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GRADUATING PILOTS



Sayyid Shihab pins aviation wings on pilot officers

MUSCAT: HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik Al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, pinned aviation wings yesterday at Al Murtafaa Camp on a number of graduating pilots of the Royal Air Force of Oman (RAFO), after they successfully completed an

integrated training programme in various aviation specialties. HH Sayyid Shihab also presented His Majesty the Sultan's Aviation Cup to Flying Officer Mohammed bin Said Al Kharousi for achieving first place overall in the aviation course.

The pinning ceremony was attended by Dr. Mohammed bin Nasser Al Zaabi, Secretary General of the Ministry of Defence and Air Vice Marshal Khamis bin Hammad Al Ghafri, Commander of the Royal Air Force of Oman. — ONA

ADVENTURE TOURISM

Desert tourism gains momentum

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Four-wheel-drive and desert adventure enthusiasts in Oman are transforming what was once a recreational pastime into a culture built on safety, environmental responsibility and community service, while also contributing to domestic tourism and local economic growth.

According to enthusiasts, workshop owners and volunteer rescue teams, desert excursions in Oman have evolved into well-organised activities guided by strict vehicle safety standards, disciplined convoy driving and environmental conservation practices. **Full report >A4**

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN Madagascar President receives Al Murshidi



1 President Colonel Michael Randrianirina of Madagascar received on Tuesday Abdulsalam Mohammed Al Murshidi, President of Oman Investment Authority, at Iavoloha Palace in Madagascar's capital. **>A6**

WORLD US forces end latest round of Iran strikes

2 The United States Central Command said that the US forces had completed fresh round of strikes against Iran, marking the 10th consecutive night of military operations. **>A7**

MARKET Oman-Philippines forum on investment

3 The third edition of Oman-Philippines 3rd Strategic Majlis Forum will begin in Manila on Sunday. The forum will focus on investment opportunities. **>B1**

NCSI

More Omanis join hotel workforce as expat numbers decline

Times News Service

MUSCAT: More Omanis are finding employment in the Sultanate's hotel sector despite an overall decline in workforce numbers and a drop in tourist arrivals, according to the latest tourism indicators released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The number of Omani employees in three- to five-star hotels increased by 1.3 per cent, rising from 3,654 at the end of May 2025 to 3,700 by the end of May 2026, reflecting continued progress in Omanisation within the hospitality industry.

At the same time, the total workforce in the sector fell by 3.7 per cent to 10,636 employees, down from 11,045 a year earlier.

The decline was driven by a sharp reduction in expatriate employment, with the number of non-



Omani employees dropping 6.2 per cent from 7,391 to 6,936 over the same period. The rise in Omani employment came despite a drop in the tourist arrivals.

Hotel guests decline
The number of guests staying in classified three- to five-star hotels declined by 13.2 per cent to around 856,929 by the end of May 2026, compared with 987,650 during the corresponding period in 2025. Hotel occupancy stood at 47.9 per cent, according to NCSI.

The figures indicate that while the hotel industry is operating with less employees, Omani nationals



are making up a larger share of the workforce as Omanisation efforts continue. The slowdown in tourism has also been reflected in the aviation sector.



Passenger traffic through Oman's airports fell 9.3 per cent during the first five months of 2026, with the total number of passengers dropping to 5.25 million

from 5.79 million during the same period last year.

International flights (arrivals and departures) through Muscat, Salalah and Sohar airports also declined 10.7 per cent to 31,867 flights, compared with 35,679 in the corresponding period of 2025.

Muscat International Airport recorded an 8.2 per cent decline in total flights to 34,242, while passenger numbers fell 8.5 per cent to 4,764,340, down from 5,207,005 a year earlier.

Meanwhile, at Salalah Airport, the total number of flights (international and domestic) reached 3,234 by the end of May 2026, a decrease of 13 percent compared to 3,717 flights during the corresponding period of last year. The number of passengers also declined by 15.9 percent to reach 468,797, compared to 557,298 passengers.

EUROPEAN UNION TO OPEN DIPLOMATIC MISSION IN MUSCAT

Sayyid Badr hoped that the European Union mission in Muscat will bring significant benefits to various sectors



MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman and the European Union (EU) signed yesterday an agreement for the establishment of a diplomatic mission of the European Union in Oman.

The agreement was signed on behalf of the Sultanate of Oman by Sayyid Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister and on behalf of the EU by Kaja Kallas, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission.

This mission, alongside the Sultanate of Oman's accredited mission to the European Union in Brussels, represents an institutional framework through which both sides will advance their shared interests, thereby contributing to the prosperity and well-being of both parties.

This significant development reflects the depth of the growing partnership between the European Union and the Sultanate of Oman and underscores their firm commitment to elevating the level of cooperation and opening new avenues across a wide range of sectors, including technology, energy, logistics, banking, minerals, infrastructure, as well as training and capacity-building, food and

water security, energy security, and maritime security.



Both sides share a comprehensive strategic vision in support of multilateralism, with each playing an active role in promoting peace, security, and prosperity. In light of the current regional challenges and the need to reinforce sustainable stability, this mission will provide the European Union with a permanent presence in the Sultanate of Oman.

In parallel with Oman's mission in Brussels, this will enhance both sides' capacity to contribute more effectively to the development

and implementation of solutions that support regional and international peace and stability.

On this occasion, Sayyid Badr expressed his hope that the European Union mission in Muscat will bring significant benefits to governments, business sectors, and citizens of both the Sultanate of Oman and the European Union, noting that the opening of this mission will help unlock the full potential of the partnership and strengthen cooperation in ways that serve the mutual interests of both sides.

For her part, the High Representative of the European Union expressed her pleasure at the signing of this agreement, and highlighted its positive impact, noting that this event represents a milestone in the course of relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the European Union.

During the ceremony, both sides reviewed the progress of their cooperation, reaffirmed their commitment to constructive engagement, and reiterated their determination to continue political dialogue and further strengthen bilateral cooperation in a manner that serves common interests and delivers mutual benefit. — ONA

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MUSCAT





COMMENTARY

A Walk Through Uppsala with Sajid Hussain – A Journalist

I have been carrying this piece for a long time, much like an unopened letter kept in a drawer—known to exist, yet postponed again and again. What I am trying to write now, and what I wish to say to my readers, is something I wanted to articulate years ago.

I always wanted to write about Sajid Hussain Baloch, but I did not know where to begin. Perhaps because writing about someone who lived truthfully and died tragically requires more than memory; it requires moral courage.

“You need to carry your suitcase by yourself, and let’s take the train ticket to Uppsala. This is not the Gulf, where a driver waits for you or you simply switch on your car and drive,” Sajid said, smiling faintly as he received us at the airport.

It was a simple sentence, spoken casually, yet it carried the weight of a philosophy. There was no sarcasm in his voice, only acceptance—an unromantic realism. In that moment, I understood something essential about Sajid Hussain Baloch. He believed in effort, in dignity, and in facing reality without complaint. Life, for him, was not meant to be cushioned; it was meant to be confronted.

Dragging luggage from the metro station to the hotel was not easy. The cold air pressed against my lungs, and the weight in my hands felt heavier with every step. Sweden, unlike many comfortable expatriate destinations, demands effort from everyone equally. Here, no one carries your burden for you. I pushed myself forward, tired but attentive, sensing that even exhaustion had a lesson hidden inside it.

At the reception desk, I asked quietly, “I have my reservation. Could you check?”

“Yes, it’s there. Would you like to pay cash or by card?” the receptionist replied.

“Here is the card,” I said.

The transaction was smooth, efficient, and silent—much like the country itself. “I will see you tomorrow”, said Sajid before leaving. “Sure”, I replied.

Uppsala University stood not far from my hotel, reachable on foot. During my stay in Sweden, I walked there several times with Sajid. The streets were calm, almost contemplative.

Walking beside him, I often felt that a foreign country had not weakened him; it had refined him. His thoughts were sharper, his silences deeper. He spoke less, but when he did, his words arrived with precision.



One meeting during those visits remains etched in my memory. I had the opportunity to meet Professor Karina Jahani, a distinguished scholar of Iranian linguistics and one of the world’s foremost authorities on Balochi language, culture, and history.

Her academic work on minority languages and marginalized communities has long been a reference point for those who study Baloch identity and cultural survival.

The meeting was brief, yet it lingered. Within the historic walls of Uppsala University, scholarship felt less like abstraction and more like responsibility.

Professor Jahani spoke with academic clarity, but also with quiet empathy. For her, language was not merely grammar or syntax; it was

memory, loss, and endurance.

Later, as I walked back through the university corridors, my thoughts returned to Sajid. Both he and Professor Jahani were engaged in the same struggle, though through different tools.

One preserved identity through language; the other defended it through journalism. For a fleeting moment, Uppsala became more than a university town. It became a meeting point of voices that refused to let silence erase history.

Sajid Hussain Baloch was not merely a journalist; he was an interruption. As he worked for several leading English-language dailies, including The News and The Daily Times, he wrote about enforced disappearances, and human rights violations —sub-

jects many preferred to avoid.

His journalism was not decorative; it was confrontational, evidence-based, and morally unsettling.

Sweden became his refuge, but never his escape. Even in displacement, he continued to write, research, and mentor young journalists. He believed journalism was not about applause or popularity. It was about truth, even when truth narrowed your choices and endangered your life.

Once, after reading my drafts, he said to me, almost gently, “Anwar, you need to take a course in journalism writing.”

There was no insult in his words, only care. He found my writing sincere but scattered. “Your thoughts are honest,” he added, “but honesty without clarity loses the reader.”

That sentence stayed with me.

For Sajid, good journalism meant discipline. It meant answering simple questions clearly: What happened? Why does it matter? Who suffers? Where is the evidence? What follows next?

Emotion, he believed, must serve facts—not to replace them. And above all, the journalist must never place himself at the center of the story.

In March 2020, Sajid Hussain Baloch disappeared in Sweden. Weeks later, his body was found in a river near Uppsala. He was thirty-nine years old. His death sent shockwaves through journalistic and human rights circles worldwide. Even today, questions remain unanswered, and justice remains incomplete.

Yet absence does not erase presence.

Sajid left behind something stronger than fear: example. He taught that journalism is not comfort; it is responsibility. It is walking long distances when no one offers a ride.

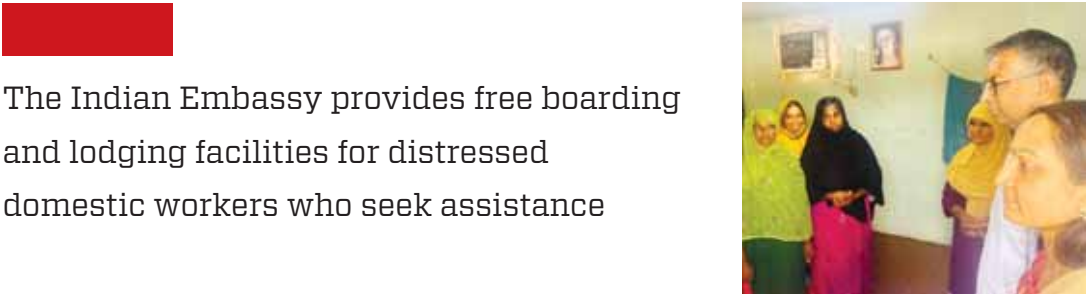
It is carrying your own suitcase—of truth, of ethics, of consequence.

Today, when I revise my writing, I still hear his voice reminding me to slow down, to organize my thoughts, and to respect the reader. Sajid Hussain Baloch may no longer walk the streets of Uppsala, but his principles continue to walk beside those who believe journalism is not a profession of convenience, but a duty of conscience.

And perhaps that is how one truly survives—by refusing to disappear, even after death.

(The views expressed by the author are personal)

Indian Ambassador meets distressed domestic workers, assures swift help



The Indian Embassy provides free boarding and lodging facilities for distressed domestic workers who seek assistance

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Indian Ambassador to Oman, Prashant Pise, met with Indian female domestic service workers staying at the Embassy’s shelter after leaving their employers’ households or being abandoned by their employers.

During the interaction, Ambassador Pise listened to the workers’ grievances and complaints, assuring

them that the Embassy’s Community Affairs team would take prompt action to help resolve their cases at the earliest.

The Indian Embassy provides free boarding and lodging facilities for distressed domestic workers who seek assistance while their cases are being processed.

The meeting was part of the Embassy’s ongoing efforts to ensure the welfare and protection

of Indian nationals working in Oman, particularly vulnerable domestic workers facing employment-related difficulties.

The Ambassador reaffirmed the Embassy’s commitment to extending all possible assistance to distressed Indian workers and ensuring that their concerns are addressed in coordination with the relevant authorities to facilitate an early resolution of their cases.



OFM/TD-19/2026

HSSE Safety Culture Assessment and Enhancement

Oman Flour Mills SAOG, (OFM) invites specialized & qualified HSSE consultants to participate in the "HSSE Safety Culture Assessment and Enhancement" tender as per the scope of work. The objective of this tender is to assess, strengthen, and embed a strong safety culture across the organization by identifying gaps, enhancing existing HSSE practices, and implementing sustainable improvements aligned with international standards.

• Minimum Qualification Requirements:
Proposed consultant(s) shall have relevant HSSE qualifications and professional experience, including internationally recognized certifications such as NEBOSH, CSP, Behavioral Safety Specialist, or equivalent.

• Demonstrated Knowledge and Experience:
The consultant(s) shall demonstrate proven knowledge and experience in applying international HSSE frameworks and methodologies, including ISO 45001, OSHA guidelines, and the DuPont Bradley Curve for safety culture assessment and improvement.

Tender Documents:
Only bidders meeting the above qualification requirements are invited to request the tender documents by sending an email to tender3@omanflourmills.com and submitting the required supporting documents as evidence of compliance.

Tender Ref no	OFM/TD-019/2026
Tender subject	HSSE Safety Culture Assessment and Enhancement
Tender fee	
Bid Bond	Not Required
Start date for tender collection	21/07/2026
Last date for tender collection	30/07/2026
Last date for receiving the technical queries	06/08/2026
Closing date of the tender	09/08/2026
Mode of payment of tender fee	Not applicable
Email address for clarifications and communication	tender3@omanflourmills.com
Mode of submission	All bidders are required to submit their proposals through email: bid-ofm@omanflourmills.com

- Vendor selection will be based on "best and final offer". OFM is not bound to select the lowest bidder.
- Notwithstanding the specific terms in the Tender Documents, Tender fee is not refundable.
- Bids submittal shall consist of 2 separate PDF files (Technical) & (Commercial), with bidder name on each and tender reference number OFM/TD-019/2026.

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RAISING AWARENESS

Purple initiative to enhance efforts aimed at community inclusion and empowering persons with disabilities

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Social Development will launch next Saturday the first edition of the “Purple Saturday” initiative, under the theme “A Day with a Lasting Impact.”

Through this initiative, the ministry seeks to enhance efforts aimed at community inclusion and empowering persons with disabilities, consolidate concepts of social responsibility, and motivate various public and private sector institutions to provide more inclusive environments, thereby enabling persons with disabilities to actively participate in various aspects of life.

The initiative, which is organised on the last Saturday of July each year, is considered one of the GCC initiatives aimed at raising awareness about the rights of persons with disabilities and enhancing their integration opportunities in society by encouraging commercial, service, and tourism institutions to provide qualitative services and initiatives that cater to their needs and offer them a smoother and more comfortable



experience.

The initiative, which was launched for the first time in 2021, comes as an affirmation of the unified GCC vision in supporting and empowering persons with disabilities, enhancing their quality of life, and consolidating principles of justice and equal opportunity.

The “Purple Saturday” initiative aligns with the directions

of “Oman Vision 2040” toward building an inclusive society that guarantees equal opportunities for all its members and promotes the rights of persons with disabilities. This is achieved by supporting national initiatives aimed at improving service quality, developing inclusive environments, and consolidating the values of respect and equality,



in line with sustainable development targets and enhancing quality of life.

