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عُمان OMAN

Times of Oman

GOLDEN JUBILEE

51 YEARS OF LEGACY

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Manila hosts opening of Oman–Philippines Forum **A2**

SMEs CONTRIBUTED OMR9.2 BILLION TO OMAN'S GDP IN 2025

Over 19,000 Entrepreneurship Cards were issued in first half of 2026

MUSCAT: The number of enterprises holding the Entrepreneurship Card reached 32,103 till the first half of 2026, while the number of new cards issued during the first half of this year reached 19,267, reflecting entrepreneurs' keenness to benefit from the advantages provided by the card.

The SMEs Development Authority "Riyada" works on providing the Entrepreneurship Card as one of the key tools supporting small and medium enterprise owners, as it enables holders to benefit from numerous facilities and advantages offered by government and private entities.

Throughout the first half of 2026, Riyada continued executing its plans aimed at strengthening the entrepreneurship environment by launching and implementing qualitative programmes and initiatives that contributed to supporting SME owners and empowering them to grow their enterprises, alongside developing delivered services in line with the targets of Oman Vision 2040 across all governorates of the Sultanate of Oman by activating the competitive advantage of each governorate.

The sector witnessed noticeable growth, as the total number of small and medium enterprises in Oman reached approximately 267,535 by the end of 2025, according to the National Centre for Statistics and Information.

Of these, 136,459 enterprises were registered in Riyada's database by the end of the first half of 2026, divided into 116,195 micro enterprises, 19,196 small enterprises, and 1,068 medium enterprises, with their total contribution to the gross domestic product reaching 9.2 billion Omani Rials, accounting for 21.8 percent.

The Authority continued developing the incubation ecosystem by providing a supportive environment for emerging projects and small and medium enterprises, contributing to transforming entrepreneurial ideas into projects capable of growth and sustainability.

During the first half of this year, 132 new incubation contracts were signed across several economic sectors, and 16 incubators were opened, contributing to providing 284 job opportunities.

The Authority also continued supporting general and specialized business centres targeting promising sectors—including e-commerce, financial technology, creative industries (including craft industries), manufacturing industries, in addition to the logistics sector and services linked to economic and special zones—in partnership with several government and private institutions to enhance the innovation environment and expand growth opportunities for SMEs. The graduation rate from general and specialized entrepreneurship centres during the first half of 2026 reached 14.5 percent.

The Authority continues to provide specialised advisory services aimed at assisting SME owners in developing their projects and improving their performance by offering suitable solutions across administrative, financial, legal, marketing, and technical domains. >A6

FINANCIAL SERVICES AUTHORITY

Oman adopts new securities law to strengthen capital market

MUSCAT: The Financial Services Authority (FSA) yesterday adopted the Executive Regulation of the Securities Law, representing an explanatory legislative framework for the implementation mechanism of the general rules stipulated in Royal Decree No. 46/2022.

The move aims to achieve legislative and technical readiness to elevate the performance of capital market institutions and securities entities in the Sultanate of Oman, enabling them to keep pace with rapid developments driven by financial technology and innovative financial instruments.

The regulation comprises seven chapters covering various aspects of capital market regulation: Chapter One on definitions and general provisions; Chapter Two on capital market institutions; Chapter Three on operating entities, including their licensing, activities, and obligations; Chapter Four on credit rating agencies and their operational requirements; Chapter Five on collective investment schemes; Chapter

Six on issuing entities, their disclosure obligations, and market integrity provisions; and Chapter Seven on the Grievance Committee, which outlines procedures, review mechanisms, and rulings regarding appeals against decisions issued by the Authority, its Board Chairman, or its Chief Executive Officer.

The regulation attaches significant importance to providing competitive financing options within the national economy and enhancing flexibility to attract local and foreign capital to the capital market sector, thereby supporting national economic and business activities and boosting investor confidence through principles of fairness, integrity, and transparency.

The decision issued by the Chairman of the Authority's Board of Directors stipulated that the Executive Regulation of the Securities Law shall come into force on the day following its publication in the Official Gazette, in its issue published today, 26 July 2026.

The decision instructed the Chief Executive Officer of the Authority to issue the necessary instructions, forms, and circulars to implement the provisions of the attached regulation. Until their issuance, existing instructions, forms, and circulars will remain in effect, provided they do not conflict with the Securities Law and its Executive Regulation. The decision also directed capital market institutions and securities entities to align their status within six (6) months from the implementation date. >A5

WORLD DROWNING PREVENTION DAY

'A minute of attention can save a life'

Times News Service

MUSCAT: "A minute of attention can save a life," the Royal Oman Police (ROP) said as Oman marked World Drowning Prevention Day on July 25 with a renewed appeal for the public to follow water safety measures.

The awareness campaign, launched by the National Risk Register in cooperation with the ROP, aims to strengthen public awareness and encourage residents and visitors to adopt safe practices while swimming or taking part in water-related activities.

