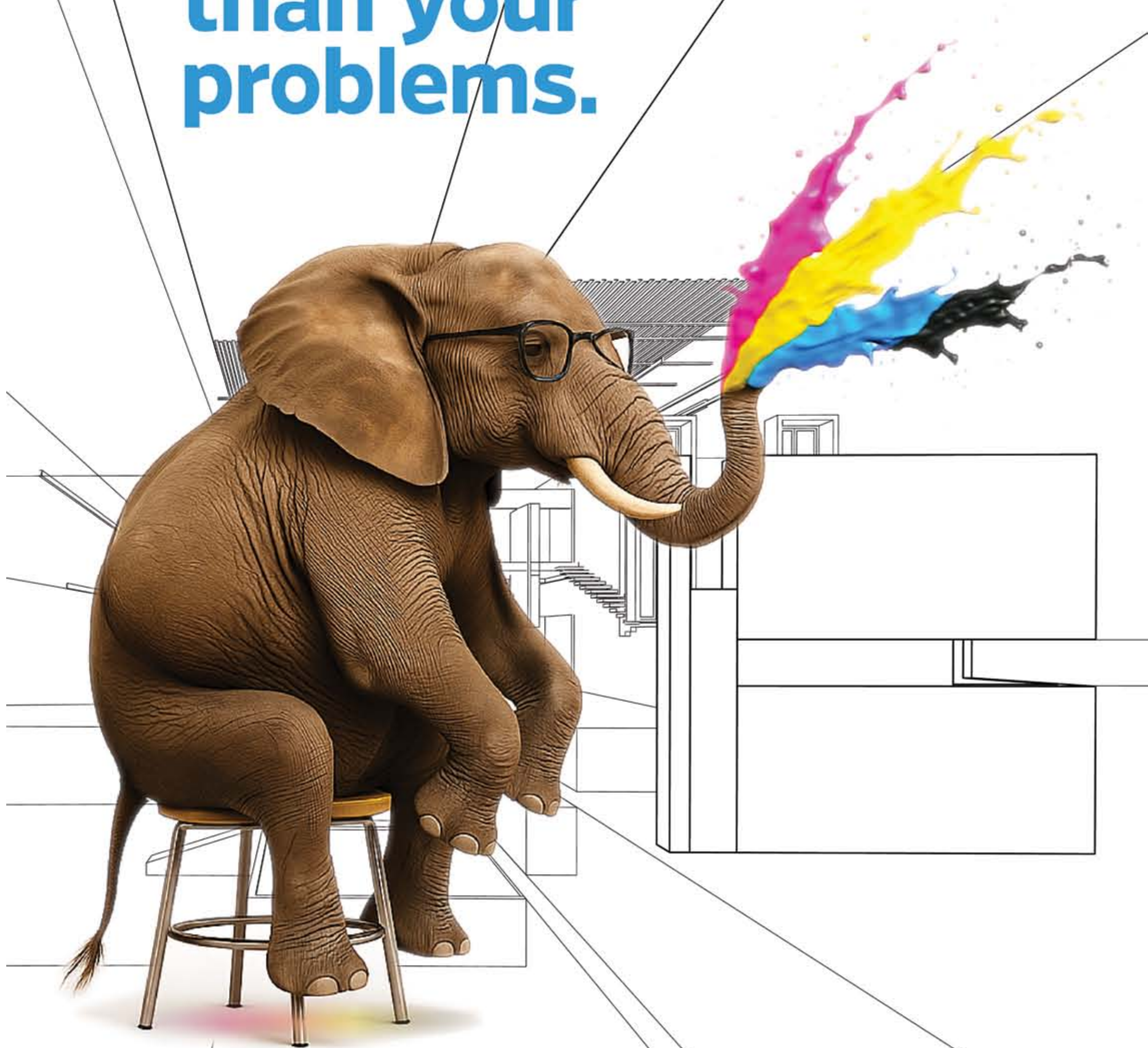


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COMMENTARY

After 250 years, is the United States entering an era of imperial decline?

History shows that transitions in leadership among great powers have never been sudden events or the result of a single crisis.

Rather, they are the culmination of a long historical process in which internal transformations interact with international developments. Empires do not lose their status because of one military defeat or a temporary economic slowdown. They decline when their ability to convert economic, military, and technological resources into sustainable political influence weakens, and when the foundations of their domestic and international legitimacy begin to erode.

From this perspective, the central question in strategic studies is no longer whether the United States still possesses the world's most powerful military or one of its largest economies. Instead, it is whether America can preserve the structural foundations that have underpinned its global dominance since the end of the Cold War. Hegemony is not based solely on possessing instruments of power; it also depends on the ability to use them effectively, maintain the legitimacy of international leadership, and balance external commitments with domestic stability.

When Francis Fukuyama published his thesis on the "End of History" in 1992, the United States was at the height of its strategic supremacy. The

collapse of the Soviet Union had created a unipolar international system, and the liberal democratic model appeared to represent the final framework for organizing international relations. Yet that period proved to be an exceptional historical moment rather than a permanent law governing the evolution of the international order.

Over the following three decades, global power dynamics underwent profound transformation. China emerged as a formidable economic, technological, and geopolitical competitor.

Russia regained a significant measure of its military and diplomatic influence. At the same time, regional powers acquired increasing capacity to shape developments within their own strategic environments. Foremost among them is Iran, which, despite sanctions and sustained international pressure, has established itself as an influential regional power by expanding its military and missile capabilities and strengthening its political and security influence across several Middle Eastern arenas.

As a result, Iran has become an indispensable actor in many of the region's strategic calculations. This reality reflects the growing autonomy of regional powers and the declining ability of any single global power to monopolise the management of international balances.

Nevertheless, the most significant challenge to America's



future lies not only in the rise of its competitors, but also in its own internal structural transformations. Political polarisation has evolved beyond conventional partisan rivalry into a deeper conflict over the nature of the state, constitutional interpretation, the limits of federal authority, and the meaning of national identity. This reflects a weakening of the political and social consensus that has historically been one of America's greatest sources of strength.

These developments coincide with a rapidly growing national debt, the rising costs of maintaining a global military presence, intense competition in advanced technologies, the restructuring of global supply chains, and broader shifts within the international economy. While these trends do not necessarily signal an imminent economic collapse, they indicate that maintaining global leadership has become far more costly and complex than at any previ-

ous time.

At the same time, traditional instruments of hegemony are no longer producing the same outcomes they achieved in previous decades. Economic sanctions, military interventions, and political pressure are increasingly encountering limitations in a world gradually moving toward multiple centers of power. Moreover, the excessive use of force—or the abandonment of the legal and institutional commitments that the United States itself helped establish after the Second World War—erodes the legitimacy of American leadership and weakens confidence in the international order it has long championed. History demonstrates that legitimacy is no less important than power itself; when power becomes detached from legitimacy, it gradually transforms from an instrument of dominance into a source of strategic exhaustion.

From a theoretical perspective, the ideas of Ibn Khaldun

remain remarkably relevant in interpreting this stage. He argued that states reach the height of their strength when they possess a unifying social cohesion (asabiyyah) that binds society around a common political project. Decline begins when those bonds of solidarity weaken and internal divisions outweigh national consensus. This perspective resonates with Oswald Spengler's theory of the life cycle of civilizations, Arnold Toynbee's argument that civilizations endure only when their elites successfully respond to historical challenges, and Paul Kennedy's thesis that imperial overstretch transforms the very sources of power into burdens when external commitments exceed the economy's capacity to sustain them.

Viewed through these theoretical frameworks, the United States faces a historic test that is not defined by the magnitude of its current power, but by its ability to renew the foundations of that power, restore domestic cohesion, and redefine its international role within a strategic environment characterized by multiple centers of influence and the growing independence and influence of both global and regional powers.

Accordingly, the more important question is not whether the United States will collapse—a question that cannot be answered with certainty—but whether it can adapt to the struc-

tural transformations reshaping the international system, renew its institutions, and reconcile power with legitimacy in the conduct of its foreign policy.

The future of the international order will not be determined solely by the extent of American power, but by the ability of both major and regional powers to forge new strategic balances. If the United States succeeds in renewing its domestic project and adapting its strategy to this changing reality, it may well remain the world's most influential power, even if it is no longer the sole dominant one. If, however, current structural trends continue without meaningful reform, the world may gradually evolve toward a genuinely multipolar order in which major powers, alongside rising regional actors such as Iran, play increasingly significant roles in shaping global security, politics, and economics.

Ultimately, the issue is not predicting the collapse of the United States, but understanding whether it has entered a phase of imperial decline—a stage in which a state transitions from unchallenged hegemony to competition within a more balanced and multipolar international system. History grants no nation permanent supremacy, but it does offer every great power the opportunity to rebuild the foundations of its strength before international transformations impose a new reality.

HEALTHCARE SERVICES

Medical City for military to get robot for surgery

MUSCAT: The Medical City for Military and Security Services on Tuesday signed an agreement to acquire a modern robotic surgery system.

The agreement seeks to develop the Medical City's healthcare services and adopt the latest global medical technologies.

3D vision

The new system provides advanced technologies, including high-resolution 3D vision and robotic arms that give the surgeon greater accuracy during operations.

It also improves clinical outcomes, expands the volume of treatment solutions and supports the training of medical and technical staff.

The agreement is in pursuance of the Medical City's ongoing efforts to enhance its medical and operational capabilities and consolidate its position as a



leading health institution that offers world-standard treatment services. It is also in line with the

objectives of Oman Vision 2040 to establish an advanced and sustainable health sector. -ONA

Forum focuses on consumer compliance

The forum's activities included working papers about legal awareness, the services offered to entrepreneurs by the Consumer Protection Authority



BAHLA: The Consumer Protection Authority's (CPA) department on Tuesday organised the second edition of the Traders and Entrepreneurs Forum under the slogan "Partnership and compliance for a safe shopping environment".

The forum, which took place at the premises of the Omani Women's Association in Bahla, was organised in cooperation with the office of the Wali of Bahla, the Department of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate and the Omani Women's Association in the Wilayat of Bahla.

The forum's activities included

working papers about legal awareness, the services offered to entrepreneurs by the Consumer Protection Authority and related social insurance programmes.

The forum also looked into the electronic invoicing experience.

Social Protection Fund

It introduced two visual presentations, first of which dealt with the competencies of the Social Protection Fund, while the second elaborated on the SMEs Development Authority's role in supporting the entrepreneurship sector.

An exhibition featuring relevant products was held on the sidelines of the forum.

The forum aimed to enhance

partnership and cooperation between the Consumer Protection Authority, traders and consumers in a manner that ensures transparency and compliance principles as fundamental pillars that support economic growth and sustainability.

It also underlined the need to encourage activate dialogue and integrate regulatory procedures and commercial practices to help consolidate public awareness in developing rational consumer behaviour within a safe and sustainable shopping environment.

The forum's activities were held under the auspices of Sheikh Said bin Ali Al Nu'aimi, Wali of Bahla. -ONA

MEETING

RNO commander receives British military official

MUSCAT: Rear Admiral Saif Nasser Al Rahbi, Commander of the Royal Navy of Oman (RNO), received on Tuesday at his office in Al Murtafa'a Camp, Commodore Dan Thomas, the United Kingdom's (UK) Commander of the Maritime Component Command and Deputy Commander of the Combined Maritime Forces (CMF), and his accompanying delegation.

During the meeting, the Commander of the Royal Navy of Oman and British military official discussed several matters of mutual interest. -ONA





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New Indian digital eOCI card to ease travel for eligible holders in Oman

The electronic upgrade is available immediately for both new applicants and existing cardholders

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Government of India has introduced the Electronic Overseas Citizen of India card, with the new digital system taking effect from 30 June 2026.

The electronic upgrade is available immediately for both new applicants and existing cardholders.

The newly designed card incorporates a range of enhanced security features, enabling individuals to travel and access various essential services smoothly without the absolute necessity of carrying a physical booklet.

Eligible individuals can now easily download their digital card by logging directly into the official portal or by utilising the mobile application.

For the convenience of current travellers, the Indian authorities have confirmed that existing physical booklets will remain completely valid for immigration purposes and all other associated public services, meaning there is no immediate requirement to phase them out.

Under the e-OCI card registration system, a unique OCI registration number will be allotted to the OCI cardholder with lifetime validity, irrespective of subsequent changes in the passport particulars. However, in the case of registration of a spouse of foreign origin of an Indian citizen or spouse of foreign origin of an OCI cardholder under section 7A(1)(d) of the Citizenship Act, 1955, the validity of the e-OCI card registration shall be initially for a period of five years and extension of the validity beyond five years shall be subject to the renewal of the registration beyond five years.

Further, the requirement of re-issuance of the OCI booklet upon issuance of a new passport after attaining the age of 20 years has been dispensed with under the e-OCI card registration system.

However, all OCI cardholders irrespective of age shall be required to update the passport particulars on the online system under OCI Miscellaneous Services whenever a new passport is issued and upload a copy of the new passport containing the photo of the passport holder along with latest photograph on the online system.

An OCI cardholder obtaining a new passport after attaining the age of 20 years shall be required to give his/ her biometric information to the Indian Mission/ Post or FRRO concerned at the time of updation of details on the online system or at the Immigration Post at the time of first entry or departure, as the case may be, after such updation of the details.

Upon updation of the new passport details on the OCI Services Portal, the revised passport particulars shall automatically stand reflected on the e-OCI record, thereby eliminating the requirement for the OCI Cardholder to carry the old passport for verification purposes.

Similarly, all other relevant particulars of the OCI Cardholder shall remain digitally updated in the e-OCI system on a real-time basis, unlike the existing physical booklet system where details remain static unless a fresh booklet is issued.

Indian Embassy in Oman said in a post on X: "The Government of India has introduced Electronic Overseas Citizen of India (e-OCI) Card with effect from 30 June 2026 for both new applicants and existing OCI Card holders.

The e-OCI card can be downloaded by login into OCI portal (<https://ociservices.gov.in>) and through the official 'Indian Visa Su-Swagatam' mobile app."

For more information, visit the Indian Embassy website : <https://www.indemb-oman.gov.in/page/oci-services/>



MEDIA COOPERATION

Information Ministry, AZERTAC sign MoU for cooperation in news



BAKU: The Ministry of Information, represented by Oman News Agency (ONA) and the Azerbaijan State News Agency (AZERTAC) signed on Tuesday a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for cooperation in the field of news and information exchange. This took place on the sidelines of the Shusha Global Media Forum hosted by the Republic of Azerbaijan.

The MoU was signed on behalf of the Omani side by Ibrahim Salim Al Salmi, Director General and Editor-in-Chief of Oman News Agency, while on the Azerbaijani side, it was signed by Vugar Aliyev, Chairman of the Board of the Azerbaijan State News Agency (AZERTAC).

The Memorandum of Understanding aims to strengthen media cooperation between the two agencies, develop professional partnership in the exchange of news and information, serve mutual interests, and contribute to expanding the horizons of media collaboration between the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Azerbaijan.

The MoU encompasses the exchange of news services, photographs, video footage, and news bulletins in both Arabic and English, as well as the exchange of technical information related to news service transmission and reception methods.

