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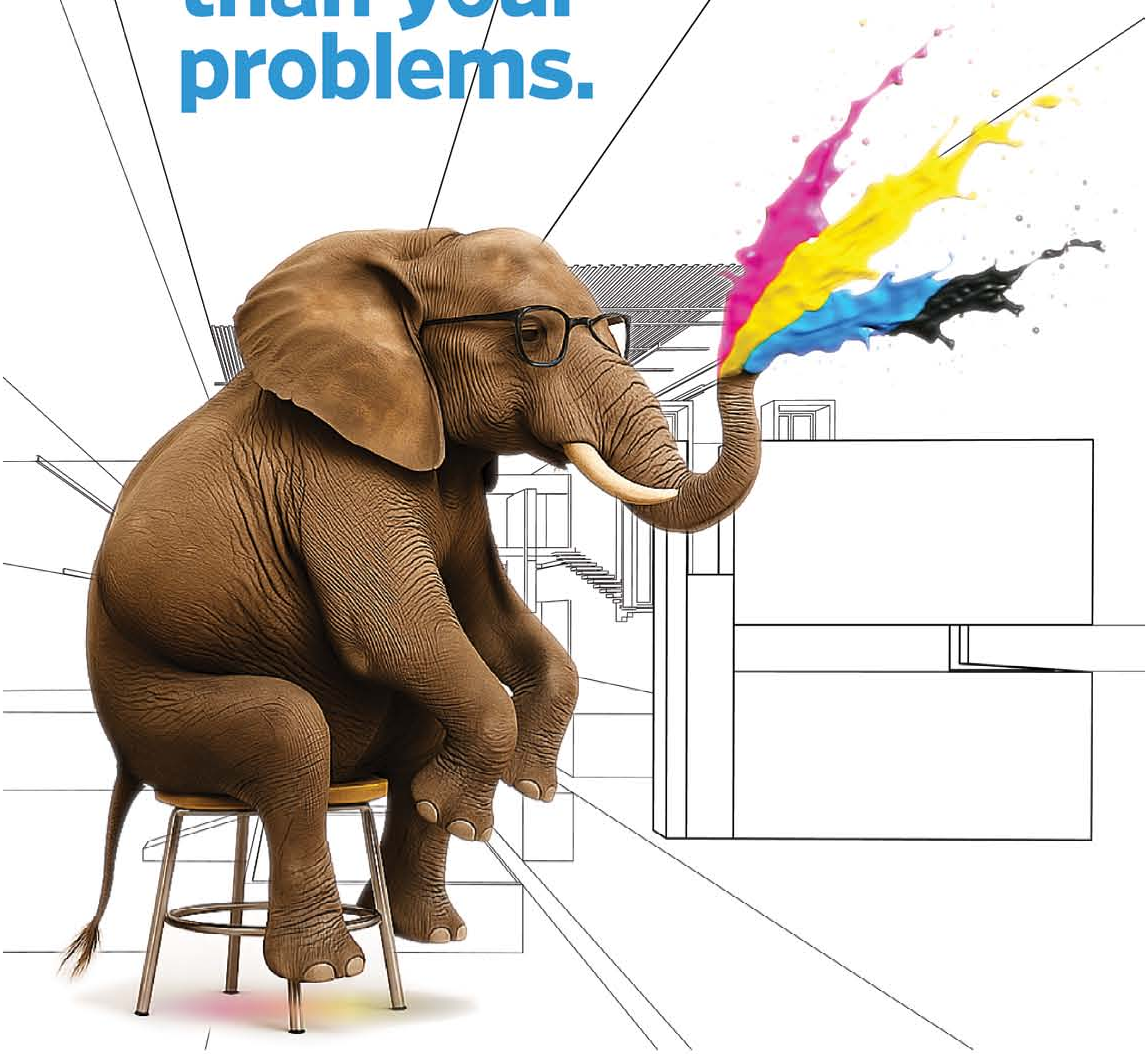

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UNDER VISION 2040

OMAN UNVEILS LABOUR MARKET ROADMAP TO DRIVE JOBS, GROWTH

Labour Forum adopts measures to strengthen governance, modernise legislation and unlock opportunities in emerging sectors

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman has charted a roadmap to build a more flexible and future-ready labour market, with a focus on strengthening governance, improving legislation and supporting promising economic sectors, including arts, entertainment and recreation.

The roadmap was adopted at the conclusion of the labour market laboratories organised as part of the third edition of the Labour Forum, held under the patronage of Dr. Mahad Said Ba'Owain, Minister of Labour.

The laboratories focused on enhancing the efficiency of the labour market system, raising the effectiveness of policies and regulations, and identifying future opportunities that support economic diversification in line with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040.

The Minister highlighted the importance of developing the arts, entertainment and recreation sector, describing it as one of the promising sectors with significant investment potential. He said the sector can contribute to diversifying the national economy, creating new employment opportunities and increasing value-added contributions.

He stressed that the growth of the sector requires an integrated regulatory framework that matches the nature of its activities, improves operational efficiency and strengthens competitiveness. As the sector becomes increasingly connected to commercial, financial and investment activities targeting regional and global markets, he said there is a need to enhance its legislative and regulatory environment and strengthen coordination among relevant government entities.

The Minister said the development of labour legislation is based on a participatory approach involving government institutions, employers and workers, with cooperation from the Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs. This approach, he noted, helps update regulations and ministerial decisions in line with economic developments while balancing the interests of all production partners. >A5

CYBERATTACKS

Beware! Travel scams on the rise

Times News Service

Times Exclusive

MUSCAT: A growing wave of sophisticated online travel scams is targeting travellers from Oman, with cybercriminals using fake airline, hotel and transport booking websites to steal banking details, personal information and payments, cybersecurity experts have warned.

While many residents are now returning from their summer vacations, overseas travel continues throughout the year, making fake booking scams an increasingly persistent threat.

Experts say fraudsters exploit the trust people place in well-known travel brands, using convincing phishing websites, fraudulent payment portals and bogus compensation offers to trick unsuspecting travellers.

Global cybersecurity company Kaspersky said cybercriminals are increasingly impersonating leading airlines, ride-hailing services and online booking platforms to lure victims into revealing sensitive financial information.

270,000 attack attempts

According to Kaspersky, its security solutions detected nearly 270,000 cyberattack attempts linked to popular travel brands between 2025 second quarter and first quarter of 2026 worldwide.

Airlines and transport companies accounted for the largest share of attacks, with cybercriminals creating fake websites and phishing campaigns designed to mimic legitimate services.

Researchers said most of the threats involved Trojan malware, including banking Trojans capable of stealing financial credentials and giving attackers direct access to victims' bank accounts.

One scam identified by Kaspersky impersonated European budget airline Ryanair, falsely informing travellers they were eligible for flight compensation. Victims were urged to act within seconds by entering account credentials or paying a small "processing fee" to receive the refund. >A2

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN

Oman-Nepal Business Forum held in Muscat

1 Oman-Nepal Business Forum, organised by Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry discussed partnership and investment opportunities between Oman and Nepal in the sectors of trade, investment, food security, water, beverages and traditional industries. >A2

OMAN

'Kids Time' at Awqad Park in Khareef Dhofar

2 Awqad Park, which hosts the "Kids Time" activities, is offering visitors a diverse array of entertainment, educational, and cultural activities during the Khareef Dhofar (monsoon) season. >A3

MARKET

Number of SMEs in Al Buraimi exceeds 2,700

3 The number of SMEs registered in Al Buraimi Governorate reached 2,708 by the end of 2025. Among these SMEs, 2,199 enterprises are registered in Riyada database. >B1

Oman and Nepal explore investment partnerships

The forum was attended by a number of businessmen and businesswomen from the two friendly countries and was held at the Chamber's headquarters in Muscat

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Oman–Nepal Business Forum, organised by the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), explored partnership and investment opportunities in the sectors of trade and investment, food security, water and beverages, and handicrafts and traditional industries between the Sultanate of Oman and the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal.

The forum was attended by a number of businessmen and businesswomen from the two friendly countries and was held at the Chamber's headquarters in Muscat.

The forum aimed to strengthen communication between the business communities of the two friendly countries, explore available trade and investment opportunities, and examine the potential for establishing partnerships and joint ventures across a number of targeted economic sectors.

Salim bin Said Al Alawi, Director General of the Board Affairs and International Cooperation Sector at the OCCI, said that the organisation of the forum stems from the Chamber's belief that the private sector is a key partner in building economic relations and promoting mutual interests between countries, and that direct engagement among business leaders is the first step towards identifying opportunities, exchanging expertise, and establishing sustainable partnerships capable of creating added value for the national economy.

Al Alawi explained that the selection of water and beverages, food security, trade and investment, and handicrafts and traditional industries as the forum's main themes reflects the diversity of promising opportunities that can bring together business leaders from the Sultanate of Oman and the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal and open broad horizons for cooperation and partnership.

These sectors provide opportunities for the exchange of expertise, the transfer of modern technologies, and the promotion of investment in water management, food production and processing, logistics services, trade, and investment partnerships, thereby contributing to economic development and sustainability.

For his part, Bishesh Kumar Sah, Chargé d'Affaires of the Embassy of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal to the Sultanate of Oman, emphasised the importance of the forum in strengthening economic and trade relations between the two friendly countries. He noted that direct communication between business leaders provides valuable opportunities to identify areas of cooperation and investment and to establish sustainable partnerships that serve mutual interests.

He also praised the strengths and opportunities available in both the Sultanate of Oman and the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal that can be built upon to expand cooperation between the private sectors of the two countries.

He further stressed the importance of continuing to organise economic meetings and events that contribute to opening new channels for trade and investment exchange, enhancing the presence of products and services in the markets of both countries, and encouraging the establishment of joint ventures.

The forum also featured a number of presentations. Shurooq bint Hamad Al Farsi, Deputy Director of the Sectoral Committees Department at the OCCI, delivered a presentation entitled "Exploring the Omani Market from the Private Sector Perspective", highlighting the key economic and investment advantages that make the Sultanate of Oman an attractive investment destination.

She reviewed the Sultanate's key economic indicators and strategic geographical location, noting that Oman serves as a gateway linking Gulf markets with Asia and Africa and enjoys direct access to the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean, enhancing its connectivity to major markets such as India, China, South Korea, Pakistan and Singapore, in addition to African markets. She also highlighted Oman's Free Trade Agreement with the United States, which provides investors with a competitive advantage in accessing the US market.

Mr. Govinda Prasad Ghimire, President of the Federation of Export Entrepreneurs Nepal (FEEN) and Head of the Nepalese Trade Delegation, delivered a presentation on opportunities to enhance trade and investment cooperation with the Sultanate of Oman.

He stressed the importance of building long-term strategic partnerships between the Omani and Nepalese private sectors to diversify bilateral trade, encourage joint investments, and develop value chains across promising sectors.

He also highlighted a number of Nepalese products with strong potential for the Omani market, including handmade crafts and jewellery inspired by Nepalese heritage and culture, specialty coffee, tea, organic vegetables and spices, cardamom, ginger and pepper, as well as herbal products, natural supplements, essential oils, natural honey, and health and wellness products.

On the sidelines of the forum, B2B meetings were held between businessmen and businesswomen from the Sultanate of Oman and the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal.

The meetings explored opportunities for trade and investment cooperation, identified areas of mutual interest, and examined the potential for establishing partnerships and joint ventures, thereby strengthening direct engagement between the private sectors of the two friendly countries and supporting the development of Oman–Nepal economic and trade relations.

CYBERATTACKS

Accommodation booking platforms also an easy target

< FROM A1 Kaspersky stressed that legitimate airlines do not ask customers to make upfront payments to process compensation claims.

Accommodation booking platforms have also become a major target. Kaspersky recorded more than 5,400 attack attempts involving hotel and travel booking services during the same period.

In one case, fraudsters created a convincing fake Booking.com payment page where travellers unknowingly entered their personal and banking details. Many discovered the deception only after arriving at their destination to find that no reservation had ever been made.

"Travel brands sit at a unique intersection of trust, urgency and payment activity, making them highly attractive to cybercriminals," said Evgeny Kuskov, Lead Security Researcher at Kaspersky.

Cybersecurity experts advise travellers to make bookings only through official websites or trusted mobile applications, carefully verify website addresses before making payments, avoid clicking on unsolicited travel offers received through email, SMS or messaging apps, and never carry out financial transactions over unsecured public Wi-Fi networks.

CPA warning

In Oman, the Consumer Protection Authority (CPA) has also urged the public to remain alert against electronic fraud by verifying the authenticity of websites before submitting complaints or conducting online transactions.

In an awareness advisory, the authority said users should ensure that official government websites begin with "https" and end with ".gov.om", confirming they belong to authorised government entities in Oman.

It stressed that complaints and reports should be submitted only through its official portal and warned that even minor changes in a website address could indicate a phishing attempt.

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION AUTHORITY

RIA to organise Research Skills Forum on 8 August

MUSCAT: Acting in partnership with the Arab Open University, the Research and Innovation Authority (RIA) will organise the 5th Research Skills Forum from 8 to 20 August 2026.

The forum will see the participation of 100 male and female postgraduate researchers from higher education institutions in the Sultanate of Oman.

Titled "Advanced Analysis of Statistical Data", the 5th edition of the forum seeks to enable participants to use modern statistical methods in a manner that ameliorates the quality of research outputs and enhances opportunities for the publication of the research papers in peer-reviewed scholarly journals.

The forum includes an intensive training programme on the use of Statistical Analysis Software (SPSS) and its applications.

The progamme also covers mechanisms for importing data from electronic questionnaires, in addition to exploring the role of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies in advanced statistical analysis.

The forum aims to provide researchers with advanced skills that keep pace with the goals of Oman Vision 2040, which places education, research and innovation among its national priorities.

The forum furnishes a platform for graduate students and faculty members to exchange experiences, supports cooperation among higher education institutions and develops the participants' critical thinking and communication skills. — ONA

SOUTH AL BATINAH

Restoration works on Al Sadd Tower in Al Awabi completed

AL AWABI: The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism has completed the restoration works on Al Sadd Tower in the Wilayat of Al Awabi, South Al Batinah Governorate, as part of its ongoing efforts to preserve historical landmarks and safeguard their architectural value. This initiative aims to ensure the sustainability of these structures as civilizational witnesses embodying the historical depth and cultural legacy of the Sultanate of Oman.

Situated along the main road of Al Awabi, Al Sadd Tower was constructed atop a rocky outcrop using stone and clay, featuring a circular design that reflects the traditional architectural characteristics distinctive to the region.

The restoration works encompassed structural reinforcement of the tower, strengthening of wall foundations, enhancement of stone base elements, crack treatment, and the reconstruction of sections of the walls using stone and saruj (traditional lime-based mortar), thereby preserving the authenticity and architectural character of the landmark. — ONA

BILATERAL RELATIONS

Azerbaijan, Oman explore strategic logistics partnership

MUSCAT: The Middle Corridor, also known as the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route (TITR), is a strategic trade and transport corridor that connects Asia and Europe via the Caspian Sea region. The Middle Corridor continues to strengthen its position as one of the most promising regional connectivity initiatives across Eurasia.

The Republic of Azerbaijan lies at the heart of this corridor and has firmly established itself as a pivotal hub for transportation, logistics, and freight transit. Through sustained investments in transport infrastructure, multimodal logistics services, digital trade facilitation, and port development, Azerbaijan has significantly strengthened its role as a reliable gateway connecting East and West.

His Excellency Ilham Aliyev, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, has consistently emphasized that the development of international transport corridors is one of the country's strategic priorities. Under his leadership, Azerbaijan has made substantial investments in expanding its railway and highway networks, the Port of Baku, and logistics infrastructure, while actively promoting regional connectivity and international cooperation. These efforts have further consolidated Azerbaijan's position as one of the most reliable transportation and logistics hubs across the Eurasian region.

In parallel, the Sultanate of Oman, under the leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik — may God protect and preserve him — continues to advance the objectives of "Oman Vision 2040," which places economic diversification and enhancing the competitiveness of productive and service sectors among its national priorities. The transport and logistics sector is considered one of the key enablers for achieving these objectives, leveraging the Sultanate's strategic maritime location and advanced infrastructure.

The ports of Sohar, Duqm, and Salalah play complementary roles in facilitating maritime trade flows and connecting the Gulf markets with the Indian Ocean, East Africa, the Indian subcontinent, and international markets. Furthermore, the economic and free zones, along with the logistics ecosystem associated with these ports, enhance the Sultanate of Oman's capacity to attract investments and provide transportation, storage, and re-export services.

When the necessary conditions are in place, this integration could support the movement of goods between the Gulf region and the Indian Ocean on one hand, and the markets of Central Asia and the South Caucasus on the other, through multimodal transport routes. This vision is based on leveraging potential points of convergence between the maritime, land, and rail networks connecting the two regions.