Officials stressed that preventing drowning is a shared responsibility that begins with awareness and vigilance. "Preventing drowning is everyone's responsibility," the campaign said.

Times Exclusive

"With awareness, a culture of safety and vigilance, we protect ourselves and our loved ones, making prevention a way of life."

The ROP also highlighted the importance of constant supervision of children around water bodies.

"It is very important to monitor children closely, and they should not be left unattended near bodies of water," a spokesperson said.

Authorities have advised the public to swim only in designated and supervised areas, wear life jackets while boating or participating in water sports, avoid swimming

in rough seas or flooded wadis, and strictly follow the instructions of emergency and safety officials.

The awareness drive comes as Oman continues to report increase in drowning incidents.

According to data released by the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority (CDAA), 639 drowning incidents were reported in 2024, compared with 166 cases in 2023, representing an increase of nearly 300 per cent.

Most incidents occurred in wadis, followed by the sea, waterways, dams, ponds, wells, open reservoirs and rain-fed streams. Many victims were adults and children with limited swimming ability who entered unsafe or undesignated swimming areas.

Authorities attribute the rise in accidents to poor swimming skills, inadequate supervision of children, swimming in prohibited locations and dangerous rescue attempts that sometimes result in multiple drowning.

NUMBEO QUALITY OF LIFE INDEX

Oman named Asia's best country for quality of life

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman has been ranked the best country in Asia for quality of life and placed third globally in the Numbeo Quality of Life Index 2026 Mid-Year, reinforcing the Sultanate's growing reputation as one of the world's most desirable places to live.

According to Numbeo, Oman achieved an overall Quality of Life Index score of 203.9, sharing the third position globally with Denmark, behind only the Netherlands (205.6) and Luxembourg (204.8). In Asia, Oman topped the rankings, followed by Qatar in second place, Japan in third place. The ranking evaluates countries based on several indicators that influence residents' quality of life, including purchasing power, safety, healthcare, cost of living, property price-to-income ratio, traffic commute time, pollution levels and climate.

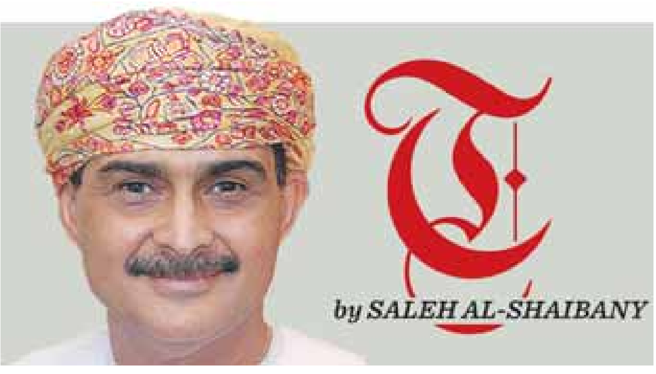
Oman's strong performance was driven by its high levels of public safety, low pollution, quality healthcare services, favourable climate and relatively short commuting times, making it the highest-ranked country in Asia and the Arab world in the latest assessment.

Numbeo's Quality of Life Index is one of the world's most widely referenced crowd-sourced databases for comparing living conditions across countries and cities. The index is updated periodically using user-contributed data combined with statistical indicators to provide comparative assessments of quality of life worldwide.

OMAN

COMMENTARY

The spirit of holding no grudges



A young woman was watching the bulldozer crushing the old wall. She also watched a line of date trees and mangoes being felled. Her six-year old daughter was counting each tree that hit the ground. As the thick dust was filling the air, an old man moved his pick up from harm's way. He motioned to the woman to go inside their bricked house to close all the windows.

Then they came out and the old man was complaining about the dust and sands coating his lettuce, carrots and cucumbers that were growing in his five acre land next to his house. He was also complaining about the cracks that appeared on his house caused by the impact of the bulldozer. The ten-hour noise a day was deafening and his vegetable and fruit business was taking a dive. The construction supervisor just shrugged his shoulders and apologetically explained that there was nothing he could do about it.

A week earlier, I offered to write a complain letter to the authorities who gave their approval for the development of the site. But I didn't have good news for him. There would be no compensation to either his livelihood or the discomfort they were causing to his life. I did not relish the task of giving him the bad news. He smiled broadly when he saw me. My heart sank because I had nothing to offer him to keep that smile on for a long time. He could read my salaam on my lips because my voice was lost under the noise of the bulldozer. He then led me inside his house. As we were entering, I saw more heavy duty machines slowly making their way to the site. Once inside his sparsely decorated living room, he offered me a glass of milk mixed with sweet rose water.

