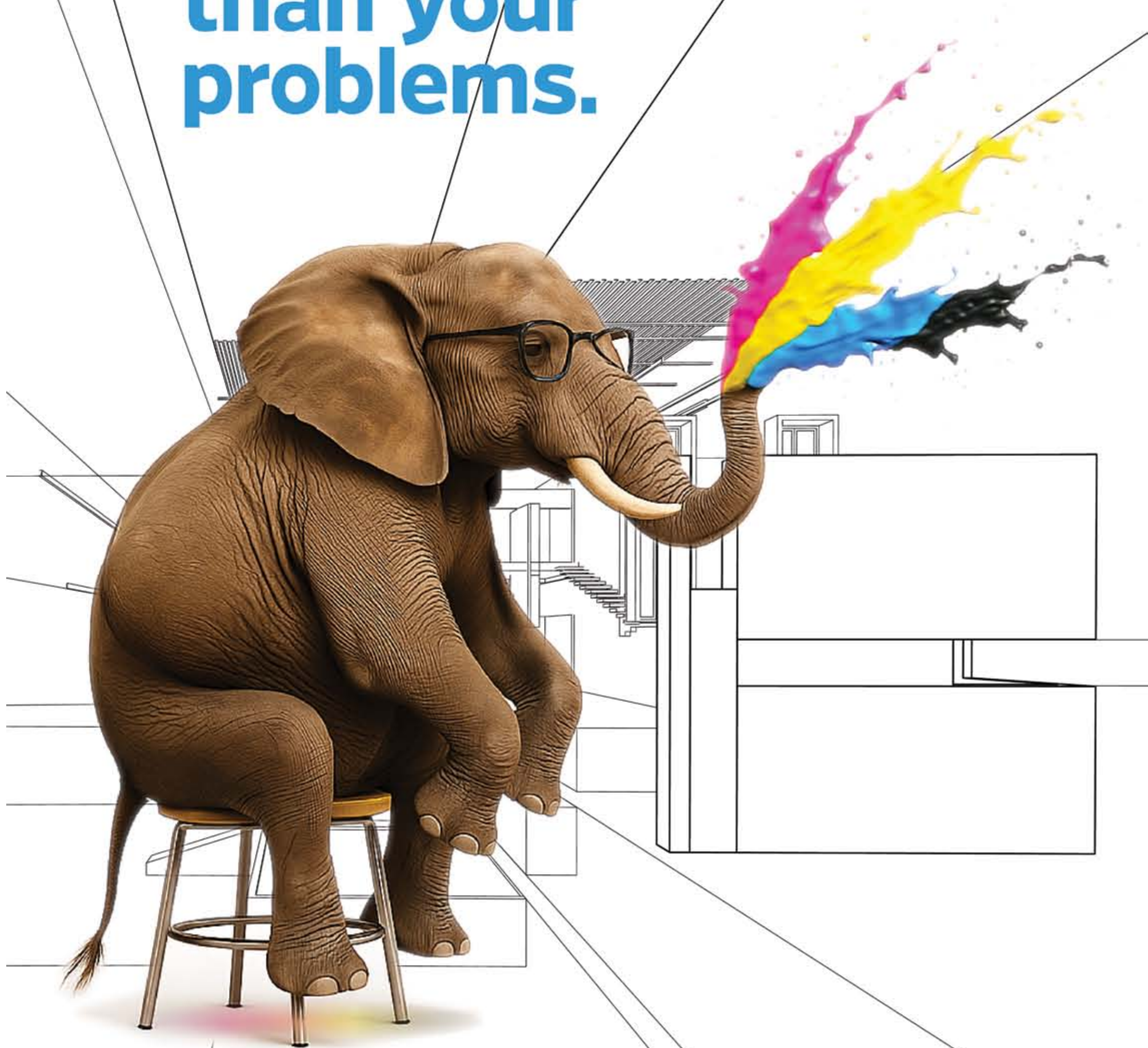


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51

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A8

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN

Oman braces for 50°C temperature

1 The Sultanate of Oman is set to experience another spell of extreme summer heat, with temperatures expected to approach 50 degrees Celsius in coastal and desert areas over the coming days, according to a warning issued by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA). >A3

OMAN

Olive oil project bags three gold medals

2 “OLIO”, an Omani project for the production and marketing of Jabal Akhdar olive oil recently won three gold medals in international competitions, posing high among the most prominent extra virgin olive oil. The accomplishment affirms the outstanding quality of this Omani product. >A4

MARKET

Drive to promote Duqm attractions

3 The Special Economic Zone at Duqm, Al Wusta Governorate, yesterday launched a media and promotional campaign codenamed “Drop By Duqm” to welcome visitors to Dhofar Khareef season. The campaign aims to encourage travellers and visitors to stop in Duqm. >B1

PRIVATE ENTERPRISES
ADDED VALUE EXCEEDS
OMR8.1BN IN OMAN



Oman’s micro, small and medium-sized enterprises are playing an important role in driving the country’s growth

MUSCAT: Private enterprises in the Sultanate of Oman generated more than OMR8.1 billion in value added during the first quarter of 2026, despite a modest decline in overall economic activity, according to the latest data released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI). The data showed that the total value added of private enterprises declined by 1.7 percent to OMR8.1 billion during the January-March 2026 period, compared with OMR8.2 billion recorded in the corresponding quarter of 2025.

2.0 percent decline
The country’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) also registered a 2.0 percent decline, falling to OMR10.293 billion in the first quarter of 2026 from OMR10.501 billion during the same period last year. Despite the overall decline, micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) continued to demonstrate resilience, recording positive growth in value added. >A6

OMAN ADVANCES STRATEGIC ENGAGEMENT WITH ASEAN

Sultanate to join the 50th anniversary of the treaty of amity and cooperation in Southeast Asia

Oman’s participation reflects the Sultanate’s longstanding commitment to dialogue, peaceful coexistence, regional stability and respect for international law. It also provides an important platform to advance practical cooperation with ASEAN across trade and investment, logistics, energy, food security, tourism, digital transformation and advanced manufacturing.

Representing more than 680 million people and a combined economy approaching US\$4 trillion, ASEAN is one of the world’s most dynamic economic regions. Oman is strengthening its position as a strategic partner connecting ASEAN with the Gulf, Africa, and wider International markets.

ASEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY AT A GLANCE

ASEAN Combined Economy

US\$3.8 TR

ASEAN Foreign Direct Investment

US\$226 BN

ASEAN Approximate Population

680 MN

Oman’s Trade Surplus with ASEAN

US\$3.41 BN



Partnership & Collaboration Over the Years

1990
ASEAN - GCC relationship initiated by Oman's Foreign Ministry

2011
ASEAN - GCC Economic Officials convene in Salalah, Oman

2022
Oman signs The Treaty of Amity & Cooperation (TAC) with ASEAN

2023
Oman takes part in the 1st ASEAN - GCC Summit, Riyadh, KSA

2025
Oman joins the 2nd ASEAN - GCC Summit & the 1st ASEAN - GCC - China Summit

2026
ASEAN - GCC - China Tripartite Business Council. Oman to take part in 50th anniversary of the treaty of amity and cooperation in Southeast Asia the 59th ASEAN

MEETINGS

Foreign Minister bids farewell to ambassadors of Germany, Nepal



MUSCAT: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, received on Sunday, separately, Dirk Lölke, Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany, and

Dornath Aryal, Ambassador of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal, to the Sultanate of Oman, to bid them farewell at the end of their tour of duty.



Sayyid Badr expressed his appreciation for the efforts of the two ambassadors which contributed to strengthening bilateral relations, wishing them contin-

ued success in their future endeavors. The two meetings were attended by a number of officials from the Foreign Ministry. -ONA

ROP

Two persons die, three injured in vehicle collision

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Two people were killed and three others injured in a serious road traffic collision between two vehicles on Sultan Said bin Taimur Road, while heading towards the Wilayat of Mirbat, the Royal Oman Police (ROP) said.

According to the ROP, the accident claimed the lives of two individuals and left three others with injuries of varying severity.

The ROP Air Wing carried out a medical evacuation operation for an injured person of Asian nationality, transporting the victim to Sultan Qaboos Hospital in Salalah for urgent medical treatment.

Emergency response teams attended the scene, providing medi-

cal assistance to the injured before they were transferred for further care. Authorities have not yet released the identities of the victims or the cause of the crash.

Recently, a teacher and her three children were killed in a tragic road accident while returning from Dhofar Governorate, plunging the educational community and residents of South Al Sharqiyah into mourning.

The incident is the latest in a series of serious road accidents reported on Sultan Said bin Taimur Road, with authorities continuing to urge motorists to exercise caution, adhere to speed limits and avoid risky driving behaviour, particularly on long-distance route.

COMMENTARY

Saying goodbye to your office colleagues

I was waiting for my bank statement printout in the office of my branch manager when a man walked in. I knew who he was. But the man was not in his usual cheerful mood that morning. I thought it was strange for a person I knew for nearly five years to completely ignore me.

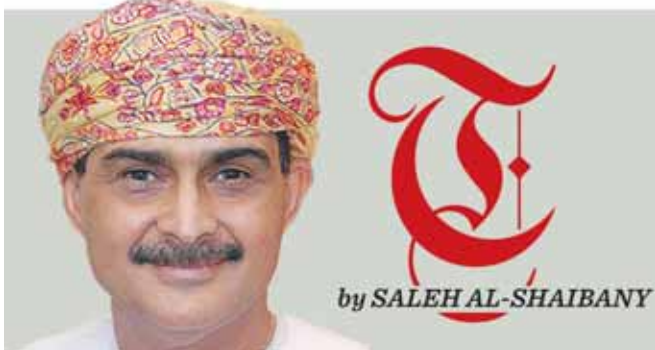
He just collected a bundle of papers from his manager's desk and walked out without a word. I would normally assume he had a bad day but there was something in him that made me look sharply at his boss.

"He was asked to leave the bank by our regional manager," the branch manager told me, "poor man!"

I felt for him. I know, from my relatively long association with him, that he had four kids. I was so shocked that I just looked at the manager without really seeing her. She took that as an accusation and quickly defended herself by saying, "nothing to do with me. It was his performance that got him the sack."

She did not fool me. There was something in that lame defence that gave her away. She had something to do with it. People in the head office would not know much of the staff in branches. He was obviously fired from her recommendation. There must have been something in my face that made her angry. She asked me if I could wait for the statement in the waiting lounge.

I knew she did not want



me there. I also knew right there and then what it was like to work under her. My first reaction was to stay put and to report her as "rude" to her seniors. But that, I thought, would be taking revenge for somebody's course. So I left her office and sat quietly on the lounge.

That gave me the opportunity to watch the man. He had a brown carton and several plastic bags in his hands. He slowly put them on his desk and almost in slow motion, started clearing his stuff. There were half a dozen of his colleagues around him pretending to be busy but they were clearly upset to see their friend in that state.

It is funny how you could clear your office station in five minutes with things you put there for five years. I saw him packing everything and one of the staff offered to help carry the bags in his car. He came back a few minutes later to check if he had not left anything behind. He might have

wiped out everything there but not the memory of his service in that bank in the minds of his colleagues.

I watched him standing awkwardly next to his desk unsure whether to be the first one to say goodbye. They just looked at him.

Words are difficult in those situations. So he just waved his hand in a circle motion and walked away. He passed the office of her former boss then took a step back. He entered and I saw him stretched his hand. She got up and shook it. It was very brief but sweet and sour. It was a gesture on his part to show that there were no hard feelings.

