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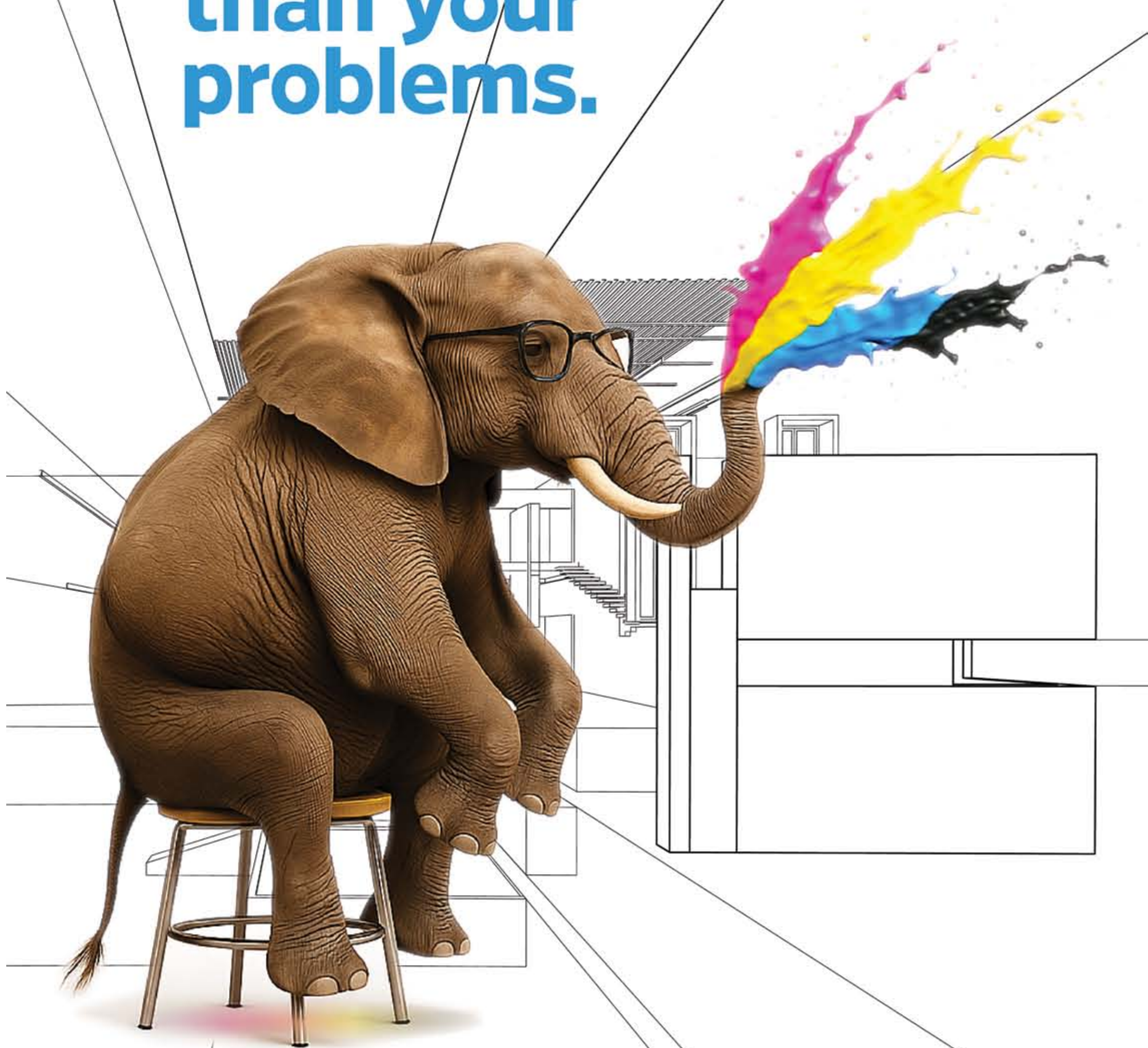
Showrooms: **Qurum 96620435, Sohar 96620475, Salalah 96629050**
Sales Centres : **Mawaleh 97888180, Nizwa 96628940, Ibri 96628930,**
Barka 96629010, Sur 96628920

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COMMENTARY

How Oman’s Cybercrime Law Safeguards Private and Family Life

The Cybercrime Law issued under Royal Decree 61/2026 introduces detailed provisions on invasion of online privacy, addressing conduct committed through websites, information systems, or information technology means that violates the sanctity of private or family life. Speaking exclusively to the Times of Oman, Dr. Mohammed Ibrahim Al Zadjali, Chairman of Mohammed Ibrahim Law Firm, explained that “the law prohibits eavesdropping, intercepting, recording, transferring, transmitting, or disclosing conversations, communications, or audio or video materials, and also forbids taking, transmitting, revealing, copying, or retaining



photographs or video footage of others.” “These protections extend to online publications, making it an offence to publish news, electronic images, pho-



tographs, audio or video clips, comments, data, or information, even if true and accurate, with the intention of harming another person. The law also prohibits

taking, transmitting, or publishing photographs of the injured, the deceased, or victims of accidents and disasters without the permission or consent of those concerned,” he said. “Privacy safeguards further cover geographical location data, as tracking, monitoring, disclosing, transmitting, revealing, copying, or retaining another person’s location done with the intention of violating the sanctity of their private or family life is a punishable act. The law similarly criminalises modifying audio recordings, videos, or images of a third party with the intention of defaming, harming, or portraying that person in a way prejudicial to honour or dignity,” Dr. Al Zadjali noted.

He stated that “special protection is given to children under 15 and domestic workers by prohibiting their exploitation as negative media content, or the publication of material promoting violence or excessive terror directed at children. Violations of these provisions carry imprisonment ranging from 03 months to 03 years and a fine from OMR 1,000 to OMR 5,000, or either penalty.” “He concluded by stating that these provisions reflect Oman’s commitment to protecting individuals’ privacy, honour, and dignity against violations committed through websites, information systems, and other information technology means, strengthening the legal frame-

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

Oman, Turkiye explore investment opportunities in urban projects

The visit featured an intensive programme of government meetings, investment discussions and field visits designed to expand economic partnerships and attract high-quality investments



private sector companies. The delegation’s field visits provided first-hand insight into Turkiye’s experience in city development, urban regeneration, mixed-use developments, waterfront projects and tourism destinations.

The visits enabled the delegation to examine best practices in urban planning, project implementation and community management, supporting knowledge transfer and the application of successful international models in Oman’s urban development projects.

Ali bin Mohammed Al Lawati, Chairman of the Real Estate Development Committee at the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said the visit represented a strategic step toward strengthening economic and investment ties between Oman and Turkiye. He noted that it opened new avenues for cooperation between private sector companies in both countries and would support the implementation of urban projects through the exchange of expertise.

Al Lawati added that the visit offered valuable exposure to advanced Turkish models in real estate and urban development, emphasising that Turkiye’s experience demonstrates how the real estate sector can serve as an economic driver that stimulates growth in construction, tourism, services and financial sectors.

Times News Service

ANKARA: The Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning has concluded an official visit to the Republic of Turkiye aimed at expanding cooperation in housing, urban planning and real estate investment, while strengthening private sector participation in the implementation of major urban development projects in the Sultanate of Oman. The Omani delegation was headed by Dr. Khalfan bin Saeed Al Shuali, Minister of Housing and Urban Planning, and included

representatives from the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning, Khazaen Economic City, the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), and a number of Omani real estate developers. The visit featured an intensive programme of government meetings, investment discussions and field visits designed to expand economic partnerships, attract high-quality investments and connect Oman’s major urban development projects with international expertise. The initiative supports the Sultanate’s goals of building sustainable cities and increasing

the contribution of the real estate sector to economic growth. During the visit, the delegation held more than 20 meetings, networking sessions and site visits involving government officials, investors, real estate developers, construction firms, and investment and financing institutions. The programme also included visits to leading urban, residential, tourism and commercial developments across Turkiye. High-level discussions with Turkish government agencies responsible for housing and urban planning, the Real Estate Devel-

opers Association and leading companies in real estate, investment and construction focused on Oman’s strategic urban development projects, including future cities and integrated residential neighbourhoods. **Investment environment** The meetings highlighted Oman’s investment environment, legislative framework and incentives offered to developers, while exploring opportunities for Turkish companies to participate in the implementation of urban projects in the Sultanate.

Discussions also covered cooperation in real estate development, project management, advanced construction technologies and digital transformation. Both sides reviewed a number of investment-related issues, including off-plan property sales, real estate financing, foreign ownership regulations, investment guarantees, registration and classification procedures, local content requirements and talent attraction. These discussions aimed to enhance the investment ecosystem and facilitate sustainable partnerships between Omani and Turkish

CULTURAL COOPERATION

Oman highlights cultural heritage at Brunei International Book Fair 2026

BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, is participating in the Brunei International Book Fair 2026, which officially opened on Saturday in the capital, Bandar Seri Begawan, and will continue until July 21. Through its participation, Oman is showcasing the richness of its cultural, literary and intellectual heritage to visitors from Brunei and beyond, while strengthening cultural cooperation between the two friendly countries.

Heritage in both Arabic and English The Ministry’s pavilion features a wide selection of valuable books and publications spanning literature, intellectual thought, history and heritage in both Arabic and English. The collection reflects the diversity of Oman’s cultural identity and highlights the country’s contributions to literature, intellectual discourse and historical scholarship. In addition to books, the pavilion includes promotional materials introducing visitors to Oman’s tourism destinations, offering an opportunity to showcase the Sultanate’s cultural landmarks, heritage sites and tourism potential alongside its intellectual achievements. Oman’s participation forms part of ongoing efforts to strengthen the longstanding cul-



tural relations between the Sultanate and Brunei Darussalam. It also serves as a cultural bridge for presenting Omani publications and creative works at international book fairs and expanding their reach to new audiences. The participation comes amid

growing interest in Omani culture and the Arabic language within Bruneian society, providing an opportunity to deepen cultural dialogue and encourage greater cooperation and exchange between cultural institutions in both countries. By taking part in international

cultural events such as the Brunei International Book Fair, Oman continues to promote its literary and intellectual output globally while supporting broader cultural diplomacy efforts and reinforcing the objectives of preserving and sharing the nation’s rich cultural heritage. -ONA

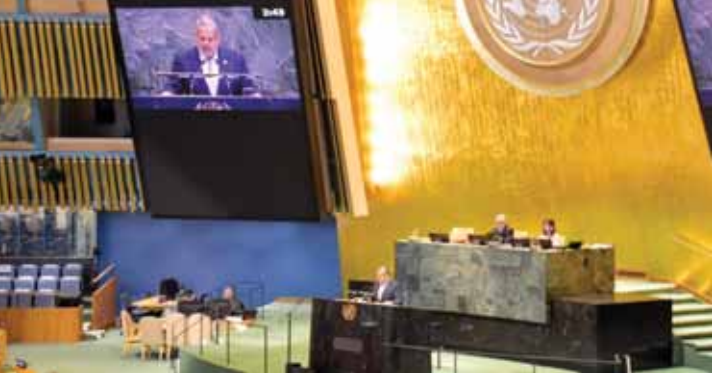
A PUBLIC HEALTH THREAT BY 2030

Oman reaffirms commitment to ending HIV/AIDS

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman has reaffirmed its commitment to global efforts to eliminate HIV/AIDS as a public health threat by 2030 during the United Nations High-Level Meeting on HIV/AIDS held at the UN Headquarters in New York. In Oman’s statement to the UN General Assembly, delivered by Ambassador Omar bin Said Al Kathiri, Permanent Representative of the Sultanate of Oman to the United Nations, the country highlighted the Ministry of Health’s commitment to investing in maternal and child health as a cornerstone of sustainable development. The statement outlined Oman’s continued efforts to strengthen its national healthcare system based on equity, universal health coverage, and the protection of human rights.