Adnan Mustafa Al Farsi, Acting Director General of the Directorate General of Communication and Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, emphasised that through this initiative, the Ministry of Social Development seeks to raise community

awareness of the importance of providing inclusive and friendly environments for persons with disabilities, encourage institutions to adopt practices supporting accessibility, and highlight the role of the private sector as a key partner in achieving sustainable social development, thereby enhancing social responsibility and instilling a culture of inclu-

siveness across various sectors.

He added that the initiative constitutes a platform to enhance co-operation among government entities, private sector institutions, and civil society organisations, contributing to unifying efforts aimed at empowering persons with disabilities, expanding the scope of services and initiatives provided to them, and promoting their full and active participation in economic and social life.

He explained that the colour purple, adopted by the initiative as its identity, carries global significance associated with persons with disabilities, symbolising respect, dignity, appreciation, and solidarity.

It reflects the initiative’s message of spreading a culture of community inclusion, raising awareness of the rights of persons with disabilities, and urging various segments of society to contribute to providing an environment that is more inclusive and responsive to their needs. -ONA

Oman produced over 934,000kg of honey in 2025

North Al Sharqiyah Governorate ranked as the largest honey producing governorate in 2025, with a total production of 248,547 kg



MUSCAT: Local production statistics indicated that the Sultanate of Oman’s production of honey recorded significant growth during the 2023–2025 periods, with output increasing from 623,313 kg in 2023 to 765,054 kg in 2024, reaching 934,443 kg in 2025, according to the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The data showed that, North Al Sharqiyah Governorate ranked as the largest honey producing governorate in 2025, with a total production of 248,547 kg, followed by Al Dakhiliyah governorate with 176,428 kg, North Al Batinah with 158,097 kg, and South Al Sharqiyah with 128,120 kg.

Meanwhile, Al Dhahirah and Dhofar produced 97,818 kg and 64,216 kg, respectively. The remaining was produced by the other governorates of the Sultanate of Oman in varying quantities, re-

flecting the continued expansion of beekeeping and honey production nationwide.

In terms of production infrastructure, 47 establishments were engaged in beekeeping and the production of honey and beeswax, in addition to two facilities are producing black honey (molasses) and sugar honey.

Regarding production farms and research stations, the number of beekeeping units remained stable at 12 units throughout the 2023–2025 periods, while research units remained unchanged at two, reflecting the stability of the sector’s research infrastructure and its continued operational readiness.

Trade-wise, the Sultanate of Oman’s imports of strained natural honey reached a total value of OMR2.131 million. The People’s Republic of China was the leading importer, accounting for OMR 541,881, followed by India with OMR 417,333, the Kingdom of

Saudi Arabia with OMR 406,940, Australia with OMR 234,102, and the United Arab Emirates with OMR 229,355.

Imports of natural honey in comb or containing pieces of comb amounted to OMR 42,941, while Türkiye ranked first among importers at a value of OMR 19,657, followed by Australia at OMR 17,556. This was followed by the United Arab Emirates at OMR 3,251. Meanwhile, imports of wooden beehives totalled OMR 15,629, led by Egypt with OMR 9,809, followed by the United Arab Emirates with OMR 5,793.

Data indicated that, the Sultanate of Oman’s exports of strained natural honey reached a value of OMR 648,274. Lebanon was the leading destination, importing honey worth of OMR 246,272, followed by Qatar with OMR 179,024, Jordan with OMR 118,018, Kuwait with OMR 55,247, and the United Arab Emirates with OMR 36,406. -ONA

SOUTH AL SHARQIYAH

CPA seizes nearly 53,000 non-compliant tobacco bags

MUSCAT: The Consumer Protection Authority (CPA) has seized and confiscated nearly 53,000 non-compliant tobacco products during a raid on a residential property in Sur, South Al Sharqiyah Governorate, carried out in cooperation with Sur Police Station.

The operation resulted in the seizure of 6,745 bags and packages of smokeless chewing tobacco and 47,227 packs of cigarettes that failed to meet the approved standards and specifications.

According to the CPA, the confiscated products included large quantities of smokeless chewing



tobacco and cigarettes that violated the Sultanate of Oman’s approved quality and safety regulations. All seized items have been confiscated, and the necessary legal procedures have been initiated against those involved.

The authority reaffirmed its commitment to protecting consumers by intensifying market inspections and taking strict action against the sale of products that do not comply with approved standards and specifications.

CPA

Door manufacturer fined, ordered to refund customer

Times News Service

Muscat: A commercial establishment specialising in door manufacturing in Wilayat of Barka has been convicted for failing to deliver contracted services, with the court ordering the company to refund the customer’s advance payment, pay a fine and cancel the contract.

The ruling was announced by the Consumer Protection Authority (CPA), which said the case arose after a consumer signed a contract with the company to manufacture custom doors for a residential property.

According to the CPA, the consumer paid an advance payment after the contract was signed, with the company committing to complete and deliver the work



within two months.

However, despite the agreed timeline, the establishment failed to begin any of the contracted work, prompting the consumer to file a complaint with the Consumer Protection Department in South Al Batinah Governorate.

Following an investigation, the case was referred to the competent court, which found the establishment and its owner guilty of failing to provide the contracted service in accordance with its nature and of failing to issue an

invoice written in Arabic, in violation of Oman’s consumer protection regulations.

The court sentenced the owner to imprisonment and imposed a fine of OMR500. The prison sentence was suspended on the condition that the fine is paid.

In addition, the court ordered the cancellation of the contract, directed the company to refund the consumer’s advance payment, and required the defendants to bear the costs of the criminal proceedings.

The Consumer Protection Authority reaffirmed its commitment to safeguarding consumers’ rights and urged businesses to honour contractual obligations and comply with legal requirements governing commercial transactions.

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Desert tourism gains momentum as Omani youth promote safety and sustainability

Omani desert enthusiasts blend adventure with safety and sustainability

MUSCAT: What was once considered a recreational pastime for four-wheel-drive enthusiasts has evolved into a thriving ecosystem that promotes tourism, volunteerism, environmental conservation and economic development across the Sultanate of Oman.

From professionally equipped off-road vehicles and organised desert convoys to volunteer rescue teams and social media influencers promoting the country's spectacular landscapes, Oman's desert adventure community is redefining responsible outdoor recreation while creating new opportunities for local businesses and communities.

Experts and enthusiasts say today's desert expeditions are built on technical expertise, strict safety protocols and environmental awareness, transforming off-road driving into a structured activity that reflects the maturity and growing professionalism of Omani youth.

Safety at the heart of every adventure

Abdullah bin Masoud Al-Riyami, owner of Autofixer Workshop, which specialises in preparing four-wheel-drive vehicles, said desert adventures have become far more sophisticated than simply driving across sand dunes.

He explained that responsible enthusiasts now ensure vehicles undergo comprehensive inspections of suspension systems, steering, braking systems, tyres and mechanical components before every trip.

Participants also equip their vehicles with essential recovery gear, including winches, approved towing points, recovery straps, sand ladders, air compressors and tyre repair kits, allowing them to respond safely to emergencies in remote areas.

According to Al-Riyami, organised desert groups have established strict participation standards. Vehicles that fail technical inspections or lack mandatory safety equipment are not allowed to join expeditions, while new members receive training in safe driving techniques, convoy discipline and emergency response.

He said the collaboration between vehicle preparation workshops, equipment suppliers and off-road clubs has significantly reduced accidents and mechanical failures, making desert travel safer and more organised than ever before.

Skills beyond ordinary driving

Desert adventure expert Abdullah



bin Hamoud Al-Khanbashi said driving across sand dunes requires specialised skills that differ greatly from conventional road driving.

Successful navigation depends on understanding dune formations, selecting safe routes, controlling speed and mastering proper ascent and descent techniques to minimise the risk of rollovers or becoming stranded.

Modern technology has also become indispensable.

GPS navigation systems enable drivers to accurately plan routes, share live locations and safely return from remote areas, while organised trips are generally conducted with at least three vehicles travelling together to ensure immediate assistance during emergencies.

Beyond safety, Al-Khanbashi noted that regular gatherings and competitions strengthen friendships among enthusiasts while providing valuable opportunities to exchange knowledge and improve driving techniques.

Volunteer rescue teams answer the call

One of the most remarkable developments within Oman's off-road community has been the emergence of volunteer rescue organisations.

Asim bin Habibullah Al-Shizawi, a member of the Fazaa Rescue Team, said the initiative grew naturally after volunteers repeatedly encountered tourists and families stranded in remote desert areas.

What began as a shared passion for exploration gradually evolved into a humanitarian mission focused on saving lives.

Operating entirely through volunteer efforts, team members respond to emergency calls using their own vehicles and equipment, coordinating rapidly through digital communication groups that share GPS coordinates and field updates.

The team is divided into specialised units responsible for navigation, recovery operations, towing and first aid, while extensive field experience enables members to interpret tyre tracks, analyse shifting sand formations and navigate difficult terrain during rescue missions.

Volunteers also maintain customised vehicles equipped with navigation systems, wireless communications, recovery winches and specialised rescue equipment.

Al-Shizawi said the initiative reflects the deeply rooted Omani tradition of Al-Fazaa—the spirit of helping others—adapted to modern desert rescue operations.

The team works closely with



government authorities, providing field support and logistical assistance whenever reports of stranded travellers are received.

Protecting fragile desert ecosystems

Environmental responsibility has become another defining feature of Oman's growing desert adventure culture.

Tour guide and camping enthusiast Najem bin Mohammed Al-Jabri stressed that preserving desert ecosystems is essential to ensuring their long-term sustainability as tourism destinations.

He warned against littering, driving over vegetation, damaging fragile desert plants and leaving campfires unattended.

Drivers are encouraged to stay on designated tracks, reduce tyre pressure to minimise surface damage and avoid driving or camping in environmentally sensitive areas during periods of plant regeneration following rainfall.

Al-Jabri also urged campers to maintain safe distances from wildlife and avoid disturbing animals with excessive noise or lighting.

Volunteer groups now monitor environmental violations, report illegal activities to authorities and organise clean-up campaigns, tree planting initiatives and biodiversity conservation programmes in cooperation with environmental agencies.

Educational workshops also introduce new off-road enthusiasts to environmentally responsible driving practices, helping build a culture of sustainable recreation.

Tourism and entrepreneurship on the rise

Beyond recreation and conservation, Oman's desert adventure sector is becoming an increasingly important contributor to domestic tourism and local economic development.

Desert adventure content creator Al-Salt bin Salem Al-Khalili

said young Omanis have successfully transformed their passion into thriving businesses.

Specialised vehicle workshops, guided desert tours, camping facilities, cafés, restaurants and hospitality services have emerged around popular adventure destinations, generating employment and stimulating economic activity in nearby communities.

He highlighted the growing influence of digital media, where Omani content creators share high-quality photographs, videos and authentic travel experiences with millions of followers across social media platforms.

These digital campaigns have significantly increased interest in Oman's deserts among domestic travellers as well as regional and international visitors.

Rather than simply showcasing scenic landscapes, social media has become a powerful marketing platform for local businesses, helping campsites, tourism companies and hospitality providers reach new customers.

Digital creators expanding Oman's global appeal

Desert adventurer and content creator Mohammed bin Abdullah Al-Mundhiri said online platforms have become one of the country's strongest tourism promotion tools.

Professional digital content highlighting Oman's unique geography, spectacular sand dunes and renowned hospitality has positioned the Sultanate as an increasingly attractive destination for off-road enthusiasts across the region.

The resulting increase in visitor numbers has boosted demand for fuel stations, restaurants, grocery stores, vehicle maintenance workshops, camping equipment rental businesses and family-run enterprises in communities located near desert attractions.

According to Al-Mundhiri, continued growth will depend on stronger partnerships between government agencies, private businesses, event organisers and content creators.

He called for professionally organised desert festivals, improved tourism infrastructure and expanded international marketing campaigns to unlock the sector's full economic potential.

A model for sustainable adventure tourism

Oman's desert adventure community is increasingly being recognised as a model that balances excitement with responsibility.

Through rigorous safety standards, environmental stewardship, volunteer rescue initiatives and entrepreneurial innovation, young Omanis have transformed off-road driving into an activity that supports tourism, strengthens local economies and reinforces social values.

As investment in desert tourism continues to grow, the sector is poised to play an even greater role in diversifying Oman's economy while showcasing the country's unique natural heritage to visitors from around the world.

ASIAN TEAMS

Asian U-18 Hockey5s Championship kicks off with 9 games at Al Amerat



MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by Oman Hockey Association, is hosting the Asian U-18 Hockey5s Championships, being played at Hockey Oman stadium in the Wilayat of Al Amerat.

The championships, which began yesterday, will run until 25 July 2026. It brings together a select group of promising Asian teams, of men and women, in a competitive atmosphere that reflects the Sultanate of Oman's growing status on the map of continental championships.

The first day of the event saw the holding of 9 matches (5 men's games, 4 women's games). In the men's competitions, Oman lost to the Pakistani 5-0, Iran defeated Iraq 5-0, India defeated Bangladesh 7-3, Iran defeated Saudi Arabian 9-0 and Pakistan conquered Bangladesh 5-2

In the women's competitions, India defeated Kazakhstan 8-3, Oman lost to Pakistan 6-0, China conquered Uzbekistan 12-0 and Kazakhstan defeated Uzbekistan 5-2. -ONA

69TH

Oman national volleyball team achieves its highest world ranking

MUSCAT: Oman national men's senior volleyball team recorded its best-ever world ranking by reaching 69th globally, in an achievement that reflects the extent of development witnessed by Omani volleyball in recent years and underscores its growing presence on the continental and international stages.

This achievement comes as the culmination of continuous technical and administrative efforts, placing the national team on the threshold of a new and more ambitious phase. This is particularly evident as it nears a qualitative leap in the global rankings should it win the West Asian Championship for National Teams, which would boost its chances of advancing into the top 50 teams worldwide—a goal now closer than ever.

The national team has also succeeded in qualifying for the Continental Championship hosted by Japan, joining the elite major Asian teams participating in



this important event, which carries high sporting stakes given the opportunities it offers to qualify for key global championships in the coming years.

The tournament holds exceptional importance, as the champion will secure direct and official qualification for the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic Games—an accomplishment that would mark

a first of its kind for Omani volleyball if achieved—while the top three teams will guarantee direct spots in the 2027 FIVB Volleyball Men's World Championship scheduled to take place in the Philippines.

The national team's reach to this advanced stage confirms that Omani volleyball is moving with confident steps toward

consolidating its position among the major Asian teams. Having achieved remarkable results during its recent appearances, which directly reflected on its world ranking and level of technical performance, the team has transformed from a competitor seeking to establish its presence into one that commands respect at the continental level. -ONA

MEETING



President of Madagascar receives Al Murshidi

ANTANANARIVO: President Colonel Michael Randrianirina of the Republic of Madagascar received on Tuesday Abdulsalam Mohammed Al Murshidi, President of Oman Investment Authority (OIA), at Iavoloha Palace in Madagascar's capital, Antananarivo. This meeting comes

within the framework of the visit conducted by the President of the OIA to explore prospects for cooperation in economic and investment fields between the two countries.

During the meeting, the two sides touched upon economic and investment cooperation op-

portunities, as well as the efforts exerted to enhance them across various sectors.

Both sides affirmed the keenness of the leaderships of the two countries to push these relations toward broader horizons in various fields, in a manner that serves mutual interests. -OMA

Summer programmes launched to develop youth capabilities



The offering also encompasses an IELTS test training programme to develop listening, reading, writing, and speaking skills

MUSCAT: The Youth Center has launched a new package of in-person and virtual summer programmes aimed at developing youth skills and fostering their capabilities and talents in line with their interests and aspirations.

The package includes a cybersecurity programme focusing on developing participants' knowledge in information security, raising awareness of cyber threats, and enhancing skills in protecting data and digital systems through practical applications and security incident simulations, keeping pace with the rapid growth in the cybersecurity sector and labour market needs.

Additionally, it features a Chinese language programme that offers participants the opportunity to acquire language fundamentals and basic communication skills, alongside getting acquainted with Chinese culture, thereby contributing to expanding their educational and professional horizons and opening new opportunities in study and international cooperation.

The offering also encompasses an IELTS test training

programme to develop listening, reading, writing, and speaking skills, as well as familiarising participants with the test structure and success strategies through practical exercises and mock tests to enhance their chances of achieving competitive scores.

