, urban development and the green economy.

He said Dhofar Municipality is working to strengthen these advantages through the development of strategic projects that enhance quality of life, support the growth of economic activities and provide a favourable environment for the private sector and investors.

He added that the investment opportunities offered in the governorate represent an important step towards capitalising on these advantages and transforming them into value-added projects that contribute to diversifying the local economy and strengthening Dhofar’s position as a sustainable year-round investment and tourism destination.

### Invest Oman

Lamya bint Sultan Al Habsi, Assistant Director General of Investment Promotion at the MoCIIP, affirmed that the investment opportunities in Dhofar Governorate reflect the diversity of the governorate’s assets and its promising potential across urban development, real estate development, eco-tourism and marine tourism, providing a range of opportunities for local and international investors.

She said Invest Oman, in coordination with the government entities associated with the investment opportunities, works to highlight and showcase them through the platform, enabling investors to access information on each opportunity, its advantages and investment potential.

This facilitates access to suitable opportunities and communication with the relevant entities, contributing to attracting strategic, value-added investments.

She noted that showcasing opportunities and connecting them with investors forms part of an integrated investment promotion ecosystem in the Sultanate of Oman. The ecosystem aims to present investment opportunities clearly to local and international investors and maximise the competitive advantages of different sectors and governorates, supporting the transformation of promising opportunities into sustainable investment projects.

### Integrated investment promotion ecosystem

The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion continues its efforts to enhance the competitiveness of the investment environment in the Sultanate of Oman by developing an integrated investment promotion ecosystem and coordinating with government and private-sector entities to identify strategic investment opportunities and showcase them to local and international investors, while seeking to attract investments that generate added value for the national economy.

Through Invest Oman, the MoCIIP also works to facilitate the investor journey, strengthen integration among relevant entities, connect investors with investment opportunities and the entities offering them, and provide relevant information and data. These efforts are intended to facilitate investment decision-making and convert investor interest into actual projects and investments.

The MoCIIP’s efforts focus on attracting strategic investments in targeted sectors, enhancing local value addition, expanding private-sector participation, and capitalising on the competitive advantages of the various governorates of the Sultanate of Oman.

# Oman strengthens health, safety standards across oil and gas sector

Times News Service

**MUSCAT:** The Ministry of Energy and Minerals is developing an integrated health, safety and environment (HSE) system for Oman’s oil and gas sector, focusing on stronger legislation, governance, risk management and emergency preparedness to protect workers and the environment while improving operational efficiency and sustainability.

The ministry said its strategic and regulatory role includes developing legislation governing the sector, particularly the Oil and Gas Law, which sets requirements for protecting people, the environment and property. Concession agreements with operating companies also require compliance with national laws, standards and regulations and the adoption of international best practices.

As part of its supervisory role, the ministry monitors the performance of operating companies and conducts field inspections to assess implementation of HSE plans across concession areas.

The efforts are showing measurable improvements in safety performance. In 2025, around 321 million working hours were recorded across sector operations, compared with 285.5 million hours in 2024. Vehicles and other operations covered approximately 503 million kilometres, up from 433 million kilometres a year earlier.

Despite the increase in operational activity, lost-time accidents fell by 23% to 30 cases in 2025. Serious traffic accidents declined by 33% to 10 cases, while no fatalities were recorded.

Zainab bint Ali Al-Saadi, Director of the HSE Department at the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, said HSE had become an integrated institutional approach covering all stages of operations, from planning and design to risk reduction, operation and emergency response.

She said the ministry is strengthening the legislative and regulatory framework while promoting prevention and continuous improvement to protect lives, preserve the environment and ensure sustainable operations in line with international best practices.

The ministry’s HSE strategy fo-

cuses on developing a strong safety culture, supporting sustainable development, improving emergency preparedness and business continuity, strengthening sector capabilities and accelerating progress towards Oman’s net-zero emissions target for 2050.

Al-Saadi said companies are implementing management systems aligned with international standards and unified standards of the Oman Energy Association. Greater emphasis is also being placed on field leadership, human-performance programmes, training and awareness campaigns, early reporting of risks and empowering workers to stop work when necessary.

Worker wellbeing is also receiving increased attention through occupational and mental health programmes and improved medical preparedness at operational sites.

Transportation safety is another priority. The sector is expanding journey-management systems using vehicle monitoring technologies and tools designed to detect driver fatigue and distraction, while strengthening compliance with procedures governing movement between work sites.

Environmental measures include compliance with national environmental regulations and the adoption of international environmental-management standards by some operations.

The ministry is also expanding carbon-management initiatives, including efforts to achieve zero routine gas flaring by 2030, reduce methane emissions, improve energy efficiency and increase the use of renewable energy.

Technology is playing an increasingly important role in the HSE system, with companies and regulators using artificial intelligence, data analytics, smart monitoring systems and digital reporting platforms to identify risks, report incidents in real time and accelerate responses.

The ministry said the approach is aimed at embedding health, safety and environmental protection into the efficiency and sustainability of Oman’s oil and gas sector through stronger regulation, effective governance, digital transformation and innovation.



YEMENI NATIONALS

# Drugs seized in Dhofar

Times News Service

**MUSCAT:** More than 3,000 kilograms of narcotic substances have been seized by the Directorate General for Narcotics and Psychotropic Substances Control, in cooperation with Dhofar Governorate Police.

Authorities arrested two Yem-

eni nationals on charges related to drug trafficking and drug use, according to the authorities.

The suspects were taken into custody following an operation that resulted in the seizure of the large quantity of narcotics. Legal procedures are being taken against the two individuals in accordance with Omani law.

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AL-MAHAL AREA

# 6 dead, 18 injured in Samail crash

Times News Service

**MUSCAT:** A sudden buildup of traffic following an earlier crash is believed to have triggered a deadly chain collision in Samail, where a heavy truck collided with vehicles ahead, leaving six people dead and 18 injured. The crash occurred on Sultan Thuwaini bin Saeed Road in the Al-Mahal area as traffic backed up toward Muscat.

Royal Oman Police official revealed that the crash began when a large tanker truck carrying solid iron was involved in a collision. The accident occurred shortly after another traffic incident had taken place nearby, causing congestion on the road.

According to the details issued by ROP, the truck driver was sud-



denly confronted with the traffic buildup and collided with vehicles in front of him.

The impact triggered a chain reaction involving several cars and caused the truck to veer from its lane before coming to rest between the road's barriers.

A total of 15 vehicles were affected, with some reportedly sustaining severe damage. Six people lost

their lives, while 18 others suffered injuries of varying degrees.

The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, represented by the Transport Safety Office, has commenced an investigation into the incident that occurred on Sultan Thuwaini bin Saeed Road in Samail; to ascertain the causes and related factors of the incident.

IN SALALAH

# HH The Honourable Lady visits Omani Women's Association

**< FROM A1** Upon Her Highness's arrival, she was received by His Highness Sayyid Marwan Turki Al Said, Governor of Dhofar, Dr. Laila Ahmed Al Najjar, Minister of Social Development, Noor Hassan Al Ghassani, Chairperson of the Omani Women's Association in Salalah and the Chairpersons of Omani Women's Associations in Dhofar Governorate.

**Heritage House**  
During her tour of the association premises, the Honourable Lady viewed the Omani women's associations gathering in Dhofar

Governorate, which included the Heritage House featuring models of traditional crafts and women's handicrafts that reflect the richness of Dhofar's folk heritage, alongside efforts being made to preserve and develop it and transform it into products of economic and social value.

Her Highness's tour also included the exhibition hall, which featured pavilions for the Omani Women's Associations in Dhofar Governorate.

**Community achievements**  
The association chairpersons presented initiatives, voluntary and community achievements,

and women's projects.

The Honourable Lady also acquainted herself with the ideas and experiences embodied in these initiatives, which reflect the spirit of initiative and social responsibility among the women of the governorate.

At the conclusion of the visit, Her Highness the Honourable Lady inscribed a commemorative entry marking the occasion, in which she expressed her appreciation for the efforts exerted by the associations, commending the diversity of programmes and projects, the attention paid to heritage, and the effective contribution to serving women and society. -ONA

# Oman, Saudi Arabia to advance trade and industrial integration

The meeting will bring together officials and representatives from both countries and will review progress in implementing existing initiatives



Times News Service

**SALALAH:** The Wilayat of Salalah in Dhofar Governorate will host next Wednesday the seventh meeting of the Coordination Committee for Economy, Trade and Industry under the Omani-Saudi Coordination Council, as Oman and Saudi Arabia seek to

accelerate joint initiatives and strengthen economic and industrial integration.

The meeting will bring together officials and representatives from both countries and will review progress in implementing existing initiatives, consider new proposals

and identify measures to overcome challenges and speed up implementation.

The Omani delegation will be headed by Ghalib bin Said Al Maamari, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion

for Trade and Industry, while the Saudi side will be led by Rakan bin Wadhah Trabzoni, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Economy and Planning for International Economic Affairs.

Key areas of cooperation include industrial supply chains, intra-

regional trade, non-oil exports, investment and private-sector partnerships. The committee is also working to facilitate trade between the two markets and provide equal treatment for Omani and Saudi companies in government tenders and procurement.

Al Maamari said economic, trade and industrial relations between Oman and Saudi Arabia are continuing to develop, with the next phase focusing on initiatives that have a direct impact on businesses and the private sector.

**Bilateral trade**  
These include facilitating trade and investment, addressing barriers to bilateral trade, strengthening industrial integration and supply chains, and creating opportunities for joint investments.

The initiatives under discussion also cover attracting industrial investments, expanding non-oil exports, cooperation on competition and anti-monopoly practices, and facilitating the registration of Omani products with Saudi regulatory authorities.

New opportunities in semiconductors, electronic chips and ready-made factories are also expected to receive attention. Khalid bin Salim Al Qasabi, Director General of Industry at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, said the two sides aim to open new opportunities for private-sector cooperation in value-added industries and advanced technologies.

The meeting will also seek to leverage Oman's strategic position as a re-export hub and increase intra-regional trade between the two countries.

A key outcome will be the signing of an executive programme for 2026-2028 to activate the memorandum of understanding between the Omani Ministry of Economy and the Saudi Ministry of Economy and Planning in the fields of economy and planning.

The programme is intended to translate the memorandum into concrete projects and initiatives, with implementation to be monitored through the Coordination Committee.

SUSTAINING WATER RESOURCES

# UN symposium on climate change to open in Salalah



Times News Service

**SALALAH:** The International United Nations Symposium on Water Resources Sustainability, themed "Water and Climate Change," will begin on Sunday in Salalah, bringing together specialists and experts from Oman and abroad for two days of discussions.

The symposium is organised by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources in partnership with Dhofar Municipality and Nama Dhofar Services, and in cooperation with the Omani Na-

tional Commission for Education, Culture and Science, UNESCO and the Omani Water Society.

The event will highlight Oman's experience in managing and sustaining water resources, with discussions focusing on the impact of climate change on surface and groundwater resources.

**Key topics will include:**

- Managing risks associated with floods, drought and salinity
- Expanding water sources through seawater desalination and treated-water reuse

- Improving water-use efficiency in agriculture
- Protecting groundwater reserves
- Preserving, maintaining and rehabilitating aflaj, Oman's traditional irrigation systems

Using artificial intelligence, remote sensing, geographic information systems and hydrological modelling in water management

The symposium will provide a platform for sharing expertise and exploring approaches to strengthening water security and climate resilience in Oman and beyond.

MEETING

# Tajikistan Prime Minister receives Sheikh Khalifa

**DUSHANBE:** Kokhir Rasulzoda, Prime Minister of the Republic of Tajikistan, received Sheikh Khalifa Ali Al Harthy, Foreign Ministry Undersecretary for Political Affairs, during his visit to the Tajik capital, Dushanbe, to participate in a meeting of the Political Consultations Committee between Oman and Tajikistan. The meeting reviewed relations and discussed opportunities to strengthen cooperation across various fields.

Sheikh Khalifa conveyed the greetings of the Government of Oman to the Prime Minister and expressed its appreciation to the Government of Tajikistan for opening its Embassy in Muscat, a step that supports relations and strengthens communication and cooperation



between the two countries.

The Prime Minister appreciated Oman's role and standing, and affirmed Tajikistan's interest in deepening cooperation and exploring new areas to strengthen and broaden the partnership.

The meeting was attended by Sharifzoda Farrukh Homiddin, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Tajikistan; Zubaydullo Zubaydzoda Najot, Ambassador of Tajikistan to Oman, and officials from the Foreign Ministries of both countries.