It also highlighted Oman’s achievement in receiving the World Health Organization’s Global Validation Certificate in 2022, becoming the first country in the Middle East and North Africa to eliminate mother-to-child transmission of HIV and syphilis. The milestone was attributed to the effectiveness of the country’s primary healthcare programmes, which achieved key indicators, including zero cases of mother-to-child HIV transmission and high screening coverage among pregnant women. Concluding its statement, Oman reaffirmed its commitment to implementing the World Health Organization’s recommendations, enhancing surveillance, prevention and treatment systems, and raising public awareness to sustain this national public health achievement while supporting relevant international health targets.



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EIGHTH TERM

State Council to conclude its third session today

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The State Council will conclude its third ordinary session of the eighth term on Sunday, in accordance with Article 41 of the Council of Oman Law and based on the Royal directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik.

The session continued the Council's role in strengthening legislation, reviewing public policies and supporting national development in line with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040.

Khalid bin Ahmed Al Saadi, Secretary-General of the State Council, said the Council maintained an integrated institutional approach during the session, ensuring its work was based on scientific analysis and objective evaluation to enhance legislative quality and support decision-making.

During the session, the Council held 10 public sittings, discussing 23 topics, including the draft Eleventh Five-Year Development Plan (2026–2030), the 2026 State General Budget, 13 draft laws referred by the Council of Ministers, and eight specialised studies covering economic, social, educational, technological and administrative issues.

The Council gave particular attention to the Eleventh Five-Year Development Plan and the 2026 State Budget, with both docu-



ments first examined by the expanded Economic and Financial Committee before being debated in plenary sessions and submitted to the Council of Ministers.

The Council also reviewed 13 draft laws spanning legal, economic, social and technical sectors. In addition, it held two joint sessions with the Shura Council to deliberate on 12 draft laws requiring consensus between the two chambers.

As part of its research role, the Council completed eight studies and referred them to the Council of Ministers. The Council's Office held six meetings, discussing 63 topics and issuing 52 decisions, while organising eight sessions with government entities and other stakeholders to review com-

mittee work and external participation reports.

The Council approved the formation of three special committees to study comprehensive economic development indicators under Oman Vision 2040, governance of the State's administrative apparatus and its role in empowering the private sector, and sustainable investment models for endowments (waqf) in Oman.

Strengthening cooperation between the executive and legislative branches remained a key priority. The Council's leadership held two meetings with the Council of Ministers under Article 77 of the Council of Oman Law to discuss institutional integration, implementation of the Eleventh Five-Year Develop-

ment Plan and mechanisms to enhance government performance.

Standing committees held 44 main meetings and 88 subcommittee meetings, while special committees conducted 20 main meetings and seven subcommittee meetings. Committees also hosted 51 meetings with representatives from government agencies, private sector institutions, experts and specialists to support legislative reviews and studies.

Committee work focused on a broad range of national priorities, including legislation, economic policy, labour markets, tourism, education quality, scientific research, digital transformation, innovation and water resource management.

The Council also maintained its active role in parliamentary diplomacy by strengthening cooperation with regional and international legislative bodies, while continuing outreach programmes that introduced university and college students to the Council's legislative responsibilities and its role in the national governance framework.

Al Saadi said the achievements of the third ordinary session reflect the State Council's commitment to enhancing legislative efficiency, supporting national development, strengthening institutional cooperation and contributing to the realisation of Oman Vision 2040.

BILATERAL MEETING



Oman, Iran hold talks on safety in Strait of Hormuz

MUSCAT: Oman and Iran held talks in Muscat on Saturday on ensuring the safety and freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz amid the implications of recent regional developments.

During the discussions, both sides agreed to continue consultations at the technical and polit-

ical levels to reach the necessary agreements in accordance with international law.

The Omani delegation was led by Sayyid Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, while the Iranian delegation was headed by Foreign Minister Seyed Abbas Araghchi.

MoCIIP announces OMR16mn investment to boost healthcare

The initiative aims to attract quality investments, strengthen medical industries and support Oman's goals of building a more efficient and sustainable healthcare system



Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) has announced a package of quality investment opportunities in the healthcare sector, with a total estimated investment value of approximately OMR16 million.

The initiative is being launched in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ).

The initiative aims to attract quality investments that contribute to the development of healthcare services, strengthen medical industries and support the Sultanate of Oman's goals of building a more efficient and sustainable healthcare system.

The opportunities form part of ongoing efforts to expand the Sultanate of Oman's investment opportunities map by identifying priority projects and aligning them with market needs.

This approach enhances investment readiness while responding to the growing demand for specialised healthcare services, advanced medical technologies, pharmaceuticals and medical supplies.

The package comprises four investment opportunities covering preventive healthcare, medical rehabilitation and medical manufacturing.

These include the establishment of an early detection centre in the Wilayat of Bausher, with an estimated investment of approximately OMR7.5 million, aimed at meeting growing demand for early diagnosis and preventive medicine services.

It also includes the development of a specialised rehabilitation hospital in Muscat Governorate, with an estimated investment of around OMR6 million, to provide integrated rehabilitation services in line with the latest medical practices and treatment technologies.

The package also includes two opportunities in medical manufacturing: the production of chlorhexidine gluconate solution in Salalah Free Zone, with an estimated investment of approximately OMR2.4 million; and the manufacture of paraffin-impregnated gauze in North Al Batinah Governorate (Sohar Free Zone), with an estimated investment of around OMR577,500.

These projects are expected to strengthen local medical manufacturing, support healthcare supply chains and enhance the competitiveness of Oman's products in regional markets.

The opportunities provide a diverse range of investment options that address increasing demand for healthcare services and medical manufacturing, while targeting both local and foreign investors seeking projects with sustainable economic and developmental impact.

The package reflects a strategic direction towards developing an integrated healthcare ecosystem built around three key pillars: preventive healthcare, specialised medical rehabilitation and medical industries.

It is expected to strengthen the readiness of the healthcare sector, expand investment opportunities in value-added activities and support the Sultanate of Oman's vision of building a more competitive and sustainable healthcare sector.

Lamya bint Sultan Al Habsi, Assistant Director General of the Directorate General of Investment Promotion at MoCIIP, said the healthcare sector in the Sultanate of Oman is undergoing rapid transformation, driven by population growth, rising demand for specialised healthcare services and efforts to localise medical industries, making it one of the country's most attractive sectors for investment.



She explained that through this package, the MoCIIP seeks to provide quality investment opportunities based on actual market needs, offering investors commercially viable projects with significant added value while strengthening the private sector's contribution to economic development and the goals of Oman Vision 2040.

She added that Invest Oman is developing investment opportunities that go beyond the traditional approach of offering projects by creating opportunities founded on specialised sector studies and effective partnerships with government entities.

This enhances project readiness, provides investors with greater clarity regarding available opportunities and reinforces confidence in the Sultanate of Oman's investment environment.

Meanwhile, Balqees bint Saud Al Mukhmari, Director of the Department of Investment Empowerment at the Ministry of Health, said strengthening partnerships with the private sector is one of the key pillars of further developing the Sultanate of Oman's healthcare system.

She noted that these investment opportunities will expand specialised healthcare services, strengthen local medical manufacturing and improve the sector's readiness to meet future requirements.

She added that the projects will contribute to delivering more ef-

ficient and sustainable healthcare services, facilitate the transfer of knowledge and advanced medical technologies, and foster innovation within the healthcare sector in line with global developments.

Al Mukhmari emphasised that the integration of efforts between the public and private sectors plays a vital role in building an advanced healthcare system founded on quality, efficiency and sustainability. Such collaboration will help meet the aspirations of society, improve quality of life and reinforce the Sultanate of Oman's position as a regional hub for healthcare services and investment in medical industries.

She further noted that these opportunities demonstrate the effective collaboration among government entities in developing investment projects that respond to the needs of vital sectors while providing investors with quality opportunities in high-demand fields. The projects build on the Sultanate of Oman's competitive advantages, including its strategic location, advanced infrastructure, investment-friendly legislation and stable investment environment.

She affirmed that the initiative is aligned with national efforts to diversify the economy, increase private sector participation in development, attract quality investments and expand value-added industries, thereby strengthening the Sultanate of Oman's position as a regional investment destination for the healthcare sector.

She added that Invest Oman will continue to further develop and promote quality investment opportunities in cooperation with government entities to enhance the Sultanate of Oman's competitiveness as a regional investment destination and create new opportunities for investors in priority sectors, supporting economic diversification and sustainable development.

Environment Authority warns against chasing, filming wildlife in Dhofar

The Authority urged the public to comply with laws and regulations governing interactions with wildlife

MUSCAT: Oman's Environment Authority has issued a warning against the practice of pursuing and filming wild animals in their natural habitats in Dhofar Governorate without obtaining the required permits, describing the behavior as a legal violation that poses serious risks to wildlife and the environment.

The Authority said it has recently observed that some social media content creators have been chasing and filming wild animals to produce online content, stressing that such actions are irresponsible and have harmful consequences for wildlife.

According to the Authority, the practice causes stress and fear to wild animals, disrupts their natural behavior, increases the risk of accidents and injuries to both people and wildlife, and negatively affects ecological balance by disturbing animals in their natural habitats.

Action against offenders

The Authority urged the public to comply with laws and regulations governing interactions with wildlife, emphasizing that photographing or pursuing wild animals without prior authorisation constitutes a violation of the Natural Reserves and Wildlife Conservation Law, issued under Royal Decree No. 6/2003, and its



Executive Regulations.

It also affirmed that it will coordinate with the relevant authorities to monitor content that violates environmental regulations and take the necessary legal action against offenders to safeguard wildlife and preserve Oman's natural environment.

The warning comes as Dhofar experiences its annual kharref season, a period that attracts large numbers of visitors to the governorate's unique natural landscapes and wildlife. The Environment Authority called on all visitors and content creators to act responsibly and respect wildlife protection regulations.



ADVANCED 6 PLACES

Oman soars to 49th place globally in Environmental Performance Index

WASHINGTON: The Sultanate of Oman has achieved a new milestone in the 2026 Environmental Performance Index (EPI), rising to 49th place globally among 180 countries.

Oman advanced 6 places in the 2026 EPI, compared to its 2024 ranking (55th globally).

The accomplishment affirms the effectiveness of national efforts to promote environmental sustainability and ameliorate related performance indicators.

Oman has also won third place among Middle East countries, second place in the Arab world and second place among GCC states. This reflects the country's growing status in the field of environmental protection and sustainable management of natural resources. The success is the outcome of Oman's national policies in climate action, including the conservation of biodiversity, the improvement of air quality, the expansion of renewable energy projects, the promotion of circular economy and implementation of initiatives on environmental sustainability in line with the goals of Oman Vision 2040.

The Environmental Performance Index (EPI), co-authored by Yale University and Columbia University in the United States, ranks 180 countries in the world by measuring their performance through a wide range of indicators on environmental and sustainability, including climate change, environmental health, and the vitality of ecosystems.

In Oman, the credit goes to the Environment Authority and other government departments concerned.

The success is the outcome of Oman's national policies in climate action, including the conservation of biodiversity, the improvement of air quality, the expansion of renewable energy projects



TRADE HUB

Oman's trade surplus tops OMR2 billion

<FROM A1 The value of re-exported goods climbed to OMR770 million by the end of April 2026, up from OMR462 million during the corresponding period in 2025, representing a strong 66.8 percent growth. The increase underscores Oman's growing importance as a regional logistics and trade hub, benefiting from its strategic location and advanced port infrastructure. The UAE remained the largest destination for Oman's non-oil exports, receiving goods worth OMR480 million. It was followed by Saudi Arabia with OMR233 million, India with OMR214 million, the United States with OMR168 million, and South Korea with OMR160 million.