It further includes a career readiness program focusing on preparing youth for the job market by developing professional communication skills, CV drafting, passing job interviews, and fostering teamwork skills, emotional intelligence, career path planning, and dealing with digital job market requirements.

Additionally, a planning and time management programme aims to boost participants' productivity through developing personal planning skills, organising priorities, stress management, and building practical habits that help achieve work-life balance, positively impacting performance and achievement.

In line with youth needs, the Center is conducting a digital personal branding programme that seeks to empower young people to develop a professional digital

presence reflecting their skills and professional identity, focusing on content creation, digital reputation management, and leveraging digital platforms to advance professional and entrepreneurial opportunities, in addition to an AI-powered social media account management programme.

The Center also offers a basics of agriculture programme for individuals with Down syndrome, which is a practical program aimed at introducing participants to the basics of modern agriculture through interactive activities that contribute to developing life and motor skills, and enhancing self-confidence and teamwork.

Coinciding with the summer programs, the Center is also conducting during this period the 3rd edition of the EV-Pro Electric Vehicle Experience Camp in cooperation with Shell Oman Marketing Company to empower Omani youth in the fields of electric vehicles and environmental sustainability.

Additionally, it is holding the AI Agent Development Camp to enable participants to develop technical solutions addressing real-world challenges in the Omani market, culminating in building a displayable, scalable, and testable Minimum Viable Product (MVP) prototype through utilising modern AI tools and technologies under the supervision and guidance of experts and mentors, in cooperation with the SMEs Development Authority "Riyada". -OMA

Muscat Pharmacy Wins Best Brand in Customer Experience Award in Pharmacy Category



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

Muscat Pharmacy has consistently demonstrated a strong commitment to customer experience by providing trusted healthcare solutions, quality pharmaceutical products, and personalised care to customers across Oman. With an extensive network of pharmacies and a comprehensive portfolio of prescription medicines, wellness products, medical equipment, and healthcare essentials, the company continues to make quality healthcare more accessible and convenient.

With a customer-centric approach built on professionalism, accessibility, and service excellence, Muscat Pharmacy

places customer wellbeing at the centre of every interaction. Its knowledgeable pharmacists, commitment to ethical healthcare practices, efficient service, and expanding digital capabilities have helped strengthen customer trust while delivering a seamless pharmacy experience.

By continuously investing in healthcare innovation, product availability, digital solutions, and customer-focused services, Muscat Pharmacy continues to set benchmarks in customer experience within the pharmacy sector. Its dedication to improving community health, enhancing patient care, and delivering exceptional service reinforces its position as one of Oman's leading and most trusted pharmacy brands.

The Best Brand in Customer Experience (CX) Awards are instituted by Times of Oman, in collaboration with Muscat Media Group, Gulf Leaders Circle and TEvents. They are presented to the leading brands that are ahead of the curve in

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CULTURAL, SOCIAL

4,600 students are taking part in summer activities across all the governorates

MUSCAT: About 4,600 students are taking part in summer activities and programmes organised by the Directorate General of Scouts and Guides with the aim of grooming a generation of young people capable of contributing to the development of the country.

The programmes, being organised across all governorates of the Sultanate of Oman, cover all kinds of cultural, social, scouting, guiding and sports activities designed to hone the skills of students and make use of their 2026 summer vacation. -OMA



80 PARTICIPANTS

Oman Aquarium Blitz Chess held

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Oman Aquarium Blitz Chess Championship concluded with a closing ceremony recognising the competition's winners.

The event was organised by Oman Aquarium in collaboration with the Oman Chess Committee, with the support and sponsorship of Muscat Governorate, and attracted 80 participants from various age groups.

Commitment

Muscat Governorate's sponsorship of the championship reflects its commitment to supporting sporting activities and purposeful community initiatives, while encouraging events that foster intellectual development, promote positive competition, and strengthen community engagement.

The championship brought together a distinguished group of chess players and enthusiasts, who competed in the unique surroundings of Oman Aquarium among its marine life exhibits.

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TENDER NO. 006-2026

For Property Development for Plot located at Airport Heights, Muscat

Sl. #	Tender ID	Description	Tender Fee	Deadline for Request for Tenders	Deadline for Submission of Offers
1.	006-2026	Property Development for Plot located at Airport Heights, Muscat	Free	29 th July 2026 2359 Hours	02 nd August 2026 2359 Hours

Tender documents can be obtained by sending a request to yaqub.tamtami@omancement.com & kawthar.naabi@omancement.com & nasser.said@omancement.com with the Subject showing "Tender No." and "Tender Description," enabling the Company to provide the tender document through email to your company. Contact details: Office number: +968 22705601, 22705566, 22705565.

The last date for submission of offers is on **Sunday, 02nd August 2026, 2359 hours**; detailed date on the above table.

To request tender documents, please scan the code and fill in the requirements.

India, Saudi Arabia review bilateral ties and regional situation

During the visit, India's National Security Advisor held talks with top Saudi leadership across key portfolios, including energy, foreign affairs, and national security



RIYADH: Indian National Security Advisor (NSA) Ajit Doval paid an official visit to Riyadh on Monday, holding high-level meetings with senior Saudi leadership to review progress in bilateral relations and discuss the current regional situation.

In a post on X, the Embassy of India in Saudi Arabia stated that upon his arrival, NSA Doval was warmly received at the airport by Saud Al-Sati, Deputy Minister for Political Affairs at the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Indian Ambassador to Saudi Arabia Suhel Khan.

"Hon'ble NSA Shri Ajit Doval paid an official visit to Riyadh on 20 July. He was warmly received at the airport by H.E. Dr. Saud Al-Sati, Deputy Minister for Political Affairs, and Ambassador Dr. Suhel Khan," the Embassy said in a statement.

During the visit, the National Security Advisor held talks with top Saudi leadership across key

portfolios, including energy, foreign affairs, and national security.

"During the visit, the NSA met H.R.H. Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman, Minister of Energy; H.H. Prince Faisal bin Farhan, Minister of Foreign Affairs; and H.E. Dr. Musaed Al-Aiban, National Security Advisor," the Embassy added.

High-level deliberations

Detailing the agenda of the high-level deliberations, the Embassy noted that both sides took stock of the overall strategic partnership between the two nations.

"The meetings reviewed the progress in India-Saudi bilateral relations and discussed the current regional situation, as well as other issues of mutual interest," the Embassy stated.

Earlier, Ambassador of India to Saudi Arabia Suhel Khan also paid farewell calls on senior officials at the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as his tenure in the Kingdom draws to a close.

During his visit to the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Khan met with Waleed El Khereji, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Saud Al-Sati, Deputy Minister for Political Affairs.

The Embassy of India in Saudi Arabia, in a post on X, stated that during the meeting both sides reaffirmed their commitment to further strengthening bilateral relations.

Highlighting the scope of the deliberations, the Embassy of India in Saudi Arabia stated, "As his tenure in the Kingdom draws to a close, Ambassador Dr. Suhel Ajaz Khan paid farewell calls on H.E. Eng. Waleed El Khereji, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, and H.E. Dr. Saud Al-Sati, Deputy Minister for Political Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The meetings reflected on the remarkable progress in India-Saudi relations and reaffirmed the shared commitment to further strengthening the Strategic Partnership between the two countries."

gic Partnership between the two countries."

Outgoing ambassador's contributions

Acknowledging the outgoing ambassador's contributions during his diplomatic assignment, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Saudi Arabia expressed appreciation for his role in enhancing bilateral ties. In an official statement, the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated, "His Excellency the Deputy Minister for Political Affairs, Ambassador Dr. Saud Al-Sati, receives His Excellency the Ambassador of the Republic of India to the Kingdom, Dr. Sohail Ejaz Khan, where His Excellency bid farewell to him on the occasion of the end of his tenure as his country's ambassador to the Kingdom, appreciating the commendable efforts exerted by His Excellency the Ambassador in documenting and strengthening the relations between the two countries." — ANI



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FOLLOWING TWIN EARTHQUAKES

UAE sends 70 tonnes of aid to Venezuela

CARACAS: The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has sent 70 tonnes of humanitarian aid and relief supplies to Venezuela following two recent earthquakes as part of its emergency response to the disaster.

Delivered through the UAE Aid Agency in coordination with the UAE Embassy in Caracas, the shipment includes medical supplies, tents and shelter materials to help address urgent humanitarian needs and support the response efforts of the Venezuelan authorities.

The aid shipment was received by senior UAE and Venezuelan officials, including Andrea Corao Faria, Venezuela's Deputy Minister for Asia, Middle East and Oceania, and Inder Romero, Deputy Minister for Industrial Development and Commerce of the Ministry of People's Power for Industries and National Commerce.

Tareq Ahmed Al Ameri, Chairman of the UAE Aid Agency, said the assistance reflected the UAE's longstanding commitment to responding rapidly to humanitarian crises. He said the supplies will help meet urgent shelter and healthcare needs by providing accommodation materials for displaced people and medical supplies to support the treatment of those injured, contributing to early recovery efforts and easing



the suffering of those affected.

Alexandra Josefina Hernandez, Venezuela's Vice Minister of Health, said that the UAE was the first country to provide these specific medical supplies and medicines tailored to the ministry's requirements.

She praised the UAE's swift response and its support for the country's healthcare sector, adding that further international assistance might be required as the situation evolves.

The UAE Aid Agency said its teams continue to conduct field visits to the hardest-hit areas of La Guaira state to assess damage and humanitarian needs. The teams are also carrying out regular inspections of tent installation sites and medical warehouses in Caracas to monitor the distribution of aid and ensure it is delivered in line with international humanitarian standards.

— ANI/WAM

CROSS-BORDER TRADE



Al Mazunah Free Zone holds talks with Yemeni traders

AL MAZUNAH: Al Mazunah Free Zone yesterday held a coordination meeting with representatives of import and export companies operating in the Yemeni market, attended by Qais bin Mohammed Al Yousef, Chairman of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ). The meeting highlighted the zone's services and facilitations and reviewed a proposed open market initiative.

Discussions also covered challenges and opportunities for boosting trade and investment flows between Oman and Yemen.

Al Yousef stressed the importance of the meeting in strengthening private sector partnership and addressing investor needs linked to the Yemeni market, to enhance the business environment and the zone's competitiveness.

Eng. Ahmed bin Khamis Al Kasbi, Director General of the zone, said its strategic location near the Yemeni border makes it an ideal logistics and trade platform for import-export companies. The meeting aimed to encourage companies to establish a permanent presence in the zone, offering additional competitive advantages.

The zone has proposed an open market or permanent exhibition initiative, allocating space for participating companies to consolidate, display and re-export products to Yemen and other markets.



The six-month pilot phase will allow for evaluation and refinement based on investor feedback. The meeting reviewed proposed incentives and heard company representatives outline key challenges and proposals for improving logistics and procedures. Both sides stressed the need for continued government-private sector coordination to overcome challenges and boost trade and investment.

The meeting is part of efforts to enhance the zone's attractiveness, develop initiatives leveraging its strategic location, and consolidate its role as a regional hub for trade and logistics serving regional markets, particularly Yemen.

Managed by the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn), Al Mazunah Free Zone serves as the Gulf gateway for transit trade to Yemen and East Africa.

It offers tax exemptions for up to 30 years, customs duty exemptions, 100 percent foreign ownership, and exemption from minimum capital requirements under Oman's company law. — ONA

REGIONAL ORGANISATION

Bangladesh may decide to host BIMSTEC summit next year, says Secretary General

DHAKA: BIMSTEC Secretary General Indra Mani Pandey said that Bangladesh, as the current chair, may host the next summit in 2027 to mark the 30th anniversary of the regional organisation.

Speaking with the media, Pandey noted that the 30th anniversary aligns with the final year of Bangladesh's chairmanship.

"Celebration and then related matter of whether we can hold a summit. It's a very good coincidence that the 30th anniversary year, 2027, will also be the second and final year for the chairmanship of Bangladesh. So, the summit that Bangladesh might decide to host next year, so that's coincide, that summit would certainly be a very special summit because it would then coincide with the 30th anniversary celebration," Pandey said.

Speaking on the continuous review of regional cooperation, the Secretary General emphasised that expanding priority sectors remains an ongoing process.

"So, we do regular stocktaking on cooperation in different sectors when our experts meet, when our ministers meet, our senior officers meet. They take stock of progress in different sectors. It's a continuous process. So, we have, after every meeting, new areas of cooperation are added. Member states sometimes decide to focus on very specific areas in different



sectors. So, it's a continuous process," he said.

Pandey stressed that all initiatives under BIMSTEC are built strictly on mutual agreement among constituent nations.

"And that's why I would like to underline that whatever cooperation we engage in under BIMSTEC is with the consensus of all the member states. That means all the member states believe that they will benefit from cooperation in those areas," he added.

Addressing the execution of decisions, the Secretary General identified ground-level implementation as a common hurdle for international bodies.

"The last point was about the challenge of implementation. I think it's a challenge that a number of organisations face; govern-

ments face that challenge on how to actually translate different decisions or different initiatives into tangible cooperation on the ground," he said.

Highlighting the organisation's action-oriented strategy, Pandey stated that the grouping prioritises concrete results over publicity.

"But if you look at our overall approach, the approach of BIMSTEC, we have actually focused on forging cooperation on the ground through different action plans, through setting up those centers of excellence. We have actually not engaged in any publicity about what we are doing, because our focus has been on doing—engaging in cooperation on the ground so that all our member states can benefit together," the Secretary General said.

PRESS CONFERENCE

Wildfires scorch 735,000 hectares in Toronto

TORONTO: Wildfires raging in Toronto have expanded to consume approximately 735,000 hectares, up from around 650,000 hectares at the start of the week, media reports said on Tuesday.

Ontario Premier Doug Ford said at a press conference that the province is currently battling 190 active fires, with about 1,800 people evacuated from low-density communities in the northwest.

Firefighting crews are working to extinguish the blazes and ensure

the safety of residents, he added.

Toronto recorded its worst air quality among major global cities, as smoke and pollution from the ongoing fires intensified, with officials urging residents to stay indoors.

Since the start of 2026, wildfires in Canada have consumed about 1.9 million hectares of land and vegetation, though more than 800 fire hotspots remain active across the country.



— ONA

US military forces complete latest round of strikes on Iran

According to CENTCOM, the operation was intended to reduce Iran’s ability to continue attacks on commercial vessels transiting the strategic waterway

WASHINGTON DC: The United States Central Command (CENTCOM) said that the US forces had completed another fresh round of strikes against Iran, marking the 10th consecutive night of military operations aimed at degrading Tehran’s military capabilities linked to attacks on commercial shipping in the Strait of Hormuz.

In a statement issued on Monday, CENTCOM said the latest strikes concluded at 9 pm ET on July 20 and targeted Iranian military command centres, maritime capabilities, missile and drone launch sites, and air defence systems.

“US Central Command (CENTCOM) completed another round of strikes against Iran at 9 p.m. ET, July 20,” the statement said.

According to CENTCOM, the operation was intended to reduce Iran’s ability to continue attacks on commercial vessels transiting the strategic waterway.

“US forces struck Iranian military command centers, maritime capabilities, missile and drone launch sites, and air defense systems to degrade Iran’s ability to continue attacking commercial vessels flowing through the Strait of Hormuz,” the statement added.

CENTCOM said commercial shipping through the Strait of Hormuz continues despite the ongoing tensions.

“Commercial vessel transits through the vital international maritime corridor continue. Since early May, CENTCOM forces



have helped facilitate the transit of approximately 900 commercial vessels and 450 million barrels of crude oil,” it said.

Reaffirming the US military’s posture in the region, CENTCOM said American forces remain prepared to respond to threats against civilian maritime traffic.

“American forces remain postured and prepared to hold Iran accountable for unwarranted aggression toward civilian mariners seeking to freely and openly transit the strait,” the statement added.

Following the strikes, Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps

(IRGC) and its armed forces targeted multiple US-linked assets across the Gulf region, including what they described as the destruction of an American missile defence radar system and an F-15 aircraft inside a shelter in Jordan, as well as an attack on Amazon’s central data infrastructure in Bahrain.