ALGERIA

# Oman expresses solidarity

**MUSCAT:** The Sultanate of Oman has expressed its solidarity and sincere condolences to the government and people of the People's Democratic Repub-

lic of Algeria following forest fires that broke out in northern parts of the country, resulting in deaths and injuries.

In a statement, the Foreign

Ministry conveyed its condolences to the families of those who lost their lives and wished a speedy recovery to those injured in the fires.

# Musandam targets tourism, maritime economy and logistics to drive non-oil growth

The maritime economy also offers significant opportunities through fisheries industries, marine services, boat and yacht maintenance

**KHASAB:** Musandam Governorate is seeking to expand the contribution of non-oil activities to its local economy by capitalising on its strategic location, marine resources, natural landscapes and growing investment opportunities in tourism, logistics and value-added industries.

The governorate is focusing on sustainable tourism, the maritime economy, fisheries-related industries and logistics as key sectors capable of attracting quality investments, creating jobs and strengthening the role of the private sector in line with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040.

Mohammed bin Rashid Al Qutaiti, Director of the Department of Trade, Industry and Investment Promotion in Musandam Governorate, said the governorate has significant economic and investment assets that can support the expansion of non-oil activities and increase local added value.

He identified sustainable and quality tourism as one of the leading investment areas, including tourism and environmental resorts, marine and adventure tourism, as well as medical and wellness tourism.

The maritime economy also offers significant opportunities through fisheries industries, marine services, boat and yacht maintenance and port-related logistics. Other opportunities include light and processing industries, fisheries-related manufacturing, recycling and circular-economy projects.

The governorate also sees potential in logistics and commercial services, particularly distribution and storage centres and services supporting commercial and maritime activities.

Al Qutaiti said priority sectors



include sustainable and medical tourism, the maritime economy, small and medium-sized value-added industries, logistics and supply chains.

Musandam's distinctive geography — combining mountains, bays and coastlines — together with its rich marine resources provides a strong foundation for tourism and maritime industries, he said.

**Fisheries and agriculture support local economy**  
The governorate's existing non-oil economy is already supported

by activities including fish farming, fish processing and packaging, agriculture and construction contracting.

The agriculture, forestry and fishing sector recorded growth of approximately 7.6%, highlighting its contribution to local value creation and its potential to attract further investment in agricultural and fisheries production and related manufacturing.

The governorate currently has around 3,000 licences for active economic activities, covering construction and contracting, fishing,



fish preservation and packaging, agriculture, shipping agencies, hotels, resorts and other businesses.

Officials said the diversity of these activities provides a foundation for expanding private-sector participation, supporting SMEs and attracting investment into emerging sectors.

## Infrastructure strengthens investment prospects

Infrastructure development is also improving Musandam's connectivity and investment readiness.

Among the key projects are the development of Khasab Port, the Khasab-Lima-Dibba road, development of Mahas Industrial City and new tourism projects.

Al Qutaiti said these projects will not only improve infrastructure but also strengthen the overall business environment, improve commercial and tourism activity, connect different parts of the governorate and facilitate investor access to markets and resources.

During the next phase, Musandam will concentrate on developing sustainable tourism, the maritime economy, value-added industries and logistics, while empowering small and medium-sized enterprises and attracting quality investments.

The governorate believes these sectors can generate new employment, strengthen local supply chains and increase economic value by linking Musandam's natural and geographical resources with production, services, tourism and maritime activities.

With continued infrastructure development and expansion of its investment base, Musandam aims to establish itself as an increasingly important investment, tourism and economic destination, while raising the contribution of non-oil activities to Oman's broader economic diversification drive.

## BILATERAL COOPERATION

# Oman, Tajikistan hold third round of political consultations in Dushanbe



**DUSHANBE:** The Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Tajikistan held the third session of political consultations in Dushanbe, reviewing bilateral cooperation and exploring ways to expand relations across economic, investment, trade, scientific and cultural fields.

The Omani delegation was headed by Sheikh Khalifa Ali Al Harthy, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for Political Affairs, while the Tajik side was led by Sharifzoda Farukh Homiddin, Deputy Minister

of Foreign Affairs.

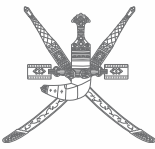
The discussions focused on strengthening joint investments and trade exchange, with both sides seeking to develop cooperation in areas that serve the interests of the two countries and their peoples. The officials also exchanged views on a number of regional and international developments of mutual interest.

On the sidelines of the consultations, Al Harthy met Tajik Foreign Minister Sirojiddin Muhridin and conveyed the greetings of

Oman's Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi.

Muhriddin stressed the importance of continuing mutual visits and meetings between officials at various levels, saying such exchanges would contribute to further strengthening relations between Oman and Tajikistan.

The consultations were attended by Zubaydullo Zubaydov, Tajikistan's Ambassador to Oman, along with officials from the foreign ministries of both countries.



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| Tender No               | Description of Tender                                                                            | Last date to collect the tender | Tender return date |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------|
| PRE/26/104<br>Re-Call 1 | Consultancy Services for Strategic Study for the Rental Values in Muscat Governorate (Re-Call 1) | 15/09/2026                      | 05/10/2026         |
| PRE/26/128              | Design & Construction of Fountain at Darsait                                                     | 15/09/2026                      | 05/10/2026         |
| PRE/26/129              | AMC for MM IT External Infrastructure                                                            | 15/09/2026                      | 05/10/2026         |

- Bidders shall submit their offers electronically.
- Clarification and Support:
  - For any inquiries regarding tenders, please visit e-tendering website: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) .
  - For technical support of e-tendering system please send an email to ([etenderhd@ptlc.gov.om](mailto:etenderhd@ptlc.gov.om)) or call (+96824402200).

Website: [www.mm.gov.om](http://www.mm.gov.om)



# Iran willing to negotiate with US but remains wary, says President Pezeshkian

“We can move forward” if Iran’s actions are met with reciprocal and proportional actions from the other side, the Iranian president said, acknowledging that the two sides might not achieve all their objectives



**TEHRAN:** Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said that Iran will negotiate with the United States, but remains wary of Washington, stressing that Tehran will honor its commitments only if the other side does the same. Pezeshkian made the remarks in a televised interview broadcast on Friday night, responding to

questions about whether ongoing diplomatic efforts could revive the peace memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed by Iran and the United States in June and restore the Iranian nation’s rights. “We can move forward” if Iran’s actions are met with reciprocal and proportional actions from the other side, the Iranian president

said, acknowledging that the two sides might not achieve all their objectives. Under the MoU, the United States was expected to lift a naval blockade and oil and petrochemical sanctions against Iran and release Iranian frozen assets. Pezeshkian said Iran had exported nearly 90 million barrels

of oil during the period when the agreement was being implemented. “The main issue is that we must be committed to the MoU we have written. When we sit down at the negotiating table, we can talk to them,” he said. On June 18, the United States and Iran signed the deal on ending the war in the region on all fronts, including Lebanon. Under the MoU, they were scheduled to hold negotiations within 60 days, which ended on Aug. 17, to reach a final agreement. The talks’ fate remains unclear following the escalation between the two countries last month. Pezeshkian’s comments came as Iran continues to grapple with economic pressures at home. In a separate message Friday marking Government Week, Iranian Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei called for “serious” attention to economic and livelihood challenges, including inflation, unemployment and the management of prices and markets. Iran needs stronger economic growth, increased investment and a production boost, Khamenei said, describing greater reliance on domestic production as key to addressing the country’s economic difficulties. — Xinhua

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## Indian PM Modi lays wreath at Yangi Uzbekistan Park in Tashkent

**TASHKENT:** Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday laid a wreath at Yangi Uzbekistan Park. During the wreath-laying ceremony, PM Modi was accompanied by Uzbekistan President Shavkat Mirziyoyev. Yangi Uzbekistan Park is one of Uzbekistan’s largest public parks. It was opened on August 31, 2021, to commemorate the 30th anniversary of Uzbekistan’s independence.



Earlier, Prime Minister Narendra Modi arrived in Uzbekistan’s capital, Tashkent, on the first leg of his two-nation visit. PM Modi was accorded a warm welcome on his arrival at the airport by Uzbekistan President Shavkat Mirziyoyev. The two leaders were also seen sharing a cordial hug. During the visit, the Prime Minister will hold delegation-level talks with Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev to further strengthen the strategic partnership between the two countries. The two leaders will review cooperation in trade and investment, defence, digital connectivity, energy, education and people-to-people domains and set the agenda for the road ahead. In his departure statement, PM Modi said the India-Uzbekistan Strategic Partnership has seen significant advancement in recent years. “I look forward to my discussions with President Mirziyoyev

on further deepening our cooperation in trade and investment, digital connectivity, defence, energy, and on advancing our shared visions of Viksit Bharat and Yangi Uzbekistan,” he said. PM Modi said he will also visit the Shastri Memorial and the Mahatma Gandhi Centre at the Tashkent State University of Oriental Studies, a tribute to the close cultural and people-to-people ties that bind our two countries. This marks PM Modi’s fourth visit to Uzbekistan, following previous diplomatic engagements in 2015, alongside subsequent visits in 2016 and 2022 to attend SCO Summits. Bilateral and multilateral cooperation between New Delhi and Tashkent has expanded steadily over the years, highlighted by President Mirziyoyev’s State Visit to India in 2018 and his participation in the Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit in 2019. — ANI

## Strikes in Gaza killing children, hit humanitarian aids

**UNITED NATIONS:** UN humanitarian workers on Friday expressed concern over attacks in Gaza that are killing civilians, particularly children, damaging humanitarian supplies and infrastructure, and restricting the entry of key supplies. The UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) said four children aged 2 to 16 were reportedly killed over five days, including one who succumbed to wounds sustained in an attack last week. Five others, aged 8 to 17, were reportedly hit by live fire or shrapnel following airstrikes and suffered life-changing injuries. The attacks also destroyed more

than \$770,000 worth of UNICEF nutrition supplies intended for more than 45,000 children, pregnant women and breastfeeding mothers, and heavily damaged a humanitarian partner’s warehouse, UNICEF said. **Desalination facility** On Monday, a UNICEF-supported water well and desalination facility serving more than 4,000 people in Deir al-Balah were severely damaged by a nearby strike. Partners are supplying water by truck from other sources. “Civilians and civilian objects -- including humanitarian facilities and infrastructure -- must always

be protected,” said the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). The UN and its partners are assessing and marking explosive hazards, educating people on safety measures and referring those affected for support, OCHA said. However, authorisation to bring in equipment and remove explosive ordnance has not been granted. On Thursday, explosive ordnance detonated about 30 meters from a UN convoy returning with fuel from the Kerem Shalom/Karem Abu Salem crossing as it crossed the so-called Yellow Line in Rafah. No one was injured, but one ve-

hicle suffered a minor mechanical problem, OCHA said. World Health Organization Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said Friday that the organization supported the evacuation of 106 patients, including 19 children, and 132 companions from Gaza through the Rafah and Kerem Shalom/Karem Abu Salem crossings last week. Since October 2023, more than 13,000 patients and 16,000 companions have been evacuated, but thousands still await medical evacuation. Tedros said sustained access through multiple crossings is needed to ensure timely treatment. — Xinhua

NEW BOOK IN ENGLISH

## Five years on, Afghanistan still bears scars of war

**KABUL:** An infant, still hungry and unaware that his mother had been killed, reached for her breast after a US overnight bombardment in Bala Buluk district of Afghanistan’s western Farah province in 2009. The haunting scene is described in the newly released English edition of a book by Muhajer Farahi, Afghanistan’s deputy minister for publications at the Ministry of Information and Culture, as Afghanistan approaches Aug. 31 -- five years since the last US troops left the country, bringing America’s longest war to an end. The English edition, titled *Memories of Jihad: Twenty Years in Occupation*, looks back at the two decades of US-led military presence through the eyes of Farahi, chronicling what he describes as years of bombardment, civilian casualties, displacement, destruction, detention and torture. Five years after the withdrawal, for many Afghans, the scars of war remain. Farahi said he wrote the book to document what he describes as the realities of the US military presence and its far-reaching consequences for Afghan society. “The Americans committed widespread acts of violence and atrocities over the past 20 years, from 2001 to 2021. They bombed villages, wedding ceremonies, funerals, religious schools and educational institutions,” Farahi told Xinhua. “They left behind enormous devastation, mostly in remote areas and rural communities. Hundreds of thousands of our compatriots were killed, imprisoned and tortured,” he said. “Civilians suffered extensive losses and hardship, and people were displaced from their homes.” Farahi also challenges portrayals of the two-decade US pres-



ence that emphasise development assistance and reconstruction projects undertaken during those years while overlooking what he sees as Afghanistan’s continued dependence on external support. “Instead of teaching our people how to catch fish, they preferred to keep providing them with ready-caught fish under their own control,” Farahi said. For many Afghan families, however, memories of those two decades are rooted not in debates over the legacy of the war, but in the loss of loved ones. Haji Sharif Khan, a resident of Hesarak district in eastern Nangarhar province, still remembers the night in 2019 when his brother, Dr. Nazar Gul, and 12 others from two related households were killed in a US bombing. Khan said the attack came from multiple directions and continued for hours. “About six planes came for bombardment from three sides, which continued for over three hours. M4 ammunition, helicopters, jets and even B-52 aircraft were included in this attack,” Khan said. For Khan, the loss was not an

isolated tragedy but part of what he sees as a broader pattern of suffering inflicted on Afghan communities during the U.S. military presence. “The United States had oppressed the whole land of Afghanistan with its plans and programs,” he said. For Miro, another resident of Nangarhar, the ordeal did not end when the bombardment stopped and ground operations ceased. He recalled that civilians were afraid to approach the scene, help the wounded or pull people from the ruins, fearing that anyone who ventured outside could become another target. “No one could help anyone. If you went out to help, you would also be targeted,” Miro told Xinhua. Beyond airstrikes and ground operations, the detention of Afghans on various grounds and their confinement in US-run facilities became another deeply contentious chapter of the two-decade war. Thousands of Afghans were held at US military bases in Afghanistan, including Bagram and Kandahar, while some were transferred to the Guantanamo