In re-export activity, the UAE also ranked first, accounting for OMR331 million worth of re-exported goods. Saudi Arabia followed with OMR140 million, while Iran ranked third with OMR98 million.

On the import side, the UAE remained Oman's largest trading partner, exporting goods worth OMR1.5 billion to Oman during the January-April period. China ranked second with imports valued at OMR801 million, followed by Turkiye at OMR422 million, Saudi Arabia at OMR413 million, and India at OMR392 million.

The latest trade statistics reflect the continued resilience of Oman's external trade sector despite a decline in oil and gas export revenues. Strong growth in re-export activity and sustained trade with key regional and international partners helped maintain a healthy trade surplus, reinforcing the Sultanate's position as a leading commercial and logistics hub in the region while supporting the objectives of economic diversification under Oman Vision 2040. -ONA

CREATE OPPORTUNITIES

Oman’s SMIIC membership to strengthen cooperation

Times News Service

MUSCAT: In a move that strengthens its presence within the Islamic standardisation and quality infrastructure, the Sultanate of Oman has been admitted as a member of the Standards and Metrology Institute for the Islamic Countries (SMIIC), with membership taking effect in 2027.

The membership will create broader opportunities for the Sultanate of Oman to contribute to the development of harmonised standards adopted by member states, strengthen technical cooperation, and facilitate the movement of goods and products across Islamic markets.

The membership forms part of the efforts of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP), represented by the Directorate General of Standards and Metrology (DGSM), to strengthen integration with regional and international organisations specialising in standardisation, while enhancing the reliability of products, services and processes delivered by conformity assessment bodies, including testing and calibration laboratories, certification bodies and inspection bodies.

Imad bin Khamis Al Shukaili, Director General of DGSM, said Oman's membership was approved during the 31st Meeting of the Board of Directors of the Institute of Standards and Metrology for Islamic Countries, following the MoCIIP's application to join the organisation.

Strengthening cooperation
Al Shukaili said Oman's accession to the Institute, which operates under the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and is headquartered in Türkiye, marks an important step towards strengthening cooperation and integration with Arab, Islamic and other countries in the fields of standardisation and quality. He added that the membership will enable Oman to participate



in the development of standards, benefit from training programmes and workshops, and exchange technical expertise, contributing to national capacity building and enhancing the competencies of specialists in standardisation and quality.

Al Shukaili also noted that the Directorate General of Standards and Metrology will represent Oman at the Institute's General Assembly and a number of its councils and technical committees, including the Standardization Management Council and the Metrology Council, further strengthening the Sultanate's role in shaping technical policies related to standards and metrology across Islamic countries.

Enhancing cooperation
Meanwhile, Dr Said bin Sultan Al Busaidi, Director of the Oman Accreditation Centre (OMAC) at MoCIIP, said the membership will support the development

of Oman's halal ecosystem by strengthening cooperation with the Institute and OIC member states, while contributing to the establishment of an integrated halal accreditation framework based on SMIIC standards. This will cover halal products, services and halal certification bodies. Harmonising halal standards

Dr Al Busaidi added that the move will contribute to harmonising halal standards among Islamic countries and support national products by facilitating their access to international markets and enhancing their competitiveness.

He also highlighted that the membership will support training and qualification programmes for Omani assessors and specialists in evaluation and auditing in accordance with SMIIC requirements, helping ensure the quality and integrity of halal audits, particularly for food, cosmetics and pharmaceutical products, while protecting consumers from counterfeit or fraudulent halal-labelled products.

Strengthening of OMAC
Dr Al Busaidi explained that the membership will enhance the role of the Oman Accreditation Centre (OMAC) through active participation in the Institute's Accreditation Council, which is responsible for developing a unified accreditation system among member states to ensure the competence of certification bodies.

MLS Wins Best Brand in Customer Experience Award in Livestock Category



MLS (Muscat Livestock) was felicitated with the "Times of Oman Best Brand in Customer Experience (CX) Award in Livestock Category" at the Times of Oman CX Awards 2026. The awards presentation was co-located with Times of Oman CX Forum 2026, held at Hotel Kempinski, Muscat. The premier event was attended by over 325+ CX leaders across sectors in Oman.

MLS has consistently demonstrated a strong commitment to customer experience by delivering premium-quality red meat and livestock products through a customer-centric approach built on quality, convenience, and trust. With a heritage spanning more than four decades in the butchery business and a modern, technology-enabled retail experience, MLS continues to redefine how customers purchase fresh meat in Oman. Its focus on ethically sourced, hormone-free, and high-quality products has earned the confidence of consumers across the Sultanate. With customer satisfaction

at the heart of its operations, MLS has invested in digital innovation, offering seamless online ordering, express home delivery, and a growing network of gourmet retail stores. Backed by stringent quality standards, sustainable practices, and responsive customer service, the company continues to provide a reliable and convenient shopping experience while meeting the evolving needs of modern consumers.

By continuously investing in product quality, digital transformation, sustainability, and operational excellence, MLS continues to set benchmarks in customer experience within the livestock sector. Its commitment to innovation, responsible sourcing, and delivering nature's finest red meat reinforces its position as one of Oman's most trusted and admired brands.

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

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meeting and exceeding customer expectations. The winners are selected based on an extensive consumer survey conducted by the Times of Oman.



وزارة التنمية الاجتماعية
Ministry of Social Development



Tender Announcement

The Internal Tender committee of Ministry of Social Development hereby announces the following tender :-

Tender No.	Tender Subject	Grade	Last date for obtainment of tender document	Last date for tender submission	Tender Document Price (non-retundable)	
					Small and Medium companies	Local companies
331/2026	Purchase, Supply, and Installation of Air Conditioners for the Social Development Department at Al-Musannah	Companies specializing in the supply of electrical, mechanical, and industrial machinery and equipment, as well as spare parts, and registered with the Projects, Tenders, and Local Content Authority at the Excellent, First, Second, Third, or Fourth degree	Thursday 16-07-2026 02:00 PM	Thursday 23-07-2026 10:00 AM	10 R.O	25 R.O

❖ Specialized Companies, registered with the **Tender Board** may obtain the Tender documents at the Tender Board e-tendering digital portal link (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>), On Sunday 12/07/2026

❖ For Inquiry, please contact though the e-tendering website (reg@tenderboard.gov.om) Tel: (24402200)

The lowest or any other tender shall not be binding to the Ministry

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Advertisement No.(21/2026)

Muscat Municipality invites Companies specialized in the field and registered with General Secretariat of Tender Board, to participate and obtain tender documents from the website via the following link: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> starting from the date of this announcement and until the end of deadline stipulated below.

Tender Number	Description of Tender	Last date to collect the tender	Tender return date
PRE/25/032	Development of Quriyat Seafront	28/07/2026	18/08/2026
PRS/26/031	Supply of Equipment, Solutions & Materials for MM Laboratory	28/07/2026	18/08/2026
PRE/26/104	Consultancy Services for Strategic Study for the Rental Values in Muscat Governorate	28/07/2026	18/08/2026
PRE/26/105	Design, Supply & Installation of Lighting Poles in Al Khoudh area at A' Seeb	28/07/2026	18/08/2026
PRE/26/106	Abandoned Vehicles Management	28/07/2026	18/08/2026

1. Bidders shall submit their offers electronically.

2. Clarification and Support:

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- For technical support of e-tendering system please send an email to (etenderhd@PTLC.gov.om) or call (+96824402200).

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BERLIN HOSTAGE CRISIS

Woman freed after hours-long standoff

BERLIN: A man allegedly took a woman hostage at a supermarket in the German capital, Berlin, triggering a major police operation, officials said Saturday.

Police said the operation began at about 10 p.m. on Friday, after officers were called out to the Rewe supermarket in the Marienfelde district on the southern outskirts of Berlin.

The suspect was later overwhelmed by police and the hostage was freed after an 11-hour standoff.

A 22-year-old male employee of the supermarket told German news agency dpa that a man had brandished a “very big” knife shortly before the market closed on Friday evening.

The male employee ran out of

the supermarket with a colleague and contacted police.

The employee further said that the female hostage also worked at the supermarket, and “was simply in the wrong place at the wrong time.”

Police, who have yet to provide a motive, did not confirm reports that a manager at the supermarket had seen a weapon or whether the

woman or the hostage-taker had sustained any injuries.

Footage posted to social media showed armed police officers in protective gear at the entrance to the supermarket.

Onlookers gathered nearby, and several police and emergency vehicles were visible on the street, which had been cordoned off.

— DW



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WINDOW PANE SMASHED

Passenger partly sucked from Ryanair plane during flight

THESSALONIKI: A Ryanair flight to southern Germany had to return the Greek city of Thessaloniki on Friday after a passenger window broke shortly after takeoff.

The pressure difference pulled the head and shoulders of the man sitting by the window outside the aircraft, and a desperate rescue effort ensued.

Travellers heard a loud bang during Friday's flight to Memmingen Airport in Bavaria after which the window pane smashed, and oxygen masks dropped from the ceiling.

The passenger sitting by the window had kept his seat belt fastened, which helped prevent him from being pulled farther out of the aircraft and eased the rescue, a witness told Radio Thessaloniki.

“His head and shoulders were sticking out of the broken window,” one witness told Greek broadcaster ERT.

Some passengers began screaming while others, including the man's wife, struggled to hold and successfully drag him to safety.

Greek media identified the man as a Serbian tourist. He was taken to hospital in Thessaloniki with abrasions but was otherwise in good condition, according to Greek authorities.

— DW

Spain’s deadly wildfires claim at least 12 lives



Andalusian Minister of the Presidency, Health, and Emergencies Antonio Sanz described the situation as an “unprecedented tragedy”.

ALMERIA: At least 12 people have been killed in a wildfire in Spain's Six people had died in a hamlet of Bedar as of late Thursday evening, with some of the bodies found trapped in vehicles. Six more bodies have been discovered since in Los Gallardos, Andalusia's regional government said in a statement on Friday morning.

Andalusian Minister of the Presidency, Health, and Emergencies Antonio Sanz described the situation as an “unprecedented tragedy.”

“There are no words for such pain. This is terrible news, and today the hearts of all Andalusians are in mourning,” he said after the new death toll was announced.

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez expressed his sadness over the deaths in a post on X.

Meanwhile, Sanz urged resi-

dents to avoid the impacted areas, not take any risks and choose escape routes after coordinating with emergency services.

“The absolute priority right now is to save lives, and that is what all operational services are working tirelessly to achieve,” he said.

Other injured residents have been treated for minor burns and respiratory issues arising from smoke inhalation.

Spain's emergency services combat flames

Authorities have mobilized about 150 personnel from the military emergency unit to rein in the spreading fire.

They are joining about 150 other firefighters backed by five fire trucks, fire suppression technicians, and medical units. Residents of several neighbor-



dry vegetation. Authorities have not confirmed if this was the cause of the fire.

Spain, among other European nations, is facing a heat wave with scorching temperatures triggering orange weather warnings in recent days. That's the second-highest level of alert, which indicates significant danger.

The high temperatures dry out vegetation, increasing the risk of forest fires.

In May, Sanchez had said that Spain would launch its largest-ever wildfire response this year. Spain recorded its worst wildfire in recent history in 2025, according to the European Forest Fire Information System, burning over 393,000 hectares, or about three times the size of Los Angeles, US. — dw

What caused the wildfire?
Earlier, witnesses told authorities that the blaze may have started after a power line fell, igniting the

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Mojtaba Khamenei vows to avenge his father’s killing

Locked and Loaded

Trump says ‘1,000 missiles’ pointed at Iran

In a message issued on the occasion of the funeral and burial of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Mojtaba Khamenei declared that those responsible for the killing would not escape justice



TEHRAN: Iran’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei on Saturday vowed to avenge the death of his father Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who was assassinated in US-Israeli strikes earlier in the year, describing it as the responsibility of the nation. He also praised the massive turnout at the late leader’s funeral as “historic” and “enemy-breaking”. In a message issued on the occasion of the funeral and burial of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Mojtaba Khamenei declared that those responsible for the killing would not escape justice. “We pledge to avenge your pure blood and that of all the martyrs of these two wars from the criminal and dishonourable murderers. This revenge is the will of our nation and must be carried out without fail,” he said.