Although this model remains largely at the stage of a future-oriented vision, it reflects the growing opportunities available to enhance connectivity between the Gulf region and the Caspian Sea basin. Expanding cooperation in the areas of logistics services, customs procedures, digital transport solutions, and port management could gradually contribute to the establishment of more efficient, resilient, and sustainable transport links.

In recent years, the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Sultanate of Oman have demonstrated a shared commitment to enhancing bilateral cooperation in the fields of transport, logistics, investment, renewable energy, trade, and digital connectivity. The growing political dialogue and expanding economic partnership provide a strong foundation for exploring new areas of cooperation, particularly within the framework of regional connectivity initiatives.

Looking ahead, deepening cooperation between Azerbaijan and the Sultanate of Oman in the transport sector holds significant potential to diversify regional supply chains, improve transport efficiency, enhance trade resilience, and create new investment opportunities. By combining Oman's maritime advantages with Azerbaijan's strategic land transport infrastructure, the two countries can contribute to building a more integrated, sustainable, and resilient connectivity network linking Asia, the Middle East, and Europe.

As Azerbaijan and the Sultanate of Oman continue to deepen their strategic partnership, cooperation in the transport and logistics sectors could become one of the key pillars shaping bilateral economic relations. By leveraging their respective geographic advantages and the complementary and integrated infrastructure of both countries, Azerbaijan and Oman have the potential to make a significant contribution to the development of a more interconnected, diversified, and sustainable Eurasian transport network.

NON-NATIVE SPEAKERS

35 students from 17 countries complete course in Arabic

MANAH: The Sultan Qaboos Institute for Teaching Arabic to Non-Native Speakers on Wednesday held a ceremony at its headquarters in the Wilayat of Manah, Governorate of Al Dakhiliyah, to mark the conclusion of its 62nd course.

The 7-week course included an academic and cultural programme that was attended by 35 male and female students representing 17 countries of the world.

The ceremony included a poem in French translated into Arabic and a presentation titled "Artificial Intelligence and its application in learning", by a student named Merdina from Brunei Darussalam.

The ceremony also included a poem in Persian translated into Arabic and the screening of a film titled "Harvest of the Course" that outlined salient features of the 62nd course—its educational programmes, its cultural activities and its field trips that enriched the experience of the students.

Suleiman bin Said Al Siyabi, Director of Administrative and Financial Affairs at the Sultan Qaboos Higher Centre for Culture and Science, Royal Court, distributed certificates to the students of the 62nd course and the language partners. — ONA

CDAA JULY DATA

All public requests through Tajawob platform resolved

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman's Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority (CDAA) achieved a 100% response and completion rate for all public requests submitted through its Tajawob electronic platform during July 2026, underscoring its commitment to efficient public service and citizen engagement.

According to the authority's monthly report, the platform received a total of 19 requests during the month. These included seven inquiries, six suggestions, four reports, and two complaints. All requests were addressed and completed, resulting in a full 100% completion rate across every category. The Tajawob platform serves as a digital communication channel between the public and the CDAA, enabling users to submit inquiries, reports, complaints and suggestions online. The initiative is part of the authority's broader efforts to improve transparency, enhance service quality and strengthen community participation through digital transformation.

The CDAA continues to encourage members of the public to use the platform to communicate their feedback and contribute to the ongoing development.

Awqad Park brings fun-filled learning to kids at Khareef Dhofar

The park has been meticulously designed to offer an integrated experience that seamlessly combines learning and entertainment within an interactive environment tailored for children and their families in Salalah

SALALAH: Public parks and gardens rank among the premier destinations attracting families and visitors during Khareef Dhofar (monsoon) season, offering a diverse array of entertainment, educational, and cultural activities catering to all age groups.

These initiatives are part of Dhofar Municipality's ongoing efforts to deliver high-quality experiences that enrich the season and enhance its touristic allure.

In this context, Ameen Rabi Al Amri, Head of the Subcommittee for Parks and Recreational Areas Events at Dhofar Municipality, stated that Awqad Park, which hosts the "Kids Time" activities, stands as one of the flagship recreational and educational projects of the season.

The park has been meticulously designed to offer an integrated experience that seamlessly combines learning and entertainment within an interactive environment tailored for children and their families. He explained that this year's park features the "Children's University" activity, through which children engage in a simulated university experience spanning eight academic faculties.

The journey begins with registration and admission, followed by familiarisation with academic systems and study methodologies, before progressing through both theoretical and practical components, culminating in an official graduation ceremony where participants receive a certificate of program completion.

Elaborating on the university concept, Al Amri noted its direct integration with the interactive cities dispersed throughout the park, where children apply their acquired knowledge in practical, profession-simulating environments. For instance, graduates of the Faculty of Media transition to the Talent and Media City, where they engage in hands-on experiences including news broadcasting, on-camera presentations, and work within miniature studios specifically designed to suit children.

He added that graduates of the Faculty of Arts participate in diverse activities encompassing theater, singing, painting, and face painting, while the Engineering City, affiliated with the Faculty of Engineering, offers interactive programs and games introducing children to fundamental principles of construction and building, alongside simplified and safe equipment usage—complete with engineering attire and safety gear—thereby reinforcing learning through practical application.

Al Amri noted that the experience extends to other cities, including the Pilots' City, the Future City—which features commerce and medicine-related activities—and the Sports City. He emphasized that all these cities are designed as practical extensions of the educational curricula within the Children's University, solidifying the concept of experiential learning and providing children with a rich experience that fuses knowledge with enjoyment. The park also features playgrounds, green spaces, fountains, illuminated structures, as well as a food court and rest areas, creating an integrated environment where families can enjoy quality time while children participate in various activities and programmes. — ONA

Al Hamra house of honey enriches tourist experience; reflects Omani cultural heritage

Al Misfah House of Honey has emerged as a distinctive attraction that introduces visitors to Oman's heritage in beekeeping and authentic local products

AL HAMRA: The tourism sector in the Sultanate of Oman has witnessed remarkable engagement from the youth, leveraging local resources to deliver innovative tourism experiences that reflect the nation's cultural identity. Numerous youth-led projects have succeeded in presenting tourism models that seamlessly blend recreation and entertainment with the preservation of cultural heritage.

In a move that further enriches the tourism experience, Al Misfah House of Honey in the village of Misfat Al Abriyeen in the Wilayat of Al Hamra, has emerged as a distinctive attraction that introduces visitors to Oman's heritage in beekeeping and authentic local products. With the growing tourist footfall in Misfat Al Abriyeen, the establishment has become an essential stop on visitors' itineraries, offering insights into traditional mountain beekeeping practices and showcasing the superior quality of Omani honey. Through an interactive experience that underscores the deep connection between this heritage and Oman's natural environment, the project significantly enhances the appeal of rural tourism across the Sultanate of Oman.

Ali Mohammed Al Abri, the founder, noted that the apiary was established in 2015, coinciding with the rising number of visitors to Misfat Al Abriyeen. The primary objective was to familiarise tourists with the traditional beekeeping heritage of mountainous regions through comprehensive explanations of breeding and production methods, alongside a curated display of Omani honey products.

Al Abri further explained that the apiary currently houses approximately 340 beehives, encompassing both modern hives, wooden boxes, and traditional palm-trunk hives—a model that harmoniously blends ancestral and contemporary beekeeping techniques. The facility offers a diverse range of natural honey varieties, including Samr (Acacia) honey, Sidr (Ziziphus) honey, and herb honey, in addition to distinctive seasonal productions. Annually, beehives are transported to Dhofar Governorate during the flowering season of frankincense trees in April to produce Omani frankincense honey, which enjoys strong demand among visitors. Additionally, a number of hives are relocated to the Ras Al Hadd in the Wilayat of Sur for the production of mangrove honey, renowned for its superior quality and unique flavour profile.

In 2025, the project underwent significant product development with the introduction of an array of naturally flavoured honey varieties, including thyme, clove, ginger, rose, saffron, and cinnamon—aimed at diversifying visitor options and catering to a wide spectrum of palates.

In 2026, the project achieved a qualitative leap with its relocation to a new location overlooking Misfat Al Abriyeen village, accompanied by an expansion of its product line to include palm molasses and select therapeutic apiculture-derived products. The site now offers guided tours within the apiary, granting visitors firsthand exposure to beekeeping methodologies, the opportunity to observe hive inspections under expert supervision, and the chance to capture commemorative photographs—an experience that seamlessly integrates education, entertainment, and direct engagement.

Al Abri affirmed that during the tourist season, which extends from September through April, the project welcomes between 2,000 and 2,500 visitors weekly, with numbers peaking during November and December.

Al Misfah House of Honey has become a cornerstone of the tourism programs organised by travel companies for visitors to Misfat Al Abriyeen. It offers guests a detailed exposition on bee biology and honey production stages, along with complimentary tastings of various honey types.

This interactive dimension has significantly elevated the visitor experience, exemplifying a successful community-based tourism enterprise that harnesses local resources and traditional heritage to enrich tourist engagement and invigorate the tourism movement in Misfat Al Abriyeen—further cementing its status as one of the premier tourist destinations in the Sultanate of Oman. — ONA

OCCI NORTH AL BATINAH

Exhibition held for women entrepreneurs

SOHAR: Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) branch in North Al Batinah Governorate is hosting the first edition of an exhibition codenamed "Makers" that features the business initiatives of Omani women entrepreneurs.

The exhibition, opened on Wednesday in the Wilayat of Sohar and will run until 8 August, is organised by the OCCI Businesswomen's Committee in the Governorate.

The exhibition, which seeks to promote women's entrepreneurship, provides a platform that brings together Omani women's projects under one roof. It aims to showcase local products and services, enhance opportunities for establishing partnerships and open up new vistas of marketing in a manner that supports the growth of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and augments their contribution to economic development.

Me'aad bint Khamis Al Shidi, Head of the OCCI Businesswomen's Committee in North Al Batinah Governorate, said that the exhibition constitutes a podium for highlighting the efforts of women who turned their ideas into activities with an impact.

The event keeps pace with women's passion to see their visions realised in the form of projects that cater to the needs of society, she added. "It is not just a commercial exhibition, but rather an experience that brings together innovation and ambition in an environment that celebrates the strong significance of Omani women's business potential", Me'aad said.

She explained that the exhibition also underlines the contribution of government and private establishments that support entrepreneurship, investors, members of the public and parties interested in the development of local business projects.

The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of Faisal bin Abdullah Al Rawas, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry. — ONA

ENVIRONMENT AUTHORITY

Beach cleanup campaign

MUSCAT: The Environment Authority (EA) has conducted a campaign to clean the beaches of Al-Aijah in the Wilayat of Masirah, South Al Sharqiyah Governorate. "The Environment Centre in Masirah, in cooperation with the Excellence Team, the Free Path for Volunteer Work, and Masirah Municipality, carried out a campaign to clean the beaches of Al-Aijah."

Suhol Al Fayha Wins Best Brand in Customer Experience Award in Fruits & Vegetables Category

Suhol Al Fayha was felicitated with the 'Times of Oman Best Brand in Customer Experience (CX) Award in Fruits & Vegetables Category' at the Times of Oman CX Awards 2026. The awards presentation was co-located with Oman CX Forum 2026, held at Hotel Kempinski, Muscat. The premier event was attended by over 325 CX leaders across sectors in Oman.

Suhol Al Fayha has consistently demonstrated a strong commitment to customer experience by delivering fresh, high-quality fruits and vegetables sourced to meet the highest standards of quality, freshness, and food safety. Through its extensive sourcing network and efficient distribution capabilities, the company has earned the trust of consumers and businesses alike by ensuring a reliable supply of premium produce throughout Oman.

With a customer-centric approach focused on freshness, consistency, and service excellence, Suhol Al Fayha continuously invests in quality control, modern handling practices, and efficient logistics to preserve the quality of its products from farm to customer. Its commitment to understanding customer preferences and maintaining rigorous quality standards has helped establish the company as a trusted name in the fresh produce sector.

By continually enhancing its sourcing capabilities, supply chain operations, and customer service, Suhol Al Fayha continues to set benchmarks in customer experience within the fruits and vegetables category. Its dedication to quality, reliability, and customer satisfaction reinforces its position as one of Oman's leading fresh produce suppliers.

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

COMMENTARY

The Case for Reforming English Language Education in Omani Schools

Omanis love their language, and rightly so. Arabic is the language of our holy book, the Quran; it lives in our poetry, our songs, and our everyday lives, and it is not something we would ever give up. But alongside this, English has steadily grown into a practical necessity.

Today, nearly 99% of university majors like engineering, medicine, nursing, economics, and many others are taught in English, giving graduates access to opportunities in both local and international industries. English is also the working language of most professional environments, particularly in the private sector. In short, a strong command of English has become essential for academic and career success, not a luxury.

Many students, especially those who graduate from public schools, find their first years at university challenging because they have to switch from studying in Arabic to studying in English. Universities try to bridge this gap with a foundation year, but the math doesn't work in its favor: twelve years of schooling conducted mostly in Arabic, with only basic English instruction along the way, cannot be undone by a single semester or two of foundation studies. The gap is simply too wide to close in that short a time.

> Many students, especially those who graduate from public schools, find their first years at university challenging because they have to switch from studying in Arabic to studying in English

Much of this struggle traces back to a deep inconsistency in English education before students even reach university. Private schools generally offer a far more advanced English curriculum than public schools, starting from the earliest grades. Even though school environment and exposure play some role, the core issue is curricular: students in the same grade level, sitting for the same national milestones, are simply not being taught the same language content. And the longer this gap persists, the harder it becomes to close as students grow older, language acquisition becomes more difficult, not less.

Instead of having two different education systems that lead to very different outcomes, public schools could gradually adopt the English curriculum used in private schools. This should not be introduced all at once. It should begin with first grade and expand to the next grade each year until it reaches grade twelve. Students who start learning through this curriculum from an early age will build a strong foundation in English and graduate with much stronger language skills than many students do today.

Curriculum alone, however, won't close the full gap. Public school students typically have far fewer opportunities to practice speaking English outside the classroom than their private school peers. Dedicating one or two periods a week specifically to spoken practice would give students the confidence and fluency that reading and grammar-focused instruction alone cannot provide, helping ensure that what they learn is retained rather than forgotten.

If students graduate high school with a genuinely advanced level of English, the traditional foundation year which is designed to teach general English essentially from scratch becomes unnecessary. In its place, universities and colleges could adopt a model similar to the LANC approach already used at Sultan Qaboos University, where students study English tailored to their specific major rather than repeating general basics they should have already mastered in school. This shift would let higher education institutions focus their resources on preparing students for the specific academic vocabulary and skills their majors demand, rather than spending a full year catching students up on fundamentals.

Unifying the English curriculum across public and private schools would mean students graduate at comparable levels regardless of which sector they came from. It would remove the anxiety around the sudden linguistic shift many face at university, and it would let students walk into their foundation year or better yet, their major-specific English program with confidence instead of catching up. And when students are comfortable with the language their major is taught in, they are better positioned to understand the material itself, which can only translate into stronger academic performance across the board.

Abdulrahman Ibrahim Al-Muharbi is a Political Science student at Sultan Qaboos University with a keen interest in public policy, international relations, and political communication. He is passionate about governance, policy analysis, and contributing to informed public discourse on contemporary political issues.

MINISTRY OF LABOUR

Improving legal framework

< FROM A1

The labour market laboratories moved beyond identifying challenges to developing practical solutions and initiatives based on analysing root causes, prioritising issues and preparing recommendations supported by performance indicators, responsible entities and clear timelines.

The Governance of Legislative Procedures and Ministerial Decisions Laboratory examined ways to improve the labour market's legal and regulatory framework, enhance transparency and governance, simplify procedures and strengthen coordination among institutions.

The Arts, Entertainment and Recreation Sector Laboratory explored opportunities in employment, investment and entrepreneurship, while highlighting the role of creative industries in diversifying income sources and creating high-quality jobs. Discussions covered areas such as artistic production, content creation, digital media, event management and entertainment technology.

The initiatives are expected to open new avenues for employment and investment while enabling promising sectors to play a greater role in Oman's economic development.

— With inputs from ONA

UNESCO approves Oman's Bahla heritage initiative

This step reflects the role of the Sultanate of Oman in preserving and managing registered World Heritage sites of Outstanding Universal Value

PARIS: The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has adopted the "Cultural Property" initiative for pottery, copper, metal, and woodworking crafts submitted by the Bahla Volunteer Team, a local community organization, at the historic Bahla Fort site in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate.

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism participated in the initiative for the first time in cooperation with the Oman National Commission for Education, Culture and Science, as part of the World Heritage Volunteers (WHV) 2026 campaign under the slogan "Working on the Future," organised by the UNESCO World Heritage Centre.