Bay detention facility. For Khan Mohammad, that chapter remains deeply personal. The former detainee said he spent nearly two decades in US custody despite maintaining that he had committed no crime. “They accused me of orchestrating a major conspiracy to attack Jalalabad airport and kill many Americans,” Khan told Xinhua. “But I did nothing. I completely denied the allegations.” US troops detained Khan in Jalalabad, the capital of Nangarhar province, in 2006. He was subsequently transferred to Bagram and later to the United States, where he was sentenced to life imprisonment. Recalling the journey from Afghanistan to the United States, Khan said he was deprived of his senses for much of the trip. “In Bagram, I was like the other prisoners. Then they transferred me to the United States. The journey was terrifying. They tied my hands and feet, blindfolded me and blocked my ears. The distance was long, and I was in pain the whole time,” he said. After being sent to Washing-

ton, DC, for further interrogation, Khan was imprisoned in California following a court judgment. He was released in January 2025 and returned to Afghanistan as part of a prisoner exchange between the United States and the Afghan interim government. His release ended nearly two decades in US custody, but the experience, he said, had irrevocably changed the course of his life. The scars left by the war were compounded by the chaotic final days of the U.S. military withdrawal in August 2021. Among the Afghans who lost their lives during those days was Zaki Anwari, a 17-year-old promising football player who fell to his death after clinging to a US military aircraft as it took off from Kabul International Airport. For the Anwari family, the pain of Zaki’s death has not faded with time. His brother, Haji Zakaria, still struggles to contain his grief whenever he sees Zaki’s belongings -- his jerseys, boots and football equipment, reminders of the young man’s dreams. “That black day was unbearably

painful for us. Regrettably, those harrowing memories are etched into our souls, and we shall carry them to the end of our days,” Zakaria said. On Aug. 26, 2021, amid the final days of the US military withdrawal, a suicide bombing claimed by the Islamic State near the gates of Kabul International Airport killed at least 170 Afghan civilians and 13 US service members. Two decades of US-led military intervention left Afghanistan scarred by death, destruction and enduring trauma. Night raids, airstrikes and military operations in civilian areas claimed numerous lives, while hospitals, schools, wedding ceremonies and other civilian gatherings were also caught in the violence. For many Afghan families, the loss of loved ones remains an open wound. Nor did Afghanistan’s hardships end with the departure of US troops. Following the Taliban’s return to power in August 2021, about \$7 billion in assets belonging to Afghanistan’s central bank were frozen by the United States. Sanctions, financial restrictions and declining development assistance added further pressure to an already fragile economy. Unemployment and poverty rose, food insecurity worsened and development projects stalled, pushing millions of Afghans deeper into hardship. Five years after the last US troops left Afghanistan, the country continues to live with the consequences of two decades of war. For millions of Afghans, memories of lost relatives, destroyed homes and years of displacement and hardship have yet to fade, while economic deprivation remains another enduring legacy of a war whose scars Afghanistan still bears today. — Xinhua

# Nepal flood death toll rises to 675, thousands still missing

NDRRMA said Chitwan district has recorded the highest number of fatalities, with 246 bodies retrieved, followed by Nawalparasi East with 165, Nawalparasi West with 63, Gorkha with 57, Nuwakot with 51, Dhading with 45, Tanahun with 35, and Rasuwa with 13

**KATHMANDU:** The death toll from the catastrophic Rasuwa Bhote Koshi flash floods has risen to 675, with emergency teams recovering bodies and human remains across multiple downstream districts, according to the latest updates released by Nepal's National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority (NDRRMA). As of 6:30 PM, a total of 2,418 individuals remain missing or out of contact following the deluge.



Chitwan district has recorded the highest number of fatalities, with 246 bodies retrieved, followed by Nawalparasi East with 165, Nawalparasi West with 63, Gorkha with 57, Nuwakot with 51, Dhading with 45, Tanahun with 35, and Rasuwa with 13. Medical teams have also treated or discharged 219 injured survivors across the impacted regions. The NDRRMA reported that the

missing include 933 workers from underground hydropower projects, 589 foreign citizens, and 127 Nepalis who were travelling alongside foreign tourists. In addition, 104 security and government officials, comprising 45 Nepal Army personnel, 27 Nepal Police officers, 15 Customs staff, 13 Armed Police Force members, and 4 Immigration personnel, remain unaccounted for. Geographically, missing

person reports are concentrated heavily in Rasuwa with 562, Nuwakot with 115, Makwanpur with 65, and Langtang National Park with 3. To manage the ongoing operations and locate the missing, 18,708 security personnel have been deployed to the disaster zone, including 8,135 Nepal Police, 6,370 Nepal Army, and 4,203 Armed Police Force members. Air and

ground operations have successfully rescued 7,514 people so far. Nepali Army and private helicopters have completed 261 sorties, airlifting 227 foreign nationals to safety and rescuing 279 workers from flooded hydropower tunnels over the past two days. Restoration efforts for critical infrastructure are progressing, with technicians restoring 145 out of 198 damaged telephone towers, while an automated flood monitoring station has been established at Galchi. Financial assistance from the government has been distributed, providing Rs 1 crore each to Rasuwa and Nuwakot, Rs 50 lakh to Dhading, and Rs 6.57 crore across 15 affected local palikas. Ground teams have dispatched 37 trucks and 7 helicopter flights of food and non-food supplies, while maintaining fuel reserves of 36,000 liters of diesel, 24,000 liters of petrol,

and 14,000 liters of aviation fuel in Nuwakot to sustain aerial rescue operations, NDRRMA stated. Earlier in the day, Minister of State for External Affairs Kirti Vardhan Singh said that India is closely monitoring the flood situation in Nepal and extending all possible assistance following the massive flood-related tragedy in the neighbouring country. Speaking in Gonda, Singh said that the Indian Embassy in Nepal immediately activated a 24-hour helpline after the tragedy to monitor the situation, identify those requiring assistance and coordinate relief efforts. "On the day this tragic incident occurred, our embassy there immediately launched a 24-hour helpline. They provided a number so we could keep a close watch on the situation, monitor developments, and identify exactly where assistance was needed," Singh said. — ANI

## EMERGENCY PROCUREMENT



## India, US sign deal for buying Javelin anti-tank missiles

**NEW DELHI:** India and the United States have signed a Rs292 crore deal to buy around 60 Javelin anti-tank guided missiles for the Indian Army under the emergency procurement powers. The procurement has been done under the Emergency Procurement powers granted to the defence forces to build their capabilities post Operation Sindoor last year, Defence sources told ANI. The contracts under the (EP-6) are expected to start being delivered to the armed forces by the end of 2026-27. Several companies have sought extensions to delivery timelines due to disruptions caused by the conflict in West Asia. US Ambassador to India Sergio

Gor said in a post on X on Friday, "BIG news! India plans to buy the battle-tested Javelin anti-tank system. Just as @secwar highlighted at the May 2026 Shangri-La Dialogue, this is a great step forward in the U.S.-India defense relationship and opens the door to co-production possibilities. The engagement between our two nations is at record high levels." The Javelin anti-tank guided missiles have been in service for many years now and have been used in actual combat in many conflicts. The missile is being procured by the Indian Army in limited numbers only, as the Emergency procurement powers allow them to make purchases only up to Rs 300 crore per equipment. — ANI

## NEPAL FLOODS

# Survivors airlifted to army camp in Nuwakot as rescue efforts continue

**NUWAKOT:** Flood survivors were airlifted by Army helicopter to an army camp in Nepal's Nuwakot district to seek refuge days after a devastating flood swept through a mountainous region bordering Tibet, Reuters reported. The survivors were taken to the Maithili Army Camp, where Nepalese Army personnel helped them find shelter in tents and provided assistance. "I have lost everything; my house and belongings are all gone," a woman from Nepal's Rasuwa District told Reuters. Meanwhile, speaking from the disaster-hit area in Betrawati, a local resident described the complete obliteration of a thriving neighbourhood where a market, a temple, and a school once stood. "There was a temple right in front, and this entire area was a market. In that open space in the middle, there used to be a school. On the very day the flood occurred, the teachers evacuated all the students and got them to safety; now, there is absolutely no trace left," he said. "Everything was swept away. Many people died here; there is still no information regarding exactly how many lives were lost," he said. In the aftermath of the August 26 flood in Betrawati, in Nepal's Nuwakot district, the road has been completely washed away and



merged into the river. Several areas remain inaccessible even to rescue teams. Meanwhile, people stranded in remote and severely affected areas of Rasuwa are being rescued by helicopter. As of 8 am on Saturday, Nepal Army and rescue teams have evacuated 2,265 people, including 163 foreign nationals, in Army helicopters; 200 people were rescued on the ground, and 1,706 injured individuals were provided medical care at the Emergency Treatment

Centre. The Army has deployed 6,700 personnel in rescue and relief efforts. Meanwhile, the death toll in the Bhotekoshi flood disaster in Nepal has reached 626, while 2,426 people remain missing, according to the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority (NDRRMA). **Teenager among volunteers distributing relief to stranded families in remote villages**

Meanwhile, Amid the devastation caused by floods in Nepal, local residents have stepped forward to help families stranded in remote and flood-affected villages, with a group of volunteers travelling from Kathmandu to distribute essential supplies. Fifteen-year-old Pranil Basnet, along with Raju Adhikari, Yuwraj Khanal, Prabhin Basnet and several others, has been distributing rice, pulses, biscuits, blankets and other essential items to families affected by the floods. The volunteers have been reaching remote villages where access to relief materials and essential supplies remains a major challenge. The group said everyone should come forward and contribute in whatever way possible to help flood victims during the difficult situation. The volunteers also said their efforts were not linked to any organisation or political affiliation but were aimed at helping fellow citizens in need. They appealed to more people to come forward and support flood-affected families across Nepal. Recalling the devastation in Nepal's Trishuli area, local resident Surendra Kumar told ANI that an entire marketplace, a temple and a three-storey school were swept away by the floods. — ANI

## BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE

# China hands over major hospital project to Rwanda

**KIGALI:** China on Friday handed the Masaka Hospital renovation and expansion project to Rwandan authorities at a ceremony held at the hospital in the capital, Kigali. The China-aided project is the largest grant-aid project undertaken by the Chinese government in Rwanda to date and a key livelihood project under the Belt and Road Initiative. Following the renovation and expansion, the hospital's floor area has expanded from 6,398 square metres to 56,957 square metres, while the number of beds increased significantly from 127 to 837. The hospital's daily outpatient capacity has been raised to 2,000 visits. Speaking at the handover ceremony, Rwandan Minister of Health Sabin Nsanzimana said the occasion was a major milestone for the country and the health sector. "We expect this hospital to be a symbol of the high-quality medical care we can provide in Rwanda, in Africa," Nsanzimana said. "We look forward to continuing working together to make this partnership expand in health." Chinese Ambassador to Rwanda



da Gao Wenqi described Masaka Hospital as both a witness and participant in the China-Rwanda friendship. "The successful completion of this renovation and expansion project marks a comprehensive and historic transformation of the hospital, ushering in a new era of development in both its facilities and service capabilities," he said. He said the new hospital will not only become one of the largest and most comprehensive teaching hospitals, but will also gradually grow into a regional medical hub serving East Africa and extending benefits to the entire African continent. "Completion and handover mark the successful conclusion of

the project's construction phase, and more importantly, represent a brand-new starting point for China-Rwanda health cooperation," he said. The project employed more than 1,000 Rwandan workers and engaged more than 200 Chinese builders during the construction period, contributing to the development of local technical professionals. China and Rwanda have maintained long-term cooperation in the medical and health sector. Since 1982, China has dispatched 26 medical teams to Rwanda, providing daily medical services at Masaka Hospital and Kibungo Hospital. — Xinhua

SPORTS

# Robinson and Archer demolish Pakistan as England take control

Visitors blown away despite Azan Awaish' gritty knock, as wickets continue to tumble at Lord's

**LONDON:** Ollie Robinson provided the perfect rhythm to Jofra Archer's relentless tempo as England took control of the second Test at Lord's with a 261-run lead over Pakistan by the end of day two on Friday.