It also provides for mutual utilisation of news content from both parties in accordance with applicable editorial policies, and the facilitation of necessary arrangements for correspondents and representatives of the two agencies.

Furthermore, the MoU stipulates the encouragement of exchange in training courses, expert visits, and specialized research in media fields of common interest.

This is intended to enhance institutional cooperation between the two agencies, facilitate the exchange of expertise, develop professional performance, and keep pace with rapid developments in the media sector, thereby supporting the expansion of media cooperation avenues between the two countries.

This Memorandum comes within the framework of the shared commitment to strengthening media relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Azerbaijan, and advancing cooperation between media institutions in both countries, in a manner that serves mutual interests and keeps abreast of developments in media operations.

-ONA

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LE MONDE

Sayyid Badr calls for a balanced review of relations

< FROM A1 Sayyid Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi, the Foreign Minister, said that the recent war revealed the extent to which the policy of containment was an illusion, adding that the sources of greatest danger to Gulf security often stem from decisions made outside the region, particularly from Tel Aviv.

Al Busaidi raised questions regarding how the Gulf security system could be rebuilt in light of these transformations, emphasising that any future structure cannot exclude any of the eight countries bordering the Gulf, namely the six GCC countries, in addition to Iran and Iraq.

He added that each of these countries has vital interests and responsibilities commensurate with its capabilities and priorities; thus, all of them must participate in designing, implementing, and bearing the obligations arising from the new regional system.

He explained that this transition will require frank and perhaps difficult discussions, as well as a review of some of the established norms that have governed regional and international relations for decades, with the aim of distinguishing between partnerships that enhance Gulf security and those that may create vulnerabilities or new sources of tension.

Historic and deep-rooted relations

In this framework, he called for a balanced review of relations with international partners, notably the United States, pointing out that the goal is not to abandon historic and deep-rooted relations, but rather to rebalance them in a manner consistent with the strategic realities revealed by the war.

Constructive role

The Foreign Minister questioned what constructive role friendly nations, including the United States, could play if inclusion, rather than containment, becomes the foundation upon which regional security cooperation is built.

He also stressed that Gulf security cannot be separated from the northwestern Indian Ocean, the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, the Red Sea, and the ports and sea lanes linked to the economic and logistical infrastructure of the region.

He said that the peoples of this vast geographical scope would benefit from the establishment of a legal and practical framework capable of protecting trade and navigation, and promoting sustainable stability and prosperity.

Sayyid Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, described the war as a "disaster," noting that it broke out without a United Nations mandate and did not achieve the goals declared to justify it.

He concluded his article by emphasising that hope remains that the repercussions of the war will lead to an end to the nearly half-century-old policy of containment, paving the way for a more just, realistic, and effective security system in the Gulf region.

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-ONA

SOCIAL EMPOWERMENT

Culture Ministry takes part in Morocco-GCC Forum

CASABLANCA: Represented by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, Oman is taking part in the Moroccan-Gulf forum for economic and social empowerment of Youth, being hosted by the city of Casablanca in the Kingdom of Morocco from 13 to 15 July 2026.

The forum is organised by the Moroccan Ministry of Youth, Culture and Communication, in cooperation with the Secretariat General of GCC states. During the forum, the participants exchange expertise in the field of economic and social empowerment of youth, review pioneering initiatives and enhance the Gulf-Moroccan partnership in capacity building.

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Oman marks World Youth Skills Day with focus on empowering future generations

Oman's commitment to investing in youth skills is reflected in national programmes implemented by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, tailored to enhance young people's readiness for future



learning in a non-traditional training environment. Since its launch in 2022, it has reached more than 2,700 young people, with 90 per cent of participants confirming the programme contributed to developing their practical or personal skills, and an average impact of 80 per cent.

He pointed out that the “Youth Ambassadors” project has helped prepare young national leaders capable of representing Oman internationally by equipping them with diplomatic and leadership skills through specialised training, UN simulation sessions and meetings with diplomatic leaders. The project has seen steady growth in participation, with four graduates attending the UN Economic and Social Council’s Global Youth Forum in New York — a positive sign of its success.

Youth initiatives have also fostered entrepreneurship, innovation, volunteerism and community participation, helping to refine young people’s capabilities, develop their sense of responsibility and enable them to offer innovative solutions. The annual support these initiatives receive reflects the ministry’s commitment to programmes that serve society, Al Siyabi said.

These efforts reflect the ministry’s direction towards investing in youth human capital and building a generation equipped with the skills, knowledge and values needed to contribute effectively to Oman Vision 2040, he added.

He told Oman News Agency (ONA) that the growing interest of Omani youth in acquiring future skills is a positive indicator of rising awareness about the need to prepare for rapid global transformations, including technological and digital advances,

economic shifts, and evolving job market demands.

“Young Omanis are responding consciously to these changes, seeing them as an opportunity to build a generation better equipped for adaptation and innovation,” Hilal Al Siyabi said.

He added that the “Youth and Future Skills” project, recently launched by the ministry, aims to study and develop youth skills, prepare them for the labour market, and help them anticipate future skills and jobs in vital sectors.

The initiative helps young people acquire critical and creative thinking, problem-solving, continuous learning, and digital and technical skills — enhancing their ability to seize emerging opportunities and compete in changing work environments, Al Siyabi said.

Is’haq bin Saud Al Manji, Director of Relations and Partnerships at the Youth Centre, said investing in youth skills is essential for a sustainable future, and that anticipating emerging skills is central to the centre’s programme design. Programmes are built on the actual needs of young people, aligned with Oman Vision 2040 priorities.

The centre works with partners to launch strategic programmes that enable young people to acquire future skills early, boosting their competitiveness and innovation in priority sectors, Al Manji added.

The centre uses international benchmarks such as the Global Youth Development Index and the Global Innovation Index to monitor skills gaps and measure programme impact, ensuring continuous alignment with global trends.

Strategic partnerships with public and private institutions are key to anticipating future skills and ensuring programmes remain

relevant to Oman Vision 2040’s knowledge- and innovation-driven economy, he said.

The centre’s goal is not only to equip young people with today’s skills but to prepare a generation capable of adapting to change, anticipating future demands, and playing an active role in development, Al Manji concluded.

Omani youth continue to acquire future skills, recognising their role in shaping professional and academic ambitions, building competitive capabilities to meet labour market demands, and strengthening their presence in promising sectors.

Ola Mohammed Al Mutawa, an operations engineer in satellite systems at Oman Lens, said acquiring skills enables young people to identify their interests and discover their strengths, enhancing their awareness of their creative potential. This generates an inner drive and a clear goal aligned with those skills, directly reflected in the achievement of their professional and social aspirations.

Awareness of one’s abilities and skills facilitates the choice of paths and roles that suit individual potential, increasing productivity and helping make more informed decisions, she added.

On the skills that guided her ambition to work in space physics, she highlighted self-learning and the ability to apply knowledge gained through research and study to practical work. Continuous learning, she said, is essential for success in the space sector — a constantly evolving field that requires professionals to stay updated and apply the latest developments.

Young people’s acquisition of advanced scientific skills represents a knowledge asset that serves national development priorities in scientific innovation, she noted.

The presence of Omani youth in vital sectors is a long-term investment in economic diversification, building a knowledge- and innovation-based economy, enhancing the competitiveness of national competencies, and strengthening their capacity to lead technological transformations and develop innovative solutions to future challenges.

Ali bin Salim Al Busaidi, founder of “Mus’ef for Business,” said that innovation is no longer merely a new idea, but has become a way of thinking and a responsibility towards the challenges facing socie-

ty. He stressed that invention goes beyond innovative thinking alone, requiring the transformation of an idea into a practical solution and a viable product that can be applied and effectively utilised.

Innovation skills are reshaping the ambitions of Omani youth by enabling them to see themselves as opportunity creators rather than job seekers, he said. They possess numerous ideas across fields such as technology, energy, services, health, safety, education and the environment that can be turned into real projects.

An idea alone is insufficient; young people must have the ambition to turn their ideas into tangible reality by establishing innovation-based start-ups. This begins with studying the problem, understanding market needs, building a prototype, testing and developing the product, and ultimately finding the right partnerships, funding and licences, Al Busaidi explained.

The modern economy relies not only on natural resources but also on ideas, skills, technology, research and development, and the ability to convert knowledge into applicable products, services and solutions, he noted.

Oman’s shift towards a knowledge-based economy has made scientific research and innovation a national priority, as key drivers of sustainable development, competitiveness and integration between universities, government institutions and the private sector. This ensures that research is linked to market and societal needs, and that skills and knowledge are transformed into real economic and social value, he said.

Al Busaidi further said that the skills of Omani youth are a fundamental element in this transformation, due to their ability to learn quickly, embrace new technologies and experiment with different ideas. These qualities qualify them to be researchers, inventors, innovators, entrepreneurs and leaders of impactful start-ups.

He concluded that the success of innovation is not measured by the number of ideas or awards alone, but by the extent to which these ideas are able to reach the ground and make a tangible difference.

The growing interest of Omani youth in studying and researching artificial intelligence is not a passing trend but a genuine indicator of a shift in how a broad segment of

young Omanis view their professional future, said Malak Majid Al Amri, an AI researcher at Sultan Qaboos University.

Rather than being passive consumers of technology, they are becoming active participants in understanding, developing and applying it to solve real-world problems, she said. This shift is reshaping ambitions from seeking traditional employment to embracing innovation skills and technological entrepreneurship.

Omani youth awareness of the importance of acquiring future skills has seen a notable leap in recent years, evident in the growing demand for professional digital courses, online programmes, technical initiatives and AI-related research, she added.

She explained that contributing factors include the widespread integration of AI tools into daily and academic life, support from Omani government and academic institutions through training and research grants, the influence of digital learning communities, and young people’s recognition that the job market requires skills beyond traditional specialisations — including analytical thinking, data handling and a deep understanding of emerging technologies.

On her own research journey, Al Amri said: “My interest in AI was not coincidental, but the result of observing that students used AI tools daily, yet there were insufficient local studies explaining why some embrace these tools while others hesitate. This research curiosity led me to study the determinants of AI tool usage among higher education students in Oman.”

The experience refined her skills in designing research tools and analysing quantitative data using structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) — a skill she also applied to a study on higher education students’ behavioural intention to use metaverse technology. Moving between AI and the metaverse deepened her understanding of how Omani youth interact with emerging technologies, she said.

Scientific research not only helps understand reality but also supports decision-makers in shaping educational and technological policies, ensuring responsible and effective AI deployment, improving research efficiency, and enhancing graduates’ readiness for future labour market needs, Al Amri added. -ONA

CHUZHOU

Oman youth handball team begins Asian Championship preparations in China

CHUZHOU: Oman’s national youth handball team has officially begun its final preparations for the Asian Men’s Youth Handball Championship after arriving in Chuzhou, China, on Monday evening ahead of the continental tournament.

The Omani delegation was welcomed by the local organising committee before heading to its accommodation, with players quickly shifting their focus to the competition. On Tuesday morning, the squad held its first training session at the championship venue under Tunisian head coach Kamel Hadidder, who concentrated on tactical preparations for Oman’s opening match against Saudi Arabia.

The session focused on refining attacking and defensive systems, reviewing tactical scenarios, and making final adjustments before the tournament gets underway.

Hadidder said the team has made significant progress despite having only six weeks to prepare.

“We began by building the players’ physical condition before playing two friendly matches against Yemen. Those games were not at the competitive level we hoped for, so we looked for stronger opposition,” he said.

That opportunity came through an international friendly tournament in Dubai, where Oman faced the UAE, Qatar and Bahrain.

“The tournament was extremely valuable,” Hadidder explained. “We competed against teams with high-quality players. The UAE and Qatar included many naturalised players with strong experience, while Bahrain fielded players competing in their top domestic league. Those



matches helped us raise our performance level.”

“Those matches gave us confidence and helped us improve. The preparation was not perfect, but it was much better than entering the championship without strong competition,” he added.

Following the Dubai tournament, the team completed an intensive domestic training camp featuring morning and evening sessions alongside extensive video analysis of opponents.

Tuesday’s practice in China was dedicated almost entirely to Saudi Arabia.

“We reviewed Saudi Arabia’s attacking and defensive systems and worked on the tactical solutions we will use in the opening match,” Hadidder said. “I also reminded the players that they must play with personality, confidence and pride while representing Oman.”

Although Oman has been drawn into a challenging group featuring Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and host nation China, the coach believes commitment and teamwork can make the difference.

“The group is difficult, but we will rely on discipline, collective spirit and tactical preparation. We

hope to achieve results that make everyone proud.”

Players also expressed optimism after their first session in China.

Left wing Amir Al Balushi said the squad immediately settled into tournament mode.

“Our first training session went very well. The coaching staff explained the tactical plan clearly, and everyone gave their best. We hope to achieve success and represent Oman proudly.”

Backcourt player Essam Al Balushi praised the atmosphere within the squad.

“The enthusiasm among the players was incredible. We’ve worked hard throughout our camps in Oman and during our overseas preparations. The federation has provided everything we needed, and we are determined to give everything we have during this championship.”

Fellow left wing Wahaj Al Balushi echoed those sentiments.

“Everyone is excited about the tournament. We trained with great energy today, and we are grateful to the Oman Handball Association and the coaching staff for their continuous support. Our goal is to return home with performances

that make our supporters proud.”

Goalkeeper Waleed Al Balushi revealed that much of Tuesday’s session centered specifically on Saudi Arabia.

“We focused on the tactical plan for our opening match. In the coming days we will also prepare for the other opponents. We are determined to deliver our best performances throughout the championship.”

Meanwhile, Oman Youth Indoor Teams Director Anwar Al Balushi praised both the players’ commitment and the federation’s preparation program.

“Our delegation arrived safely, and everyone is fully focused. The federation worked hard to provide the best possible preparation through domestic camps and the international tournament in Dubai. The players understand the responsibility they carry, and we believe they can represent Oman with distinction.”

Oman will continue daily training sessions in Chuzhou before opening its Asian Championship campaign against Saudi Arabia, aiming to make a strong start in one of Asia’s most competitive youth handball tournaments. -ONA

QATAR



National youth basketball team begins Gulf Asia Cup qualifiers campaign

DOHA: Oman national youth (U-18) basketball team begin its campaign in the Gulf region qualifiers for the Asia Cup on Friday against Kuwait.

The qualifiers, hosted by the State of Qatar from 17-22 July, feature the participation of the national teams of the Sultanate of Oman, Qatar, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Bahrain.

The national team looks forward to delivering outstanding performances that reflect the development of Omani basketball, and to competing for one of the qualifying berths for the U-18 Asia Cup finals.

Oman will play its second match against Bahrain on 19 July, then meet Qatar on 21 July,

before concluding its matches by facing the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on 22 July.

The national team completed its preparations to participate in these qualifiers by holding an external training camp in the Kingdom of Bahrain, as part of the final phase of its preparatory programme.