I collected my statement minutes later and walked out. The man was still there outside arranging his stuff in the car. He now had all the time in the world. I went to talk to him. He smiled and said I would have to look for somebody else to do my bank transfers. He was taking it well because he knew that life must go on.

ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP

Oman, Niger to enhance bilateral cooperation

MUSCAT: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, held a session of talks on Sunday with Bakary Yaou Sangaré, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and Nigeriens Abroad of the Republic of Niger.

The two sides discussed areas of cooperation and opportunities to develop the commercial and economic partnership between the two countries.

They agreed to follow up on the completion of a number of agreements and memorandums of understanding to encourage and stimulate further exchange and communication at the government and private sector levels. Furthermore, they aimed to develop commercial and investment exchange and capacity building to achieve mutual benefits and shared interests.

During the talks, the two ministers exchanged views on a number

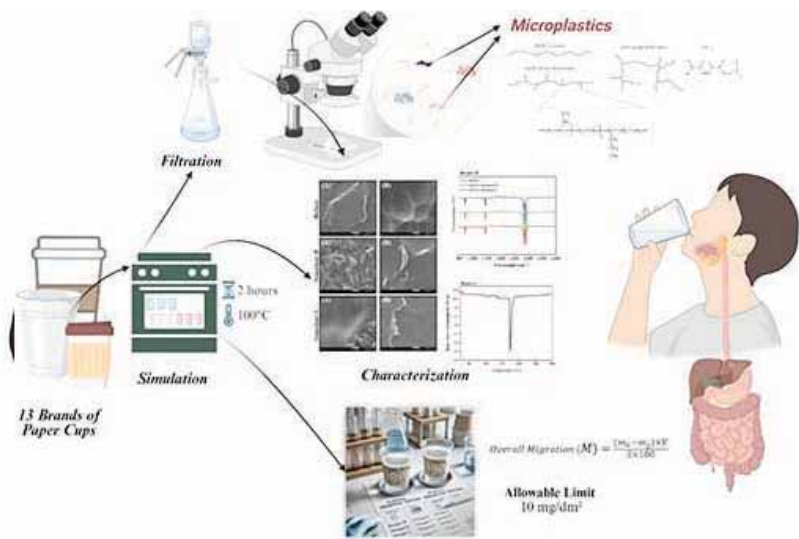


of regional and international issues of common interest, affirming the importance of continuing consultation and coordination between the two countries. The

meeting was attended by Dr. Mohammed Ali Al Balushi, Head of the Africa Department at the Foreign Ministry, along with several officials from both sides. -ONA

FOOD SAFETY REGULATIONS

Omani study on paper cups safety calls for assessment



Times News Service

MUSCAT: A new study by Omani researchers has found that single-use paper cups sold in Oman comply with current food safety regulations but may release polymeric particles that are not covered by existing testing methods, prompting calls for updated food-contact material safety standards.

The study, published in the peer-reviewed journal Food and Bioproducts Processing by Elsevier, was conducted by researchers from the Ministry of Agricultural, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources, Sultan Qaboos University, Nottingham Trent University, and other research institutions.

The researchers assessed 13 brands of paper cups available in the Omani market by combining conventional overall migration testing with advanced analyses of suspected polymeric particle release. Consumer usage patterns were also examined through a survey involving 868 participants.

The survey found that 58 percent of respondents use one to three paper cups daily, while around 33 percent reported using

at least one paper cup every day. Tea was the most commonly consumed beverage in paper cups, accounting for 72 percent of usage, followed by coffee at 13 percent.

The study also found that paper cups are most frequently used in cafés (31.9 percent) and workplaces (26.9 percent). Convenience was identified as the primary reason for their use by 30 percent of respondents, followed by hygiene (26.5 percent) and easy availability (23.4 percent).

Laboratory testing showed that all paper cup samples complied with the European regulatory limit for overall migration of food-contact materials, indicating that they are considered safe under current regulatory frameworks.

However, the researchers found evidence that paper cups can release suspected polymeric particles, including microplastics, particularly under conditions simulating contact with hot beverages. The study noted that these particles are not currently evaluated under conventional migration tests, suggesting that existing regulations may not fully capture all potential exposure pathways. The researchers emphasised

that no significant relationship was found between overall chemical migration and the release of polymeric particles, indicating that the two should be assessed independently in future food safety evaluations.

Based on the findings, the study recommends encouraging consumers to use reusable cups whenever practical and improving the quality and consistency of the internal coatings used in paper cup manufacturing to reduce material degradation and potential particle release.

The authors also called for the development of standardised methods to assess both chemical migration and particle emissions from food-contact materials, alongside expanding food safety regulations to include particle release assessments.

In the longer term, the researchers recommended supporting research into safer coating materials and enhancing analytical techniques for identifying and accurately measuring polymeric particles, helping ensure that food-contact material regulations keep pace with emerging scientific evidence.

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CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY

Doctors issue health advisory as Oman braces for 50°C heat



Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman is set to experience another spell of extreme summer heat, with temperatures expected to approach 50 degrees Celsius in coastal and desert areas over the coming days, according to a warning issued by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA). The CAA's National Multi-Hazard Early Warning Centre said temperatures will begin rising gradually from Sunday evening (July 19) and continue through July 20 and 21, with the hottest conditions forecast across coastal areas overlooking the Sea of Oman and the country's interior desert regions. Authorities said daytime temperatures are expected to range from the mid-40s to nearly 50°C, urging residents to take necessary precautions during the peak heat period. Medical professionals have also appealed to the public to remain vigilant, warning that prolonged exposure to extreme heat can lead to dehydration, heat exhaustion and potentially life-threatening

heatstroke, particularly among children, elderly people, outdoor workers and those with chronic medical conditions. Dr Dilip Singhvi, Specialist in Internal Medicine and Diabetes at Burjeel Hospital, said advised citizens and residents to avoid unnecessary outdoor activities during the hottest hours of the day, generally between 12am and 3pm. "When temperatures approach 50 degrees Celsius, the risk of heat-related illnesses increases significantly. People should drink water regularly, even if they do not feel thirsty, wear loose-fitting and light-coloured clothing, and stay in air-conditioned or shaded places whenever possible," he said. Doctors also recommend avoiding strenuous physical activity during peak daytime hours and limiting the consumption of caffeinated and sugary drinks, which may contribute to dehydration. Instead, people are encouraged to consume plenty of water and include water-rich fruits and vegetables such as water-

melon, oranges and cucumbers in their diet. Parents have been reminded never to leave children or pets inside parked vehicles, even for a short period, as temperatures inside a closed vehicle can rise rapidly to dangerous levels. Health experts said anyone experiencing symptoms such as dizziness, headache, confusion, nausea, muscle cramps, rapid heartbeat, excessive sweating followed by hot and dry skin, or loss of consciousness should seek immediate medical attention, as these could indicate heatstroke, a medical emergency that requires urgent treatment. Outdoor workers have also been advised to take frequent rest breaks in shaded areas, stay well hydrated and follow occupational safety measures to minimise the risk of heat stress. The Civil Aviation Authority urged residents and visitors to keep updated with the latest weather bulletins and follow official advisories as the Sultanate experiences one of the hottest periods of the summer season.

Modification option for GED students to begin from July 21

47 support centres ready as Oman begins diploma students' admission preference revision



MUSCAT: The Ministry of Education has announced the commencement of the preference modification period for General Education Diploma students for the academic year 2025/2026 through the electronic system of the Higher Education Admission Centre, running from 21 July to 1 August. The Ministry confirmed the readiness of 47 technical support centers across various educational directorates in the governorates to provide technical support services, as well as professional and academic counseling to students and their parents during this crucial phase. Additionally, 48 technical support centers have been established at the Career Guidance and Student Counseling Centre, distributed across the various educational directorates in the governorates. This aims to offer technical support and answer inquiries related to registration and preference modification, alongside providing professional and academic counseling that assists students in selecting the appropriate academic programmes. The Ministry clarified that the preference modification period represents an opportunity for students to review their academic programs and rearrange their academic choices in a manner that aligns with their inclinations, abil-

ities, and future aspirations. It also allows them to benefit from the educational opportunities available at higher education institutions, thereby contributing to making informed future academic and professional decisions. The Ministry indicated that the preference modification period constitutes one of the important stages in the admission pathway to higher education institutions. It grants students the opportunity to review their academic choices in light of their final results and rearrange them according to their priorities and future plans. It also provides an electronic environment that contributes to facilitating the registration and preference modification procedures, enabling students to utilise the designated period for this purpose. Sheikh Yaqoub Saif Al Shahimi, Director General of the Career Guidance and Student Counseling Centre, explained that the technical support centers are among the services implemented by the Ministry to support General Education Diploma students during the preference modification period. Their services are supervised by career guidance specialists and professionals in the career guid-

ance departments within the educational directorates to provide the necessary support and guidance to students and their parents, and to assist them in understanding the available educational choices and the mechanisms for arranging preferences in a well-considered manner. He pointed out that the centers provide an integrated environment combining technical support with professional and academic counseling, which contributes to enabling students to make educational decisions that align with their interests, abilities, and future opportunities. He affirmed that the geographical distribution of the centers took into consideration facilitating access to services across the various governorates. The Ministry of Education called upon General Education Diploma students and their parents to benefit from the services of the technical support centers during the preference modification period and to review the academic programs carefully before confirming them, thereby supporting the building of educational and professional pathways that are commensurate with their future aspirations. -ONA

RENFREW MUSIC COMPETITION

RAO band secures third place in Scotland music competition



LONDON: The Royal Army of Oman (RAO) Band achieved on Sunday third place in the world-class (second) level competition within the Renfrew Music Competition, which is hosted by the city of Renfrew in Scotland, the United Kingdom (UK), with the participation of more than 20 musical bands from various countries around the world. The Royal Army of Oman Band also achieved several honorable individual results in the competition, as Warrant Officer Mohammed Khamis Al

Amri secured first place in the stick-bearers competition, Captain Hamid Suleiman Al Ghafri achieved third place, while Warrant Officer Talal Ali Al Maamari claimed fourth place in the same competition. The Royal Army of Oman Band presented military musical performances at the (second) and (third) levels within the international classification for bagpipes and drums. The band's performance reflected its characteristic precision in execution, harmony in

ensemble playing, and discipline in movement, winning the admiration of the large crowds present. This participation marks the band's first involvement in global music competitions this year. The Royal Army of Oman Band will continue its participation in a number of music competitions held in different Scottish cities, including Dumbarton, Dundonald, Bridge of Allan, and Perth, concluding with its participation in the World Championship in Glasgow. -ONA

ROP

Arab national arrested in Seeb with large quantity of drugs

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Directorate of Narcotics and Psychotropic Substances Control, under the Muscat Governorate Police Command, has arrested an Arab national in the Wilayat of Seeb for possessing a large quantity of psychotropic substances with the intent to traffic and consume them. The Royal Oman Police (ROP) said the suspect was apprehended during an operation carried out by the anti-narcotics unit in Seeb. Legal procedures are currently being completed against the accused, the ROP added. **Man arrested for theft** The North Al Sharqiyah Governorate Police Command has ar-



rested an individual for allegedly stealing cash and various goods from seven commercial shops in the Wilayat of Bidiyah. The Royal Oman Police (ROP) said the suspect is accused of car-

rying out a series of thefts targeting commercial establishments in the wilayat. Legal procedures against the accused are being completed, the ROP added.