This step reflects the role of the Sultanate of Oman in preserving and managing registered World Heritage sites of Outstanding Universal Value.

The World Heritage Volunteers initiative was established in 2008 within the framework of the World Heritage Education Programme to promote a culture of volunteerism and engage youth and community institutions in protecting and promoting heritage globally. Its membership comprises 200 organizations from 84 countries and more than 10,000 national and international volunteers.

The Sultanate of Oman's participation in this initiative marks it as the second country in the Arab region after the Kingdom of Morocco, owing to its significant role in preserving global cultural heritage.

The initiative represents a model of partnership between the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism and local community institutions in line with the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention, thereby enhancing community participation in protecting and managing sites of Outstanding Universal Value and embodying the concept of effective partnership in heritage conservation.

This participation aims to highlight the Sultanate of Oman's efforts in preserving World Heritage, as well as preserving traditional craft knowledge and skills and transmitting them to future generations—particularly in pottery, copper and metalworking, and woodworking crafts, as these crafts constitute true pillars for the artistic, technical, economic, and social sustainability of society.

Moreover, this participation also aims to involve youth in preserving World Heritage through tangible on-site projects, enabling them to learn essential preservation and maintenance skills and techniques, building their capacities as future decision-makers and active global citizens, strengthening sustainable cooperation between community institutions and the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, raising awareness among youth, volunteers, and relevant entities regarding the need to protect and promote World Heritage, and identifying best practices by developing non-formal education tools to facilitate the involvement of community stakeholders in World Heritage education.

The implementation of the initiative submitted by the Bahla Volunteer Team will begin from 3 to 13 September at the Bahla Fort site in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate.

It is organized by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism in cooperation with the Ministry of Education—represented by Oman National Commission for Education, Culture and Science—and the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, with the participation of the SMEs Development Authority "Riyada" and the Bahla Volunteer Team, as well as international and local volunteers representing several countries, thereby enhancing cultural exchange and the sharing of expertise and experiences in heritage preservation.

Ali Said Al Adawi, Acting Director of the Bahla Fort Site, said that the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism's participation in the World Heritage Volunteers 2026 initiatives, "Working for the Future," contributes to raising awareness among youth, volunteers, and stakeholders about the need to protect World Heritage, highlighting the Sultanate of Oman's efforts in this area, and establishing crafts as cultural property that must be preserved from extinction.

Al Adawi added that participating projects must be located at a site inscribed on the World Heritage List or the Tentative List, build effective partnerships with the local community and relevant entities to enhance project impact and the sustainability of its outputs, include awareness activities and workshops, have a legally registered applicant in the country, and be implemented on a non-profit basis.

He explained that selected initiatives will receive financial support to empower them to implement their projects.

The World Heritage Centre will also grant official international recognition to the organising entity and volunteers, and UNESCO will promote successful initiatives by publishing their content on the organisation's official website and presenting them at international conferences, positively contributing to the tourism sector and introducing the sites globally.

For his part, Sultan Nasser Al Nabhani, Head of the Bahla Volunteer Team, stated that this initiative will yield results that benefit the heritage site—Bahla Fort—which was inscribed 40 years ago as the first Omani site on the World Heritage List.

He pointed out that this initiative represents the team's first international experience, with hopes of benefiting from other global experiences in the field of voluntary work. -ONA

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NO FATALITIES REPORTED

More than 150 migrants rescued from burning boat in English Channel

PARIS: More than 150 migrants were rescued on Tuesday following a boat fire in the English Channel while attempting to cross from France to Britain.

CNN, citing French and British authorities, reported that the vessel's engine caught fire and its "condition deteriorated very rapidly," prompting joint rescue efforts by coastguards to pull 157 people to safety.

Prior to the incident, French authorities had already rescued five individuals overnight on Monday, CNN noted. Officials had deployed multiple vessels to monitor the craft after it departed from an area near Boulogne-sur-Mer on Monday, given the extreme dangers associated with such crossings.

Small boat crossings

Fortunately, CNN stated there are no reports of any fatalities resulting from this latest incident.

Small boat crossings have emerged as a major political issue in the United Kingdom over recent years, fueling stricter immigration strategies across successive political administrations and contributing to the rise of Reform UK, a populist hard-right party, according to CNN.

CNN reported that just two days prior to the rescue, newly elected British Prime Minister Andy Burnham promised that his administration would be "relentless" in tackling the crisis.

Burnham pointed to recent enhancements in enforcement operations alongside the necessity of establishing a framework that "offers safe routes for people as well, because that also takes away the selling point of the gangs," as cited by CNN.

In search of asylum

Tens of thousands of individuals have attempted the perilous crossing since 2018 in search of asylum or improved living conditions, often fleeing conflict or persecution in nations such as Afghanistan, Eritrea, Iran, and Sudan, CNN detailed. Migrants frequently rely on overcrowded and unseaworthy vessels, including dinghies, kayaks, and rigid-hulled inflatable boats.

Despite the severe risks, migrants exhibit such strong resolve to reach the UK that they "routinely refuse assistance offered by French resources, only accepting help when faced with situations of extreme emergency," according to a statement from the French maritime prefecture reported by CNN. – ANI

DIPLOMATIC TENSIONS

Trump administration revokes visa of Brazil's ambassador to US amid diplomatic tensions

WASHINGTON DC: The Trump administration has revoked the visa of Brazil's Ambassador to the United States, Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti, escalating diplomatic tensions between Washington and Brasilia, CNN reported, citing US officials and statements from the Brazilian government.

According to CNN, the US State Department did not designate Viotti as persona non grata, and a senior State Department official said the visa revocation was not equivalent to expelling the ambassador from the country.

"The cancellation of her visa is not the same thing as kicking the person out of the country," the official said, as quoted by CNN.

The official described the move as a "reciprocal action" in response to Brazil's delay in granting diplomatic approval, known as agrement, for the US nominee for ambassador to Brazil, Daniel Perez.

The State Department official said the decision also came amid several other diplomatic disagreements between the two countries over the past year, including Brazil's refusal to grant visas to certain US officials.

The official said Viotti's visa would be restored immediately if Brazil grants agrement to Perez. However, it remains unclear how the visa revocation will affect Viotti's position as ambassador, CNN reported.

Another senior State Department official said that if she leaves the US, she would need to apply for a new visa.

The Brazilian government criticised the decision, saying it "repudiates the decision announced today by the US Department of State to alter the visa of Brazil's Ambassador in Washington," and rejected the reasons provided by Washington, as reported by CNN.

"Both justifications offered for the decision are false," the Brazilian government said in a statement.

Brazil's presidency said the move was part of broader pressure from Washington.

"Today's decision is not an isolated incident. It forms part of a deliberate escalation of hostile measures against Brazil, driven by ideological motives that are incompatible with a bilateral partnership that has always been guided by mutual respect," the statement said, as quoted by CNN.

The visa revocation comes ahead of Brazil's October presidential election, in which incumbent President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva is expected to face Flavio Bolsonaro, the son of former President Jair Bolsonaro.

Flavio Bolsonaro met with members of the Trump administration, including US President Donald Trump, earlier this year.

The dispute also follows Brazil's recent refusal to grant visas to two US State Department officials.

Lula had said the decision was linked to concerns over possible election interference.

Brazil's presidency accused the US officials of planning to visit the country "to cast doubt on the integrity of Brazil's electoral system."

A senior State Department official rejected the allegation, describing the planned visit as a "routine trip," CNN reported. -ANI

Trump says 'a lot of progress' made, signals possible talks with Iran

Trump said that Iranian officials had contacted the US and expressed an interest in talks, while suggesting that Tehran would be "very smart" to reach a deal

CALIFORNIA: US President Donald Trump on Wednesday said "a lot of progress" had been made and claimed that Iran had reached out seeking talks, adding that the situation would become clearer within the next 48 hours, according to media report.

"We're moving along very nicely. We'll find out. We'll know in 48 hours, I would say," Trump told reporters as he departed Los Angeles for Las Vegas as part of a two-day West Coast trip.

Trump said that Iranian officials had contacted the US and expressed an interest in talks, while suggesting that Tehran would be "very smart" to reach a deal.

"A lot of progress has been made. They called me, and they said, 'Please, let's talk.' They want to talk. The funny thing is, they never mention that... I think they'd be very smart to make a deal. We'll see what happens," he said.

Trump's remarks come amid uncertainty over the possibility of renewed US-Iran engagement. While he did not provide details about the reported contacts or the nature of a potential agreement, he indicated that developments could become clearer within 48 hours.

The US President is travelling to Los Angeles and Las Vegas during his two-day West Coast trip to promote his economic agenda, highlight the Working Families Tax Cuts and campaign ahead of the November midterm elections.

He further reiterated his stance that Iran would not be allowed to acquire a nuclear weapon and linked the reopening of the strategic waterway to the ongoing diplomatic efforts.

During an interview with Fox News, Trump said, "Iran, as an example, will never have a nuclear weapon. They already can't, but they'll--it's going to be formal. The strait's going to be open very soon, or they're going to get hit very hard, and then the strait's going to be open."

According to Axios, Trump said the US had earlier been preparing for a major military operation against Iran but decided to pursue diplomacy after receiving a request from Tehran for talks.

"We were going into a tremendous attack, the biggest since World War II, and they called me and said, very politely, 'Please, can we talk? Can we talk?'

"They didn't want-and I said, 'Yes, we can talk. Let's get it done.' Finally, let's get it done," the US President said to Fox News.

Trump had decided on Saturday not to proceed with previously threatened large-scale military strikes against Iran after consultations with Gulf partners, allowing more time for diplomatic efforts.

However, Trump had warned that major military action could still follow if an agreement is not reached.

"If they back out again, they're going to get hit really hard. They know that. They understand that. I have no choice. They can't have a nuclear weapon. It's very simple," Trump said.

Trump said the US military action against Iran had already demonstrated its capabilities but added that he hoped diplomacy would succeed.

"They wouldn't be talking if we weren't doing what we're doing. We hit them very, very hard. But the hard hit is yet to come, and hopefully we won't have to use it. I hope we won't have to--we're having very good discussions. They don't like to admit that, but it's a little bit disconcerting," he told Fox News.

The report said regional mediators, including officials from Qatar, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, were also involved in efforts to facilitate an understanding between Washington and Tehran.

"The only thing that matters is action. And they want to make a deal. We'll see what happens. If they don't make a deal, it's going to be too bad," Trump said.

Citing regional sources, Axios reported that Araghchi had agreed in principle to the proposed arrangement but required approval from Iran's Supreme Leader, Mojtaba Khamenei, and the Supreme National Security Council.

A US official and a regional source told Axios that Iran's leadership completed the approval process on Tuesday, bringing the parties closer to a formal announcement. -ANI

PENTAGON'S MUNITIONS

Hegseth rejects reports claiming US missile stockpiles low

WASHINGTON, DC: US Secretary of War Pete Hegseth on Tuesday rejected a media report claiming that the Pentagon's missile defence stockpiles had fallen to dangerously low levels.

In a post on X, Hegseth wrote, "That banner is NOT TRUE, @CNN. Shame on you. We don't hate the Fake News media enough."

His remarks came after CNN reported, citing multiple sources familiar with the matter, that the US military has exhausted nearly 80 per cent of its inventory of Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) interceptors and around half of its Patriot missile interceptors since the conflict with Iran began.

According to CNN, senior US military commanders have warned that the Pentagon's munitions stockpile is "dangerously low," with key air defence systems significantly depleted during operations linked to the war with Iran.

452 THAAD missiles

The report cited estimates by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), which said the United States possessed around 452 THAAD missiles and approximately 2,200 Patriot interceptors before the conflict.

According to the report, Gulf allies also expressed concern that shortages in US air defence systems could affect their ability to defend against possible Iranian missile or drone attacks if regional hostilities intensified. -ANI

STUDENT-LED UPRISING

Is Bangladesh backtracking on post-Hasina reforms?

DHAKA: Just two years after a student-led uprising ended the nearly 16-year rule of Sheikh Hasina, many fear Bangladesh is slipping backward.

With Hasina, now in exile in India, planning a return in December and critics accusing the current government of failing to deliver on its promises, the country's political future is once again in doubt.

"At the end of the day, we did not see the elimination of discrimination, the creation of an inclusive society, or the new political order that was promised," Mohammad Tanzimuddin Khan, a professor of international relations at Dhaka University, told DW.

"It seems we are forgetting the very reasons behind the uprising of last July, especially those who came to power."

The protest movement began in 2018 over a controversial quota system for government jobs. In 2024, a court-backed move to reinstate parts of the system sparked fresh demonstrations that grew into a wider anti-government uprising.

In August 2024, after more than 1,000 people were killed in the unrest, then Prime Minister Hasina fled to India.

Rebuilding Bangladesh's institutions

Bangladesh's interim government, which was led by Nobel Peace Prize winner Muhammad Yunus and backed by the military and key figures from the uprising, facilitated the signing of a reform roadmap. It was named the "July Charter" after the month when the uprising that toppled Hasina began.

In a February 2026 referendum, around 70% of voters approved the charter, which proposed term limits for prime ministers, the creation of an upper house of parliament, stronger presidential powers and greater judicial independence.

The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) won a decisive majority in a general election that took place alongside the referendum.

Critics say the BNP has since failed to implement several pre-election reform commitments.

Ali Riaz, who led the interim government's Constitution Reform Commission, said there had been "time-bound commitments," including the creation of a constitutional reform council and steps to implement reforms within 180 working days.

"That was not done," he said, adding that it was "deeply regrettable."

Is Bangladesh moving in the wrong direction?

The interim government introduced 133 ordinances as part of its reform agenda, but after the BNP came to power, it refused to adopt 20 of them — including measures concerning the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), the Anti-Corruption Commission, enforced disappearances and referendums.

The BNP argues that constitutional and institutional changes should be enacted through proper legislative procedures in Parliament. The BNP and the opposition Jamaat-e-Islami-led alliance have clashed over the July Charter, including proposals for a constituent assembly to oversee constitutional reforms.

Salahuddin Ahmed, who led the BNP's representatives in the National Consensus Commission, now serves as Bangladesh's Home Minister.

Speaking in Parliament in March, Ahmed described the charter's implementation order as "a document of endless deception" by the interim government.

Asif Mahmud, spokesperson for the student-led National Citizen Party (NCP), accused the BNP of "betraying the public" on its reform promises and cast doubt on "whether voters would trust the party again if a similar political moment were to arise."

Mahmud, a leading figure in the uprising who later served as an adviser in the interim government before resigning ahead of the national election, told DW: "The BNP is taking the country backward by revoking the very ordinances and reforms that the interim government had implemented."

However, Khan believes the opposition party also bears responsibility for this. "It is not just the ruling party; there is no sign of the opposition breaking free from this tendency either."

While he sees some change in the way prime ministerial power is exercised, he believes "politicization has returned to major institutions, including educational ones."

Have public aspirations been realised?

Mahmud said "political parties were eager to secure power" through early elections, forcing student leaders of the uprising to "make compromises on key reform demands."

Alleged enforced disappearances were among the most serious accusations against Hasina's government. A commission set up by the interim administration reported that, of 1,913 complaints received, 1,569 were verified and classified as cases of enforced disappearance.

Among those who later returned alive, about 75% were linked to the Islamist party Jamaat-e-Islami and 22% to the BNP, the main political rivals of Hasina's Awami League party.

In an effort to prevent future abuses, Bangladesh signed the UN Convention against Enforced Disappearances in August 2024. The interim government later introduced an ordinance to criminalize the practice.

"We wanted to ensure permanence by incorporating this into the constitution and making the necessary legal changes," Asif Mahmud said.

However, rather than seeking parliamentary approval for the ordinance, the BNP-led government published a new draft bill in July 2026. Critics say the proposal weakened safeguards by assigning investigations into alleged enforced disappearances from the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) to the police.

Human Rights Watch (HRW) warned that "allowing the police to investigate enforced disappearances will not ensure accountability and will not create the deterrence necessary to bring this practice to an end."

HRW also cited the April 21 alleged abduction of Miraj Sheikh by men allegedly posing as Coast Guard personnel as the first reported enforced disappearance since the 2024 uprising. More than three months later, his whereabouts remain unknown. -DW

SPORTS

Historic all-Omani squad set for Asian Games challenge in Japan

Sufyan Mehmood will captain the Asiad-bound side after Oman secured qualification through an impressive campaign in Singapore, marking the first time an all-Omani cricket team will compete on one of Asia's biggest multi-sport stages

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman Cricket on Wednesday unveiled its squad for the forthcoming Asian Games in Japan, where the Sultanate will script another chapter in its sporting history with an all-Omani team competing on one of Asia's biggest multi-sport stages for the first time.

Captained by Sufyan Mehmood, Oman earned their place at the continental showpiece after an outstanding qualifying campaign in Singapore, underlining the rapid growth of cricket in the Sultanate and setting up an opportunity to challenge the region's elite.