The camp featured an intensive training programme focusing on technical, physical, and tactical aspects, in addition to playing five friendly matches against Bahraini clubs. This aimed to raise the players’ readiness, enhance cohesion among them, assess the team’s overall level, and address technical aspects before the start of the qualifiers. -ONA

13TH NDC COURSE

Academy of Strategic, Defence Studies celebrates graduation



MUSCAT: The Academy of Strategic and Defence Studies celebrated on Tuesday the graduation of the thirteenth course of the Na-

tional Defence College (NDC). The event was held under the auspices of Nasr Hamoud Al Kin-di, Secretary-General of the Royal



Court Affairs. Participating in the course were a number of senior officers from the Sultan's Armed Forces and

other military and security apparatuses, alongside several officials from ministries, government authorities, and civil institutions.



The ceremony included a visual presentation on the course, highlighting its academic curricula, practical applications, and field

visits associated with its program, in addition to lectures and seminars presented by several specialists and decision-makers. -OMA

Tourism ministry promotes Oman at Ironman events

The participation aims to cement Oman's position as a leading destination for sports and adventure tourism

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism continues its efforts to strengthen the presence of the Sultanate of Oman on the global tourism map through its promotional participations in the Ironman 70.3 event in Swansea, United Kingdom, and the Ironman 70.3 event in Spain.

The participation aims to cement the Sultanate of Oman's position as a leading destination for sports and adventure tourism, and to attract an increasing number of visitors from various international markets.

The race held in Swansea, United Kingdom, is among the premier Ironman events in Europe, drawing 2,651 participants representing 216 TriClub teams from around the world.

Meanwhile, the race held in Vitoria-Gasteiz, Spain, witnessed the participation of 1,237 athletes from various countries, representing 146 international TriClub teams, with first-time participants accounting for 48.75 percent of the total competitors.

The significance of this participation lies in leveraging the media and promotional momentum generated by Ironman races globally, by highlighting the tourism assets of the Sultanate of Oman and showcasing the races it hosts throughout the year. The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism's participation included the establishment of a promotional pavilion over four days, dedicated to introducing Oman's tourism destinations and experiences, and presenting the Ironman races hosted by the Sultanate of Oman in 2026.

The Ministry affirmed that its participation in international Ironman events falls within its efforts to achieve the objectives of

Oman Vision 2040, through diversifying tourism products and enhancing event and sports tourism. This is intended to raise the competitiveness of the tourism sector and support its contribution to the national economy.

Furthermore, these participations contribute to raising international awareness of the Sultanate of Oman as a destination that combines diverse natural landscapes and unique sporting experiences, offering advanced tourism facilities, world-class resorts and hotels, in addition to authentic Omani hospitality.

They also attract a growing number of international competitors, thereby boosting hotel occupancy rates and supporting various tourism-related activities and experiences, including transport, restaurants, and entertainment services.

In a related context, these events contribute to supporting small and medium enterprises operating in the tourism and service sectors, highlighting Oman's environmental and natural diversity, and transforming race courses into live promotional platforms for tourist sites.



RUPEE FALLS

'Global uncertainty likely to push inflationary pressures'

FROM A1 "Shipping costs, including war-risk insurance premiums, have already risen significantly, adding to the import bill of oil-importing countries such as India. This is expected to widen the current account deficit," Madhusoodanan said.

"The prevailing global uncertainty is also likely to fuel inflationary pressures in oil-import-dependent economies like India."

He added that the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has been actively intervening in the foreign exchange market to curb excessive volatility. Recent measures, including the easing of norms for Foreign Currency Non-Resident [FCNR(B)] deposits, have helped boost India's foreign exchange reserves by nearly \$7 billion, taking the country's total reserves to around \$674 billion.

However, sustained foreign investor outflows from Indian



equity markets continue to exert pressure on the rupee, he said.

While a weaker rupee benefits expatriates by increasing the value of their remittances, it also raises the cost of overseas travel, medical treatment abroad, foreign currency loan repayments and ed-

ucation in foreign countries.

"The rupee is likely to remain volatile in the near term. Its direction will largely depend on developments in West Asia and the extent of the RBI's intervention to stabilise the currency," Madhusoodanan added.

A'Soud Global School Wins Best Brand in Customer Experience Award in International School Education Category



A'SOUD Global School (AGS) was felicitated with the 'Times of Oman Best Brand in Customer Experience (CX) Award in International School Education 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.

A'Soud Global School has consistently demonstrated a strong commitment to customer experience by delivering a holistic, student-centred learning environment that nurtures academic excellence, personal development and global citizenship. Through its internationally recognised curriculum, experienced faculty, and innovative teaching methodologies, the school continues to provide students with an engaging and enriching educational journey while fostering strong partnerships with parents and the wider community.

With a customer-centric

approach that places students and families at the heart of its educational philosophy, A'Soud Global School focuses on personalised learning, wellbeing, open communication, and continuous engagement. Its commitment to creating a safe, inclusive, and inspiring environment has earned the trust of families seeking world-class international education in Oman.

By continuously investing in academic innovation, modern learning facilities, technology-enabled education, and student wellbeing, A'Soud Global School continues to set benchmarks in customer experience within the international education sector. Its dedication to excellence, innovation, and lifelong learning reinforces its position as one of Oman's leading international schools.

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

Co-located with:



For more information, contact: 78471944/97221630

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



Ministry of Defence

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

1. The medical city of military and security invites specialized companies to participate in the following Tenders:

No	Subject	Tender Number	Grade	Last date for Purchasing Tender document	Last date to submit bids	Tender document Fees + Vat
1.	Extension Of Central Plante	02/2026	First, Excellent	23 July 2026	17 August 2026	130 OMR
2.	Development Of Visitors Waiting Hall At The Hospital Of Medical City Of Military And Security Services -Al Qurm	03/2026	First, Excellent	23 July 2026	17 August 2026	90 OMR
3.	Central Warehouse For Medical And Consumables At The Hospital Of Medical City Of Military And Security Services - Salalah	13/2026	First, Excellent	23 July 2026	17 August 2026	185 OMR
4.	Commercial Complex Project	14/2026	First, Excellent	23 July 2026	17 August 2026	530 OMR
5.	Supply And Custom Tailoring Bush Jacket And Administrative uniform Suiting	15/2026	————	23 July 2026	10 August 2026	420 OMR

2. Tenders documents and terms may be obtained on payment from the office of the secretary of the the Tender Committee in Medical City of Military and Security Services between 0900 to 1300 on the working days.

3. Omanisation compliance certificate (issued by ministry of labor) with a validity period not exceeding one month from the date of issuance must be submitted when tenders document collection.

4. payment of the tenders document to be made by transferring the amount to the bank account of Medical City of Military and Security Services details are provided on the official website (www.mcmss.gov.om/tenders).

Trump makes big claim as US and Iran conflict spirals out of control

Trump stated that recent coordinated military strikes by the US and Israel had completely shattered Iran's defensive infrastructure

WASHINGTON, DC: US President Donald Trump has asserted that Iran's top military leadership has been eliminated, claiming that Mojtaba Khamenei, the son of the late Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, is "90% gone" as Washington and Tehran exchanged renewed strikes over the weekend.

The declaration coincided with an announcement that Washington intends to re-establish a maritime blockade on Iran and levy fees on vessels navigating the Strait of Hormuz to guarantee safe transit, a move that triggered an immediate and sharp retaliation from Tehran.

Elaborating on the situation during an interview with Fox News on Monday, Trump stated that recent coordinated military



strikes by the US and Israel had completely shattered Iran's defensive infrastructure.

"They have no navy. They have no air force. It's all gone. Their anti-aircraft is gone. Their leaders have all been killed," Trump said during the broadcast.

Detailing the extent of the leadership vacuum in Tehran, the US President noted that the country's most prominent strategic commanders had been neutralised during the operations.

"Their best leaders have been killed. They're gone. Khomeini is gone," Trump stated, in an ap-

parent reference to Ali Khamenei, who was killed in late February during the initial wave of US-Israeli aerial bombardment against Iran.

The US President further alleged that Mojtaba Khamenei, who has been widely projected as his late father's successor, had also been incapacitated during the military campaign, describing him as being "90% gone".

The younger Khamenei is reportedly recuperating from severe wounds suffered in a previous airstrike and was noticeably absent from the high-profile funeral cer-

emonies held across Iran and Iraq earlier this month.

These developments emerged immediately after Washington and Tehran engaged in a fresh exchange of missile strikes over the weekend, a flare-up that has pushed regional volatility to unprecedented levels.

Compounding the military pressure, Trump declared that Washington would actively enforce an "Iranian blockade" while simultaneously mandating that commercial shipping lines compensate the US for securing the strategic waterway. — ANI



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Dhofar Governorate braces for conference



SALALAH: HH Sayyid Marwan bin Turki Al Said, Governor of Dhofar, yesterday held a meeting with Bader Wael Al Ajeel, Secretary General of the Arab Towns Organization. During the meeting, Sayyid Marwan and Al Ajeel discussed ways to enhance cooperation and exchange experiences, in addition to ongoing preparations of Dhofar Governorate to host the 20th General Conference of the Arab Towns Organization.

The meeting reviewed key projects implemented by Dhofar Governorate in the fields of digital transition, sustainability and innovation.

Sayyid Marwan affirmed Dhofar's commitment to take measures to ensure the success of the forthcoming Arab conference in a manner that embodies the Sultanate of Oman's approach to support joint Arab action and enhance intra-Arab cooperation.

For his part, Al Ajeel expressed his appreciation for the efforts made by Dhofar Governorate to host the 20th General Conference of the Arab Towns Organization. He pointed out that the event would contribute to the organisation's progress and realise the aspirations of member cities for a more sustainable and innovative urban future. —ONA

FOR FINAL RITES

Bodies of Vietnam boat tragedy victims arrive in Mumbai

MUMBAI: The mortal remains of the victims of the Vietnam boat tragedy were brought to Mumbai on Tuesday aboard Vietnam Airlines flight VN979.

After arriving at Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport, the bodies will be transported to their respective hometowns in coordination with the concerned state governments for final rites.

The bodies are being dispatched to various domestic destinations, including Chennai, Hyderabad, Thiruvananthapuram, and Coimbatore, where grieving family members are awaiting their arrival for the final rites.

Earlier on July 13, the Embassy had informed that the mortal remains of 15 Indian nationals de-

parted from Ho Chi Minh City aboard Vietnam Airlines flight VN979.

Final destinations

It said the respective state governments had already been informed and requested to coordinate the onward transportation of the victims to their final destinations. The Embassy and the Consulate General in Ho Chi Minh City also thanked the authorities of the Phu Quoc Special Economic Zone, An Giang Province, the Department of Foreign Affairs in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other agencies for extending all possible assistance in the aftermath of the tragedy.

The tragedy struck on July 11

when a tourist speedboat carrying 36 people, including 32 Indian tourists and four Vietnamese crew members, capsized near Hon May Rut Ngoai Island off Vietnam's Phu Quoc Island.

According to Vietnamese authorities, the vessel, operated by Ocean Pearl Island Company, was ferrying tourists from Hon May Rut Islet to An Thoi Port, around 25 kilometres from Phu Quoc Airport, when it encountered rough weather and overturned, throwing everyone on board into the sea.

Nearby tourist boats rushed to the accident site within minutes and rescue teams subsequently brought all passengers ashore. Of the 36 people on board, 21 survived

while 15 tourists lost their lives.

Ten of the victims were from Tamil Nadu, three from Andhra Pradesh and two from Kerala.

Following the accident, the Indian mission worked closely with Vietnamese authorities to complete identification, documentation and consular procedures for the victims while also extending assistance to survivors and their families.

The Embassy also provided an update on the lone critically injured Indian survivor, stating that the patient had successfully undergone a medical procedure before being shifted from Phu Quoc to a hospital in Ho Chi Minh City for advanced treatment.

— ANI



BASTILLE DAY

France holds parade with Ukraine in focus

PARIS: France celebrated Bastille Day on Tuesday with a special show of solidarity with Ukraine.

A massive parade was held in front of French President Emmanuel Macron and other high-level guests in Paris.

The event features European troops and warplanes from the "Coalition of the Willing" in support of Ukraine, which has been fending off Russia's ongoing invasion. French fighter jets flew over the Champs Elysees avenue with trails of the French national colours of blue, white and red behind them.

It was Macron's last Bastille Day as president. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy attended the celebrations as a special guest.

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez, NATO chief Mark Rutte and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen were also in attendance.

US President Donald Trump, who had attended an earlier Bastille Day celebration in person with Macron, sent his wishes to the French leader in a social media post.

It comes as the US, which was aided by France its fight for independence from the British, celebrates its 250th anniversary.

"As we look toward the next 250 years, the United States looks forward to deepening its relations with France, guided by our shared



commitment to freedom, peace and prosperity," Trump said.

Bastille Day celebrations this year amid sweltering temperatures

The holiday comes as France has grappled with multiple deadly heatwaves this year. Paris on Wednesday is expected to witness temperatures as high as 34 degrees Celsius (94 degrees Fahrenheit).

Forest fires are occurring south of Paris near Fontainebleau and in other parts of the country.

This year's Bastille Day event comes exactly 10 years after a terrorist attack in Nice in south

of France.

In 2016, a cargo truck drove into a crowd of people celebrating Bastille Day on Nice's promenade by the Mediterranean Sea, killing 86 people. The attack, which was carried out by a Tunisian living in France, was claimed by the so-called "Islamic State" (IS) group.

Bastille Day, which is known as la fete nationale francaise, is marked on the 14 of July each year, to remember the storming of the the Bastille in 1789. The Bastille is a medieval fortress and prison, and the storming of the royal facility was a key moment during the French Revolution. — DW

ON DOMESTIC PRODUCTS

Brazil expects fresh US tariffs

SAO PAULO: Brazil's government is preparing for the possibility that the United States will confirm new tariffs on Brazilian products on July 15, despite an intensive diplomatic campaign by President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva's administration to avert the move. Officials at the Planalto Palace believe Washington is unlikely to reverse course, citing what they describe as a "maximalist" approach to trade negotiations, according to a report by Brazil 247.

The outlet, citing government sources, reported that Brazil has pursued multiple diplomatic channels in recent weeks, including four meetings with representatives of the Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR) and several technical-level discussions. The Lula administration also submitted a roadmap for negotiations outlining proposals aimed at resolving bilateral trade concerns, as per the report.

Despite these efforts, Brazilian officials say the US has shown little indication that it intends to modify its position. While acknowledging that the United States enjoys a trade surplus with Brazil, Washington continues to allege the existence of practices it considers harmful to fair trade.

As per Brazil 247, President Lula has directed his government to continue pursuing dialogue before considering any retaliatory measures.

— ANI

India calls for safe and unimpeded navigation through Strait of Hormuz

Responding to queries during the weekly media briefing, Ministry of External Affairs Spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said India is deeply concerned by the attacks on two vessels in which one Indian national was killed

NEW DELHI: India on Tuesday said it is closely following developments in West Asia and called for safe and unimpeded navigation and the flow of commerce through the Strait of Hormuz.

Responding to queries during the weekly media briefing, Ministry of External Affairs Spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said India is deeply concerned by the attacks on two vessels in which one Indian national was killed.