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الشركة العامة للسيارات
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Road projects worth OMR105mn implemented in North Al Sharqiyah

The scheme includes the dualisation of carriageways, the opening of new roads and the expansion of the existing network to serve all the governorate’s wilayats

IBRA: The Governorate of North Al Sharqiyah is undergoing an active road construction activity in implementation of the plans set by the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology to upgrade the scheme of road networks in the Sultanate of Oman.

The total value of projects implemented and awarded in the governorate of North Al Sharqiyah during the years 2025 and 2026 exceeds OMR105 million.

The scheme includes the dualisation of carriageways, the opening of new roads and the expansion of the existing network to serve all the governorate’s wilayats.

Work is underway (at a rate of more than 85%) on Aqabat Wadi Bani Khalid road, which is a 9-km long road being constructed at a cost of OMR13,200,000. This road connects the centre of the Wilayat of Wadi Bani Khalid with tourist sites and economic and commercial hotspots in the governorate.

As part of efforts to boost the internal road network in the Wilayat of Ibra, the Ministry awarded a project to dualise Al Yahmedi-Al Qafisi road—a stretch of 15.6 km that will be constructed at a cost of OMR29,109,898.

The Ministry is pressing ahead with efforts to finalise the remaining works of a 3 km road linking the areas of Mahlah, Ghubrat Al Tam and Ismailiyat Al Khabah in the Wilayat of Dima and W’Attayeen. The project cost more than OMR8 million.

The Ministry also awarded five more projects in the Governorate



As part of efforts to boost the internal road network in the Wilayat of Ibra, the Ministry awarded a project to dualise Al Yahmedi-Al Qafisi road—a stretch of 15.6 km that will be constructed at a cost of OMR29,109,898.

Wilayat of Sinaw and other wilayats.

The sixth project awarded by the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology aimed to complete the remaining works on the Sultan Turki bin Said Road (Phases 1 & 2 in North Al Sharqiyah Governorate and Phase 2, Part 1 in South A’Sharqiyah Governorate. The project costs OMR15,602,643.

The Ministry pointed out that these projects top its national priorities for year 2026. The projects aim to achieve a number of objectives, including traffic safety—through the construction of dual carriageways and the separation of truck lanes—in addition to supporting economic activity by connecting industrial areas, local markets and tourist and raising the efficiency of the overall transport network in line with Oman Vision 2040 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). -ONA

of North Al Sharqiyah recently.

The first, worth OMR4,844,685, was awarded to design and implement a road link that will shorten the distance between the wilayat of Ibra and the Wilayat of Dima W’Attayeeh.

The second project was awarded for designing and implementing the project Al Jabal Al Abyadh in the Wilayat of Dima W’attayeen, to

the tune of OMR13,500,143.

The project aims to open new areas for investment and housing and ease access to adjoining archaeological areas in the Wilayat.

The third project was awarded to pave the Seeh Jibreen road and the road of Al Oqaidah, Al Saleel and Al Butain in the Wilayat of Al Qabil. The project costs OMR12,423,487. The project aims to improve the

network of internal roads, serve residential neighbourhoods and ease access to adjoining archaeological areas in the Wilayat.

The fourth project awarded recently by the Ministry deals with raising the capacity of the road linking the areas of Sinaw, Mahoot and A’Duqm. The project, which costs OMR9.214 million, aims to consolidate the road networks

linking various governorates of the Sultanate of Oman.

The project includes the design and implementation of separate service roads (with a total length of 9 km) and the designing and implementation of Al Khashaba village link in the Wilayat of Al Mudhaibi (11 km). These works will Al Mudhaibi Industrial City’s support for adjoining local markets in the

OLIO

Omani olive oil project bags 3 gold medals in international contests



JABAL AKHDAR: “OLIO”, an Omani project for the production and marketing of Jabal Akhdar olive oil recently won three gold medals in international competitions, posing high among the most prominent extra virgin olive oil. The accomplishment affirms the outstanding quality of this Omani product and its ability to compete in global markets.

“OLIO” achieved this feat by winning gold medal in Abu Dhabi International Olive Oil Competi-

tion, the European International Olive Oil Competition (EIOOC) in Geneva and the Scandinavian International Olive Oil Competition (SIOOC).

Global platforms assess olive oils according to precise standards that include chemical and sensory properties, under the supervision of a specialized international jury.

After pressing, oil is stored in food-grade stainless steel tanks away from light, heat and oxy-

gen, while nitrogen gas is pumped into the containers before filling, to help minimize oxidation. The product is then packed in opaque containers to ensure that its quality remains intact until it reaches the consumer.

“OLIO” brand name is inspired by the compound Oleoanthal known for its natural properties and health benefits. It has been officially registered with the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion. -ONA

COMMENTARY

The Legacy of Business: It's Not What You Earn, It's What You Leave Behind

Success in business is often measured by sales, profits, and growth. These are important because they help a company expand and create new opportunities. But the most respected businesses are remembered for something much greater. They are remembered for the lives they touched, the opportunities they created, and the positive difference they made to society.

As Oman moves forward with the goals of Vision 2040, businesses have a unique opportunity to create a lasting legacy. A successful company is not just one that makes money—it is one that helps people grow, supports the community, and contributes to the country's future.

Every business, whether large or small, has the power to make a positive impact. When a company creates jobs, it supports families. When it trains young people, it builds future leaders. When it buys from local suppliers, it helps other businesses grow. These actions may seem simple, but together they strengthen the economy and improve lives.

One of the greatest gifts a business can give is opportunity. A young graduate's first job can shape an entire career. A small supplier receiving a new contract can expand its business. A customer receiving honest service becomes a loyal supporter. These everyday actions create value far beyond financial results.

Oman has always been known for its values of honesty, generosity, and respect. These values are not only important in daily life but are also the foundation of successful businesses. Companies that treat people fairly earn trust, and trust is one of the most valuable assets any business can have. Customers return to businesses they trust. Employees



stay with leaders who respect and support them. Investors prefer companies that are well managed and have strong values. Trust cannot be bought—it is earned through consistent actions over many years.

Great business leaders understand this. They do not think only about today's profits. They also think about tomorrow's impact. They ask themselves, "How can we create more opportunities? How can we help our employees succeed? How can we contribute to our community?" These questions often lead to stronger businesses and lasting success.

A company's greatest investment is its people. Employees who receive training, encouragement, and recognition are more motivated and productive. They bring new ideas, provide better service, and help the business grow. When people succeed, businesses succeed too.

Businesses can also give back by supporting schools, mentoring young entrepreneurs, promoting innovation, and protecting the environment. These efforts create stronger communities and build a positive reputation. People naturally want to support businesses that care about more than just profits.

The good news is that creating a legacy does not require a large company or a big budget. Every business can make a

difference. A small family business that provides excellent service, pays its employees on time, and treats every customer with respect is already building a legacy. It is not the size of the business that matters—it is the values it follows.

As Oman continues to diversify its economy, the role of the private sector will become even more important. Businesses that invest in people, encourage innovation, and support their communities will help create a stronger and more competitive nation.

Their success will contribute directly to the ambitions of Vision 2040.

At the end of the day, people rarely remember a company only for the profits it made. They remember how it treated its employees, how it served its customers, and how it helped the community.

They remember the trust it earned and the opportunities it created.

Money can build a business, but values build a legacy. The companies that will stand the test of time are those that choose to make a positive difference every day. By focusing on people as much as profits, Omani businesses can leave behind something far more valuable than financial success—they can leave a legacy that inspires future generations and helps build a stronger, more prosperous Oman.

Tadoom Wins 'Excellence in IoT & Smart Cities Solutions' Award



Tadoom was felicitated with the 'Excellence in IoT & Smart Cities Solutions' Award 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.

Tadoom was recognised for its outstanding contribution to advancing smart city initiatives and digital transformation through innovative Internet of Things (IoT) solutions. By enabling intelligent connectivity, data-driven decision-making, and integrated digital ecosystems, the company continues to support organisations in improving operational efficiency, enhancing service delivery, and creating smarter, more connected communities.

With a strong focus on innovation, sustainability, and customer-centric technology, Tadoom delivers tailored IoT and smart infrastructure solutions that address the evolving

needs of government entities, businesses, and urban developments. Its expertise in deploying scalable technologies has played a significant role in accelerating digital transformation and enabling organisations to deliver better experiences for citizens and customers alike.

Through continuous investment in emerging technologies, strategic partnerships, and future-ready solutions, Tadoom continues to set benchmarks in the IoT and smart cities sector. Its commitment to innovation, excellence, and creating intelligent digital environments has established the company as a trusted technology partner driving the future of smart living in Oman.

Instituted by Times of Oman in association with Muscat Media Group, Gulf Leaders Circle and TEvents, the Oman Customer Experience (CX) Awards celebrate exceptional professionals, organisations, and brands that have distinguished themselves through excellence in customer experience.

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The awards recognise those who continue to lead the way in understanding, meeting, and surpassing customer expectations while setting new standards of service excellence and customer-centric innovation.

AL MURTAFA'A CAMP

RAO football, catering teams honoured

MUSCAT: Maj. Gen Mattar Salim Al Balushi, Commander of the Royal Army of Oman (RAO), honoured on Sunday at Al Murtafa'a Camp the Royal Army of Oman football team, which secured first place in the 26th edition of the Sultan's Armed Forces Football Championship 2026, held from 22 June to 8 July 2026.

The Commander of the Royal Army of Oman, also honored the catering team of the Royal Army of Oman, which achieved advanced positions in the annual International Catering Exercise 2026 in the United Kingdom. The exercise was held during the period from 15-20 June.

The Commander of the Roy-



al Army of Oman, praised the achievements made by the participating teams, congratulating them on their excellence and securing advanced positions. He also commended the honorable

representation of the teams in regional and international forums, urging them to continue their dedication and efforts, and wishing them success in future participations.

SAFEGUARD SHOPPERS

CPA launches awareness drive

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Consumer Protection Authority (CPA) has launched a five-week public awareness campaign titled "Your Awareness, Your Safety" to promote consumer rights, strengthen legal awareness and encourage responsible shopping during the busy Khareef tourism season in Dhofar.

The campaign, which began on Sunday, July 19, aims to enhance consumer and legal awareness,

safeguard consumer rights and ensure suppliers comply with applicable laws and regulations.

According to the Authority, the initiative seeks to build greater trust between consumers, businesses and regulators while reducing commercial violations and unfair market practices through an integrated media and awareness programme.

Running over five weeks, the campaign will focus on improving the quality of tourism-related ser-

vices as thousands of visitors head to Dhofar for the annual Khareef season. It is intended to help create a safe and reliable marketplace for citizens, residents and tourists alike. The CPA said the campaign forms part of its ongoing efforts to foster a stable consumer environment by educating both shoppers and businesses about their rights and responsibilities. The initiative also supports Oman Vision 2040 by promoting a secure, transparent and responsible environment.

OVER 200 KM/H

Two drivers caught for speeding

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The General Directorate of Traffic has apprehended two drivers for travelling at speeds exceeding 200 km/h on Sultan Said bin Taimur Street in the direction of Dhofar Governorate.

The violations were detected using mobile speed monitoring devices during traffic enforcement operations. Authorities said the motorists were stopped, and the necessary legal procedures are being completed against them.

The Royal Oman Police has repeatedly urged motorists to adhere to speed limits and traffic regulations, warning that excessive speeding poses a serious risk to road users and can lead to fatal accidents



19th Death Anniversary you will always live in our hearts Mr. R. Justus Management and Staff of GULF OILFIELDS & IND.SUPPLIES LLC P.O. Box 423, P.C. 117 Ghala Tel: 24818163, 24819168, Fax: 24818187 Email : info@goisoman.com

MUSCAT GOVERNORATE MUSCAT MUNICIPALITY Advertisement No. 23/2026 Muscat Municipality invites Companies specialized in the field and registered with Projects, Tenders and Local Content Authority , to participate and obtain prequalification documents from the website via the following link: (https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om starting from the date of this announcement and until the end of deadline stipulated below.