Oman secured qualification after an impressive campaign in the Asian Games Qualifier, becoming one of four nations to book a place at the Games alongside Nepal, Malaysia and Hong Kong.

They will now join automatic entrants India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan and hosts Japan in the 10-team men's cricket competition.

The tournament draw has placed Oman in Group B alongside Malaysia and Hong Kong, while Group A comprises Afghanistan, Japan and Nepal.

The top two teams from each group will advance to the quarterfinals, where they will be joined by seeded giants India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.

The group-stage matches will be played on September 24, 25 and 26.

Oman Cricket Chief Development Officer Duleep Mendis described the occasion as a landmark achievement for Omani cricket, saying the team's qualification was a proud moment for the nation.

Made us proud

"It is a historic occasion for our all-Omani team to represent the nation at the continental level. They have made us proud by qualifying in Singapore, and we hope they advance from their group to the quarterfinals of the Asian Games, where the heavyweights of Asian cricket will be waiting," Mendis said.

"We wish them the very best and under the able captaincy of Sufyan, we are hopeful of a good show," he added.

Oman squad: Sufyan Mehmood (captain), Muzaffar Shiralkar, Mohammed Ali Al Balushi, Zubair Al Balushi, Shuaib Al Balushi, Nawed Al Balushi, Wasim Al Balushi, Ahmed Zadjali, Sameer Othman, Waheed Al Balushi, Faris Al Balushi, Mohammed Osman, Issa Rahim Al Balushi, Abdul Jalil and Qais Al Balushi.

Support staff: Head coach: Sultan Ahmed; assistant coach: Parviz Al Balushi; manager: Said Haider Al Balushi; physiotherapist: Saravanan T.

World Cup 2027 Qualifier set to be held from February 22 to March 23

LONDON: The 2027 ODI World Cup Qualifier is set to be played from February 22 to March 23 next year. *Cricinfo* has learned that while the ICC has finalised the tournament dates, the venue remains undecided.

In the revamped structure for the 2027 World Cup, which was announced by the ICC in July, the winner of the 10-team Qualifier will gain direct entry to the main group of the 14-team marquee tournament. The teams finishing second, third and fourth in the Qualifier will contest the first round of the World Cup, called the Super Series, with the top team qualifying for the main, 12-team stage.

The World Cup will be held in 12 venues across South Africa, Zimbabwe and Namibia from October 4 to November 21.

The 10-team Qualifier includes the two bottom-ranked Full Members in the ODI rankings (other than hosts South Africa and Zimbabwe) as of September 30, 2026; the top four teams from CWC League 2; and the top four teams from a World Cup Qualifier Playoff. This Playoff will be contested by the bottom four teams from CWC League 2 along with four teams from the Challenge League (essentially cricket's third division). The format is yet to be decided but the top four from this eight-team Playoff will advance to the World Cup Qualifier.

The Challenge League will feature 12 teams divided into two pools of six and each will play three round-robin tournaments over the cycle. The top two teams from each pool will move on to the World Cup Qualifier Playoff.

West Indies are currently ranked 10th and will only play two more ODIs before the cut-off date, against India in September. Those matches and the results of other series, specifically the imminent one between Afghanistan (ranked 8th) and Ireland (12th), could affect their ranking. If Ireland beat Afghanistan to win that series 4-1 or 5-0, then two wins for West Indies could be enough to see them into the top eight. If Afghanistan win the series, West Indies are all but certain to have to qualify.

West Indies missed out on the 2023 ODI World Cup after losing to Netherlands in a Super Over in the Qualifier in Harare that year.

SECOND TEST

Shafique, Sajid star on see-sawing day as Pakistan seize control against WI

PORT OF SPAIN: West Indies led Pakistan by 60 runs with only four second-innings wickets in hand Tuesday after a dramatic third day of the second cricket Test played out on a turning pitch.

First, Abdullah Shafique 's unbeaten 160 guided Pakistan past West Indies' first innings of 344, then Jomel Warrican took 6-112 to bowl out Pakistan for 387 and limit the lead to 43 runs.

An opening partnership of 40 between Tagenarine Chanderpaul (17) and Kavem Hodge (34) almost erased the lead before Sajid Khan took 4-32 and Ali Usman 2-29 to reduce West Indies to 103-6 at stumps, putting Pakistan in control.

Sajid first took the wickets of Chanderpaul and Amir Jangoo (13) before a stubborn partnership between Shai Hope and captain Roston Chase took West Indies to 99-3, giving it hope of reaching stumps with wickets in hand.

That all changed in the last five overs when Sajid trapped Hope lbw for 15 and Jayden Seales in the same manner for a two-ball duck. Finally, Chase (17) fell to the last ball of the day, losing concentration and providing Usman with a simple return catch.

Pakistan now have the opportunity to wrap up the match Wednesday, to achieve their first Test win away from home since 2023.

Day 3 also saw Pakistan captain Babar Azam denied his first Test century in four years when he was run out for 88 to end a 183-run partnership with Shafique.

Pakistan were still 63 runs behind when Babar was left short of his ground by Brandon King's direct hit from cover.

The Pakistan batters had been pressured by tight bowling and Babar thought he saw the chance of a relieving single when he pushed the ball into the off side. Shafique first supported the call for a run, then sent Babar back as King swooped on the ball.

Babar tried to turn, retreat and dive for the crease but was beaten by King's flat throw that hit the stumps at the striker's end. The Pakistan captain lay prostrate for some time then rose slowly and left the ground with every sign of dejection.

His last Test century came in December 2022 against New Zealand at Karachi, and his 88 Tuesday was his highest score in 35 test innings since that match. To add to the drama, King picked up a lower back injury and had to be taken off after he fell awkwardly after his throw to run out Babar. It is not yet clear whether he will bat on Day 4.

Earlier, left-arm spinner Warrican was splendid with both the old ball and the second new ball, bowling Awais Zafar for 1.

Shamar Joseph then trapped Salman Ali Agha lbw and Warrican, with the new ball, claimed his third wicket of the innings when he bowled Mohammad Rizwan for 18. Warrican then wrapped up the Pakistan tail with three wickets in four balls.

Brief scores: West Indies 344 and 103 for 6 (Sajid 4-32) lead Pakistan 387 (Shafique 160*, Babar 88, Warrican 6-112) by 60 runs. - Agencies

BILATERAL HOCKEY SERIES

Pakistan U20 clinch Test series despite Oman's spirited late revival

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Pakistan Under-20 wrapped up a convincing 3-0 series victory over Oman after the two sides concluded an entertaining five-match bilateral hockey Test series in Muscat recently, with the final two encounters ending in draws as the hosts showed encouraging signs ahead of the forthcoming Asian Games.

The visitors dominated the opening three matches to seal the series, recording victories of 3-0, 3-1 and 4-2 before Oman bounced back with improved performances to hold the Asian junior powerhouse to 2-2 and 3-3 draws in the final two fixtures.

While Pakistan emerged as deserving series winners, Oman's strong finish offered plenty of positives for the hosts as they continued preparations for the 20th Asian Games in Aichi-Nagoya in 2026, to be held from September 18 to October 3.

The five-match series also served as a crucial build-up for the Pakistan U20 side ahead of the Men's Junior Asia Cup 2026, scheduled to be held in China in September.

Pakistan showcased their quality throughout the tour, combining disciplined defence with clinical finishing to take an unassailable lead in the series. However, Oman steadily raised their level as the matches progressed, producing determined displays in the closing two games to deny the visitors further victories.

The improved performances reflected Oman's growing confidence in attack and greater defensive organisation, underlining the progress made by the national team under its ongoing preparation programme.

For both teams, the series provided valuable international match practice and an opportunity to fine-tune combinations ahead of major continental assignments.

Hockey Oman thanked the Pakistan Hockey Federation and the Pakistan U20 national team for accepting the invitation to tour Muscat, saying the series strengthened the long-standing sporting ties between the two countries while offering both squads important international exposure.

The association reiterated its commitment to organising high-quality international competition as part of its long-term athlete development programme and preparations for future international events.

OMAN OIL PRICE RISES

The price of Oman crude oil has increased, with prices for delivery by October 2026 reaching $79.16. The price of Oman crude oil rose by $4.35 from the price of Tuesday, which was $83.52.

MSX INDEX ENDS HIGHER

The MSX index closed at 7,349.10 points, up by 0.19% from previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 0.35% at 584.51 points. Al Batinah Development Company, up 4.69%, was the top gainer while, Construction Materials, down 4.41%, was the top loser.

Al Buraimi strengthens SME base with 2,708 enterprises

These enterprises have contributed to supporting the local economy, stimulating supply chains, and raising competitiveness

AL BURAIMI: The number of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) registered in Al Buraimi Governorate reached 2,708 by the end of 2025.

Among these, 2,199 enterprises are registered in the SMEs Development Authority (Riyada) database, while 509 enterprises have obtained the Riyada card.

Khalfan Abdullah Al Kharousi, Director of the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Department in the Al Buraimi Governorate, stated that these enterprises are distributed in terms of size into 2,268 micro-enterprises, 420 small enterprises, and 20 medium enterprises. He pointed out that the micro category represents the largest segment of these enterprises, reflecting the nature of a business environment that stimulates startups on the one hand, and the reliance on micro-activities during foundational stages on the other.

Regarding the sectors these activities focused on, Al Kharousi explained that the concentration was on wholesale and retail trade, vehicle repair, construction and building, manufacturing industries, administrative and support services, transport and storage, and professional, scientific, and technical activities, in addition to the accommodation and food services sector.

He indicated that the Al Buraimi Governorate witnessed growth in modern activities and creative, value-added service projects, most notably cafes and restaurants, women's tailoring and fashion design, beauty centres and cosmetics, tourism and entertainment services, as well as design and printing.

He added that these enterprises have contributed to supporting the local economy, stimulating supply chains, and raising competitiveness. He noted that there is continuous coordination with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board and the competent authorities to empower entrepreneurs with available opportunities in government procurement, contracts, and in-country value applications.

Concluding his statement to Oman News Agency (ONA), the Director of the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Department in the Al Buraimi Governorate, affirmed that these enterprises have contributed to creating direct and indirect job opportunities for Omani youth through supply services and support activities. This is in addition to their contribution to promoting a culture of self-employment and developing the competencies of entrepreneurs through specialised consultations and training programs. -ONA

COMPETITIVE RETURNS

BankDhofar delivers enhanced savings value through its High Yield account

MUSCAT: BankDhofar's High Yield Savings Account continues to strengthen its position as one of the preferred savings solutions among the bank's discerning clientele in Oman, offering a compelling combination of competitive returns, liquidity, and digital convenience.

Designed to meet the evolving financial expectations of both Omani nationals and expatriates, the account enables customers to earn attractive returns on their savings while maintaining unrestricted access to their funds. It reflects BankDhofar's broader strategy of delivering value-driven retail banking solutions that combine performance with everyday usability.

A key distinguishing feature of the High Yield Savings Account is its competitive interest structure, which has positioned it among the more rewarding savings products in the local banking market. Interest is calculated on a daily basis and credited monthly, allowing customers to benefit from compounding returns over time. Depending on prevailing market conditions and balance tiers, the account can offer interest up to approximately 4 per cent per annum, reinforcing its appeal to customers seeking efficient cash management solutions.

Unlike traditional fixed deposits that require locking in funds for a specified period, BankDhofar's High Yield Savings Account is structured as a flexible, transactional savings product. Customers retain full access to their funds at all times through ATM networks, debit cards, and digital banking platforms, enabling seamless day-to-day financial management without compromising on earnings potential.

The account is also deeply integrated into BankDhofar's digital ecosystem, reflecting the bank's continued investment in customer-centric technology. Customers can open and manage accounts through digital onboarding platforms, monitor balances in real time via mobile banking, and conduct transactions securely through a fully integrated digital interface. This ease of access has made the product particularly attractive to digitally active customers who prioritise convenience and speed.

Inclusivity is another hallmark of the offering, with the High Yield Savings Account available to a broad customer base, including both Omani nationals & and expatriate residents in Oman, subject to standard documentation requirements. This wide eligibility base has contributed to its sustained uptake across diverse income segments.

The account also functions as a gateway to BankDhofar's wider suite of financial services, including cards, financing solutions, and insurance products, enabling customers to build a more integrated and personalised banking relationship.

As customers increasingly seek smarter ways to manage liquidity and optimise returns in a dynamic economic environment, BankDhofar's High Yield Savings Account continues to stand out as a practical and rewarding solution. Its blend of strong yield potential, accessibility, and digital-first functionality reinforces its position as a product of choice for customers seeking both financial growth and flexibility.

WHITELEG SHRIMP FARMING PROJECT

Construction work at OMR5mn shrimp farming project in Shinas 80% complete

SHINAS: The completion rate of construction work in the first phase of the whiteleg shrimp farming project in the Wilayat of Shinas, North Al Batinah Governorate, has reached 80 percent.

Spanning an area of 100,000 square metres, it carries a construction cost of approximately OMR5 million, with shrimp production in the first phase expected to reach nearly 5,000 tonnes, according to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources.

The ministry confirmed that the ponds have been prepared and are currently in the finishing phase, along with the commencement of constructing nursery ponds, shrimp broodstock ponds, and administrative offices.

It pointed out that the project, implemented by Blue Aqua International Gulf Company, will contribute to producing larvae of various shrimp species in demand locally and globally.

This will enhance the local economy by creating direct job opportunities for Omani youth and providing indirect employment generated by operational processes and the supply chain. The project will also provide an ideal environment for transferring knowledge and modern technology in aquaculture, enhancing human resource efficiency in this promising sector.

Dr. Issa Mohammed Al Farsi, Director of the Aquaculture Development Department at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, stated in a statement to Oman News Agency (ONA) that the total plot area of the project reaches 288,478 square metres, with an overall construction cost reaching approximately OMR23.5 million. The total area for all phases covers 28 hectares, with annual production upon operation expected to reach 7,500 tonnes, making it one of the largest aquaculture projects in Oman.

He said: "The project is expected to provide 62 direct job opportunities and 124 indirect job opportunities. It will also contribute to supplying shrimp broodstock instead of importing them from abroad and creating aquaculture technologies that can be manufactured locally, in addition to introducing new shrimp species previously not present in the Sultanate of Oman."

The Director of the Aquaculture Development Department explained that the project includes a research and development centre and provides water recirculation technologies used in aquaculture, which helps increase biosecurity. Additionally, the project utilises high and advanced technologies in aquaculture, thereby reducing reliance on human labour in operations.

He indicated that the whiteleg shrimp farming project in the Wilayat of Shinas is considered one of the largest aquaculture projects in the Sultanate of Oman, featuring a shrimp hatchery, shrimp nursery ponds, shrimp grow-out ponds, a water treatment unit, a live feed production unit, a research and development centre, and water recirculation units, in addition to administrative offices and worker accommodation for the project. -ONA

GCC-STAT

Total GCC bottled water market reaches $7.55bn

MUSCAT: The size of the bottled water market in the GCC countries reached approximately $7.55 billion in 2024, continuing its growth at an annual rate of 11 percent, driven by increased demand for bottled water, rising health awareness, and expanding investments in this sector.

Data from the GCC Statistical Centre (GCC-Stat) indicated that in the field of water resources management, the volume of collected treated wastewater increased by 98.4 percent in 2024.

This indicator reflects the progress made by GCC countries in water reuse and supporting circular economy applications, thereby contributing to preserving water resources and enhancing environmental sustainability.

Desalinated water production in GCC countries also rose by 4.8 percent compared to 2023, underscoring the continued reliance on desalination technologies as one of the most vital strategic sources to meet the growing demand for water, particularly in light of limited natural water resources.

On the other hand, the annual rate of groundwater abstraction recorded a decrease of 3 percent over the past nine years, coinciding with an increase in the share of renewable water to 25.5 percent in 2024, reflecting a GCC trend toward sustainable water resources management and reducing pressure on groundwater reserves.

Regarding natural resources, rainfall rates in GCC countries increased by 43.8 percent in 2024 compared to the long-term average for the period (1980–2009). This presents opportunities to enhance water security through expanding rainwater harvesting projects, recharging groundwater aquifers, and increasing the utilisation of conventional water resources.

Collectively, these indicators confirm the continued adoption by GCC countries of integrated water management policies based on diversifying supply sources, enhancing reuse, developing desalination technologies, and preserving natural resources, thereby supporting the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals and enhancing the region's ability to face water scarcity challenges. -ONA

MARKET

MSX index ends higher

Al Batinah Development Company, up 4.69%, was the top gainer while, Construction Materials, down 4.41%, was the top loser

MUSCAT: The MSX index closed at 7,349.10 points, up by 0.19% from previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 0.35% at 584.51 points. Al Batinah Development Company, up 4.69%, was the top gainer while, Construction Materials, down 4.41%, was the top loser. Shares of OQGN were the most active in terms of number of shares traded while OQEP were the most active in terms of turnover.