“We are closely following the developments in West Asia. We continue to call for safe and unimpeded navigation and the flow of commerce through the Strait of Hormuz. This is key for ensuring the economic and energy security of people across the world,” he said

Jaiswal said MEA issued a statement after summoning the Deputy Chief of Mission of Iran and conveyed India’s deepest concerns over attack on two vessels - MT Al



Bahiyah and MT Mombasa - during their transit through the Strait of Hormuz today.

The two vessels were carrying 30 Indian seafarers, among their combined crew of 46.

Of the 12 Indian nationals onboard MT Al Bahiyah, one has tragically lost his life and another has been injured. Of the 18 Indian nationals onboard MT Mombasa, 9 have sustained injuries, including 2 who are reported to be seriously injured.

“We issued a statement after summoning the Deputy Chief of Mission of Iran. We conveyed to them our deepest concerns and that we strongly condemned what has happened. We lost a precious Indian life, and several Indian nationals have been injured, a couple of them seriously. We conveyed our strongest protest to the Iranian side on this matter, stating that these attacks must stop at the earliest,” he said at the media briefing.

Jaiswal said there should be de-escalation and Iran and USA should come to the negotiating table and take the path of dialogue for peace in West Asia.

“There should be de-escalation, and the two sides should come to the negotiating table and take the path of dialogue and diplomacy so that peace and stability can be en-

sured in West Asia,” he said.

In its statement issued earlier in the day, MEA extended deepest condolences to the family of the deceased Indian national and wish speedy recovery to those injured.

“Our Mission and Post in the UAE are closely monitoring the situation and are in touch with the UAE authorities to ensure all possible assistance to the affected Indian seafarers. The Deputy Chief of Mission of the Embassy of Iran in New Delhi was summoned this morning by the Ministry of External Affairs and a strong protest against these attacks was lodged with him,” the statement said.

“We strongly condemn these attacks and acts of violence targeting seafarers and disrupting free and safe navigation through international waterways like the Strait of Hormuz. We also reiterate our deep concern on account of the resumption of attacks and escalation of hostilities in the West-Asian region and call for immediate cessation of violence and a return to dialogue and diplomacy in the interests of peace, security and stability in the region,” it added.

MEA said that targeting of commercial shipping and civilian infrastructure in the region must cease in order that free and unimpeded navigation and commerce

through international waterways in the region, in keeping with international law, can be restored at the earliest.

US President Donald Trump on Monday said that the United States is “reinstating” the Iranian blockade and said that the US will charge “20 per cent” to provide security to the Strait of Hormuz, a strategic gateway.

In a post on Truth Social, Trump assured that the international maritime traffic through the critical shipping lane would not be closed to the rest of the world despite escalating regional tensions.

India lodges “strong protest” over Hormuz strikes

India on Tuesday strongly protested the strikes on commercial ships, describing them as aggressive acts directed at crew members that jeopardise the unhindered and secure passage of shipping traffic across global sea lanes such as the Strait of Hormuz.

The official response was released by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) soon after South Block called in the Iranian Embassy’s Deputy Chief of Mission in New Delhi to register a “strong protest” regarding the targeted strike on two ships navigating the Strait of Hormuz, an incident that



resulted in the death of one Indian sailor and left multiple crew members wounded. According to the official release, the MEA conveyed its “deep concern” regarding the restart of maritime strikes and the intensifying friction across West Asia, calling for a swift end to hostilities alongside a return to negotiations and diplomatic engagement to safeguard regional tranquillity, safety and stability.

The ministry further underlined that strikes directed at commercial shipping vessels and non-military installations across the region “must cease” to ensure that unrestricted, unhindered transit and maritime trade across global shipping channels can be restored swiftly, in line with international legal frameworks.

Elaborating on the scale of the incident, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) noted that India was “deeply concerned” by the strikes launched against MT Al Bahiyah and MT Mombasa.

The ministry noted that both ships carried an aggregate of 30 Indian sailors out of a total complement of 46 personnel.

Sharing specific casualty data, the MEA reported that one Indian citizen out of the 12 serving on MT Al Bahiyah lost his life, while another sustained injuries.

Out of the 18 Indian nationals deployed on MT Mombasa, nine crew members suffered injuries, with two individuals currently stated to be in a critical condition.

Conveying the government’s sorrow, the ministry offered its “deepest condolences” to the family of the deceased sailor while wishing a speedy recovery to the injured personnel.

The MEA noted that India’s diplomatic mission and consulate in the UAE are monitoring developments closely and remain in constant communication with the Emirati authorities to ensure the delivery of all necessary assistance to the affected Indian sailors.

Highlighting the immediate diplomatic measures initiated by New Delhi, the ministry detailed that India on Tuesday summoned the Iranian Embassy’s Deputy Chief of Mission in New Delhi to lodge a “strong protest” over the missile strike on the two ships transiting the Strait of Hormuz, which caused the death of one Indian sailor and injured several others.

“The Deputy Chief of Mission of the Embassy of Iran in New Delhi was summoned this morning by the Ministry of External Affairs and a strong protest against these attacks was lodged with him,” the statement read. — ANI

TAKES A SWIPE



Iranian FM Araghchi takes a dig at Trump

TEHRAN: Iranian Foreign Minister Seyed Abbas Araghchi on Monday mocked US President Donald Trump over recent remarks charging “20 per cent” over ships transiting the Strait of Hormuz, describing Tehran as the one and only “guardian” of the region.

In a post on ‘X’, Araghchi took a swipe at Trump, asserting that Iran will always remain the “guardian” of the Strait of Hormuz.

“POTUS is absolutely right. Whoever provides secure and safe passage of commercial vessels through the Strait of Hormuz should be compensated for this service. Iran has always been the GUARDIAN of the Strait and will remain so FOREVER. 20% is of course too much. We will be fair,” said Araghchi.

These remarks come in the backdrop of the renewed tensions between the US and Iran in the past few weeks.

Earlier, US President Donald Trump said that the United States is “reinstating” the Iranian blockade and said that the US will charge “20 per cent” to provide security to the Strait of Hormuz, a strategic gateway.

In a post on Truth Social, Trump assured that the international maritime traffic through the critical shipping lane would not be closed to the rest of the world despite esca-

lating regional tensions.

“The Hormuz Strait is OPEN, and will remain OPEN, with or without Iran,” Trump said. “We are reinstating the THE IRANIAN BLOCKADE, so named because it is only stopping Iran’s ships or customers from entering or leaving. All other countries will have fair and open use of the Strait,” he wrote.

Trump claimed that a 20 per cent levy on transiting cargo is a necessary measure to cover the operational expenses of securing the volatile shipping lane.

“The U.S.A. will be, from this point forward, known as ‘THE GUARDIAN OF THE HORMUZ STRAIT,’ but as such, and as a matter of FAIRNESS, will be reimbursed, at the rate of 20% on all cargo shipped, for any and all costs necessary to do the job of providing safety and security to this very volatile section of the World. President DONALD J. TRUMP,” he added.

The President added that the deployment and institutionalisation of this protection-and-reimbursement model would be enacted without delay, concluding that “the process and formation will begin immediately.”

On the other hand, Iran issued a stern warning against the US, reaffirming its authority over the Strait of Hormuz, dismissing Washington’s intervention in its management. — ANI

IRAN

Living in limbo between war and ceasefire

TEHRAN: Since the ceasefire between Iran, the United States and Israel was announced, Iranians have repeatedly been told that the war is over.

But at the same time, attacks, threats and diplomatic talks have continued. Iranian authorities talk about negotiations, progress and even sanctions relief one day, only to warn of retaliation, further strikes and threats to Iran’s critical infrastructure the next.

This constant oscillation between war and diplomacy has left many people in Iran caught between hope and dread.

For many, that uncertainty has become more psychologically damaging than the war itself. The problem is no longer just the fear of violence, but also the inability to imagine a stable future.

A society unable to plan

One lawyer based in Tehran, who asked not to be named, told DW that the hardest part of the current moment is not knowing when the crisis will end. “The most important feature of this moment is that the end of the war is unknown,” she said. “When you cannot plan how to endure hardship, it puts enormous pressure on you.”

She said she no longer has the motivation to work or start anything new. Even speaking freely in society feels difficult. In the city where she grew up in, she said, she now feels a sense of estrangement from some of the people around her.

That sense of paralysis appears to go well beyond individual frustration, affecting basic decisions about work, family and the future.

Combined with economic instability and the constant fear that violence could return at any moment, the result has been a wider mood of fatigue and social stagnation.

“We are completely hopeless,” a resident of Isfahan city told DW. “This instability between peace and war has turned our mental state into a game, and we have no clear outlook for our future, or for our psychological and financial security.”

The same person said the entire experience had become deeply



corrosive, with trust in either side of the war, or in the possibility of a durable agreement, having largely collapsed.

Generation without a template for war

The current uncertainty may weigh especially heavily on younger Iranians, many of whom have no direct memory of the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq war or of life under prolonged military threat. For them, this is the first experience of living under the shadow of an open-ended regional conflict.

A nurse in western Iran told DW that when a society enters this kind of situation, trust in the future weakens and people begin postponing long-term decisions. “People start living as if the only goal is just to get through today,” she said on condition of anonymity. For a generation without direct experience of prolonged war, she added, the situation is more disorienting, not necessarily because they are weaker, but because they have no mental model for how to live through such a period.

What many people are experiencing now is less fear of war in

the narrow sense than exhaustion produced by uncertainty, she said.

The nurse said the change is visible in hospitals and clinics, with patients being increasingly angry, dissatisfied and easily provoked. Even when services are good, she said, many remain upset. In her view, that anger is inseparable from the wider social climate.

Anger, despair and emotional burnout

Saeed Paivandi, a professor at the University of Lorraine in France, told DW that available data and field research point to two overlapping tendencies in Iran today: widespread despair about the future, and intense anger at the government’s inability to deal with ordinary life and govern effectively.

Referring to a survey conducted by Iran’s Interior Ministry in May 2026, he said it found that around 60% of the population felt hopeless about the future. He also cited more recent survey findings published by IranWire, which he said showed anger in 64% of respondents, despair in around 50%, depression in 48% and fear and anxiety in about 45%.

According to Paivandi, these figures show a clear deterioration compared with the last available survey before the mass anti-government protests and the authorities’ harsh clampdown earlier this year.

He believes anger, depression and anxiety have all risen by roughly 10 to 12 percentage points. That suggests that the state crackdown, followed by the US and Israeli attack on Iran, has left a serious mark on how people feel about life, politics and the future.

Paivandi also said the data point to another striking trend: around one-third of Iranians now express a desire to emigrate, with that figure rising among younger and more educated groups.

Outside deal unlikely to resolve an inside crisis

Against that backdrop, experts argue that Iran’s current psychological crisis extends beyond ceasefires, diplomacy and military escalation.

While the external conflict matters, it has landed on top of a society already worn down by high inflation, repression, mistrust and a long-running sense of blocked opportunity.

What makes the current moment especially difficult is that no side has offered people a clear and credible horizon.

Instead, they are confronted with contradictory messages every day, making uncertainty a fact of daily life.

And the longer that limbo continues, the more difficult it becomes to restore confidence — or sustain people’s energy needed to imagine any future at all. — nw

SPORTS

The goal is to be on podium and to push for a race win, says Al Zubair

Oman's Al Faisal Al Zubair to team up with British driver Ben Tuck in Al-Manar by Dragon Racing Ferrari at Paul Ricard for the International GT Open round from July 17-19

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman's Al Faisal Al Zubair will reunite with Britain's Ben Tuck in the Al-Manar by Dragon Racing Ferrari as the British driver returns to the cockpit for this weekend's International GT Open round (July 17-19) at the Paul Ricard Circuit in southern France.

The 29-year-old Tuck replaces Italy's David Fumanelli in the Ferrari 296 GT3 EVO run by Dubai-based Dragon Racing. The Briton will be hoping he and Al Zubair can fight for a podium finish in what promises to be two fiercely contested races at the world-famous circuit near Le Castellet.

Al Zubair has only recently re-

turned to top-flight professional racing after a brief spell on the sidelines and made his comeback with sixth- and seventh-place finishes alongside Fumanelli at last month's International GT Open round at Misano.

Al Zubair and Tuck have enjoyed considerable success together, most notably finishing runners-up in the GT World Challenge Europe Endurance Cup with Team WRT. They also secured second overall at the 2025 Gulf 12 Hours in Abu Dhabi with Chris Froggatt in the Al-Manar by Dragon Racing Ferrari 296 GT3 EVO, despite suffering late brake issues.

Al Zubair said: "Great to be back at Paul Ricard. This is an incredibly challenging circuit steeped in



history. I am looking forward to the weekend immensely. I am eager to get back in the 296 GT3 Evo with my team-mate this weekend, Ben Tuck, and to be back behind the wheel.

"Ben and I have enjoyed a lot of success together, from Dubai 24 last year, to GT World Challenge, finishing second in the Endurance Cup, and then finishing second together on our first run in the Ferrari at the Gulf 12.

"Ben and I get on extremely well. He has proved himself to be

a top contender and a top driver. With the package we have, we should be in a strong position to compete for top honours. The goal is to be on the podium and to push for a race win."

Thirty teams have entered the GT3 category across the Pro, Pro-Am and Amateur classes. Al-Manar by Dragon Racing faces competition in the Pro class from Rinaldi Racing and the class-leading Elite Motorsport Ferrari, two Team Motopark Mercedes, the

Greystone GT McLaren, a pair of AF Corse Ferraris, the Scuderia Villorba Corse Lamborghini and the ZRS Motorsport Porsche.

International GT Open competitors will share the iconic 5.842km Paul Ricard Circuit with GT Cup Europe, E4 Championship, FIA Formula Regional and Euroformula Open entrants.

The first of two one-hour free practice sessions for the International GT Open field gets underway at 10.31hrs on Friday (July 17),

with the second session scheduled for 15.39hrs.

The first 25-minute qualifying session for Driver One takes centre stage from 11.35hrs on Saturday, followed by the opening 70-minute race with a rolling start, scheduled to get the green light at 17.40hrs.

The second 25-minute qualifying session will take place in cooler track temperatures at 08.30hrs on Sunday to finalise the starting grid for the second one-hour race, scheduled for 13.45hrs.

ROYAL BIRKDALE

Last Chance Qualifier Dean seals final British Open spot

LONDON: Joe Dean became the final man to qualify for this week's Open Championship.

The Sheffield golfer shot a two-under-par round of 68 on Monday to win by one shot the inaugural Last Chance Qualifier - 12 players competing for the final spot in the 154th staging of golf's oldest major.

Sinking a winning putt, in front of the iconic art deco clubhouse at Royal Birkdale on Sunday will be followed by the immortal words 'Champion Golfer of the Year'.

For Dean, the prize of qualifying for The Open is one he'll cherish, and now send him house hunting.

"We were fortunate to get a hotel room last night but everywhere else is booked," he said, before joking: "With the weather like it is I could probably pitch a tent next to the putting green.

"Maybe like in Troon in 2024, we'll find a camper van park but I'll sleep in the car if I have to."

After six straight pars, a solitary birdie on the par-three seventh

meant Dean was the only player of the dozen to reach the turn under par. The world No. 268 surged further clear with a stunning eagle on the par-five 14th to move to three under. His nerveless scrambling for bogey on the par-four 13th and 20-yard greenside bunker shot to tap-in range on the 18th saw Dean set the clubhouse pace.