Project Number	Description of Project	Last date to collect	Bids return date
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Efforts to integrate jobs with education system

It seeks to build more efficient transition pathways from school to work, raise the readiness of national competencies, and align education and training outputs

AL MUSANNAH: The National Employment Programme, in partnership with Sultan Qaboos Naval Academy, conducted a workshop to introduce the national initiative, codenamed “National Model for Transition from School to Work.”

The workshop was held at the Said bin Sultan Naval Base in the Wilayat of Al Musannah, South Al Batinah Governorate, with the participation of officials and representatives from more than 20 entities from the government, military, and private sectors.

The workshop aims to enhance institutional integration among partners within the education, training, and employment system.

It seeks to build more efficient transition pathways from school to work, raise the readiness of national competencies, and align education and training outputs with the needs of the labour market, thereby supporting the competitiveness of the national economy and keeping pace with the targets of Oman Vision 2040.



The workshop included a detailed presentation of the initiative, addressing its main pillars aimed at building professional readiness and enhancing professional identity among students from early educational stages.

It also focused on utilising the best international practices and experiences in designing effective transition pathways from education to work.

This contributes to aligning education and training outputs with labor market needs, raising the efficiency of the employment system, and supporting sustainable economic development.

Furthermore, the workshop witnessed a review of the “Ship’s Cook” program, which is implemented in partnership among the Sultan Qaboos Naval Academy, the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, the Ministry of Labour, the National Employment Programme, and Asyad Shipping Company.

This programme serves as a practical model for applying the concept of transitioning from school to work.

It combines academic education, practical training, and professional qualification, enabling participants to acquire the skills and knowledge required to work in the maritime sector, ultimately leading to the employment of the program’s graduates at Asyad Shipping Company.

This was followed by an extensive discussion session in which representatives of the National Employment Programme and participating entities took part. During the session, they discussed ways to develop the initiative, enhance institutional partnerships, and expand the scope of applying the national model.

This aims to contribute to building a more integrated system that connects education, training, and employment, enhances the readiness of national competencies, keeps pace with the needs of the labor market, and supports the sustainability of economic development.

The workshop comes as part of the National Employment Programme’s efforts to develop innovative national solutions that enhance integration within the education, training, and employment system.

It also contributes to preparing a qualified human capital that possesses the necessary skills and competencies to help lead development, thereby supporting the competitiveness of the national economy, enhancing the efficiency of the employment system, and achieving the targets of Oman Vision 2040. -**OMA**



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PHONE CALL

Foreign Minister discusses regional developments with Jordanian, Qatari counterparts



MUSCAT: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister held a telephone conversation today with Ayman Safadi, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, discussing regional developments and their impact on the security and stability of the region.

The two ministers stressed the need to intensify political efforts to halt escalation, prioritise dialogue and peaceful solutions and prevent the region from sliding into further confrontation. They also underlined the importance of upholding international law, safeguarding freedom of navigation, protecting the interests of all peoples and preserving the autonomy and stability of states.

In a separate call, Sayyid Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister spoke with Sheikh Mo-

ammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani, Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the State of Qatar.

The telephone conversation covered the latest regional developments, mediation efforts and ongoing communications to prevent escalation and confrontation and to advance opportunities for reaching understanding between the parties that could lead to a practical and sustainable consensus — particularly on securing the freedom and safety of navigation through the Strait of Hormuz and restoring global supply chains.

Both sides affirmed the importance of continued consultation and coordination on current developments, and of concerted regional and international efforts to address the root causes of tension and consolidate security and stability.

BLACK SEA



Caspian Pipeline Consortium halts oil loading after tanker attacks off Russian coast

MOSCOW: The Caspian Pipeline Consortium suspended oil loading on Sunday after two tankers were attacked off the Russian Black Sea coast.

The consortium said the tankers Asia and NISSOS IOS were struck during loading operations, adding that no casualties or injuries were reported among its employees or contractors. It also denied any oil spill, but did not identify those responsible for the attack.

Last week saw a significant escalation in strikes by both Russia and Ukraine on vessels in the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov.

The consortium operates a 1,510-kilometre pipeline linking Kazakhstan’s Caspian oilfields to the Russian port of Novorossiysk. Oil loaded there is shipped by tankers to global markets, with the consortium handling about 80 percent of Kazakhstan’s oil exports.

- **ONA**

EUROPEAN UNION

EU ban on destroying unsold clothes takes effect

BRUSSELS: A ban on the disposal of unsold clothes and shoes took effect across the European Union on Sunday, in the bloc’s latest move to cut waste.

Hundreds of thousands of tons of fashionwear are destroyed every year across the 27-member EU due to damage, old stock and returned online orders.

The new rule is expected to affect large fashion retailers, wholesalers and manufacturers of apparel — only 20% of which are produced in the EU.

What are the new rules?

Under the EU’s Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation, large companies with more than 250 employees and over €50 million in net annual turnover are banned from destroying stocks of unsold clothing, accessories and footwear.

Firms must now find ways of selling the products, including via discounts, alternative markets and charity donations.

Unsold clothes can only be destroyed when items are unsafe, damaged, counterfeit or rejected by charities, according to a post on the European Commission’s website.

Companies are now required to publish annual reports on the goods they have discarded and keep records for five years.

The regulation, which was approved by Brussels more than two years ago, will be extended to me-



dium-sized firms in 2030.

How big is the fashion waste issue?

Concerns about so-called fast fashion — low-cost, lower-quality mass-produced clothing — have grown significantly over the past decade.

According to the European Environment Agency (EEA), around 4% to 9% of unsold textile products are destroyed each year.

The waste has been exacerbated by rapid growth in online shopping and returns.

Across the EU, one in five fashion goods ordered online is

later returned to the retailer and not resold.

Combined, this amounts to hundreds of thousands of tons of clothes, accessories and footwear.

The new ban aims to help reduce the impact on the environment, as the incineration of millions of clothes hits efforts to cut

greenhouse gas emissions.

EU states are also under pressure to consider waste from raw materials, water, energy and transport in the apparel sector and to encourage more recycling and the reuse of products.

In a recent LinkedIn post, the EEA said the bloc wanted the textile industry to become more sustainable.

“A circular economy — where products are designed to last, and are reused, repaired and recycled — is no longer just a vision, but is being embedded in law through these new legislative measures,” the EEA wrote.

The fashion industry has repeatedly defended its tactics, noting that disposal is often cheaper than storing, repairing or discounting the products.

What’s the reaction to the ban?

The German Retail Federation (HDE) said consumers would benefit from the ban as more discounted apparel is put on sale through outlets, clearance markets and second-hand channels.

HDE Managing Director Stefan Genth warned, however, that the rule change would be a challenge for many stores.

“Not all unsold goods can be resold or donated easily,” he said, due to damaged packaging, high logistics costs, lack of demand or low product values.

- **DW**

NCSI

Micro-enterprises recorded the strongest performance

<FROM A1 Micro-enterprises recorded the strongest performance, with value added increasing 6.2 percent to reach OMR841,200,000, compared to OMR792,400,000 in the first quarter of 2025.

Small enterprises followed with 5.2 percent growth, as their value added rose to OMR702,200,000, compared to OMR667,200,000 during the same period last year.

Meanwhile, medium enterprises posted 3.1 percent growth in value added, reaching OMR654,900,000, compared to OMR635,300,000 in

the first quarter of 2025.

In contrast, large enterprises experienced a decline in value added, which fell 4.0 percent to OMR5,906.9 million compared to 6,152.6 million during the same period of the previous year.

Employment continues to grow

The NCSI figures also showed continued growth in employment across active private enterprises, with the total workforce increasing by 0.9 percent to 1,822,317 workers in the first quarter of 2026, compared with 1,806,245

workers during the corresponding period last year.

Medium enterprises recorded the highest increase in employment, with their workforce expanding by 7.9 percent to 165,195 workers, up from 153,094 a year earlier.

Small enterprises ranked second, recording 6.3 percent growth in employment as the number of workers increased to 570,663, compared with 537,079 during the same period in 2025.

Employment in large enterprises also rose by 3.5 percent, reaching 453,708 workers, com-

pared to 438,212 workers in the previous year.

However, micro-enterprises recorded a decline in employment, with the number of workers falling 6.7 percent to 632,751, down from 677,860 during the first quarter of 2025.

Active enterprises decline slightly

According to the NCSI, the number of active private enterprises in Oman declined marginally by 0.8 percent during the first quarter of 2026, reaching 265,918 enterprises, compared with 268,033 en-

terprises in the same period of the previous year.

Among different enterprise categories, medium enterprises registered the highest growth in numbers, increasing 6.7 percent to 1,987 enterprises, up from 1,862 in the first quarter of 2025.

Small enterprises grew by 4.8 percent, with their numbers rising to 31,369 from 29,932 during the same period last year.

The number of large enterprises also increased by 4.5 percent, reaching 762 enterprises, compared with 729 a year earlier.

In contrast, the number of mi-

cro-enterprises declined 1.6 percent to 231,800, compared with 235,510 in the first quarter of 2025.

The latest figures indicate that while Oman’s overall economy experienced a modest slowdown during the first quarter of 2026, the country’s micro, small and medium-sized enterprises continued to strengthen their contribution to economic activity, recording growth in value added, enterprise numbers and employment. Large enterprises, however, accounted for most of the decline in overall value added, reflecting softer performance in the broader economy.

US says 8th ‘consecutive night’ of strikes against Iran completed

During the operational sweep, American forces engaged multiple strategic locations, focusing heavily on degradation operations. The strikes targeted Iranian coastal surveillance networks, air defence infrastructure, maritime assets, and critical missile and drone storage sites

FLORIDA: US Central Command (CENTCOM) has carried out a series of military operations targeting Iranian assets, marking an “eighth consecutive night” of kinetic actions against Tehran-backed facilities in the region.

According to an official statement released on X, the operation was executed late Saturday under direct authorisation from the White House.

“US Central Command (CENTCOM) completed another round of strikes against Iran on July 18 at 11:30 p.m. ET, at the Commander in Chief’s direction,” the statement read.

During the operational sweep, American forces engaged multiple strategic locations, focusing heavily on degradation operations. The strikes targeted Iranian coastal surveillance networks, air defence infrastructure, maritime assets, and critical missile and drone storage sites.

CENTCOM noted that the primary objective of the mission was to further degrade “Iranian mili-



tary capabilities”.

The military action also served as a direct retaliatory response to hostilities directed at American personnel the previous day. “American military assets also targeted Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps forces that launched attacks against US service members in Jordan late Friday,” the command stated.

Reaffirming its operational stance amid heightened regional friction, CENTCOM emphasised that US military personnel in the Middle East remain “highly vigilant, focused, lethal, and ready”.

These fresh military operations were specifically designed to “punish” Iran following the fatalities of two American service members during an assault attributed to Tehran-backed forces in Jordan. Elaborating on this punitive objective, CENTCOM confirmed that the strikes were intended to “swiftly punish Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps forces who launched attacks against American service members in Jordan last night”.

Authorised by US President Donald Trump, the military engagement was also “designed to further degrade Iran’s ability to threaten commercial shipping in the Strait of Hormuz,” CENTCOM stated.