He further asserted that those responsible “will take with them to their graves the wish for a peaceful death in bed”, adding

that the pursuit of revenge did not depend on any single individual or official. “They should know that this

matter does not depend on the existence of me or other officials. Whether we are there or not, this will be accomplished, and soon every free person around the world will fulfil a part of this divine mission,” he added. Khamenei also expressed gratitude for what he described as the unprecedented public participation in the six-day funeral ceremonies across Iran and Iraq. “On this occasion, I would like to sincerely appreciate the presence of tens of millions of people in the cities and villages of Iran and Iraq, especially Tehran, Qom, Najaf, Karbala, and Mashhad, which is astonishing, enemy-breaking, and historic,” he said. Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was laid to rest at the Holy Shrine of Imam Reza in Mashhad late Thursday night as thousands of

supporters gathered to pay their final farewells to the slain leader.

Final burial The final burial took place at the Dar al-Dhikr prayer hall after his coffin was carried around the holy shrine as part of the funeral rites. The funeral prayers were led by his eldest son, Mostafa Khamenei, who performed the ritual prayers over the body. Referring to religious symbolism associated with Imam Hosayn, Mojtaba Khamenei, in his message, said that the Iranian nation had long made sacrifices in his cause and remained committed to that legacy. “Our nation is the bloodthirsty one for Hosayn. This great nation sacrificed its children for many years in the cause of Hosayn and in the war against the enemies of Hosayn and the Hosayni cause. And now it is the bloodthirsty one for him and the Hosayni people of the time,” he said. Paying tribute to the late supreme leader, Mojtaba Khamenei pledged to continue his predecessor’s path. “Now that we bid farewell to your body with tearful eyes and broken hearts, we pledge with you to uphold your school and to walk the straight path you have drawn with perseverance and not be afraid of difficulties on this path, and like you, to take heart in the good news and promises of God,” he said. In the concluding part of his message, Mojtaba Khamenei offered prayers for the deceased leader and those killed alongside him in the US-Israeli strikes, describing them as martyrs who had attained divine honour. — **ANI**

WASHINGTON DC: US President Donald Trump once again threatened to bomb Iran, this time accusing the country of threatening to assassinate him. “1000 Missiles are Locked and Loaded and aimed at the Islamic Republic of Iran, with thousands of more to immediately follow,” he said in a post on his Truth Social platform. He said Iran threatened, “in many Corners of the Globe,” to assassinate him. Should that occur, Trump wrote: “Orders have already been given, and the U.S. Military is ready, willing, and able, for a one year period of time, subject to extension, to completely decimate and destroy all areas of Iran - PRAISE BE TO ALLAH!” The funeral of former Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei saw open calls for his death and people holding signs that read, “Kill Trump.”

Tehran has ‘kept its word’ in ceasefire with US — Iranian Foreign Minister Iran has respected its commitments in a ceasefire with the United States, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi wrote in a post on X. “Iran has so far kept its word, unlike the so-called US Treasury Secretary who is violating Para 9 of the MoU. That violation follows other violations and missteps by the United States. Reality check: There can only be mutual compliance,” Araghchi said. The US and Iran have traded accusations of violating the ceasefire. US wants Tehran to publicly pledge halting Hormuz attacks, officials say. — **DW**

DILAPIDATED ENERGY INFRASTRUCTURE

Cuba suffers its second nationwide blackout in 5 days

HAVANA: Cuba on Friday saw its second nationwide blackout in five days. The island nation’s electricity grid has crumbled amid a six-month US fuel blockade and already-dilapidated energy infrastructure. This is Cuba’s ninth nationwide power outage since 2024, and the fourth in 2026. State electricity company UNE said in a post on X that there had been a “total collapse of the national electric system” at 4:30 p.m. local time. “Protocols are being activated to begin the recovery process,” Cuba’s Energy Ministry said on social media. There was no immediate explanation of the blackout from Cuban authorities. Authorities attributed Monday’s outage to voltage instability and low levels of electricity output. Most of the country was reconnected to the grid by late Tuesday. **What is the cause of Cuba’s energy woes?** Cuba had already grappled with electricity shortages when US President Donald Trump cut off

the country’s oil supplies in January, with the US leader vowing to bring down Cuba’s communist government. The move came shortly after the US kidnapped Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro and brought him to the United States, leading to his effective replacement by acting President Delcy Rodriguez. Venezuela was previously a major oil supplier to Cuba. Only one oil tanker has docked in Cuba since the start of the US blockade. The Russian tanker’s load covered only about two weeks of Cuba’s energy needs. The oil blockade also comes amid a decadeslong US economic embargo against Cuba. Havana blames its ailing infrastructure on the US embargo. Washington maintains it is due to state mismanagement of the Cuban economy. Don’t let the algorithm hide the news. If you rely on our team for trusted reporting, please take a moment to select us as your Preferred Source on Google by clicking here and hitting the “star” or “preferred” button, so you’ll always see our verified news first. — **DW**

LANDMARK VISIT

Indian PM concludes three-nation visit

AUCKLAND: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday concluded his three-nation visit to Indonesia, Australia and New Zealand. He departed for India after wrapping up a landmark visit to New Zealand, which elevated their ties to a Strategic Partnership and unveiled an ambitious roadmap for cooperation across multiple sectors. Sharing an update on X, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said, “A visit that deepened bonds, strengthened partnerships and shaped a shared future. After concluding substantive discussions and overseeing key set of outcomes in New Zealand, PM Narendra Modi departs for India.” New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon, in a special gesture, personally came to see off PM Modi at the airport. “In a special gesture, he was seen off by PM Christopher Luxon at the airport. Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s three-country visit to Indonesia, Australia and New Zealand delivered significant outcomes advancing cooperation across several sectors including trade, technology, security, education, innovation and people-to-people exchanges among others,” the MEA post added. Prime Minister Modi’s two-day official visit to New Zealand, held on July 10-11 at the invitation of Prime Minister Christopher Luxon, marked the first visit by an Indian Prime Minister to the country in 40 years.



During the visit, PM Modi was accorded a traditional Maori welcome at Government House in Auckland, featuring customary rituals symbolising peace, respect and welcome, before inspecting a ceremonial Guard of Honour. The two Prime Ministers held extensive bilateral discussions in both restricted and delegation-level formats, covering the entire spectrum of India-New Zealand relations, including trade and investment, defence and security, maritime cooperation, agriculture, education, sports, tourism, culture, innovation and people-to-people ties. The leaders agreed to elevate bilateral ties to a Strategic Partnership and adopted the India-New

Zealand Strategic Partnership: Roadmap to 2030, which provides a comprehensive framework to guide cooperation across ministries and stakeholders over the next four years. In a post on X, Prime Minister Modi said, “This has been a great year for the India-New Zealand partnership. Earlier this year, our nations concluded a Free Trade Agreement in record time and now, we have elevated our ties to a Strategic Partnership. Next up, we wish to double bilateral trade by 2030!” As part of the visit, India and New Zealand announced 18 key outcomes spanning defence, maritime security, trade, disaster management, agriculture, education,

culture, tourism, sports, science and clean energy. Among the major agreements signed was a Memorandum of Arrangement on Maritime Cooperation between India’s Ministry of Defence and the New Zealand Defence Force to strengthen dialogue, coordination, information sharing and joint activities in the Indo-Pacific. The two countries also concluded an Implementation Arrangement on Hydrography and Nautical Cartography, enhancing cooperation through navigational chart production, hydrographic data sharing, training and capacity building. An Arrangement on Mutual Logistics Support between the Indian Navy and the New Zealand Defence Force was signed to facilitate reciprocal logistics assistance during approved operations and exercises. To enhance security cooperation, both sides agreed to establish a Joint Working Group on Counter-Terrorism, aimed at strengthening information sharing and coordinated efforts to combat terrorism. India’s National Disaster Management Authority and New Zealand’s National Emergency Management Agency signed a Memorandum of Cooperation focusing on disaster risk reduction, earthquake resilience, tsunami preparedness, coastal hazard mitigation, policy dialogue and capacity building. — **ANI**

AIR DEFENCE MISSILES

Trump signals support for Patriot production in Ukraine

KYIV: NATO members agreed a comprehensive military aid package for Ukraine totalling €140 billion at their recent Ankara summit. In addition, after meeting with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, US President Donald Trump announced that he intends to grant Ukraine a licence to produce Patriot air defence missiles on its own soil. These missiles are crucial for defending the country against Russian ballistic attacks. It has been reported that Ukrainian Patriot missiles stockpiles are running low. Indeed, the Ukrainian Air Force was unable to shoot down a single Russian missile during the massive attack on July 6. The US intends to share its Patriot technology with Ukraine and

grant it the right to produce the air defence missiles, Trump said. He also said the US was willing to provide any necessary support. Trump also said he wants to buy Ukrainian drones, marking a complete reversal in his attitude toward Ukraine’s defence industry, which he had previously dismissed. Now, however, he praised the country’s extensive drone manufacturing capabilities. He called it “amazing” that Ukraine was still able to build drones “in a war situation.” Ukrainian drone expertise is widely sought after, including in Europe, and numerous countries signed drone agreements with Ukraine at the recent Ankara summit. Ukraine would be the third country in the world — after Japan



and Germany — granted the right to produce Patriot missiles. Going from political declarations to the actual production stage, however, will take years, says military expert Oleh Katkov, editor-in-chief of Defense Express, a Ukrainian media and consulting company. “That’s really great, it’s a his-

toric moment,” Katkov told DW. “But it’s important to realise that a process like this doesn’t take just a few days or weeks. Despite its industry, skills, and expertise, it took Japan two years from reaching the agreement to starting production. We are likely still only in the stage of the Ukrainian and US govern-

ments reaching a general political agreement.” He told DW a government-level agreement needs to be finalised before defense contractors begin cooperation. Only then, Katkov said, will it be possible to negotiate with the US companies that hold the rights to the Patriot missiles. “PAC-3 missiles are manufactured by Lockheed Martin, and PAC-2 missiles are built by RTX (Raytheon),” Katkov explained. “These companies must first draw up contracts with Ukrainian firms and only then can we talk about starting production in Ukraine.” Ukraine’s Centre for Defence Strategies director Oleksandr Khara noted that the issue goes beyond whether Ukraine will receive a licence to produce Patriot

missiles. “I really hope there aren’t any hidden conditions,” Khara told DW. “Like expecting Ukraine to make concessions to Russia before it receives these Patriot missiles. We can expect all kinds of things from the current US administration.” Ihor Reiterovych of Kyiv’s Taras Shevchenko National University, however, voiced doubts the Patriot missile agreement will be implemented soon. “This is more of a symbolic matter,” the political analyst told DW. “First and foremost, it’s a message to the Russian Federation: ‘Look at what might happen next.’ It is clear, however, that Ukraine will need a lot of time to actually establish Patriot missile production in its country.” — **DW**

NEW STRATEGIC PLAN

The Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) strategy, which was launched in 2022, has focused on providing an efficient investment environment that operates according to the best standards and practices applied in global markets.

MARKET
BUSINESS & FINANCE



GROWTH OF CREDIT

An analysis of the activities of traditional commercial banks in the Sultanate of Oman during May 2025 and May 2026 indicates continued growth of credit in the Sultanate of Oman, as the total credit granted by banks recorded an increase of 11.8 percent.