On a day when 13 wickets fell, Robinson and Archer shared seven of them to bowl Pakistan out for 110 in their first innings, a deficit of 180 runs, with Imam-ul-Haq unable to bat after straining a calf muscle while fielding on the opening day.

When bad light stopped play just before 6.45pm on Friday, England were 81 for 3 in their second innings with Emilio Gay unbeaten on 30 and Harry Brook not out 7.

Robinson took a rockstar 4 for 11 in 13 overs, including six maidens, with unwavering accuracy and sublime seam movement.

Archer, meanwhile, hammered away with hostile speed and bounce, hitting 92mph/148kph with startling regularity and at times reaching 94mph/151kph. His miserly economy rate of 2.29 was overshadowed by Robinson's 0.84 but Archer's three wickets for 26 runs from 11.2 overs were no less valuable.

Resuming on 248 for 9 after bad light stopped play on the opening night, England's last-wicket pair of Gus Atkinson and Josh Tongue batted for nearly an hour, building a 47-run partnership.

When Atkinson sent a ball from left-arm spinner Ali Usman straight to long-off after a 46-ball 45, Tongue remained unbeaten with an impressive 30 off 48.

Robinson found some swing



early and Archer struck the first blow. Shan Masood, opening in place of Imam, was glued to his crease as the ball came in full and at a blistering 91mph/146kph and ended up edging behind.

The first ball Abdullah Shafique faced was a menacing 92mph bouncer that rapped him on the hand as he ducked behind it and Archer continued to ramp up the pace, keeping Azan Awaish on his toes in a menacing eighth over in which he hit 94mph.

Tongue entered the fray with 20 minutes left in the morning session, followed immediately by Atkinson.

The latter thought he had Awaish first ball with a vicious bouncer collected behind the stumps by Jamie Smith, but the dismissal was overturned when replays showed the ball missed the bat and came off his shoulder.

Atkinson should have had Awaish next over, but Brook spilled it at second slip, and it was Tongue who

made the breakthrough next over when Shafique edged behind, sending Pakistan to lunch at 16 for 2.

Babar Azam, the Pakistan captain back in the side after missing the first Test with a hand injury, managed just 8 before Tongue had him well caught by Jordan Cox at third slip.

Robinson got Saud Shakeel and Mohammad Rizwan lbw on review either side of a brief rain stoppage, which soon gave way to bright sunshine again. Archer was finally rewarded for keeping the pressure dialled up on Pakistan when he had Usman out chopping on.

Archer had been unforgiving against Awaish, beating him outside off stump time and time again. Somehow the young opener gritted it out for a 106-ball stay yielding 46 runs and it was Robinson who ultimately broke him - with a bouncer, no less, pulled to square leg. That was the second in a double-wicket over costing just two runs for Robinson, who also had Khurram Shahzad caught at second slip.

Archer closed his eyes and dropped his shoulders as though he could curl up and sleep for days when he ripped out Mohammad Abbas's off stump with a nip-backer. With Imam unable to bat, that ended Pakistan's innings after just 37.2 overs, the tourists 180 runs in arrears.

England made a frenetic start to their second innings, Ben Duckett feeding one to mid-off in the second over. Then, after two fours in three balls off Abbas, Cox - a half-century in the first innings - was pinned lbw to give Shahzad his second wicket in as many overs, following a successful review by Pakistan.

Root and Gay put on 47 runs together but Root reviewed in desperation - and in vain - when he was struck on the pad by Ali's stock nip-backer, extending a worrying run of lbw dismissals for the England skipper to seven in his last nine innings.

**Brief scores:** England 290 (Abbas 4-73) and 81 for 3 (Gay 30\*, Shahzad 2-26) lead Pakistan 110 (Awaish 46, Robinson 4-11, Archer 3-26) by 261 runs. - Agencies

TRI-NATION T20I SERIES



## SA rout Zimbabwe to bounce back

**WINDHOEK:** Dewald Brevis' second score of 75 in as many innings proved successful as South Africa got their first points on the board in the Namibia T20I tri-series, this time against Zimbabwe with a seven-wicket win on Saturday.

South Africa were set a target that was exactly the same number of runs they managed to score in the opener against Namibia - which they lost by 18 runs - and Zimbabwe proved no match for them.

South Africa made light work of the total, and polished it off inside 14 overs, as Richard Ngara's absence showed and none of their bowlers was able to put a lid on Brevis.

Wessly Madhevere and Sikandar Raza bowled four overs for 34 runs between them but almost everyone else conceded at nine to the over or more with, Graeme Cremer the most expensive. He came back into the side for the first time since the T20 World Cup and bowled two overs which cost 32 runs.

In the end, Zimbabwe's bowlers could only work with the total their batters set and will reflect on that as being where the match was lost.

Zimbabwe squandered a strong start and slipped from 76 for 1 after 10 overs to 144 for 8.

They scored only 68 runs and lost seven wickets in the second half of their innings as South Africa deployed both spin and seam to strangling effect.

Only Duan Jansen conceded at more than 6.75 runs an over, as his four overs cost 45 runs but he picked up more wickets than anyone else: three.

South Africa now join Namibia on two points with Zimbabwe winless from their only game so far. Sunday is a rest day in the series with Namibia scheduled to take on Zimbabwe on Monday.

**Brief scores:** South Africa 146 for 3 in 13.4 overs (Brevis 75\*, Evans 1-19) beat Zimbabwe 144 for 8 (Bennett 34, Marumani 30, Jansen 3-45, Subrayen 2-27) by seven wickets. - Agencies

IN MALAYSIA

## Confident Oman ready for ACC Premier Cup challenge: Kulkarni

**MUSCAT:** Armed with confidence from a productive build-up and carrying the experience of finishing runners-up in the previous edition, Oman will launch their ACC Premier Cup 2026 campaign in Malaysia, on Sunday with head coach Sulakshan Kulkarni backing his well-balanced side to deliver a strong performance in the high-stakes 50-over tournament.

The challenge, however, will be different for Oman this time. Having finished second in the previous edition played in the T20I format, Oman will now look to make their mark in the 50-over competition, where the champions will earn a coveted place in the Asia Cup, and the top three teams will qualify for the Rising Stars Asia Cup.

Oman begin their Group B campaign against Singapore on August 30, with Kulkarni confident that his players are ready for the challenge after a successful preparation period, including the recent warm-up series against India's domestic side Goa.

"We have high hopes for the boys. They prepared well and are coming to the tournament with confidence," Kulkarni said. "We had a nice warm-up series against India's domestic side Goa. We tried different combinations and are all geared up."

Oman used the five-match series against Goa to test their combinations ahead of the Premier Cup, winning the two-match T20 series 2-0 before losing the three-match 50-over series 2-1.

Kulkarni believes Oman have the right mix of experience and emerging talent to mount a strong challenge in the tournament.

"We have a well-balanced squad and I thank the selectors for ensuring the right balance.

"There are quite a few experienced players and I am hopeful that the boys will bring home posi-



tive results," he said. Among those returning to the squad are Karan Sonavale and Hassnain Wahab, with the latter earning his place following a strong performance in the Goa series.

The tournament will also mark a significant milestone for Vinayak Shukla, who takes charge of Oman for his first major assignment as captain.

Kulkarni backed the wicket-keeper-batter to handle the responsibility, describing him as a "confident leader with a strong tactical understanding of the game."

And the coach signed off ahead of the start of the event, "We will do well in this tournament."

Oman have been drawn in Group B alongside UAE, Kuwait, Qatar and Singapore and will face each of their rivals in the league phase.

After Sunday's opening match

against Singapore, Oman take on Qatar on September 2, Kuwait on September 5 and UAE on September 8.

The 10-team tournament is divided into two groups, with the competition progressing to the semi-finals, final and a third-place playoff. The winners will qualify for the Asia Cup, while the top three teams will book their places in the Rising Stars Asia Cup.

All Oman matches will begin at 1:30 pm Oman time and will be streamed live on the ACC YouTube channel in Oman.

**Oman squad:** Vinayak Shukla (captain, wicketkeeper), Jatinder Singh, Hassnain Wahab, Hammad Mirza, Jiten Ramanandi, Shakeel Ahmad, Nadeem Khan, Muhammed Imran, Faisal Shah, Hassnain Ali Shah, Jay Odedara, Wasim Ali, Karan Sonavale and Mujib Ali.

INVESTMENT FORUM

UN Trade and Development will convene the ninth World Investment Forum bringing together policymakers, investors, business leaders and international financial institutions as geopolitical tensions, economic fragmentation and rapid technological change reshape global investment.

MARKET  
BUSINESS & FINANCE



MSX FIRMS PROFITS UP

Net profits of public shareholding companies listed on the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) rose by a hefty 26% to about OMR1.2 billion in the first half of this year compared to OMR949.8 million in the same period last year.

# Nizwa Industrial City localises 20 projects worth over OMR12mn

These projects will be built on a total area exceeding 51,000 square metres, and investments vary between the oil and gas sectors, the manufacture of chemicals, medical supplies, building materials, glass products, and other sectors that add value to the governorate in particular and Oman in general

Times News Service

**NIZWA:** Nizwa Industrial City, affiliated with the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn), received about 22 applications during the first half of this year, 20 of which were settled projects with a total investment volume exceeding OMR12 million.

These projects will be built on a total area exceeding 51,000 square metres, and investments vary between the oil and gas sectors, the manufacture of chemicals, medical supplies, building materials, glass products, and other sectors that add value to the governorate in particular and the Sultanate of Oman in general.

Saeed bin Abdullah Al Balushi,

Director General of Nizwa Industrial City, explained that the total volume of cumulative investments in the city exceeded OMR560 million by the end of the first half of 2026, while the number of existing and productive projects is 193, employing 6,100 workers with an Omanisation rate exceeding 45 percent, and the total area of the city is 7.2 million square metres.

He confirmed in a statement to the Oman News Agency that Madayn continues to work on implementing a group of vital projects in Nizwa Industrial City, such as launching a tender for consultancy studies for the residential area project. It also helps in completing the leasing of leasable spaces in the Madayn Entrepreneurial Complex



for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) that have obtained the Riyada card. This project is being established on an area of 11,000 square metres in cooperation with the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority and at a cost of OMR1.2 million.

He further pointed out that the first half of this year witnessed the opening of a number of factories in the field of medical and food sup-

plies, oil and gas and iron formations, and the planting of 386 trees out of more than 2,415 trees that are currently located within the industrial city. In addition to the implementation of the installation of solar energy cells to reduce electricity consumption as an initial experiment for one of the investing companies.

The Masar Services Centre in Nizwa Industrial City is an investment window with a unified

system to facilitate and simplify the procedures for investors to obtain all the necessary approvals, permits and licenses for their investment project in one place and within a specific time period.

This is in line with Madayn's endeavour to form a system of integrated services that investors need to create and add value to an attractive business environment for investments in Oman.

BILATERAL TRADE



## India and Argentina move to boost market access for pharma and farm products

**BUENOS AIRES:** India and Argentina have agreed to step up efforts to improve market access for Indian pharmaceutical and agricultural products, with technical talks underway on farm exports and Argentina working to upgrade India's status under its pharmaceutical regulatory framework, according to the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

The developments were discussed at the fourth India-Argentina Joint Trade Committee (JTC) meeting held in Buenos Aires on August 24. The Indian delegation was led by Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agrawal, while the Argentine side was led by Ambassador Fernando Brun, Secretary for International Economic Relations.

Argentina has committed to work towards upgrading India from Annex II to Annex I under its pharmaceutical regulatory framework and reducing barriers to entry for Indian medicines. The move is expected to provide greater opportunities for Indian pharmaceutical companies and improve access to quality and affordable healthcare in Argentina.

The two sides also noted progress on sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures for Indian onions, milk and milk products, grapes, potatoes, bananas and pulses. Technical-level discussions are underway to facilitate their entry into the Argentine market.