Detailing the broader scope of the aerial campaign on X, the command confirmed that “During the eighth consecutive night of US strikes, CENTCOM forces successfully hit Iranian military coastal surveillance and air defence facilities, maritime capabilities, and missile and drone storage sites to continue degrading Iranian military capabilities.” The operations specifically targeted elements of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) believed to be responsible for the July 17 strikes against American positions in Jordan.

Highlighting the scale of the American military posture amid this escalating regional friction, the command added, “More than 50,000 U.S. men and women in uniform are operating across the Middle East. They remain highly vigilant, focused, lethal, and ready.”

This massive deployment followed an earlier announcement confirming that the two US soldiers had lost their lives on Friday while they “defended against Iranian ballistic missile and drone attacks.” CENTCOM further noted that another service member was still missing in action. These latest casualties bring the official tally to 16 US military personnel killed since hostilities escalated on February 28 following joint

US-Israeli strikes.

Providing an update on the wounded, the military command stated, “Four American service members were medically evacuated to Jordanian hospitals. They have since been discharged. Other personnel who were evaluated for minor injuries have returned to duty.”

In response to these incursions, counter-claims emerged from the region. Iranian state media reported that the latest operations targeted fuel infrastructure at the Al-Azraq US base in Jordan. This follows assertions by the IRGC the previous day that it had struck American aircraft deployed in the country using a combination of missiles and unmanned aerial vehicles.

Washington had initiated this latest round of military actions earlier this month, accusing Tehran of threatening maritime traffic in the Strait of Hormuz, the world’s most vital energy conduit. In retaliation, Tehran has repeatedly targeted American bases across Gulf nations.

This ongoing escalation marks a sharp deterioration in relations, occurring just weeks after the collapse of an interim diplomatic framework intended to de-escalate the conflict. President Donald Trump and Iranian President

Top Iranian commander warns the US of ‘devastating response’

TEHRAN: In a sharp escalation of rhetoric amidst ongoing regional tensions, the commander of Iran’s Khatam al-Anbiya Central Headquarters, Major General Ali Abdullahi, has issued a severe warning to Washington, declaring that “any aggression or barbarism will be met with a decisive and devastating response” by the Islamic Republic’s military.

In an official statement carried by Iranian state media, Major General Abdullahi fiercely condemned Washington, characterising the US as “the great Satan” and “the criminal, treacherous, and deceitful enemy”.

According to the state media broadcast, the top military commander vowed to fortify internal solidarity across the nation by strengthening the bond between the armed forces, the Iranian public, and state officials.

He further committed to expanding the scale of resistance against American actions, pledging to “impose heavier costs” on the US than encountered during past military conflicts.

Detailing the underlying strategy of Washington’s actions, Abdullahi claimed that the US has shifted its focus towards internal subversion after failing to achieve its objectives on the battlefield.

“The enemy, following successive defeats in the military conflict, has taken comfort in



creating division and discord between the people and their leaders,” Abdullahi said.

Framing the country’s military capabilities as a guarantee of national stability, the commander emphasised the geographical reach of Iran’s deterrence posture.

“Our dear country’s defensive power is a solid foundation for the peace and security of the proud and courageous nation from south to north and from east to west of the glorious and vast Iranian land,” Abdullahi added.

Translating this aggressive rhetoric into immediate kinetic action, the Iranian military subsequently announced that it had launched targeted drone strikes against two United States military installations in Kuwait, characterising the operation as direct retaliation for American strikes executed on Iranian soil. — **ANI**

BILATERAL RELATIONS

India, Zanzibar aim to boost trade ties

NEW DELHI: External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar met Zanzibar President and Chairman of the Revolutionary Council Hussein Ali Mwinyi in the national capital on Sunday, aiming to deepen bilateral ties across key sectors, including digital technology, water infrastructure, artificial intelligence, healthcare, and higher education.

Reviewing the diplomatic engagement on X, the External Affairs Minister termed the dialogue productive, emphasising New Delhi’s resolve to bolster developmental alliances with both Zanzibar and the United Republic of Tanzania.

He wrote, “A pleasure to meet Hussein Ali Mwinyi, President of Zanzibar, United Republic of Tanzania and Chairman of the Revolutionary Council, today in Delhi. We discussed expanding our cooperation in higher education, capacity building, water supply, health, AI, digital and other priority sectors.”

Focusing on the rapidly evolving educational synergy between the two sides, Jaishankar added, “@IITMZanzibar stands as a shining example of our close partnership and India’s enduring commitment to Africa’s education and development priorities.”

The high-profile meeting aligns with the broader momentum between India and Tanzania as the two democracies accelerate their strategic alliance via technology transfers, institutional growth, and shared capacity-building projects.

President Mwinyi reached the capital city after anchoring trade and academic events in Chennai, where he participated as the Chief Guest at the 63rd Convoca-



tion Ceremony of the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Madras on Friday.

During his southern India itinerary, the visiting leader strongly advocated for robust academic exchange programmes, pinpointing the IIT Madras Zanzibar operational facility, the premier international outpost for any IIT, as the anchor of this relationship.

On Saturday evening, Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal received the African dignitary at the airport.

In a post on X, Jaiswal said, “Warmly welcome Hussein Ali Mwinyi, President of Zanzibar, United Republic of Tanzania and Chairman of the Revolutionary Council, as he arrives in New Delhi.”

The official spokesperson further noted, “The visit follows President Mwinyi’s successful engagements in Chennai yesterday, where he attended the 63rd Convocation Ceremony of IIT Madras as the Chief Guest.”

Underlining the geopolitical weight of the state visit, Jaiswal added, “The visit reflects the growing momentum in the India-Tanzania Strategic Partnership, building on longstanding people-to-people ties and our shared priorities as partners in the Global South.”

IRAN’S SUPREME LEADER

Mojtaba Khamenei slams ‘criminal’ US

TEHRAN: Iran’s Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei has called the United States “Great Satan” who is no longer capable of sustaining a “trouble-free, domineering presence” across West Asia.

In a written communication addressed to the citizens of Iraq on Sunday, Khamenei, who was selected in March to succeed his father Ali Khamenei, following his killing on February 28 in the US-Israel strikes, stated, “The Great Satan—the criminal US—has now realised that the continuation of its trouble-free, domineering presence in the region is nothing but a naive fantasy.”

Pointing to the large crowds of mourners who gathered across Iran and Iraq for the funeral of his father, Khamenei remarked that the events had “opened a new chapter of awakening and active engagement to alter the equations that had been designed by the Arrogant Powers.”

He further remarked, “Undoubtedly, the leaders of Global Arrogance witnessed the magnificent scenes of this massive gathering in Iraq with trepidation, seeing how the vast resources they’ve invested to undermine relations between the two nations have proved entirely futile and ineffective.”

The seven-day funeral rites for Ali Khamenei, who lost his life during the initial US-Israel joint “Operation Roaring Lion/Epic Fury” on February 28, drew to a close on July 9 following a week of public observances held throughout both Iran and Iraq.

However, Mojtaba Khamenei remained absent from all the funeral proceedings.

He had sustained injuries during the specific aerial bombardment that resulted in the death of his father. Although widespread assessment indicates that Mojtaba remains alive, he has completely



avoided any public appearances since the outbreak of hostilities, with no visual or audio evidence of him being made public.

In a separate textual communique issued on July 11, Mojtaba committed to retaliating for the killing of his father, asserting that the perpetrators “will carry their dream of a peaceful death in bed to the grave.”

He noted in the documentation, “We pledge to avenge your pure blood and the blood of all the martyrs of these two wars by taking revenge against the criminal, disgraceful murderers.”

Khamenei added, “This vengeance is what our nation is demanding, and this must definitely be done. These criminals, whose names are fully documented from the highest to the lowest ranks, will carry their dream of a peaceful

death in bed to the grave.”

Earlier on Saturday, Iran’s Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi said Tehran had suspended its commitments under the interim MoU, accusing the US of breaching the deal as Washington carried out a seventh consecutive night of strikes on Iran, while Tehran also retaliated with attacks on US allies in the Gulf.

“The US has violated and suspended all its commitments within the framework of the Islamabad MoU,” Gharibabadi said. He added that Iran had also suspended implementation of the agreement.

Saudi outlet claims Mojtaba Khamenei “is not in Iran”

Meanwhile, Iranian Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei “is not in Iran,” an Israeli security source cited by Saudi news outlet al-

60-day window.

However, the diplomatic track disintegrated on July 8 when President Trump declared that the agreement was “over”. Tehran subsequently voided the memorandum of understanding, alleging that Washington was “violating all its commitments”.

Hadath stated on Sunday.

Khamenei, who assumed the position of Iran’s Supreme leader shortly after his father was killed in joint US-Israeli military strikes on February 28, has not made any public appearances and has communicated exclusively through written statements since taking office.

According to the source cited by al-Hadath, Khamenei’s official messages are authored by the newly appointed Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) chief Ahmad Vahidi alongside other high-ranking members of the IRGC.

“Iran’s internal divisions are deep and threaten the existence of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps,” the Israeli security source was quoted as saying.

Furthermore, the Israeli source stated that the United States does not want Israel to participate in retaliatory strikes against Iran, even in the event that Tehran launches an attack on Israeli territory.

These severe internal fractures are concurrently playing out on the streets of Tehran.

Amidst ongoing military escalations between the United States and Iran, reports indicate that a major internal power struggle has broken out in Tehran, separating ultra-hardline factions from the country’s more moderate public administration.

According to a CNN report, radical elements within the West Asian nation are charging the governing leadership with executing a “soft coup” following the conclusion of a 14-point diplomatic agreement with the US.

This political volatility directly erupted into public hostility during the funeral of Iran’s former Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

2026 FIFA WORLD CUP CHAMPIONS TORRES PUTS SPAIN ON TOP OF THE WORLD

The striker's goal in extra time helped La Roja dethrone Argentina 1-0 in the summit clash

NEW YORK: Spain were crowned world champions for the second time in their history as Luis de la Fuente's men edged past a lacklustre Argentina 1-0 in Sunday's FIFA World Cup 2026 final in New York New Jersey.

Although Spain dominated the game from start to finish, they had to wait until the 106th minute to finally find a way past Emiliano Martinez.

The Argentina goalkeeper had made 12 saves up to that point but he had no answer when Nico Williams nodded down a Pedro Porro cross at the far post and striker Ferran Torres buried a first-time shot into the roof of the net.

Defending champions Argentina had lost Enzo Fernandez to a second yellow card at the end of normal time yet battled to the end. However, Spain, as when winning the 2010 final, found the answer in extra time.

This was a head-to-head worthy of the World Cup final, bringing together the champions of Europe and South America, the top two sides in FIFA's world ranking, each of them unbeaten on the road to the final.

What followed was a first half dominated by Spain, who produced the first notable attempt through Lamine Yamal after five minutes. Dani Olmo worked the ball to the teenager in space on the right side of the box and he shot low but Emiliano Martinez got down to block at the near post.

If Spain were in control, it was



cagey stuff with La Roja struggling to find gaps in a deep, determined Argentina defence. With half-time approaching, openings did appear with Mikel Oyarzabal driving a shot at Martinez and Marc Cucurella dragging an effort wide.

For Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni, the challenge increased with injuries to both of their starting centre-backs as the final progressed, with Lisandro Martinez making way for Nicolas Otamendi just before the break and Facundo Medina replacing Cristian Romero after 70 minutes.