In a series of announcements issued by the IRGC and the Iranian Army and carried by Iran’s state broadcaster Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB), the IRGC stated that its strikes came as part of “Operation Nasr 2”, while the Iranian Army target-

ed the assets as under “Operation Lightning”.

The IRGC claimed that its forces had attacked a compound housing US military personnel in Jordan’s Rukban region, alleging that several soldiers were killed.

“The IRGC’s aerospace fighters attacked a compound where the American army forces were stationed in the Rukban region of Jordan, killing a number of them,” the statement said, as carried by IRIB.

IRGC also claimed that an MQ-9 drone hangar at Ali Al-Salem in the Kuwait base was hit, damaging or destroying several drones.

The Iranian Army further

claimed that HIMARS missile systems belonging to US forces at the Arifan base in Kuwait were targeted with surface-to-surface missiles.

This 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 the Strait of Hormuz.

Its collapse renewed the conflict in West Asia, with the US striking Iranian military and civilian assets, and the Islamic Republic also targeting American bases across the Gulf in retaliatory strikes.

Iran strikes multiple US-linked assets across the Gulf region

Meanwhile, Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and its armed forces have stated that they have tagrteted multiple US-linked assets across the Gulf region, including what they described as the destruction of an American missile defence radar system and an F-15 aircraft inside a shelter in Jordan, as well as an attack on Amazon’s central data infrastructure in Bahrain.

The claims were made in a se-

ries of announcements issued by the IRGC and the Iranian Army and carried by Iran’s state broadcaster Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB).

The Iranian strikes came as retaliation after the United States launched another round of attacks against Iran.

US Central Command (CENTCOM) earlier stated that American forces carried out new strikes on Iranian targets under directions from President Donald Trump.

“Today at 4 p.m. ET, U.S. forces began a new round of strikes against Iran at the Commander in Chief’s direction. The strikes are designed to further degrade Iranian military capabilities used to attack commercial shipping in the Strait of Hormuz,” CENTCOM said in a post on X, before Iran’s retaliation.

In its announcement, the IRGC stated that its Aerospace Force, during the 24th wave of “Operation Nasr 2”, targeted US radar and air defence capabilities in the region.

“The zealous fighters of the IRGC Aerospace Force, in the continuation of the 24th wave of Operation Nasr 2, destroyed a missile defence radar system and destroyed an F-15 aircraft inside the relevant shelter,” the IRGC said, according to IRIB.

The IRGC further claimed that the operation was aimed at clearing the region of radar and defence systems to enable further missile and drone operations.

“This region is not a place for American aggressors. The child-killing American army must leave our region to prevent further casualties,” the statement added.

In another announcement, the IRGC claimed that it had targeted the “central data infrastructure of the American company Amazon in Bahrain” with several cruise missiles.

The IRGC’s aerospace warriors, in response to the aggression and assault yesterday by the US army on the civilian facility under construction in Dar Khuyin, attacked and destroyed the central data infrastructure of the American company Amazon in Bahrain with several cruise missiles,” the statement read.

— Agencies

PHILIPPINES AMBASSADOR TO INDIA

‘India is playing a very important role in achieving ASEAN goals’

NEW DELHI: As Philippines chairs the Association of South-east Asian Nations (ASEAN) for the year 2026, Philippines Ambassador to India, Josel F Ignacio, on Tuesday said that India has a “very important role” to play in achieving ASEAN’s goals, while highlighting New Delhi’s consistent support for ASEAN unity and centrality as External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar is expected to visit Manila for ASEAN and Quad-related meetings.

Speaking to ANI on the Philippines’ priorities as the ASEAN Chair for 2026, Ignacio said Manila’s theme of “Navigating Our Future Together” reflects the shared responsibility of member states and partners in addressing geopolitical challenges and advancing regional cooperation.

“The Philippines, as chairman of ASEAN, we have chosen the theme ‘Navigating Our Future Together’. Just to highlight the fact that we’re all in this together, and we share the same fate, whatever geopolitical factors come to bear on our realities. Ultimately, we have to solve them as well,” Ignacio said.

He said the Philippines has identified three key priorities during its ASEAN Chairship, “Peace and Security Anchors”, “Prosperity Corridors” and “People Empowerment”, which align with ASEAN’s political-security, economic and socio-cultural pillars.

“In practical terms, this means supporting economic integration and digital transformation for our MSMEs, supporting supply chain resilience, and especially given the current crisis in West Asia, energy and even food



security,” the envoy said.

Ignacio emphasised India’s role in supporting ASEAN objectives, noting the convergence between New Delhi’s Indo-Pacific vision and ASEAN’s regional outlook.

“We believe that India has a very important role to play when it comes to achieving this purpose. India has always supported ASEAN centrality. We have a convergence of views in our views on the Indo-Pacific, the IPOI and the ASEAN Outlook,” he said.

He added that India supports the ASEAN Master Plan on Connectivity and that both sides are working under the ASEAN-India Plan of Action to strengthen cooperation.

“As we enter the halfway mark of our term, I believe that we’ve hosted ASEAN summits and now the ASEAN Foreign Ministers’ meeting and related meetings. I believe that we’re making some progress with our priorities, and we look forward to the next six months delivering as much as we can on these goals,” Ignacio said.

— ANI

WORLD WEATHER ATTRIBUTION

Sleep disruption emerges as an inevitable consequence of longer and hotter summers

SAXONY: During the June heat wave that brought record temperatures to western Europe, around 65% of adults in the UK struggled to sleep, according to a recent poll. Near half of those lost three or more hours sleep a night.

Sleep disruption is an inevitable consequence of longer and hotter summers fuelled by human-made climate change. As the fastest-warming continent that is heating at more than double the global average, Europe is a sleep loss hot spot.

In the German state of Saxony in June, a weather station reported a tropical overnight minimum temperature of 29.4 degrees Celsius (85 degrees Fahrenheit).

Such overnight extremes are now 100 times more likely due to climate change caused primarily by burning fossil fuels, notes World Weather Attribution, a global scientific body analysing how climate drives weather extremes.

Climate change disrupts sleep

Heat-driven sleep loss has only recently been recognised as an important indicator of how climate change affects both physical and mental health. A global team of researchers collated 165 million nights of data from nearly 318,000 users of wearable and under-mattress sleep trackers to monitor the impact of rising temperatures on sleep. In a paper published in July, they showed that when nighttime temperatures rise from around 12 C to 27 C, people face about a 40% higher chance of sleeping less than six hours.

Humans can’t maintain cognitive function, memory or emotional balance when they sleep less than seven hours a night, noted Ty Ferguson, a research fellow at Australia’s Adelaide University who



studies the potential health and social impacts of climate-driven sleep disturbance — but wasn’t part of the July study.

In addition to impacting mood and attention, disrupted sleep can increase diabetes risk, depression, heart disease and even obesity, according to Ferguson.

‘Sleep essential for immune function, mental health’

“Sleep is a fundamental physiological necessity essential for human immune function, mental health, and daily well-being,” said Bowen Chu, a researcher at the School of Atmospheric Sciences at Nanjing University in China who co-authored a March study on the potential economic impacts of climate-driven sleep erosion in children.

Unlike traditional climate impact research focused often on extreme weather events, understanding sleep loss “allows scientists to quantify the gradual, day-to-day, and cumulative effects of ambient temperature rise on the everyday lives and health of global populations,” Chu told DW.

“Temperatures are also rising faster at night than during the day,” notes Kelton Minor, an associate professor at the University of Copenhagen in Denmark whose research team, along with the

World Sleep Society, has called for a global sleep task force to better understand and prepare for sleep depletion in a hotter world.

Nights are getting hotter in part because clouds absorb heat and send it to Earth after dark — unlike daytime when they reflect sunlight. Researchers have found that cloud patterns are changing in ways that amplify global warming.

‘Quietly accumulating’ sleep decline underreported

Sleep loss is probably underreported as a climate impact since it “doesn’t produce a dramatic single event — no headline death toll, not as visible damage,” noted Kim van Daalen, an environmental epidemiologist at the University of Cambridge and co-author of a recently published paper on “Sleep loss in a warming world.”

“It accumulates quietly, night after night, which makes it easy to miss in coverage that tends to focus on acute heat wave deaths or hospitalisations,” said van Daalen of the subtle impacts of sleep deficits.

“Heat-related sleep loss is likely to widen existing health and socioeconomic inequalities,” said van Daalen. Children may struggle with concentration, learning and emotions, while “greater cardiovascular and metabolic strain”

is being placed on older adults and people with chronic illnesses when sleeping less.

“Chronic sleep loss driven by high temperatures is associated with decreased labor productivity, reduced learning efficiency, potentially an increased risk of traffic accidents, and heightened long-term healthcare burdens on society,” said Chu of the broader societal impacts of sleep interruption.

“Poor sleep makes it harder to work, learn, care for others and maintain good health,” he said, adding that low-income households are more exposed because they live in poorly ventilated homes or cannot afford cooling.

Both lower-income populations within wealthy nations and residents of lower-income countries may be up to three times more vulnerable to the impact of heat on sleep, according to Minor.

This is explained by “lower access to air conditioning and other economic lifelines that can keep the heat out,” he said, pointing to “houseless individuals trying to sleep on the streets, migrants in sweltering tents, incarcerated populations in searing hot prison cells, infants in scorching bedrooms, as well as pregnant and new mothers already struggling to sleep.”

What are the solutions?

Even in a scenario where nations achieve net zero emissions, adaptation to climate-driven sleep loss will be an ongoing necessity since temperatures will take decades to fall, noted Ferguson.

Increased access to fans or air conditioning, lighter and breathable bedding, greater building insulation, and limiting heat-trapping concrete in cities are some of the ways climate-related sleep decline can be mitigated, he explained.

— DW

SPORTS

Oman to host Arab Women’s Sailing Championship from October 15

The region’s leading women’s sailors will converge in Mussanah for the third edition of the championship

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman Sail will host the 3rd Arab Women’s Sailing Championship from October 15-21, welcoming an expected 30 of the region’s top female sailors to compete in the Optimist, ILCA 4 and ILCA 6 classes at Barceló Mussanah Resort. Registration is now open, with Oman Sail inviting national federations and sailors from across the Arab world to take part in one of the region’s most significant events dedicated to the growth of women’s sailing. Organised by Oman Sail in cooperation with the Oman Maritime Sports Committee and the Arab Sailing Federation, the championship will form part of the 15th



edition of Mussanah Race Week (MRW), further cementing the event’s reputation as one of the Middle East’s premier sailing festivals while strengthening Oman’s standing as a regional hub for competitive women’s maritime sport. Hosting the championship marks another major milestone in Oman Sail’s long-term commitment to developing women sailing talent and follows the national team’s impressive performances at the previous two editions. At the 2024 championship in Bahrain, Oman’s Hadeel Al Mushaifri secured bronze in the



Optimist class. The momentum continued in Kuwait in 2025, where Tarteel Al Hasni claimed silver in the Optimist class, Hadeel Al Mushaifri added another bronze in the ILCA 4 fleet, and Ibtisam Al Salmi earned bronze in the ILCA 6 competition. Abdul Aziz Salim Al Shidi, Acting Director of Sailing at Oman Sail, said: “Hosting the 3rd Arab Women’s Sailing Championship is a proud milestone for Oman Sail and reflects our continued commitment to advancing women’s sailing across the Arab region. After our team’s outstanding perfor-

mances in recent championships, welcoming the event to our home waters at Barceló Mussanah Resort gives our sailors the opportunity to compete on familiar waters while inspiring more young women to embrace the sport. “We look forward to delivering a world-class championship that showcases both the talent of the region’s athletes and Oman’s capability to host international sailing events.” Sheikh Khalifa bin Abdullah Al Khalifa, President of the Arab Sailing Federation, said: “We are delighted to see the Arab Women’s



Sailing Championship continue to grow, bringing together talented sailors from across the Arab world. The championship reflects our commitment to developing women’s sailing, strengthening sporting cooperation among Arab nations, and providing athletes with opportunities to compete at the highest level. We look forward to outstanding racing in Oman and to the continued growth of sailing throughout the region.” Oman Sail’s Women’s Sailing Programme has become one of the region’s leading initiatives for women participation in sailing

since launching the Arab world’s first all-women national sailing team in 2012. The programme also aligns closely with the ambitions of Oman Vision 2040, promoting equal opportunities in sport while contributing to wider national goals in youth development, social inclusion, human capital and economic diversification. By investing in women’s sailing, Oman Sail continues to use sport as a platform for lasting social impact, empowering future generations and strengthening the Sultanate’s position as a leader in maritime excellence.

AUSTRALIA TEST SQUAD

Cummins, Hazlewood, Lyon return to face Bangladesh

MELBOURNE: Australia’s veteran bowling trio, captain Pat Cummins, Josh Hazlewood and Nathan Lyon, have returned from injury and were all on Tuesday named in the Test squad to face Bangladesh next month. Ashes pace hero Michael Neser was left out of the 13-man party for the two-match series in Darwin and Mackay beginning on August 13, with Scott Boland named as the fourth seamer. Cummins, Hazlewood and Lyon

have all been plagued by injury over the past 12 months. The 35-year-old pace bowler Hazlewood missed the Ashes and the subsequent T20 World Cup in India, his last Test appearance for Australia coming in July 2025. Fast bowler Cummins and spinner Lyon played just three of the five home Ashes Tests between them. The 33-year-old Cummins has not played for Australia in any format since the third Test against England in Adelaide



in December 2025 because of a back stress complaint. Lyon, who is 38, tore a hamstring in the same

match and needed surgery. Australia will be careful to wrap the ageing trio in cotton

wool ahead of a 12-month period that could see them play as many 21 Tests if it qualifies for next year’s World Test Championship final. “As previously stated, the volume of cricket and schedule across the next 12 months are likely to present further opportunities across all formats for many players.” Opening batsman Usman Khawaja retired after the final Test of the 4-1 Ashes triumph in early January, leaving a spot open at the

top of the order alongside Travis Head. Jake Weatherald may get the nod, with all-rounder Cameron Green or Marnus Labuschagne coming in at three. **Australia squad:** Pat Cummins (capt), Scott Boland, Alex Carey, Cameron Green, Josh Hazlewood, Travis Head, Josh Inglis, Marnus Labuschagne, Nathan Lyon, Steve Smith, Mitchell Starc, Jake Weatherald, Beau Webster. - Agencies

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OMAN OIL PRICE RISES

The price of Oman crude oil has increased, with prices for delivery by September 2026 reaching \$81.79. The price of Oman crude oil rose by \$2.34 from the price of Monday, which was \$79.45. -ONA

MARKET BUSINESS & FINANCE



MSX INDEX ENDS LOWER

The MSX index closed at 7,091.30 points, down by -0.85% from previous close. The Sharia Index ended down by -1.25% at 571.40 points. Ahli Bank, up 9.74%, was the top gainer while, Sohar Power, down 9.80%, was the top loser.

Manila forum to deepen Oman-Philippines economic ties

3rd Strategic Majlis Forum will focus on investment opportunities in the sectors of tourism, technology, logistics, agriculture and fisheries

MUSCAT: The third edition of Oman-Philippines 3rd Strategic Majlis Forum will begin in Manila on Sunday (26 July).

The forum will see the participation of senior government officials, representatives of private sector establishments and specialists in the field. It will explore means of expanding bilateral cooperation in a manner that generates new op-



portunities for the two countries' strategic partnership.

The forum will focus on investment opportunities in the sectors of tourism, technology, logistics, agriculture and fisheries. It will serve as a platform to promote dialogue, develop strategic cooperation and identify practical areas for partner-

ship between the two countries.

Oman's delegation to the forum will be led by Sayyid Badr Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister. It will include Dr. Mahad bin Said Ba'Owain, Minister of Labour, Munir bin Ali Al Muniri, Deputy Chairman of Oman Invest-

Eng. Nasser bin Said Al Muniri, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Republic of the Philippines, and representatives of public and private sector establishments.

The forum elaborates on three main domains: Economic ties, diplomatic relations and innovation.



It seeks to consolidate economic ties by exploring opportunities for developing trade exchange, attracting investments and encouraging joint projects in priority sectors.