The discussions come as bilateral trade between India and Argentina crossed USD 6.5 billion in 2025, registering annual growth of more than 17 per cent. India is now Argentina's fifth-largest trading partner, highlighting scope for further expansion and

diversification of trade.

The JTC also reviewed investment opportunities in mining, energy and infrastructure, including the involvement of India's KABIL in Argentina's lithium sector. KABIL has completed Phase II drilling at its lithium project in Catamarca, while opportunities in Salta and Jujuy are also being explored.

The two sides identified aviation, space technology, telecommunications and digital services, including 5G, artificial intelligence and digital infrastructure, as areas for greater cooperation.

The India-MERCOSUR Preferential Trade Agreement was also discussed, with progress on the Terms of Reference and the adoption of digital certificates of origin expected to make cross-border trade easier for businesses.

Commerce Secretary Agrawal also held meetings with Argentine officials on agriculture, non-tariff barriers, pharmaceutical regulatory recognition, and space and nuclear cooperation, including a proposed meeting between ISRO and Argentina's CONAE.

The JTC was followed by the India-Argentina Business Forum on August 25, where Agrawal led India's first and largest-ever business delegation to Argentina, comprising more than 25 business leaders, including representatives from UPL, Kirloskar and Aditya Birla Group.

The delegation explored trade and investment opportunities in agriculture, minerals, energy, pharmaceuticals, healthcare, tourism, banking and telecommunications, with the focus on converting government-level discussions into business partnerships, the ministry said. -ANI

CBO

## Private deposits at Oman's banks rise by 12.45% to over OMR19 billion

Times News Service

**MUSCAT:** The total value of private deposits with commercial banks in the Sultanate of Oman recorded an increase of 12.45 percent reaching OMR19.36 billion at the end of June 2026 compared to OMR17.13 billion during the same period in 2025.

The monthly statistical bulletin issued by the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) stated that the total value of those deposits consisted of term deposits amounting to OMR5.21 billion, savings deposits amounting to OMR6.53 billion, while the value of demand deposits amounted to OMR7.28 billion.

The bulletin explained that the total value of deposits amounted to OMR16.59 billion and OMR2.67 billion in foreign currencies.

The bulletin indicated that the ratio of total cash and clearing to deposits in Omani riyals at the end of June 2026 was 7 percent, while the ratio of total cash and clearing to total deposits was 5.6 percent,



and the ratio of total loans to deposits was 102.9 percent.

The ratio of foreign currency deposits to total deposits was 18.9 percent, while the ratio of foreign assets to total loans was 15.4 per-

cent, and the ratio of foreign assets to total assets was 12.5 percent, while the ratio of foreign liabilities to total liabilities was 10.9 percent.

The ratio of private demand deposits to total private deposits

rose to 39 percent, and the ratio of capital and reserves to total deposits reached 21.1 percent, while the ratio of provisions and retained interest to total credit reached about 5.5 percent.

LANDMARK AGREEMENT

## Trump announces 'biggest oil deal in world history' with Venezuela

**WASHINGTON DC:** US President Donald Trump on Friday (local time) announced the "biggest oil deal in world history" with Venezuela. The landmark agreement with Venezuela will give the US majority control over more than 65 billion barrels of proven crude oil reserves.

"The United States of America has just entered into an Agreement with the Country of Venezuela on, THE BIGGEST OIL DEAL IN WORLD HISTORY! At my direction, Secretary of State Marco Rubio, and Secretary of War Pete Hegseth, working closely with Highly Respected Interim President of Venezuela, Delcy Rodriguez, and, through a partnership with private business, have secured majority US control of more than 65 BILLION BARRELS of proven Oil Reserves in Venezuela, at no cost



to the American Taxpayer," he said.

According to the president, the agreement was secured "at no cost to the American Taxpayer" and will "more than double" total American oil reserves. The administration claims the massive influx to the US oil supply will drive down domestic gasoline prices long-term while putting Venezuela's economy on a path toward economic recovery.

"This Historic Transaction

MORE THAN DOUBLES American Oil Reserves, greatly increases our Oil Supply, and will substantially lower Gas Prices for all Americans, long into the future, while helping to continue to set Venezuela on a course toward Tremendous Success and Great Prosperity. This Transaction will greatly strengthen the already growing relationship between Venezuela and the United States! Thank you for your attention to this groundbreaking matter," added Trump.

The announcement comes following months of intense US diplomatic pressure, sanctions enforcement, and direct oversight of Venezuelan oil exports aimed at stabilising the South American nation's energy sector.

The deal comes nine months after a US military operation ordered by Trump captured Ven-

ezuelan leader Nicolas Maduro and transferred him to the US on federal narcoterrorism and drug trafficking charges.

It also comes as the administration faces pressure on gas prices while the war in Iran hits six months, and after the U.S. Strategic Petroleum Reserve dropped below 300 million barrels in early August, down over 100 million barrels since January.

Trump had previously floated a return of US oil companies to Venezuela following Maduro's ouster, arguing US assets were taken when Hugo Chavez nationalised foreign-owned properties.

Venezuela holds an estimated 303 billion barrels of crude, or about 17% of world supply per the EIA, though it produces only about 1% of global output due to dilapidated infrastructure. -ANI

MARKET

# MSX-listed firms’ profits surge 26% to OMR1.2bn in first half of 2026

The initial financial results announced by public shareholding companies indicated the achievement of a number of positive figures, benefiting from the companies’ trend towards raising their operational efficiency, controlling costs, diversifying their products and services, and improving productivity

Times News Service

**MUSCAT:** Net profits of public shareholding companies listed on the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) rose by a hefty 26% to about OMR1.2 billion in the first half of this year compared to OMR949.8 million in the same period last year.

The initial financial results announced by public shareholding companies indicated the achievement of a number of positive figures, benefiting from the companies’ trend towards raising their operational efficiency, controlling costs, diversifying their products and services, and improving productivity.

The companies also benefited from increased government spending, the rise in the average price of Omani oil, and the improvement in economic activity, which provided a supportive economic and financial environment for the activities of banks, financial and industrial companies, and companies operating in the services sector.



The first half of this year saw an increase in the number of companies that recorded profits to 82 companies, compared to 80 companies that recorded profits in the first half of last year, while the number of companies that recorded losses decreased from 14 companies to 12 companies. Eight companies were able to move from losses to profits, compared to six companies that moved from profits to losses, and six other companies recorded losses in both periods. Omantel Group topped the list of companies with the highest profits, with the group’s profits in the first half of this year rising to OMR292.7 million compared to OMR168.7 in the first half of last year, registering a growth of 73.5 percent. Omantel said that this rise is due to the increase in the group’s revenues in the main operating markets and the increase in investment income from the Zain Group, noting that the net profit attributable to the company’s shareholders rose from OMR36.6 million to OMR58.6 million.

OQ Exploration and Production (OQEP) came in second with net profits of OMR199 in the first half of this year compared to OMR166.6 million in the same period last year, registering a growth of 19.4 percent. The company said that since the beginning of this year it has been working on implementing a growth strategy that focuses on exploration successes, improving commercial terms, discipline in project implementation, and a well-considered expansion

of the asset portfolio that enhances production, cash flows, and portfolio sustainability.

Bank Muscat came in third with profits of around OMR137.5 million in the first half of this year compared to OMR125.8 million Omani riyals in the first half of last year. The bank said that its financial performance comes at a time when the bank is working to implement its long-term strategic priorities, focusing on strengthening its core business, investing in technology and innovation, expanding its strategic partnerships, and supporting vital sectors of the national economy in line with the objectives of the “Oman 2040” vision.

Oman India Fertiliser Company (Omifco), which was listed on the Muscat Stock Exchange in July, came in fourth with net profits of OMR80.2 million in the first half of this year compared to about OMR54.2 million in the same period last year. Bank Sohar International came in fifth, with net profits OMR53 million compared to OMR46.1 million in the same period in 2025.

In contrast, the first half of this year saw a decrease in the number of companies that recorded losses to 12 companies, compared to 14 companies in the first half of last year. However, the recorded losses increased from OMR7 million to OMR37.8 million. The losses of Al Suwadi Power and Al Batinah Power, amounting to OMR34.4 million, representing 90.8 percent of the total recorded losses. The two companies stated that these

## Omani stock market rises in weekly trading

Times News Service

**MUSCAT:** The Omani stock market rose for another week, with the MSX 30 index up 0.13% to close at 7,532 points. Overall market capitalisation still edged lower by 0.01% week-on-week, driven by softer performance in the parallel market.

The value of shares traded declined by 55.08%, while the number of shares traded fell by 51.89%.

In parallel, the US economic sanctions announcement against Iran weighed on investor sentiment at the beginning of the week and fuelled some uncertainty, said an industry watcher. “The expansion of secondary sanctions risks to Iran’s trading partners and enablers raised concerns about potential spillover effects on regional trade and shipping,” said Daniel Takieddine Co-founder and CEO, Sky Links Capital Group.

“Crude oil prices declined throughout the week amid renewed hopes of a reopening of the Strait of Hormuz. The energy market could remain under pressure, but prices could retreat further if diplomatic efforts deliver material



progress and actual improvements in shipping conditions,” he added further.

At the sector level, the financial sector index rose by 1.02% during the week, closing at 13,383 points. National Bank Oman, Bank Muscat and Bank Nizwa recorded strong performances, advancing by 3.16%, 3.03% and 2.11% respectively. Al Omaniya Financial Services slipped by 2.67%, and Madina Takaful declined by 1.80%.

The services index eased by 0.11%, closing at 3,014 points, weighed by OQ Exploration and Production and Oman Telecom, which recorded losses of 2.29% and 2.00%, respectively. Sembcorp Salalah

gained 2.00%, while Phoenix Power increased by 0.72% and Ooredoo climbed by 0.32%.

The industrial sector traded higher by 0.74% this week, finishing at 9,484 points, supported by gains in Oman Cables Industry and Oman Cement, which jumped by 3.09% and 2.41% respectively. Jazeera Steel Products increased by 0.11%, while Voltamp Energy fell by 0.58%.

Meanwhile, markets also monitored US inflation signals and Fed Warsh’s address at Jackson Hole, Daniel Takieddine said adding that the Federal Reserve is expected to raise its interest rates in September, with another hike anticipated next year. “Higher US interest rates could eventually weigh on global risk appetite and equity valuations, including on the MSX,” he said.

“Looking ahead, sentiment could be shaped by whether diplomatic progress materialises into an actual reopening of the shipping corridor, and eases concerns regarding traffic through the Strait of Hormuz. Traders will likely monitor oil price movements and any U.S economic data that could shift interest rate expectations as well,” he added.

### UN TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT

## World Investment Forum to focus on changing global investment landscape

**GENEVA:** UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD) will convene the ninth World Investment Forum (WIF) (Doha, Qatar, 25-27 October), bringing together policymakers, investors, business leaders and international financial institutions as geopolitical tensions, economic fragmentation and rapid technological change reshape global investment.

Held in partnership with the State of Qatar, the forum will focus on how investment can support sustainable development and build resilience at a time of heightened uncertainty and shape the future of development.

The WIF is the United Nations’ flagship event for the global investment community. Under the theme “Investing in the Future,” WIF 2026 will bring together those who shape investment policy with those who allocate capital, with discussions spanning AI, critical minerals, energy, infrastructure, sustainable finance, tourism and culture, and emerging investment opportunities, including in the space economy.

The Forum will feature Global Leaders Plenaries, Ministerial Roundtables on investment and entrepreneurship, the Sustainable Stock Exchanges Dialogue, a high-level session on investment in the Gulf region, and a global investment promotion conference, showcasing investment opportunities from around the world.

The Forum is expected to attract senior government officials, heads of international organisations, investment authorities, multinational corporations, in-

The forum will focus on how investment can support sustainable development and build resilience at a time of heightened uncertainty and shape the future of development

vestors, entrepreneurs and financial institutions.

UN Trade and Development’s World Investment Report 2026 shows that global foreign direct investment (FDI) recovered in 2025, but that the recovery remains uneven.

Global FDI rose 6% to \$1.6 trillion in 2025, ending two years of decline. Investment in developed economies increased by 11%, while flows to developing economies rose by 2%.

More than 80% of global FDI went to the 20 largest host economies. At the same time, a small number of strategic sectors accounted for 44% of the value of global greenfield investment projects in 2025, up from 16% in 2020. The figures underscore a central challenge for policymakers: while investment is recovering, it is increasingly concentrated in particular economies and sectors. -WAM

### SPONSORSHIP IN MUSCAT ENERGY SECURITY CONCLAVE

## MHD ACERE backs Oman’s sustainable energy transition, future-ready e-mobility

**MUSCAT:** MHD ACERE reinforced its long-term commitment to Oman’s sustainable energy transition through its sponsorship and participation in the “Muscat Energy Security Conclave 2026” on Future Energy Security, held on 24 August at Grand Hyatt Muscat.