By that point, Spain were still the side asking all the questions. Yamal created an excellent opportunity for Torres after 67 minutes but he headed too close to Martinez. Pau Cubarsi and substitutes Pedri and

Williams all drew saves from the Argentina No1 as the pressure continued, culminating in the goalkeeper's flying save from Yamal's free-kick at the very end of normal time.

Argentina had hit 19 goals on their way to the final yet Spain's control was such that La Albiceleste did not manage a single attempt in the 90 minutes. Their task became even greater when Fernandez collected his second yellow card for a challenge on Cubarsi three minutes into second-half added time.

Extra time brought more of the same. Martinez kept out a Williams header and Merino put another wide. Both Williams and Torres had goals disallowed. In between, though, Torres produced the defining moment to put Spain back on top of the world. - Agencies

RANGE ROVER SPORT



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NON-OIL FOREIGN TRADE
Dr. Thani bin Ahmed Al Zeyoudi, UAE Minister of Foreign Trade, stated that the historic results achieved by the UAE's non-oil foreign trade in the first half of 2026 reflect the success of our leadership's vision.

MARKET
BUSINESS & FINANCE



MSX INDEX ENDS LOWER
The MSX index closed at 7,407.09 points, down by -0.98% from previous close. The Sharia Index ended down by -0.86% at 590.94 points. Oman Fisheries, up 4.55%, was the top gainer while, Oman & Emirates Investment, down 9.79%, was the top loser.

TRA rolls out 29 new stations for Khareef Dhofar

Additionally, 40 stations were upgraded to fifth-generation (5G) technologies to enhance the performance of data and communication services



SALALAH: The telecommunications sector has announced its readiness for the Khareef Dhofar (monsoon) season 2026. This comes as part of the efforts exerted to ensure the quality of telecommunication services during the tourist season, which annually witnesses a high influx of visitors.

The telecommunications sector has implemented a package of projects, including the installation of 29 new telecommunication stations to expand and improve coverage across various locations. Furthermore, 13 new stations were installed along the Sultan Said bin Taimur Road to ensure a continuous and secure connection for road users.

Additionally, 40 stations were upgraded to fifth-generation (5G) technologies to enhance the performance of data and communication services. The capacity of 58 links was also increased to guarantee connection speed and stability. Moreover, the transmission

lines of 30 stations were upgraded to improve network efficiency and capacity. In preparation for locations expected to witness a high density of visitors during the season, 38 mobile telecommunication stations have been deployed. This measure aims to enhance coverage and accommodate the anticipated surge in the usage of telecommunication services.

The Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) affirmed that these efforts align with the sector's objectives of enhancing the readiness of telecommunication services during tourist seasons. They also seek to meet users' needs and ensure a continuous and secure communication experience across the various areas of the Dhofar Governorate.

-ONA

REPORT

Indian banking sector outlook brightens on robust credit growth

NEW DELHI: Indian banks are entering FY27 with a strong combination of robust credit demand, improving deposit mobilisation, benign asset quality, and potential monetary policy support, setting the stage for sustained earnings momentum, according to a research report by Ashika Institutional Equities.

The brokerage said that the banking sector is expected to benefit from broad-based loan growth, additional foreign currency deposit inflows, and a possible recovery in net interest income, although deposit costs and MSME asset quality will remain key monitorables.

"Banking system's non-food credit growth and deposit growth improved to 18.6 per cent YoY and 13.3 per cent YoY, respectively, as on June 30, 2026," the report said, adding that the current level of credit growth is the highest in over a decade, excluding the impact of the e-HDFC merger.

The domestic brokerage firm expects system credit growth to remain healthy, supported by demand across secured retail, MSME, services and select corporate segments. "System credit



growth is expected to be at -15 per cent in FY27," it said, adding that improving deposit mobilisation should enable banks to sustain loan growth while maintaining underwriting discipline.

The special FCNR(B) deposit window is also expected to provide an additional source of funding. The report estimates US\$50 billion of inflows through FCNR(B) deposits by September 2026, which could contribute around 1.8 per cent to system deposit growth. It said select large banks could see FCNR(B) fund-raising add 1-3 per cent to their deposit growth in FY27.

On margins, the report said, "the RBI is expected to hike repo

rate by 25-50bps in H2FY27," which could benefit banks with a higher share of external benchmark-linked loans. The RBI's FCNR(B) zero-cost swap window is also expected to support margins by providing access to lower-cost funding and easing deposit mobilisation pressures.

Asset quality remains a major strength for the sector. "GNPA of Scheduled Commercial Banks (SCB) stood at 1.8 per cent in March 2026, a multi-decadal low, with NNPA at 0.4 per cent," the report said. Strong provision coverage and low credit costs are expected to support profitability, although rising stress in the MSME segment remains a key monitorable.

-ANI

MEETING

Committee assesses progress on Harat Al Raml development

IBRI: The committee for the Harat Al Raml development and investment project in the Wilayat of Ibri discussed the latest updates on the development works, and reviewed the execution plan and timeline for the upcoming phases, within the framework of following up on the workflow and enhancing the project's readiness to transition to the executive phase according to the approved plans and frameworks.

This came during a meeting of the committee chaired by Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdullah Al Bussaidi, Wali of Ibri, in the presence of committee members and Eng. Abdulrahman Humaid Al Yahyai, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Al Dhahirah Company.

The committee reviewed what has been accomplished in the technical and organisational aspects, and discussed the project's execution mechanisms and the requirements for the upcoming phase, emphasising the importance of continuous coordination and integration among the relevant entities to ensure the implementation of the project according to the approved schedules, and to achieve its developmental and investment goals.



The meeting also discussed the roles of partner entities in executing the project and cooperation mechanisms during the upcoming stages, thereby contributing to raising the readiness of the site and supporting the execution of the project according to the approved vision.

The Harat Al Raml development and investment project is considered one of the promising devel-

opmental and tourism projects in the Wilayat of Ibri. It aims to preserve the historical and architectural value of the neighbourhood and revive it through development and investment to enhance its presence as a tourist and cultural destination, support economic activity, and provide investment opportunities that contribute to achieving development targets in A'Dhahirah Governorate.

-ONA

SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE AT DUQM

New campaign launched to promote tourist attractions in Duqm



DUQM: The Special Economic Zone at Duqm, Al Wusta Governorate, launched a media and promotional campaign codenamed "Drop By Duqm" to welcome visitors to Dhofar Khareef (monsoon) season. The campaign aims to encourage travellers and visitors to stop by A'Duqm and explore its diverse tourism landmarks, natural sites, services and assets that abound in the wilayat.

The campaign seeks to enhance the status of A'Duqm on the tourism map in the Sultanate of Oman, to consolidate its position as a coastal destination that is distinguished for its outstanding coastal climate and relatively moderate temperatures during the summer, in addition to its abundance of beaches, geological formations and sites suitable for marine activities, adventures and camping.

The campaign, which continues during the months of July and August, focuses on initiatives and projects that support small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and tourism and service establishments operating in the region.

The campaign also outlines tourist routes and showcases experiences that help visitors plan their trips and explore beaches and natural sites.

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The Three Lions survived a second-half onslaught to triumph 6-4 over Les Bleus and finish third at the FIFA World Cup 2026

MIAMI GARDENS: England and France delivered a thriller on Saturday in a World Cup match that was supposed to be an afterthought. A day before Lionel Messi and Argentina were set to try and defend their title in a highly anticipated final, Bukayo Saka scored three goals to lead England past Kylian Mbappé and France 6-4 in a wild third-place game. Mbappé surpassed Messi's record for World Cup goals, scoring twice in the second half. The 27-year-old star has 22 goals in his career and 10 in this World Cup, two ahead of Messi in the Golden Boot race. It was the highest-scoring World Cup game since Hungary beat El Salvador 10-1 in 1962,

and the 10 goals were the most in a third-place match. Saka had goals in the 37th minute and in first-half stoppage time, then added his third on a penalty in the 87th for his second career hat-trick with England. Saka became just the second England player to score a hat-trick in a World Cup knockout match, after Sir Geoff Hurst in the 1966 final. The only other player to score a treble versus France in the competition was Pele in 1958. The Three Lions also got goals from Declan Rice and Ezri Konsa to build a 4-0 halftime lead, and they hung on against a relentless France attack in the second half to secure their second-best finish

in the World Cup. England won its only title in 1966. Rice required only 134 seconds to score England's second-fastest goal in the World Cup. Fellow midfielder Bryan Robson netted after 28 seconds – coincidentally against France – in 1982. Jude Bellingham capped the scoring in the eighth minute of second-half stoppage time, his seventh goal of the tournament and the most in a World Cup by an England player. Captain Harry Kane scored six this year and in 2018, and Gary Lineker had six in 1986. France's biggest World Cup defeat – when they effectively operated with 10 men in a 5-2 to Brazil loss in 1958 – appeared under severe threat, but they came out swinging. Bradley Barcola and Ousmane Dembélé also scored in the second half for France, which pulled within 4-3 on Mbappé's second goal. France's Michael Olise took his assists' tally at these global finals to seven. It is the most ever registered – records began in 1966 – in a World Cup, with Pele providing six

for Brazil in 1970. Mbappe has hit 10 goals in eight outings in North America. The only men with more in a World Cup are Sandor Kocsis with 11 for Hungary in 1954 and Just Fontaine with 13 for France in 1958. Messi – with 21 career World Cup goals and eight in this tournament – will get one last shot to pass Mbappé for the scoring title when he and defending champions Argentina face Spain on Sunday in East Rutherford, New Jersey. Mbappé also won the Golden Boot four years ago, when France lost the final to Argentina on penalties. "Leo scores all the time," Mbappé told Fox Sports in French. "Tomorrow he will score for sure. I just try to help my team every time to score. It's certain that when you score so many goals in the World Cup, it elevates you to certain levels. I would have preferred not to be the top scorer in history and play in the match tomorrow." Both teams had said they'd rather be playing in Sunday's final. France had enough offensive

firepower to potentially win the tournament, but Les Bleus lost to Spain in the semi-finals and squandered their chance at reaching a third straight World Cup final. Still, a sellout crowd of 64,478 showed up to watch the seventh and final match of this World Cup at Hard Rock Stadium. Plenty of supporters were cheering for both teams. Many were there simply for the atmosphere of the low-stakes match, and it more than delivered. Thomas Viel, who traveled from Paris to follow France throughout the tournament, was hoping to see a hat-trick by Mbappé. He nearly got his wish. France trailed 4-0 when Mbappé flicked a shot past goalkeeper Dean Henderson in the 48th minute. Then he beat Henderson again with a left-footed strike from about 14 yards in the 66th. France had never before conceded six goals in a World Cup match. It is the first time they have conceded six times in any match in, appropriately, 66 years. It was also the final match for

France coach Didier Deschamps, who has said he will step down after 14 years. Deschamps embraced players and waved toward the crowd as he exited the pitch. Mbappe said: "There were two very different halves. During the first one, I can understand why some people think we made fools of ourselves and didn't do the jersey justice. I'd say instead that we were human – and we can't afford to be. We were completely stunned, and they really shook us awake. "In the second half, we went back to being top-level players, mental machines. In the end, we didn't win, and that's a shame for the coach [Didier Deschamps]. We wanted to do something for him. The first half gives the impression that we let him down – that's not at all how we wanted him to feel. That match isn't going to tarnish Didier Deschamps' legacy." France won the World Cup under Deschamps in 2018, lost a gut-wrenching final to Argentina on penalties in 2022, and was shut down offensively by Spain in the semi-finals in this edition. - Agencies