In the diplomatic domain, the forum stresses the two countries' commitment to constructive dia-

logue and coordination about regional and international issues of common interest.

The forum will also focus on promoting innovation by developing stronger cooperation in modern production sectors, including technology, energy, agriculture and fisheries, logistics and transport. -ONA

PARTICIPATION



Bank Muscat supports activities of Al Jabal Al Akhdar Festival 2026

MUSCAT: Reaffirming its steadfast commitment to supporting national initiatives that contribute to economic and tourism development, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, has announced its participation in the Al Jabal Al Akhdar Festival 2026, organised by Al Dakhiliyah Governorate from 15 July to 30 August.

During the opening ceremony, Sayyid Ibrahim bin Said Al Busaidi, the Minister of Heritage and Tourism honoured the bank for its successful participation in the festival. Sami bin Mohammed Al Kindi, Regional Manager of Bank Muscat branches in Dhakhiliya, received the award.

This participation reflects Bank Muscat's strategy of supporting events that stimulate tourism, promote local development, and provide valuable platforms for small and medium enterprises (SMEs), entrepreneurs, and home businesses. It also aligns with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040, which aims to diversify the national economy and strengthen the contribution of the tourism sector to sustainable economic growth.

The festival is recognised as one of Oman's most prominent annual tourism events. It is held in the Wilayat of Al Jabal Al Akhdar in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, a destination renowned for its spectacular mountain scenery and pleasant summer climate, making it a preferred destination for visitors from across the Sultanate and beyond.

The wilayat has also witnessed significant tourism and development projects that have enhanced its infrastructure, attracted further investment, and

reinforced its position as one of the Sultanate's leading tourism destinations at both the national and regional levels.

This year's festival features a comprehensive programme spanning more than six weeks, offering a wide range of cultural, heritage, recreational and sporting activities that showcase the unique natural and cultural attractions of Al Jabal Al Akhdar. The event will also see the participation of more than 85 exhibitors, including SMEs, home businesses, farmers, restaurants, cafés and retail outlets, creating opportunities to promote local products, support entrepreneurs and generate sustainable economic value.

Previous editions of the Al Jabal Al Akhdar Festival have achieved remarkable success in attracting visitors and stimulating economic activity. The 2025 edition welcomed more than 250,000 visitors, featured the participation of 30 small and medium enterprises, and created around 50 temporary employment opportunities for the locals, highlighting the festival's positive contribution to the local economy and its role in empowering entrepreneurs and families.

Through this sponsorship, Bank Muscat continues to play a leading role in supporting sustainable development by backing national initiatives that deliver tangible economic and social impact while strengthening public-private partnerships. The Bank firmly believes that such events contribute to the development of local communities, create new investment opportunities, and support the growth of tourism, hospitality and related sectors across the Sultanate.

OMAN BROADBAND COMPANY

Digital awareness programme unveiled for Khareef Dhofar

MUSCAT: Oman Broadband Company has launched a comprehensive programme of awareness activities and interactive experiences that embody the role of optical fibre in building an integrated and sustainable digital society.

The programme is designed to enhance visitors' knowledge of the benefits of the optical fiber network and its contributions to supporting innovation and digital transformation. This initiative comes as part of the company's participation in the Khareef Dhofar 2026 season under the theme "Experience the Speed... Go Fibre", running from July 25 until the end of August 2026. The activities will take place across several vital locations and commercial centers in the city, alongside the company's role as a main sponsor and strategic partner of the "Nova" events.

The programme aims to introduce visitors to the importance of the ultra-high-speed optical fibre network, offering direct, hands-on experiences that reflect its role in improving connectivity quality. It ultimately empowers individuals and institutions to leverage more efficient and reliable digital solutions, thereby supporting the digital transformation journey in the Sultanate of Oman.

The activities will officially kick off on July 25 at the Nova Stage in Al Haffa Market with a PlaySta-



tion FIFA 26 tournament, coinciding with the opening of the Oman Broadband Gaming Zone.

This zone will welcome Khareef season visitors until August 4, offering interactive experiences, daily competitions, and prizes.

In addition, awareness and interactive activities will be held at various locations across the Dhofar Governorate to raise awareness of ultra-high-speed optical fibre services and highlight the role of digital infrastructure in national development. All events will also feature raffle draws with various prizes and daily winner announcements.

Furthermore, from July 27 to 30, the company will organise the "Interactive Journey to Discover the World of Optical Fibre" at Salalah



Gardens Mall. This entertaining and educational experience allows visitors of all ages to understand the importance of optical fiber through five interactive games. These activations simulate the speed of fiber, its role in connecting the community, and its impact on the home user experience, culminating in its contribution to building Oman's digital future. The programme will conclude on August 4 at the Nova Stage with an engaging Q&A and Trivia event ("Sin Jeem").

Eng. Sultan bin Ahmed Al Wahaibi, Chief Executive Officer of Oman Broadband Company, emphasised that the company's participation in the Khareef Dhofar season aims to foster public awareness regarding the importance of

modern digital infrastructure and to highlight the optical fibre network's role in enabling users to benefit from highly reliable communication services.

Al Wahaibi stated: "Through our participation, we seek to provide an interactive experience that introduces visitors to the true value of optical fibre. The optical fibre network has become an essential pillar of digital life due to the speed, stability, and reliability it provides. We were keen to design a programme that seamlessly blends awareness, entertainment, and direct experience. This reflects our mission to support digital transformation, enhance the quality of life, and perfectly embodies our campaign theme, 'Experience the Speed... Go Fiber'." -ONA

NAMA DHOFAR SERVICES

200 employment-linked technical training opportunities offered on 'Tawteen' platform



SALALAH: Nama Dhofar Services announced on Tuesday the provision of 200 technical training opportunities linked to employment with its contracted companies, in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour and the Authority for Public Services Regulation, as part of the initiatives of the Governance Committee for Employment and In-Country Value in the Public Services Sector

in Dhofar Governorate.

"Tawteen" platform

The recruitment process will take place via the "Tawteen" platform in coordination with the Ministry of Labour. These efforts contribute to meeting the needs of the water, wastewater, and electricity sectors, and developing services through trained and qualified na-



tional cadres to achieve the targets of "Oman Vision 2040."

It is worth noting that the first batch included 467 job opportunities with operating companies contracted with Nama Dhofar Services, while the second batch includes 200 new job opportunities, bringing the total to 667 job opportunities this year across successive phases of the Omanization

initiative in permanent contracts.

The announcement of these job vacancies comes as part of Nama Dhofar Services' efforts to enhance employment and training fields and support the continuation of joint cooperation with the Ministry of Labour, thereby contributing to empowering national cadres and raising their readiness to join the labour market. -ONA

MARKET

MSX index ends lower

Ahli Bank, up 9.74%, was the top gainer while, Sohar Power, down 9.80%, was the top loser



MUSCAT: The MSX index closed at 7,091.30 points, down by -0.85% from previous close. The Sharia Index ended down by -1.25% at 571.40 points. Ahli Bank, up 9.74%, was the top gainer while, Sohar Power, down 9.80%, was the top loser. Shares of Sohar International Bank were the most active in terms of number of shares traded while Bank Muscat were the most active in terms of turnover.

A total number of 9493 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating turnover of RO 38.65 million, with more than 167.28 million shares changing hands. Out of 73 traded securities, 14 advanced, 37 declined, and 22 remained unchanged. At the session close, foreign investors were net sellers for RO 5181K while domestic investors were net buyers for RO 4648K, followed by GCC & Arab investors for RO 533K worth of shares.

Financial Index closed at 12,631.08 points, up 0.63%. Prices of Ahli Bank, Muscat Finance, Ominvest, Oman Arab

Bank, United Finance were up by 9.74%, 8.48%, 2.43%, 1.28%, 1.12% respectively. Prices of Al Madina Investments, Arabia Falcon Insurance, Bank Muscat, Sohar International Bank, Al Madina Takaful were down by 5.88%, 3.57%, 2.35%, 1.82%, 1.75% respectively.

Industrial Index closed at 9,271.62 points, down -0.89%. Prices of were up by respectively. Prices of Oman Chromite, Oman Fisheries, Oman Cement, Jazeera Steel Products, Al Anwar Ceramics were down by 10.00%, 4.35%, 3.55%, 1.90%, 1.52% respectively.

Services Index was down by -1.64% before closing at 2,845.70 points. Prices of Oman National Engineering, National Gas, Oman Oil Marketing, Oman Oil Marketing were up by 2.06%, 1.98%, 0.42%, 0.42% respectively.

Prices of Barka Desalination, Al Suwadi Power, Barka Water & Power Company, Al Batinah Power, OQ Exploration & Production were down by 4.27%, 4.19%, 3.03%, 3.03%, 2.86% respectively.

OMAN STOCKS									
MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE									
INDICES									
Index	High	Low	Value	Prev. Value	Diff.	Diff%			
MSX 30 INDEX	7,152.35	6,962.68	7,091.30	7,152.35	-61.05	-0.85%			
FINANCIAL INDEX	12,631.08	12,278.22	12,631.08	12,551.95	79.13	0.63%			
Industry Index	9,390.71	9,273.97	9,271.62	9,355.08	-83.47	-0.89%			
Services Index	2,893.05	2,828.80	2,845.70	2,893.05	-47.35	-1.64%			
MSX Shariah Index	578.66	564.58	571.40	578.66	-7.25	-1.25%			
FINANCIAL TR IDX	11,065.51	10,772.07	10,971.05	11,065.51	-94.45	-0.85%			
INDUSTRIAL TR IDX	15,529.25	15,065.43	15,529.25	15,431.97	97.29	0.63%			
SERVICES TR IDX	12,027.11	11,787.94	11,874.59	11,981.49	-106.90	-0.89%			
FIXED INCOME INDEX	3,876.15	3,790.05	3,812.70	3,876.15	-63.45	-1.64%			
	1,253.83	1,253.83	1,253.83	1,253.83	0.00	0.00%			

Trading Summary									
Volume	Turnover	Trades	Market Cap	Up	Down	Equal	Sec. Traded		
167,284,034	38,645,581	9,493	37,077,569,057	14	37	22	73		

SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR TUESDAY, JULY 21

	SECURITY NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF (RD)	DIFF %	LAST PR	LAST BID	LAST OFFER	PUR VALUE	MARKET CAP
REGULAR MARKET																
OM0000001533	OMINVEST	736,031	278,034	39	0.375	0.379	0.375	0.379	0.370	0.009	2.432	0.379	0.379	0.379	0.100	425,561,634
OM0000001152	OMAN NATL ENGG & INVESTMENT	639	95	1	0.149	0.149	0.149	0.149	0.146	0.003	2.055	0.149	0.145	0.149	0.100	22,350,000
OM0000002674	UNITED FINANCE	316,899	28,529	11	0.090	0.090	0.090	0.090	0.089	0.001	1.124	0.090	0.090	0.090	0.100	23,051,457
OM0000008072	OQ GAS NETWORKS	22,555,046	4,210,535	1,505	0.192	0.194	0.184	0.194	0.192	0.002	1.042	0.194	0.197	0.194	0.100	840,141,040
OM0000001483	NATIONAL BANK OMAN	307,000	147,935	35	0.484	0.488	0.473	0.488	0.484	0.004	0.826	0.488	0.488	0.100	793,461,821	
OM0000002672	OMAN OIL MARKETING	2,960	3,552	2	1.200	1.200	1.200	1.200	1.195	0.005	0.418	1.200	1.200	1.200	0.100	73,530,000
OM0000001707	OMAN CABLES INDUSTRY	5,266	17,351	5	3.295	3.295	3.295	3.295	3.295	0.000	0.000	3.295	2.970	3.295	0.100	295,561,500
OM0000002226	ALJAZEERA SERVICES	8,844	2,221	5	0.270	0.270	0.250	0.250	0.250	0.000	0.000	0.250	0.252	0.255	0.100	10,710,748
OM0000002267	GULF MUSHROOM PRODUCTS	11,945	4,938	10	0.420	0.420	0.413	0.417	0.417	0.000	0.000	0.417	0.415	0.417	0.100	20,992,771
OM0000002440	AL SHARQIYA INVESTMENT HO.	14,123	1,387	5	0.099	0.099	0.096	0.099	0.099	0.000	0.000	0.099	0.097	0.099	0.100	8,910,000
OM0000002549	BANK DHOFAR	50,000	10,955	48	0.219	0.220	0.219	0.220	0.220	0.000	0.000	0.220	0.219	0.220	0.100	668,755,677
OM0000003961	VOLTAMP ENERGY	543,839	86,994	93	0.163	0.165	0.157	0.165	0.165	0.000	0.000	0.165	0.157	0.172	0.010	165,000,000
OM0000007811	MUSANDAM POWER	45,500	15,015	6	0.330	0.330	0.330	0.330	0.330	0.000	0.000	0.330	0.320	0.340	0.100	32,228,700
OM0000001509	DHOFAR INTL DEVELOPMENT & INVEST	5,100	1,326	3	0.260	0.260	0.260	0.264	0.265	-0.001	-0.377	0.264	0.264	0.291	0.100	130,958,821
OM0000004735	SEMBOCORP SALALAH	336,230	84,659	34	0.253	0.254	0.251	0.252	0.253	-0.001	-0.395	0.252	0.250	0.255	0.100	240,552,131
OM0000001772	ALANWAR INVESTMENT	16,480	2,795	3	0.170	0.170	0.169	0.169	0.170	-0.001	-0.588	0.169	0.169	0.170	0.100	11,968,109
OM0000003125	GLOBAL FINANCIAL INVESTMENT HO.	70,428	18,561	15	0.263	0.266	0.263	0.265	0.268	-0.003	-1.042	0.265	0.260	0.285	0.100	57,000,000
OM0000005963	PHOENIX POWER	476,587	113,460	57	0.243	0.243	0.235	0.242	0.245	-0.003	-1.224	0.242	0.242	0.242	0.100	353,949,553
OM0000004420	BANK NIZWA	1,037,097	141,235	58	0.139	0.139	0.135	0.137	0.139	-0.002	-1.439	0.135	0.135	0.137	0.100	306,462,565
OM0000001087	OMAN UNITED INSURANCE	34,650	10,742	6	0.310	0.318	0.310	0.310	0.315	-0.005	-1.587	0.310	0.310	0.318	0.100	32,550,000
OM0000008934	ABRAJ ENERGY SERVICES	5,015,958	1,815,065	115	0.366	0.366	0.357	0.360	0.366	-0.006	-1.639	0.360	0.357	0.360	0.100	277,272,000
OM0000003234	RENAISSANCE SERVICES	70,222	20,526	14	0.295	0.295	0.290	0.291	0.296	-0.005	-1.689	0.291	0.292	0.291	0.100	68,795,310
OM0000003025	OMAN TELECOM	2,238,972	3,054,785	216	1.373	1.373	1.350	1.350	1.374	-0.024	-1.747	1.350	1.350	1.384	0.100	1,012,500,000
OM0000008908	OQ BASE INDUSTRIES (SFZ)	23,576,712	5,200,561	1,549	0.229	0.230	0.218	0.225	0.229	-0.004	-1.747	0.225	0.225	0.223	0.040	778,385,441
OM0000004768	MADINA TAKAFUL	225,308	25,257	29	0.114	0.114	0.110	0.112	0.114	-0.002	-1.754	0.112	0.111	0.115	0.100	19,600,000
OM0000003398	SOHAR INTERNATIONAL BANK	50,483,350	78,473,835	1,780	0.165	0.165	0.150	0.162	0.165	-0.003	-1.818	0.162	0.161	0.162	0.100	1,243,512,919
OM0000003965	COBREDOO	143,525	46,511	15	0.329	0.329	0.323	0.323	0.329	-0.006	-1.824	0.323	0.323	0.327	0.100	210,254,986
OM0000002176	JAZEERA STEEL PRODUCTS	58,500	48,716	14	0.850	0.850	0.828	0.828	0.844	-0.016	-1.896	0.828	0.828	0.830	0.100	103,415,511
OM0000003900	AL MAHA PETROLEUM PRODS MRKTNG	2,857	3,191	5	1.126	1.126	1.110	1.125	1.150	-0.025	-2.174	1.125	1.111	1.160	0.100	77,625,000
OM0000002786	BANK MUSCAT	24,604,436	9,197,978	1,403	0.383	0.383	0.389	0.374	0.383	-0.009	-2.350	0.374	0.371	0.374	0.100	2,807,292,501
OM0000001020	ASTAD SHIPPING	875,343	220,518	134	0.258	0.259	0.249	0.250	0.257	-0.007	-2.724	0.250	0.252	0.250	0.000	1,302,186,070
OM0000009759	OQ EXPLORATION AND PRODUCTION	5,078,737	2,255,907	305	0.447	0.449	0.440	0.442	0.455	-0.013	-2.857	0.443	0.430	0.443	0.010	3,536,000,000
OM0000003025	BANK MUSCAT	115	18	1	0.160	0.160	0.160	0.160	0.165	-0.005	-3.030	0.160	0.160	0.165	0.100	25,600,000
OM0000004925	ALBATINAH POWER	262,805	41,843	28	0.163	0.163	0.157	0.160	0.165	-0.005	-3.030	0.160	0.160	0.160	0.100	107,981,869
OM0000001749	OMAN CEMENT	4,108	2,344	8	0.575	0.575	0.570	0.570	0.591	-0.021	-3.553	0.570	0.550	0.570	0.100	188,597,445
OM0000004933	AL SUWADI POWER	192,089	30,803	27	0.166	0.166	0.158	0.160	0.167	-0.007	-4.192	0.160	0.160	0.160	0.100	114,305,014
OM0000000870	BARKA DESALINATION	17,001	2,672	4	0.158	0.158	0.157	0.157	0.164	-0.007	-4.298	0.157	0.152	0.164	0.100	11,856,954
Total		37			139,425,493	34,994,896	7,588									

