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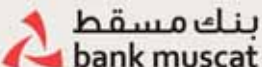






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TELEPHONE CALLS

HM discusses regional developments with King of Jordan, French President

LONDON: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein of Jordan, held a telephone conversation on Friday during which they discussed the evolving situation in the region.

The two leaders touched on the regional and international efforts being exerted to promote calm and de-escalation, in a manner that bolsters regional security and stability and ensures the safety of maritime navigation.

On Thursday, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and President Emmanuel Macron of France, discussed during a telephone call the latest developments in the region and its rapid escalations, as well as regional and international efforts to contain them in a manner that contributes to safeguarding regional security and stability, and preserving the safety of navigation in accordance with the provisions of international law. - **ONA**

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN Oman strengthens real estate regulations

1 The Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning is intensifying efforts to regulate and develop Oman's real estate sector through a comprehensive legislative and regulatory framework aimed at improving market efficiency, strengthening investor confidence and safeguarding buyers' rights. **>A2**

OMAN Oman charts next phase of AI strategy

2 Oman's decision to become a founding member of the Global Cooperation Organization for AI marks a big step in positioning itself as a global player in AI governance. **>A4**

SPORTS Klopp named new coach of Germany

3 The German Football Association appointed Jürgen Klopp as the new head coach of the national team, ending speculation about who would succeed Nagelsmann. **>B6**

FDI IN OMAN RISES 8.7% TO OVER OMR32BN IN 2026 FIRST QUARTER

The growth comes amid continued economic reforms and efforts to enhance the country's investment climate in line with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Foreign direct investment (FDI) in Oman rose by 8.7 percent to OMR32.2 billion by the end of the first quarter of 2026 compared with the same period last year, reflecting growing investor confidence in the country's economy and long-term growth prospects. According to data released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI), the Sultanate of Oman continues to strengthen its position as a leading regional and international investment destination, with new investment inflows



reaching OMR2.5 billion during the first quarter.

The growth comes amid continued economic reforms and efforts to enhance the country's investment climate in line with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040, which seeks to diversify the economy and expand the contribution of high-value sectors.

The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) has played a central role in strengthening the business environment through its Invest in Oman platform. The platform is a national gateway that showcases investment opportunities, promotes priority economic sectors and connects investors with relevant government entities to streamline investment procedures.

During the first half of 2026, the platform achieved several key milestones, successfully facilitating eight quality investment projects with a combined value of OMR460.74 million. It also developed and promoted 22 investment opportunities and targeted 150 global companies to highlight Oman's competitive advantages and opportunities across priority sectors.

Engineer Nasser bin Khalifa Al Kindi, Chief Executive Officer of Invest Oman, said the results demonstrate the effectiveness of collaboration between the platform, government agencies and strategic partners in attracting quality investments and responding efficiently to investors' needs.

He said these efforts have strengthened Oman's position as a regional hub for business and investment by improving the competitiveness of the investment environment and providing comprehensive support throughout the investor journey. **>A3**

EMERGENCY RESPONSE

CDAA teams step up safety measures across Dhofar tourist sites

MUSCAT: The Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority (CDAA) has intensified the deployment of its water rescue teams across Dhofar Governorate's beaches, springs and major tourist attractions as part of its safety plan for the Dhofar Khareef season.

The initiative forms part of the authority's ongoing efforts to enhance public safety and ensure rapid emergency response during one of Oman's busiest tourism seasons.

Water rescue teams are stationed at key tourist locations and other areas within their jurisdiction, where they conduct continuous field monitoring, provide preventive safety advice to visitors, and remain on standby to respond immediately to emergencies.

Captain Muslim bin Moham-



med Al Amri, Assistant Officer at the Civil Defence and Ambulance Centre in Al Saada, said the teams operate under a comprehensive deployment plan covering areas

with high visitor numbers to ensure faster response times and improve rescue effectiveness.

He explained that the teams' responsibilities extend beyond emer-



gency rescue operations. They also raise public awareness by offering safety guidance to beachgoers and visitors to water springs, while monitoring conditions at tourist

sites to help minimise risks and improve visitor safety.

Captain Al Amri noted that the water rescue teams are staffed by trained Omani personnel with the expertise to handle a wide range of water-related emergencies.

Equipped with specialised vehicles, rescue equipment and modern technology, the teams are capable of carrying out rescue operations efficiently and in line with approved operational standards.

He emphasised that the authority maintains a high level of readiness throughout the Khareef season and urged visitors to follow safety instructions issued by the relevant authorities, co-operate with rescue personnel, and avoid entering hazardous areas to protect themselves and their families.



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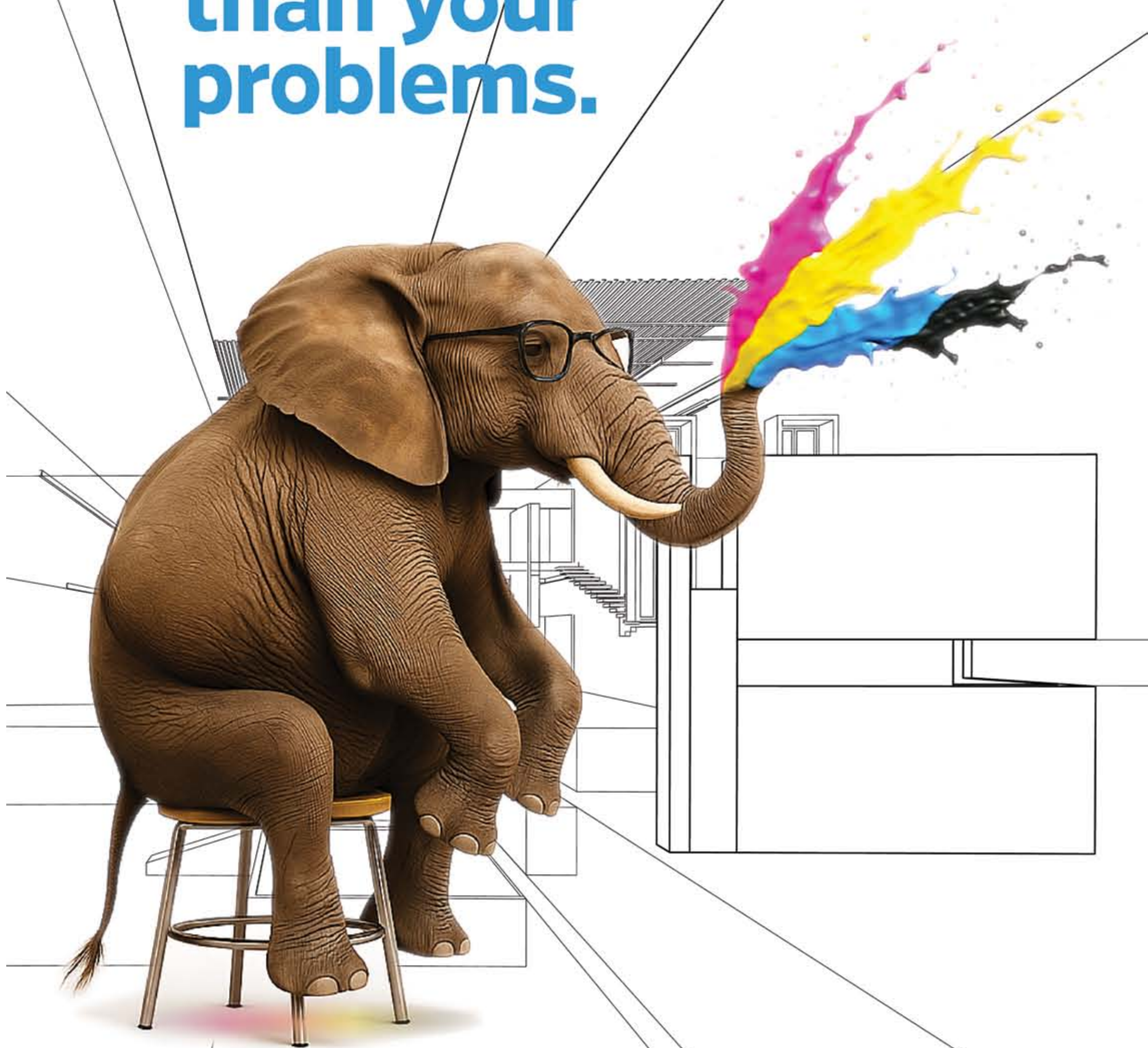
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Real estate rules strengthened to boost confidence of investors

The initiative supports the Sultanate's urban development objectives by creating a more competitive, transparent and sustainable real estate market

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning is intensifying efforts to regulate and develop Oman's real estate sector through a comprehensive legislative and regulatory framework aimed at improving market efficiency, strengthening investor confidence and safeguarding buyers' rights.

The initiative supports the Sultanate's urban development objectives by creating a more competitive, transparent and sustainable real estate market.

At the heart of the reforms is the Real Estate Regulation Law, which unifies the legal framework governing key real estate activities, including property development, off-plan sales, real estate brokerage, valuation, joint property management and escrow accounts. The law is designed to enhance governance, improve transparency and provide a stable environment for local and foreign investment.

Nasser Khamis Al Siyabi, Director General of Real Estate Development at the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning, said that trust is the foundation



of a strong real estate sector and that compliance with regulations is essential for protecting the interests of developers, investors and buyers alike.

Speaking to the Oman News Agency (ONA), Al-Siyabi said developers must complete all licensing and registration procedures before advertising, promoting or selling any real estate project. This ensures that projects meet legal, technical and financial requirements and gives buyers confidence that developments are ready for implementation under approved regulatory standards.

He said the regulations governing real estate development help ensure that only projects meeting all legal requirements are marketed, contributing to greater market stability and increased investor confidence.

Al-Siyabi added that the Real Estate Development Services

Center is working to simplify and accelerate licensing procedures by coordinating with relevant government entities, improving the investment experience while ensuring compliance with regulatory requirements.

He explained that licensing real estate development projects involves three key stages:

Obtaining a licence to carry out real estate development activities in Oman.

Securing a project licence, including opening an escrow account with a local bank, enabling the sale of off-plan units in accordance with approved regulations.

Obtaining a permit for advertising and promotion, allowing developers to market projects through media platforms, exhibitions and other promotional channels.

According to Al-Siyabi, adherence to these procedures not only ensures regulatory compliance



but also improves project readiness, enhances credibility and allows developers to market projects within an organised investment environment that protects all stakeholders.

He noted that the Real Estate Regulation Law imposes legal penalties for several violations, including undertaking real estate development activities, implementing projects or advertising developments without the required licences, as well as violating escrow account regulations.

Al-Siyabi urged prospective homebuyers and investors to verify that both the developer and the project are licensed and officially registered with the Ministry before making any purchasing or investment decisions, helping to ensure legal compliance and protect their rights.

He reaffirmed the Ministry's commitment to continuously improving the regulatory environment to strike a balance between encouraging investment and protecting investors and buyers, ultimately supporting sustainable growth in the real estate sector

and contributing to the national economy.

The reforms come as Oman's property market continues to expand. The value of real estate transactions rose 5.4 per cent to OMR1.434 billion by the end of June 2026, compared with OMR1.360 billion during the same period last year.

Foreign real estate investment transactions exceeded OMR60 million, while Gulf investors accounted for more than OMR13 million in property investments. More than 190 real estate companies were registered with the Ministry by the end of June 2026.

According to the National Centre for Statistics and Information, real estate activities contributed approximately OMR1.08 billion to Oman's gross domestic product in 2025, underlining the sector's growing role in the country's economic diversification strategy.

AT UNESCO

Oman reaffirms commitment to global heritage protection



Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman has highlighted its pioneering experience in supporting capacity building and promoting the implementation of the 1972 World Heritage Convention in African countries during a side event held on the sidelines of the 48th session of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee in Busan, Republic of Korea.

The event, titled "Strengthening African Expertise in World Heritage," took place during the committee session being held from July 19 to 29.

In a statement delivered by Ambassador Amna Salim Al Balushi, Oman's Permanent Delegate to UNESCO, the Sultanate stressed that protecting world heritage and ensuring balanced representation on the World Heritage List require long-term strategic partnerships based on knowledge exchange, expertise sharing and the empowerment of national institutions.

She said such partnerships are essential for achieving sustainable development and preserving cultural and natural heritage for future generations.

Ambassador Al Balushi noted that Oman, in cooperation with UNESCO, has been implementing a strategic programme since



2021 aimed at supporting East African countries in strengthening the capacities of national institutions, developing specialised heritage expertise and enabling local communities to participate in the management of World Heritage sites.

She explained that the programme has produced significant results, including support for the inscription of new African sites on the World Heritage List, the updating of tentative lists for several countries and the training of around 250 heritage specialists from across East Africa.

These efforts, she said, have contributed to preparing qualified national professionals capable of managing heritage sites and preparing nomination dossiers in accordance with international standards.

The ambassador added that

the initiative reflects Oman's approach of promoting international cooperation and sharing expertise, while recognising that investment in capacity building is a key pillar for the effective implementation of the World Heritage Convention.

She said the programme also contributes to enhancing the representation of African countries on the World Heritage List and establishing a sustainable framework for the protection of cultural and natural heritage.

Oman reaffirmed its commitment to continuing support for international initiatives aimed at achieving the objectives of the World Heritage Convention, strengthening cooperation among States Parties and safeguarding humanity's shared heritage for present and future generations.

Italian Barista Café Wins Best Brand in Customer Experience Award in Casual Dining Category



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

Italian Barista Café has consistently demonstrated a strong commitment to customer experience by creating welcoming spaces where exceptional food, hand-crafted beverages, and warm hospitality come together. Renowned for its authentic Italian-inspired café experience, the brand has built a loyal customer base by offering quality cuisine, premium coffee, and attentive service in a relaxed and contemporary setting.