ENGLAND MANAGER

Hope players can be proud of first medal for 60 years: Tuchel



MIAMI: England manager Thomas Tuchel said he hoped his players would one day look back on finishing third at the World Cup with some pride, despite falling short of their goal of winning the tournament. Bukayo Saka's hat-trick for England on Saturday inevitably raised a question about why the right winger was not played in the semi-final. "It was a tough decision for me to leave him out of the semi-final," said Tuchel, who admitted he had been cautious with Saka because of the Achilles injury he had been managing for the last few months. "I had the feeling that Morgan Rogers had something special to give to us with his physicality and his body in the match against Argentina. "We had (Saka) warm up several times against Argentina. We were ready to change, but the game became so crazy that we in the end opted for a different option. "But nothing has changed during the World Cup for me. Bukayo is a fantastic team-mate, fantastic football player, key player for us, and that will not change. He showed it again today and I'm happy for him." He said Saturday's result was the first step toward closing the gap with teams like Argentina and France. "This game will help us for sure," he said, "even if a part will never allow you to fully celebrate the bronze medal." - Agencies

‘Unacceptable first half’: Deschamps

MIAMI: Didier Deschamps took responsibility for France's "unacceptable" first-half collapse in a 6-4 defeat by England on Saturday as his extraordinary 14-year reign as national team head coach ended in painful fashion. France trailed 4-0 at halftime in the World Cup third-place playoff before mounting a spirited recovery, but its late rally was not enough to prevent Deschamps' 185th and final match in charge from ending in a loss. "It is a defeat, but we were 4-0 down. We produced an unacceptable first half," Deschamps told reporters. "There was a reaction, with the things we know how to do well. We had two chances to make it 4-4, but we pushed forward a little more. "That is what we know how to do, but we didn't do it. It is my fault because I must not have done what was needed in the first half." Deschamps said the performance after the break at least restored pride, though he admitted the sporting disappointment of France's tournament remained considerable after they had arrived in North America bidding to win a third world title. "It would have been better to finish third," he said. "We came here with a lot of ambition. We managed to do quite a few positive things.



"We failed in our match against Spain and they knew how to perform after the break at least restored pride, though he admitted the sporting disappointment of France's tournament remained considerable after they had arrived in North America bidding to win a third world title. "It would have been better to finish third," he said. "We came here with a lot of ambition. We managed to do quite a few positive things.

Dominant force France's 2-0 semi-final defeat by Spain ended their hopes of reaching a third successive World Cup

matches and 120 victories in change. "Didier Deschamps embodied high standards, rigour, a sense of the collective and love for the blue shirt," the FFF said in a statement. "Under his leadership, for 14 years, the France team regained credibility, respect and affection while remaining at the highest level in the world." Deschamps led France to the 2018 World Cup title and 2021 Nations League crown as well as the

Euro 2016 and 2022 World Cup finals. The FFF said his quarter-century of service to the national team, stretching from his years as captain to his time as coach, had left an "indelible mark." "Few will have given as much to the blue shirt, as a player and then as coach," it said. Deschamps captained France to their first World Cup triumph in 1998 and won the European Championship two years later before becoming only the third man to win the World Cup as both player and coach when Les Bleus triumphed in Russia in 2018. His final match provided none of the controlled, disciplined football that came to define much of his tenure, but the chaotic defeat did little to diminish a legacy that transformed France into one of the most consistent teams of the modern era. "Thank you, Didier," the FFF said. Deschamps embraced players on the pitch before exiting, and he defended Mbappé in his news conference. "I know he has been given an image that is not true to reality," the coach said through an interpreter. "He is an incredible captain, and like many of these players, he has evolved. He is disappointed that he did not manage to compete in the final." - Agencies

HAT-TRICK HERO: BUKAYO SAKA



‘I’m proud to be part of an elite list’

MIAMI: It might not have been the ending they were targeting pre-tournament but, having downed France in an exhilarating bronze final on Saturday, England have registered their best finish at a FIFA World Cup since 1966. At the heart of an extraordinary penultimate fixture at the World Cup was Three Lions winger Bukayo Saka. The Arsenal dynamo became just the fourth Englishman to score a hat-trick at the global finals, after Geoff Hurst in 1966, Gary Lineker 20 years later and then Harry Kane at Russia in 2018. Speaking post-match, the 24-year-old forward reflected on a standout evening in Miami, where he also became the third England player to score three goals or more in two editions of the World Cup, after Lineker and Kane. "That was fantastic. It was enjoyable and an amazing achievement of course. "I've just been told there's only four players for England that scored World Cup hat-tricks, and you know who those players are as well. That is an elite list to be part of. It makes me very proud," said Saka. As much as Saka and Co were desperate for things to end in the north-east of the country, rather



than the south, Miami will now hold a special place for England fans as the setting where the nation ended their most successful World Cup on foreign soil. "I think it was more about finishing the tournament strong because as a group that's what we deserve. "Obviously we believe as a whole we should have gone all the way and that we should be playing tomorrow, not today. But the reality is that we were playing today and we just wanted to finish strong. I'm happy we've done that." Having rotated his starting XI for England's final outing, England coach Thomas Tuchel will be delighted with how those changes played out. In their concluding fixture of the tournament, England drew level with France, with 20 goals, as the top scoring nation, with Saka later revealing his coach's parting words to the squad. "He just told us how proud he is of us and that he's going to miss us. "We're going to miss each other. You know, the six, seven weeks we bonded like crazy. That was the message and we leave with a proud feeling of what we've done today as a team, and we'll focus on winning next time." - Agencies

Death toll from Venezuela’s twin earthquakes rises above 5,000

Acting President of Venezuela Delcy Rodriguez said the country had accessed funds from its own resources at the IMF, which would be directed towards helping affected communities, rebuilding infrastructure and restoring essential public services

CARACAS: The death toll from the twin earthquakes that struck Venezuela last month has risen to 5,119, according to an official government report, as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) announced emergency financial support of \$346 million to assist recovery and reconstruction efforts.

Acting President of Venezuela Delcy Rodriguez said the country had accessed funds from its own resources at the IMF, which would be directed towards helping affected communities, rebuilding infrastructure and restoring essential public services.

“Following the devastating double earthquake that struck our country, Venezuela initially accessed US\$346 million from its own resources at the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which will be allocated to the recovery and reconstruction process in the wake



of the tragedy,” Rodriguez said in a statement posted on X.

She added that the funds would support families affected by the disaster, including assistance related to housing, infrastructure and basic services.

“I would like to thank the IMF Managing Director, Kristalina Georgieva, for her support and commitment, as well as all the institutions that made this important step possible. We will continue to work tirelessly to protect

our people and drive the country’s recovery forward,” she said.

Emergency funds

IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva also confirmed the release of emergency funds, expressing solidarity with those affected by the earthquakes.

“My heart is with the people of Venezuela as they recover from the devastating earthquakes. We worked with key counterparts to help Venezuela access its own re-

sources at the Fund for urgent humanitarian needs and the authorities have now drawn US\$346M from their reserve tranche,” Georgieva said in a post on X.

According to the official report released by Venezuela’s National Assembly President Jorge Rodriguez, the disaster has left 16,740 people injured, while 6,462 people have been rescued. More than 128,000 families have received assistance, with 107 temporary camps set up to shelter over 21,000 people.

The report stated that 17,907 people have been left without homes, with 856 buildings affected and 190 buildings collapsed. Authorities have also reported distributing over 10 million food supplies and more than 32 million litres of water as part of relief operations.

The government said 2,278 international rescuers and nearly 31,000 deployed personnel are involved in emergency response operations, supported by over 31,000

volunteers.

The twin earthquakes and subsequent aftershocks have caused widespread destruction across affected areas, with authorities continuing rescue, relief and rehabilitation efforts. The official report recorded 1,350 aftershocks following the main seismic events.

Last month, twin earthquakes - measuring 7.2 and 7.5 in magnitude - struck Venezuela in the north, causing widespread destruction and chaos. — **ANI**

COMPLEX SECURITY ENVIRONMENT



US issues worldwide travel caution amid West Asia tensions

WASHINGTON DC: The US Department of State on Saturday issued a worldwide travel caution for American citizens, citing heightened tensions in West Asia and warning of a complex security environment with the potential for unforeseen escalation amid the heightened military operation from both the US and Iranian sides in the region.

In a statement, the State Department advised Americans across the world, particularly those in West Asia, to exercise increased caution and stay informed about rapidly evolving security developments.

Heightened tensions

“Due to heightened tensions in the Middle East, the security environment remains complex with the potential for unforeseen escalation,” the advisory said.

The department urged US citizens in the region to closely monitor the news for breaking developments and follow security guidance issued by the nearest US embassy or consulate.

“We remind Americans in the region of the continued need for

caution and encourage them to monitor the news for breaking developments. The Department of State advises Americans worldwide, and especially in the Middle East, to exercise increased caution,” the statement added.

The advisory also warned that flight cancellations and periodic airspace closures could disrupt travel, as regional tensions continue to affect aviation operations.

In addition, the State Department noted that US diplomatic facilities, including those outside the Middle East, have been targeted in the past and cautioned that groups supportive of Iran could target US interests overseas.

The development comes as tensions between Iran and the United States escalated after the collapse of the 14-point MoU, signed last month, aimed at ending the hostilities between the two sides and opening the pathway for further negotiations, particularly on Iran’s nuclear programme and maritime security over the Strait of Hormuz. — **ANI**

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

Authorities in Germany crack down on money laundering and tax fraud

BERLIN: The 2027 federal budget proposal, with its estimated revenues and expenditures, is alarming. With projected expenditures of around €555 billion (\$634 billion), Germany will have to take on approximately €200 billion in new debt next year.

No wonder the federal government is thinking hard about ways to boost revenue. It quickly zoomed in on the billions the government loses each year due to financial crimes. While there are no official figures, experts estimate the loss at between €100 and €200 billion per year.

Even if only a small portion of that could be recovered through more effective auditing and stiffer penalties, it would still be a big help to Germany’s federal government, federal states and municipalities, whose budgets are funded almost exclusively by tax revenue.

Police, tax investigators and customs authorities to work together

“The majority of citizens in this country pay their taxes, and they do so without question, without fail and without making a fuss,” said Federal Justice Minister Stefanie Hubig in Berlin. “But there are also those who conceal their income from the tax authorities.”

This ranges from illegal employment to offshore tax shelters, shell companies and slush funds, all the way to many other deceptive practices.

Together with Finance Minister Lars Klingbeil, Hubig has developed a 26-point action plan aimed at better combating tax fraud and money laundering. She also announced plans to establish a “Joint Center Against Tax and Financial Crime” within the Customs Department. A total of 1,500 new posts are planned in order to consolidate investigations, analysis and prosecution of money laundering and tax crimes.

Tax evaders ‘cannot be allowed to get away with it’



“A key component of the center will be a new data analysis center,” said Klingbeil. “Artificial intelligence will help sift through large amounts of data, decipher complex corporate structures and better identify front men.”

Tax investigators from the federal states, the Federal Criminal Police Office and financial investigators from the Customs Department aim to collaborate more closely on major cases.

“No one should be able to rest assured that they won’t be caught,” said Klingbeil. “We cannot let honest people be the ones who lose out while tax evaders line their pockets with illegal tricks — they cannot be allowed to get away with it.”

But that’s exactly what has been happening in Germany for a long time. Take, for example, what became known as the Cum-Ex scandal. For more than 10 years, the government allowed capital gains taxes on stock dividends — which had been paid only once or not at all — to be refunded multiple times. It wasn’t until 2011 that the scandal led to numerous investigations, court proceedings and political debates about the responsibility of banks, investors and regulatory authorities.