Parallel Market																
OM0000002200	AHLI BANK	100,100	21,420	5	0.195	0.214	0.195	0.214	0.195	0.019	9.744	0.214	0.200	0.214	0.100	594,554,256
OM0000001590	MUSCAT FINANCE	58,300	3,441	7	0.059	0.064	0.059	0.064	0.059	0.005	8.475	0.064	0.054	0.064	0.100	19,657,365
OM0000001160	NATIONAL GAS	173,647	17,378	34	0.104	0.104	0.104	0.103	0.101	0.002	1.980	0.100	0.100	0.100	0.100	8,755,000
OM0000008447	OMAN REIT FUND	37,371	3,972	14	0.107	0.108	0.106	0.108	0.106	0.002	1.887	0.108	0.116	0.108	0.100	70,452,965
OM0000005260	OMAN ARAB BANK	111,344	26,182	14	0.234	0.238	0.233	0.238	0.235	0.003	1.277	0.238	0.238	0.235	0.100	476,652,913
OM0000008868	THE PEARL REIF	74,194	13,014	9	0.175	0.178	0.175	0.177	0.175	0.002	1.143	0.177	0.158	0.177	0.100	104,684,328
OM0000001400	OMAN FLOUR MILLS	445,423	250,312	10	0.560	0.565	0.560	0.560	0.560	0.000	0.000	0.560	0.504	0.575	0.100	97,240,500
OM0000002275	SHELL OMAN MARKETING	390	301	1	0.771	0.771	0.771	0.771	0.771	0.000	0.000	0.771	0.772	0.795	0.100	73,245,000
OM0000002648	NATIONAL FINANCE	33,146	7,027	6	0.212	0.212	0.212	0.212	0.212	0.000	0.000	0.212	0.212	0.216	0.100	137,947,424
OM0000003281	TAGEER FINANCE	210	25	1	0.120	0.120	0.120	0.120	0.120	0.000	0.000	0.120	0.112	0.120	0.100	34,042,894
OM0000003521	GALFAR ENGINEERING & CONTRACTING	500	76	1	0.152	0.152	0.152	0.157	0.157	0.000	0.000	0.152	0.152	0.152	0.100	31,868,872
OM0000007084	MUSCAT GENERAL INANATION	8,000	708	0.088	0.088	0.088	0.088	0.088	0.088	0.000	0.000	0.088	0.088	0.090	0.100	13,888,435
OM0000007407	DHOAF GENERAL ESTATE	54,202	4,045	17	0.079	0.080	0.072	0.080	0.077	0.000	0.000	0.077	0.070	0.077	0.100	17,773,200
OM0000007910	OMAN REIT ESTATE	14,002	994	8	0.073	0.073	0.068	0.073	0.073	0.000	0.000	0.073	0.068	0.073	0.100	14,000,000
OM0000009599	JABAL REIF	228,268	23,615	10	0.104	0.104	0.103	0.104	0.104	0.000	0.000	0.104	0.103	0.104	0.100	18,996,000
OM0000002628	GULF INTERNATIONAL CHEMICALS	110,270	7,497	28	0.069	0.069	0.067	0.068	0.069	-0.001	-1.449	0.068	0.063	0.072	0.100	1,428,000
OM0000002168	AL ANWAR CERAMIC	126,980	16,422	34	0.136	0.139	0.128	0.130	0.132	-0.002	-1.515	0.130	0.128	0.130	0.130	28,600,000
OM0000001151	OMIFCO	16,915,281	3,133,072	1,403	0.187	0.188	0.184	0.185	0.188	-0.003	-1.596	0.185	0.185	0.170	0.000	1,237,534,375
OM0000001897	MAJAN COLCO	1,025	135	1	0.132	0.132	0.132	0.132	0.135	-0.003	-2.222	0.132	0.128	0.132	0.130	13,968,000
OM0000001885	OMAN NATRAV FUND	2,120	210	7	0.093	0.093	0.088	0.093	0.092	-0.026	-2.839	0.098	0.098	0.093	0.000	27,153,820
OM0000007290	ABRAHA FALCON INSURANCE	37,000	4,995	1	0.135	0.135	0.135	0.135	0.140	-0.005	-3.571	0.135	0.000	0.135	0.100	13,945,724
OM0000001962	AL MADINA INVESTMENT HOLDING	20,000	649	4	0.032	0.034	0.031	0.032	0.034	-0.002	-5.882	0.034	0.031	0.036	0.100	2,720,000
OM0000003071	SOHAR POWER	7,608	1,681	8	0.221	0.221	0.221	0.221	0.245	-0.024	-3.796	0.221	0.221	0.221	0.100	4,420,000
OM0000001030	OMAN CHROMITE	112	353	2	3.150	3.150	3.150	3.150	3.150	0.350	-10.000	3.150	3.150	3.400	1.000	11,434,500
Total	24	18,559,524	3,539,408	1,627												



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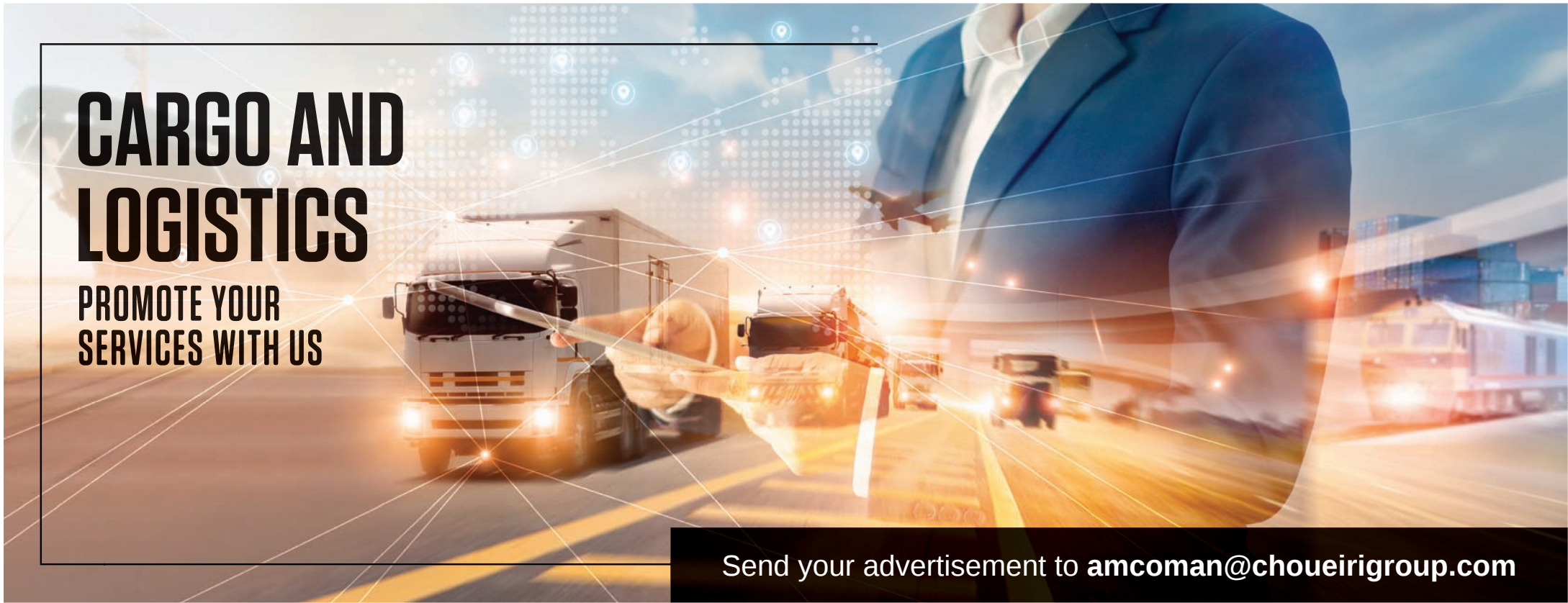
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DR Congo Ebola cases top 2,400 amid continued transmission

Health authorities also reported a newly affected health zone, Adja, in Ituri province, bringing the total to 47 across five provinces, of which 46 remain under active transmission



KINSHASA: Confirmed Ebola cases in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) have risen to 2,423, including 967 deaths, health authorities said in an update.

It said 734 patients remained in quarantine or treatment as of July 19, while 469 people had recovered since the outbreak began.

Health authorities also reported a newly affected health zone, Adja, in Ituri province, bringing the total to 47 across five provinces, of which 46 remain under active transmission.

The outbreak, caused by the Bundibugyo ebolavirus, was declared on May 15. It has since spread to five provinces. Population movements, insecurity, artisanal mining activities and cross-border exchanges with Uganda and South Sudan continue to facilitate transmission. As of July 19, the outbreak has also infected 121 frontline health workers in Ituri province, including 36 deaths.

Meanwhile, the DRC and Uganda conducted a joint technical assessment of a mobile laboratory in Kasenyi near the border to strengthen cross-border surveillance.

Overcrowding at displacement sites increases Ebola risk in DR Congo: UN

Overcrowding and limited access to basic services in displacement sites are increasing the risk

of the spread of Ebola in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), UN humanitarian warned on Monday.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) confirmed Ebola cases had been reported in at least 16 sites hosting more than 270,000 displaced people across Ituri province, the epicenter of the outbreak.

OCHA said the world body and its partners were supporting displaced communities through prevention and awareness activities, such as installing handwashing stations and conducting community outreach on Ebola prevention measures. As of Saturday, DRC health authorities had reported 2,344 confirmed Ebola cases across five provinces. Ituri accounts for nearly 90 percent of the confirmed cases, according to OCHA. The office continued its call for increased international support to sustain the Ebola response and life-saving assistance to displaced communities already facing years of conflict, displacement, and deteriorating living conditions.

DRC's neighbours boost preparedness as Ebola cases surge

Kinshasa: Countries bordering the Democratic Republic of Congo have stepped up screening at border crossings, trained front-

line health workers and activated emergency plans to reduce the risk of imported cases as the DRC battles a growing Ebola outbreak.

On Monday, the DRC's Health Ministry reported that at least 930 people have died due to the illness. The DRC has recorded 2,344 cases of Bundibugyo, the virus behind the current outbreak, which the government declared on May 15. The World Health Organization (WHO) recently warned that the number of cases could be up to four times higher than what is known.

In Zambia, authorities have stepped up screening at points of entry despite recording no confirmed Ebola cases. Dr. Naeem Dalal, assistant director for preparedness and response at the Zambia National Public Health Institute (ZNPHI), told DW that prevention measures had been reinforced nationwide. "Infection prevention and control is currently being activated, where a lot of disinfection will be taking place, and face masks and washing of hands with soap and water will become mandatory," Dalal said.

He said provincial public health emergency response centers had been activated to coordinate a rapid response should suspected cases be detected.

Uganda, which has successfully contained previous Ebola outbreaks, has also increased surveillance along its border with the

DRC. Speaking on Uganda National Television, Dr. Beda Senkware, of Kabale Referral Hospital, said three western districts of the country remained particularly vulnerable. "The risk of getting this disease, Ebola, is very high. We have three districts that border the DRC — Kisoro, Kanungu and Rukungiri. These three districts have been put at the highest risk of getting Ebola," Senkware said.

Rwanda has likewise strengthened health screening at border crossings, expanded disease surveillance and prepared rapid response teams to investigate suspected cases.

East African Community's response to Ebola

Regional cooperation is also increasing. The East African Community (EAC) has agreed on a coordinated response to improve preparedness and reduce the risk of cross-border transmission.

EAC Secretary General Stephen Mbundi said partner states were working with the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC), the WHO and other partners to expand surveillance, laboratory testing and emergency response capacity.

"We are mobilizing regional mechanisms and working closely with Partner States, Africa CDC, WHO and development partners to strengthen surveillance,

laboratory diagnosis, infection prevention and control, risk communication and rapid response capacities," Mbundi said.

The heightened preparedness follows a warning from the WHO that the outbreak may be significantly larger than official figures indicate because many infections are going undetected in conflict-affected areas of eastern DRC.

Speaking during a virtual news conference in Geneva, WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said the outbreak had become "the third-largest Ebola outbreak on record" and had "expanded faster than any previous outbreak" over the past month.

Tedros also called on international donors to help close a funding gap of more than \$400 million (€344 million) for the joint WHO-Africa CDC preparedness-and-response plan.

The outbreak is centered in eastern DRC, where conflict, insecurity and population displacement have complicated efforts to identify cases, trace contacts and contain the virus. The DRC has experienced several Ebola outbreaks since the virus was first identified there in 1976, but health experts say insecurity has made the current outbreak especially difficult to contain. There is currently no known vaccine for Bundibugyo.

Africa CDC urges early Ebola detection

Africa CDC Director-General Jean Kaseya urged neighboring countries to strengthen surveillance and laboratory capacity to improve early detection.

"This outbreak started in Ituri. Now it's moved to Uganda and to

other parts of the DRC. That is putting countries neighboring the DRC at risk," Kaseya said, adding that timely detection remains critical to preventing wider transmission. "If countries do not increase capacity to detect, they are really at risk," Kaseya said. "This is the message we are giving to countries: If you are near the DRC, please increase your capacity to detect."

Professor Aileen Marty, an infectious disease specialist at Florida International University, said the ongoing violence continues to undermine containment efforts.

"The cases have continued to rise because it's a highly inflamed area where there has been ongoing conflict for over a decade," Marty said.

"A few of our treatment centers have been burnt down," she said. "That discourages health workers from going there to manage patients and increases the number of people who travel elsewhere while infected. That is also making it extraordinarily challenging."

Marty said the situation underscored the importance of preparedness in neighboring countries, where surveillance, rapid diagnosis and coordinated public health responses remain the best defense against regional spread.

Apart from Uganda, no neighboring country has confirmed a case linked to the outbreak, but health officials say vigilance remains essential until transmission in the DRC is brought under control. They warn that sustained investment in surveillance, laboratory capacity and regional cooperation will be critical to preventing the virus from further spreading across borders. — Agencies

FROM OCTOBER 1



UK's new PM Andy Burnham to cut electricity taxes

LONDON: Britain's new Prime Minister Andy Burnham on Tuesday announced that there would be a cut in taxes on household electricity bills, by removing VAT from October 1.

In a statement issued by Downing Street, the measure was described as an effort to "give millions of households breathing space this winter." "We're taking immediate action to cut taxes on energy bills, put more money in people's pockets and bring back hope," Burnham said.