A total number of 9026 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating turnover of RO 46.41 million, with more than 148.66 million shares changing hands. Out of 69 traded securities, 18 advanced, 21 declined, and 30 remained unchanged. At the session close, domestic investors were net buyers for RO 1058K while GCC & Arab investors were net sellers for RO 569K, followed by foreign investors for RO 489K worth of shares.

Financial Index closed at 12,945.93 points, down -0.34%. Prices of Al Batinah Development Company, Muscat Finance, Oman & Emirates Investment, United Finance, National Bank Oman were up by 4.69%, 3.18%, 2.26%, 1.14%, 0.88% respectively. Prices of Al Anwar Investment, Al Omaniya Financial Services, Al Madina Takaful, Takaful Oman, Bank Dhofar were down by 5.00%, 2.58%, 1.77%, 1.56%, 1.40% respectively.

Industrial Index closed at 9,412.34 points, down -0.21%. Prices of A'Saffa Foods, Gulf Mushroom Products were up by 2.74%, 0.71% respectively. Prices of Construction Materials, Al Maha Ceramics, Al Anwar Ceramics, Galfar Engineering, Voltamp Energy were down by 4.41%, 1.85%, 0.76%, 0.64%, 0.57% respectively.

Services Index was up by 0.58% before closing at 2,949.88 points. Prices of OQ Gas Networks, Abraj Energy, Al Suwadi Power, Al Batinah Power were up by 4.55%, 2.26%, 0.54%, 0.54%, 0.54% respectively. Prices of Muscat Desalination, Ooredoo, Barka Desalination, Oman Telecom, Sembcorp Salalah were down by 1.10%, 0.62%, 0.59%, 0.50%, 0.39% respectively.– United Securities

OMAN STOCKS

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE

INDICES

Index	High	Low	Value	Prev . Value	Diff	Diff %
MSX 30 INDEX	7,374.65	7,333.58	7,349.10	7,334.80	14.30	0.19 %
FINANCIAL INDEX	13,076.12	12,933.18	12,945.93	12,989.83	-43.89	-0.34 %
Industry Index	9,439.73	9,410.94	9,412.34	9,431.86	-19.53	-0.21 %
Services Index	2,959.18	2,932.83	2,949.88	2,932.83	17.05	0.58 %
MSX Shariah Index	586.08	581.45	584.51	582.48	2.03	0.35 %
MSX TR INDEX	11,409.44	11,345.89	11,369.91	11,347.79	22.12	0.19 %
FINANCIAL TR IDX	16,076.41	15,900.67	15,916.35	15,970.31	-53.96	-0.34 %
INDUSTRIAL TR IDX	12,089.90	12,053.03	12,054.82	12,079.82	-25.01	-0.21 %
SERVICES TR IDX	3,964.74	3,929.44	3,952.28	3,929.44	22.84	0.58 %
FIXED INCOME INDEX	1,253.83	1,253.83	1,253.83	1,253.83	0.00	0.00 %

Trading Summary

Volume	Turnover	Trades	Market Cap	Up	Down	Equal	Sec. Traded
148,667,409	46,409,646	9,026	37,801,124,911	18	21	30	69

SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 5

REGULAR MARKET

ISIN	SECURITY NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR.	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF (RO)	DIFF %	LAST PR	LAST BID	LAST OFFER	PAR VALUE	MARKET CAP
OM0000009072	OQ GAS NETWORKS	30,893,046	6,250,098	1,805	0.198	0.208	0.198	0.207	0.198	0.009	4.545	0.207	0.198	0.207	0.100	896,439,151
OM0000002804	ASAFFA FOODS	77,081	57,802	6	0.731	0.751	0.731	0.750	0.730	0.020	2.740	0.750	0.700	0.750	0.100	90,000,000
OM0000008934	ABRAJ ENERGY SERVICES	5,264,405	1,891,018	699	0.354	0.369	0.354	0.362	0.354	0.008	2.260	0.362	0.360	0.362	0.100	278,812,400
OM0000001681	OMAN EMIRATES HO.	18,571	2,499	13	0.139	0.139	0.131	0.136	0.133	0.003	2.256	0.136	0.131	0.136	0.100	17,403,750
OM0000002374	UNITED FINANCE	33,111	2,947	4	0.089	0.089	0.089	0.089	0.088	0.001	1.136	0.089	0.089	0.089	0.100	31,695,330
OM0000001483	NATIONAL BANK OMAN	1,002,500	455,143	3	0.454	0.457	0.454	0.457	0.453	0.004	0.883	0.457	0.453	0.457	0.100	743,057,484
OM0000002267	GULF MUSHROOM PRODUCTS	2,827	1,188	3	0.420	0.423	0.420	0.423	0.420	0.003	0.714	0.423	0.420	0.423	0.100	21,294,825
OM0000003398	SOHAR INTERNATIONAL BANK	26,512,067	4,815,267	1,336	0.181	0.183	0.179	0.182	0.181	0.001	0.552	0.182	0.181	0.182	0.100	1,397,033,032
OM0000004933	AL SUWADI POWER	110,501	20,584	12	0.188	0.188	0.186	0.186	0.185	0.001	0.541	0.186	0.186	0.188	0.100	132,879,579
OM0000004925	ALBATINAH POWER	96,926	18,141	11	0.189	0.189	0.187	0.187	0.186	0.001	0.538	0.187	0.187	0.187	0.100	126,203,949
OM0000002226	ALJAZEERA SERVICES	4,925	1,256	1	0.255	0.255	0.255	0.255	0.254	0.001	0.394	0.255	0.252	0.270	0.100	10,924,963
OM0000001509	DHOFAR INTL DEVELOPMENT & INVEST	1,196	316	3	0.270	0.270	0.261	0.268	0.267	0.001	0.375	0.268	0.256	0.267	0.100	132,943,046
OM0000005963	PHOENIX POWER	736,722	198,410	70	0.272	0.274	0.268	0.268	0.267	0.001	0.375	0.268	0.266	0.268	0.100	391,977,191
OM0000001087	OMAN UNITED INSURANCE	2,099	661	3	0.315	0.315	0.315	0.315	0.315	0.000	0.000	0.315	0.312	0.315	0.100	33,075,000
OM0000001707	OMAN CABLES INDUSTRY	1,000	3,300	1	3.300	3.300	3.300	3.300	3.300	0.000	0.000	3.300	3.300	3.300	0.100	296,010,000
OM0000002176	JAZEERA STEEL PRODUCTS	1,000	838	1	0.838	0.838	0.838	0.840	0.840	0.000	0.000	0.838	0.838	0.840	0.100	104,914,286
OM0000002796	BANK MUSCAT	20,532,130	8,256,321	1,174	0.401	0.404	0.399	0.401	0.401	0.000	0.000	0.401	0.441	0.401	0.100	3,010,065,222
OM0000003125	GLOBAL FINANCIAL INVESTMENT HO.	2,316,113	684,648	26	0.300	0.305	0.290	0.300	0.300	0.000	0.000	0.300	0.296	0.330	0.100	60,000,000
OM0000003224	RENAISSANCE SERVICES	4,400	1,232	3	0.280	0.280	0.280	0.280	0.280	0.000	0.000	0.280	0.275	0.280	0.100	66,194,800
OM0000004420	BANK NIZWA	94,832	12,980	5	0.137	0.137	0.136	0.137	0.137	0.000	0.000	0.137	0.132	0.137	0.100	306,462,565
OM0000009759	OQ EXPLORATION AND PRODUCTION	21,592,622	9,576,817	436	0.447	0.449	0.439	0.447	0.447	0.000	0.000	0.447	0.444	0.447	0.010	3,576,000,000
OM0000010120	ASYAD SHIPPING	9,044,484	2,185,057	844	0.242	0.243	0.240	0.241	0.241	0.000	0.000	0.241	0.241	0.241	0.000	1,255,307,371
OM0000004735	SEMBCORP SALALAH	51,462	13,092	17	0.254	0.257	0.254	0.254	0.255	-0.001	-0.392	0.254	0.254	0.257	0.100	242,461,275
OM0000003026	OMAN TELECOM	4,776,448	6,770,655	306	1.410	1.422	1.403	1.403	1.410	-0.007	-0.496	1.403	1.403	1.269	0.100	1,052,250,000
OM0000003661	VOLTAMP ENERGY	3,196,892	562,642	34	0.176	0.176	0.175	0.175	0.176	-0.001	-0.568	0.175	0.171	0.176	0.010	175,000,000
OM0000008710	BARKA DESALINATION	220	37	1	0.169	0.169	0.169	0.169	0.170	-0.001	-0.588	0.169	0.158	0.169	0.100	12,763,218
OM0000003968	OOREDOO	51,350	16,621	14	0.325	0.325	0.323	0.323	0.325	-0.002	-0.615	0.325	0.325	0.325	0.100	210,254,986
OM0000002440	AL SHARQIYA INVESTMENT HO.	76,992	7,649	10	0.098	0.100	0.098	0.100	0.101	-0.001	-0.990	0.100	0.099	0.100	0.100	9,000,000
OM0000009908	OQ BASE INDUSTRIES (SFZ)	10,537,941	2,591,857	1,434	0.248	0.249	0.244	0.244	0.247	-0.003	-1.215	0.244	0.244	0.244	0.040	844,115,767
OM0000001533	OMINVEST	22,349	8,658	4	0.378	0.393	0.378	0.388	0.393	-0.005	-1.272	0.388	0.388	0.393	0.100	435,667,319
OM0000002549	BANK DHOFAR	927,220	198,245	31	0.217	0.220	0.212	0.212	0.215	-0.003	-1.395	0.212	0.212	0.215	0.100	644,437,289
OM0000004768	MADINA TAKAFUL	2,369,851	261,159	99	0.112	0.112	0.110	0.111	0.113	-0.002	-1.770	0.111	0.111	0.111	0.100	19,425,000
OM0000002077	AL OMANIYA FINANCIAL SERVICES	3,050	461	4	0.150	0.151	0.150	0.151	0.155	-0.004	-2.581	0.151	0.151	0.156	0.100	47,627,967
OM0000001772	ALANWAR INVESTMENT	7,100	1,350	2	0.199	0.199	0.190	0.190	0.200	-0.010	-5.000	0.190	0.189	0.209	0.100	58,426,809
Total	34	140,363,433	44,868,949	8,415												

Parallel Market

ISIN	SECURITY NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR.	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF (RO)	DIFF %	LAST PR	LAST BID	LAST OFFER	PAR VALUE	MARKET CAP
OM0000001590	MUSCAT FINANCE	34,383	2,221	3	0.064	0.065	0.064	0.065	0.063	0.002	3.175	0.065	0.059	0.065	0.100	19,964,511
OM0000004669	SHARQIYAH DESALINATION	5,555	933	2	0.168	0.168	0.168	0.168	0.165	0.003	1.818	0.168	0.168	0.168	0.100	16,430,763
OM0000011151	OMIFCO	7,053,377	1,368,155	439	0.193	0.195	0.193	0.194	0.193	0.001	0.518	0.194	0.194	0.194	0.000	1,297,738,750
OM0000001095	DHOFAR INSURANCE	300	102	1	0.340	0.340	0.340	0.340	0.340	0.000	0.000	0.340	0.340	0.000	0.100	39,559,336
OM0000001160	NATIONAL GAS	57,184	6,266	13	0.110	0.110	0.109	0.109	0.109	0.000	0.000	0.109	0.109	0.109	0.100	9,265,000
OM0000001897	MAJAN COLLEGE	5,000	655	1	0.131	0.131	0.131	0.131	0.131	0.000	0.000	0.131	0.131	0.133	0.100	12,969,000
OM0000002028	GULF INTERNATIONAL CHEMICALS	2,883	202	1	0.070	0.070	0.070	0.070	0.070	0.000	0.000	0.070	0.069	0.070	0.100	1,470,000
OM0000003265	NATIONAL DETERGENT	3,000	1,863	2	0.621	0.621	0.621	0.621	0.621	0.000	0.000	0.621	0.621	0.650	0.100	12,420,000
OM0000003711	SOHAR POWER	71	17	1	0.242	0.242	0.242	0.242	0.242	0.000	0.000	0.242	0.242	0.242	0.100	4,840,000
OM0000005260	OMAN ARAB BANK	185,980	49,651	20	0.267	0.267	0.266	0.266	0.266	0.000	0.000	0.266	0.265	0.266	0.100	532,729,727
OM0000007407	DHOFAR GENERATING	11,111	889	2	0.080	0.080	0.080	0.080	0.080	0.000	0.000	0.080	0.080	0.080	0.100	17,779,200
OM0000009569	JABAL REIF	8,400	872	5	0.104	0.104	0.103	0.103	0.103	0.000	0.000	0.103	0.103	0.111	0.100	17,922,000
OM0000010823	OMAN GATEWAY FUND	550	554	2	1.007	1.007	1.007	1.007	1.007	0.000	0.000	1.007	1.000	1.025	0.000	27,616,816
OM0000008868	THE PEARL REIF	600	107	2	0.181	0.181	0.179	0.179	0.180	-0.001	-0.556	0.179	0.180	0.180	0.100	105,867,202
OM0000003521	GALFAR ENGINEERING & CONTRACTING	6,500	1,008	4	0.155	0.156	0.155	0.156	0.157	-0.001	-0.637	0.156	0.142	0.172	0.100	31,665,886
OM0000002168	AL ANWAR CERAMIC	521,463	67,614	50	0.130	0.130	0.129	0.130	0.131	-0.001	-0.763	0.130	0.129	0.130	0.100	28,600,000
OM0000008447	OMAN REIT FUND	202,332	21,809	16	0.108	0.108	0.107	0.107	0.108	-0.001	-0.926	0.107	0.106	0.107	0.100	90,064,033
OM0000007084	MUSCAT CITY DESALINATION	1,511	136	1	0.090	0.090	0.090	0.090	0.091	-0.001	-1.099	0.090	0.090	0.000	0.100	13,999,536
OM0000004776	TAKAFUL OMAN	5,100	321	2	0.061	0.063	0.061	0.063	0.064	-0.001	-1.563	0.063	0.061	0.063	0.100	15,750,000
OM0000005005	ALMAHA CERAMICS	309	82	1	0.265	0.265	0.265	0.265	0.270	-0.005	-1.852	0.265	0.265	0.290	0.100	14,575,000
OM0000002275	SHELL OMAN MARKETING	1,180	931	4	0.800	0.800	0.770	0.770	0.800	-0.030	-3.750	0.770	0.770	0.800	0.100	73,150,000
OM0000001368	CONSTRUCTION MATERIAL INDUSTRIES	8,883	567	5	0.068	0.072	0.062	0.065	0.068	-0.003	-4.412	0.065	0.066	0.072	0.100	4,062,500
Total	22	8,115,672	1,524,955	577												

COMMUNITY-UPLIFTING INITIATIVE

Sohar International drives social, economic value via mass wedding sponsorship in Al Mudhaibi

MUSCAT: Continuing its support for community-uplifting initiatives, Sohar International announced its main sponsorship of the 8th mass wedding in Al Mudhaibi, which celebrated the marriage of 27 grooms from across the Sultanate of Oman and its resident community on 31 July.

Bringing people together in a powerful expression of national solidarity, the event strengthened social cohesion while generating a positive economic impact, with a total cost of OMR 50,000.

Through this sponsorship, Sohar International reaffirms its commitment to aligning with national efforts aimed at strengthening the foundations of Omani society, facilitating family formation, and easing marriage expenses for youth to build a stable community. This aligns with the bank's ethos, which was previously demonstrated by the introduction of its interest-free marriage loan as an innovative and accessible financing solution.

The mass wedding was held under the umbrella of the Social Committee in Wilayat Mudhaibi and Al Mudhaibi Club. The event featured an accompanying charity exhibition to support productive families, with the participation of over 20 (SMEs).

It also included performances of various folk and heritage arts, alongside honoring the grooms and sponsoring companies, And with the efforts of more than 300 volunteers from the wilayat.

In this regard, Abdul Qader Ahmed Al Sumali, Chief Retail & Wealth Management Officer at Sohar International, stated: "At Sohar International, we take immense pride in sponsoring initiatives that foster social solidarity, such as the 8th mass wedding. This stems from a deeply-rooted corporate vision through which we believe that social stability is the bedrock of economic prosperity. Our support for this event is a strategic investment aimed at easing the financial burden on young couples embarking on marriage. It also transforms these occasions into vital economic drivers that empower entrepreneurs and SMEs, while stimulating the services sector and related local markets.

"Through this, we reaffirm our deep commitment to the goals of Oman Vision 2040 in achieving sustainable development, embodying responsible corporate citizenship, and fostering community partnerships that value local grassroots efforts and support the nation's development journey."