With a customer-centric approach focused on consistency, freshness, and personalised

service, Italian Barista Café continues to enhance every dining experience. From carefully curated menus and expertly prepared beverages to comfortable ambience and friendly staff, the café ensures that every guest enjoys a memorable experience that keeps them coming back.

By continuously investing in quality ingredients, menu innovation, customer service, and inviting café environments, Italian Barista Café continues to set benchmarks in customer experience within the casual dining sector. Its dedication to excellence, authenticity, and customer satisfaction has established the brand as one of Oman's preferred destinations for casual dining and café culture.

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

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



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COMMENTARY

Legal Framework Governing Foreign Ownership in Oman’s ITCs



or plots designated for construction or exploitation in an ITC for residential or investment purposes.”
“This general right, however,



is narrower in one governorate: in Musandam, non-Omanis are limited to acquiring already-built units under a usufruct arrangement for a period not

exceeding 99 years. The Ministerial Committee for Tourism may also, where the public interest requires it, notify the Governmental Licensing Committee not to grant integrated tourism complex status to specific sites where it deems ownership should be restricted to Omanis only. Two natural persons who are first-degree relatives may jointly hold ownership of a built unit or plot of land, subject to terms and conditions of the law,” he noted.

He further stated that “an owner who registers a plot in their name must complete construction, or put the land to its intended use, within four years of registration.

“On the recommendation of the Ministry of Tourism, the Ministry of Housing may grant

a further extension of up to two years where the owner applies before the original period lapses and provides sufficient justification. Before completion, the owner cannot sell or otherwise dispose of the plot, apart from mortgaging it strictly to finance the building work.”

“Ownership also carries residency benefits. A non-Omani who owns a completed unit may obtain renewable residency for himself and his first-degree relatives. Owners of undeveloped plots intended for construction and their first-degree relatives instead receive a multi-entry investor visa, renewed every two years until construction is finished,” he said.

Developers and owners found in violation of these legal provisions face warnings, corrective

orders, and fines, separate from any other penalty under Omani law, he concluded.

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

Construction work reshapes rhythm of life in CBD area

Every morning and evening, people gathered there for exercise under the shade of trees. Today, with large sections excavated for construction, there is barely enough space left for walkers





ture upgrades, including improvements to roads, pavements, public spaces and amenities, as part of its efforts to enhance Muscat’s urban landscape and support sustainable development.

The project is designed to improve traffic flow, accessibility and the overall appearance of the district, reinforcing Ruwi’s role as a major commercial and business centre while creating a more



attractive environment for residents, visitors and businesses.

Yet for many regular visitors, the redevelopment has come at the cost of cherished daily routines.

For years, the stretch from the Muscat Exchange area to the Oman Post Office building served

as one of Ruwi’s most popular walking routes. Every morning and evening, people gathered there for exercise under the shade of trees. Today, with large sections excavated for construction, there is barely enough space left for walkers.

The transformation has also silenced the lively recreational scene that once brought the neighbourhood to life after sunset.

Children who regularly played football and cricket along the wadi have disappeared from the area, their usual playground now occupied by construction activity.

Near Sri Saravana Bhavan, the nightly cricket matches that had

become a hallmark of the neighbourhood have come to a halt. Cricket enthusiasts once gathered almost every evening, often playing until 2 a.m., while weekends turned the entire stretch into a festive social hub filled with families, spectators and friends.

Informal gatherings

Even those who were not interested in exercising found their own place in the neighbourhood. Many would simply sit along the pavements, enjoying the cool evening breeze and engaging in animated conversations with neighbours and friends. Those informal gatherings have largely vanished as construction continues.

Despite the temporary inconvenience, residents remain optimistic about the outcome.

Many say they understand the need for redevelopment and are eagerly looking forward to the project’s completion, hoping it will restore the area’s charm while providing improved facilities, safer walkways and greener public spaces.

Once completed, the revamped CBD is expected to offer a more comfortable and attractive environment where people can once again enjoy morning walks, evening strolls and community gatherings under Ruwi’s familiar green canopy, combining modern infrastructure with the neighbourhood’s long-standing social character.

Sultanate facilitates localisation of 45 investments

<FROM A1 Engineer Nasser bin Khalifa Al Kindinoted that between 2023 and the end of the first half of 2026, Invest in Oman facilitated the localisation of 45 investment projects worth a combined OMR4 billion.

The portfolio included 37 new investment projects, support to overcome challenges facing seven existing projects to ensure their continuity, and the successful promotion of one strategic project, highlighting the platform’s evolving role beyond investment promotion to providing end-to-end investor support.

He added that promotional efforts are focused on sectors that underpin Oman’s economic diversification strategy, including manufacturing, food security, logistics, healthcare and energy.

These sectors are expected to generate higher value addition, strengthen local content, reinforce supply chains, encourage innovation and attract advanced technologies, further enhancing the competitiveness of the national economy and supporting sustainable long-term growth.



ONE DAY, A LASTING IMPACT

Oman launches ‘Purple Saturday’ initiative to promote awareness among persons with disabilities

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman has launched the first edition of the national Purple Saturday initiative under the slogan “One Day, A Lasting Impact.”, a nationwide campaign aimed at promoting accessibility, inclusion and social participation for persons with disabilities through a more welcoming shopping experience.

Led by the Ministry of Social Development in partnership with the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion and the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the initiative encourages commercial establishments across the Sultanate to offer exclusive promotions and discounts for persons with disabilities from July 23



to August 1, 2026.

The campaign goes beyond retail offers, highlighting the importance of creating accessible and

inclusive environments. Organisers stressed that accessibility is not limited to providing ramps or designated parking spaces, but

also includes ensuring that facilities, entrances, customer service and communication are designed to welcome everyone.

As part of the awareness campaign, the Ministry of Social Development noted that every individual experiences public spaces differently, and that simple measures—such as accessible entrances, suitable facilities and staff trained to communicate effectively with persons with disabilities—can make a significant difference in fostering inclusion.

The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion said the initiative transforms shopping promotions into a message of support, encouraging businesses to make their services more inclusive while improving the shopping experience for persons with disabilities.

The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information

Technology (MTCIT) is also participating in the initiative.

Developing transport, communications

The ministry reaffirmed its commitment to promoting inclusion by developing transport, communications and digital services that are accessible to persons with disabilities, ensuring they can fully benefit from public services and technological advancements.

The Purple Saturday initiative reflects Oman’s continued efforts to strengthen the inclusion of persons with disabilities in community life by encouraging collaboration between government institutions and the private sector to create accessible, welcoming and equitable environments for all.



Oman charts next phase of AI strategy after joining global governance body

Oman signed the agreement establishing the organisation in Shanghai, China, joining 28 other countries in an initiative aimed at strengthening international cooperation and governance in artificial intelligence

MUSCAT: Oman's decision to become a founding member of the newly established Global Cooperation Organization for Artificial Intelligence (AI) marks a significant step in the country's efforts to position itself as a regional and global player in AI governance, while reinforcing its long-term strategy to build a knowledge-based digital economy.

The Sultanate signed the agreement establishing the organisation in Shanghai, China, joining 28 other countries in an initiative aimed at strengthening international cooperation and governance in artificial intelligence. The move reflects Oman's commitment to embracing emerging technologies while contributing to the development of global standards for the responsible use of AI.

Building a national AI ecosystem

According to Hassan Fida Al Lawati, Head of the National Artificial Intelligence and Advanced Technologies Programme at the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, the first phase of Oman's National Artificial Intelligence Programme (2021-2025) focused on laying the foundations for a national AI ecosystem.

The programme was built around three key pillars: expanding AI adoption across economic and development sectors, localising AI technologies, and establishing governance frameworks



centred on human values. During this phase, government institutions launched a range of initiatives aligned with the national strategy to accelerate AI adoption across sectors.

Among the most notable achievements was the launch of 'Mu'een', Oman's first national generative AI language model, developed using more than 3,000 local datasets with contributions from 60 government institutions. The initiative is intended to strengthen Omani digital content and preserve national knowledge within the era of generative AI.

The government also established the Artificial Intelligence Studio, providing innovators and institutions with a collaborative platform to develop AI solutions. More than 100 advisory sessions have been conducted through the studio, benefiting over 200 participants.

Other milestones include the launch of the Green Artificial Intelligence Alliance, promoting environmentally sustainable AI development, and the Oman Digital Triangle, a global initiative aimed at developing green computing infrastructure and AI data centres while supporting sustainability goals.

Second phase targets localisation and innovation

Building on these achievements, the second phase of the National AI Programme (2026-2030) aims to move Oman beyond AI adoption towards developing indigenous capabilities in AI research, innovating and technology localisation.

Al Lawati said the next phase will focus on integrating AI into industry, expanding its use across



government and the economy, nurturing national talent, developing an innovation ecosystem, strengthening computing infrastructure and investing in emerging technologies such as quantum computing.

The programme also seeks to expand national high-performance computing capacity, further develop the Maeen language model and enhance research capabilities in advanced technologies, helping Oman generate economic and knowledge value from AI while strengthening technological sovereignty.

Governance must keep pace with technology

Experts believe Oman's participation in the new global AI organisation provides an opportunity to influence the future of international AI governance rather than simply adopting external standards.

Dr. Saeed bin Mohammed Al Kalbani, a researcher specialising in AI and advanced technologies, noted that rapid advances in AI are outpacing governments' ability to regulate the technology effectively. He cited findings from the Independent International Scientific Committee on Artificial Intelligence, which warned that

current governance frameworks have not kept pace with technological development.

According to Al Kalbani, joining the new organisation enables Oman to contribute to shaping international AI standards while ensuring they reflect national priorities and local experience.

He stressed that AI governance should evolve continuously through practical implementation, evaluation and learning rather than relying solely on legislation. Institutions, he said, should become active contributors to regulatory knowledge through research, innovation and real-world experience.

Al Kalbani also called for the development of a national AI institutional maturity framework to measure readiness in leadership, skills, data governance, risk management and impact assessment, enabling Oman to contribute evidence-based proposals in international forums.

International collaboration essential

Saleh bin Obaid Al Khaldi, an expert in communications and artificial intelligence, said effective AI governance requires collaboration among governments,



universities, research centres, private companies and international organisations.

He argued that global challenges such as privacy, cybersecurity, transparency and algorithmic bias cannot be addressed by individual countries alone, calling for permanent platforms for knowledge exchange, joint research and internationally recognised technical and ethical standards.

Al Khaldi said Oman's digital transformation strategy and its strategic location linking Asia, Africa and Europe position the country to become a regional hub for dialogue on AI governance and international cooperation.

Trust key to AI adoption

Dr. Rami Shaheen, Secretary-General of the Global Artificial Intelligence Award, emphasised that trust is fundamental to AI adoption.

He advocated independent evaluation laboratories, algorithmic impact assessments and transparent reporting of AI performance and failures to build public confidence. He also highlighted the importance of risk-based regulation, regulatory sandboxes and internationally recognised AI management standards that balance

innovation with the protection of privacy and human rights.

Shaheen said compliance should become a competitive advantage rather than a bureaucratic obligation, supported by greater public awareness and professional certification programmes grounded in international AI ethics principles.

AI governance as an economic advantage

Jordanian economist Dr. Adli Qandah said countries that establish credible AI governance systems are likely to attract greater investment as businesses increasingly seek stable and transparent regulatory environments.

He urged institutions to develop measurable indicators for digital readiness, transparency, data quality and AI's economic impact while documenting successful national experiences and sharing them internationally through research partnerships and multilateral cooperation.

According to Qandah, future competitiveness will depend not only on technological capabilities but also on the ability to build what he described as an "economy of trust in AI," where confidence in governance becomes as important as infrastructure, capital and human talent.

With its founding membership in the Global Cooperation Organization for Artificial Intelligence and an ambitious second phase of its national AI strategy underway, Oman is seeking to position itself not only as a user of emerging technologies but as an active contributor to shaping the future global framework for artificial intelligence governance.

OIA expands footprint with investments in Cambridge Capital, Oxford Science

The investments are aimed at accelerating knowledge and technology transfer to the Sultanate, creating opportunities for future partnerships



Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Oman Investment Authority (OIA) has strengthened its position in the global innovation ecosystem through strategic

investments in Cambridge Capital Innovation and Oxford Science Projects, gaining access to a portfolio of leading startups in life sciences, healthcare and advanced technologies.

The investments are aimed at accelerating knowledge and technology transfer to the Sultanate, creating opportunities for future partnerships and supporting the country's transition towards a

knowledge-based economy while delivering sustainable long-term returns.

Through its investment in Cambridge Capital Innovation, OIA is connected to an ecosystem that transforms cutting-edge university research into commercially viable companies.

Advanced surgical robots

The portfolio includes CMR Surgical, a developer of advanced surgical robots that improve precision and reduce the invasiveness of operations; Pragmatic Semiconductor, which produces flexible, low-cost chips for Internet of Things applications; Immotrin, focused on innovative antibody therapies for diseases including cardiomyopathy; and Riverlane, a company developing quantum error-correction technologies essential for next-generation quantum computing.

OIA's investment in Oxford Science Projects provides access to

one of the world's leading university spinout platforms, supporting companies developing breakthrough technologies in quantum computing, healthcare and life sciences.

Portable diagnostic devices

Its portfolio includes Quantum Motion Technologies, which is building scalable quantum processors; Ravine, a developer of advanced biomolecular analysis technologies that support drug discovery and gene therapies; Osler Diagnostics, which produces rapid, portable diagnostic devices for healthcare settings; and Oxford Quantum Circuits, a pioneer in quantum computing systems and applications.

Ibrahim Al-Isri, Head of Private Markets Investments at OIA, said the Authority's growing presence in the global innovation ecosystem reflects its conviction that advanced technologies are among the key drivers of economic, scientific

and social development.