MSX emerges as top-performing GCC stock market in 2026 first half

The Muscat Stock Exchange topped the Gulf markets in terms of the growth rate of trading value, which jumped by 650 percent, approaching OMR7 billion, and 8 companies were able to enter the list of the top 30 companies in terms of the percentage increase in stock prices in the Gulf stock exchanges



the top 30 companies in terms of the percentage increase in stock prices in the Gulf stock exchanges.

MUSCAT: The Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX recorded the best performance among Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) stock exchanges in the first half of this year, after the main index rose by 28 percent, exceeding 7,500 points.

The Muscat Stock Exchange also topped the Gulf markets in terms of the growth rate of trading value, which jumped by 650 percent, approaching OMR7 billion, and 8 companies were able to enter the list of

This performance reflects the growing confidence of investors in the Muscat Stock Exchange and the expected returns on investment in it, as well as the ability of the exchange to absorb international economic changes and benefit from the improvement achieved by public shareholding companies during the past months and the positive disclosures they announced.

Gulf stock exchanges witnessed volatile performance in the first half of this year, pressured by geo-

political factors in the region. The Muscat Stock Exchange and the Saudi market managed to close higher, while other Gulf stock exchanges recorded declines ranging between 1 and 5 percent.

The main index of the Muscat Stock Exchange recorded three record levels in the first half of this year, rising to 6,000 points in January, recording a new record high of 7,000 points in February, and increasing its gains to 8,000 points by March 29, recording its best levels since 2008. It continued its rise in April, and on May 4 it managed to achieve the highest gains, rising

to 8,397 points.

However, it could not surpass this level with increased selling pressures to take profits after the record highs recorded by many leading stocks, to close June trading at 7,507 points, adding 1,641 points during the past six months.

The Muscat Stock Exchange benefited in the first half of this year from the growth in performance of various sectors listed on the exchange, especially banks, investment companies, telecommunications, energy and industrial companies.

In the first half of this year, the

Muscat Stock Exchange attracted more liquidity from local and Gulf investment funds and institutions. Individual purchases also recorded strong growth, with the improvement of local economic indicators and the rise in profits of publicly listed companies and their improved financial performance.

This was reflected in the trading value, which recorded an exceptional performance, and in the total market capitalisation of the Muscat Stock Exchange, which rose by the end of the first half of trading to OMR36.72 billion, recording gains estimated at OMR4.71 billion com-

pared to its level in December at OMR32.11 billion.

Total trading value of MSX in the first half of this year rose to OMR6.9 billion, compared to OMR917.2 million in the same period last year and OMR711.5 million in the first half of 2024. The number of transactions executed rose to 733,000 compared to 147,000 transactions in the same period last year and 133,000 transactions in the first half of 2024.

April recorded the highest trading value at OMR1.5413 billion, March came in second with trading at valued at OMR1.4264 billion, February came in third with trading at valued at OMR1.2947 billion, while June recorded the lowest trading value at OMR776.1 million.

In terms of the number of transactions executed, June came first with 159,000 transactions, April came second with 131,000 transactions, and February came in third with 122,000 transactions.

The first half of this year witnessed several increases recorded by public shareholding companies listed on the stock exchange. Eight companies were among the top 30 companies that recorded an increase in their share prices on the Gulf stock exchanges. These companies are: Galfar Engineering and Contracting, Raysut Cement, Voltamp Energy, Al Anqa Energy, Asyad Shipping, Oman and Emirates Investment Company, Al Anwar Investments, and Bank Dhofar. This rise was supported by financial results, increased investor confidence in the Muscat Stock Exchange, and their expectations of the companies' ability to achieve stable returns. **-OMA**

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MARKET

BEST STANDARDS

MSX begins preparing new strategic plan for next five years

MUSCAT: The Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) strategy, which was launched in 2022, has focused on providing an efficient investment environment that operates according to the best standards and practices applied in global markets, in addition to providing diverse opportunities that are in line with the directions of Oman Vision 2040.

Haitham bin Salem Al Salmi, CEO of the Muscat Stock Exchange, explained that the strategy set by the exchange between 2022 until the end of 2026 has achieved a completion rate of about 96 percent so far, after the completion of all major projects.

He further added that work is underway to complete some products during the next few months, including exchange-traded funds (ETFs), in addition to announcing the fulfillment of the requirements for inclusion in global indices.

He confirmed that the stock exchange has completed all the requirements of the FTSE Global Index and is currently awaiting the assessments being conducted by the relevant authorities regarding this index.

He pointed out that the stock



exchange has begun preparing its strategic plan for the next five years, which includes introducing new financial products, developing technology plans, and defining the features of the stock exchange as a group, including its listing as a public shareholding company,

indicating that these plans are being completed and prepared in the current stage.

He stressed that the first strategy had a clear impact, most notably the increase in the market value of listed public shareholding companies from 20 percent of

GDP to 38 percent currently, with expectations that it will reach about 40 percent after the listing of Omifco. He further added that there has been an increase in the average daily trading volume from less than OMR2 million to about OMR60 million per day, which is

equivalent to a growth of 30 times since the beginning of the implementation of the strategy.

He further added that the sectoral distribution has witnessed a remarkable development, as the financial sector previously accounted for about 60 percent of the market, while the market value is now distributed between the financial sector and the services sector, while the remaining is distributed between the industrial sector and bonds, which reinforces the importance of diversification in market value.

He explained that the number of companies whose market value exceeds OMR100 million has increased from 14 previously to more than 29 companies currently. This provides more shares for trading and enhances market depth, stressing that all targets related to enhancing liquidity and market value have been achieved, while the focus during the next period will be on developing and launching new financial products.

He pointed out that the next phase will witness the offering of the remaining percentage of shares of the maritime transport

company affiliated with the Asyad Group, after 20 percent of its shares had already been offered.

Regarding IPOs, he affirmed that the Muscat Stock Exchange has succeeded in attracting foreign investors who have never traded on the Muscat Stock Exchange before, whether at the regional or global level.

He explained that the results of the introductory and marketing meetings that were organised outside the Sultanate of Oman showed a shift in the nature of the discussions, as the interest moved from learning about the stock exchange's plans to inquiring about trading mechanisms and procedures for opening investment accounts, which reflects the growing attractiveness of the market to institutions and investors.

He added that the stock exchange is currently undergoing an upgrade phase, and foreign direct investments have already begun entering the market, while investors specialising in portfolio management are still waiting for the upgrade process to be completed before they begin their investments. -**ONA**

Market capitalisation of Muscat Stock Exchange rises to OMR38.3bn

The substantial gains of MSX was attributed to being benefited by the listing of the Oman India Fertiliser Company (Omifco) and also to the rise in shares of several companies coinciding with the start of the announcement of preliminary financial results for the first half of this year



the end the week's trading session, registering weekly gains of more than OMR1.458 billion.

The substantial gains of MSX was attributed to being benefited by the listing of the Oman India Fertiliser Company (Omifco) and also to the rise in shares of several companies coinciding with the start of the announcement of preliminary financial results for the

first half of this year.

The Muscat Stock Exchange indices recorded collective gains, with the main index closing at 7,644 points, up 69 points. The industrial sector index rose by 107 points, the services sector index by 26 points, the financial sector index by 14 points, and the Sharia index by 9 points.

The Muscat Stock Exchange

benefited from the optimistic atmosphere that the exchange witnessed with the listing of the Omifco on July 8.

Trading data issued by the Muscat Stock Exchange indicated an increase in institutional purchases of the stock by local and Gulf investment funds and institutions, which supported the stock and pushed it to rise above the level of

200 baisa before it closed trading at 193 baisa, recording an increase of 37 baisa from the subscription price of 156 baisa.

The Omifco shares witnessed the execution of 16,499 transactions worth OMR74.62 million, representing 30.1 percent of the total trading value. The company's capital is OMR107 million and its market cap reached OMR1.29 billion, ranking fourth among the highest public shareholding companies in terms of market cap after OQ Exploration and Production with a market cap of OMR3.8 billion, Bank Muscat with a market cap of OMR2.9 billion and Asyad Shipping with a market cap of OMR1.4 billion, while Bank Sohar International ranked fifth with a market cap of OMR1.26 billion.

Trading value remained stable during the week at OMR247.8 million for the second week in a row, while the number of transactions executed increased by 21.7 percent from 48,000 to more than 58,000 transactions.

OQ Basic Industries ranked second among the most traded companies in terms of trading value after (Omifco) with trades of OMR27.1 million, representing 10.9 percent of the total trading value. Omantel came in third with trades valued at OMR25.8 million,

Bank Muscat in fourth place with trades valued at OMR25.3 million, while Bank Sohar International came in fifth with trades valued at OMR24.6 million Omani riyals, representing 9.9 percent of the total trading value.

Purchases by local and Gulf investment funds and institutions accounted for 66.9 percent and 14.9 percent respectively of the total trading value, compared to purchases of 65.8 percent by local investment institutions and 8.1 percent by Gulf investment institutions, while local individual investors increased their sales to constitute 19.7 percent of the total trading value, compared to purchases of 14.5 percent of the trades.

The week also witnessed the rise of shares of 47 securities, most notably: Oman Cement, OQ Exploration and Production, Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing, Oman United Insurance, OQ Basic Industries, Bank Dhofar, Oman Packaging, and Al Anqa Energy. These rises were reflected in the stock exchange indices, while the number of securities whose prices declined reached 32 securities, most notably Sohar Power, Al Maha Ceramics, Oman Finance Services bonds issued in 2026, Oman Fisheries, and Gulf Hotels - Oman. -**ONA**

CBO REPORT



Credit granted by banks in Oman to private sector rises

MUSCAT: An analysis of the activities of traditional commercial banks in Oman during May 2025 and May 2026 indicates continued growth of credit in the Sultanate of Oman, as the total credit granted by banks recorded an increase of 11.8 percent.

The monthly report issued by the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) indicated that credit granted by conventional banks to the private sector increased by 8.2 percent to reach OMR23.1 billion by the end of May 2026.

The total investments of con-

ventional commercial banks in securities witnessed an increase of 29.8 percent, reaching approximately OMR7.1 billion by the end of May 2026.

Investment in government development bonds rose by 26.3 percent compared to the same period last year, reaching OMR 2.4 billion. Their investments in foreign securities also increased by 36.1 percent, reaching OMR 2.6 billion by the end of May 2026.

On the liabilities side, total deposits with conventional commercial banks recorded an increase of

13.7 percent to reach OMR28.6 billion by the end of May 2026.

Within total deposits, government deposits with commercial banks increased by 9 percent to reach approximately OMR6.3 billion, while public sector institution deposits rose by 42.9 percent to reach approximately OMR2.4 billion during the same period.

Private sector deposits increased by 11 percent to reach OMR19 billion in May 2026, representing 66.3 percent of total deposits with conventional commercial banks. -**ONA**

PROFOUND CHANGES

China intensifies digital push in energy sector amid AI boom

BEIJING: China is stepping up efforts to integrate artificial intelligence (AI) into its energy sector as the country accelerates digital transformation and advances the sector's green transition.

Amid profound changes in the global energy landscape, deeper integration of AI and energy is seen as key to improving the resilience and efficiency of energy systems, while also carrying significance for China's development, industrial competitiveness and energy security, experts said.

Deep integration

China's National Energy Administration has rolled out a series of policy measures in recent years, providing top-level guidance that has helped drive notable progress in AI-energy integration.

The country's power sector has moved from isolated digitalization pilots to integrated development across the entire industrial chain, with power sources, grids, loads and energy storage becoming more integrated, said Yang Kun, executive vice chairman of the China Electricity Council.