Ahmed Alhabsi – Head of the mass Wadding added, stating: "Sohar International's sponsorship of this mass wedding exemplifies a model partnership between the banking sector and civil society organizations. With the total number of beneficiaries reaching 169 grooms since the initiative's inception in 2017, and a remarkable turnout exceeding 5500 well-wishers at this ceremony, it clearly underscores how effectively these community initiatives align with authentic Omani values and religious principles that call for facilitating marriage. This, in turn, yields sustainable positive impacts that contribute to family stability, social cohesion, and the nation's progress."

This sponsorship reflects the continuity of Sohar International's approach to supporting national initiatives, reaffirming its commitment to delivering value that extends beyond traditional banking toward meaningful partnerships aimed at strengthening the Sultanate's social fabric. This is achieved by building bridges of cooperation with various entities to empower individuals, instill the values of solidarity and synergy, and drive social development in alignment with national priorities focused on building a sustainable society.

By adopting this development-driven mindset, Sohar International continues to build impactful partnerships that blend the humanitarian dimension with developmental value. This falls within an integrated Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) vision aimed at creating a sustainable impact on society, while reinforcing the bank's role as an active national partner in supporting initiatives that contribute to achieving balanced development and elevating the quality of life.

RESERVE BANK OF INDIA

RBI keeps repo rate unchanged at 5.25%, lowers FY27 inflation forecast to 5%

NEW DELHI: The Reserve Bank of India's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) on Wednesday decided to keep the benchmark repo rate unchanged at 5.25 per cent while retaining its 'neutral' policy stance, citing the need for greater clarity on the inflation trajectory amid uncertainties surrounding the southwest monsoon, El Nino, geopolitics and global trade policy.

According to the Monetary Policy Statement by RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra, the central bank also retained the Standing Deposit Facility (SDF) rate at 5.0 per cent, while keeping the Marginal Standing Facility (MSF) rate and the bank rate unchanged at 5.5 per cent following the conclusion of its three-day meeting.

Malhotra said headline inflation is projected to increase, primarily due to supply-side pressures from food and fuel, while core inflation remains moderate and is expected to decline after peaking in the third quarter. He added that greater clarity is needed on the inflation trajectory and its composition before taking any policy action.

The RBI has projected Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation at 5.0 per cent for the current financial year, 10 basis points lower than its earlier estimate, with quarterly projections placed at 5.3 per cent in Q1, 4.7 per cent in Q2, 5.9 per cent in Q3 and 5.5 per cent in Q4. Core inflation for the financial year has been projected at 4.3 per cent.

The Governor said, "Core inflation, excluding precious metals is projected to be lower than core, although it is likely to align with core inflation towards the end of the financial year."

He said the rise in inflation in June was primarily driven by higher food and fuel prices, including fuel-induced inflation. Despite higher input costs, core inflation, excluding food and fuel, remained unchanged at 3.9 per cent in May and June.

Malhotra said the impact of El Nino on the temporal and spatial distribution of rainfall remains a major risk, while global oil prices have witnessed sharp two-way movements due to geopolitical developments, clouding the near-term inflation outlook. Although elevated inflationary pressures remain modest, he cautioned that second-round effects from higher food, fuel and other input costs could spill over into wider inflation.

On liquidity conditions, the Governor said, "Going ahead, the usual return of currency during the monsoon season, drawdown of government cash balances, and our special measures to attract capital inflows are expected to aid banking system liquidity in the near term."

He added, "Short-term money market rates, especially rates of commercial papers and certificates of deposit, moderated in July."

On agriculture, Malhotra said the outlook remains clouded by deficient and uneven southwest monsoon rainfall under El Nino conditions. However, reservoir levels remain close to normal, while government initiatives such as crop diversification, promotion of short-duration and climate-resilient crops, along with water harvesting and conservation measures, are expected to mitigate the adverse impact of deficient rainfall.

He added that while manufacturing could face cost pressures, increasing diversification of global supply chains should help cushion the impact.

The Governor further said supply-side pressures arising from the West Asia conflict had eased somewhat since June 2026, but the renewed escalation since the first week of July has increased volatility in energy prices and revived uncertainty over global supply chains. -ANI

WORLD BANK

AI benefits for developing countries outweigh risks

WASHINGTON: The World Bank has said that artificial intelligence could enable developing countries to achieve the equivalent of a century of development within a decade if they move quickly to improve electricity supplies, expand internet access and strengthen digital skills.

In a report released on Tuesday, the World Bank said emerging economies have greater opportunities than risks in benefiting from artificial intelligence, adding that AI is not expected to result in widespread job losses in these countries compared with high-income economies.

> Emerging economies have greater opportunities than risks in benefiting from AI, and AI is not expected to result in widespread job losses in these countries compared with high-income economies

The report noted that developing countries do not need large language models or massive investments. Instead, they can deploy low-cost AI applications tailored to local needs to improve healthcare, education, judicial services and agricultural extension.

It added that 14.2 percent of jobs in high-income countries are exposed to the effects of generative artificial intelligence, compared with 4.5 percent in low- and middle-income countries, while the expected productivity gains are broadly similar across both groups.

The World Bank urged governments to invest in digital infrastructure and energy, while warning of the risks of widening income inequality, the spread of misinformation and the misuse of artificial intelligence. It stressed that failing to seize this opportunity would impose a significant development cost on developing countries. -WAM

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Civil, project engineer (Indian Male) 10 yrs Oman experience in building construction having valid D/L looking for suitable opportunity. Contact: 76423164. Email : sjn112020@gmail.com

Sr. Plumbing and firefighting engineer (MEP) Indian male 12+ years of experience. Contact: 78407838, Email id-niyasniyas27@gmail.com

ENGINEER
Indian male 31, having Oman experience of 8 yrs(sales & project Engineer) with valid D/L. Contact : +968 75227433. nafeesnooruddin@gmail.com

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

Indian professional 11 yrs of GCC experience in sales, administration & logistics. Contact: 94536222, Email: abdullahonge5@gmail.com

Indian female, 23 yrs old, MBA (Marketing), currently in Oman, seeking opportunities in Marketing, sales, or business development. Available for immediate joining. Contact: +968 95849121

Russian strikes on Kyiv region kill at least 17, injure 44 others

Russian missiles tore through residential buildings and warehouses, part of an intensifying campaign against Ukraine's capital

KYIV: Russia launched a wave of missile attacks on the Ukrainian capital of Kyiv and its surrounding region early Wednesday, killing at least 17 and wounding 44, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said.

The attacks began after midnight with air raid sirens sounding across the capital for more than an hour. Ukraine's air force had earlier warned that ballistic missiles were incoming.

According to an air force report, Ukraine was unable to shoot down a single Russian missile during an overnight attack involving 115 drones and 28 high-speed missiles, including ballistic ones.

In his post on X, Zelenskyy said that "ballistic missile interceptors could have saved the lives of those killed today."

"It is very important that our partners understand that delays in supplying them, or an unwillingness to provide anti-ballistic systems, lead directly to such horrific casualties and destruction," he added

What do we know about the Russian strikes?

Kyiv's military administration said seven sites in the city were hit. The strikes damaged residential buildings and warehouses:

"The enemy is once again deliberately striking civilians and civilian infrastructure," it said on Telegram.

Mayor Vitali Klitschko said one warehouse near the city center was destroyed and rescue teams pulled two people from the debris. "There may still be people under the rubble," he wrote. "Search and rescue operations are proceeding."

Klitschko said early reports of a burning 20-story apartment building were inaccurate. But a large fire did break out on the edge of the city. Debris from a downed missile landed near a residential building.

The attack also caused an ammonia leak, which emergency crews worked to contain. Ukrainian air defense units worked to shoot down the incoming missiles.

Attack comes amid intensified Russian strikes on Kyiv

Russia has struck Kyiv several times in the past month.

On Saturday, Russian strikes on the capital and its suburbs killed 10 people and wounded more than 30. That same day, Ukrainian drones sank a Russian ship in the Black Sea.

Both sides have stepped up long-range strikes in recent weeks. Russia used more than twice as many missiles in July as before, according to an analysis by the French AFP news agency. Ukraine has also increased drone attacks on Russian oil, gas, and supply sites.

On Tuesday, strikes in the Moscow region killed five people and wounded 10 others. The attacks hit warehouses used by the Russian retailer Wildberries. Moscow's mayor said the city's air defenses shot down at least 10 drones on Wednesday.

Why does Ukraine want more Patriot interceptors?

Earlier, Zelenskyy has asked allies for more Patriot missile interceptors, saying the lack of these defenses "only encourages Russia to launch such attacks that take human lives." Zelenskyy met with US President Donald Trump last Tuesday to lobby Washington for licenses to build Patriot systems inside Ukraine. United Nations human rights monitors have raised concerns over increased civilian deaths in the war, which are now at their highest level since Russia's invasion began in February 2022.

Russia and Ukraine both deny targeting civilians in the war.

EU: Russia must pay for destruction it has caused

Meanwhile, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said, "Once again we wake up to the news of horrible atrocities by Russia through its aerial attacks on Ukraine."

In a post on X, she emphasized that Russia must pay for the destruction it has caused.

"And we are using the proceeds from the immobilised Russian assets to make sure it does," von der Leyen wrote, announcing hat the European Union will use €1.4 billion ($1.6 billion) in interest generated from frozen Russian assets to help Ukraine. The money came from interest on cash balances, which are part of the Russian central bank's assets that were frozen by the EU in the wake of Moscow's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. -DW

PROMOTIONAL EVENT

South Korea police raid Starbucks headquarters over 'tank day' fiasco

SEOUL: Police raided Starbucks' nation headquarters in South Korea on Wednesday, the company confirmed, after a controversial promotional event led to large protests and boycotts of the coffee chain across the country.

"The Seoul police raided the headquarters of Starbucks Korea on Wednesday morning as part of the ongoing investigation," said a spokesman for the Shinsegae Group, which operates Starbucks Korea.

What was the controversial promotion?

This past May, Starbucks advertised large to-go cups they called "tank tumblers" and seemed to refer to the Gwangju Uprising as "tank day."

On May 18, 1980, the ruling military junta violently put down a pro-democracy protest in the city of Gwangju. At least 165 civilians were killed when the army rolled tanks out into the streets to quell the demonstration. The Starbucks promotional event also appeared to allude to statements made by the government at the time to deny that they had tortured a student protest leader to death.

The backlash was swift, and led to protest and boycotts against the coffee giant in what is the company's third-largest market after the United States and China.

President Lee Jae Myung also expressed his outrage, and Shinsegae Group chairman Chung Yong-jin and Starbucks Korea CEO Son Jung-hyun resigned following a public apology.

What are police investigating?

Starbucks Korea said it conducted its own internal investigation into the matter and found no evidence of wrongdoing. However, the firm admitted that the inquiry had been hampered by, amongst other things, not being able to compel the people involved in planning the promotion to hand over their phones.

Police told the Yonhap agency they were looking for evidence that executives knowingly trivialised the 1980 massacre.-DW

BLOCK ACCESS

Turkish court orders X to block Imamoglu candidacy account

ISTANBUL: The social media platform X announced that it was complying with a Turkish court order to block access to the presidential candidacy account of imprisoned Istanbul Mayor Ekrem Imamoglu, which has around 225,700 followers.

According to a copy of the order posted by X on Wednesday, an Istanbul court ordered the platform to restrict access domestically to Imamoglu's account to protect national security and public order.

However, X said that it is challenging the order in court. "Although Türkiye's laws force us to comply with the order, we are challenging the order in court and, in the spirit of full transparency, are sharing the court order," it said.

Elon Musk has sought to portray X as a defender of free speech since taking control of the company in 2022 but he has drawn criticism for having done away with dedicated measures for content moderation.

In May 2025, Imamoglu's main X account, which had nearly 10 million followers, was blocked in Turkey under a similar order. At the time, X also filed a legal challenge against the order, arguing against the restriction.

"Our challenge against this order remains pending before the Constitutional Court, awaiting a decision following our recent legal filings," X said. Ekrem İmamoğlu, the popular former mayor of Istanbul, is the main political rival of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.-DW

SPANISH EXCLAVE OF CEUTA

Who is responsible for the Ceuta border surge?

MADRID: For a long time, the Moroccan government chose not to comment on the Ceuta border crisis that saw tens of thousands of migrants cross into the Spanish exclave.

It was not until Sunday that Moroccan interior ministry spokesperson Rachid El Khalfi said "the malicious exploitation of the digital space," "misleading information" and misinterpretations of a Spanish Supreme Court ruling were to blame for the incident.

Morocco has since said it never intended for the border surge to happen and has promised full cooperation with Spain.

Spain, however, was quick to suspect Moroccan involvement, with Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez calling the border breach an "attack on our territorial sovereignty." Videos have, after all, surfaced showing Moroccan security forces doing nothing to stop the crowd surging forward.

Efforts have been made to try and explain what caused the migrant crisis. Some have said Spain's recent rapprochement with Algeria may have angered Morocco, while others have speculated US influence may have played a role, although there is no reliable evidence to support the latter theory.

A complex situation

DW spoke with two analysts who caution against simplistic explanations. They do, however, ascribe different degrees of responsibility to Morocco for causing the crisis.

"I think the situation today is significantly different from what it was in 2021," says Isabelle Werenfels, a Maghreb regional expert at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP).

Back then, Morocco was interested in exerting foreign policy pressure on Spain over the Western Sahara dispute, she says. Today, Moroccowould have "a great deal to lose, above all, international credibility and investment" if found to have deliberately orchestrated the Ceuta migrant surge.

Jochen Oltmer, a migration researcher at the University of Osnabrück in Germany, also warns against jumping to conclusions, telling DW, "You have to keep in mind the many different interests at play."

He points to Ceuta's unique status as a European exclave on the African continent, decades of migration flows, the impact of social networks and the hopes of many migrants to build better lives abroad.

Oltmer says Moroccan authorities carry considerable responsibility for the Ceuta crisis, as "such a border crossing could never have taken place if the Moroccan side hadn't looked the other way." It was this inaction that made possible a border breach of this magnitude in the first place, he told DW.

Werenfels does not dispute this assessment. Yet she also believes Morocco may have wanted to send a political signal to Spain, perhaps over its recent rapprochement with Algeria and its decision to grant Spanish citizenship to individuals born in Western Sahara before September 1977.

"But there is a significant difference between making a political statement and orchestrating a migration surge on this scale," Werenfels says.

The expert thinks it is "unlikely" that Morocco had planned the latter, even though it cannot be ruled out, while stressing a lot of information remains extremely unclear.

Who bears responsibility?

There is some evidence to suggest that Morocco played a part in the border chaos to push its own political agenda, says Oltmer. For years, the country has viewed itself as an indispensable partner to the European Union in the context of migration policy, he says, adding that Morocco has repeatedly emphasized how much the bloc depends on its cooperation.

Yet the conflict over Western Sahara and Morocco's rivalry with Algeria also plays an important role, Oltmer explains. That is why he "ultimately cannot imagine that the recent events would have been possible without Morocco."

Werenfels advocates for a more nuanced analysis. She suspects it's possible that Morocco wanted to send a message but that matters got out of control.

Werenfels says it is hard to imagine that Morocco would want to risk a lasting rift with Spain and the EU.

This is all the more true given that Morocco will be hosting the next football World Cup together with Spain and Portugal and also depends on Spanish gas supplies. In 2025, one-quarter of Spain's total natural gas exports went to Morocco.

Even if Morocco had wanted to send a political message, that does not automatically mean that it deliberately orchestrated a migration surge of this magnitude, Werenfels says. Doing so would carry enormous political and economic risk.

No evidence of third-party involvement

Neither of the experts believes a third country played a part in the Ceuta border crisis. That said, Werenfels does entertain the possibility that other governments or political actors may have attempted to exploit the situation propagandistically for their own political interests and thereby may have amplified the crisis.