He said investing in companies pioneering healthcare innovation, quantum computing and other emerging technologies enables OIA to stay at the forefront of global technological advances while exploring opportunities to transfer expertise and technologies to Oman and strengthen knowledge exchange.

Al-Isri added that the investments support Oman's ambitions in the technology sector while generating sustainable financial returns from fast-growing industries with strong long-term potential.

The investments form part of OIA's Generations Portfolio, which manages overseas investments across more than 50 countries. The portfolio focuses on achieving sustainable financial returns through diversified, long-term investments while supporting innovation and future economic growth for the Sultanate.

AT LONDON SCIENCE FORUM

Omani AI project ranks among world's top 13

Times News Service

MUSCAT: An artificial intelligence project developed by Omani innovator Aya bint Hamed Al Kindi has been selected among the world's top 13 projects to be showcased at the 67th London International Young Scientists Forum (LIYSF), marking a significant achievement for Omani youth on the global innovation stage.

Oman is participating in this year's forum under the umbrella of the Research and Innovation Authority (RIA) with 10 innovative scientific projects selected from a pool of 738 entries spanning science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).

Al-Kindi's project was the only Omani entry to earn a place among the forum's elite global selections.

Named "Guardian," the project uses artificial intelligence to combat financial crimes, particularly money laundering.

The system analyses financial data with high accuracy, detects suspicious transaction patterns and predicts potential risks far more quickly than conventional monitoring systems.

Al-Kindi expressed pride in representing Oman internationally, saying the selection of Guardian among the world's best



project demonstrates the ability of Omani innovators to develop advanced technological solutions with global relevance in critical fields such as financial security and financial technology.

She said the recognition reflects the growing capabilities of young Omani researchers and innovators to address complex global challenges through science and technology. The achievement also highlights the increasing contribution of Omani youth to research and innovation in areas

including artificial intelligence, environmental sustainability, energy and emerging technologies, in line with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040.

The 67th London International Young Scientists Forum, taking place in London from July 19 to August 1, brings together talented students, researchers and young innovators from around the world and is regarded as one of the leading international platforms for showcasing excellence in STEM research and innovation.

SULTANATE OF OMAN
MINISTRY OF CULTURE, SPORTS and YOUTH

MINISTRY OF CULTURE, SPORTS and YOUTH, Muscat, hereby give notice of tenders for the following projects:

TENDR. No.	Tender	Project Category	Last day to purchase tender documents	Last date of tender submission
1	CONSTRUCTION OF SPORT HALL AT IBRI SPORTS COMPLEX	Construction and Maintenance	08/08/2026	07/09/2026
2	RENNOVATION /MAINTENANCE WORKS IN SPORTS HALL AT OURAYAT SPORTS CLUB	Construction and Maintenance	04/08/2026	01/09/2026
2	RENNOVATION /MAINTENANCE WORKS IN MOHOT SPORTS HALL	Construction and Maintenance	04/08/2026	01/09/2026

Companies, which are registered with the Tender Board and engaged in same category with experience in and same Grade as noted above, can obtain the Tender Documents at the Tender Board E-tendering digital portal link (<http://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>)

The last date of tender submission on above E-tendering site

INTERNAL TENDER COMMITTEE OF MINISTRY OF CULTURE, SPORTS and YOUTH
Any participants have doubt in adopting e-tendering can contact over the phone 24402200 or through Email : etenderhd@ita.gov.om

وزارة التنمية الاجتماعية
Ministry of Social Development

Tender Announcement

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

Tender No.	Tender Subject	Grade	Last date for obtainment of tender document	Last date for tender submission	Tender Document Price (non-retundable)	
					Small and Medium companies	Local companies
351/2026	Provision of cleaning services for the General Directorate of Social Development building in Dhofar Governorate and the buildings of its affiliated social development departments	Companies specialized in the field of Hygiene, washing and pest controlregistered with the Projects, Tenders and Local Content Authority with excellent or first or second or third or fourth degree.	Thursday 13-08-2026 02:00 PM	Thursday 03-09-2026 10:00 AM	10 R.O	25 R.O
355/2026	Supplying, providing and preparing feeding meals for those joining the internal accommodation buildings of the Home for Persons with Disabilities at Al-Khoud	Companies specialized in the field of Supply and nutrition registered with the Projects, Tenders and Local Content Authority with excellent or first or second or third or fourth degree.	Thursday 13-08-2026 02:00 PM	Thursday 03-09-2026 10:00 AM	10 R.O	25 R.O

❖ Specialized Companies, registered with the Tender Board may obtain the Tender documents at theTender Board e-tendering digital portal link (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>), On Sunday 26/07/2026

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

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

www.mosd.gov.om

OBITUARY

With profound grief, we announce the passing of

SANJAY NAGAR
Owner of Indian Art Palace, Qurum,
who passed away peacefully on July 18, 2026,
in the Sultanate of Oman.

May his soul rest in eternal peace

Grieved By:
Wife: Amita Nagar
Daughter: Aadhya Nagar
Son: Atharav Nagar
& family and friends

LARGE-SCALE ARREST

Israeli army detains at least 80 Palestinians

RAMALLAH: The Israeli army launched a large-scale arrest campaign in the West Bank from Friday evening to Saturday morning, detaining at least 80 Palestinians, less than a day after four Palestinians and an Israeli were killed in clashes in the town of Tell, south of Nablus.

In a press statement, non-governmental organisation the Pales-

tinian Prisoners Club said those targeted in the campaign included former prisoners, adding that most of the recent arrests were carried out in response to Palestinians confronting settler attacks and attempting to protect their towns and lands.

More than 3,600 Palestinians in the West Bank have been arrested so far this year, it said.

In response to Friday's clashes, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defense Minister Israel Katz announced in a joint statement measures including intensifying military operations, establishing more checkpoints in the West Bank, and establishing new farms, among others.

Meanwhile, Nablus Governor Ghassan Daghlash said the Israeli

army continues to close all entrances to the city and is besieging it, leaving thousands of Palestinians unable to return to their homes in the northern West Bank.

"Israeli extremists have begun their election campaigns at the expense of the Palestinians," he warned, referring to general elections for the Knesset, Israel's parliament, on Oct. 27. — **ANI**



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Founder: Essa bin Mohammed Al Zedjali
Chairman / Editor-in-Chief: Mohamed Issa Al Zedjali
Deputy Editor-in-Chief: Anees bin Essa Al Zedjali
Chief Executive Officer: Ahmed Essa Al Zedjali

EDITORIAL: Telephone: 24726666, Fax: 24813153, E-mail: editor@timesofoman.com
ADVERTISING: Telephone: 22009004, E-mail: amcoman@choueirigroup.com
CIRCULATION: Telephone: 24726666, Fax: 24818270, E-mail: circulation@timesofoman.com

IN DOHA

Qatari PM, Egyptian FM discuss bilateral ties

DOHA: Qatari Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani met with visiting Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty on Saturday to discuss bilateral cooperation and regional developments.

According to a statement by Qatar's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the two sides reviewed bilateral relations and ways to further strengthen cooperation.

They also exchanged views on ongoing diplomatic efforts to de-escalate tensions and enhance regional security and stability. The Qatari official said all relevant parties should adhere to dialogue and diplomacy, and implement the U.S.-Iran peace memorandum of understanding, including ensuring freedom of navigation through the Strait of Hormuz, to safeguard regional security and promote regional stability.

He also reaffirmed Qatar's full support for efforts aimed at easing tensions and reaching a comprehensive agreement that would achieve lasting peace in the region.

The meeting took place amid heightened regional tensions, as the United States launched multiple rounds of attacks on Iranian targets. — **Xinhua**

CJP ends protest after India's education minister resigns

CJP's Chief Spokesperson said, "Cockroach Janta Party declares that we withdraw the agitation in good faith, with the understanding that the agreed-upon terms will be executed within the agreed-upon timelines"

NEW DELHI: Cockroach Janata Party on Saturday announced that it has withdrawn the 37-day long agitation at Jantar Mantar in "good faith" after Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan stepped down from the Council of



Ministers and the outfit received assurance on other demands from the government.

Addressing a press conference at the Constituion Club in the national capital, CJP's Chief Spokesperson Saurav Das said, "Cockroach Janta Party declares that we withdraw the agitation in good faith, with the understanding that the agreed-upon terms will be executed within the agreed-upon timelines." Following the third round of talks with Union Ministers J P Nadda and Jitendra Singh at the Constitution Club, the CJP said that the Central government has agreed to provide suitable compensation to the families of the NEET aspirants who died by suicide and assured to withdraw the FIRs lodged against protesters anywhere in India.

The CJP has presented a five-point demand charter before the government and will hold the next round of talks after four weeks.

Spokesperson Ashutosh Ranka said, "We had demanded compensation of Rs 1 crore for the families of NEET victims. The government has agreed to this, stating that an honorary compensation will be given to those families under whatever rules and regulations allow. Apart from this, we also placed a five-point demand charter before the government, which talked about broader educational reforms and exam reforms. We will meet the government again in about four weeks regarding that demand charter so that we can work together on broader reforms. If all these demands are agreeable to the gov-

ernment, then we would also like to withdraw the agitation."

"All our demands have been accepted, so we request the protesters to withdraw immediately and return home peacefully. We will inform you of our future strategy or any other issues. But we request the protesters to withdraw immediately," he added.

Several FIRs have been filed against protesters across India after the July 20 'Chalo Sansad' march at Jantar Mantar. The CJP had demanded a withdrawal of the FIRs and no legal action in the future. Das said that the government has agreed to the demand.

Saurav Das said, "Our second demand was that all the FIRs filed against the protesters, not just in Delhi but in all BJP-ruled and BJP-allied states, should be with-

drawn. This was also our second demand. The government has accepted that demand as well. Furthermore, the withdrawal will be done shortly. The government has assured us that it will share copies of all the FIRs filed - as per our last information, 15 to 20 FIRs were filed in Delhi - and we will receive those copies within three to four days in any case. The government has also assured that the withdrawal will be done shortly."

"Understanding this, we have shared a draft with the government, which is a written guarantee. The government has said it will share this with us by Tuesday. We hope that by Tuesday we will receive the government's guarantees regarding these FIRs and any future action," he added.

Earlier, Dharmendra Pradhan submitted his resignation to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and stated that he was stepping down in the larger interest of students to ensure that the country's youth do not become "trapped in a web of confusion."

The Cockroach Janata Party (CJP), beginning as a satirical social media account from CJT Surya Kant's remarks, led the movement along with activist Sonam Wangchuk at Jantar Mantar in the national capital, demanding Pradhan's resignation. — **ANI**

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PARTNERSHIPS AND AWARDS

SYED AMIR SALEEM: syed.amir@mmg.om | +968 78471944
SANJEEV RANA: sanjeev@mmg.om | +968 97221630
SHAMIK RAO: shamik.rao@mmg.om | +968 79333149

SPEAKING OPPORTUNITIES

ROSANNA PAUL: rosanna@mmg.om | +968 93173774

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Iran records first ‘peaceful night’ following 13 days of US strikes

Iranian Health Ministry spokesperson Hossein Kermanpour confirmed the pause via a post on X, stating, “Iran had a peaceful night.” However, regional instability remains acute following the sharp escalation surrounding the Strait of Hormuz



TEHRAN: In a brief respite following nearly two weeks of intense military action, Iran reported an absence of overnight bombardment on Saturday, signalling an interruption to 13 consecutive nights of American military strikes. However, regional instability remains acute following the sharp escalation surrounding the Strait of Hormuz.

Iranian Health Ministry spokesperson Hossein Kermanpour confirmed the pause via a post on X, stating, “Iran had a peaceful night.”

Meanwhile, United States Central Command (CENTCOM) did not immediately state the operational pause, breaking its previous daily routine of announcing fresh offensive actions over the prior 13 days.

Despite the overnight calm in Iranian territory, security alerts persisted across neighbouring

Gulf nations. Saudi Arabian authorities activated warning sirens across the Red Sea provinces of Yanbu and Jizan, both critical hubs for oil infrastructure, citing a “potential danger” that was subsequently stood down.

Similarly, defence systems in Bahrain triggered missile warning alarms early Saturday morning, though local officials confirmed no casualties occurred.

The fragile quiet comes after a delicate truce collapsed earlier this month. The initial hostilities, sparked by joint US and Israeli strikes against Iranian assets, intensified after Tehran was implicated in attacks on three commercial vessels attempting transit through the Strait of Hormuz.

Washington subsequently launched strikes against scores of targets inside Iran, prompting Iranian forces to launch retaliatory barrages towards US-aligned Arab partner states.

The Strait of Hormuz, a vital maritime corridor for global oil

supply, remains the core flashpoint of the confrontation and was rendered largely impassable following Iranian strikes.

On Friday, American naval forces engaged a merchant vessel in the Gulf of Oman accused of attempting to break the re-established blockade on Iranian ports. Concurrently, Iranian forces launched strikes directed at Gulf Arab states maintaining defence alliances with the United States.

Adding to the maritime security crisis, Houthi forces targeted two Saudi Arabian oil tankers in the Red Sea earlier this week, sparking renewed fears of a wider blockade along key commercial sea lanes.

In response, the Saudi-led coalition operating in Yemen executed targeted retaliatory strikes against the Yemeni port city of Hodeida early Saturday.

“The Saudi enemy’s targeting of civilian facilities in Hodeida and Kamaran island constitutes a dangerous escalation,” the Houthi’s Ansarollah media posted on

Telegram.

“We affirm that these recent crimes will not go unanswered.”

Houthi-run Al Masirah television said on Saturday that Saudi strikes had targeted facilities belonging to the state telecommunications corporation and Kamaran island, off Yemen’s western coast.

The broadcaster reported that one worker was wounded in Hodeida while a woman was also injured on Kamaran Island.