Organised by Mercuré Events under the theme “Future Energy Security for the Region: Oman’s Role,” the conclave brought together senior representatives from government entities, the energy sector, diplomatic missions, financial institutions and leading businesses to exchange perspectives on energy security, renewable energy, cleaner mobility and future-ready infrastructure.

Highlighting MHD ACERE’s strategic vision, Mohsin Hani Al Bahrani, Chief Executive Officer, MHD ACERE, emphasized that the successful transition towards sustainable e-mobility requires more than the introduction of new technologies. It also depends on building a reliable and integrated ecosystem that supports their long-term adoption.

Commenting on MHD ACERE’s participation, Mohsin Al Bahrani also said: “At MHD ACERE, we recognise that Oman’s transition towards a more sustainable future requires strong collaboration, continuous innovation and investment in the right infrastructure. Our ambition goes beyond introducing advanced e-mobility and renewable energy solutions to the market. We are equally focused on building the ecosystem necessary for these technologies to be adopted successfully and deliver lasting value.

Through our capabilities in renewable energy, engineering and e-mobility, together with our partnerships with global technology leaders such as ABB, we are



committed to supporting Oman’s sustainability ambitions. We will continue working closely with government entities, industry partners and other stakeholders to help develop a resilient, future-ready e-mobility and energy landscape for the Sultanate of Oman.”

Bassam Alshabatat, ABB E-mobility Solution Lead, MENA & North Africa, was also present at the event and shed lights on ABB’s e-mobility solutions and EV charging infrastructure across the GCC.

The conclave provided MHD ACERE with an important platform to engage with senior stakeholders representing prominent organisations, including OQ Exploration & Production, Al Maha Petroleum, ABB E-Mobility, Moore, the French Embassy, the British Embassy, and InnovateQ, among others.

Through its participation, MHD ACERE further strengthened its position within Oman’s renewable energy and sustainable e-mobility sectors while showcasing its capabilities across renewable energy, engineering, procurement and construction, e-mobility and EV charging infrastructure.





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- Submission Format:** Sealed tenders should clearly mention only the Tender Name and Tender Number on the envelope.
- Submission Location:** Sealed tenders, accompanied by the necessary documentation, must be submitted at the reception counter of the MUNA NOOR Head Office.

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For list of items and site visit please  
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# Nearly 200,000 deportees returned to Haiti amid worsening gang violence

Activists caution that Haiti, at present, is too dangerous amid surging gang violence and lacks the resources to help those being deported to the country

**PORT-AU-PRINCE:** The first eight months of 2026 have seen almost 200,000 people being forcibly returned to Haiti, an emergency meeting of the United Nations Security Council learned on Friday, days after a gang attack near the troubled Caribbean nation's capital left 47 people dead.

The attack — which took place on Sunday in Kenscoff on the outskirts of the capital, Port-au-Prince — came days after a first US deportation flight landed in Haiti following the Trump administration winning a legal case which stripped away the Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for thousands of Haitians.

Activists caution that Haiti, at present, is too dangerous amid surging gang violence and lacks the resources to help those being deported to the country.

“The latest attack on Kenscoff is yet another grim reminder of the



suffering Haitians face every day,” Indrika Ratwatte, the acting UN Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, told the Security Council on Friday.

**What else was discussed at the UNSC emergency meeting?**

Forcible deportations to Haiti so far in 2026 were 10% higher over the same period last year, Ratwatte said.

Meanwhile, nearly 1.5 million people, among Haiti's population of nearly 12 million, are internally displaced, with half of them being

children, as per the summary of the Security Council's meeting.

Ratwatte told the UNSC that the displacement has doubled in just two years, while describing the conditions in many displacement sites as “squalid”.

**Haiti calls for rapid deployment of multinational force**

At the meeting, Haiti urged the full deployment of the UN mandated Gang Suppression Force (GSF).

The multinational force was authorised in 2025 to suppress gang violence across Haiti and restore public safety, working

alongside the Haitian police and armed forces.

The GSF aims to reach a capacity of 5,500 troops by fall and the Security Council will vote on whether to renew its mandate at the end of next month.

At the UNSC emergency meeting, Haiti's representative Pierre Ericq Pierre called on the international community to accelerate the deployment of the GSF to its planned strength.

US representative Jennifer Locetta urged the Security Council to renew the GSF's mandate.

“The GSF was not created to is-

sue statements from within a compound wall or spend our money while Haiti suffers,” she said.

Locetta said that if more nations bring material support to the force, it could assist police fight gangs more efficiently.

“This attack is precisely why the UN authorised Gang Suppression Force's mission and mandate matters,” she said.

**Calls for stronger arms embargo in Haiti**

Pierre also asked for support for his country's recruitment and training of new military personnel

and stronger enforcement of the UNSC's arms embargo to curb the flow of firearms and ammunition.

An illegal flow of weapons and ammunition into Haiti has continued to strengthen armed gangs, according to the UN Human Rights Office.

The UN on Friday referred to reports of a gang operating in Port-au-Prince displaying what appeared to be a new shipment of weapons arriving from abroad on its social media account earlier this week, despite the UNSC arms embargo on Haiti which has been enforced since 2022.

Haiti has not had an elected president since the murder of President Jovenel Moise in July 2021, due to long-term instability and insecurity.

Powerful armed gangs control large parts of the capital, Port-au-Prince, and continue expanding into other parts of the country. Families are fleeing their homes in record numbers, schools and health centres have closed, and humanitarian agencies are struggling to meet soaring needs as funding runs dangerously low.

Yet amid the crisis there are also signs of progress. Haitian authorities are pressing ahead with long-delayed plans to restore democratic government through elections, security forces have begun pushing gangs out of some strategic areas, and new international support is arriving to help tackle the violence. Restoring democratic government remains one of the country's biggest challenges, but credible voting cannot take place unless security improves significantly.

— Agencies

AT NASA'S JOHNSON SPACE CENTRE



## Trump creates space academy and honours Artemis II crew

**Texas:** US President Donald Trump accorded the crew members of the Artemis II Space mission America's highest space award and also signed the order to create the US Space Academy.

Sharing the details, NASA said that Trump awarded astronauts Reid Wiseman, Victor Glover, and Christina Koch, and CSA (Canadian Space Agency) astronaut Jeremy Hansen with the Congressional Space Medal of Honour on Friday for their service during the Artemis II mission. He presented the awards during a ceremony at NASA's Johnson Space Centre in Houston, honouring the first medal recipients since 2023.

On the occasion, President Trump said, “We gather on these historic grounds to celebrate the immense courage of four intrepid space heroes whose sense of daring and adventure led them further from Earth than anyone has ever travelled before.”

He lauded the skills of the people involved in the mission and said, “Today we're proudly awarding the Congressional Space Medal of Honour to the remarkable crew of Artemis II. These astronauts did not do it alone. I want to salute all of the engineers, scientists, launch and landing specialists, everyone at NASA who helped make this mission a great success.”

NASA's historic Artemis II mission launched on April 1, and splashed down safely in the Pacific Ocean on April 10.

Trump also signed an Executive Order on Friday to establish the nation's first US Space Academy.

NASA noted that the proposed academy would focus on technical education, leadership development, discipline, and a commitment to public service, helping ultimately advance U.S. interests in space.

“Given the rapid growth of the U.S. Space Force and commercial space industry, and the expansion of our ambitions to the Moon and far beyond the Moon, it's clear we will need to educate and train an entire generation of skilled service members, engineers, and civil operators,” President Trump said.

The signing of “Establishing the United States Space Academy Executive Order” took place at NASA's Johnson Space Centre in Houston, where the President also presented the Artemis II crew members with the Congressional Space Medal of Honour.

American broadcaster Fox News reported that President Donald Trump also spoke with American astronauts aboard the International Space Station from Houston.

According to Fox News, the astronauts expressed pleasure at speaking to the President and said they were “thrilled”.

He welcomed other officials to speak to the ISS crew and offered to welcome the astronauts to the White House when they return.

— ANI

CAMEROON, UGANDA AND ZIMBABWE

# Africa's ageing autocrats fight to stay in power for as long as possible

**YAOUNDÉ:** Power can be seductive, and many who possess it want to hold on for as long as possible. The leaders of China and Russia, for example, cleared the way for additional terms years ago, and in the United States, the president occasionally speaks of another run for office, even though the US Constitution does not allow it.

From the perspective of Paul Biya, however, Chinese President Xi Jinping, Russian President Vladimir Putin and US President Donald Trump are still relatively new to office.

Cameroon's president has been head of state since 1982. In 2025, Biya began his eighth term — which is officially due to end on November 6, 2032, just a few months before his 100th birthday.

The 93-year-old has given no official indication that he intends to step down, and the position of vice president remains vacant.

During his 44 years in office, Biya has built a stable network of loyal allies that keeps the machinery of government running despite his lengthy absences.

The 93-year-old has now spent two and a half months in Geneva, Switzerland, continuing to issue decrees and make personnel decisions from abroad. In mid-June, his spokesperson denied rumours Biya was receiving treatment in a hospital and stated that the president was in good health.

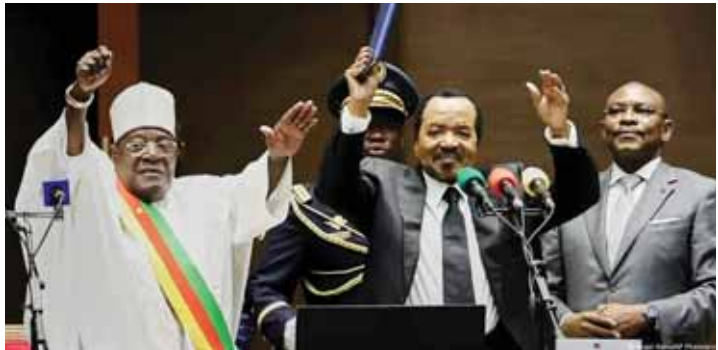
“There is continuity, but that also means there is little momentum for reform within the government,” Beverly Ochieng, senior analyst at consultancy Global Risk, told DW.

And while Biya's power apparatus has helped cushion the impact of the president's long absence, that does not necessarily mean the most influential figures on the ground are united. After all, a post-Biya era is now in sight, and several of his allies are rumoured to have ambitions of succeeding him.

“When everyone is lining up to potentially succeed Biya, it also means that the elites may begin challenging one another,” Ochieng said. Such rivalry, she warned, could lead to major disruptions, including the possibility of a military coup.

Analyst Levi Mboushou recently voiced similar concerns on DW's AfricaLink podcast.

“Everyone feels the fear and uncertainty, but no one dares to look directly at it because we all have to deal with this repressive regime.



You see something, but you say nothing. That is the situation in Cameroon at the moment,” he said.

**Yoweri Museveni in Uganda: Signs of a dynasty?**

Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni is only slightly younger, both in age and years in office.

The 81-year-old has been president since 1986 and, like Biya, recently embarked on another term. His succession also remains unresolved, although his son, Muhoozi Kainerugaba, has recently attracted considerable attention as head of the military.

According to Ochieng, the dynamics in Uganda are complex, not least because military elites and the ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM) have their own internal power structures.

“Muhoozi has become the most visible figure primarily because he has a strong personality and enjoys the discreet backing of his father. His rise is not the result of support

from either the NRM or the military leadership,” she said.

Kainerugaba is increasingly emerging as a political figure, including on issues beyond military affairs.

In early July, he ordered the closure of several media outlets. At the time, a source from an international foundation who requested anonymity told DW: “We are witnessing a transfer of power to the president's son.”

A similar development has been unfolding for years in Equatorial Guinea, where Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, who has ruled since 1979, appears to be gradually transferring power to his son.

Known by the nickname “Teodorin,” he has served as first vice president since 2016 and now also controls the military.

In June, Teodorin announced the resignation of the entire government on behalf of his father. Observers interpreted the move as a sign that he is gradually be-

coming the public face of state authority.

Whether Museveni will actually arrange his succession during his lifetime remains uncertain.

Ochieng believes that, in the event of a sudden power vacuum, Uganda could either hold constitutionally mandated elections or follow a scenario similar to that seen in Chad in 2021.

Then-President Idriss Deby was killed in clashes with rebels. The constitution was suspended, allowing his son, Mahamat Idriss Deby Itno, to take power.

**Emmerson Mnangagwa in Zimbabwe: Party before people**

Zimbabwe also amended its constitution this year, making it far less likely that President Emmerson Mnangagwa could be voted out of office.