Could tax evaders simply pay back taxes?

Another frequently debated topic is the option of voluntarily reporting tax evasion in exchange for immunity from prosecution. Germany has allowed this practice

since 1919.

The idea behind it has been to encourage taxpayers to voluntarily disclose previously hidden income so that the government can collect the back taxes owed. This arrangement became hugely important starting in 2008, as authorities began uncovering an increasing number of Germans who had been maintaining anonymous bank accounts abroad to hide assets from taxation.

In 2011 and 2012 alone, there were around 30,000 voluntary disclosures after German tax authorities acquired several “tax CDs” with data on German clients at Swiss banks. Those who feared being caught chose to go to the tax office themselves, disclose their accounts and pay the outstanding taxes. Voluntary disclosure with immunity from prosecution has always been a thorn in the side of the center-left Social Democratic Party.

“Criminals should no longer be able to buy their way out of trouble that easily,” said Klingbeil.

Plans to seize Porsches, Rolexes

Together with Hubig, Klingbeil is also pushing for harsher penalties. The maximum sentence for organized crime involving tax fraud is set to increase from 10 to 15 years in prison. Additionally, serious tax fraud will be reclassified to carry a minimum sentence of one year in prison.

Klingbeil and Hubig’s action

plan also provides for more opportunities to seize assets obtained through dubious means. Previously, such seizures were only possible after evidence of a specific crime, such as money laundering, was found and a criminal conviction was handed down.

In the future, customs authorities will be able to seize assets for 180 days. “The Porsche and the Rolex will be gone for the time being. That will really hit offenders hard,” said Klingbeil.

Those affected would then have to prove that they acquired the assets legally.

Cryptocurrency deals under scrutiny

New regulations will also be introduced for the purchase and sale of cryptocurrencies. Currently, they are tax-exempt provided that more than one year elapses between acquisition and sale. That is set to change.

“We will also introduce blockchain analyses,” said Klingbeil. “Tax crime in the digital realm is increasingly eluding traditional investigative methods, and we must respond to that.”

But the government also intends to take a closer look at the traditional business world as well — especially where large amounts of cash change hands over the counter. Starting in 2028, anyone with annual sales exceeding €100,000 will be required to use a cash register. Jewelry and antique dealers, for example, would be affected by this.

€1 billion in additional revenue projected for 2027

The action plan will now be turned into legislation as quickly as possible. Initial findings should be out in August.

In his budget plan for 2027, Klingbeil has already factored in new revenue. He has estimated an additional €1 billion (\$1.1 billion) from the fight against tax crime, but expects the total to be much higher. — **dw**

LIFESTYLE



STUDY
FINDS
OUT WHY
EXERCISE
REVERSES
MUSCLE
AGEING

A new study shows that physical activity can restore the natural repair systems that weaken with age, helping muscles recover and maintain function later in life

Researchers have uncovered a molecular “switch” that helps explain why exercise keeps ageing muscles healthy. By reducing levels of a gene called DEAF1, physical activity allows older muscles to clear out damage, repair themselves, and maintain strength.

A new study from Duke-NUS Medical School shows that physical activity can restore the natural repair systems that weaken with age, helping muscles recover and maintain function later in life.

The research team, working with collaborators from Singapore General Hospital and Cardiff University, found that exercise helps correct an important imbalance that develops inside ageing muscle cells.

The findings, published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS), provide new insight into the biological mechanisms behind muscle ageing and could eventually lead to new approaches for preventing age-related muscle loss.

Why muscle health declines with age

Healthy muscles do much more than enable movement. They are essential for maintaining metabolism, regulating blood sugar levels, and supporting overall health. From middle age onward, muscle strength and function gradually decline, raising the risk of falls, fractures, and delayed recovery from illness or injury.

The consequences extend beyond individual health. As populations age, muscle loss can increase demands on caregivers and healthcare systems. Preserving muscle function is therefore an important part of maintaining independence and quality of life.

One of the key regulators of muscle health is a growth pathway called mTORC1, which helps control protein production and muscle maintenance.

In ageing muscles, this pathway can become excessively active. When that happens, muscles focus more on building new proteins while becoming less efficient at removing damaged ones.

Over time, these damaged proteins accumulate inside muscle cells, placing them under stress and contributing to the gradual loss of strength associated with ageing.

DEAF1 emerges as a key muscle ageing gene

The researchers identified a gene called DEAF1 as an important factor behind this process.

According to the study, DEAF1 levels rise in ageing muscles. As DEAF1 increases, it drives mTORC1 activity higher, disrupting the normal balance between protein production and protein removal. This imbalance accelerates muscle deterioration.

Under normal conditions, DEAF1 is regulated by a group of proteins known as FOXOs. However, FOXO activity naturally declines with age. As a result, DEAF1 is no longer kept under tight control, allowing its levels to increase and pushing muscles further away from repair and maintenance.

How exercise restores muscle repair

The team discovered that exercise can help reverse this imbalance, provided the underlying regulatory system remains responsive.

Assistant Professor Tang Hong-Wen from the Cancer and Stem Cell Biology Program at Duke-NUS, the study’s lead author, said:

“Exercise can reverse this process, correcting the imbalance. Physical activity activates certain proteins which lower DEAF1 levels, bringing the growth pathway back into balance. This allows aging muscles to clear out damaged proteins, rebuild themselves properly, and help them stay stronger and more resilient.”

The researchers also found an important limitation. In some older muscles, DEAF1 levels become extremely high or FOXO activity drops drastically. In those cases, exercise alone may not be enough to fully restore the muscle’s repair capacity.

This finding may help explain why some older adults experience greater benefits from exercise than others and highlights the importance of understanding the underlying biology of muscle ageing.

Results confirmed in flies and mice

To test their findings, the researchers conducted experiments in both fruit flies and older mice.

The results were consistent across both species. Raising DEAF1 levels caused muscles to weaken more rapidly, while lowering DEAF1 restored healthier protein balance and improved muscle strength. The findings suggest that DEAF1 plays a conserved role in muscle ageing across different organisms.

Potential benefits beyond ageing

The implications of the research may extend beyond normal ageing.

DEAF1 also influences muscle stem cells, which are responsible for helping muscles repair and regenerate tissue. These stem cells naturally become less effective with age, and disruptions in DEAF1 appear to make recovery even more difficult.

The findings could also prove valuable for people recovering from surgery, illness, or chronic diseases such as cancer. Researchers suggested that targeting DEAF1 could potentially reproduce some of the beneficial effects of exercise at the molecular level, helping maintain muscle strength even when physical activity is limited.

Priscillia Choy Sze Mun, a research assistant with the Cancer and Stem Cell Biology Program at Duke-NUS, and the study’s first author, said:

“Exercise tells muscles to ‘clean up and reset.’ Lowering DEAF1 helps older muscles regain strength and balance, almost like hitting the rewind button. With millions of older adults at risk of muscle decline, understanding DEAF1 could lead to new ways to protect muscles and improve quality of life.”

Professor Patrick Tan, Senior Vice-Dean for Research at Duke-NUS, added: “This study helps explain, at a molecular level, why ageing muscles lose their ability to repair themselves and why exercise can restore that balance in some individuals. By identifying DEAF1 as a key regulator in this process, these findings may lead to new ways in which the benefits of exercise can be brought to societies with rapidly ageing populations.” - ANI



ROUND-UP

BankDhofar credit cards enable customers to enjoy travel experience during holiday season



Among the bank’s flagship offerings is the recently launched Mastercard World Elite Credit Card, designed for globally connected customers who value convenience, rewards and premium travel privileges. Cardholder can earn up to 1.5% value back as reward points on international spending

MUSCAT: As summer travel gathers pace across the Gulf and beyond, customers of BankDhofar are increasingly turning to the bank’s latest suite of credit cards to enhance their travel experiences through premium rewards, airport privileges, digital payment convenience and exclusive lifestyle benefits.

Among the bank’s flagship offerings is the recently launched Mastercard World Elite Credit Card, designed for globally connected customers who value convenience, rewards and premium travel privileges. Cardholder can earn up to

1.5% value back as reward points on international spending and 1% on domestic purchases, enabling them to accumulate rewards while travelling or shopping overseas.

A key attraction during the holiday season is the card’s travel-focused benefits package. Customers enjoy unlimited complimentary access for cardholder and one guest to over 1,200 airport lounges through Mastercard Travel Pass app, fast-track airport services and comprehensive travel insurance coverage, helping make journeys smoother and more comfortable. Additional merchant offers and

lifestyle privileges further enhance travel experience.

Beyond travel rewards, digital convenience has become a defining feature of the bank’s card offerings. Through its strategic partnership with Mastercard, BankDhofar has strengthened access to secure digital payment solutions, allowing customers to transact seamlessly at millions of merchants worldwide, whether in-store, online or while travelling abroad. Advanced security features and authentication technologies further enhance confidence in cross-border spending.

The combination of Value back

rewards, airport privileges, travel protection and global acceptance is proving particularly attractive during peak holiday periods, when consumers seek both convenience and value. The growing adoption of premium cards also reflects broader trends towards digital payments and cashless travel across the region.

As Omanis and expatriate residents embark on summer holidays, BankDhofar’s card portfolio is helping customers enjoy a more rewarding travel season, combining financial flexibility with a suite of benefits that extend well beyond simple payment functionality.

IRONCLAD FRIENDSHIP

68 years on, China-Cambodia ties reach new high



CHINA: As Cambodia and China mark 68 years of diplomatic relations, their bilateral relationship has evolved significantly.

Established on July 19, 1958, through the historic engagement of the previous generations of leaders of the two countries, bilateral relations have withstood changing international dynamics.

By sharing weal and woe, both sides have forged an ironclad friendship that remains a precious asset for both nations and their peoples.

What began as early diplomatic solidarity has transformed into a robust economic partnership and, ultimately, an unbreakable ironclad friendship.

The concept of an ironclad friendship signifies a mutual commitment to preserving strategic



stability and providing core support, regardless of global geopolitical evolution.

Both nations have consistently

adhered to the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, multilateralism, and close coordination within regional frameworks like the ASEAN-China mechanisms and the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation.

Cambodia became an early partner in the China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) following its launch in 2013. Under the BRI and complementary bilateral agreements, economic cooperation between the two countries has facilitated major infrastructure and trade projects in three main areas: the industrial development corridor, transport and connectivity, and trade integration.

Centered around the Sihanoukville Special Economic Zone, the industrial development corridor helps transform Cambodia’s coastal Preah Sihanouk province into a premier manufacturing and export hub.

As a result of infrastructure cooperation, major expressways,

deep-sea ports, international airports, hydropower plants, key bridges and national roads have been built in Cambodia.

Concurrently, the China-Cambodia Free Trade Agreement and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership have granted Cambodian goods greater access to the Chinese market, making China Cambodia’s primary trading partner and a main source of foreign direct investment.

Beyond the BRI, the bilateral partnership was further underpinned by the “Diamond Hexagon” cooperation framework, which has boosted engagement in six priority areas: politics, production capacity, agriculture, energy, security, and people-to-people exchanges.

The framework continues to in-

ject strong momentum into building an all-weather Cambodia-China community with a shared future in the new era to a higher level.

Moving forward, the cooperation between the two countries will continue to deepen. Besides relying on high-level political rapport, relations are increasingly embedded in institutionalized, multi-sectoral integration designed for long-term durability.

The 68-year relationship between the two Asian countries has reached a new high, characterized by an ironclad friendship and a deeply rooted and mutually beneficial community with a shared future.

The views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of Xinhua News Agency.



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