The Saudi-led coalition, meanwhile, claimed that it hit “Houthi military sites” and destroyed targets that were posing a threat to commercial vessels in the Red Sea.

Riyadh said it would do everything necessary to protect its ships, warning the Houthis that if they continued “hostile acts then there will be no hesitation in responding.”

For Saudi Arabia, a top oil producer, the Red Sea had emerged a critical shipping alternative to the war-blockaded Strait of Hormuz.

Reflecting the worsening securi-

ty landscape, American diplomatic missions across the Middle East issued advisories to US citizens on Friday, warning that commercial departure routes from the region could face severe restrictions.

Simultaneously, Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) advised civilians in neighbouring states to maintain distance from facilities housing American military personnel.

Humanitarian tolls from the multi-front conflict continue to rise. According to figures released by the Iranian Health Ministry, more than 3,400 people have been killed in Iran since the outbreak of hostilities.

Casualties reported elsewhere include 18 US service personnel, 24 civilians inside Israel, and additional civilian fatalities across various regional states.

Furthermore, combat along the northern front involving Iran-backed Hezbollah has resulted in over 4,000 deaths in Lebanon and 38 casualties among Israeli troops, highlighting that despite the overnight lull in Tehran, the broader regional arena remains highly volatile.

the Associated Press news agency.

US Central Command spokesperson Tim Hawkins told AP that the M/T Lavine was “disabled” in the Gulf of Oman on Friday, after the vessel had reportedly attempted to circumvent the US blockade four times.

Hawkins claimed the ship did not comply with US commands after it was warned. Hawkins said US forces then fired into the ship’s engine room.

It’s the second commercial vessel attacked by the US since the military reimposed its blockade on Iranian ports on July 14. It follows the collapse of a ceasefire between the US and Iran on July 8.

US President Donald Trump first imposed a blockade on Iran’s ports in April, before it was paused during the ceasefire following the US-Iran Memorandum of Understanding in June.

UN urges repatriation of 6,000 sailors stranded in Strait of Hormuz

The United Nations has called on countries involved in the Middle East war to help repatriate around 6,000 sailors who remain stranded on ships in the Strait of Hormuz.

UN rights chief Volker Türk called on states to urgently provide consular assistance to stranded seafarers, deliver essential supplies, and “facilitate safe passage for stranded seafarers to safely evacuate and disembark.” — Agencies

A WIDER CONFLICT

UN chief ‘deeply alarmed’ over attacks on vessels in Red Sea

NEW YORK: UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres expressed deep concern and was “deeply alarmed” over the resumption of attacks by Yemen’s Houthi group on commercial vessels in the Red Sea and has warned that such actions could further escalate regional tensions and draw Yemen deeper into a wider conflict.

In a statement delivered by UN Secretary-General’s spokesperson Stephane Dujarric on Friday (local time), he said Guterres expressed concern over renewed threats to maritime navigation in the strategic waterway following attacks claimed by the Houthis on commercial vessels.

“The Secretary-General is deeply alarmed about the resumption of Houthi attacks on commercial vessels transiting the Red Sea and the renewed threats to maritime navigation,” Dujarric said, attributing the statement to the UN chief.

The UN Secretary-General said attacks on commercial vessels risked intensifying tensions in the region and expanding the ongoing cycle of escalation.

“The attack on commercial vessels, claimed by the Houthis, risks further heightening regional tensions and widening the current cycle of escalation with the potential to draw Yemen deeper into regional conflict,” the statement read.

Guterres warned that continued hostilities in Yemen could undermine peace efforts and result in severe consequences.

“Further hostilities in Yemen will undermine prospects for peace, and cause serious economic, humanitarian and environmental consequences across and beyond the region,” he said.

Calling for an immediate reduction in tensions, the UN chief



urged the Houthis to halt further attacks and avoid actions that could increase instability.

“The Secretary-General calls for immediate de-escalation and urges Houthis to refrain from any further attacks or other escalatory actions, in line with Security Council resolution 2722 (2024) and subsequent relevant resolutions concerning attacks against commercial vessels and freedom of navigation in the Red Sea,” the statement added.

Guterres also stressed the need to restore maritime rights and freedom of navigation in the region.

The remarks came after Yemen’s Houthi group claimed responsibility for an attack on two Saudi oil tankers in the Red Sea.

The claim followed Saudi strikes on Sanaa airport, further escalating tensions between Riyadh and the Iran-backed group.

Houthi spokesperson Brigadier General Yahya Saree claimed that the group targeted Saudi vessels “ENCELIA” and “LAYLA” using ballistic and cruise missiles as well as drones. He claimed the operation caused fires on both vessels.

Saudi Press Agency (SPA), citing the country’s Transport General Authority, reported that all crew members aboard the Saudi-owned vessel ENCELIA were safe after the ship was targeted while transiting the Red Sea.

— ANI

POWER SUPPLIES DISRUPTED

Russia hits various sites in Ukraine

KYIV: Russia struck various sites in Ukraine on Friday, including a defence event on the outskirts of Kyiv thought to be showcasing aerial defence technologies like drones.

Sometimes fatal attacks elsewhere in the country disrupted power supplies in five separate regions.

Meanwhile, Ukraine again struck facilities belonging to Russia’s largest online retailer, Wildberries, in St. Petersburg.

And in the skies over Romania, NATO jets downed a stray drone on Friday morning, with no immediate reports of casualties or damage.

Across the Atlantic, the White House said President Donald Trump and President Volodymyr Zelenskyy would hold talks on Tuesday of next week, almost four and a half years after Russia’s full scale invasion.

What happened in Ukraine?

Acting regional military administration head Ruslan Oliinyk said the strike hit the grounds of a privately operated military training site that was hosting an event at the time. The site is some 20-30 kilometres (12-18 miles) from central Kyiv, in the Bucha district.

Attorney General Ruslan Kravchenko called the attack a war crime, saying that 10 people were killed and around 100 more were injured.

The surrounding area was also



struck repeatedly, with Zelenskyy posting images of destruction and rescue efforts from the wider Kyiv region.

He said, “Interceptors for Patriot systems are the number one priority,” a reference to the air defence systems made by US arms giant Raytheon, which had sent a delegation to Kyiv on Thursday.

Russia’s Defense Ministry also acknowledged the attack online, saying it had used “high-precision long-range weapons” to target “a demonstration of unmanned aerial vehicles [UAVs or drones], including promising ones, of Ukrainian and foreign production, used to strike civilian targets in Russia.”

Russia’s Defence Ministry

claimed that at the time of the strike, leading defense industry officials and Ukrainian military members were at the site, saying these people were “directly planning and carrying out strikes on Russian territory.”

Five people were reported killed in the eastern region of Slovyansk on Friday. The EU’s foreign policy chief, Kaja Kallas, bemoaned one such strike that she said hit “Latvia’s Honorary Consulate” in Slovyansk, saying, “We will summon Russia’s envoy to the EU over today’s strikes,” and that she would propose further EU sanctions to target Russia’s “military-industrial complex.”

Ukraine’s energy company Ukr-

energo reported damage to power plants in five separate regions, saying around 150,000 people were left without power in the Chernihiv region alone after an attack on a facility there.

What happened in Russia?

The latest Ukrainian drone strikes to target warehouses of the online retail giant Wildberries struck in St. Petersburg, Vladimir Putin’s powerbase for decades, on Friday.

Company founder Tatyana Kim said facilities came under attack in St. Petersburg, in the adjacent Leningrad region, and also in occupied Ukraine in Simferopol, a city in illegally annexed Crimea.

— DW

HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

DR Congo reports nearly 3,000 Ebola cases

KINSHASA: Confirmed Ebola cases in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) have risen to 2,973, including 1,309 deaths, as Prime Minister Judith Suminwa Tuluka warned on Friday that the outbreak could further aggravate the humanitarian crisis in the eastern DRC.

Speaking on Friday in Bunia, the capital of the eastern Ituri Province and the epicenter of the out-

break, Suminwa said the government has disbursed 50 million U.S. dollars for the response, in addition to funds mobilised by international partners. She said logistical resources need to be delivered and deployed more rapidly across the expanding outbreak zone.

“The issue now is how to ensure that all the logistics are taken care of,” she said, citing laboratory equipment, water and oxygen sup-

plies, ambulances, hygiene materials, and equipment for safe and dignified burials.

She also called for greater vigilance at displacement sites to prevent the epidemic from further aggravating the humanitarian crisis in Ituri and other parts of the eastern DRC.

According to the latest situation report released by the country’s health authorities on Saturday, a

total of 540 patients have recovered since the outbreak began, while 766 people remain in isolation or hospitalisation. The report said the epidemic remains in a phase of sustained transmission, with a high level of virus circulation. It warned that recent fluctuations in reported cases should be interpreted cautiously because of reporting delays and the progressive consolidation of data. — Xinhua

Klopp named new head coach of Germany men’s football team

DFB President Bernd Neuendorf said the association's governing bodies had unanimously approved Klopp's appointment, describing him as the "ideal choice" for the role

BERLIN: The German Football Association (DFB) has appointed Jürgen Klopp as the new head coach of the national team on Friday, ending speculation about who would succeed Julian Nagelsmann. DFB President Bernd Neuendorf said the association's governing bodies had unanimously approved Klopp's appointment, describing him as the "ideal

choice" for the role. "It is a great honor to sit here today," Klopp said at the press conference announcing his appointment, adding he was "delighted." Klopp emerged as the federation's preferred candidate after Nagelsmann stepped down following Germany's penalty shootout defeat to Paraguay in the World Cup round of 32. In a statement released by the DFB, Klopp was quoted



ed as saying: "The national team can unite us Germans like almost nothing else. That is precisely what makes this role so special to me." He said he was looking forward "to this special challenge in German football, which we will tackle together with humility and pa-

tience." He wanted to build a team "that fights for one another, that enjoys playing football, and behind which the people of our country can rally with complete conviction." The former Liverpool manager held talks with DFB officials in New York while working as a tel-

evision analyst during the tournament, and the federation announced on July 11 that the two sides had reached agreement on the essential terms of a contract. His contract starts on August 15 and continues until the summer of 2030, with the next World Cup tournament. His first match as Germany head coach will be against the Netherlands in Amsterdam on September 24 in Germany's opening Nations League fixture. This is Klopp's first coaching job since he left Liverpool in 2024 citing fatigue. The DFB also announced on Friday that Per Mertesacker will be its managing director, after his predecessor Andreas Rettig steps down at the end of the year. **Klopp's star-studded coaching career** After spending much of his career

as a player for Mainz, Klopp as coach took the club to the Bundesliga for the first time. Then, as Borussia Dortmund's coach, he took the team to back-to-back Bundesliga titles, taking the club to the Champion's League final in 2013. His more recent coaching career saw him shine with England's Liverpool, which he coached for nine years, delivering a first league title in more than a quarter of a century and glory in the 2019 Champions League final. Klopp was awarded the highest civic award in Germany as a result of his outstanding contribution to democracy and his impact on the football world. He was credited with becoming a role model, a football ambassador and someone who has improved the image of Germany around the world, particularly in the United Kingdom. **-DW**

EGYPTIAN PLAYER



Ex-Liverpool legend Salah set to join Besiktas in Turkiye, talks in final stages

ANKARA: Egyptian and Liverpool football legend looks all set to join Turkish club Besiktas, with the negotiations having entered the final stages and the Egyptian legend just a few steps away from donning the colours of 16-time Super Lig champions, reported Goal.com. Salah ended his Liverpool career, which lasted nine seasons at the club's home arena, Anfield, before the FIFA World Cup. During his stay with the English football giants, he broke several records and captured two Premier League and a UEFA Champions League titles.

As per Italian journalist Nicolo Schira, quoted by Goal.com, Besiktas have agreed on all the personal terms with the star player and his agent and the veteran is set to sign a season-long deal worth upto 12 million euros. The deal also has a clause, allowing for an extension untill summer of 2028, with Schira pointing out that Italian coach Vincenzo Italiano played a key role in selling the club's project and vision to Salah and pushing the talks to closing phase. Now the Besiktas board is putting final touches on paperwork before an official announcement

is made, with expectations that one will be made in the coming days. After Salah parted ways with Liverpool, several Saudi Arabian clubs chased Salah, but reports suggested that Besiktas and Turkiye was a more likely destination, with the player's desire to stay in the European football scene playing a crucial role in this decision. In Egypt's FIFA World Cup 2026 run, Salah played a crucial role in taking them to the round of 16, where they lost 3-2 to defending champions Argentina, scoring a goal and delivering two assists. **-ANI**

WEST INDIES CAPTAIN



Leading by example earns teammates’ trust, says West Indies Test skipper Roston

BRIDGETOWN: West Indies captain Roston Chase believes leadership carries greater weight when it is backed by performances on the field, saying teammates have more belief in a captain who leads from the front as his side prepares for the opening Test against Pakistan. Chase heads into the two-match series on the back of a career-reviving 194 against Sri Lanka in June, ending a wait of more than six years for a Test century. The knock helped West Indies register an innings victory and seal the series, while also ending their winless run in the ongoing World Test Championship cycle. Reflecting on his return to

form after a lean run with the bat, Chase said the innings had lifted both his confidence and his standing within the team. "It's a good feeling to find some form after struggling for the past year in the batting department. That knock gave me a lot of confidence, gave me a lot of relief, to know that I can actually come and perform for the team. And as a leader as well - I think when you're a leader that goes out there and leads by example, I think everyone has a different level of respect for you, and they believe in you even more, and they want to play for you even more," he said, as per Cricinfo. **-ANI**

IGNED TEAM INDIA SHIRT

One of my all time favourite player: Jos Buttler cherishes signed ODI jersey received from Rohit