In June, both chambers of parliament approved changes extending the terms of parliament and the president from five to seven years. Even more fundamentally, the president will no longer be elected directly by the people but by parliament, where the ruling ZANU-PF party enjoys comfortable majorities. In July, the 83-year-old Mnangagwa signed the amended constitution into law. However, the opposition and some constitutional experts argue that a referendum should still be held. The government, by contrast, considers the constitutional amendment process complete.

“We are not surprised,” Chiedza Mlingwa, deputy spokesperson for the Constitution Defenders Forum, said at the time on DW's AfricaLink podcast.

“The only thing one could be surprised by is the audacity, nothing else. We have observed this pattern since independence in 1980: ZANU-PF works to stay in power. The party does not believe in relinquishing power.”

Ochieng noted that countries such as Togo and Cote d'Ivoire have also implemented constitutional changes aimed at preserving power in recent years.

Meanwhile, in Senegal, a constitutional amendment is being discussed amid tensions between former allies at the top of the state, President Bassirou Diomaye Faye and Speaker of Parliament Ousmane Sonko, both of whom are significantly younger than the continent's other long-ruling leaders.

— DW



# 40 YEARS AFTER THE LAKE NYOS DISASTER IN CAMEROON

On August 21, 1986, a silent cloud of carbon dioxide swept through villages around Lake Nyos in Cameroon, killing nearly 2,000 people in their sleep. Four decades later, survivors are still living with the trauma

“The Lake Nyos disaster took everybody by surprise. We had no warning signals before it ever took place,” said Isaac Konfor Njilah, a Cameroonian geologist and head of a laboratory in the department of Earth Sciences at the University of Yaounde.

On the night of August 21, 1986, Lake Nyos suddenly released a massive cloud of carbon dioxide that spread through nearby valleys and villages. The gas replaced oxygen, suffocating people and animals as they slept.

Located in Cameroon’s Northwest Region, about 315 kilometres (196 miles) northwest of Yaounde, Lake Nyos sits inside an ancient volcanic crater in the Oku volcanic field. At the time of the incident, the area’s population exceeded 3,000, with many families relying on farming and cattle ranching.

The disaster claimed the lives of about 1,700 people and some 3,500 head of livestock, making it one of the deadliest natural disasters in Cameroon’s history.

### How did a lake become deadly?

Following the disaster, scientists from Cameroon and abroad launched extensive investigations to determine what had happened.

They concluded that carbon dioxide from deep underground had been accumulating at the bottom of the lake for years, trapped beneath more than 200 metres (656 feet) of water.

Before the disaster, the upper layers of the lake contained oxygen-rich water, while the deeper layers were saturated with dissolved carbon dioxide. Njilah explains that water has an insatiable appetite for carbon dioxide.

“So when carbon dioxide comes from the [Earth’s] mantle, it is being dissolved continuously in the lake,” Njilah told DW.

Scientists often compare Lake Nyos to a giant bottle of carbonated water. For decades, carbon dioxide built up in the lake’s depths. When that balance was disturbed, the gas escaped in a rapid chain reaction, releasing a deadly cloud



that rolled through nearby communities.

Researchers believe a landslide may have triggered the release by disturbing the gas-rich waters at the bottom of the lake.

Carbon dioxide is harmless at normal atmospheric levels. But in high concentrations, it acts as an asphyxiant, displacing oxygen in the air. Because the gas is heavier than air, it flowed downhill into villages, where many residents died in their sleep before realising anything was wrong.

### Tragedy at another lake in Cameroon just two years prior

The Nyos tragedy was not a first in Cameroon. Two years earlier, on August 15, 1984, a similar event occurred at nearby Lake Monoun, about 100 kilometres southeast of Nyos. A sudden release of carbon dioxide killed 37 people.

Scientists were still investigating the Monoun disaster when the far deadlier catastrophe struck

at Lake Nyos. Researchers eventually concluded that the deaths were caused by a rare phenomenon known as a limnic eruption, in which gas-rich deep waters suddenly rise to the surface and release dissolved gases.

In the years that followed, engineers installed degassing pipes in Lake Nyos to gradually release carbon dioxide trapped deep below the surface.

Today, Njilah says the lake no longer contains enough dissolved carbon dioxide to trigger a disaster.

“The lake is very safe for the population to return,” he told DW.

### Survivors still live with the trauma

For survivors, however, the fear remains. Tsang Emelda Njah was just 5 years old when the disaster happened.

“We were at home, and there was a big vibration of the house,” she recalled. “We thought it was just the house that was about to collapse. But we were not sure

The conflict erupted in 2016 between government forces and separatist groups in the country’s primarily English-speaking Northwest and Southwest regions, where Lake Nyos is located

what it was. So we ran out.” Kum Samuel, who was 17 at the time, returned to his village and was confronted with a scene of pure horror. “I saw my parents lying there

dead. Chickens, flies and birds. Dogs together with our elders. I wasn’t sure what to do.”

For Ndong Frederick Bah, the losses were deeply personal.

“Nine of us went to bed that night, and I was the lone survivor of the family,” he told DW, adding that the next day, people who had heard about the disaster came and rescued him.

Entire communities were later relocated to new settlements. Although scientists have reduced the risk of another gas release, many survivors still struggle to overcome the trauma.

“I am a child of Nyos,” said Tsang Emelda Njah. “But I am still afraid to go close to the lake. That’s because whatever killed people there, I am not sure whether or not it has been stopped from ever happening again. That is why we are still afraid.”

**Anglophone crisis harms restoration** While scientists consider the lake

safe, long-term reconstruction efforts have been slowed by Cameroon’s Anglophone crisis.

The conflict erupted in 2016 between government forces and separatist groups in the country’s primarily English-speaking Northwest and Southwest regions, where Lake Nyos is located.

According to Njilah, plans to rehabilitate affected communities and encourage people to return to their ancestral lands have been disrupted by insecurity, with the area now difficult to access.

“It is the plight of the survivors to go back home. They want to go back to their ancestral land so that they are able to pour libations on the graves of their forefathers,” he said.

The ongoing violence has also hindered scientific work and development projects.

“Nobody can venture [there,] unless you want to have a bullet lodged in your head,” Njilah said. “It has affected government and international agencies who are working there.” - DW

SPORTS

# Munoz rescues Liverpool to deny Nottingham Forest win at Anfield

Andoni Iraola is still awaiting his first win as Reds boss after his side twice trailed to Nottingham Forest at Anfield on Saturday.

**LONDON:** Victor Munoz marked his full debut with a goal to rescue a Premier League point for Liverpool at home to Nottingham Forest as the match ended in a 2-2 draw at Anfield on Saturday.

The Spain winger lashed homed from Florian Wirtz's pass to level for Andoni Iraola's side with eight minutes remaining after Morgan Gibbs-White's penalty had put the visitors on course for three points.

Dan Ndoye had given Forest the lead midway through the first half, slotting home from Gibbs-White's pass after a simple long ball over the top took out the Liverpool defence.

Liverpool drew level on the hour mark when Alexander Isak tapped into an empty net from Cody Gakpo's pinpoint low cross.

But with Liverpool hoping to push on to find a winner, goalkeeper Alisson was adjudged to have brought down Neco Williams after a quick throw-in from Forest's new record signing Liam Delap.

The home side were furious with the decision but it was upheld and Gibbs-White sent Alisson the wrong way from the spot.

But, as they did at Newcastle last weekend, Liverpool battled back and Munoz thumped the ball home off the crossbar to equalise.

Neither side could find a winner, though, leaving both Iraola and Oliver Glasner without a win since taking over their respective



sides in the summer.

After a slow start, Forest were the better side once the game settled and it took a superb block from Jeremy Jacquet to prevent Igor Jesus prodding home.

Ndoye also headed narrowly wide from James McAtee's clipped cross and by the time he did put Forest ahead, the lead was deserved.

Liverpool thought they had equalised 10 minutes later through Wirtz's smart finish but it was ruled out for offside in the build-up, and they could be grateful to Alisson that they did not go into half-time two down as he pushed Igor Jesus' effort on to the bar in first-half stoppage time.

Forest looked the more likely at the start of the second half to score but failed to make the most of a couple of promising counter-attacks, and were punished when Gakpo span Williams and crossed for Isak to equalise.

However, 10 minutes later, Forest were back in front. A long ball forward was put out for a throw-in, Delap and Williams spotted an opportunity and when Alisson came

## Liverpool agree £123m deal for PSG's Barcola

**LONDON:** Liverpool have agreed a deal worth up to £123m for Paris Saint-Germain forward Bradley Barcola. PSG initially valued the France attacker at £145m, but the Reds have agreed a package worth an initial £106m with £17m in potential add-ons.

The 23-year-old is expected to have a medical this weekend before signing a long-term contract at Anfield.

Right-footed Barcola prefers to play on the left wing and his



impending arrival will increase the doubts around Cody Gakpo's future at Liverpool. Reports suggest that both Tottenham Hotspur and Manches-

ter City have shown interest in the Netherlands forward.

Liverpool are also in the market for a right winger, having explored moves for Brighton's Yankuba Minteh and Crystal Palace's Ismaila Sarr.

Barcola moved to PSG from Lyon in 2023 for a reported £38.5m and has won three Ligue 1 titles, two Champions Leagues, the French Cup twice, as well as the UEFA Super Cup and the FIFA Intercontinental Cup.

out to meet the latter, he caught the wing-back and referee Samuel Barrott pointed to the spot.

Gibbs-White finished emphatically and Forest fans were dreaming of a third consecutive league win at Anfield.

But Liverpool rallied again and

Munoz's strike ensured the points were shared.

### Man City overrun Palace

Earlier on Friday, Rayan Cherki scored two goals in five minutes and Erling Haaland also got a brace as Manchester City won 4-1 at

Crystal Palace to maintain its perfect start to the Premier League.

Haaland, the league's top goalscorer last season, opened his account after 17 minutes with a neat header. Cherki doubled the visitors' lead early in the second half when he danced through a nest of

players and poked the ball home from close range.

However, Palace reduced the deficit almost immediately when Jeremy Pino's superb free kick hit the bar and then rebounded into the net off the despairing back of goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma.

Cherki, though, was in fine form and restored City's two-goal advantage two minutes later when his deflected shot from just outside the box wrong-footed keeper Dean Henderson.

It was the first brace of his Premier League career but he was not happy and called his performance "so-so."

The French midfielder said he thought he was about to be subbed, so he turned on the style to ensure his permanence.

"When I see Enzo Maresca wanted to change me I didn't like that, so I had to show him I wanted to play and wanted to score," Cherki said of the recently appointed coach.

Haaland rounded off the scoring with a left-footed strike six minutes from time. - Agencies

### GERMAN BUNDESLIGA

## Bayern Munich ease past Stuttgart for a solid start

**MUNICH:** Bayern Munich kicked off their German Bundesliga title defence in dominating fashion with a 5-1 win over Stuttgart at the Allianz Arena on Friday.

Dayot Upamecano, Michael Olise, Aleksandar Pavlovic and Luis Diaz found the back of the net for the hosts while Stuttgart's Josha Vagnoman's slip cost his side the other goal.

Bayern displayed they had not lost any potency from last season as they took the lead in the 21st minute with an Upamecano header off a Joshua Kimmich corner.

The two sides had only one goal difference at the end of the first half. Stuttgart equalised when Vagnoman fired a rebound back of the net.

However, Bayern scored twice in three minutes to strangle the visitors' hopes.

First Olise had time and space to finish after Kimmich latched onto



Angelo Stiller's poor pass. Then, an unfortunate Vagnoman bundled Alphonso Davies' low cross into his own net as he slipped while trying to clear.

After offside ruled out Olise's goal, and Diaz was denied on several occasions, Pavlovic perfected

a tap-in opportunity created by Ismael Saibari. Diaz finally got his goal with a late strike from Saibari's pass to cap an ominous display from the Bavarians, as they extended their unbeaten run in their opening game of a new campaign to 15 matches. - Agencies

### BAYERN MUNICH

## Kane begins negotiations for contract extension

**MUNICH:** Star striker Harry Kane confirmed that he has begun talks about a contract extension with Bundesliga defending champions Bayern Munich on Friday.

Kane's current contract with Bayern runs out in 2027. The German club has repeatedly said it would like to extend Kane's deal.

After Bayern's 5-1 win over Stuttgart at home in the opener, Kane said negotiations had started and that the first meeting happened last week.

"I'm 33. It's probably going to be, not my last contract, but it's a big contract for me to sign," Kane said.

Kane said "a lot of details" needed to be discussed but hoped to continue his stay at Bayern, who he joined in 2023 from Tottenham.

"They need to make sure I'm happy. They obviously need to make sure they're happy... There's



no panic from either side.

"I'm sure we'll get to a point where both sides are happy."