According to industry data, direct investment in digitalization by China's power sector exceeded 42 billion yuan (about 6.17 billion US dollars) in 2025, ranking among the highest of all industries

nationwide. As a new factor of production, digital technologies have been rapidly integrated into power dispatching, operation and maintenance, electricity trading and equipment inspection, providing key support for the development of a new power system.

Major energy enterprises, including the State Grid Corporation of China, China Southern Power Grid and China Energy Investment Corporation, have introduced a series of large AI models, effectively improving system operational efficiency.

In the oil and gas sector, AI has been gradually applied in exploration, production, safety, environmental protection and business management, helping shift the industry from experience-based to data-driven decision-making, said Hu Senlin, vice president of the Energy Economics Institute of China National Offshore Oil Corporation.

Challenges remain

Despite this progress, Hu noted that deeper integration of AI and energy still faces challenges, including a shortage of industry-specific large AI models, a limited supply of high-quality industry data, and inadequate mechanisms for cross-enterprise and cross-industry data sharing. Hu called for greater efforts to make breakthroughs in key

AI technologies for the energy sector, improve industry data standards and sharing mechanisms, and promote the large-scale application of AI in the energy sector.

Meanwhile, Lyu Tingyan, deputy general manager of China Three Gorges Corporation, has warned of growing security risks as AI technologies become more deeply integrated into the energy sector. "As automation increases, machines are playing a greater role in decision-making. If systems are maliciously attacked or fed false data, the consequences could be severe," Lyu said.

High-quality development

To make AI applications safer and more reliable, Guo Jianbo, an academician of the Chinese Academy of Engineering, suggested using digital twin technologies to build an intelligent "brain" for power system operations and verify AI-generated strategies.

Focusing on data infrastructure, Li Jianguo, an official with the National Data Administration, called for further exploration of technological approaches such as trusted data spaces, as well as systematic efforts to catalog multidimensional data resources related to power supply and demand, to provide a model for data circulation in the power sector. -**Xinhua**

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Chartered Accountant, presently Finance Controller, with 22 plus years' experience as Finance Head in leading companies of Oman as well in Auditing firm. Well versed with Banking, IFRS and taxation seeks suitable position.

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Email: azamca7@gmail.com

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Senior finance professional CA(Inter) MBA expertise dynamic and results-driven finance professional with over 20 yrs of progressive experience in financial leadership roles across multinational corporations in Oman. Holds a strong track record in strategic financial planning, etc.

Contact/WA: +968-95877725

FINANCE

An Indian CA with over 25 years of experience in manufacturing, retail and construction industry in accounting, banking arrangements, Tax, VAT, budgeting and cash flow management seeks managerial position.

CONTACT : 75156709

CHANGE OF NAME

I Yunus Mohamed Ibrahim Chowdhary Mohamed (holder of Indian passport No. S36755090) son of Mohamed Ibrahim Chowdhary having permanent residence in D11, Flat No. 3, Kausar Baugh, Near Zam Zam Hotel, Kondhwa Khurd, Pune. Pin No 411048, (complete postal address in India) and presently residing in P.O. Box No. 865, PC 122, Mabela South, Muscat, Oman. (complete postal address in Oman) intend to change my name from **YUNUS MOHAMED IBRAHIM CHOWDHARY MOHAMED** (old name) to **YUNUS MOHAMED IBRAHIM CHOWDHARY** (new name) for all practical purpose. Any objection towards my name may please be communicated to Embassy of India, Muscat, Diplomatic Quarters, Al Khuwair, P.Box. No.1727, Postal Code 112, Ruwi, Sultanate of Oman.

SUPPLY CHAIN

Indian, male, MBA with 17 yrs
Oman experience in supply chain (procurement, warehousing & logistics) SAP knowledge, looking for suitable placement. Ready to join immediately.

Contact : 92813310

ENGINEER

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Contact, WA +968 79880602, +91 7200747471

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Accountant in Oman seeks job. Contact **77336141**

ACCOUNTS/FINANCE

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Chief Accountant, finance manager Indian male with 19 yrs experience in Oman. Accounts up to finalization. MIS, audit, tax, VAT. Contact 78543201 E-mail kramct2021@gmail.com

27 yr Indian male holding MBA (UK) looking for job in Accounts & Sales. Contact **77198066**

ADMINISTRATION

Indian male (BBA graduate) experienced professional seeking administration, junior accountant, sales marketing (Immediate joining) in Oman Contact: +968 99055336. Email: athulgvr12345@gmail.com

DRIVER

Bangaladeshi driver with 11 yrs experience looking for job. Contact 94247262

ENGINEER

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

JOB WANTED

ENGINEER

Fresher Mechanical engineer (B.Tech) seeking an opportunity in Mechanical or MEP field valid Oman D/L. Available to join immediately. Contact: 76267602 Email : yedhu911@gmail.com

Engineer, designer Indian female electrical engineer with 11 yrs experience including 7yrs in Oman, in MEP design and project coordination, with Oman D/L. Contact +968 97890503

Service engineer with 3 yrs gulf experience seeks job. Contact -92225082 Email- nithisraj333@gmail.com

ENGINEER

Mechanical Engineer having piping experience & completed Masters in supply chain management & logistics from UK, seeking Job opportunities, having 6 yrs of experience. Contact : 91251757. Email: jighilthooprath@gmail.com

Seeking opportunities, telecom (RF) & fiber optic engineer (7+ yrs). Ex-Nokia, Huawei. expert in 4G/5G RF planning, optimization, and fiber management. Seeking Oman roles. Available immediately. Contact +9687182 2875. Email: Shamnadh1@gmail.com

ENGINEER

Sudanese Civil engineer with over 17 yrs of experience, including 1 year in Oman seeking a position in Project management or any administrative role. OSE membership and a valid Omani D/L. Contact: 92323037

IT

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

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FIFA selling the field for the final in \$450 pieces



EAST RUTHERFORD: Even the field for the World Cup final is for sale. FIFA, accused of charging high prices for this year's tournament in the United States, is selling the grass that will be used for the July 19 final at MetLife Stadium in New Jersey at \$450 per piece. FIFA's store says each segment of turf is 17.5 by 17.5 by 17.5, although it doesn't specify whether that figure is inches, centimetres or millimetres. Football's governing body did not immediately respond to an email requesting detail of the dimensions. "Own a genuine piece of football history with an authentic 2026 FIFA World Cup Piece of the pitch, permanently preserved in a premium acrylic with a USB keepsake," the website says. "Each piece contains an original fragment of the iconic Final playing surface, making it a unique collectible that celebrates one of the world's greatest sporting events." FIFA said "the acrylic USB features an authenticity film, while offering a sleek, contemporary display piece. Presented in a premium hinged shoulder box with striking spot UV detailing, this exclusive item is designed for collectors, fans, and football enthusiasts alike." FIFA is making the turf available to send only to addresses in the United States and Europe. "Orders will not be shipped until after the FIFA World Cup 2026 Final," the governing body said. FIFA is selling regular tickets for the final at up to \$32,970 for the final and is asking \$34,500 and \$32,500 for hospitality tickets that include food and drinks.

Death threats against Colombian midfielder Campaz condemned



BOGOTA: The Colombian football federation on Friday condemned death threats directed at midfielder Jaminton Campaz and his family following the national team's elimination from the World Cup. Colombia's tournament ended Tuesday in a penalty shootout loss to Switzerland in the round of 16. During extra time, Campaz — who plays for Argentine club Rosario Central — missed when his shot went wide. After the match, the player's social media accounts were flooded with negative comments and threats. He decided to limit comments on his social media and, as a precaution, did not take the return flight to his home country with his teammates. "No athlete, nor any member of their inner circle, should be subjected to intimidation for representing their country in a sporting arena," the federation said in a statement. On Instagram, Campaz shared a photo of himself covering his face in frustration, alongside a plea for respect. "Football is also made up of difficult moments," he wrote. "My Colombia, please let us never lose sight of respect. We may think differently or feel frustration and sadness, but no reason justifies hatred or living in fear." The threats evoke a dark chapter in Colombian football history. During the 1994 World Cup in the United States, defender Andrés Escobar scored an own-goal in a 2-1 loss to the host nation. Days after the team was eliminated and returned home, Escobar was murdered in Medellín.

Portugal hire Jesus to replace Martinez as their new coach



LISBON: Portugal announced Jorge Jesus as their new coach on Friday following their disappointing run at the World Cup. The 71-year-old Jesus has coached several Portuguese clubs, including Benfica and Sporting Lisbon. His last job was with Al Nassr in the Saudi Arabian league, where he coached Portugal star Cristiano Ronaldo. The experienced Portuguese coach will replace Spaniard Roberto Martinez after Portugal lost 1-0 to Spain in the round-of-16 of the World Cup. The Portuguese national team wrote on X on Friday that "A new journey begins today. Welcome to the National Team, Mister Jorge Jesus." The hiring of Jesus as coach came two days after the Portuguese federation said it was parting ways with Martinez. Ronaldo, the leading scorer for men's international soccer with 146 goals, said that this was his final World Cup. But the global star has yet to say when he plans to retire from international play. He will be 43 by the time the 2028 European Championship, the next major tournament, rolls around. Jesus, who called Ronaldo a "symbol" of Portuguese sports on Friday, said that he still needs to talk with him about his future. "That's a conversation we're both going to have. What does he want to do for the future of his career?" Jesus told reporters at his presentation that was held shortly after the announcement of his hiring. Ronaldo is under contract with his Saudi club through 2027.

England's Quansah handed two-match suspension

ATLANTA: England defender Jarell Quansah was handed a two-match suspension on Thursday for his red card offense against Mexico in the World Cup round of 16. That means Quansah will miss England's quarter-final match against Norway in Miami Gardens on Saturday and also the semi-finals if Thomas Tuchel's team advances. Quansah was sent off in the second half of England's 3-2 victory against Mexico on Sunday for a dangerous foul on Jesus Gallardo. FIFA confirmed the two-match suspension for serious foul play. Quansah's prolonged extension is the latest issue for Tuchel to contend with at right back. - Agencies

Merino stars again as Spain edge Belgium to set up a blockbuster clash with France



Supersub scored the decisive goal in the 88th minute after Belgian backup goalkeeper Senne Lammens spilled the ball into his path for his team's 2-1 victory

INGLEWOOD: Mikel Merino is Spain's World Cup hero once again. Just four days after he scored a clutch goal as a substitute in injury time to beat Portugal, Merino found himself in the right spot again in the quarter-finals when Belgium's backup goalkeeper spilled the ball into his path. Merino booted it home in the 88th minute, sending Spain to a 2-1 victory on Friday and into a titanic semi-final showdown with tournament favourite France. "I've done this again, and it's happened to me again, so it would seem that coincidence exists," a smiling Merino said. "If you're ready and you try, I guess it can happen for you." Already a versatile contributor in any role he can get as a depth player for his country or English club Arsenal, the multi-positional Merino has transformed into the ultimate super-sub while providing exactly what Spain needed to survive two knockout matches against top opponents. Merino has scored two goals in his first World Cup — and they're both historic. "Honestly, it's crazy to be able to help the team once again," he said. "This time in a different way, but at the same time to believe and trust that the opposing goalkeeper could make a mistake and to stay alert. ... I prepare for when the moment comes, and hopefully they keep coming." Merino is the first to admit he also needed luck, and Belgium keeper Senne Lammens provided it after being forced into his first World Cup match in the 71st minute by an injury to starter