When 2025 PGA Tour Rookie of the Year Aldrich Potgieter failed to make birdie, Dean's spot in his third Open was secure. - Agencies



GOALKEEPER

Darlow joins ManU after Leeds exit

LONDON: Manchester United have signed goalkeeper Karl Darlow on a two-year contract, with the option to extend by a further season.

The move is likely to lead to the Old Trafford exit of Turkiye international Altay Bayindir, who came close to joining Besiktas in January.

Darlow's contract at Leeds expired this summer and although he was offered a new deal, he has opted to make the switch across

the Pennines. Leeds did not reference rivals Manchester United in their own statement.

"Leeds United can confirm Karl Darlow has left the club upon the expiration of his contract to pursue an opportunity elsewhere," Leeds said in a statement.

"Despite the offer of a new deal to remain in West Yorkshire, the goalkeeper wished to explore a different challenge and leaves the Whites with the best wishes of everyone at Elland Road." - Agencies

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OMAN OIL PRICE RISES
The price of Oman crude oil has increased, with prices for delivery by September 2026 reaching \$82.17. The price of Oman crude oil rose by \$10.06 from the price of Monday, which was \$72.11.

MARKET

BUSINESS & FINANCE



MSX INDEX ENDS LOWER
The MSX index closed at 7,603.97 points, down by -0.19% from previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 0.02% at 609.40 points. Oman Chromite, up 10.00%, was the top gainer while, Muscat Gases, down 5.33%, was the top loser.

Oman’s total refinery products output reaches 89.9mn barrels till May 2026

The statistics showed that production of Regular Motor Gasoline (M91) fell by 7.8 % to 6.814 million barrels by the end of May 2026, compared with 7.391 million barrels during the same period of 2025



MUSCAT: The total refinery products output in the Sultanate of Oman declined by 6.8% by the end of May 2026, reaching 89.916 million barrels, compared to 96.522 million barrels during the corresponding period in 2025, according to the latest preliminary statistics issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).
Motor gasoline production also declined by 5.5% during the same period. The statistics showed that production of Regular Motor Gasoline (M91) fell by 7.8 % to 6.814 million barrels by the end of May 2026, compared with 7.391 million barrels during the same period of 2025.
Sales of M91 also declined by 22.9% to 6.478 million barrels, down from 8.401 million barrels a year earlier. In contrast, exports increased by 21.7%, reaching 1.883 million barrels, compared with 1.547 million barrels during the corresponding period of 2025.
Production of Premium Motor Gasoline (M95) decreased by 2.4%, reaching 5.493 million barrels by the end of May 2026, compared

with 5.630 million barrels during the same period of 2025.
Sales of M95 fell by 20.1% to 6.036 million barrels, compared with 7.551 million barrels in the corresponding period of the previous year. Exports also declined by 32.8% to 252,700 barrels, compared with 376,000 barrels by the end of May 2025.
The gas oil (diesel) production declined by 8.1 % to 29.925 million barrels by the end of May 2026, compared with 32.574 million barrels during the corresponding period of 2025. Diesel sales fell by 11.8 % to 8.149 million barrels, compared with 9.239 million barrels a year earlier. Exports also decreased by 11.1% to 23.093 million barrels, down from 25.983 million barrels by the end of May 2025.
In contrast, jet fuel production increased by 5.5% to 11.727 million barrels by the end of May 2026, compared with 11.118 million barrels during the corresponding period of 2025.
Despite the increase in production, jet fuel sales declined by 20.6% to 1.722 million barrels, compared with 2.169 million barrels during the same period of the previous year. Exports, however,

rose by 20.2% to 9.706 million barrels, compared with 8.075 million barrels by the end of May 2025.
Production of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) declined by 5.8% to 4.530 million barrels, compared with 4.811 million barrels during the corresponding period of 2025. LPG sales also decreased by 21.0% to 1.294 million barrels, compared with 1.638 million barrels in the corresponding period of the previous year. Meanwhile, exports recorded a slight increase of 0.5 %, reaching 1.374 million barrels, compared with 1.367 million barrels by the end of May 2025.
As for naphtha, production increased by 2.2 % to 15.603 million barrels by the end of May 2026, compared with 15.263 million barrels during the corresponding period of 2025. Naphtha sales rose by 7.6% to 5.951 million barrels, up from 5.530 million barrels in the same period of the previous year. However, exports declined by 8.1% to 9.258 million barrels, compared with 10.073 million barrels during the corresponding period of 2025.
Meanwhile, production of other refinery products declined by 19.8% to 15.825 million barrels, compared with 19.735 million barrels

during the corresponding period of 2025. Sales of other refinery products also fell by 32.4% to 12.167 million barrels, compared with 18.007 million barrels during the same period of the previous year. In contrast, exports increased by 4.0% to 4.412 million barrels, compared with 4.243 million barrels by the end of May 2025.
The statistics also indicated that benzene production increased by 11.9% to 83,100 metric tonnes by the end of May 2026, compared with 74,300 metric tonnes during the corresponding period of 2025. Benzene exports also rose by 10.8% to 80,500 metric tonnes, compared with 72,700 metric tonnes during the same period of the previous year.
Paraxylene production increased to 272,000 metric tonnes by the end of May 2026, compared with 224,000 metric tonnes during the corresponding period of 2025. Its exports rose by 8.8% to 275,400 metric tonnes, compared with 253,100 metric tonnes during the same period last year.
Production of polypropylene declined by 27.1% to 100,800 metric tonnes, compared with 138,200 metric tonnes during the corresponding period of 2025. -ONA

STARTUPS

‘Riyada Deal’ for empowerment of startups launched in North Al Sharqiyah

IBRA: The branch of the SMEs Development Authority (Riyada) in North Al Sharqiyah Governorate on Tuesday organised an event codenamed “Riyada Deal”, with the participation of emerging companies (startups) representing various economic and commercial sectors.
The initiative aimed to provide a direct platform to enable entrepreneurs and innovative thinkers to showcase their projects to potential investors and partners. It also aims to enhance the participants’ persuasion skills and improve their readiness to communicate with decision-makers in order to open up new vistas for funding.

The event was in pursuance of Riyada’s strategy to consolidate the system of entrepreneurship across different governorates of the Sultanate of Oman, linking startups with funding opportunities and assessing the readiness of projects for investment. The strategy contributes to converting young people’s ideas into productive projects that support economic diversification and provide employment opportunities.

The event was in pursuance of Riyada’s strategy to consolidate the system of entrepreneurship across different governorates of the Sultanate of Oman

The event explored the success story of a startup that received investment. It also included presentations by seven startups wishing to obtain investment support and expand the range of their businesses.
The event was attended by specialists and stakeholders from the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion and Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI). -ONA



INTERACTIVE SHOWROOM CAMPAIGN

Hyundai launches ‘Football Count Challenge’ to celebrate spirit of FIFA World Cup and reward football fans with exciting prizes



MUSCAT: Reinforcing its long-standing passion for football and its global association with the World Cup football, Hyundai Oman has launched the exciting Hyundai Football Count Challenge, an interactive showroom campaign designed to engage football enthusiasts across the Sultanate while giving them the opportunity to win more than 100 exciting prizes, including a PlayStation 5 (PS5) and Hyundai branded footballs.
Running across Hyundai showrooms in Wattayah, Seeb, Barka, Sohar, Nizwa, and Salalah, the challenge invites visitors to test their observation skills by counting the number of footballs placed inside a specially displayed Hyundai vehicle. Participants who correctly guess the number of footballs will stand a chance to win a

range of exciting prizes.
For more than two decades, Hyundai has proudly been one of FIFA’s valued global partners, supporting international football through multiple FIFA World Cup tournaments and creating unforgettable experiences for millions of fans worldwide.
This enduring partnership reflects Hyundai’s commitment to bringing people together through the universal language of football while creating meaningful experiences beyond mobility.
Speaking about the campaign, a spokesperson for Hyundai Oman said: “Football has a unique ability to unite people across cultures and generations. As a long-standing supporter of global football and the FIFA World Cup, Hyundai is delighted to bring that excitement closer to our customers

in Oman. The Hyundai Football Count Challenge is a fun and engaging way to celebrate the beautiful game while rewarding our visitors with fantastic prizes.”
The Football Count Challenge is part of Hyundai Oman’s ongoing efforts to create engaging showroom experiences that go beyond vehicle displays, bringing together entertainment, sport, and customer interaction in a memorable and rewarding way.
OTE Group is the exclusive distributor of Hyundai in the Sultanate of Oman, representing the brand through a nationwide network of showrooms and world-class after-sales facilities. Backed by a commitment to quality and exceptional customer service, OTE Group delivers an ownership experience that reflects Hyundai’s global reputation for reliability, value, and excellence.





Announcement

The Tax Authority would like to draw the attention of taxpayers to file their VAT and Excise tax returns for the second quarter of the year 2026 in accordance with the tax return form which is available on e-service portal.

www.taxoman.gov.om

And attach all required documents to it no later than: **30 July 2026.**

We hope all taxpayers comply with filing their tax returns on the deadline.

taxoman

1020

MARKET

MSX index ends lower

Oman Chromite, up 10.00%, was the top gainer while, Muscat Gases, down 5.33%, was the top loser

MUSCAT: The MSX index closed at 7,603.97 points, down by -0.19% from previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 0.02% at 609.40 points. Oman Chromite, up 10.00%, was the top gainer while, Muscat Gases, down 5.33%, was the top loser. Shares of OQBI were the most active in terms of number of shares traded while OQEP were the most active in terms of turnover.



A total number of 8900 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating turnover of RO 32.5 million, with more than 111.14 million shares changing hands. Out of 63 traded securities, 22 advanced, 24 declined, and 17 remained unchanged. At the session close, domestic investors were net buyers for RO 1579K while GCC & Arab investors were net sellers for RO 1087K, followed by foreign investors for RO 492K worth of shares. Financial Index closed at 13,152.06 points, down -0.35%. Prices of Muscat Insurance, National Finance, Bank Nizwa, Al Sharqia Investment, Oman Arab Bank were up by 3.57%, 2.80%, 1.42%, 0.99%, 0.85% respectively. Prices of Al Batinah Development Company, Al Madina Investments, Ominvest, Bank Dhofar, Bank Muscat were down by

2.86%, 2.78%, 1.83%, 1.31%, 1.26% respectively. Industrial Index closed at 9,829.37 points, down -0.06%. Prices of Oman Chromite, Oman Fisheries, Oman Cables Industry, Raysut Cement, Jazeera Steel Products were up by 10.00%, 4.35%, 2.17%, 2.12%, 1.66% respectively. Prices of Oman Cement, National Real Estate, Voltamp Energy, Gulf International Chemicals were down by 2.95%, 2.04%, 1.71%, 1.37% respectively. Services Index was down by -0.13% before closing at 3,054.57 points. Prices of Muscat Desalination, Ooredoo, OQ Exploration & Production, Al Jazeera Services were up by 3.33%, 0.90%, 0.63%, 0.55%, 0.36% respectively. Prices of Phoenix Power, National Gas, SMN Power Holding, Al Suwadi Power, Abraj Energy were down by 1.92%, 1.84%, 1.02%, 0.54%, 0.52% respectively. — **United Securities**

OMAN STOCKS

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE

INDICES

Index	High	Low	Value	Prev. Value	Diff.	Diff%
MSX 30 INDEX	7,660.40	7,589.19	7,603.97	7,618.23	-14.26	-0.19%
FINANCIAL INDEX	13,211.57	13,111.18	13,152.06	13,198.16	-46.10	-0.35%
Industry Index	9,887.52	9,776.29	9,829.37	9,835.50	-6.13	-0.06%
Services Index	3,075.96	3,052.82	3,054.57	3,058.57	-4.00	-0.13%
MSX Shariah Index	611.27	606.89	609.40	609.29	0.11	0.02%
MSX TR INDEX	11,851.52	11,741.35	11,764.22	11,786.28	-22.07	-0.19%
FINANCIAL TR IDX	16,242.93	16,119.52	16,169.77	16,226.44	-56.68	-0.35%
INDUSTRIAL TR IDX	12,663.41	12,520.95	12,588.93	12,596.79	-7.85	-0.06%
SERVICES TR IDX	4,121.20	4,090.21	4,092.55	4,097.91	-5.37	-0.13%
FIXED INCOME INDEX	1,253.83	1,253.83	1,253.83	1,253.83	0.00	0.00%

Trading Summary

Volume	Turnover	Trades	Market Cap	Up	Down	Equal	Sec. Traded
111,142,178	32,498,493	8,900	38,371,396,410	22	24	17	63

SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR TUESDAY, JULY 14

SECURITY NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR.	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF (RD)	DIFF %	LAST PR	LAST BD	LAST OFFER	PUR VALUE	MARKET CAP
REGULAR MARKET															
OM00000001707	20,000	65,970	7	3,240	3,300	3,240	3,300	3,230	0.070	2.167	3,300	3,300	3,300	0.100	296,010,000
OM00000002176	24,340	20,829	4	0.850	0.856	0.850	0.856	0.842	0.014	1.663	0.856	0.856	0.856	0.100	106,912,654
OM00000004420	376,476	53,913	44	0.142	0.143	0.142	0.143	0.141	0.002	1.418	0.143	0.128	0.145	0.100	319,884,284
OM00000001020	733,097	204,940	319	0.279	0.282	0.278	0.281	0.278	0.003	1.079	0.281	0.282	0.281	0.000	1,463,657,143
OM00000002440	25,380	2,609	3	0.103	0.103	0.102	0.102	0.101	0.001	0.990	0.102	0.101	0.104	0.100	9,180,000
OM00000003968	168,799	55,607	34	0.332	0.335	0.331	0.335	0.332	0.003	0.904	0.335	0.335	0.335	0.100	218,063,317
OM00000009759	15,419,431	7,414,403	774	0.477	0.484	0.477	0.480	0.477	0.003	0.629	0.480	0.480	0.480	0.010	3,840,000,000
OM00000001772	74,804	12,867	7	0.172	0.173	0.172	0.173	0.172	0.001	0.581	0.173	0.173	0.174	0.100	53,199,147
OM00000004925	16,000	2,944	3	0.184	0.184	0.184	0.184	0.183	0.001	0.546	0.184	0.183	0.184	0.100	124,179,287
OM00000000906	23,146,435	6,132,377	1,600	0.265	0.268	0.261	0.265	0.264	0.001	0.379	0.265	0.265	0.265	0.040	916,765,075
OM00000002226	11,800	3,292	6	0.279	0.279	0.279	0.279	0.278	0.001	0.360	0.279	0.275	0.279	0.100	11,953,194
OM00000001509	3,000	888	1	0.296	0.296	0.296	0.296	0.296	0.000	0.000	0.296	0.298	0.295	0.100	146,832,618
OM00000002804	1,000	780	1	0.780	0.780	0.780	0.780	0.780	0.000	0.000	0.780	0.750	0.836	0.100	91,200,000
OM00000003224	78,553	23,924	6	0.305	0.305	0.304	0.305	0.305	0.000	0.000	0.305	0.304	0.305	0.100	72,105,050
OM00000003398	23,033,365	4,206,984	1,536	0.183	0.185	0.182	0.183	0.183	0.000	0.000	0.183	0.183	0.201	0.100	1,404,709,038
OM00000004768	8,811	1,066	6	0.121	0.121	0.121	0.121	0.121	0.000	0.000	0.121	0.121	0.123	0.100	21,175,000
OM00000000926	1,453,387	2,008,904	150	1.401	1.405	1.394	1.397	1.402	-0.005	-0.357	1.397	1.397	1.397	0.100	1,047,760,000
OM00000004735	325,270	83,617	49	0.256	0.260	0.254	0.256	0.257	-0.001	-0.389	0.256	0.256	0.258	0.100	244,370,419
OM00000009072	20,894,011	4,551,119	1,686	0.218	0.223	0.215	0.217	0.218	-0.001	-0.459	0.217	0.214	0.217	0.100	939,745,391
OM00000006934	15,151	60,016	111	0.388	0.388	0.385	0.385	0.387	-0.002	-0.517	0.386	0.386	0.386	0.100	296,527,000
OM00000004933	112,300	20,525	23	0.184	0.184	0.182	0.183	0.184	-0.001	-0.543	0.183	0.183	0.183	0.100	130,736,360
OM00000003125	7,115	2,015	7	0.281	0.297	0.281	0.295	0.298	-0.003	-1.007	0.295	0.284	0.290	0.100	59,000,000
OM00000004248	9,050	1,570	3	0.195	0.195	0.195	0.195	0.197	-0.002	-1.015	0.195	0.195	0.205	0.100	38,928,942
OM00000002796	13,488,558	5,324,793	1,586	0.388	0.399	0.391	0.392	0.397	-0.005	-1.298	0.392	0.392	0.392	0.100	2,942,507,648
OM00000002549	125,000	28,288	68	0.227	0.229	0.224	0.226	0.229	-0.003	-1.310	0.226	0.223	0.226	0.100	686,994,468
OM00000003661	161,742	28,096	60	0.177	0.177	0.172	0.172	0.175	-0.003	-1.714	0.172	0.172	0.177	0.100	172,000,000
OM00000001533	1,588	599	2	0.379	0.379	0.375	0.375	0.382	-0.007	-1.832	0.375	0.376	0.381	0.100	421,070,218
OM00000005963	1,384,640	359,529	68	0.260	0.261	0.254	0.255	0.260	-0.005	-1.923	0.255	0.254	0.255	0.100	372,963,372
OM00000001749	9,369	5,542	12	0.591	0.593	0.590	0.593	0.611	-0.018	-2.946	0.593	0.591	0.593	0.100	196,207,517
Total	29	101,247,442	30,678,373	8,166											
Parallel Market															
OM00000001030	908	2,997	3	3,230	3,553	3,230	3,553	3,230	0.323	10.000	3,553	3,300	3,550	1.000	12,897,390
OM000000001806	12,500	7,250	2	0.580	0.580	0.580	0.580	0.580	0.000	0.000	0.571	0.580	0.570	0.880	1,639,557
OM00000007084	1,321	113	2	0.092	0.093	0.092	0.093	0.090	0.003	3.333	0.093	0.085	0.099	0.100	14,466,187
OM00000002648	25,070	5,439	4	0.216	0.220	0.216	0.220	0.214	0.006	2.804	0.220	0.216	0.220	0.100	143,152,987
OM00000002036	42,804	9,417	14	0.217	0.221	0.217	0.220	0.217	0.003	1.382	0.220	0.220	0.221	0.100	4,071,066
OM00000005260	123,322	29,323	13	0.236	0.238	0.236	0.238	0.236	0.002	0.847	0.238	0.233	0.240	0.100	476,852,913
OM000000010823	238	249	2	1.045	1.045	1.045	1.045	1.040	0.005	0.481	1.045	1.020	1.050	0.000	28,575,785
OM000000001400	17,089	9,963	2	0.583	0.583	0.583	0.583	0.583	0.000	0.000	0.583	0.560	0.592	0.100	101,234,306
OM00000001590	200,200	13,113	10	0.066	0.067	0.065	0.067	0.067	0.000	0.000	0.067	0.061	0.067	0.100	25,578,804
OM00000001897	2,255	296	2	0.132	0.132	0.131	0.131	0.131	0.000	0.000	0.131	0.128	0.131	0.100	12,969,000
OM00000002168	61,283	8,975	14	0.147	0.147	0.146	0.147	0.147	0.000	0.000	0.147	0.145	0.147	0.100	32,340,000
OM00000002341	12,900	2,761	2	0.218	0.218	0.218	0.218	0.218	0.000	0.000	0.218	0.165	0.218	0.100	12,013,485
OM00000003521	22,200	3,899	7	0.177	0.180	0.175	0.175	0.175	0.000	0.000	0.175	0.171	0.180	0.100	35,523,628
OM00000004776	10,000	660	1	0.066	0.066	0.066	0.066	0.066	0.000	0.000	0.066	0.060	0.067	0.100	16,500,000
OM00000007407	12,500	1,013	3	0.081	0.081	0.081	0.081	0.081	0.000	0.000	0.081	0.081	0.081	0.100	18,001,440
OM00000001151	8,572,332	1,649,881	535	0.193	0.194	0.191	0.193	0.194	-0.001	-0.515	0.193	0.190	0.193	0.000	1,291,049,375
OM00000008447	23,240	2,509	7	0.108	0.108	0.107	0.107	0.108	-0.001	-0.926	0.107	0.105	0.108	0.100	69,800,623
OM00000009569	12,600	1,304	5	0.104	0.104	0.103	0.104	0.104	-0.001	-0.962	0.103	0.103	0.104	0.100	17,822,000
OM00000008688	12,349	2,179	13	0.177	0.177	0.176	0.176	0.178	-0.002	-1.124	0.176	0.176	0.177	0.100	104,092,891
OM00000002228	40,500	2,946	7	0.076	0.076	0.072	0.072	0.073	-0.001	-1.370	0.072	0.072	0.074	0.100	1,512,000
OM00000001160	171,440	18,666	23	0.110	0.110	0.110	0.107	0.109	-0.002	-1.835	0.107	0.107	0.108	0.100	9,095,000
OM00000001434	100	480	1	4.800	4.800	4.800	4.800	4.800	-0.100	-2.041	4.800	0.000	4.900	1.000	8,460,000
OM00000001962	30,200	1,057	4	0.035	0.035	0.035	0.035	0.036	-0.001	-2.778	0.035	0.035	0.038	0.100	2,975,000
OM00000001719	3,000	298	2	0.149	0.150	0.142	0.142	0.150	-0.008	-5.333	0.142	0.143	0.148	0.100	4,260,000
OM00000000790	3,000	298	2	0.098	0.097	0.098	0.098	0.097	-0.004	-5.556	0.097	0.074	0.073	0.100	13,900,000
Total	25	9,412,551	1,774,352	681											

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**Accountant in Oman
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77336141**

**Indian Chartered
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a job. Contact : 92106856**

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as a Senior Accountant,
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98869499**

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CA Intermediate-qualified professional (Keralite) with 3+ yrs of experience, currently based in Oman on a family visa, seeking full-time or part-time opportunities. Contact: 91281006, 78536919

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

JOB WANTED

ADMINISTRATION

Indian female, Exe secretary, HR, admin asst, coordinator. Contact: 92243552/ 91190552

Postgraduate with 10+ yrs of GCC experience in HR & administration, skilled in recruitment, payroll, employee relations & office administration. Contact: +96875191563 Email: Eisha-sheikh88@outlook.com

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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

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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

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England, Argentina set to renew storied rivalry

The semi-final is one of the World Cup's richest and most emotionally charged contests, with a place in the final only bringing another dimension to a fixture that has rarely needed extra significance

ATLANTA: England are bidding to end Lionel Messi's dream of winning back-to-back FIFA World Cups and reach their first final in six decades as they renew their old rivalry with holders Argentina on Wednesday in a seismic semi-final showdown.

An England team which has been dragged to this stage by the brilliance of Jude Bellingham take on Messi's Argentina under the roof of the spectacular arena in Atlanta, already the scene of a memorable victory by the defending champions at this tournament.

It is the first competitive meeting of the sides since the 2002 World Cup and the fixture conjures so many memories, from Diego Maradona and the 'Hand of God' in 1986, to David Beckham's red card after tangling with Diego Simeone in 1998.

There is more than enough to focus on in purely footballing terms, with England one win from a first appearance in the FIFA World Cup final since they lifted the trophy in 1966.

Argentina, meanwhile, are looking to reach a third final in four FIFA World Cups, and in doing so remain on course to become the first nation to retain the trophy since Brazil in 1962.

"This squad does not get tired of making history. They keep wanting more," said Messi after the Switzerland game. "It is not easy to have been world champions, to have won all that we have won, and to once again keep competing at this level and be back in the semi-finals."



Neither team has enjoyed a smooth passage to this stage.

Argentina cruised through the group phase, but the knockout rounds have been frenetic for the team coached by Scaloni, the one-time West Ham United full-back.

Twice they were pegged back before beating Cabo Verde 3-2 in extra time. Then they needed a late comeback to beat Egypt 3-2 in Atlanta, before requiring extra time to sink 10-man Switzerland 3-1 on Saturday.

That game ended Messi's streak of scoring in nine consecutive World Cup outings, but extended the La

Albiceleste's unbeaten run at the Finals to 12 matches since losing to Saudi Arabia in 2022.

England began with a thrilling 4-2 win over Croatia but have struggled to hit the same heights since, even if their run in the knockout rounds has had an epic feel to it.

They needed a late comeback, and two Harry Kane goals, to beat Congo DR 2-1, then held on with 10 men to defeat Mexico 3-2 in a World Cup classic in which Bellingham notched a brace.

The Real Madrid star also scored twice, including an extra-time win-

ner, as England fought back to beat Norway 2-1 in Miami. And so here they are, in a fourth semi-final in the last five major tournaments.

Argentina are an ageing side, and perhaps their exertions to reach this point will catch up with them - the average age of their starting line-up against Switzerland were over 30, while England's against Norway was 26.6.

"I have played against everyone except England and it is special because they are a major nation, a powerhouse, and it is always nice to play against a side like that, especially in a

World Cup semi-final," said 39-year-old Messi.

The last meeting of the teams was a 3-2 friendly win for England in November 2005, when Michael Owen scored twice. Messi was 18 at the time and had made his international debut three months earlier, but he did not play in that game.

England ahead

The teams have crossed paths five times in the tournament, producing three England victories and two Argentina wins, including one on penalties. Yet the rivalry has never been

defined by numbers alone.

Although they first met at the World Cup in 1962, when England won 3-1 in the group stage, the teams laid the rivalry's foundations at Wembley in the 1966 quarter-finals.

England prevailed 1-0 in a match remembered less for Geoff Hurst's late winner than for the dismissal of Argentina captain Antonio Rattin.

Rattin was sent off for dissent after 35 minutes by West German referee Rudolf Kreitlein and refused to leave the field for several minutes. Many in Argentina believed the dis-

missal reflected favoUrabLe treatment for the host, while England accused Argentina of persistent foul play.

The animosity continued after the final whistle when England manager Alf Ramsey stopped George Cohen from exchanging shirts with Alberto Gonzalez.

England went on to lift the trophy, but the ill feeling from that encounter lingered for decades.

The rivalry reached its defining moment 20 years later at Mexico City's Azteca Stadium.

Diego Maradona scored both

Semi-final is 'nothing more' than football, says Scaloni

KANSAS CITY: Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni insisted there is nothing more than football at stake when his team faces England in Wednesday's World Cup semi-final, despite a rivalry steeped in decades of sporting drama and political tension.

Scaloni said the showdown should be viewed as nothing more than a game.

"It's a football match. Period. There's nothing more to it," he told reporters after Argentina kept alive their bid to win back-to-back titles, booking a clash against England in Atlanta on Wednesday after the Europeans edged Norway 2-1. "Let's not look for anything else," Scaloni said. "It's a football match. We're going to play a football match against a great national team that has a great coach whom I appreciate and admire a lot."

Argentina forward Jose Manuel Lopez acknowledged the historical weight surrounding the fixture, but said the players would approach it professionally. "Obviously, outside the four lines of the pitch, it's a matchup that has a lot of history, a lot of pain, and a lot behind it," he told reporters.

"But we're professionals. We're going to play it the way



between the two countries.

Argentina and Britain fought a short conflict over the islands known by the British as the Falklands and by the Argentines as the Malvinas in 1982, in which 649 Argentine soldiers and 255 British combatants died.

During the ongoing World Cup, Argentina fans and players have been singing a chant referencing the islands.

Atlanta Police's statement read: "As Atlanta prepares to host an upcoming FIFA World Cup semi-final match and welcomes increased numbers of residents and visitors, the Atlanta Police Department has enhanced its citywide public safety and security posture.

ENGLAND GOALKEEPER

Pickford relishing first Messi test

KANSAS CITY: England goalkeeper Jordan Pickford has faced World Cup penalty shootouts, semi-finals and some of the biggest names in football during his record-breaking career, but there is one challenge that has eluded him until now.

When England takes on Lionel Messi and reigning champions Argentina in Wednesday's World Cup semi-final in Atlanta, Pickford will come up against the eight-time Balon d'Or winner for the first time.

For a player who broke Peter Shilton's record for most England World Cup appearances in the quarter-final against Norway, the occasion carries a sense of history.

The 32-year-old Everton player was eight when England last met Argentina, during the group stage of the 2002 World Cup.

"I remember being sat in school on the floor watching when the teacher wheeled in the TV, so I'll never forget that moment," Pickford told reporters on Monday.

"He's scored so many goals and

he's contributed to so many goals all his career, and it's great to be able to finally come up against him after so long and watching him as a kid," Pickford said of the 39-year-old Messi, who is playing in his sixth World Cup.

The goalkeeper warned, however, about treating Argentina as a one-man team. "We all know how good Messi is, but we also know how good Argentina are, Pickford said. "We've got our thoughts on their other strengths as well, and the other weaknesses we can take advantage of."

England arrived among the favourites and have navigated numerous pressure situations, including a 10-man win over Mexico, throughout the tournament, which Pickford said underlined a resilience that any team has, he said. "It shows the mentality we have, we don't get wrapped up in things like that. We stay focused. We stay together."

Tuchel raised eyebrows after the Norway win when he angrily highlighted areas England needed to improve in, and Pickford agreed the team had not reached its peak.

Dark arts

Argentina's run to the semi-finals has been accompanied by complaints over refereeing decisions and the team's mastery of football's so-called "dark arts", but Pickford said England would not be distracted by anything.

"Throughout the tournament, you've seen our desire to win titles. We've not got into any scuffles or anything, we've been very well respected within the game," he said. "Decisions go our way, they don't go our way. We just reset, and we let the football do the talking."

Pickford said the players were determined to reward the faith of a nation daring to dream of World Cup glory for the first time since 1966.