LONDON: England wicketkeeper-batter Jos Buttler expressed happiness at having received a signed Team India shirt from superstar opener Rohit Sharma following the conclusion of the ODI series against India at home, calling him "one of his all-time favourite player". Despite struggles in the first two matches of the series, which put a doubt over Rohit's future in the ODIs leading up to the ICC Cricket World Cup 2027, the 'Hitman' served the world a reminder of his effortless timing, elegance and class with a sensational century during a massive chase of 388 in the final ODI at Lord's, which marked his first-ever international tonne at the iconic venue known as the 'Home of Cricket'. Taking to Instagram, Buttler posted a picture of a signed jersey received from Rohit, saying, "One opposition player's shirt I've always wanted. One of my all-time favourite players. Will treasure this; thank you, @rohitsharma45." Rohit ended the England ODIs with 175 runs in three matches at an average of 58.33 and a strike rate of 98.31, with a century, a blistering 138 in 110 balls with 17 fours and five sixes during a 388-run chase



in the series decider, which India lost by 27 runs. Despite India's series loss by 2-1, a masterclass from 'the Hitman' and his century stand with long-time batting partner Virat Kohli (74 in 60 balls, with four boundaries and three sixes) enthralled the fans in attendance. With 11,895 runs in 288 matches

and 280 innings at an average of 48.95 and a strike rate of 93.04, including 34 centuries, 62 fifties and a best score of 264, Rohit is one of the world's greatest ODI batters ever, ranked seventh in all-time run-scoring lists and India's third-highest run-getter in the format behind Virat Kohli (14,941) and

Sachin Tendulkar (18,426 runs). In nine ODIs this year, Rohit has scored 379 runs in nine innings at an average of 42.11, with a century and a fifty each, and a best score of 138. Rohit and Virat will be seen in action during ODIs against West Indies at home from September 27 to October 3. **-ANI**

EARLY SETBACK

Pakistan opener Abdullah Fazal ruled out of WI Test series with back injury

TAROUBA : Pakistan have suffered an early setback ahead of their two-Test series against the West Indies after opener Abdullah Fazal was ruled out with a lower back injury sustained during training at the Brian Lara Cricket Academy. According to the ICC, the 23-year-old picked up the injury during a practice session in Tarouba, the venue for the opening Test, which begins on Saturday. An MRI scan and subsequent medical assessment confirmed that Fazal will require a period of rehabilitation, with the Pakistan team yet to announce a replacement. Fazal's absence comes as a blow for Pakistan, who are looking to improve their position in the ICC World Test Championship 2025-27 standings after an encouraging start to the youngster's international career. The left-handed opener impressed on his Test debut against Bangladesh in May, scoring half-centuries in both innings to finish as Pakistan's leading run-scorer in the match. In his first two Tests, Fazal has accumulated 141 runs,



including two fifties, with a highest score of 66. His injury is likely to pave the way for middle-order batter Awaiz Zafar to make his Test debut. Zafar was added to the squad as cover for the injured Saud Shakeel and is now in contention for a place in the playing XI. Meanwhile, Imam-ul-Haq is expected to return to the top of the order after missing Pakistan's previous Test against Bangladesh. Imam had been left out for that match, allowing Azan Awaiz and

Fazal to open the batting. The series carries added significance for both teams as they attempt to climb the World Test Championship table. Pakistan are currently placed ninth and last in the standings, while the West Indies occupy eighth place, one spot above them. The opening Test between the two sides gets underway in Tarouba on Saturday, with both teams aiming to make a positive start to their World Test Championship campaign. **-ANI**

COMMONWEALTH GAMES

South Africa’s Chad Le Clos becomes most decorated male athlete in competition history

GLASGOW: South African swimmer Chad Le Clos made history during the ongoing Commonwealth Games 2026 in Glasgow, becoming the most decorated male athlete in the competition's history with another medal during the men's 4x100 m freestyle relay event. On Friday, Le Clos captured his 19th individual medal in Common-

wealth Games, which also includes seven golds, with the team of Pieter Coetzee, Guy Brooks, Ruard van Renen and Chad clocking 3:13.99 in the men's freestyle 4x100 m freestyle relay event. The official handle of Team SA posted on X, "Team South Africa has claimed bronze in the Men's 4x100m Freestyle Relay, with Pie-

ter Coetzee, Guy Brooks, Ruard van Renen and Chad le Clos stopping the clock in 3:13.99. The medal also marks a historic milestone for Chad le Clos, who has now won 19 Commonwealth Games medals, making him the most decorated male athlete in Commonwealth Games history. History made. Congratulations, Team SA!" **-ANI**

BILATERAL COOPERATION
India and Tanzania on Wednesday held the 3rd Foreign Office Consultations (FOC) in Dar es Salaam to review and strengthen bilateral cooperation across trade, defence, digital public infrastructure, and healthcare.

MARKET
BUSINESS & FINANCE



TRUMP THREATENS EU
US President Donald Trump has said he will initiate a tariff investigation against the EU in response to fines against US tech companies. He cited the latest case that Google lost on Thursday, as well as others.

MSX-listed industrial firms net profits rise 46.8% to OMR175.3mn

This rise reflects the improvement in the local economic environment, supported by government spending, increased consumer confidence, increased demand for Omani industrial products, and lower financing costs

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The net profits of industrial companies listed on the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) rose in the first half of this year to OMR175.3 million compared to OMR119.4 million in the same period last year, registering a growth of 46.8 percent.

This rise reflects the improvement in the local economic environment, supported by government spending, increased consumer confidence, increased demand for Omani industrial products, and lower financing costs. It was also aided by the efforts made by companies to raise operational efficiency, increase exports and work to raise



quality levels through many marketing plans and programs and enhance competitiveness in the face of external competition.

Preliminary financial results indicated increased profits for several industrial companies. Oman India Fertiliser Company (Omifco) recorded a significant jump in net profit, which climbed to OMR80.2 million in the first half of this year, compared to OMR54.1 million in

the same period last year. OQ Basic Industries saw its net profit rise from OMR23.4 million to OMR43.3 million.

Oman Cables Industry Company recorded a slight increase in net profit, rising from OMR11.3 million to OMR11.4 million. Voltamp Energy Company's net profit increased from OMR6.8 million to over OMR7 million. Oman Flour Mills Company's profits jumped

from OMR4.3 million to approximately OMR6.9 million. Cement companies also achieved positive results, benefiting from increased demand for their products and a rise in real estate investment.

Oman Cement Company's profits increased from OMR4.7 million to OMR6.9 million. Raysut Cement Company achieved net profits of OMR2.7 million, compared to losses of OMR2.5 million

in the first half of last year. Many other industrial companies also recorded good performance and an increase in net profits.

Galfar Engineering and Contracting's net profits rose from OMR71,000 to OMR2.5 million. Dhofar Food and Investment net profits rose from OMR332,000 to OMR2.2 million and Gulf Mushroom Production's net profits rose from OMR1.1 million to more than

OMR1.6 million.

The first half of this year also saw two companies turn from losses to profits these include Raysut Cement and Building Materials Industry Company. Three companies turned from profits to losses. These include Oman Chlorine, National Industrial Detergents, and Salalah Mills.

The number of industrial companies that announced their preliminary financial results for the first half of this year reached 28 companies, including 21 companies that recorded profits and eight companies that recorded losses. The preliminary financial results indicated a decline in the losses of industrial companies in the first half of this year to OMR3.1 million, compared to losses of OMR5.2 million in the same period last year.

The Omani Fisheries Company recorded the highest losses at more than OMR1 million followed by the National Mineral Water Company in second place with losses amounting to OMR616,000 and Oman Chlorine in third place with losses amounting to OMR397,000.

The financial results achieved by the industrial companies listed on the Muscat Stock Exchange were reflected in the industrial sector index, which closed at the end of trading last June at 9,756 points, recording an increase of 1910 points.

The number of industrial companies listed on the Muscat Stock Exchange is 36, including 5 companies under liquidation. The first half of this year witnessed the transformation of Majan Glass Company from a public shareholding company to a single-person company after its acquisition by Al Zumurud National Company.

CEO REPORT



Broad money supply in Oman grows by 12.7% to OMR28.6bn

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Broad money supply in the Sultanate of Oman witnessed a growth of 12.7 percent on an annual basis reaching OMR28.6 billion by the end of May 2026. This increase came as a result of a rise in narrow money by 26.9 percent and a rise in quasi-money by 7.1 percent, which consists of the sum of savings and time deposits in Omani rials, plus certificates of deposit issued by banks, in addition to margin accounts and all foreign currency deposits in the banking sector.

The report issued by the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) indicated that cash held by the public increased by 12.1 percent, while demand deposits saw an increase

of 29.8 percent. Regarding the interest rate structure of conventional commercial banks, the weighted average interest rate on Omani Rial deposits decreased from 2.708 percent in May 2025 to 2.366 percent in May 2026, and the weighted average interest rate on Omani Rial loans decreased from 5.551 percent to 5.327 percent during the same period.

The average overnight inter-bank lending rate fell to 3.375 percent in May 2026, compared to 4.394 percent in May 2025, as a result of the weighted average interest rate on repurchase operations falling to 4.250 percent, compared to 5 percent during the same period last year, in line with the policies of the US Federal Reserve.

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE

Local purchases on MSX exceed OMR154 million in weekly trading

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Local purchases on the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) rose in trading during the week, exceeding OMR154 million, compared to OMR125 million in the week before.

This was on the back of strong demand of Omani individual investors, funds and local investment institutions to buy, taking advantage of the declines recorded by stocks over the past two weeks as well as the positive expectations for the coming period after companies listed on the stock exchange announced an increase in their net profits in the first half of this year.

The week saw the value of trading rise to OMR182.7 million compared to OMR137 million in the week before, registering a growth of 33 percent. Local purchases accounted for 84.7 percent of the total value of trading, compared to sales of 74.7 percent of the trades.

Trading data issued by the Muscat Stock Exchange indicated continued selling pressure on many stocks. The number of securities whose prices declined reached 65 securities, compared to 13 securities whose prices rose and 22 securities that remained unchanged at their previous levels. These declines pushed the stock exchange indices to close lower.

The main index fell by 363 points during the past week, after falling by 163 points in the week before, to close Thursday's trading at 7117 points. The financial sector index recorded the largest losses, declining by 412 points, while the industrial sector index fell by 275 points, the services sector index by 155 points, and the Sharia index by 23 points, closing at 572 points.

The market capitalisation was affected by the selling waves at the end of the week's trading to fall at OMR37.17 billion, recording weekly losses of OMR877.9 million.

The week also saw a surge in demand for Bank Muscat shares, with trading value reaching OMR40.2 million, representing 22 percent of



the total trading value. The share price fell to 369 baisa during trading before recovering some of its losses and closing at 383 baisa, registering a weekly decline of 9 baisa. The share had surpassed the 500 baisa level at its peak this year, but the pressures that the shares have been under for several months have reduced these gains.

Bank Sohar International's stock attracted investor interest as the bank began offering 1.0587 billion shares for preemptive rights from July 21 to 26 at a price of 141 baisa per share. Trading volume reached OMR27.9 million, representing 15.2 percent of total trading.

The preemptive rights, upon their listing on the stock exchange, saw strong investor demand, with

456 transactions involving the trading of over 20 million rights at prices ranging from 6 to 20 baisa. The rights closed at 14 baisa. Bank Sohar aims to increase its capital from OMR702.5 million to OMR849.6 million through this offering. The share price closed at 172 baisa at the end of the week's trading, down 10 baisa during the week.

OQ Basic Industries ranked third among the most traded companies in terms of trading value with OMR25.5 million, representing about 14 percent of the total trading value. Omantel came in fourth with trading value of OMR17 million and OQ Gas Networks ranked fifth with trades valued at OMR16.2 million, representing 8.8 percent of the total

trading value.

SMN Power Holdings shares led the gainers, rising 6.3 percent to close at 202 baisa. Shell Oman Marketing shares climbed to 800 baisa, up 2.5 percent. Ahli Bank shares rose 1.9 percent to close at 214 baisa. Oman Chlorine shares increased 1.8 percent to close at 163 baisa, and Oman Arab Bank shares climbed 1.6 percent to 242 baisa.

In contrast, Oman and Emirates Investment Holding Company's stock led the losing stocks, declining by 21.6 percent and closing at 112 baisa. Al Batinah Power Company's stock fell by 11.1 percent and closed at 160 baisa, and Asyad Shipping Company's stock recorded a decline of about 11 percent and closed at 243 baisa.

MARKET

Trump threatens EU with tariff probe over Google and tech fines

US President Donald Trump has said he will initiate a tariff investigation against the EU in response to fines against US tech companies. He cited the latest case that Google lost on Thursday, as well as others



vent imports made using forced labor from their supply chains. US trading partners and allies like the EU, Japan and Australia have responded to these with a mixture of outrage and bafflement at the new tariffs.

What did Trump say online? Trump issued the warning in a lengthy post on his Truth Social online platform.

“The European Union is at it again and, as usual, taking direct aim at GREAT American Companies!,” he wrote.

He then listed a series of fines — or cumulative totals of supposed fines — against various tech companies, which he falsely alleged were issued “for no reason at all” and “without explanation.”

He mentioned the latest penalty to hit Google, and claimed this took the total of their fines to “over 18 Billion Dollars!” without specifying a timeframe or evidence of any sort. EU courts did recently uphold

a record fine of over \$4 billion for Google — in a process that had been under review for almost eight years — in one case among several in recent years.

“The United States of America is not a ‘PIGGYBANK’ for Europe, nor will we allow it to be! Please let this TRUTH serve to represent that we will immediately initiate a 301 Investigation in the practice of ‘ROBBING’ American Companies and, in turn, the American Taxpayer,” Trump wrote.