Thibaut Courtois. Merino came on in the 86th minute and scored on his second touch of the match, charging into the box and pouncing after Lammens lost control of Pau Cubarsi's long shot. Fabián Ruiz scored a rebound goal in the 30th minute for Spain, but Belgium forward Charles De Ketelaere evened it with the first goal allowed by the Spanish team in the entire World Cup in the 41st minute. Merino's clutch goal against an upset-minded Belgium sent La Roja to the semi-finals for the first time since they won the World Cup in 2010. A powerhouse matchup with France has been anticipated since the draw was announced late last year, and Spain were grateful to secure their spot. "We came here for this, to play against the best teams in the world," Merino said. "We are confident in our possibilities, while respecting the opposition. This is one of those games you dream of as a kid, and now we have the chance to compete against a massive rival. Hopefully we'll get the win." Spain and France will meet Tuesday in Arlington, Texas, in a matchup anticipated for years. Neither team has lost at this year's World Cup. "It will be a clash of giants,"



BELGIUM GOALKEEPERS

'You only get stronger': Courtois backs Lammens after Spain heartbreak

INGLEWOOD: Thibaut Courtois backed Belgium substitute goalkeeper Senne Lammens after his late error gifted Spain a 2-1 victory in their World Cup quarter-finals on Friday. Courtois was forced off in the 71st minute with a muscular problem, making way for the 24-year-old Lammens at the SoFi Stadium in Los Angeles. Lammens' appearance ended painfully when he failed to deal with Pau Cubarsi's long-range strike, allowing Mikel Merino to pounce and score Spain's 88th-minute winner. "I gave him a big hug. He's a great goalkeeper. You only get stronger from this," Courtois said. "He is a strong guy with a strong personality. I'm sure he'll be fine. He will have some holidays, then regroup in Manchester and have a great season." Courtois revealed he had felt



LOST TO ARGENTINA IN LAST 16

Hundreds welcome Salah's Egypt home after best World Cup run

EL-ALAMEIN: Thousands of fans turned out to greet Egypt's national football team on its return home Friday after its World Cup adventure ended with a 3-2 loss to Argentina in the knockout stage of the tournament. Crowds gathered at the El-Alamein airport, waving photos of star player Mohamed Salah and holding signs celebrating the team's achievements as they cheered the players' return. Egypt made it to the last 16 teams in the tournament for the first time after beating Australia 4-2 on penalty kicks, led by Salah. The players are expected to meet with Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi, who thanked the team in a Facebook statement on Tuesday "for their honourable performance and for achieving an unprecedented milestone in the history of Egyptian football." Emotions ran high across Egypt on Tuesday as supporters gathered in coffee shops, homes and public squares to watch the match against Argentina, with Egyptian flags



draped from balconies, storefronts and streets. The Egyptian Football Association, or EFA, said that it's deeply dissatisfied with the refereeing in Tuesday's match and decisions related to the Video Assistant Referee, or VAR system. "Defending the rights and interests of the Egyptian national team is not a matter that can be ignored, minimised, or treated as secondary," the EFA said in a statement. In a statement issued later,

SEMI-FINAL SHOWDOWN



Yamal says France should fear Spain

INGLEWOOD: Lamine Yamal thinks France should be afraid of Spain as the European giants head to a World Cup semi-final showdown on Tuesday. "I believe if France has to fear anyone, it should be us, in my opinion," the teenage sensation told broadcast reporters after Spain beat Belgium 2-1 on Friday to secure their first semi-final berth since 2010. "We were the ones who knocked them out before." Spain beat France in the 2024 European Championship semi-finals and again in Nations League play last year. Yamal became the youngest player to score in the continental competition. The powerhouses meet again at the Dallas Cowboys' home stadium next week for a spot in the final. "We don't fear anyone," said Yamal, who was named the man of the match against Belgium. "It's clear that we are two great teams, world-class national teams, and for me they are one of the best. We'll see what happens." France have made the past two World Cup finals, winning them all in 2018. Spain have made only one World Cup final in their history, but the current team is unbeaten in 37 consecutive competitive matches since March 2023 — a stretch that also includes a loss on penalties to Portugal in the Nations League final last year. Spain coach Luis de la Fuente has been asked by the international media about this potential showdown with France throughout the tournament, but particularly since the start of the knockout rounds two weeks ago. He has been uniformly complimentary of Les Bleus while echoing his own players' confidence. "Let me be clear: We are not finished," de la Fuente said. "We are pleased to be in the semi-finals, but we want more. ... We are capable of winning this game, and not just now, but I would have said this a few weeks ago as well." Yamal, who turns 19 on Monday, has only one goal and no assists while putting 10 shots on target in his first World Cup, but his playmaking and activity down the right side of Spain's attack have been noticeable in almost every match. He started the sequence that led to Spain's first goal against Belgium in a two-man game with Pedro Porro, eventually leading to Fabián Ruiz's rebound goal off Dani Olmo's shot. Yamal said his modest statistics don't bother him, noting that he also scored only one goal (with four assists) while Spain won the European Championship two years ago. Yamal cited Spain's acumen in ball possession — a stat they've repeatedly dominated during this World Cup — as a way to take France out of its preferred style of play. "I think we were much better, (than Belgium)," Yamal said. "It seems like we're playing very beautiful football, but in reality, there isn't a team that plays against us on equal footing. Everyone drops back, and that makes it more difficult. Nobody has gone toe-to-toe with us. But in the end, we secured the win." - Agencies



the head of refereeing for football's world governing body FIFA, Pierluigi Collina, said the debate over decisions is a natural part of football, but stressed that "unfounded allegations have no place in our sport." "Nobody can question the integrity of the FIFA World Cup match officials," he said. "When this happens, it may provoke reactions that lead to threats against them and their families. This is not right." - Agencies

At least 15 Indian tourists dead after boat capsizes near island off Vietnam

A boat owner involved in the rescue operation said his vessel reached the site within about five minutes, but rescue efforts were hampered as several passengers were trapped inside the overturned speedboat



PHU QUOC [Vietnam]: At least 15 people, including Indian tourists, were killed after a speedboat carrying 36 people capsized near Vietnam's Phu Quoc Island on Saturday, according to Vietnamese newspaper VN Express.

According to VN Express, citing authorities in the Phu Quoc Special Economic Zone, the speedboat, operated by Ocean Pear Island Company, was ferrying tourists from Hon May Rut Islet to An Thoi Port, around 25 kilometres from Phu Quoc Airport, when it overturned in the afternoon, throwing all those on board into the sea.

According to the news report, nearby tourist boats rushed to the scene after spotting the capsized vessel.

A boat owner involved in the rescue operation said his vessel reached the site within about five minutes, but rescue efforts were hampered as several passengers

were trapped inside the overturned speedboat, VN Express reported.

By Saturday late afternoon, rescuers had brought all 36 passengers ashore.

21 people survived, while 15 others - comprising two women and 13 men - were confirmed dead, VN Express reported.

The Embassy of India in Vietnam said that, as per information received from official sources, 32 Indian tourists were on board the boat that capsized near Phu Quoc Island.

"As per information received from official sources, the following 32 Indian tourists were onboard the boat which capsized near Phu Quoc Island in Vietnam a few hours ago," the Embassy said in a post on X.

There were three crew members and one flight attendant apart from the 32 Indians onboard the boat.

In a previous post, the Embassy

confirmed the incident and also announced that a control room has been established at the Consulate General of India in Ho Chi Minh City to provide information and assistance to the affected families.

"In a tragic incident, a boat carrying several Indian tourists has capsized near Phu Quoc Island in Vietnam a few hours ago. Exact details of the incident are being ascertained as search and rescue operations by local authorities are ongoing," the post read.

It added that the control room can be reached at +84 36 281 7930, +84 915523714 and +84 33 452 0414.

Additionally, another control room has been set up in Hanoi and can be contacted at +84 91 308 9165 for assistance and queries.

Indian PM Modi condoles loss of lives in Vietnam boat capsizes

Meanwhile, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday ex-

pressed grief over the loss of lives, including that of Indian tourists, in the boat capsizing incident near Vietnam's Phu Quoc Island, extending his sincere condolences to the bereaved families.

In a post on X, the Prime Minister said he was "extremely saddened" by the tragic accident and assured that the Indian Embassy and Consulate were providing all possible assistance to those affected.

"Extremely saddened to learn about the tragic news of a boat accident involving Indian nationals near Phu Quoc, Vietnam. My sincere condolences to the families who lost their loved ones. My prayers for the early recovery of the injured survivors. Our Embassy and Consulate are providing all possible assistance. Our officials are also in close contact with the Vietnamese authorities," PM Modi posted on X.

At least 15 people, including In-

dian tourists, were killed after a speedboat carrying 36 people capsized near Vietnam's Phu Quoc Island on Saturday, according to Vietnamese newspaper VN Express.

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Tourists from Telangana, Andhra Pradesh among 15 killed in Vietnam boat capsized

Meanwhile, in Hyderabad Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy on Saturday directed officials to coordinate with the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and the Indian Embassy in Vietnam to expedite relief measures following a boat accident.

Vietnamese authorities have confirmed 15 fatalities--13 men and 2 women--all Indian tourists, said Arja Srikanth, Special Commissioner, AP Bhavan, New Delhi. He confirmed that demise of two Andhra Pradesh residents - Gelli Jayalakshmi from Machilipatnam and Mudium Sridhat from Kadapa.

At least 15 people, including Indian tourists, were killed after a speedboat carrying 36 people capsized near Vietnam's Phu Quoc Island on Saturday, according to Vietnamese newspaper VN Express.

According to the Telangana Chief Minister's Office (CMO), Reddy expressed profound shock over reports that tourists from the Telugu states were among those killed in the accident.

— ANI

OIL INFRASTRUCTURE



Ukrainian drone strikes ignite fires at Russian oil sites

KYIV: Ukrainian drone attacks sparked fires at an oil refinery, fuel depots and a port in southern Russia, local officials said on Friday, forcing residents to evacuate affected areas.

The latest strikes have hit Russia's oil infrastructure after President Vladimir Putin acknowledged that the repeated attacks were causing fuel shortages across the country.

Officials said the Ilsky refinery in the Krasnodar region caught fire after drone debris fell across the surrounding Severskaya district, including into the courtyard of a private home.

The refinery, which can process around 138,000 barrels of oil a day, has been targeted several times before.

In the neighboring Rostov region, firefighters battled blazes at two fuel depots in the Azov district and at the Taganrog sea port, Governor Yuri Slyusar said on Telegram.

The Kyiv Post newspaper said early reports suggested the fire was at Taganrog's Kurganefteprodukt oil terminal, which unloads and loads petroleum products onto sea-going vessels.

Taganrog Mayor Svetlana Kambulova said residents were evacuated from homes in the affected areas. A private house was damaged, while the roof of an ad-

ministrative building caught fire.

Local authorities reported no injuries.

Russian authorities frequently attribute fires and damage following drone attacks to falling debris from intercepted drones. Ukrainian and independent accounts often describe the same incidents as successful direct strikes.

Ukraine has intensified attacks on Russian energy and other infrastructure in recent months in an effort to weaken Moscow's ability to finance and sustain its war.

Repeated strikes on Russian refineries have contributed to fuel shortages, long lines at filling stations and higher prices across the country.

Putin last month said a task force was working to ease the fuel shortages, while saying the problems were "not of a critical nature."

Kyiv describes the strikes as retaliation for Russia's near-daily attacks on Ukrainian civilians and energy infrastructure since Moscow launched its full-scale invasion in February 2022.

Russia's Defence Ministry said air defense units intercepted 376 Ukrainian drones overnight, including aircraft approaching the Moscow region.

— DW

EAST ASIA

Typhoon Bavi batters Taiwan, Japan

TAIPEI: Typhoon Bavi caused severe disruption across East Asia on Saturday, as it battered Japan's southern islands with heavy rain and strong winds, and brought life in Taiwan to a near standstill.

The storm, which began as a "super typhoon" over the US Pacific territories of Guam and the Northern Marianas last week, also triggered floods and landslides in the Philippines, killing at least 17 people, while nine were missing in the southern island of Mindanao.