"You know how we feel, you see us after every game, and to have the nation behind us at home doesn't go unseen. We know how much it means to them, but we also know how much it means to us, and we pay huge credit to them enjoying themselves. We're doing it for them as well," Pickford said. - Agencies

"Like the manager said, the mentality we have in abundance and the togetherness we have, but we're not the finished article," he said. "We hope the cream rises to the top. And we'll always keep working harder to keep improving because you don't want to think the job's done against Norway."

Pickford was England's keeper during the last-16 shootout against Colombia in 2018, saving Carlos Bacca's penalty before Eric Dier converted the winning spot-kick to secure England's first World Cup shootout victory.

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FORMER ENGLAND CAPTAIN

Terry: World-class Bellingham reminds me of Zidane

KANSAS CITY: Jude Bellingham has been so influential in England's run to the FIFA World Cup 2026 semi-finals that he is beginning to resemble Zinedine Zidane - according to Three Lions legend John Terry.

Bellingham scored both goals in England's quarter-final triumph over Norway, building on his double in the epic 3-2 victory over co-hosts Mexico City in the Round of 16.

And former England captain Terry has likened Bellingham's heroic performances to Zidane's impact during France's path to glory in 1998 and to the final in 2006.

Terry told the FIFA Podcast: "I said at the start of this World Cup, he reminds me of Zidane. He's dragging this team through at the moment. I think he's world class. Also, you listen to him off the pitch, he's got a real calmness about him as well."

Bellingham's brace in Miami saw him become the first midfielder to



score six goals at a World Cup and set England on a collision course with old enemy Argentina in Atlanta.

While wary of the threat posed by the holders and their captain Lionel Messi, Terry believes the stars are aligning for England as they eye a first World Cup triumph since 1966.

"I'm not worried about Argentina,

if I'm honest," Terry added. "I don't look at Argentina and sit here being worried about them being better than us. I think, man-for-man, we're better than Argentina."

"You know what I like about this England side at the minute? We've had big moments. We've got a good side but it feels like everything's going for us. It feels like it's England's time." - Agencies

BRIEFS

Forlan set to replace Bielsa as temporary Uruguay coach



MONTEVIDEO: Former Manchester United attacker Diego Forlan is set to take over on a temporary basis as the new Uruguay boss after Marcelo Bielsa left the role following a sorry FIFA World Cup 2026 campaign. La Celeste were knocked out at the tournament's group stage after just two draws, and the storied Bielsa took the blame for the disappointing results

and performances. Uruguayan Football Federation (AUF) president Ignacio Alonso told television channel Teledeco on Sunday that 47-year-old Forlan was enthusiastic about the idea of taking over with an agreement set to be found in a matter of hours. Forlan, who scored 36 goals in 112 Uruguay matches before retiring from international football in 2014, will be in temporary charge of the side until March 2027 and also manage the under-20 team. The ex-Atletico Madrid striker has just two coaching experiences, with Uruguayan top-flight side Penarol in 2020 and a second division side the following year. As a player, Forlan spent two seasons at Old Trafford before spells with the likes of Atletico, Inter Milan and Villarreal.

Bilic returns as Croatia coach after Dalic's exit



ZAGREB: Croatia has appointed former West Ham United manager Slaven Bilic as head coach following the departure of Zlatko Dalic, the Croatian Football Federation announced on Monday. Bilic, 57, returns to the national setup after previously coaching Croatia's Under-21 side before a six-year spell in charge of the senior team, during which he oversaw 65 matches.

Dalic, Croatia's most successful coach, stepped down last week after nine years in charge, after the side was knocked out of the 2026 World Cup by Portugal in the round of 32. Bilic has been out of management since leaving Saudi Pro League side Al Fateh in 2024, having overseen 36 matches during his lone season at the club. He brings extensive experience from English football, having managed West Ham United, West Bromwich Albion and Watford, where he was dismissed after five months. He began his coaching career at Hajduk Split in 2001 after retiring as a player for the Croatian club a year earlier. As a player, Bilic won 44 caps for Croatia and was a key member of the side that finished third at the 1998 World Cup in France. His immediate task will be to guide Croatia to Euro 2028 qualification before turning his attention to the 2030 World Cup.

'Thiaw salary demands caused World Cup downfall'



DAKAR: The Senegalese football federation (FSF) president said on Monday toxicity surrounded the team at the World Cup after coach Pape Thiaw had demanded a pay rise. Thiaw was sacked on Sunday after his side was knocked out in the last 32 by Belgium on July 1. "There was a breakdown in trust between Pape Thiaw and us", FSF president Abdoulaye Fall told a press conference in Dakar, citing the initial failure to sign a new contract after Thiaw's demand for more money. Thiaw, 45 and a former Senegal international, took over as national team boss. Prior to leaving for the World Cup, he had asked for a salary increase from 20 million CFA (\$35,000) per month to 50 million CFA (\$87,000). Ultimately the sides landed on an agreement of 30,000 CFA during the World Cup and also settled other disputes such as bonuses. At one point, Thiaw threatened not to travel to the World Cup if his demands were not met, Fall said, explaining Senegalese President Bassirou Diomaye Faye convinced him to change his mind on the day the team were due to depart for the United States. Fall said the contract was signed on the eve of their second game in the tournament, against Norway, after Thiaw refused to sit in the dugout unless it was finalised. Thiaw believed the "federation officials were his enemies, and this impacted the national team's operations", Fall said.

Thousands welcome Norway heroes at home



OSLO: More than 100,000 fans flooded the streets of the Norwegian capital Oslo on Monday to give their football team a heroes' welcome, turning the heartbreak of their World Cup exit into a massive national celebration.

A 1-2 extra-time defeat to England brought Norway's historic run to an end in the quarter-finals. However, it did not stop the country celebrating their heroes. Massive crowds along the Norwegian summer sun filled the grounds of the Royal Palace early on Monday afternoon, with an unofficial turnout estimated at more than 100,000 people. "It's simply incredible to see all the support we receive and to see how much the country is behind us," captain Martin Odegaard told public broadcasters NRK.

"It's really fantastic," the Arsenal playmaker added. - Agencies

EU-backed conference pledges Gaza Strip €900mn in donations

With about a half of its two million residents living in tents due to Israel’s war with Hamas, the funding will first go to providing the Palestinian territory with basic water and sanitation facilities, as well as restoring the Gaza Strip’s health and food systems hit hard by the war with Israel

GAZA STRIP: The Gaza Strip will receive some €900 million (\$1 billion) in donations from Europe, after an EU-backed conference raised the funds for the reconstruction of the embattled enclave. With about a half of its two million residents living in tents due to Israel’s war with Palestinian group Hamas, the funding will first go to providing the Palestinian territory with basic water and sanitation facilities, as well as restoring the Gaza Strip’s health and food systems hit hard by the war with Israel. The Team Gaza Initiative will coordinate the efforts to rebuild the enclave. The EU’s foreign policy head Kaja Kallas said reforms in the Pal-



estinian Authority are needed for the bloc to continue supporting it. Palestinian representatives, as well as representation of the Board of Peace, established by US President Donald Trump, were among the invitees to the conference.

How much money is needed to rebuild Gaza? According to a UN report from May 2026, the recovery and construction works needed in the Gaza Strip are estimated at \$71.4 billion (€62.6 billion) The report also says 371,888 homes have been directly affected by the war, which makes three quarters of the enclave’s housing stock. 85% of the affected homes have been completely destroyed. Some 1.9 million Palestinians — more than 90% of the Strip’s population — were displaced by the war between Israel and Hamas, some of them multiple times. The war broke after the Hamas-led group attacks on October 7, 2023, that claimed the lives of some 1,200 Israelis, with 251 people being taken hostage.

What’s the situation like in Gaza now? More than 71,000 Palestinians have been killed in the Gaza Strip since October 7, 2023, many of

them women and children. Some 450 of them were killed between the ceasefire’s announcement and mid-January 2026, the UN report said. Nearly 70% of the Gaza Strip is still in control of the Israeli army, with the rest still being managed by Hamas, which have so far refused to lay down their arms as agreed in the October 2025 ceasefire deal mediated by the US, Egypt and Qatar. The Board of Peace, a technocratic body led by Bulgarian diplomat Nickolay Mladenov, was established to manage the Gaza Strip’s civil matters.

Is the Gaza war considered genocide? In September 2025, the UN Commission of Inquiry, the organisation’s investigative body, blamed Israel for committing genocide against Palestinians in Gaza. Several high-profile human rights organisations in Israel and around the world also consider the Israeli army’s operations in Gaza as genocide. The International Court of Justice (ICJ) is currently considering a genocide case brought by South Africa in 2023. Israel has repeatedly denied the claim.

Palestinian Prime Minister Mustafa meets European, international officials in Brussels Prime Minister Mohammad Mustafa met on Monday with several European and international officials on the sidelines of the second ministerial meeting of the Palestine Donor Group in Brussels. The meetings were held in the presence of Minister of Finance and Planning Estephane Salameh, Palestine’s Ambassador to Belgium, Luxembourg and the European Union Amal Jadou Shakaa, and Undersecretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for Political Affairs Omar Awadallah. The meetings included Norwegian State Secretary for Foreign Affairs Andreas Motzfeldt Kravik, British Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs Yvette Cooper, Irish Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade Helen McEntee, German Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development Reem Alabali-Radovan, and Managing Director of Operations at the World Bank Anna Bjerde. During the meetings, Mustafa reviewed the latest developments on the ground and the deteriorating humanitarian and social conditions resulting from the Israeli oc-



cupation’s continued measures in the occupied West Bank, including restrictions on freedom of movement, daily raids, colonist violence and terrorism, land seizures for colonial expansion, and the continued unlawful withholding of Palestinian clearance revenues. He also highlighted the dire situation in the Gaza Strip, including the worsening humanitarian crisis and severe shortages of supplies, medicines, and materials required for reconstruction and recovery efforts. The Prime Minister stressed that the reality on the ground in the Gaza Strip demonstrates that UN-RWA remains a fundamental pillar of the humanitarian response, alongside the institutions of the State of Palestine, non-governmental organizations, and international institutions. He said these entities collectively provide essential services to the population of the Gaza Strip and that there is currently no practical alternative to their role. Mustafa also addressed the financial situation and the unprecedented crisis facing the government as a result of Israel’s continued withholding of Palestinian clearance revenues, which has severely constrained the government’s ability to fulfill its ob-

ligations toward the Palestinian people. He called for intensified international pressure on Israel to release the withheld revenues and prevent the collapse of Palestinian institutions. The Prime Minister said the government is working at full capacity to maintain the continuity of state institutions and public services despite the severe fiscal deficit. He added that the government has taken exceptional measures to prevent institutional collapse, but that its room for maneuver has become extremely limited. Mustafa stressed that Israeli policies also include financial and economic measures aimed at weakening the State of Palestine and its institutions and undermining their viability. These measures include the continued withholding of Palestinian clearance revenues, the surplus of Israeli shekels in Palestinian banks, and Israel’s refusal to receive or settle it, depriving the Palestinian economy of liquidity and limiting its ability to finance businesses and investments. He added that preventing Palestinian workers from reaching their workplaces inside Israel has also caused the Palestinian economy billions of dollars in annual losses.

— Agencies

VENEZUELA



Almost 4,500 killed in quake and many more still missing

CARACAS: Authorities in Venezuela are planning to set up temporary accommodation for families who lost their homes in last month’s devastating earthquakes, from which the death toll has now climbed to at least 4,490. The announcement was made on Saturday by Venezuelan National Assembly President Jorge Rodríguez, the brother of acting President Delcy Rodríguez. He did not say how many people were still unaccounted for, but the United Nations has estimated that 50,000 people are still missing. Rodríguez rejected suggestions that the government would suspend the search for bodies in a bid to allay families’ fears that the rubble would be cleared indiscriminately.

Venezuela: how powerful were the earthquakes? The magnitude 7.2 and 7.5 quakes which hit the capital, Caracas, and the coastal state of La Guaira, on June 24 razed entire high-rise apartment blocks to the ground. Over 850 buildings lie in ruins or have been severely damaged and more than 19,000 people have been forced to live in makeshift camps set up in sports stadiums, schools or on squares or sidewalks. But the schools in particular will have to be vacated once the new academic year begins in September, with initial government estimates indicating that about 25,000 homes will be needed to

house people. Rodríguez said the government has allocated more than 40 plots of land in La Guaira state, amounting to approximately 584,000 square meters, for the construction of new homes. **Venezuela: Government requesting financial resources** He warned, however, that costs will spiral, given the need for reconstruction, as well as for rental assistance and property purchase loans. To this end, interim President Delcy Rodríguez earlier last this week officially requested that the Bank of England release Venezuela’s gold reserves. “This gold belongs to our people and should be used to serve them,” she said, while also asking the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to release assets held for emergency use. Venezuela’s acting president has strongly rejected allegations that her government’s reaction time to the quakes was too slow. Several Venezuelans have expressed anger saying that families spent the crucial initial hours digging out their relatives themselves. Civilians searching through the debris alongside international aid organisations say assistance like food and medical supplies were delayed and there was a continuing lack of heavy machinery to move the wreckage.

— Agencies

EXPLAINER

Is the US-Iran MoU still alive?

TEHRAN/WASHINGTON: Fresh US airstrikes and Iranian retaliation have plunged Washington and Tehran back into open conflict less than a month after they signed a 14-point memorandum of understanding (MoU) aimed at ending the war and paving the way for broader negotiations. Both sides now accuse the other of violating the agreement first. While neither has formally declared the MoU void, the latest escalation has cast doubt over whether diplomacy can survive another round of fighting. The clearest signal yet came from US President Donald Trump, who formally notified Congress in a letter dated Friday that military operations against Iran had resumed under his direction. In a letter to lawmakers, Trump described the strikes on Iran that began on July 7 as “military action consistent with my responsibility to protect Americans and United States’ interests both at home and abroad.” This notification starts a new 60-day period during which the Trump administration can conduct military operations in the region without congressional approval. On Monday, Trump said on Truth Social that the United States was “reinstating the Iranian blockade, so named because it is only stopping Iran’s ships or customers from entering or leaving,” and proposed charging a 20 percent fee on cargo transiting the Strait of Hormuz. However, Tehran insists it is not the side that abandoned the agreement. Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei said on Monday that the MoU had entered a “crisis phase” because Washington had continuously violated its obligations. He said Iran would follow a principle of “commitment for commitment” and warned that if the United States continues breaching the deal, Iran would no longer see any reason to fulfill its own obligations.