According to the government statement, cutting VAT on electricity bills was expected to shave off £45 (£52.97, \$60.48) off the yearly price cap.

The statement went on to say that the measure was being funded through the cancellation of the Digital ID program that was going to cost £1.8 billion over the next three years.

Burnham to convene first cabinet meeting

Burnham is expected to set out his first policies as new British prime minister as he convenes

his first cabinet meeting on Tuesday.

On Monday, as he took office, Burnham said he would present a 10-year plan for a new economic and political model by the end of the year.

He said he was aware that the UK is facing a cost of living crisis and promised to put forward a few proposals to ease the situation.

The Labour leader said his very first concern was to "end rough sleeping in this country" and alleviate the housing crisis, before promising to "bring back hope" to all UK residents.

Burnham has made some key changes to his administration. Ex-defence secretary John Healey replaces Rachel Reeves as finance minister, Ed Miliband becomes foreign secretary and left-wing figurehead Angela Rayner returns to her old post as housing secretary.

Rayner had resigned from her position as deputy prime minister and housing minister in September 2025, amid a property tax controversy. — DW

BILATERAL RELATIONS

Pakistan PM for expanded, diverse ties between Pakistan and Canada

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, on Monday, said Pakistan and Canada enjoyed friendly ties that needed to be further expanded, particularly in the areas of trade, investment, agriculture including agri-foods and vaccine manufacturing, renewable energy, as well as the automobile and auto parts industry.

Foreign Minister of Canada Anita Anand, who is on an official visit to Pakistan, called on the prime minister at the PM House.

Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar, Minister for National Food Security Rana Tanveer Hussain, Advisor to the Prime Minister Dr. Syed Tauqir Shah and other senior government officials were also present, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

The prime minister conveyed his greetings and best wishes for Prime Minister Mark Carney and said that he looked forward to



meeting him soon.

He fondly recalled the telephone conversation with his Canadian counterpart in April, and thanked Canada for supporting Pakistan's regional peace efforts.

Foreign Minister Anita Anand thanked the prime minister for the warm welcome accorded to her and her delegation in Islamabad.

She conveyed the good wishes of Prime Minister Carney for the

Prime Minister and said that her visit was on the instructions of her prime minister to expand Canada's relations with Pakistan.

On the bilateral front, the Canadian foreign minister expressed the keen desire of her government to explore new opportunities for trade and cooperation, especially in the field of agriculture, mining, energy as well as in the auto and auto parts industry.

AFGHANISTAN

Flash flooding kills at least 20 in Nuristan

KABUL: Eastern Afghanistan was struck by flash floods that left at least 20 people dead, 80 injured, and over 100 missing, authorities confirmed late on Monday.

Yousaf Hammad of the National Disaster Management Authority said that a rescue mission was underway to locate the missing and bring them to safety if possible.

"Unfortunately, severe floods today in Parun city and several other areas of Nuristan province have caused heavy loss of life and

property among our fellow citizens," Hammad said, stressing that there had been severe damage to people's homes, farmland, and public facilities.

"We urge all citizens to stay away from flood-prone areas and zones at risk."

A spokesman for the Taliban government in Kabul added: "We pray for those who lost their lives in this incident and for a speedy recovery for the injured."

Why Afghanistan is vulnerable

to floods

A variety of factors have left Afghanistan particularly vulnerable to extreme weather events. Decades of conflict, followed by the removal of foreign investment after the return of the Taliban in 2021 has left prevention infrastructure in poor condition, where it exists at all.

Deforestation, a struggling economy, and the effects of climate change have compounded these issues. — DW





LIFESTYLE



TWO
TYPES
OF COLON
POLYPS
CAN RAISE
BOWEL
CANCER
RISK
FIVEFOLD:
STUDY

Researchers find in a study that two types of colon polyps can raise bowel cancer risk fivefold. These two polyp types may represent separate cancer pathways that can occur at the same time. Nearly half of patients with serrated polyps also had adenomas, making this high-risk combination more common than expected.

The results emphasise the importance of early detection and regular colonoscopy monitoring. Researchers from Flinders University and Flinders Medical Centre have identified an important connection between two common types of bowel polyps and a greater risk of cancer.

Their findings appear in the journal *Clinical Gastroenterology and Hepatology* (CGH). Bowel cancer, also known as colorectal cancer, is a major health concern.

In Australia, it ranks as the second leading cause of cancer death and the fourth most frequently diagnosed cancer.

Many colorectal cancers begin as polyps, which are growths that develop on the inner lining of the bowel. These growths are usually benign and cause no immediate harm.

However, two specific types of polyps, adenomas and serrated polyps, have the potential to develop into cancer over time.

Colonoscopy study reveals fivefold increase in risk

To better understand this risk, researchers reviewed more than 8,400 colonoscopy records. The analysis showed that people who had both adenomas and serrated polyps faced a much higher likelihood of developing advanced pre-cancerous changes.

In fact, the risk was up to five times greater compared with people who had only one type of polyp.

"Polyps are common and usually harmless, but when both types appear together -- what we call synchronous lesions -- the risk of serious bowel disease or cancer rises sharply," says Dr Molla Wassie, lead author and researcher at the FHMRI Bowel Health Service.

The researchers also found that this combination may be more widespread than previously believed. Nearly half of the patients who had serrated polyps were also found to have adenomas.

Separate cancer pathways may occur at the same time

"This is one of the largest studies of its kind," says Dr. Wassie. "Our findings support growing international evidence that these two types of polyps may represent separate cancer pathways that can be active at the same time -- making early detection and regular monitoring even more important," added Dr Wassie.

The study also suggests that serrated polyps may develop into cancer more quickly than adenomas. This highlights the importance of screening strategies and follow up colonoscopy schedules that reflect differences between polyp types.

Why regular colonoscopy screening matters

"Polyps become more common as we age, but the key is catching and removing them early. If you've had both types of polyps, it's especially important to stay on top of your colonoscopy schedule," said Dr Wassie.

People over age 45 or those with a family history of bowel disease are encouraged to speak with their GP or visit the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program to learn about available screening options. -ANI

Many colorectal cancers begin as polyps, which are growths that develop on the inner lining of the bowel. These growths are usually benign and cause no immediate harm



SPORTS

Champions return home to royal welcome and parade

Almost 2 million fans joined the Spanish team’s celebrations in Madrid

MADRID: Spain’s World Cup-winning football team returned home on Monday and an estimated crowd of almost 2 million was on hand to greet the squad through the streets of Madrid.

The 26 players and their coaching staff met with the country’s royals, and then with Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez, after arriving in the Spanish capital a day after beating Argentina 1-0 in the final in New Jersey.

“Thank you to the coaches and players for the style of play, the effort and the victory,” Sánchez said. “We have truly enjoyed watching you play.”

The squad then boarded an open-top bus for a raucous parade through central Madrid. “Stars shine together” was written on the bus, which also carried photos of the footballers.

Players—carrying the World Cup trophy and wearing shirts with the words Somos Campeones (We Are Champions)—danced and interacted with the fans along the route.



“It’s been an emotional and proud experience to represent a wonderful country with such passion and devoted fans,” Spain coach Luis de la Fuente said before the parade started. “We are filled with joy.”

The squad travelled down Madrid’s historic avenues from near Moncloa Palace, the prime minister’s official residence, to Cibeles Square, where authorities told local media that some 120,000

people were on hand for a ceremony.

Players were introduced one by one before entering the stage set up at the square. Each picked the song to be played when they came in. Alex Baena, celebrating his 25th birthday, entered with the World Cup trophy.

Coach De la Fuente was thrust into the air by his players after being introduced. The coach was among those who sang along to the song being played for them.

Striker Borja Iglesias featured as a D.J. at one point, with his teammates dancing on the stage.

Singers Aitana, Ana Mena and Lola Índigo were among those entertaining the crowd and the players.

The ceremony ended with the whole Spain squad lifting the trophy again, just like at the awards ceremony on Sunday, but now in front of the local crowd.

Groups of fans had begun secur-



ing their spots near Cibeles late Monday morning ahead of the team’s arrival, bringing umbrellas to protect against the sun and temperatures of up to 35 Celsius (95 Fahrenheit).

The square is where previous Spain teams and their supporters have typically gathered to celebrate. It’s also the traditional celebration spot for Real Madrid when it wins titles. Officials estimated a total of 1.8 million people

welcomed the team in Madrid.

The men’s victory, combined with the Women’s World Cup won by Spain in 2023, makes the European nation the first to hold both titles simultaneously.

Celebrations were dampened, however, after local authorities reported that a 13-year-old in Salamanca, northwest of Madrid, had died after a fountain he had climbed onto with friends to mark the victory had collapsed. - Agencies

ARGENTINA STAR



‘Pain is immense’, says Messi after losing World Cup final

NEW YORK: Lionel Messi says “the pain is immense” and that it “will take time to heal” after Argentina lost 1-0 to Spain in the World Cup final.

Ferran Torres’ extra-time strike saw Spain crowned world champions for a second time, ending Argentina’s defence of the title they won in 2022.

Messi has now lost two World Cup finals after Argentina were defeated 1-0 by Germany in 2014.

At 39 years old, Messi is unlikely to feature at the 2030 tournament, though he is yet to clarify his international future.

“The pain is immense, and this wound will take time to heal. But I also hold onto all the good things,” the Argentine captain wrote on social media. “The matches we turned around by giving it our all - moments that will remain in our

memories forever - and the support of an entire country which, combined with this group’s hard work and effort, brought us back among the world’s elite once again.

“It is hard to fully appreciate our achievement right now, but this group reached two consecutive World Cup finals.

“Thank you from the bottom of my heart for every greeting and message. Once again, we managed to unite as a country and stand together, sharing the immense pride of being Argentine.

“I also want to congratulate Spain on winning the championship.”

Messi contributed eight goals and four assists as Argentina reached the final for the third time in the past four World Cups.

He played a key role in his side coming from behind to beat Egypt

and England in the knockout stages, but could not overcome a Spain side that conceded one goal in the whole tournament.

Argentina midfielder Enzo Fernandez, who was shown a second yellow card in second half injury time for a late challenge on Pau Cubarsi, wrote on social media that he and his teammates had “defended these colors with pride, humility, and commitment”.

FIFA’s disciplinary committee has appointed a disciplinary and ethics prosecutor to investigate altercations between both sets of players at the full-time whistle.

“For years, this group has represented us in the best possible way. It teaches that competing isn’t just about winning; it’s about giving your all for the jersey and never giving up,” Fernandez added. - Agencies

WORLD CUP SILVER MEDALIST

Argentina, without Messi, greeted by fans in Buenos Aires on return

Buenos Aires: Thousands of fans braved the cold and rain on Monday to give a rapturous welcome to the Argentine football squad which landed back home without star Lionel Messi, after its World Cup final loss to Spain.

It was not the homecoming Argentines had hoped for, four years after millions celebrated their team’s tournament victory in 2022, but fresh scenes of joyful chaos filled the street as they danced, sang and set off fireworks to thank the players.

The Argentine Football Association (AFA) said earlier that some squad members would not be on the flight, and iconic team captain Messi was not seen descending from the aircraft in images broadcast on local television.

Coach Lionel Scaloni and the rest of the team were welcomed with a red carpet outside the aircraft and a military band.

They then boarded a bus, waving to frenzied fans along the way.

Despite falling short of a second straight championship, “Argentines will celebrate anyway,” said housewife Marga Ledezma. The 36-year-old thanked Messi for “all the years he made us happy,” urging him not to quit playing for Argentina, but admitting this would be difficult as he was 39.

Argentina lost 1-0 to Spain in a game that has been criticised in international media for a plethora of fouls and displays of poor sportsmanship from the Albiceleste.

“I think they criticise us be-



cause we know what it’s like to suffer, that we get up, we fall down again, and we keep going,” said Ledezma.

Many fans highlighted that the real victory for Argentina was the 2-1 semi-final win over England, played against the backdrop of a lingering dispute between the countries over the sovereignty of the Falkland Islands.

Some carried flags declaring “The Falklands are Argentine.” FIFA is investigating the Argentine team after players held up a banner bearing the phrase after their win against England which sparked a backlash from London.

“This team united us all, and we should be grateful for that. We will always be there for them, rain or shine. I would say thank you to Messi and that he gave it his all,” said Leonardo Barrientos, 36, who works in a textile workshop.

Maria Ortiz, 28, came to welcome the team with her two-year-old, and said Spain “deserved the win” but she was “happy for what the team gave us.”

With the tournament over, President Javier Milei announced that a future date agreed with the team would be set as a public holiday to celebrate their performance in the World Cup. No further details have been announced.

While crestfallen after the loss, thousands of Argentines headed to the traditional celebration point at the Obelisk in Buenos Aires where they partied for hours on Sunday evening.

Late at night, brief clashes broke out at the monument and police used water cannons, tear gas, and rubber bullets to disperse revellers. Fifteen people were detained, according to police sources. - Agencies

NO CONTRACT EXTENSION

Garcia quits as Belgium coach

BRUSSELS: National team coach Rudi Garcia has parted ways with the Belgium Football Federation after failing to reach an agreement on a contract extension.

The Royal Belgian Football Association said on Monday that it will not renew Garcia’s deal beyond the end of this month, and that it is looking for a successor to the French coach who led the Belgian team to the World Cup quarter-finals, where it was beaten by eventual champion Spain.

“Garcia has unquestionably played a key role in restoring the Belgian Red Devils,” Belgium sports director Vincent Mannaert said. “He was appointed national coach in a challenging sporting and financial context. Thanks in particular to his commitment and experience, team cohesion was



restored and a strong result was achieved at the most recent FIFA World Cup.”

Garcia was appointed Belgium coach in January 2025 as the successor to the fired Domenico Tedesco, who failed to revive the team during a relatively short tenure. Garcia, who coached several big clubs including Napoli, Marseille and Roma in his much travelled career, had never managed a national side. - Agencies

ALEKSANDER CEFERIN

UEFA president boycotts final in protest against FIFA

LONDON: UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin did not attend the World Cup final between Argentina and Spain in protest against FIFA.

While the Slovenian did travel to Mexico City for the opening game between the co-hosts and South Africa, he snubbed the trip to New Jersey on Sunday after a series of decisions taken by world football’s governing body.

UEFA reacted strongly after United States striker Folarin Balogun escaped a suspension following an intervention from US President Donald Trump.

This was a key factor in Ceferin’s decision not to go to the final.

UEFA had criticised FIFA’s decision at the time, calling it “unprecedented, incomprehensible



and unjustifiable”.

“When the certainty of rules is no longer guaranteed by its guardians, the integrity of the game is at stake and the credibility of a competition is undermined,” UEFA said in a statement.

Ceferin is also firmly against many other changes driven by FIFA president Gianni Infantino, including half-time shows. They will not be introduced to the

Champions League or the European Championship.

Pop giants Madonna, BTS, Shakira and Justin Bieber were among the acts to perform in the event, which extended the usual 15-minute half-time break to 27 minutes 22 seconds.

UEFA is also strongly against a 64-team World Cup, which Infantino appeared to open the door to during the tournament.

After referee Omar Artan was denied entry to the US before the tournament started, UEFA invited the Somali to officiate the Super Cup between Paris Saint-Germain and Aston Villa on 12 August. The high ticket prices have also proved controversial within the European football governing body.

UEFA will broadly freeze ticket prices for Euro 2028 - meaning supporters will be able to buy five for the price of a single parking space at a World Cup stadium in the United States this summer.

Players who cover their mouths in confrontations with opponents will not be shown red cards in UEFA competitions either.

The law change for a red card was the brainchild of FIFA president Infantino, who wanted something which would have “a deterrent effect” at the World Cup.

Paraguay’s Miguel Almiron was the first player to be sent off in his side’s World Cup group game against Turkey. Arsenal defender Piero Hincapié then saw red in Ecuador’s last-16 exit to co-hosts Mexico. - Agencies

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

Thousands of websites taken down for illegal World Cup streams

NEW YORK: Almost 3,000 websites have been blocked or seized for illegally streaming World Cup matches, the US Department of Justice (DOJ) said on Monday.

More than 1,000 domains were shut down in the US alone during the tournament, with a similar number blocked in Colombia.