Ten people died in a landslide in the town of Malapatan in the province of Sarangani, while two drowned in Bukidnon province. Five others died in a landslide in Lanao del Sur, the Philippines' meteorological agency said, adding that at least four people were injured in landslides.

Over 500,000 have been affected by the storm, with more than 11,000 forced from their homes.

Thousands without power in Japan

In Japan's Okinawa prefecture, the storm lashed the Sakishima island chain with sustained winds of 144 kilometres (90 miles) per hour.

More than 24,000 households have lost power, while 345 flights have been canceled and ferry services have been suspended.

Winds, heavy rainfall batter Taipei

In Taiwan, the typhoon has



prompted the "evacuation of more than 10,000 people at risk from landslides and left over 150,000 households without power," DW's Taiwan correspondent Rik Glauert said.

Authorities cancelled more than 1,100 domestic and international flights, while schools and offices were closed for two days.

Taiwanese authorities have also closed schools and offices for two days.

Although the storm has been downgraded from a super typhoon as it has moved westwards,

"winds exceeding 100 kph and more than a meter of rainfall are battering the capital Taipei, toppling trees and power lines, swelling rivers and causing localised flooding," Glauert reported.

China braces for landfall

The storm is expected to continue weakening as it heads towards China's southeast coast, where it could bring a lot of heavy rain, "causing more problems for China as it still reels from widespread flooding after a typhoon last week," Glauert said.

Bavi was forecast to strike China's eastern coast near Wenzhou early on Sunday.

Chinese authorities issued flood alerts and evacuated more than 600,000 people on Saturday in vulnerable areas ahead of Typhoon Bavi hitting Wenzhou.

Meanwhile, Beijing and several northern provinces were also braced for heavy rainfall.

In southeastern Fuzhou City, authorities rushed emergency teams to trim trees along key roads to reduce the risk of falling trees during high winds. — DW

DETAILS BEING WORKED OUT

Nepal PM's pending India visit to take place 'soon'

KATHMANDU: Nepal Prime Minister Balendra Shah's pending visit to India is expected to take place "very soon", with both sides currently working out the details, sources in Kathmandu told ANI.

Balendra Shah, popularly known as Balen, has accepted an invitation from Prime Minister Narendra Modi to visit New Delhi. However, the dates of the visit are yet to be finalised.

"The visit will take place very

soon. We are discussing all aspects of the visit, but nothing has been finalised so far," the sources told ANI.

When asked about the agenda, the sources declined to comment, saying discussions on the visit are still underway.

The visit would mark the Prime Minister's first trip to India since assuming office in March 2026. Notably, he has not visited either India or China since taking office,

departing from the long-standing practice of newly appointed Nepali prime ministers making one of the two neighbours their first bilateral destination. Instead, Nepal's Foreign Minister Shishir Khanal undertook visits to both countries.

Last month, Foreign Minister Khanal visited India at the invitation of External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar.

During the visit, the two sides reviewed the entire spectrum of

India-Nepal relations, including development cooperation, connectivity, trade and transit, energy, and people-to-people ties.

72 health facilities

Among the key outcomes of the visit, India handed over 72 health facilities and 12 cultural heritage projects completed under its post-2015 Earthquake Reconstruction Assistance programme.

— ANI



LIFESTYLE

Childhood junk food can rewire brain for life: Study



Consuming large amounts of junk food early in life may cause lasting changes in the brain, even if a person later adopts a healthier diet. Scientists discovered that diets high in fat and sugar altered eating habits and affected brain regions responsible for controlling appetite.

However, some beneficial gut bacteria and prebiotic fibres showed potential in reversing part of these effects. According to a new study from University College Cork (UCC), Children who regularly eat high-fat, high-sugar foods may experience lasting changes in the brain that continue long after their diets improve.

Researchers also found that beneficial gut bacteria and prebiotic fibres could

help reduce some of these long-term effects and support healthier eating behaviours later in life.

Scientists at APC Microbiome, a leading research centre based at UCC, discovered that unhealthy diets during early life can alter how the brain controls appetite and feeding. These changes persisted even after the unhealthy diet ended and body weight returned to normal.

Today's children are surrounded by highly processed foods that are heavily marketed and easy to access. Sugary and fatty foods have become common at birthday parties, school events, sports activities, and even as rewards for good behaviour.

Researchers say this constant exposure may shape food preferences from an early

According to a new study from University College Cork (UCC), Children who regularly eat high-fat, high-sugar foods may experience lasting changes in the brain that continue long after their diets improve

age and encourage eating habits that continue into adulthood.

The study, which was published in Nature Communications, found that early exposure to calorie-dense, nutrient-poor foods can leave lasting effects on feeding behaviour.

Researchers used a preclinical mouse model and found that animals exposed to a high-fat, high-sugar diet early in life showed persistent changes in eating behaviour as adults.

The team linked these behavioural effects to disruptions in the hypothalamus, a brain region responsible for regulating appetite and energy balance.

The research also explored whether targeting the gut microbiome could help counter these effects. Scientists tested a

beneficial bacterial strain (Bifidobacterium longum APC1472) along with prebiotic fibres (fructo-oligosaccharides (FOS) and galacto-oligosaccharides (GOS), naturally present in foods such as onions, garlic, leeks, asparagus and bananas, and widely available in fortified foods and prebiotic supplements).

According to the findings, both approaches showed potential benefits when given throughout life.

Gut Bacteria May Help Restore Healthy Eating Patterns

"Our findings show that what we eat early in life really matters," said Dr. Cristina Cuesta-Marti, first author of the study.

"Early dietary exposure may leave hidden, long-term effects on feeding behaviour that are not immediately visible

through weight alone," added Dr. Cristina Cuesta-Marti.

Researchers found that unhealthy diets early in life disrupted brain pathways linked to feeding behaviour, with effects continuing into adulthood. The findings suggest this could raise the risk of obesity later in life.

Scientists also found that modifying the gut microbiota helped reduce these long-term effects. The probiotic strain Bifidobacterium longum APC1472 significantly improved feeding behaviour while causing only minor changes to the overall microbiome, suggesting a highly targeted effect. Meanwhile, the prebiotic combination (FOS+GOS) produced broader changes across the gut microbiome. **ANI**

ROUND-UP

Lulu expands its presence in Oman, opens new store in Salalah

Strategically located to serve Salalah’s growing urban residential communities, the new Xpress store spans 3,000 square metres and offers a thoughtfully curated range of products to meet customers’ everyday needs

SALALAH: Lulu has further expanded its presence in the Sultanate of Oman with the official opening of a new Lulu Xpress store in Al Morooj, Salalah.

The store was officially inaugurated by Sheikh Dr. Said Bin Humaid Bin Abdullah Al Harthi, (Wali of the wilayat of Salalah), in the presence of Shabeer K.A., Director of Lulu Oman, along with other dignitaries and senior officials.

Strategically located to serve Salalah’s growing urban residential communities, the new Xpress store spans 3,000 square metres and offers a thoughtfully curated range of products to meet customers’ everyday needs. The store also features dedicated self-checkout kiosks, express counters, and ample parking facilities, ensuring a convenient and hassle-free shopping experience for shoppers.

“The opening of the Lulu Xpress store in Salalah underscores our commitment to expanding our footprint across the Sultanate of Oman while offering customers



greater convenience and accessibility. This expansion also creates new employment opportunities and contributes to the continued economic development of the region,” said Shabeer K.A., Director

of Lulu Oman. This marks another step in Lulu’s ongoing efforts to bring modern, accessible, and customer-focused retail experiences closer to communities across the region.



FOR CORPORATE CUSTOMERS

Bank Muscat organises workshop on Climate Risk and Sustainability



MUSCAT: As part of its ongoing efforts to enhance awareness of global economic and financial developments and support its corporate customers, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, organised a specialised workshop on “Climate Risk and Sustainability”. The workshop brought together a number of the bank’s corporate and institutional customers representing various economic sectors.

The workshop forms part of Bank Muscat’s continued efforts to implement its Climate Risk Management Framework and strengthen sustainability practices in line with the regulatory requirements of the Central Bank of Oman, national objectives under Oman Net Zero by 2050 strategy and international best practices. It also aims to support corporate customers in understanding the growing impact of climate-related risks on businesses, the financial sector, and the broader economy.

The event featured a series of presentations delivered by experts from True North Partners, covering key sustainability concepts and Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) principles highlighting the importance of integrating these considerations into business strategies. Participants were also introduced to practical case studies demonstrating how ESG practices can

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enhance organisational performance, strengthen risk management capabilities and support sustainable growth.

The workshop further explored the rapid developments taking place across the global financial sector in relation to climate risk management, emphasising the importance of preparing organisations to meet future requirements concerning sustainability disclosures and climate-related risk assessments. These efforts contribute to strengthening long-term business resilience and sustainability.

Commenting on the initiative, Afaf bint Ali Moosa, Assistant General Manager, Large Corporates, Bank Muscat said: “At Bank Muscat, we are committed to organising knowledge-sharing initiatives that reinforce our partnership with customers by providing innovative banking solutions and services and also by equipping them with valuable insights that enable them to navigate today’s rapidly evolving economic and financial landscape. This workshop comes at a time when sustainability and climate risks are becoming increasingly important factors influencing business, investment and financing decisions. We remain committed to advancing our sustainability agenda by developing a comprehensive climate risk management framework aligned with regulatory requirements and international best practices. We firmly believe that the success of these efforts depends on continuous collaboration with our customers and partners to enhance

awareness, build capabilities, prepare for future challenges, and transform them into opportunities for growth and innovation.” The workshop conducted by True North Partners, UK also featured interactive discussions between participants and industry experts on the key challenges and opportunities associated with the transition towards a more sustainable economy. Discussions highlighted the role of financial institutions and businesses in supporting this transition as well as the importance of embedding ESG considerations into business models and future growth strategies. Bank Muscat continues to implement a wide range of initiatives and programmes aimed at embedding sustainability principles and promoting responsible business practices across all aspects of its operations. As a trusted banking partner, the bank remains committed to supporting the Sultanate’s sustainable development objectives and Oman Vision 2040. The bank also reaffirms its commitment to organising specialised awareness programmes and knowledge-sharing events that enable customers to stay informed of the latest developments in the financial and economic sectors while fostering the exchange of expertise and strengthening the readiness of businesses to adapt to future changes.

COMPACT SUV



Kia Seltos targets families and young professionals

MUSCAT: The Kia Seltos continues to stand out across the Sultanate as a stylish and practical compact SUV, perfectly suited for young office-goers, and small families seeking comfort, technology, and everyday versatility.

Designed for both daily commutes and weekend outings, the Seltos offers a commanding SUV driving position that provides excellent visibility and confidence on busy city roads. Powered by a refined 1.4L Turbo engine producing 138 horsepower, paired with a smooth 7-speed Dual-Clutch Transmission (7-DCT), the Seltos delivers responsive performance alongside impressive fuel efficiency of 17 km/litre.

Kia also has another variant of the Seltos, which comes with a 1.5L engine, producing 113 horsepower, with advanced features including Smart Cruise Control, Electronic Stability Program (ESP) etc. Inside, the spacious five-seater

cabin is built for comfort and convenience, featuring generous legroom, a panoramic sunroof, ventilated front seats, and a practical 429-litre boot ideal for everyday family and lifestyle needs.

The Seltos also offers a connected and tech-forward driving experience with an 8-inch display audio system supporting Apple CarPlay and Android Auto, wireless charging, ambient lighting, and advanced convenience features including Smart Key Entry, rear-view monitor, electronic parking brake, and Parking Distance Warning (PDW) sensors.

Reliable International Automotive (RIA), the official distributor for Kia in Oman, continues to deliver an exceptional ownership experience. Ranked #1 by Kia in 2024 for Sales Customer Satisfaction in the Middle East and Africa, RIA remains committed to offering outstanding products and customer care across the Sultanate.



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