Can diplomacy revive? Before the latest escalation, the two sides had been using regional



mediators to preserve the fragile agreement. According to Axios, Washington demanded that Iran publicly reaffirm that the Strait of Hormuz remained open and “stop firing on commercial ships,” arguing that Tehran had violated the MoU. Trump also said last week that the United States had agreed to continue talks with Iran, although he simultaneously declared that the ceasefire was “over.” Iran denied requesting new negotiations but indicated it remained willing to engage through regional intermediaries, including Qatar, according to Qatar’s Al Jazeera television. The fighting has nevertheless intensified. The US Central Command (CENTCOM) said its latest

wave of strikes against Iran concluded late Monday after strikes on military targets across Iran, including Bushehr, Chah Bahar, Jask, Konarak, Abu Musa, and Bandar Abbas, to “further degrade Iran’s ability to attack commercial shipping.” Iran has continued missile and drone attacks on US positions and regional targets, including Oman, Bahrain, Jordan and Kuwait. The Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) said on Tuesday that it has launched missile and drone attacks on the U.S. Fifth Fleet based in Bahrain. “The retaliatory operation continues,” the statement said. **Who controls Hormuz?** The Strait of Hormuz has once

again become the main flashpoint. Early Sunday, Iran’s IRGC announced that the Strait of Hormuz would remain closed “until further notice” and until “the end of US interference in this region.” The US-led Joint Maritime Information Center and the U.S. Naval Forces Central Command said Sunday that the southern route remains operational despite Iranian claims, adding that “U.S. forces are prepared to maintain freedom of navigation and safeguard lawful commerce.” On Monday, CENTCOM announced that it would resume blockading maritime traffic entering and leaving Iranian ports beginning at 4 p.m. ET (2000 GMT) Tuesday. Baghaei said on Sunday that arrangements for the future administration of maritime traffic in the Strait of Hormuz must be made through consultations with Oman. Those competing visions directly contradict one of the MoU’s central provisions, which envisioned the lifting of the US naval blockade while Iran ensured safe passage for international shipping. For now, the memorandum has not been formally abandoned. But with military operations expanding, the agreement appears to be surviving more on paper than in practice.

— Xinhua



LIFESTYLE

SCIENTISTS UNCOVER SURPRISING HEALTH BENEFITS OF WATERMELON: STUDY

Studies suggest watermelon could be a hidden powerhouse for better health. Researchers found that people who eat watermelon tend to have higher-quality diets packed with more vitamins, fibre, and antioxidants while consuming less added sugar and saturated fat.

Another study showed watermelon juice may help protect blood vessel function and support heart health. Watermelon has long been a summer favourite, but research suggests this refreshing fruit may offer benefits far beyond hydration. Studies published in *Nutrients* found that people who regularly eat watermelon tend to have healthier overall diets and may also support better heart and blood vessel function.

Researchers say watermelon provides an impressive mix of nutrients, antioxidants, and naturally occurring compounds linked to cardiovascular and metabolic health. Its high water content and low calorie count also make it an easy way to add more fruit to your diet.

Watermelon linked to better diet quality

One study examined data from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) to compare the diets of watermelon eaters and non-consumers across the United States. The analysis found that both children and adults who consumed watermelon generally had higher-quality diets overall.

According to the findings, watermelon consumers took in more dietary fiber, magnesium, potassium, vitamin C, vitamin A, lycopene, and other carotenoids. At the same time, they consumed lower amounts of added sugars and saturated fat. The study was originally published in *Nutrients* in 2022.

That combination is notable because many Americans still struggle to meet recommended fruit intake goals. The Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA) recommend between 1.5 and 2.5 cups of fruit daily, yet most adults and children consume only about half that amount.

Compounds in watermelon may support heart health

A separate clinical trial from Louisiana State University explored whether watermelon juice could help protect blood vessel function during periods of elevated blood sugar. The randomised, double-blind, placebo-controlled crossover study involved 18 healthy young adults who consumed watermelon juice daily for two weeks.

Researchers focused on two naturally occurring watermelon compounds, L-citrulline and L-arginine, which are involved in nitric oxide production. Nitric oxide helps blood vessels relax and expand, an important part of healthy circulation and cardiovascular function.

The study found evidence that watermelon juice supplementation helped maintain vascular function during hyperglycemia and influenced heart rate variability.

“We acknowledge that while the sample size was small (18 healthy young men and women) and more research is needed, this study adds to the current body of evidence supporting regular intake of watermelon for cardio-metabolic health. In addition to L-citrulline and L-arginine, watermelon is a rich source of antioxidants, vitamin C and lycopene -- all of which can help reduce oxidative stress and play a role in heart disease prevention,” said Dr. Jack Losso, Ph.D., professor at Louisiana State University’s School of Nutrition and Food Sciences.

Follow up research continues to explore benefits

Since those studies were published, additional reviews and meta-analyses have continued investigating watermelon’s role in vascular and metabolic health. Researchers have reported that watermelon consumption and L-citrulline supplementation may improve measures tied to blood vessel flexibility and circulation, including pulse wave velocity and endothelial function.

Scientists are especially interested in watermelon because it is one of the richest natural food sources of L-citrulline. Recent reviews have highlighted the fruit’s potential role in supporting nitric oxide production, healthy blood flow, and cardiovascular function, although experts stress that larger long-term studies are still needed.

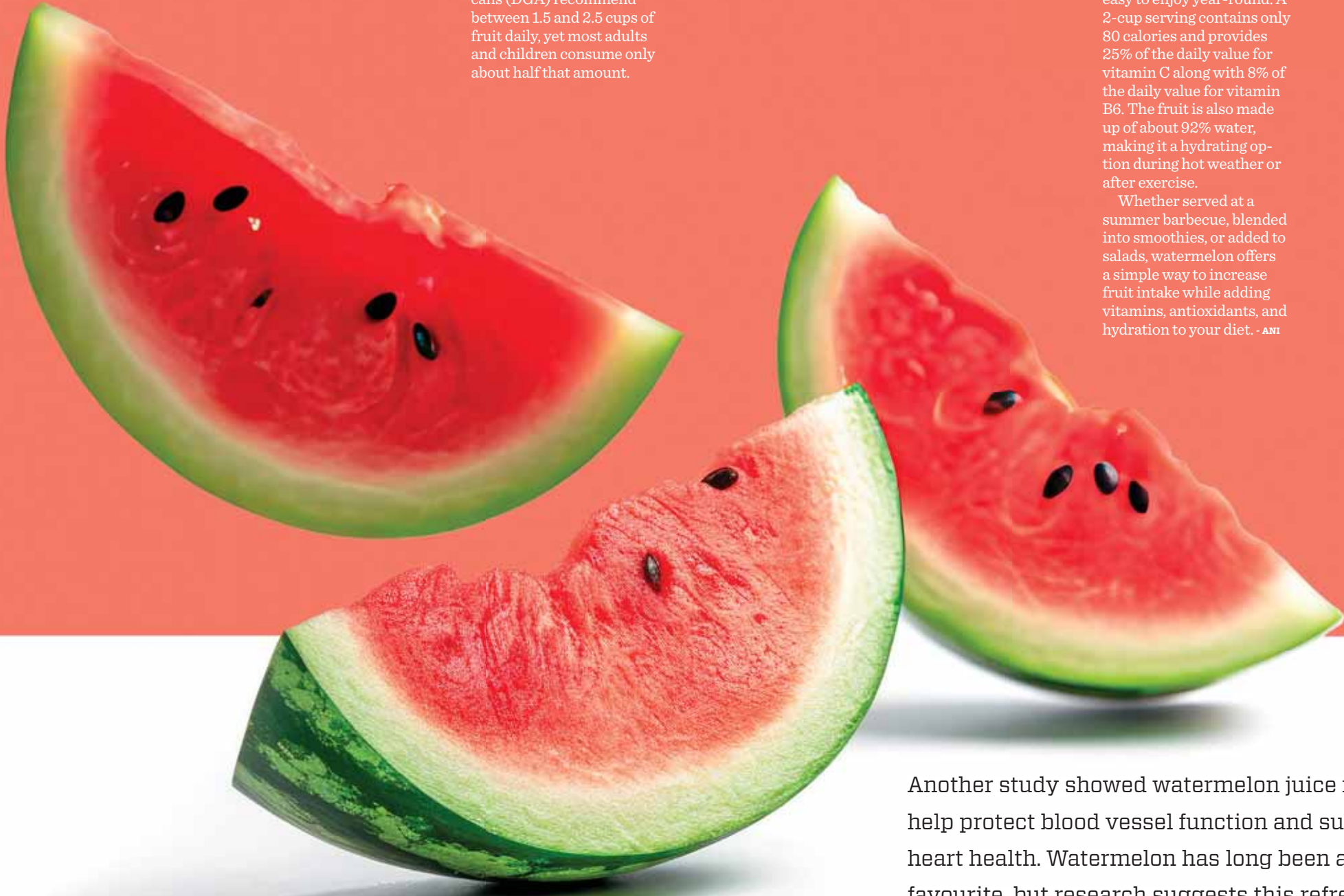
Watermelon is also packed with lycopene, a powerful antioxidant associated with reduced oxidative stress and potential heart health benefits. Red watermelon varieties tend to contain especially high levels of lycopene.

A hydrating, low calorie fruit

Beyond the research buzz, watermelon remains a nutrient-dense fruit that is easy to enjoy year-round. A 2-cup serving contains only 80 calories and provides 25% of the daily value for vitamin C along with 8% of the daily value for vitamin B6. The fruit is also made up of about 92% water, making it a hydrating option during hot weather or after exercise.

Whether served at a summer barbecue, blended into smoothies, or added to salads, watermelon offers a simple way to increase fruit intake while adding vitamins, antioxidants, and hydration to your diet. - **AM**

Another study showed watermelon juice may help protect blood vessel function and support heart health. Watermelon has long been a summer favourite, but research suggests this refreshing fruit may offer benefits far beyond hydration



ROUND-UP

All-new Chery Himla Pickup makes powerful debut in Oman

The launch introduces a vehicle purpose-built to Master the Terrain across the region’s diverse landscapes, while elevating the traditional utility truck into a premium lifestyle companion

MUSCAT: Marking a bold new chapter for the brand in Oman, New World Autos, the distributor for Chery in the Sultanate, officially unveiled the all-new Chery Himla pickup at its flagship showroom in Wattayah.

The launch introduces a vehicle purpose-built to Master the Terrain across the region’s diverse landscapes, while elevating the traditional utility truck into a premium lifestyle companion. Distinguished guests and industry partners gathered to witness the arrival of this robust model, which seamlessly bridges the gap between rugged workhorse capability and modern driving refinement.

The event opened with a welcome address by one of the Chery officials in Oman, who spoke about the growing momentum of Chery in Oman and the significance of the all-new powerful Himla as the latest addition to the brand’s expanding lineup. They highlighted the all-new Himla as a vehicle that goes beyond conventional pickup expectations — delivering a driving experience built around boldness, versatility and everyday functionality for both business and leisure.

The all-new Himla series represents a clear evolution in the pickup market, catering to drivers who require a dependable vehicle for both business operations and personal travel. The pickup features a commanding design with a 3230 mm wheelbase, giving it a strong road presence. The all-new Himla is engineered to be a versatile



partner, shifting smoothly from demanding work roles to weekend family adventures.

Performance is central to the Himla’s capability, offering a choice of practical powertrains to suit different operational needs. The lineup includes a 2.3-litre Turbo Diesel engine producing 420 N.m of torque for excellent pulling power. Available in four-wheel drive configuration, with manual and 8-speed automatic transmission options, the pickup features a double wishbone front suspension and a 3-ton towing capacity to ensure reliable stability

across all terrains.

The cabin of the five-seater Himla focuses on modern convenience and passenger comfort. It is equipped with an intuitive 15.6-inch center console panel and a 9.2-inch digital dashboard, bringing practical technology to the segment. Built to global five-star safety standards, the truck utilizes a high-strength body structure and driver assistance systems to protect occupants. The all-new Himla is now available for viewing and test drives at Chery showrooms across Oman, including Wattayah, Al Hail, Sohar, Salalah and Barka.

FINANCIAL AWARENESS

Bank Muscat continues to promote financial literacy and sound planning targeting a new segment of society

MUSCAT: As part of its commitment to supporting community development and promoting financial awareness across society, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, organised the first session of the financial literacy workshops dedicated to the newlyweds and individuals preparing for marriage.

The workshops, with the first session held in the Governorate of Dhofar, aim to strengthen participants’ understanding of sound financial management, encourage positive financial habits, and highlight their role in fostering family stability and building a sustainable financial future.

The workshop forms part of Bank Muscat’s ongoing community initiatives to equip individuals with the financial knowledge and skills needed to make informed financial decisions. Organized in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Development, the initiative reflects the Bank’s commitment to strengthening strategic partnerships with public and private sector organizations and delivering sustainable community programmes with lasting social impact. This collaboration is driven by Bank Muscat’s belief that financial literacy is a key pillar of improved quality of life and greater economic and social stability for families, particularly during the early years of marriage, when effective financial planning and responsible money management are especially important.

The workshop covered a range of key topics, including the importance of financial literacy in



married life, financial partnership between spouses as the foundation of a transparent and collaborative relationship, family budgeting and financial planning, setting shared financial goals, and building a sustainable financial future together. Participants also explored common financial challenges and mistakes faced by newly married couples and practical ways to address them, in addition to the concept of financial intelligence and its role in strengthening family stability and promoting responsible financial management.

Through initiatives that promote financial literacy, Bank Muscat continues to strengthen its role

as an active partner in community development by designing and delivering specialized programmes that serve different segments of society. These initiatives help expand financial literacy, encourage responsible financial behaviour, and enable individuals to manage their finances effectively, ultimately contributing to stronger families and enhanced community well-being. Over the past period, the Bank has organized several financial literacy workshops for diverse audiences. These include a two-day programme for more than 120 students with hearing impairments at the Scientific College of Design, as well as a series of

workshops for women held in the wilayats of Nakhal, Muscat, Sur, Ibra and Liwa, attended by more than 200 participants.

In addition to these workshops, the Bank continues to implement a range of financial literacy programmes and initiatives, including the Maliyat Academy, a financial literacy programme designed for school students and that has benefited so far over 100 thousand students. Also, the Bank has launched Maliyat Programme, a free online financial education platform launched in 2019 that offers financial literacy courses for adults aged 18 and above from across the community.

ACHIEVEMENT



Indian School Bousher prodigy creates chess history with historic WFM and WCM titles

MUSCAT: In a moment of immense pride and distinction, Indian School Bousher celebrated the extraordinary achievement of its young chess prodigy, M.A. Sriyukthaa, who has created history by becoming the first-ever Under-11 player in India to earn the prestigious Woman FIDE Master (WFM) title after crossing the remarkable 2100 Elo Classical Rating milestone.

This landmark accomplishment also saw Sriyukthaa surpass the 2000 Elo rating threshold required for the Woman Candidate Master (WCM) title, further highlighting her exceptional talent, dedication, and commitment to excellence. Adding another remarkable achievement to her growing list of accolades, she is currently ranked World No. 2 in the Under-11 category, placing her among the finest young chess talents in the world.

Karanjeet Singh Matharoo, President of the School Man-

agement Committee (SMC), felicitated Sriyukthaa and honoured her for this unprecedented achievement. He also expressed heartfelt appreciation to her parents, coaches, and mentors for their unwavering encouragement, guidance, and support throughout her remarkable journey.

Principal P. Prabakaran congratulated the young champion and commended her exceptional commitment, perseverance, discipline, and passion for excellence. He described her accomplishment as a landmark moment in the history of Indian School Bousher and a source of inspiration for the entire school community.

The gathering of students and staff applauded Sriyukthaa’s remarkable accomplishment, recognising it as a milestone that has brought immense pride not only to Indian School Bousher but also to Indian chess on the international stage.



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