Enforcement agencies in America and across South America carried out the action under investigations named “operation offsides” and “operation red card”.

Ivan J. Arvelo, director of the National Intellectual Property Rights Coordination Center (NIPRCC), said unauthorised broadcasting of World Cup matches violated intellectual property rights and “fuels



criminal organisations”. The DOJ said at the end of last month it had taken down 400 webpages over illegal World Cup streaming. Now hundreds more have been taken down or blocked.

“The sustained effort to seize more than a thousand domains dedicated to illegally streaming the World Cup confirms the administration’s commitment to intellectual property rights and to the success of the 2026 FIFA World Cup,” said the DOJ’s assistant attorney general A. Tysen Duva.

The enforcement has been largely overseen by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), a federal agency that includes the NIPRCC.

The illegal streaming of sports often happens through webpages or websites created specifically for the event. Companies and broadcasters have estimated the activity costs them billions of dollars a year. Due to its global popularity, football has been found to be pirated at an “industrial scale”, according to analysts. The increasing cost of rights deals for matches has resulted in higher prices for fans at home, especially if they choose to pay for multiple services to watch their team play.

The crackdown on illegal streaming was also supported by FIFA, which organises the World Cup, beIN Media Group, NBC Universal, Ultimate Fighting Champi-

onship, and Warner Brothers.

The Colombian Attorney General’s Office said it had even made several arrests in connection with the operations.

Four members of what was referred to as the “cybercriminal group” Los Ciberinfiltrados were arrested for allegedly gaining and distributing access to World Cup games illegally.

Another 830 websites in Argentina, Ecuador, Peru, Brazil and the Dominican Republic were also taken down.

As well as illegal streaming, police in Colombia conducted “nationwide search-and-seizure operations” around counterfeit sports clothing. - Agencies

FORMULA ONE

Russell ‘numb to disappointment’ after bitter blow to title hopes



SPA-FRANCORCHAMPS: George Russell said he is “numb to the disappointment” after another problem at the Belgian Grand Prix led to him losing nearly all the ground in the championship he had gained on team-mate Kimi Antonelli in the past month.

Russell crashed out on the first lap at Spa-Francorchamps on Sunday after a collision with Ferrari’s Lewis Hamilton, who was penalised for the incident.



With Antonelli winning for the sixth time in 10 races this season, the Italian doubled his lead over Russell in one fell swoop.

“When it happens so often, you just get used to it,” Russell said.

The Briton’s remarks are a reference to the series of issues he has suffered this year that have contributed to Antonelli’s lead.

These include technical issues in China qualifying, a safety car turning the race on its head in Japan, a retirement while leading in Canada, and the still-unresolved farrago over erroneous pit-lane speeding penalties in Monaco.

Russell said after the British Grand Prix last time out, where Antonelli suffered a second problem in three races that prevented him scoring, that the issues had now pretty much equalised across the two cars.

He felt his 25-point deficit after that race was a fair reflection of the balance of performance across the season.

So to have it upended again so soon was a bitter blow.

“I made a good start, I made a great first corner and I was choked up right behind [Max] Verstappen,” Russell said. “But for what-

ever reason, the battery decided not to recharge at Turn One.

“So I went round the first corner, the battery didn’t charge and I exited the first corner 35% down [on electrical energy].

“Because it didn’t charge, I also had a boost problem. The turbo didn’t sort itself out, so I had no power.

“I got to the top of Eau Rouge with 0% on the battery. Quite frankly, it was dangerous. I got swamped by three cars.

“I shouldn’t have been in that position in the first place. That’s why I’m most angry. The incident with Lewis, honestly, I think was a racing incident.

“He didn’t do it on purpose. He was more to blame than me. But he didn’t do anything reckless. That was one of those things.

“I’m just most angry that I was in that position in the first place. I was in a great position out of Turn One and I was ready to fight the two guys ahead of me up to Turn Five. Instead, I get swamped by three drivers.”

As if that was not enough, this latest engine issue followed a weekend in which Mercedes had been chasing another one. - Agencies



Fox brings joy to NZ as British Open champion



Most New Zealanders woke to a wintry morning and the news their small nation had its fourth major golf champion

WELLINGTON, NEW ZEALAND: When Ryan Fox rolled in a 12-foot birdie putt on the 18th hole at Royal Birkdale to win the British Open by one shot, it was just past 5.30 am in his homeland and the sun hadn’t yet risen.

Most New Zealanders woke on Monday to a wintry morning and the news their small nation had its fourth major golf champion.

Those who followed Fox on television throughout the night were able to watch him lift the Claret Jug before heading bleary-eyed

but happily to work.

Sir Bob Charles, who was New Zealand’s first major winner and the first left-handed player to win a major when he won the British Open in 1963, is now 90 and watched Fox’s round in replay at a more congenial hour.

“I’m watching this in colour. In my day, it was all black and white,” Charles told the New Zealand *Herald* newspaper of the TV coverage. “I’m watching every hole that he’s playing. In my day, they only had about the last three or four holes.”

Charles praised Fox for the pace at which he plays the game which goes against a modern tendency toward slow play.

Fox hesitated for barely 30 seconds over the final putt that allowed him to join Charles, Michael Campbell and Lydia Ko as a major-winner from New Zealand.

“Ryan is a refreshing player,” Charles told the *Herald*.

“He plays the way the game should be played, the way it used to be played and should be played. And that is: you get on with it, and you don’t spend half an hour

lining up every putt. “Let’s hope that Ryan can be a great example of how the game should be played now, even when you’re playing for, you know, \$100 million!”

New Zealand’s Parliament is in recess. Had it been in session politicians likely would have taken the opportunity to lavish praise on Fox, seeking some of his reflected glory.

Instead, New Zealanders rushed to social media to praise the 39-year-old Fox, a third-generation sporting champion within his family. His father, Grant Fox, was an All Blacks rugby star and winner of the 1987 Rugby World Cup. His grandfather, Merv Wallace, was a captain of the New Zealand cricket team.

Fox touched on the family history after his win.

“We’ve got a great history in our family,” he said. “The other great thing is I had no pressure on me to follow in any of their footsteps. I don’t know if this tops their achievements, but it’s certainly right up there. I guess there’s no pressure on my kids going forward now!”

As if in tribute, the New Zealand cricket team completed a match and series win over the West Indies in the Caribbean just hours after Fox’s triumph.

At Fox’s home course, the Royal Auckland and Grange Golf Club, club captain Ian Blair said “you couldn’t find a nicer guy and more worthy champion golfer.”

“Our club has been privileged to watch Ryan develop from a fine young man with potential to a champion player and member,” Blair said.

Club chief executive Ian Chapman told the Stuff news website members will be queuing up to buy Fox a drink.

Michael Campbell, the 2005 US Open champion, described Fox’s effort as “an incredible feat ... to beat the world’s best players in a difficult situation.”

“I got to experience that 21 years ago.

“It’s mind-blowing. It really changes your world and he’s up there with the best players in the world now,” Campbell said on the New Zealand *Herald*’s Ryan Bridge today podcast. - Agencies

PREMIER LEAGUE

Villa sign Gomes, Rogers completes British record move to Chelsea

BIRMINGHAM: Aston Villa signed Brazil midfielder João Gomes on Monday, investing some of the money the Europa League winner is set to get for a British transfer record sale of Morgan Rogers to Chelsea. Villa did not disclose the transfer fee it paid now-relegated Wolverhampton for the 25-year-old Gomes, which was reported to be US\$47 million.

Gomes arrives days after club record signing Johan Manzambi, who cost more than \$67 million from Freiburg after a stellar World Cup with Switzerland.

Gomes has played 10 times for Brazil though not for current coach Carlo Ancelotti. His last appearance was a World Cup qualifying game in March last year that Argentina won 4-1.

Also on Monday, Villa star Rogers was at Chelsea completing a \$157.4 million move after return-



ing from the World Cup with England. Youri Tielemans has left to join Manchester United, in a reported \$47 million transfer, and his Belgium teammate Amadou Onana will be out for months after rupturing an ACL at the World Cup in a 4-1 win over the United States.

United States-backed Villa’s profit on transfer dealings will help comply with financial monitoring rules after back-to-back years being fined by UEFA.

Villa should have earned about \$45.7 million in UEFA prize money for its Europa League title win and can look to double that from Champions League games starting in September. The club also will lose revenue next season by closing one end of Villa Park during construction work that will raise the capacity above 50,000 before hosting games at the 2028 European Championship. - Agencies

ROUND-UP

Kia Vision Meta Turismo wins Red Dot Award in Concept Design category



Recognition from the acclaimed international design body underscores Kia’s global design leadership and reflects the continued relevance of the brand’s ‘Opposites United’ design philosophy in shaping progressive, human-centred mobility solutions

MUSCAT: Kia Corporation (Kia) has earned a Red Dot Award 2026: Design Concept for the Kia Vision Meta Turismo, with the futuristic sports sedan concept recognized in the ‘Cars and Motorcycles’ category. Recognition from the acclaimed international design body underscores Kia’s global design leadership and reflects the continued relevance of the brand’s ‘Opposites United’ design philosophy in shaping progressive, human-centred mobility solutions. Having made its global debut at Milan Design Week, the Kia Vision Meta Turismo reinterprets the grand tourer

for the digital age and Kia’s next generation of customers. Combining a striking cab-forward silhouette with a lounge-inspired interior, the car offers dynamic driving performance and immersive digital interaction, embodying Kia’s futuristic approach to a new era of electric mobility. Karim Habib, Executive Vice President and Head of Kia Global Design, commented: “It is always an honor for everyone at Kia to receive a prestigious Red Dot Award, as it reflects the creativity, commitment and dedication of the countless people involved. The Vi-

sion Meta Turismo represents an opportunity for us to experiment, challenge ourselves, and imagine future user experiences through design. It’s rewarding to see that work resonate with the jury and motivating to see our ‘Opposites United’ design philosophy continue to connect with people around the world through our vision of future mobility.” The Kia Vision Meta Turismo was recognized for translating Kia’s future mobility vision into a distinctive concept that combines performance character, digital interaction and human-centred design. The concept’s exterior design brings together an extreme cab-forward architecture and a soft geometric surface language that results in a modern, technical and futuristic piece of sculpture, creating a dynamic sports sedan that conveys speed, technology, and a new dimension of user experience. Inside, the Vision Meta Turismo elevates driving to a multisensory level. Digital layers, intuitive physical controls and configurable experience modes combine to create a grand tourer for the digital age and transform electric mobility into a more deeply emotional and

engaging experience. The Vision Meta Turismo explores mobility as a new relationship between speed, technology and human emotion. The car’s design brings together three core experiences: Performance driving, Immersive digital interaction and Lounge-like space & comfort. This approach demonstrates Kia’s commitment to exploring the convergence of speed, technology and human experience in future electric mobility. It also demonstrates how concept car design can help make future-facing ideas tangible and enable customers to visualize new, transformative mobility solutions and experiences. The Vision Meta Turismo creates separate but complementary spatial experiences. The driver cockpit is designed for optimum focus, control and immersion, while the passenger area emphasizes greater comfort, relaxation and enjoyment of AR content via 3D HUD. Kia’s Add-Gear modular interface seamlessly connects occupants to the vehicle via configurable functions. By combining physical controls with digital layers, the technology allows interaction to be more intuitive and im-

mediate, enabling users to enjoy an elevated experience of electric mobility in unprecedented ways. The concept also features three configurable driving modes - Speedster, Dreamer and Gamer - each creating a different relationship between the vehicle, its occupants and the surrounding environment. Speedster heightens the sensation of performance driving through immersive visual, sound and lighting effects. Dreamer uses digital layers to create a more reflective and immersive urban experience. Gamer extends the connection between user and vehicle into stationary, gaming-inspired moments. The Red Dot Award recognition strengthens Kia’s position as a global design leader and underscores the role of concept vehicles in expressing the brand’s vision for future mobility. The Vision Meta Turismo demonstrates how future mobility can connect speed, technology and emotion while remaining centered on human experience. The award also reinforces Kia’s ability to use design as a strategic tool, exploring ideas that may influence future products, interfaces

and user experiences. Kia’s consistent performance at global design competitions reflects the strength of its longterm design strategy. In the 2025 Red Dot Award: Design Concept, the Kia PV5 WKNDR Concept was named ‘Best of the Best’ and the Kia Concept PV1, Concept EV2, Concept PV5 and Concept PV7 received ‘Winner’ accolades. Kia’s ‘Best of the Best’ winners also include: EV6 (2022), EV9 (2024), EV3 (2025), and EV4 (2026). Established in 2005, Red Dot Award: Design Concept was founded to create a platform that could identify and celebrate design concepts before they become tomorrow’s leading products, a platform that could ‘see the future’. In a world where innovation moves quickly, ideas in their early stages are often the spark that changes everything. This award recognizes design capabilities behind the projects that push boundaries and offer a glimpse into the future of how we might live, work, and experience the world. Reliable International Automotive (RIA), the official distributor for Kia in Oman, ensures a rewarding ownership experience.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Sohar International and Sohar Islamic serve as main sponsor of 9th Bahla mass wedding

MUSCAT: In alignment with the strategic direction of Oman Vision 2040, “Decent and sustainable Life for All,” Sohar International and its Islamic banking window, Sohar Islamic, announced their main sponsorship of the 9th mass wedding in the Wilayat of Bahla. The grand celebratory event, which brought together 34 grooms, took place at the Bahla Club stadium on July 17, beautifully reflecting the spirit of community solidarity and cohesion. Through this sponsorship, both banks reaffirmed their relentless efforts to strengthen social harmony by aligning their initiatives with the actual needs of the community. By providing the necessary financial support, they aim to foster social stability and well-being through institutional partnerships that propel the developmental efforts of local civil society organizations. Embodying the core values of Omani society, the ceremony was organized by the Bahla Voluntary Team under the patronage of Said Bin Ali Bin Ahmed Al Salf Al Nuaimi, Wali of Bahla. The event drew a massive gathering of attendees from various wilayats across the Sultanate and the GCC countries. The celebration featured traditional chants and folk performances, alongside the honoring of the grooms and sponsoring entities,



all made possible through the dedicated efforts of local volunteers. Commenting on this occasion, Fahad Al Zadjali, Chief Islamic Banking Officer at Sohar Islamic, stated: “Our relentless efforts at Sohar Islamic underscore our commitment to creating opportunities that foster social responsibility, as well as economic and social empowerment. Guided by this vision, our sponsorship of the mass wed-

ding in the Wilayat of Bahla directly contributes to easing the financial burdens associated with marriage, while providing honourable and equitable opportunities for the youth. Additionally, it stimulates the local services and markets associated with such events. This initiative is part of an integrated social development path pioneered by both banks, which began with the introduction of Oman’s first interest-free mar-

riage loan. We will continue on this path, investing in initiatives that enhance family stability and drive social and economic development in the country.” Furthermore, Mahmood Hamdan Al Gharibi, Branch Manager - Nizwa Branch, remarked: “Driven by a developmental philosophy that goes beyond traditional banking, we place the issues and challenges of our local community at

the forefront of our priorities. We fully recognize the deep implications of the rising costs of marriage, which have led to a decline in marriage rates and directly impacted demographic trends and economic growth. Therefore, we view our support for this mass wedding as a strategic responsibility to empower youth and build stable families capable of driving development and ensuring social

security—thereby transforming corporate social responsibility into a sustainable national partnership that enhances the resilience of the local economy.” This support is an extension of Sohar International and Sohar Islamic’s continuous and proven track record of empowering Omani youth and supporting community-led initiatives across various governorates. This is especially true in the Wilayat of Bahla, which serves as a fertile and vibrant hub for community initiatives. Both banks have previously played a prominent role in sponsoring hallmark events in the wilayat, such as the “Sloot Archaeological Race” and the “Extreme Bahla” event. These comprehensive sponsorships reflect the banks’ unwavering commitment to supporting youth and sports activities, which are underscored by the strategic directions of Oman Vision 2040 as a cornerstone for community development and building a stable, prosperous future generation. By adopting this approach, Sohar International and Sohar Islamic continue to solidify their corporate social responsibility through national partnerships that meet the aspirations of Omani society, driving national development toward building a fully empowered nation.



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