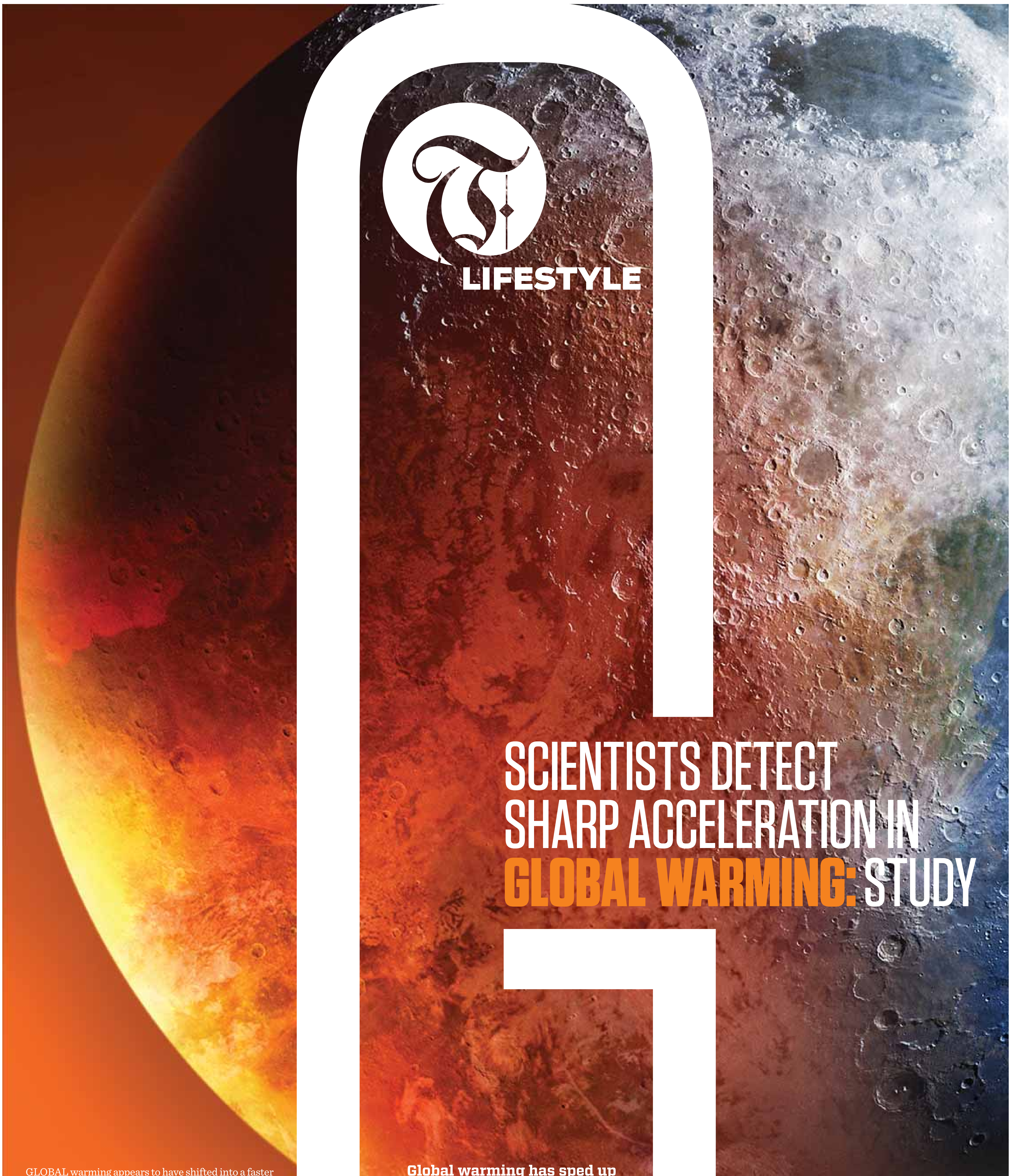
Werenfels also says it remains unclear how the situation escalated so quickly. There is much to suggest that news of an alleged border opening spread very quickly, prompting numerous young Moroccans to spontaneously set off for Ceuta. It is also possible that, given these circumstances, some Moroccan security personnel did not intervene.

Both scholars agree on the root causes of migration. "It's about hope and expectations for the future," says Oltmer. Moroccans have been emigrating for many decades, with family and friendship networks in Europe making it easier for people to risk moving abroad, he says.

Werenfels also points out social and economic factors driving emigration. She says that while Morocco had made progress in recent years, many young people are hardly seeing improvements in their everyday lives.

The scholar says Morocco's education and health care sectors show particularly significant shortcomings. This lack of prospects compels many to risk migrating abroad, Werenfels says.

Overall, both experts agree that the Ceuta migrant crisis was not brought about by a single political decision or conspiracy theory, for that matter. The incident instead resulted from the interplay of geopolitical tensions, migration policy agendas, and the often precarious circumstances of many young Moroccans. -DW



SCIENTISTS DETECT SHARP ACCELERATION IN GLOBAL WARMING: STUDY

Global warming has sped up since around 2015, according to a new analysis from the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK)

GLOBAL warming appears to have shifted into a faster gear. After removing the effects of El Nino, volcanic eruptions, and solar cycles, researchers found that the planet has warmed at roughly 0.35°C per decade over the past ten years, compared with just under 0.2°C per decade from 1970 to 2015.

According to the study published on the Science Daily website, the acceleration, which became visible around 2013 to 2015, appeared across five major global temperature datasets with more than 98% statistical certainty.

Global warming has sped up since around 2015, according to a new analysis from the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK).

After removing the effects of natural temperature swings, researchers found the first statistically significant evidence that the planet's long-term warming rate is accelerating.

Over the past decade, global temperatures have risen at an estimated pace of about 0.35°C per decade, depending on the dataset used. By comparison, the average warming rate from 1970 to 2015 was just under 0.2°C per decade.

The recent pace is higher than that of any previous decade since instrumental temperature records began in 1880. Scientists Isolate the Long-Term Warming Signal

"We can now demonstrate a strong and statistically significant acceleration of global warming since around 2015," says Grant Foster, a US statistics expert and co-author of the study, which was published today in the scientific journal Geophysical Research Letters as quoted in ScienceDaily.

"We filter out known natural influences in the observational data, so that the 'noise' is reduced, making the underlying long-term warming signal more clearly visible," Foster added.

In climate data, "noise" refers to short-term temperature changes that can temporarily hide or exaggerate the underlying trend. El Nino, for example, can push global temperatures higher for a limited period by releasing heat from the tropical Pacific Ocean into the atmosphere.

Volcanic eruptions can have the opposite effect by sending particles into the atmosphere that reflect sunlight, while changes in the Sun's activity can also produce smaller temperature variations. To separate these temporary influences from the broader warming trend, the researchers analysed measurements from five widely used global temperature data sets (NASA, NOAA, HadCRUT, Berkeley Earth, ERA5).

"The adjusted data show an acceleration of global warming since 2015 with a statistical certainty of over 98 per cent, consistent across all data sets examined and independent of the analysis method chosen," explains Stefan Rahmstorf, PIK researcher and lead author of the study, as quoted in ScienceDaily.

Warming acceleration appears across five datasets

A statistical certainty of more than 98 per cent means the researchers found strong evidence that the change in the warming rate is real rather than the result of random variation in the data.

The same overall pattern appeared in all five temperature records, even though the datasets are produced by different scientific organisations and use somewhat different methods.

After the researchers adjusted for El Nino and the solar maximum, the extreme warmth of 2023 and 2024 was reduced slightly in the analysis. Even so, both years remained the two warmest since instrumental records began. Across all of the datasets, the acceleration started to become visible in 2013 or 2014. The researchers describe the broader shift as beginning around 2015, when the evidence became clearer.

Two statistical methods point to the same shift

To determine whether the warming rate had changed since the 1970s, the team used two statistical approaches. The first was a quadratic trend analysis, which tests whether the temperature curve is bending upward over time rather than rising at a constant rate.

The second was a piece-wise linear model. This method divides the temperature record into separate periods and objectively identifies when the rate of warming appears to change. Both approaches supported the conclusion that global warming has accelerated.

The research was designed to detect and measure the statistical acceleration, not to determine exactly why it has occurred.

However, the authors noted that climate models can produce periods in which warming speeds up. In other words, an increasing rate of warming is consistent with the range of behaviour represented in current climate modelling. Climate models are computer simulations that use the laws of physics to estimate how the atmosphere, oceans, ice, and land respond to greenhouse gases and other influences. They do not predict every short-term fluctuation perfectly, but they help scientists evaluate long-term climate patterns and possible future changes.

1.5°C Threshold Could Be Exceeded Before 2030

"If the warming rate of the past 10 years continues, it would lead to a long-term exceedance of the 1.5°C limit of the Paris Agreement before 2030," says Stefan Rahmstorf.

"How quickly the Earth continues to warm ultimately depends on how rapidly we reduce global CO_2 emissions from fossil fuels to zero," added Stefan Rahmstorf as quoted on the ScienceDaily website.

The 1.5°C limit refers to the goal of restricting long-term global warming to 1.5°C above preindustrial temperatures. A single year above that level does not by itself mean the Paris Agreement threshold has been permanently crossed. Scientists generally focus on sustained warming over a longer period. The findings suggest that Earth may now be warming considerably faster than it did during the final decades of the 20th century. Whether that acceleration continues will depend heavily on future carbon dioxide emissions from coal, oil, and natural gas. - ANI

De Minaur wins all-Aussie clash against Duckworth in Montreal

The third-seed was made to work hard by a fellow countryman before advancing to the third round of the ATP Montreal Masters

MONTREAL: Alex de Minaur blew through the opening set but needed some good luck in the second to emerge with a 6-2, 7-6 (8/6) opening win over James Duckworth on Tuesday at the ATP Montreal Masters.

De Minaur, seeded third, hasn't lost to a fellow Aussie in four years, but his 86th-ranked compatriot made him work hard to keep that streak alive.

The second-round match turned in an instant in the second-set tie-breaker when a return which rolled off the top of the net handed de Minaur a match point after he saved six set points for his opponent. "A little bit of luck went my way in the tiebreaker," de Minaur said. "He was hitting me off the court in the second set, but I got lucky and managed to sneak away with the tiebreaker.

"Ultimately it was a lot of fighting and competing," added de Minaur, the 2023 runner-up in Canada who married British WTA player Katie Boulter last month.

In other second-round action, China's Shang Juncheng — only just returned from months away because of injury — scored the first notable upset of the week with 7-5, 4-6, 7-6 (7/5) defeat of 10th seed Andrey Rublev.

Shang saved five match points on his way to the third round, breaking Rublev as he served for the match at 5-3 in the third and hanging on to win a seven-deuce service game.

Tsitsipas' Buddhist philosophy

Former world No.3 Stefanos Tsitsipas regained some of the touch lost during a recent rankings slump, with the high-profile qualifier dispatching Martin Damm 6-4, 6-4 in a first-round match delayed by rain.

The 98-minute victory sends Tsitsipas into a match with Brazilian Joao Fonseca.

The 53rd-ranked Tsitsipas, winner last month in Gstaad, said that his latest coaching split from his father, Apostolos, is paying off.

"It's a chapter that should have started a long time ago," Tsitsipas said. "I guess I was too patient with my time and too nice with handling certain things, to take so much time to proceed with the change. But it's how life works.

"Certain things come at a certain time, I'm very Buddhist in that sort of philosophy."

The Greek claimed the opening set against Damm and came back from a break down in the second to earn a 5-2 lead and the chance to serve it out.

Damm managed to break back before Tsitsipas clinched the victory two games later.

Hubert Hurkacz, a 2022 finalist in Montreal who is coming back from a knee injury suffered at Wimbledon, beat Marcos Giron 7-5, 4-6, 6-2.

Britain's Jakob Fearnley, who reached the final of a hard court Challenger last month, advanced past French veteran Adrian Mannarino 7-6 (7/3), 6-4, overcoming more than 30 unforced errors to book a meeting with 13th seeded Czech Jakub Mensik.

Fellow Brit Jack Draper shed bitter tears as his latest injury comeback collapsed in a 6-3, 2-6, 6-2 loss to France's Terrance Atmane, who delivered an ace on match point.

Draper, who had not played a match since Eastbourne in June, was consoled at the net by his victorious opponent.

It was more disappointment for Draper after he and new coach Andy Murray travelled to last week's Washington event only for Draper to withdraw as an existing arm injury flared up.

Canadian Denis Shapovalov, who reached the final in Los Cabos at the weekend, was disappointed to retire with an ankle injury to hand a 4-6, 6-4, 3-0 victory to Zachary Svajda. - Agencies

Alcaraz withdraws from Cincinnati Open

CINCINNATI: Carlos Alcaraz withdrew on Tuesday from the Cincinnati Open because of a lingering right wrist injury that has sidelined him since April.

The No. 2-ranked Spaniard was hoping to return to defend his title in the hard-court tournament, which serves as an important warmup for the US Open.

"We know Carlos is doing everything he can to get back to playing tournaments as soon as possible," tournament director Bob Moran said in a statement.

"We wish him the best with his recovery and look forward to welcoming him back to Cincinnati in the future."

Alcaraz last played at the Barcelona Open, then missed the French Open and the entire grass-court season, including Wimbledon.

He is entered in the US Open, where he is the defending champion. Recent photos and videos on social media have shown the seven-time Grand Slam winner on the practice courts, so it was thought he would be ready to play in the Cincinnati event that begins August 11. - Agencies

TORONTO OPEN

Sabalenka eases past qualifier Uchijima

TORONTO: World No.1 Aryna Sabalenka returned to her hard court comfort zone with a 6-3, 6-3 victory over Japanese qualifier Moyuka Uchijima in the WTA 1000 in Toronto on Tuesday.

It was a solid start for Sabalenka in her bid to bounce back after falling in the quarter-final at Roland Garros and in the round of 16 at Wimbledon. The Belarusian star has dominated on hard courts this year and on Tuesday notched her 24th win in 25 matches on the surface. The lone defeat was her loss to Elena Rybakina in the Australian Open final.

Now she's eyeing a North American hard court run that could include a three-peat at the US Open, the final Grand Slam of the year that starts on August 30 in New York. "I'm happy with the performance, I'm happy with the fight," Sabalenka said after her second-round opener. "I knew going into this match I might struggle a little bit after a little break, but I was ready for that. "I'm happy that mentally and physically I was ready to go."

In the third round she'll face China's Zhang Shuai, who was leading Jelena Ostapenko 6-0, 4-0 when the Latvian retired from their match.

Pretty physical

Former world No.1 Iga Swiatek survived some nervy moments to launch her US Open build-up with a 6-0, 6-3 victory over Sara Bejlek.

In her first match since her Wimbledon title defence ended with a third-round exit, Poland's seventh-seeded Swiatek was rolling through the first nine games, appearing in total control with a double-break for a 3-0 lead in the second. But her Czech opponent dug in and disrupted Swiatek's rhythm, winning two straight games before Swiatek pulled off a great escape — fending off nine break points in a 22-minute sixth game to hold serve for a 4-2 lead.

Iga Swiatek bounced back from nervy moments to complete a 6-0, 6-3 win. "I'm happy that I stayed in the game and stayed solid because I felt at the end it got pretty physical," Swiatek said.

Swiatek has slipped from third in the world at this time last year to her current eighth.

Eighth-seeded American Amanda Anisimova reached the third round by walkover when scheduled opponent Lanlana Tararudee of Thailand withdrew because of illness. Ninth-seeded Ukrainian Elina Svitolina rallied from a set and a break down to beat Spain's Jessica Bouzas Maneiro 6-7 (5/7), 7-6 (7/4), 6-4.

And 10th-seeded Ukrainian Marta Kostyuk, who reached the semi-final at Roland Garros and Wimbledon, shook off a slow start to beat Canadian wild card Katherine Sebov 7-6 (7/4), 6-0.

Recovering Raducanu to miss US Open

Emma Raducanu will miss the US Open as she continues her recovery from a stress fracture.

The British No.1 suffered the injury to her right lower leg during the grass-court season and made a late decision to pull out of Wimbledon.

The 2021 US Open champion will now sit out this year's event at Flushing Meadows, which begins on August 23. The decision was made after the 23-year-old's latest consultations with her medical team. She had only recently stepped back on court wearing a protective boot. - Agencies

MAIDEN WTA TITLE

'Most exciting player' Eala shows 'Filipino heart' to make history

WASHINGTON: As the umpire called the winning point, Alexandra Eala collapsed to the ground in tears - knowing her country had been with her for every step of the tournament.

She overcame weather delays, and the loss of the first set, to defeat world number three Jessica Pegula in the Washington Open final, becoming the first Filipina to win a WTA title.

"To the Filipino community, here in DC and back home, wherever you are in the world. I really feel all the love."

Even Pegula was impressed by the turnout on Monday, for the continuation of Sunday's final.

"I can definitely confirm this is the best Monday final crowd I've seen," the American said. "I'm sure some people took off work. I won't tell them where you guys were."

Former world No.1 Rafael Nadal, whose academy Eala graduated from, congratulated her on the win, writing on X: "A well-deserved title for all the hard work."

Eala lost just three games once the final resumed on Monday

Despite only being 21 years old, this has been a long time coming for Eala.

She first started playing at the age of four, saying: "I went to train every day after school with my ruffled socks, light-up shoes and chubby cheeks."

Going on to join Nadal's tennis academy, she had the opportunity to train with the 22-time Grand Slam champion.

She graduated from there in 2023, having her diploma presented to her by the world No.1 at the time, Iga Swiatek.