What is a 301 Investigation? The 301 Investigations are the new means Trump relies on to impose tariffs, after the Supreme Court declared he had overstepped his authority with the near-global levies he imposed on what he called “Liberation Day” in 2025.

The so-called investigation relies on the US internally demonstrating what it deems to be unfair trade practices against it in order to issue retaliatory sanctions and

refers to Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974. Dozens of such investigations are in the pipeline.

“The European Union will pay a very big price for this illegal and highly unethical conduct, which I have consistently warned them about,” Trump wrote. “The penalties will be entirely reversed and, we anticipate, a substantial TARIFF to be placed on them at the earlier moment. Stay tuned!”

US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer had already criticized the decision on Thursday, saying the EU’s enforcement action undermined “constructive dialogue” and posed a “real risk” to transatlantic trade stability.

The EU and US have been bickering over the terms of their fragile trade agreement reached last year amid Trump’s Liberation Day tariff frenzy. The slow ratification process across the EU’s 27-plus member states and the institutions in Brussels has frustrated the Trump White House. -DW



Renewables make up 26% of EU energy use

BRUSSELS: Provisional data for 2025 show that the share of energy from renewable sources in gross final energy consumption in the EU reached 26.2%, up from 25.2% in 2024.

The share has been rising since the time series began in 2004 (9.6 per cent). However, there is still progress to be made, as the EU’s 2030 renewable energy target is 42.5%. Achieving this target would require an annual average increase of 3.3 percentage points (pp) from 2026 to 2030, according to Eurostat, the European Statistical Office.

Among EU countries, Sweden had the highest share of gross final energy consumption coming from renewable sources, with 65.4%. Sweden primarily relied on solid biomass, hydro and wind. Finland followed with 53.0%, relying on solid biomass, wind and hydro, ahead of Denmark with 48.2%, whose renewable energy is mainly sourced from solid biomass, wind and biogas. The lowest shares of renewables were recorded in Belgium (14.9%), Slovakia (16.3%) and Ireland (17.2%).

When it came to gross electricity consumption in the EU, renewable energy sources accounted for 49.9% in 2025, representing a 2.4 pp increase from 2024. For comparison, the share stood at 15.9% in 2004, when the time series began.

In Austria, 90.8% of gross electricity consumption came from renewable sources, and in Sweden that share was 89.2%. Denmark (77.7%), Portugal (65.6%), Greece (60.9%) and Spain (60.7%) also recorded renewable shares above 60%.

In contrast, Malta (11.2%), Czechia (19.2%), Luxembourg (23.3%), Slovakia (24.1%) and Cyprus (27.5%) registered the lowest shares.

The use of renewable energy sources in heating and cooling continued to increase in the EU, with the share reaching 27.4% in 2025, the highest value since the time series started in 2004 (11.7%). The share increased by 0.7 pp compared with 2024 (26.7%), slightly below the average annual increase from 2004 to 2025 (0.75 pp). -WAM

3RD FOREIGN OFFICE CONSULTATIONS

India and Tanzania review trade, defence, and digital ties

DAR ES SALAAM: India and Tanzania held the 3rd Foreign Office Consultations (FOC) in Dar es Salaam to review and strengthen bilateral cooperation across trade, defence, digital public infrastructure, and healthcare.

The Ministry of External Affairs stated on Friday that the meeting was led by Janesh Kain, Joint Secretary (East & Southern Africa) in India’s MEA, and Felister Rugambwa, Director of the Asia and Australasia Department in Tanzania’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs and East African Cooperation.

On the sidelines of the talks, Kain also called on Ambassador Samuel William Shelukindo, Permanent Secretary for Foreign Affairs and East African Cooperation.

During the consultations, both delegations reviewed the full spectrum of bilateral ties, focusing on trade and investment, development partnerships, defence and security cooperation, digital public infrastructure, agriculture, health-



care, culture, and people-to-people exchanges, the MEA stated.

To further momentum in key sectors, both sides agreed to or-

ganise upcoming meetings of the Joint Commission Meeting (JCM) and the Joint Defence Cooperation Committee on mutually conveni-

ent dates.

Beyond bilateral cooperation, officials exchanged views on regional and international issues of

mutual interest, expressing satisfaction with their close coordination at the United Nations and other multilateral forums.

The MEA noted that the two nations agreed to hold the next round of Foreign Office Consultations in India.

Earlier, the President of Zanzibar, United Republic of Tanzania and Chairman of the Revolutionary Council, Hussein Ali Mwinyi, arrived in India on an official visit from July 17-20, at the invitation of CP Radhakrishnan, Vice President of India. He was accompanied by First Lady Mariyam Mwinyi.

President Mwinyi and Vice President CP Radhakrishnan reviewed the full spectrum of India-Tanzania relations and explored new avenues to expand the bilateral cooperation in areas such as blue economy, tourism, technology, health and education, the Ministry of External Affairs said in an official statement.

According to the statement,

President Mwinyi held bilateral discussions with the Vice President of India. “Both leaders reviewed the full spectrum of India-Tanzania relations and explored new avenues to expand the bilateral cooperation in areas such as blue economy, tourism, technology, health and education.”

“The two sides positively assessed recent expansion in bilateral trade and investment linkages and development partnership,” the statement added.

“President Mwinyi extended an invitation to the Vice President of India to pay an official visit to Tanzania, which was graciously accepted”. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar called on the visiting dignitary on Sunday.

The discussions focused on the wide-ranging development partnership between the two countries, including the development of IIT Madras Zanzibar as a Centre of Excellence of Higher Education in Africa, it added. -ANI

IEA REPORT

Global electricity demand will grow by 3.6% in 2026



PARIS: Global electricity demand is set to grow at a faster pace this year than last – even as power systems worldwide contend with energy market turmoil and volatile prices, according to a new IEA report.

While recent disruptions to global natural gas markets due to the war in the Middle East have pushed up electricity generation costs in many regions, strong underlying demand from industry, appliances, cooling, electric vehicles and data centres is expected to keep global electricity consumption on a firm upward trajectory.

The IEA’s latest Electricity Mid-Year Update forecasts that global electricity demand will grow by 3.6% in 2026 and by a further 3.8% in 2027 – up from 3% growth in 2025. Global electricity consumption is projected to reach 30,700 terawatt-hours (TWh) in 2027, compared with 28,600 TWh in 2025.

Renewables are on track to become the world’s largest source of electricity generation in 2026, overtaking coal after reaching near parity in 2025. Renewable generation is set to grow by more than 8% in 2026, and it is poised to increase its share

of global electricity generation from 33% in 2025 to 37% by 2027.

Solar power continues to lead growth in electricity supply worldwide. Solar PV generation is set to expand strongly over the next two years, overtaking wind power in 2026 to become the world’s second-largest source of renewable electricity generation after hydropower. Solar PV’s global electricity output is forecast to increase by around 600 TWh in 2026, matching the record annual growth achieved in 2025, with similarly robust expansion expected in 2027.

The report finds that as renewable generation expands worldwide, negative wholesale electricity prices are becoming more common in some markets. These occurrences broadly signal insufficient flexibility in the system due to technical, regulatory or contractual reasons. At the same time, wider price swings throughout the day are increasing the importance of flexibility, including battery storage and demand response, for maintaining reliable and efficient electricity system.

The world’s largest economies

are set to see strong rises in electricity consumption. In China, demand growth is expected to accelerate to 5.5% in 2026, pushed higher by manufacturing activity and expanding electric vehicle charging. In India, demand growth is forecast to rebound strongly to 7% following weather-related weakness in 2025.

Among advanced economies, growth remains robust at close to 2% in the United States and in the European Union. By contrast, sharply higher fuel costs and supply disruptions are weighing on electricity consumption in more price-sensitive LNG-importing markets in Asia, including Pakistan and Bangladesh.

The report cautions that weather-related developments may affect electricity demand trends significantly, adding uncertainty to the outlook. A stronger-than-expected El Niño event in 2026 could boost electricity demand further by raising cooling needs while simultaneously reducing hydropower and wind generation in some regions, increasing reliance on other sources of generation. -WAM

EMONSTRATION ZONE

Major Chinese shale oil zone reports output of over 700,000 tonnes in 2025

BELJING: China has established its first national shale oil demonstration zone in a continental faulted lake basin at the Shengli Jiyang oilfield in east China’s Shandong Province, with it achieving annual output exceeding 700,000 tonnes in 2025, according to a report released by the National Energy Administration. The demonstration zone reported proven geological reserves of 327 million tonnes, the report added.

The project is China’s third national-level shale oil demonstration zone, following those in Xinjiang in northwest China and Heilongjiang in the northeast. It aims to improve the country’s technological system for shale oil exploration and development in continental faulted lake basins, overcome key technical bottlenecks, achieve major exploration and production breakthroughs. -Xinhua



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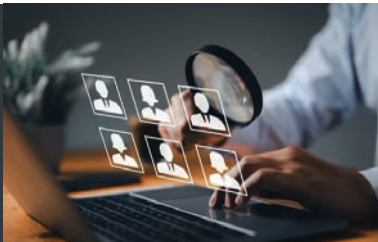
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Indian male, B.Arch (5 yrs) graduate, 1 yr experience in Architectural planning, conceptual & interior design, exterior facade design, drafting, and 3D visualization. Software certified,seeking suitable employment. Contact: 98503696.

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WORLD

STRAIT OF HORMUZ

US and UK plan London summit to form maritime coalition: Report

WASHINGTON, DC: The United States and the United Kingdom are planning a high-level meeting in London next week to form an international coalition to protect commercial shipping in the Strait of Hormuz, according to a report by Axios. Citing European diplomats and sources familiar with the matter, Axios reported that the meeting could gather defence ministers and military leaders from Western and Middle Eastern nations, including US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth and Joint Chiefs Chairman Gen. Dan Caine.

The itinerary and date are still under discussion and haven't been finalised, it added. A White House official confirmed the joint initiative, while the British Embassy in Washington declined to comment, Axios reported.

Citing sources, Axios reported that the move comes as the US aims to build on discussions that the UK and France had with multiple countries in recent months about a potential international coalition for the Strait of Hormuz, adding that Washington wants allies to send de-mining vessels, naval vessels and drones to safeguard the waterway.

A European diplomat told Axios that the effort is tied to a US exit strategy from the conflict with Iran, noting, "The Americans are looking for a way out and they want our help."

This follows US President Donald Trump's recent threat to escalate military actions against Tehran, warning that Washington would target one Iranian bridge or power plant for every strike directed at commercial vessels navigating the Strait of Hormuz. "Any time the Islamic Republic of Iran shoots at a ship in the Strait of Hormuz, whether it be by Missile, Rocket, Drone, or any other device or weapon, the United States will bomb and destroy ONE BRIDGE OR POWER PLANT," Trump wrote on social media. — **ANI**

Europe wildfires rage on, forcing 200,000 from homes

Firefighters have said that the blazes, the largest recorded in both countries in recent years, are so massive that they cannot be tackled head on. On France's Atlantic coast, 44,000 people were removed from the Cap Ferret peninsula, many by boat

MADRID: As wildfires continue to engulf massive stretches of western France and central Spain, some 200,000 people have been forced to flee, with flames devouring forests and homes near Bordeaux and Madrid.

Firefighters have said that the blazes, the largest recorded in both countries in recent years, are so massive that they cannot be tackled head on.

On France's Atlantic coast, 44,000 people were removed from the Cap Ferret peninsula, many by boat.

Towns near Bordeaux, the famed town popular with tourists, were evacuated "as a precaution" as strong winds fueled approaching flames.

On Saturday morning, regional authorities further ordered the evacuation of three of the city's western suburbs "to ensure residents' safety."



In all, French authorities say more than 140,000 people have been evacuated in France's western Gironde and Landes departments.

In Spain, the Interior Ministry said 60,000 have been forced to flee.

EU sending firefighting aircraft to France and Spain

Authorities in France say the country's two main blazes were sparked accidentally, however, as summers become drier and hotter the magnitude of such fires has increased exponentially.

French Interior Minister Laurent Nunez, who said the government would do everything possible to protect citizens, warned that a wind shift had transformed the Cap Ferret blaze into "a large, self-sustaining fire that is extremely difficult to bring under control."

"It is now moving east, toward the Bordeaux metropolitan area," added Nunez, who pledged, "We

are going to reorganise our response so we can fight it from the ground and prevent it from advancing toward Bordeaux."

French President Emmanuel Macron called for European Union assistance on Friday as well as the mobilization of the French army to halt fires that have so far destroyed 22,000 hectares (54,000 acres) of land.

The European Commission announced that it is sending three firefighting aircraft to France and four to Spain in an effort to gain

the upper hand.

This week's fires have injured dozens of firefighters and killed three of them — two in western France and one in Sicily, Italy, which is now also battling blazes.

Spain declares national emergency

In Spain, the government has declared a national emergency as two of the country's three current fires, all burning near the capital Madrid, merge into one.

Madrid's regional emergency management services said the massive blaze has now reached "its peak and is currently beyond the capacity of firefighters to contain."

The largest active fire in the region, in Guadalajara province, has already laid waste to some 32,000 hectares.

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez is scheduled to visit affected areas west of the capital on Saturday, as temperatures in the region are expected to top 39 degrees Celsius (102 Fahrenheit).

High winds are also in the forecast, which will make things even more difficult for firefighters.

NASA abandons comms facility amid Spain's summer of fire

The US space agency NASA on Saturday reported that it had been forced to evacuate its Madrid Deep Space Communications Complex (MDSCC), which is located in the region. The facility is one of three worldwide that allow the agency to communicate with spacecraft in distant parts of the galaxy — the others are located in Australia and the US.