The 33-year-old forward is among the favourites for the Ballon d'Or. Kane scored 36 goals in 31 Bundesliga games last term,

the third most in a German top-flight campaign, while winning the league and cup double.

In total, he scored 73 goals for club and country last season, including six at the World Cup for England. - Agencies

### FRENCH LIGUE 1

## Holders PSG script a great escape to draw 2-2 at Lille

**PARIS:** Vitinha and Marquinhos' stoppage time goals helped Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) draw 2-2 at Lille in the French Ligue 1 match on Friday.

The game was gone for the defending champions when Dilane Bakwa netted Lille's second goal in the 84th minute. However, Vitinha's curler into the top-left corner in the first minute of the stoppage time threw a lifeline for PSG before Marquinhos headed home four minutes later to complete an improbable comeback.

The kick-off was delayed by 15 minutes due to a ticketing error in the stadium but once the referee blew the whistle, Lille's Achraf Hakimi fired an early wide

shot, and Olivier Giroud forced a save from PSG keeper Matvey Sofanov.

Lille breached Sofanov in the 21st minute when Hakon Arnar Haraldsson curled a lovely shot into the back of the net.

The hosts then packed defence as Parisians struggled to find space and hit shots on target. Things got worse six minutes to full time when Bakwa doubled the lead.

But PSG displayed their willingness to fight back and forced a great escape.

Lille top the current standings with four points from their opening two games, while PSG are sixth with two points. - Agencies



## Ronaldo scores in Al Nassr's win

**RIYADH:** Cristiano Ronaldo scored his second goal of the Saudi Pro League 2026/27 season in Al Nassr's come-from-behind 2-1 victory over Al Taawoun at the Al Awwal Park in Riyadh on Friday.

The victory extended Nassr's perfect start to the league under Ange Postecoglou to four games.

Bassam Al Hurayji got the visiting side ahead in the 11th minute, getting first to a shot deflected off the crossbar and beating Nassr goalkeeper Nawaf Al Aqidi.

Samu Costa restored parity in the 10th minute of stoppage time in the first half as he curled a left-footed shot from outside the box into the goal. Sadio Mane provided the assist.

Five minutes after the



restart, Ronaldo stood right in front of goal and deflected a goal-bound shot from Mohamed Simakan to get his name on the scoresheet.

Al Nassr lead the standings with four wins out of four and next take on Al Itihad away from home next Saturday. - Agencies



# Norris extends McLaren deal to 2030

The world champion announced on Saturday the contract extension and said that the decision was “very easy to make”

**LONDON:** Lando Norris said that signing a new contract that will keep him at McLaren until at least the end of 2030 was “quite an easy yes for me”.  
The world champion, whose new deal was announced on Saturday, said he “didn’t even have a look” at other teams before deciding to commit his future to the team he has been with since his Formula 1 debut in 2019.  
“There was some interest from elsewhere,” Norris said in an interview with BBC Sport, “but I don’t want to go anywhere. I don’t want to be with another team. I don’t

want to spend time with other people. “That’s why it really was probably one of the easiest decisions I’ve made since being in Formula 1.”  
The Briton had no need to rush his decision to commit to McLaren because his existing contract still had more than a year to run.  
But he says the idea “became a topic of conversation over the last four months or so, but very loosely in the background” and he had no hesitation in agreeing.  
Norris says his loyalty to McLaren is based on the relationships he has within the team - starting with chief executive

officer Zak Brown and team principal Andrea Stella - and their shared history.  
After Norris made his F1 debut in 2019, they spent several years struggling for competitiveness, before their form turned around quickly after Stella was promoted at the end of 2022.  
The team won consecutive constructors’ championships in 2024 and 2025 - ending a drought that went back to 1998 - and the drivers’ title for Norris last year.  
The 26-year-old said: “The fact I stuck it through with them and then we went on to obviously have success certainly makes me feel like I don’t want to... they didn’t give up on me and I didn’t give up on them.  
“That just creates a very strong bond between everyone that works here. I want to believe that bond stays as strong as it is now ‘til I do retire in my career at Formula 1.”  
“I know that’s a long, long way away and I don’t want to think of it.

But I believe we’re in the best place we’ve ever been even with a tough start to the season. And I believe that we can fight through anything together for sure.”  
“I don’t want to fight through moments with anyone else”  
McLaren started this season well off the pace they had shown through 2024 and 2025 as they struggled to get on top of the new rules introduced to F1 this year.  
But Norris says that only made him want to stay at the team more.  
“That’s exactly the situation that doesn’t take me away from where I am or doesn’t influence anything else,” he said.  
“I still have had a lot of fun and enjoy working and trying to fight through the tougher moments with the people that I do it with now. I don’t want to fight through moments with anyone else.”  
“This beginning of the year is the perfect example of what doesn’t make me turn my head the

other way or anything. “In fact, it’s more the opposite. It makes me want to stick with the people that I am with because I believe we can fight back through most circumstances and all circumstances. And I enjoy the fight in some ways just as much as I enjoy the experience of being on top.”  
He added: “People get too hung up sometimes on saying, ‘is it the right place?’ I believe it is, but even if it wasn’t, the fact that I can just say I’m a driver for McLaren and I race for McLaren, that makes me happy enough.”  
McLaren have improved their performance significantly in recent races. After a major upgrade to their car, Norris has won the past two grands prix, in Hungary and the Netherlands.  
That has reduced the gap between him and Mercedes’ championship leader Kimi Antonelli to 83 points with 11 races remaining - although the war in the Middle East may affect the number of races

that end up being staged.  
Norris said before the British Grand Prix in July that he had been frustrated at not being able to defend his title.  
Now, he says: “I’m starting the fight of defending it. I’m trying to. I’m doing my best. We all are. As a team, we’re doing our best. They want to allow me to fight for it and of course I just want to fight for it. So, it’s a big challenge.”  
“It’s still a big mountain to climb in terms of trying to achieve it. But for a while now, we’ve been very, very close to being in the position that we are now, where we can fight for wins and podiums and we can fight the people we need to fight against.”  
“So, I’m certainly more confident than I have been, especially the first part of the year.”  
“But it still just takes a lot of work and there’s a lot of things we need to improve on but we’re confident as a team that we can try to achieve it.” - Agencies

## TOUR CHAMPIONSHIP



# Hovland in tie for lead with Gerard

**ATLANTA:** Norway’s Viktor Hovland and American Ryan Gerard are tied for the lead at 10 under, heading into the weekend at the Tour Championship in Atlanta on Friday. Hovland, who was crowned the Fedex Cup champion in 2023, made a birdie on the final hole to card a four-under 66, after Gerard had set the clubhouse pace with a five-under 65.  
While Hovland’s putting again came to the fore, Gerard was not to be outdone and memorably rolled in a stunning 78-foot birdie putt that travelled the length of the seventh green.  
Collin Morikawa and Chris Gotterup are joint-second on nine under, while world number one Scottie Scheffler shrugged off two early bogeys to fire a 67, leaving him just two shots back in the PGA Tour’s season-ending event.

Cameron Young, who won the Players Championship in March, is also at eight under after a scintillating round of 62 that contained seven birdies and an eagle on the par-five 18th. England’s Justin Rose and Matt Fitzpatrick are also firmly in contention to take home the \$10m (£7.4m) prize on Sunday evening and are three strokes adrift at seven under overall.  
Rose looked in superb form as he delivered a bogey-free 65, however, it was another day of mixed fortunes for Rory McIlroy who opened with a birdie but found himself two-over par after four holes.  
The Northern Irishman’s frustration was evident on the third hole, when he missed the green with his approach and then twice failed to chip his ball on to the putting surface from the same spot

on his way to a double bogey.  
And while he made two birdies in the final three holes, the Masters champion will need to make significant headway on Saturday, from his current position - tied for 23rd on three under.  
Scotland’s Robert MacIntyre also had a forgettable day, particularly after the turn.  
The 30-year-old followed three consecutive bogeys with a double bogey on the par-three 15th hole after finding the water off the tee.  
He eventually signed for a six-over 76 and alongside Min Woo Lee and Xander Schauffele, was one of only three players to conclude his second round over par.  
However, his route to a bogey on the 18th was far from as unusual as the one taken by Jacob Bridgeman, whose stray tee shot landed inside a stall selling pizza.

## US OPEN 2026

# Sabalenka, Pegula welcome prize money boost, new player council

**NEW YORK:** Aryna Sabalenka and Jessica Pegula on Friday praised the record prize money allocation at the US Open and the newly-founded Grand Slam player advisory council.  
“We’re super happy that we’re finally getting to the point where we wanted to be at the very beginning,” Sabalenka said.  
The US Open had announced a record \$108 million prize purse for this year’s tournament. In addition, the four Grand Slams unveiled plans for an advisory council after leading players, including Sabalenka, demanded a greater role in decision-making.  
World No.1 Sabalenka said the change will ease tensions between players and tournament organisers, which in the past led to players limiting media interactions at the French Open and Wimbledon earlier in the year.  
“Hopefully we’re not gonna boycott media or tournament or anything in the future. We all going to be happy, and that’s all we wanted from the very beginning.”  
The players kept their interactions limited to just 15 minutes, symbolic of the roughly 15 per cent revenue share that the tourna-



ments allocated to players’ prize money.  
Pegula, meanwhile, said that the united demands of the men’s and women’s tours helped the creation of the player advisory council.  
“I think it’s been amazing what the players have been able to accomplish,” Pegula said. “They have never had anything like this as far as with the slams being able to generate a council, also the player welfare contribution, and then another increase in prize money.”

“It shows being united on the men’s and the women’s side, especially with the top players, has put a lot of pressure on the slams to continue to grow our sport,” Pegula added. Pegula, however, maintained that the work was far from over. “There is still of course more work to do. Going into the council, we’ll see how that’s constructed, and who’s on it and how it’s made up, and then I think a lot of discussions will have to go through there.” - Agencies

## INDIAN JAVELIN THROWER

# Injured Neeraj Chopra to miss Diamond League Final, Asian Games

**DELHI:** India javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra announced on Saturday that he will be missing the remaining season due to an ankle injury.  
The 28-year-old was set to appear at the Diamond League Finals in Brussels next week and the Asian Games in Aichi-Nagoya later in September.  
“After a period of hard work, I finally felt I was gaining the momentum I had been looking for with a Season’s Best throw in Lausanne.

Unfortunately, shortly after, I sustained a ligament tear in my ankle during training. After discussions with my doctor and team, we’ve decided that I will sit out the rest of this season,” Neeraj posted on social media.  
Neeraj’s last event was the Lausanne Diamond League, where he finished in second place with a Season Best effort of 88.05m. His only other Diamond League participation this season had come in Doha, where he finished fourth



with a distance of 85.69 metres.  
Despite just two events, Neeraj had made the cut for the Finals in Brussels as the sixth-best athlete this season.  
He had also clinched the silver at the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow in July, securing a best throw of 85.83 metres.  
“It’s disappointing, especially because I felt close to finding my rhythm. But as they say, setbacks are a part of the journey.  
“My focus now is on recovering

well and coming back even stronger,” he added.  
The two-time Olympic medalist and former World champion had won the gold medal at the previous Asian Games in Hangzhou with a throw of 88.88 metres. India had completed a historic double podium at the event, with Kishore Jena taking silver. At Aichi-Nagoya, Rohit Yadav, who had missed out on a medal at the Commonwealth Games, is the other Indian in the event. - Agencies

# IN PICTURES

**China, Kuwait hold tea culture exchange event**

People participate in the Chinese & Kuwaiti Tea Art and Treats Tasting event at the China Cultural Center in Kuwait in Hawalli Governorate, Kuwait. *Xinhua*



**Actress Karisma Kapoor at Film City**

Bollywood actress Karisma Kapoor poses for a photo at the Film City, in Mumbai. *ANI Photo*



**People visit Chapultepec Park in Mexico City**

A woman dances at Chapultepec Park in Mexico City, capital of Mexico. *xinhua*



**A glimpse of sika deer in Heilongjiang's nature reserve**

Sika deer are pictured at the Xiandongshan sika deer national nature reserve in Qiqihar, northeast China's Heilongjiang Province. *xinhua*



**Dancers perform traditional Egyptian folk dance during 2nd Heritage Revival Week in Cairo**

Dancers perform Tanoura, a traditional Egyptian folk dance, during the second edition of Heritage Revival Week in Cairo, Egypt. *xinhua*



**Night view of Baghdad, Iraq**

People stroll along Al-Rashid Street in Baghdad, Iraq. *xinhua*



**Models present bridal creations during fashion show in Karachi, Pakistan**

Models present bridal creations during a fashion show in southern Pakistani port city of Karachi. *xinhua*



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