Three years later, Eala knocked the Pole out of Wimbledon - becoming the first player from the Philippines to reach the fourth round of a Grand Slam in the Open era. Her improvement has been visible, beating the top three seeds at the Washington Open.

After defeating third seed Naomi Osaka, Pegula described the world number 20 as "the future of the tour".

'Our new champion'

In 2022, Eala was on the cover of Vogue Philippines after becoming the first Filipina to win a junior Grand Slam title.

But it was her victory over Swiatek in the quarter-finals of the Miami Open in 2025, that brought a new passion for tennis to the Philippines.

There has been a lot of love for the young star from her community, with queues to see her play growing and fans following her all over the world.

There are more than 75,000 members of the Filipino community in Washington, with a further four million across the US who will be watching her in the US Open in late August.

"To all the Filipino fans that came out and have supported, you guys are helping grow tennis around the world," Pegula said after the match. Fellow Filipino and former boxing champion, Manny Pacquiao, wrote on social media that her comeback showed the "heart of a Filipino" before calling her "our new champion".

Former British No.1 Greg Rusedski has hailed Eala as "the most exciting player on the WTA Tour". "She is fearless, she takes the ball early, she is a lefty," he said on his podcast Off Court With Greg Rusedski. "Her mentality is so good and so strong."

"The one area she needs in her game to win a major is to get that serve a bit better and more powerful. "Maybe next year if she can get that improvement on the serve then she's definitely in the mix [for a major] because the rest of her game is there."

US Open champion and former world number one Andy Roddick described her as "the real deal". "She is just not scared to go against the top players," he said. - Agencies

Mo Salah given hero's welcome before his move to Trabzonspor

The Egyptian legend scored just seven Premier League goals in his final season at Liverpool

ISTANBUL: Turkish club Trabzonspor are set to confirm the signing of Mohamed Salah as the Egypt captain was mobbed by fans on his arrival in Turkiye.

Hundreds of fans gathered outside Ataturk Airport in Istanbul on Wednesday as Salah emerged wearing Trabzonspor colours before engaging with the excited crowd. The 34-year-old forward left Liverpool at the end of last season after nine years on Merseyside, scoring 257 goals.

It is unclear what Salah will earn at Trabzonspor, but as he is a free agent, the Super Lig club will have been able to commit more of their budget towards Salah's wages.

Salah, who has scored 50 Champions League goals, will play European football with Trabzonspor next season after they finished third, eight points behind champions Galatasaray.

If they fail to progress to the league phase of the Europa League via the play-offs, they will drop down to the Conference League.

Salah became Liverpool's highest earner in their history when he signed a reported £400,000-a-week contract in April 2025. Nicknamed the Black Sea Storm, Trabzonspor have won seven league titles, six of which came between 1976 and 1984. In 2022, they claimed their most recent league success, ending a 38-year wait.

Based in the north-eastern city of Trabzon, they are one of only six teams to have won the Turkish Super Lig.

Salah's signing will go down as the club's biggest as he joins former Liverpool striker Daniel Sturridge and former Arsenal winger Nicolas Pepe in donning the claret and sky blue shirt.

He helped the Liverpool to win two Premier League titles, the Champions League, the Club World Cup, UEFA Super Cup, FA Cup and two EFL Cups.

During his time in England, the Egyptian won the Premier League Golden Boot on four occasions and was named the Professional Footballers' Association player of the year three times - in 2018, 2022 and 2025. But despite scoring 29 goals and making 18 assists in Liverpool's 2024-25 title-winning season, Salah's minutes diminished the following campaign after a falling out with former Reds head coach Arne Slot.

Salah fever takes over Turkiye

Since announcing he would be leaving Liverpool a year before his two-year contract extension ended, the football world has been wondering where he would next be playing.

After a successful World Cup campaign where Egypt reached the round of 16 for the first time before narrowly losing to Argentina, Salah was reported to be close to an agreement with a different Turkish club, Besiktas.

With a deal breaking down reportedly because of finances, Salah reached an agreement instead with Trabzonspor.

The Turkish side took to their social media on Tuesday night to tease the arrival of Salah with the Pyramids being shown on a video next to Papara Park.

But, following swiftly was another post stating "negotiations had begun" between Salah and Trabzonspor before showing how Salah's Wednesday flight into Istanbul could be tracked.

"Trabzon, are you ready? See you very soon," he said in a video onboard a private jet and posted on social media.

Trabzonpor's flight tracking came in handy as a huge amount of fans gathered outside the airport to welcome Salah, who was greeted like a movie star. As one of sport's biggest global stars, this transfer for Trabzonspor is huge.

Their current squad includes on-loan Manchester United goalkeeper Andre Onana, as well as a couple of Cape Verde's World Cup stars in Wagner Pina and Sidny Lopes Cabral.

The official announcement of negotiations to the Istanbul stock market saw Trabzonspor shares rise 6.5%. - Agencies

SPAIN HERO

World Cup hero Torres throws first pitch at Yankee Stadium

NEW YORK: Ferran Torres, who scored the winning goal for Spain in the World Cup final last month, threw out the ceremonial first pitch at Yankee Stadium on Tuesday night.

Wearing a white Yankees jersey with the No. 7, Torres threw his pitch from in front of the mound to infielder José Caballero, a noted fan of Torres' Barcelona.

"Not too much to be honest, but I just want to enjoy the game," Torres said when asked what he knows about the Yankees. "I see some of the players and I wish them the best of luck."

Torres is negotiating a transfer to Paris Saint-Germain after scoring 16 goals for Barcelona last season. He has one year remaining on his contract and has scored 41 goals in 140 games during five seasons with Barcelona after spending two seasons with Manchester City of the Premier League and three with Valencia of La Liga.

Torres declined to discuss the potential transfer Tuesday. During an appearance on NBC's "Today" show on Monday, Torres addressed the situation by saying: "Barça have to show they love me. They can come and negotiate, and in the end, everything will be discussed.

"Whenever (teams like PSG) want you, it's a good thing. I have a contract with Barça.

"It's true that in football you never know what might happen, but the good thing is that, since I have a contract, I can wait and decide for myself."

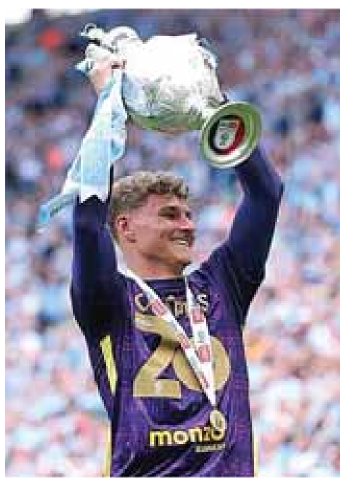
Torres was a second-half substitute in Spain's 1-0 victory over Argentina in the World Cup final and scored in the 106th minute. He pounced on a bouncing ball in the box and used his left foot to bury a shot just under the crossbar.

"To be honest my life has changed a little bit, but I feel very grateful," Torres said. - Agencies

PREMIER LEAGUE

Arsenal ready to sign Newcastle's Guimaraes

LONDON: Arsenal are set to complete their protracted move for Newcastle United captain Bruno Guimaraes.



BBC Sport reported earlier that Guimaraes was expected to move to the Premier League champions following a breakthrough in talks.

And a full agreement is now almost done, with Guimaraes waiting for permission to leave Newcastle's training base in La Manga, in Spain, to finalise the formalities of his move to Emirates Stadium.

The Gunners are now making preparations for the Brazil midfielder's medical this week. There is no confirmation of a fee but sources are indicating it could reach £80m.

Guimaraes, who joined Newcastle from Lyon in 2022, has made clear his intention to join Arsenal as the 28-year-old has emerged as Mikel Arteta's first-choice central midfield target.

Newcastle and Arsenal have been discussing the finer terms of the deal this week with a final agreement now considered a formality. Guimaraes has appeared 48 times for Brazil.

Coventry signs goalie Rushworth

Newly-promoted Coventry City signed Brighton goalkeeper Carl Rushworth in a deal worth a reported club record 22.5 million euros (30 million dollars) on Tuesday.

Rushworth enjoyed a successful loan spell at Coventry during the club's promotion-winning campaign last season.

The 25-year-old made 46 appearances in the Championship and kept 17 clean-sheets as Coventry won the second tier title, convincing boss Frank Lampard to sign him on a permanent basis.

So many emotions

"I'm really happy, there's so many emotions, said Rushworth, who has signed a "long-term" contract with Coventry.

"There's excitement, I can finally relax knowing it's done and that I'm back with the boys and at a club I loved being at.

"I'm excited to have this new challenge in the Premier League and to be able to call this place home is a big thing I've been looking forward to."

Lampard added: "It's great to have Carl back with us on a permanent basis.

"He's a top professional, a great character and he had a huge impact on the team to help us get promoted last season." - Agencies

CAPE VERDE GOALKEEPER

Vozinha granted shirt name exemption by Chile FA

SANTIAGO: The Chilean Football Federation (ANFP) has granted an exemption to allow Cape Verde goalkeeper Vozinha to wear his nickname on his Colo Colo shirt. The 40-year-old signed a six-month contract with the Chilean Liga de Primera side on Monday after garnering global acclaim for his performances at the World Cup.

Under league rules, he is required to play under his legal name Josimar Jose Evora Dias, with ANFP regulations stating "nicknames, appellations or sobriquets will not be permitted" on playing shirts.

However, Colo Colo have successfully secured permission for him to play under his famous moniker, which means 'little granny' in Portuguese. "It is the name I have used my entire life," Vozinha said in a news conference. "In Cape Verde, it holds great significance and a rich history, and now it does globally as well.

"If my grandmother were alive today, I think she would be proud. I hope to keep using it for the rest of my career as a tribute."

Vozinha arrived in Santiago on Sunday to a lively reception from Colo Colo's fans and joined his new team-mates in training two days later. The veteran goalkeeper became a cult hero when Cape Verde claimed their first-ever World Cup point against Spain in the group stage and has seen his social media fame explode from 50,000 Instagram followers to nearly 30 million. After helping his team reach the knockout stages, taking finalists Argentina to extra time in the last 32, Vozinha was named in FIFA's team of the tournament and even had a newly discovered species of sea slug named after him.

Vozinha's career has taken him to Slovakia, Angola, Moldova, Cyprus and, most recently, Portuguese second division side Chaves, but he has always believed himself to be a "'big club' player".

Joining Colo Colo, the most successful team in the Primera Division (34 titles) and Copa Chile (14), is his career "highlight".

"The decision was very clear. Despite playing in smaller leagues for clubs that weren't exactly giants, deep down I always told myself I was a 'big club' player," Vozinha said. "So when Colo Colo came calling, there was no doubt. From day one, I knew where I wanted to play. I received many offers but Colo Colo was always the priority.

"The World Cup was the best thing that ever happened to me in football, but that is in the past now. Being here representing Colo Colo - a massive club with a rich history - is the highlight of my club career." - Agencies

Bank Muscat connects visitors of Muscat and Salalah through innovative interactive experience & brings attractive Khareef offers

The innovative "Khareef Portal" interactive screens have attracted significant interest and engagement from visitors across all segments of society, delivering a unique experience that connects the Governorates of Muscat and Dhofar through a live, real-time broadcast between the bank's booths at Oman Mall and Uptown Salalah

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in Oman, continues to offer interactive activities and exclusive banking promotions as part of its Khareef Dhofar campaign.

The innovative "Khareef Portal" interactive screens have attracted significant interest and engagement from visitors across all segments of society, delivering a unique experience that connects the Governorates of Muscat and Dhofar through a live, real-time broadcast between the bank's booths at Oman Mall and Uptown Salalah. The initiative has enabled visitors at both locations to experience the atmosphere of the Khareef season and follow activities taking place simultaneously. The launch of the interactive screens reflects Bank Muscat's commitment to leveraging modern technology to enhance visitor experiences while showcasing the Sultanate of Oman's rich tourism attributes.

Alongside the interactive activities, Bank Muscat's sales team continue to welcome visitors, answer their enquiries and introduce them to the Bank's key banking solutions, products and exclusive promotional offers. These include special offers as part of the Bank's loyalty programme, Bank Muscat Rewards, when customers use Bank Muscat credit cards at restaurants and cafés with a Bank Muscat POS machine across Dhofar Governorate. Valid until 31st of August, the Food & Beverage (F&B) offer allows customer to earn upto 2x reward points, encouraging customers to make the most of their credit cards during the Khareef season. Visitors will also learn about the benefits available when applying for new Bank Muscat credit cards, including the opportunity to enter a prize draw to win an Apple Watch or an iPhone, subject to meeting the required spending criteria, with the promotion running until 30 September. In addition, the team will highlight the Bank's dedicated financing offer for electric vehicles, reflecting Bank Muscat's commitment to encouraging sustainable mobility solutions.

This offer includes a preferential interest rate, a special "Khareef Dhofar" edition vehicle registration plate offered in collaboration with the Royal Oman Police, and a waiver of the first year's credit card annual fee for customers applying for electric vehicle financing by 15 September. This initiative forms part of Bank Muscat's ongoing commitment to supporting the adoption of sustainable mobility solutions.

The bank's booths at both venues continue to receive a steady stream of visitors, who have enjoyed a variety of digital experiences, entertainment activities and competitions, in addition to interacting live with visitors in Muscat and Salalah. This has created a distinctive experience that strengthens connections between the two cities and brings the unique atmosphere of the Dhofar Khareef season to audiences across Oman, reflecting the Sultanate's growing position as a tourism destination that embraces innovation and technology to deliver exceptional visitor experiences. The two booths have also attracted visitors of all ages through a programme of interactive activities, family entertainment, competitions and dedicated experiences for children, while giving the public the opportunity to follow events taking place at the other location in real time. The interactive activities will continue until the 17 August.

The success of Bank Muscat's Khareef Dhofar activities builds on the Bank's role as a national partner in supporting initiatives that contribute to the growth of the tourism sector and advance the objectives of Oman Vision 2040. Through this interactive experience, the Bank has helped showcase the unique natural, cultural and tourism assets of Dhofar Governorate, while fostering greater community engagement with the Khareef season and supporting national efforts to attract more visitors, further reinforcing the Sultanate of Oman's position as a leading tourism destination at both the regional and international levels.

HIGH-PERFORMANCE HATCHBACK

Toyota GR Yaris brings motorsport DNA to Oman's roads

MUSCAT: Toyota GR Yaris, the rally-bred high-performance hatchback, continues to turn heads on the roads of Oman, bringing genuine motorsport DNA to everyday driving.

Developed with the expertise of the Toyota GAZOO Racing World Rally Team, the force behind Toyota's five consecutive FIA WRC manufacturers' championships, the GR Yaris stands as the brand's first model built with a "motorsport-first" approach, refined through the rigorous demands of the Super Taikyu Series and the Japanese Rally Championship to deliver unmatched confidence and control on every road.

Power built for the win

Under the hood lies a 1.6-litre inline three-cylinder turbo engine (G16E-GTS) that delivers 296 HP and 400 Nm of torque. Drivers can choose between two transmission options — an 8-speed Direct Automatic Transmission (DAT) for rapid, seamless shifting, or a six-speed intelligent manual transmission (iMT) for a more direct, mechanical connection. Power is managed by the GR-FOUR full-time 4WD system with an electronically controlled multi-plate clutch and three selectable modes, ensuring optimal traction and stability across diverse road surfaces.

Aero performance package

The Aero Performance Package enhances aerodynamic efficiency through six precision-engineered components, including a ducted aluminum hood for improved cooling, a front lip spoiler to reduce lift, fender ducts to sharpen steering response, a variable rear wing for high-speed stability, rear bumper ducts to minimize drag, and a fuel-tank undercover that smooths underbody airflow.

A driver-focused cockpit, built light

Inside, the GR Yaris features a driver-focused cockpit available in a sporty Black x Red theme or a minimalist Full Black option. Its lightweight body, featuring an aluminum hood, doors and rear hatch, along with a carbon-fiber-reinforced plastic (CFRP) roof, ensures a low center of gravity and superior handling. Safety is supported by Toyota Safety Sense, which includes the Pre-Collision System (PCS), Dynamic Radar Cruise Control (DRCC), Lane Tracing Assist (LTA), as well as Blind Spot Monitor (BSM) and Rear Cross-Traffic Alert (RCTA).

The GR Yaris is available in five distinctive colors, including Platinum White Pearl Mica, Precious Black and Emotional Red, giving performance enthusiasts across Oman a genuine rally-bred machine built for the road.

10:38
Times OF OMAN
'SERIOUS NEGOTIATIONS NOW NEEDED FOR A LASTING PEACE'
The 'Workable' Peace – Diplomacy or a Tactical Trap?
OMR3.3bn investments in logistics
TO CONTINUE READING THE FULL EDITION, PLEASE
FOLLOW
OUR OFFICIAL
WHATSAPP
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Eshhar
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