"The safety and well being of our personnel is our highest priority and our thoughts are with the families and neighbours who are also experiencing the impact of the wildfires in the surrounding communities," said a statement released by the agency. — **DW**

WASHINGTON'S WALDORF ASTORIA



Trump speaks at delayed White House Correspondents' Dinner

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump addressed hundreds of journalists at a scaled-down and rescheduled White House Correspondents' Dinner on Friday night.

The gala was held amid heightened security measures, three months after the original event was cut short by an alleged attempt to assassinate Trump.

Trump delivered the speech at Washington's Waldorf Astoria, a smaller venue that held only about 700 people, instead of its usual venue, the Washington Hilton.

Trump jokes about possible third term

"Just like my presidency, the second time is always better. It's always better," Trump said. "And the third time will be better yet."

"I'm only kidding," he added.

Trump has repeatedly suggested that he would entertain the idea of a third term, despite the 22nd Amendment of the US Constitution barring a president from being elected more than twice.

Trump makes light of shooting incident, praises Secret Service officer Trump also joked about the incident during April's gala, when a gunman tried to storm a security checkpoint before he was stopped by security personnel before making it into the ballroom where the dinner was being held.

"After hearing the gunshots,

many people yelled, 'Get down! Get down!', which caused Nicki Minaj to start twerking. Do you believe it? Get down!" Trump said. The president also praised Victor Gonzalez, the Secret Service officer who was shot during the April confrontation with the suspect. "What he did was amazing," Trump said. "We salute you and we thank you with all of our hearts."

What else did Trump say during the White House Correspondents' Dinner?

This year's events were the first Trump has attended as president. He did not appear at any correspondents' dinners during his first term.

Trump said he had not attended previous dinners because the press has treated him "unfairly," although he promised to come back next year.

The US president has long had a hostile relationship with many journalists and media outlets.

During his speech, he attacked some journalists, including CNN's Kaitlan Collins — whom Trump repeatedly complained about not smiling enough — and Josh Dawsey of The Wall Street Journal. Both were honored with journalism awards at the gala.

Despite those barbs, Trump ended his speech, which lasted over an hour, by saying that he has "tremendous respect" for the reporters attending the dinner. — **DW**

UN EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANISATION

UNESCO adds Lebanese, West Bank sites in World Heritage in Danger list

BERLIN: The United Nations cultural agency on Friday updated its list of World Heritage in Danger, with locations including a Lebanese castle that Israeli forces recently captured as well as an archaeological site in the occupied West Bank, amid Israeli objections.

The decision was made during a UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) meeting in South Korea's Busan.

Members agreed that five castles in Lebanon's Mount Amel, including Beaufort Castle, and the West Bank's Sebastia would both go on the agency's World Heritage List and List of World Heritage in Danger. The decision came after reviewing the nominations on an emergency basis, citing ongoing conflicts in the Middle East.

Israel's Foreign Ministry had urged the committee to reject the designation efforts, calling the nominations a "weaponization of cultural heritage."

What do we know about the UNESCO-designated sites?

Beaufort Castle is a Crusader fortress also known as Qalaat al-Shakif. Israeli forces captured the fortress in May amid their military operations in southern Lebanon as part of the fight against Hezbollah.

The mountainous area where Beaufort and the other five Jabal Amel listed castles are located has come under repeated Israeli bombardment during the war.

UNESCO said the fortresses had sustained damage and faced ongoing threats from the conflict "serious enough to justify resorting to an emergency procedure."

Lebanese Culture Minister Ghassan Salame told the French AFP news agency that only two of the castles were "within the Lebanese government's reach" and accused Israel of having already destroyed Shamaa Castle and of threatening to demolish Beaufort.

Salame described the UNESCO listing as a "remarkable achievement in the effort to protect these important Lebanese historical landmarks."



Meanwhile, Sebastia, the other site added on Friday, lies near the West Bank city of Nablus. It is thought to be the ancient Israeli and later Roman city of Samaria, with archaeological remains spanning the Iron Age, Roman, Byzantine and Islamic periods.

Israel still uses the name Samaria to refer to the northern West Bank. Israeli authorities have developed an interest in the site in recent years, in 2025 taking control of around 200 hectares of Palestinian land nearby for what it calls preservation and development purposes.

The site is important to the Palestinian tourism industry and threatened by the recent Israeli actions, including an Israelis-only road, a fence and entry fees.

"The integrity of the site is currently threatened by an expropria-

tion project aimed at subdividing the property and creating the 'Samaria' (Shomron) National Park," UNESCO said. Sebastia's nomination to the UNESCO list was first submitted by the Palestinian delegation to UNESCO in 2012. It argued the site remains largely undeveloped under Israeli control and requires additional conservation despite attracting tourists.

Adel Naim Daoud Atieh, a member of the Palestinian delegation to UNESCO, said the World Heritage designation rewards the perseverance of Sebastia's residents "who have protected this extraordinary site through generations, despite occupation, restrictions and repeated attempts to separate them from their own heritage."

How has Israel responded?

Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon

Saar slammed UNESCO for the listings, calling that of Samaria in particular an attempt at "erasing and denying the Jewish connection to this land."

A member of the Israeli delegation, attending the Busan meetings as an observer after Israel withdrew from the organization in 2019, said it was a "shame politicisation has ruined UNESCO and led to mockery of history."

In a statement on Tuesday, the Israeli Foreign Ministry accused the Palestinian delegation of waging a "hostile, one-sided campaign" at UNESCO by falsely portraying Sebastia as an area facing an emergency. Addressing the listing of the Lebanese Beaufort Castle, the Israeli Foreign Ministry alleged that Hezbollah turned it into a military stronghold by building tunnels beneath the site and launching rockets from the area.

At Friday's meeting, a Lebanese delegate said the castles have been used "only for cultural and tourism purposes" since Israel's withdrawal from southern Lebanon in 2000 and accused Israeli media of circulating images of tourist facilities as military tunnels.

Israel's withdrawal from UNESCO was owed to what it called bias against it, accusing the UN agency of downplaying its historical ties to the Holy Land. — **DW**



UP TO
5 CUPS OF
COFFEE
A DAY IS
SAFE FOR
MOST
ADULTS,
SAYS STUDY

The study concludes that consuming up to 400 mg of caffeine daily, particularly through black caffeinated coffee without added sugars or cream, is generally safe for most adults and may be linked to a lower risk of heart disease, heart failure and stroke in some individuals

Most adults can safely consume up to 400 mg of caffeine per day, equivalent to up to five 8-ounce cups of caffeinated coffee, without increasing cardiovascular risk, according to a new scientific statement released by the American Heart Association (AHA).

The review also suggests that moderate coffee consumption may be associated with a lower risk of several cardiovascular conditions, although researchers caution that individual responses to caffeine can vary.

Published in the peer-reviewed journal *Circulation*, the AHA scientific statement reviews the latest evidence on caffeine and cardiovascular disease.

It concludes that consuming up

to 400 mg of caffeine daily, particularly through black caffeinated coffee without added sugars or cream, is generally safe for most adults and may be linked to a lower risk of heart disease, heart failure and stroke in some individuals.

"Caffeine consumed in coffee is a key part of daily life for millions of people, and in our review of the most recent research, for most adults, intake of up to 400 mg of caffeine/day, the equivalent of up to 5 cups of caffeinated coffee per day without added sugars or fillers, is safe and does not increase cardiovascular risk," said Gregory M. Marcus, MD, MAS, FAHA, chair of the scientific statement writing group and professor of medicine at the University of California, San Francisco.

He added, "However, high doses of caffeine, such as those found in

energy drinks including energy shots, may have harmful effects on the heart and should be avoided."

The statement notes that coffee remains the primary source of caffeine in most research studies, making it difficult to separate the effects of caffeine from other naturally occurring compounds in coffee. Researchers also pointed out that observational studies cannot establish cause and effect, while ingredients commonly added to coffee, such as sugar, flavoured syrups, milk and cream, may influence health outcomes.

According to the review, drinking two to four cups of caffeinated coffee per day has been linked to a lower risk of heart disease, heart failure and stroke. However, consuming more than four cups daily may increase the risk of heart

failure in some people.

The report also highlights that black caffeinated coffee without additives has been associated with a lower risk of Type 2 diabetes, heart disease, stroke, heart failure and some irregular heart rhythms. At the same time, randomised clinical trials found that caffeine in coffee may reduce the risk of atrial fibrillation while increasing the likelihood of premature ventricular contractions (PVCs).

Researchers warned that not all caffeinated products have the same impact. Energy drinks and energy shots often contain significantly higher concentrations of caffeine, ranging from 40-69 mg per fluid ounce, compared with 9.4-20.6 mg per fluid ounce in regular brewed coffee. These products have been associated

with increased blood pressure and abnormal heart rhythms.

The scientific statement also explains that caffeine affects people differently depending on genetics, metabolism, age, medications and habitual caffeine intake. Short-term effects may include temporary increases in blood pressure, heart rate, blood sugar and alertness, while some individuals may experience heart palpitations or sleep disruption.

Marcus emphasised that moderation and individual tolerance remain important.

"Although research suggests that caffeine consumption may be associated with certain cardiovascular benefits for some people, it's important to remember that there is no 'one-size-fits-all' strategy for safe caffeine consumption. People

can respond very differently to caffeine based on various factors, such as age, medications, underlying health conditions, genetics and how quickly their bodies metabolize it. What may be a reasonable amount for one person could cause unwanted effects, such as heart palpitations, anxiety or sleep disruption, in another. That's why it's important to pay attention to how your body responds to caffeine and talk with your healthcare team about what is right for you," he said.

The American Heart Association added that more randomised controlled trials are needed to better understand how different sources of caffeine-including tea, soda, energy drinks and supplements-affect cardiovascular health and why responses vary among individuals. -ANI

SPORTS

INVALUABLE INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

Qatar defeat Oman as youth handball team finishes 10th in China

ZHUZHOU; Oman's youth handball team concluded its campaign at the 19th Asian Men's Youth Handball Championship with a 45-24 defeat against Qatar in Saturday's ninth-place playoff, finishing the continental tournament in 10th place after two weeks of challenging competition in Zhuzhou, China.

Although the final score reflected Qatar's superiority, the championship provided invaluable international experience for the young Omani squad, which faced some of Asia's strongest teams in a tournament that also served as a qualification event for the 2027 IHF Men's Youth World Championship.

Qatar controlled the match from the opening minutes, taking ad-



vantage of its greater depth and experience to establish an early lead.

Oman, however, continued to fight throughout the contest despite dealing with injuries and fatigue accumulated over a demanding tournament schedule.

The Qatari side built a commanding 26-9 halftime advantage, capitalising on quick transitions and clinical finishing, while Oman's attacking opportunities were limited by a well-organised defensive unit.

The Omani team showed greater determination after the break and produced a much-improved second-half performance.

Captain Saeed Al Hasani led the response with several goals, while Ghassan Al Mashari continued his impressive offensive display, help-

ing Oman score 15 goals in the second half compared to nine before the interval.

Despite the improvement, Qatar maintained control of the contest and secured a comfortable 45-24 victory, claiming ninth place, while Oman finished the tournament in 10th.

Throughout the championship, Oman competed against Saudi Arabia, Hong Kong China, China, Bahrain, Chinese Taipei and Qatar, gaining valuable exposure against different playing styles and some of the continent's most established youth programmes.

The experience is expected to play an important role in the development of the current generation of players.

Head Coach Highlights Need for

Long-Term Development Oman head coach Kamel Hdidder acknowledged Qatar's superiority, emphasizing that the difference between the two teams extended well beyond the match itself.

"Qatar deserved the victory," Hdidder said after the game.

"They have a much larger player pool and greater squad depth than we do. We came into this tournament without four important players because of injuries and suspension, which forced us to rely on a very limited rotation throughout the competition."

The Tunisian coach explained that fatigue had a significant impact on his team's performances, with six or seven players carrying the workload over five demanding matches.

CONTINENTAL SHOWPIECE

India, Pakistan in different groups in Asian Games draw



NEW DELHI: Defending champions India are in a different pool from arch-rivals Pakistan for the men's hockey competition at the Asian Games 2026 and the two sides cannot meet before the knockout stage of the continental showpiece.

The draw, confirmed by the organisers on Friday, placed India in Pool A alongside hosts Japan, South Korea, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Indonesia. Pakistan are in Pool B with Malaysia, China, Oman, Uzbekistan and Thailand, according to Olympics.com.

The draw means an India-Pakistan clash, one of Asian hockey's most anticipated fixtures, can only take place in the semi-finals or the medal matches if both teams progress beyond the league stage.

In the women's competition, India are in Pool B with Japan, Thailand, Singapore, Indonesia and Uzbekistan. Pool A comprises China, South Korea, Malaysia, Kazakhstan, Chinese Taipei and Bangladesh.

A total of 12 teams will compete in both the men's and women's tournaments, with the sides divided into two pools of six. The top two teams from each group will qualify for the semifinals, while the remaining teams will play classification matches.

The hockey competition at the

Asian Games will be held from September 18 to October 3 at the Gifu Prefectural Green Stadium in Kakamigahara, Japan. The women's medal matches are scheduled for October 2, while the men's podium contests will take place a day later.

India's men's team will head to Aichi-Nagoya as the defending champions. They won gold medal at the Hangzhou Asian Games in 2023. Led by Harmanpreet Singh, India defeated Japan in the final to claim their fourth Asian Games title and secure direct qualification for the Paris Olympics.

The 2026 edition will once again serve as the continental qualifier for the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic Games, with the men's gold medalists earning an automatic Olympic berth.

The Indian women's team, which claimed bronze at Hangzhou 2023, will aim to improve on that performance and secure a return to the Olympics after missing qualification for Paris 2024.

India's men have won four Asian Games hockey gold medals (1966, 1998, 2014 and 2023), while Pakistan remain the most successful nation in the competition's history with eight titles.

India's women, meanwhile, were inaugural champions in 1982 and will be chasing their first Asian Games gold in 44 years. -ANI

I'm just having fun: Noah Lyles storms to third US 100m title

The victory, following his triumphs in 2018 and 2024, saw Lyles overcome a sluggish start before surging past the field in the closing stages at Icahn Stadium



ing," he said, as per Olympics.com.

The American believes the performance sends a strong message to his rivals as the build-up begins towards the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic Games.

He said, "I think I made an T'm still the world's fastest man" statement. I think that I was playing around, so I think that everybody's going to tighten up, because if they're playing around, then shoot, I must be winning tag."

Despite not getting out of the blocks cleanly, Lyles said the race turned into one of the finest of his career after remaining composed and gradually reeling in the leaders. "Technically, I think it was the best race I've had so far," he added.

He credited his coach's advice and Coleman's fast start for helping him stay focused instead of panicking.

Looking ahead, Lyles has no intention of easing off despite this being viewed as an "off year" in the international athletics calendar. The eight-time world champion is set to return for the men's 200m on Sunday, where victory would hand him a record sixth US title in the event.

"Shoot, I'm just having fun. Just because it's an off-year doesn't mean that I plan to run slow. I'm not showing up to run slower. This is me being me. Being me is dominant. Being me is consistent," said Lyles.

With his world-leading performance, Lyles heads into the remainder of the season in formidable form, underlining why he remains the benchmark in global sprinting. -ANI

NEW YORK: Olympic champion Noah Lyles reaffirmed his status as the world's premier sprinter after blazing to a season-leading 9.77 seconds to win the men's 100m title at the 2026 USA Track and Field Championships on Friday (local time), clinching his third national crown in the event.

The victory, following his triumphs in 2018 and 2024, saw Lyles overcome a sluggish start before surging past the field in the closing stages at Icahn Stadium. As he crossed the finish line, the 29-year-old celebrated in trademark fashion, according to Olympics.com.

"Yes sir!" he shouted before throwing his arms into the air.

Ronnie Baker finished second in 9.88, while defending champion and two-time Olympic 200m medallist Kenny Bednarek also clocked 9.88 to take third. Lyles'

training partner Christian Coleman, the 2019 world champion, placed fourth in 9.93.

The winning time eclipsed Jamaican Oblique Seville's 9.82, set at the Jamaican Championships

last month, to become the fastest 100m of the year.

Lyles said he had anticipated a sub-9.80 performance after encouraging signs in training.

"Yeah, I knew that 9.7 was com-

NBA SUPERSTAR

LeBron James joins Philadelphia 76ers for final NBA chapter, eyes another title

NEW YORK: NBA superstar LeBron James has announced that he will join the Philadelphia 76ers for what he described as the final chapter of his legendary career, with the veteran saying his decision was motivated purely by his desire to win another NBA championship.

The 41-year-old, who is the NBA's all-time leading scorer, confirmed the move on Friday, ending his eight-year association with the Los Angeles Lakers. James is set to embark on a record 24th NBA season with the 76ers as he looks to help the franchise secure its first NBA championship in 43 years.

"This is my last decision. I'm not going for money. I'm not going for family. What am I really playing for at this point?" James wrote on X.

"I still want to sacrifice. I still want to work. I still want to grind. I still want to compete, to win and to have a chance at the feeling of winning another championship. I believe I can help make the Philadelphia 76ers a championship team and I am so excited to energize a new fan base and start this incredible journey one last time," he added.

James said his decision to make the final move of his career was driven by a single objective: winning another championship.

After an eight-year stint with the Lakers, during which he helped the



team secure the 2020 NBA title, the four-time champion spent the offseason reflecting on whether he still had the motivation to continue his playing career.

"I thought I was done when the season ended. I wasn't ready to announce it, and I knew I needed some time to really decide, but I was pretty sure I played my last game," James revealed.

"I was honest at that last press conference when I said I needed to look at myself and decide if I still love this game. I still truly love this

game, and I have more to give," he said.

James departed the Los Angeles Lakers in June following an eight-year stint that produced mixed results. His time in Los Angeles included an NBA championship in his second season, when he helped the team win the title in the COVID-19 bubble.

The four-time NBA MVP also set several records during his Lakers tenure, most notably overtaking Kareem Abdul-Jabbar as the NBA's all-time leading scorer. -ANI

LEADING CANDIDATE

Italy close to appointing Andrea Pirlo as the new head coach

ROME : Italy are reportedly on the verge of appointing Andrea Pirlo as their new head coach, with an official announcement expected before the end of the weekend, according to One Football.

Pirlo has emerged as the leading candidate to succeed Gennaro Gattuso after high-profile options Pep Guardiola and Carlo Ancelotti reportedly turned down the opportunity to manage the four-time world champions.

The Italian Football Federation (FIGC) had initially considered several ambitious candidates. Technical director Paolo Maldini and special advisor Leonardo reportedly approached Ancelotti first before making contact with Guardiola, but neither manager was interested in taking the job.

Guardiola's decision was reportedly based on factors beyond financial considerations. The former Manchester City boss was said to be seeking an annual salary of around EUR 20 million, which is significantly higher than the FIGC's budget, according to One Football.

However, Guardiola is also believed to be keen on taking an extended break from management after spending a decade at the Etihad Stadium. The 55-year-old reportedly wants to prioritise spending time with his family before deciding on his next managerial role.

With both Guardiola and Ancelotti unavailable, the FIGC shifted its focus to Pirlo.

The 47-year-old is currently managing UAE Pro League club United FC, which he joined in July 2025. However, reports indicate that terminating his existing contract should not prevent him from taking charge of the national team, according to One Football.

Pirlo is expected to sign a contract running through the 2030 World Cup and could earn around EUR 1.5 million per year, considerably less than the salaries reportedly demanded by Guardiola, Ancelotti, Antonio Conte and Roberto Mancini.



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A key member of Italy's 2006 World Cup-winning side, Pirlo has experienced mixed fortunes since moving into management. He won the Coppa Italia during his only season in charge of Juventus before later coaching Turkish side Fatih Karagumruk and Serie B outfit Sampdoria.

Despite his inconsistent managerial record, Maldini and Leonardo reportedly see Pirlo as a suitable long-term option for the national team. His strong relationship with both former AC Milan teammates, coupled with his admiration for his former mentor Ancelotti, is understood to have strengthened his position. -Xinhua



The Khareef 2026 Season Has Officially Begun

Hawana Salalah Hotels ready to welcome guests



With the Khareef 2026 season now underway, Hawana Salalah Hotels are delighted to welcome guests from across Oman, the GCC, and international markets. Visitors can enjoy exceptional hospitality, stunning beachfront locations, and convenient access to Salalah's iconic seasonal attractions while experiencing the region's unique climate and lush green landscapes.

The destination's hospitality portfolio, comprising Salalah Rotana Resort, Fanar Hotel, Juweira Boutique Hotel, and The Club by Fanar, offers more than 1,200 rooms, suites, and hotel apartments designed to cater to families, couples, and leisure travelers. Guests can enjoy an extensive range of facilities, including swimming pools, diverse dining experiences, family-friendly activities, and direct access to Hawana Aqua

Park, one of Salalah's premier attractions for families and adventure enthusiasts.

Ideally located just 20 minutes from the region's key Khareef attractions, Hawana Salalah Hotels provide the perfect base for visitors looking to explore the lush greenery, mist-covered mountains, and natural beauty that define the Khareef season.

To celebrate Khareef 2026, Hawana Salalah Hotels has introduced a selection of exclusive accommodation packages and curated guest experiences, offering exceptional value and memorable stays throughout the season. These tailored offerings are designed to help guests make the most of Salalah's unique weather and scenic surroundings, reinforcing the destination's position as one of the region's most sought-after seasonal escapes.



ROUND-UP

DENZA B5: Uncompromised power meets intelligent hybrid performance

Purpose-built to handle both the vibrant city layout of Muscat and the challenging geographic terrains across the country, the B5 delivers an imposing stance on the road, proving that true adventure can coexist seamlessly with elite comfort

MUSCAT: Reshaping the Sultanate's luxury automotive sector, the flagship DENZA B5 has firmly established its presence as the ultimate expression of sophisticated engineering and rugged capability. Born from a heritage where technology shapes elegance, this premium off-road SUV breaks traditional boundaries. Purpose-built to handle both the vibrant city layout of Muscat and the challenging geographic terrains across the country, the B5 delivers an imposing stance on the road, proving that true adventure can coexist seamlessly with elite comfort. The technical foundation of the DENZA B5 centres on its revolutionary Dual Mode Off-road (DMO) pioneering platform. This hybrid body-on-frame architecture fuses relentless mechanical strength with exceptional energy efficiency. Generating a massive 760 Nm of torque and a combined output of 570 horsepower, the vehicle effortlessly rockets from 0 to 100 km/h in a mere 4.8 seconds. Backed by three intelligent electronic differential locks and an advanced four-wheel-drive system, it guarantees absolute traction whether conquering soft desert dunes or cruising on open highways. Unequaled ride composure



across Oman's diverse landscapes is achieved through the vehicle's state-of-the-art chassis engineering. The B5 comes equipped with the advanced DiSUS-P intelligent active hydraulic suspension, which monitors driving surfaces in real time to independently adjust individual wheel height and damping stiffness within milliseconds. Further strengthening its core is the innovative Cell-to-

Chassis (CTC) technology, integrating high-density Blade cells directly into a rigid steel structure to enhance underbody protection and optimize handling stability on winding mountain tracks. While the exterior projects raw power through its distinctive mesh-style front grille and muscular, flared arches, the cabin is crafted as an oasis of absolute calm. The premium interior highlights

fine leather upholstery, a signature electric lift-up gear selector, and an expansive panoramic sunroof with an electric sunshade. Front occupants enjoy a first-class lounge experience featuring multi-mode massage, heating, and ventilation functions. Engineered perfectly for long-distance travel under the regional sun, a built-in comfort console in the center armrest serves as both a fridge and hotbox

to keep refreshments flawlessly stored at the desired temperature. Occupant safety remains paramount in this high-tech sanctuary, which features a robust steel body structure capable of withstanding up to 12 tons of pressure. This protective envelope is reinforced by a class-leading system of 11 airbags and an advanced L2+ driving assistance network. A grid of smart sensors and cameras provides a com-

plete 360-degree view—making tight urban navigation completely stress-free. Every asset, from the elite 14-speaker Devialet audio system to the supreme NVH (Noise, Vibration, and Harshness) insulation, cements the DENZA B5 as an unmatched premium companion for discerning enthusiasts. In Oman, BYD, Denza and Yangwang vehicles are distributed by World Auto Business.

FIRST-OF-ITS-KIND

Khareef Dhofar from Bank Muscat: Enjoy unprecedented interactive experience connecting Muscat and Salalah



MUSCAT: As part of its ongoing commitment to supporting national initiatives and strengthening the Sultanate of Oman's position on the regional and global tourism map, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate, has inaugurated the activities of Khareef Dhofar from Bank Muscat which will run from July 22 to August 17. The initiative reflects the bank's steadfast commitment to supporting the tourism sector and promoting the unique natural and cultural attractions of the Dhofar Governorate, further reinforcing its standing as one of the region's and the world's tourism destinations. With this year's activities, Bank Muscat introduces a first-of-its-kind interactive experience, with dedicated booths at Oman Mall in Muscat Governorate and Uptown

Salalah in Dhofar Governorate. Equipped with live, interconnected interactive screens named "Khareef Portals", the two venues will enable visitors at each location to watch activities and events taking place at the other in real time. The innovative concept is designed to bring the Khareef Dhofar experience closer to audiences across the Sultanate, while demonstrating how modern technology can enrich visitor engagement and strengthen connections between Oman's governorates. Visitors to the Bank Muscat booth at Oman Mall will be able to experience the vibrant atmosphere, activities and events taking place at the Bank's booth in Salalah Ateen, while visitors in Salalah will enjoy the live activities in Muscat. This interactive bridge between the two cities offers visitors an im-

mersive, real-time experience that brings the unique ambience of the Khareef season to communities across the Sultanate. It also reinforces Oman's image as a modern tourism destination that leverages innovation and technology to deliver exceptional visitor experiences. Both booths will feature a diverse programme of activities, including entertainment competitions, interactive experiences and family-friendly attractions suitable for all age groups, ensuring an engaging and enjoyable visit while introducing visitors to the outstanding tourism assets that distinguish Dhofar. In addition to the interactive activities, Bank Muscat's sales team will be present at the two venues to introduce visitors and customers to the Bank's latest banking solutions, products and exclusive

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

financing offer for electric vehicles, reflecting Bank Muscat's commitment to encouraging sustainable mobility solutions. This offer includes a preferential interest rate, a special "Khareef Dhofar" edition vehicle registration plate offered in collaboration with the Royal Oman Police, and a waiver of the first year's credit card annual fee for customers applying for electric vehicle financing by 15 September. The launch of Khareef Dhofar from Bank Muscat activities forms part of the Bank's strategic initiatives that underscore its role as a national partner in supporting sustainable development goals and Oman Vision 2040. The initiative aims to highlight the Khareef season as a unique tourism experience found only in the Sultanate, while showcasing Dhofar's exceptional natural beau-

ty, distinctive climate and rich cultural heritage, making it an attractive destination for visitors from within Oman and abroad. It also contributes to stimulating tourism and economic activity while raising awareness of the opportunities created by this exceptional season. Earlier this year, Bank Muscat also announced its official sponsorship of the Khareef Dhofar Season as the Main Sponsor, reaffirming its commitment to supporting the tourism sector and strengthening partnerships with national stakeholders to ensure the success of the season. Through this sponsorship, the Bank seeks to help attract more visitors, support the local economy and further showcase Oman's unique tourism assets, enhancing the Sultanate's competitiveness as a world-class tourism destination.





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