He apologized that there was no electricity saying that the work being carried out outside 'accidentally' cut off the cables. There was a thin film of dust on the carpet and the cushions. He also apologized for that saying it was a constant battle to keep the place clean in the last one month. He looked at me expectantly after just one sip of the drink. I hesitated and he knew I was bidding for time. His face sagged because my body language said it all. It was very difficult for him to hide his disappointment but managed to force a smile.

Maybe something good would come from it, he told me. He really believed it because I saw a sparkle in his eyes when he said it. I admired his optimism. He sold not a single carrot or cabbage in the last 30 days, yet, he was not really bitter about it. I left shortly after that but he wouldn't let leave me without a parting gift. He gave me a carton full of fresh farm products, including honey, patted my back and thank me for something I could not do for him. As I was loading the stuff in my car, the supervisor approached him and asked him if he could allow his workers to have access to drinking water in his farm. He also had another request. Since it was hot, if his workers could rest under the shade of the farm so they could eat their lunch.

A wicked thought crossed my mind. I was attempted to tell the supervisor to pay for the 'service' he was about to destroy. Instead, I waved my hand goodbye and drove away. From the mirror, I saw the farmer granted the workers their request unreservedly. It was good to see that there is still a man out there in a cruel world of commercialism, who holds no grudge to the same people he has reason to hate. He also, in a true spirit of brotherhood, he offered what he could give, free.

TRANSPORT MINISTRY

82% of important Sur road expansion project completed

SUR: The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology affirmed that 82 percent of a project to dualise the road from the Gas Roundabout to Bilad Sur Roundabout, in South Al Sharqiyah Governorate, has been completed.

Develop infrastructure

The project constitutes part of the Ministry's ongoing efforts to develop infrastructure and enhance traffic safety in the Governorate.

The project connects the Quriyat-Sur Road with the Sultan Turki bin Said Road (A'Sharqiyah Road earlier).

Earlier, the ministry opened the first part of the project (11.4 km) to traffic, leading to improved traffic safety along this vital part of the carriageway. -ONA

Al Maha Ceramics Wins Best Brand in Customer Experience Award in Tiles Category

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

Al Maha Ceramics has consistently demonstrated a strong commitment to customer experience by delivering high-quality ceramic and porcelain tile solutions that combine innovative design, durability, and superior craftsmanship. Catering to residential, commercial, and large-scale infrastructure projects, the company continues to provide products that meet the evolving needs of homeowners, architects, designers, and developers across Oman.

With a customer-centric approach built around quality, reliability, and personalised service, Al Maha Ceramics offers an extensive range of contemporary tile collections supported by expert consultation and dependable after-sales service. Its commitment to understanding customer preferences, maintaining stringent quality standards, and introducing innovative products has helped establish the brand as a trusted name in the building materials industry.

By continuously investing in advanced manufacturing technologies, product innovation, sustainable practices, and customer service excellence, Al Maha Ceramics continues to set benchmarks in customer experience within the tiles sector. Its dedication to delivering aesthetically appealing, high-performance products and exceptional customer support reinforces its position as one of Oman's leading ceramic tile brands.

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

Oman and Philippines eye deeper cooperation

MANILA: Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi and Philippine Secretary of Foreign Affairs Maria Theresa Lazaro jointly inaugurated the third Oman–Philippines Forum, which is being held this year in the Philippine capital, Manila, under the theme "The Oman–Philippines Strategic Council."

The Forum brought together senior government officials and business leaders from both countries to strengthen cooperation and explore new opportunities for partnership.

In his opening remarks, Sayyid Badr said the Forum reflects the strength of the relationship between Oman and the Philippines, built on friendship, mutual respect and a shared vision for progress.

He noted that dialogue between the two countries has continued to evolve since the inaugural forum in Cebu, creating new opportunities for cooperation and fostering practical partnerships.

He added that the Forum serves as a platform for turning ideas into practical initiatives and effective partnerships that bring together governments, the private sector, institutions and communities.

He said that, in a time of rapid global change, there is a growing need to build enduring partnerships founded on trust, mutual understanding and shared values.

The Foreign Minister added that Oman and the Philippines possess complementary strengths offering opportunities to expand cooperation across trade, investment, logistics, tourism, energy and technology.

He said that the Filipino community in Oman remains a cornerstone of the relationship, recognising its valuable contributions to the country's development and its role in strengthening the bonds of friendship between the two peoples.

For her part, Maria Theresa Lazaro said the convening of the third Oman–Philippines Forum reflects the growing economic relationship between the two countries.

She highlighted Oman's strategic position as a gateway to the Gulf and the Philippines' role as a gateway to ASEAN, noting that this creates opportunities to establish new trade and logistics corridors linking the two regions.

She also pointed to the growth in trade during 2025 and the progress made on investment agreements, calling for deeper cooperation in fisheries, agriculture, tourism and technology to build sustainable economic partnerships.

Henry Aguda, Secretary of Information and Communications Technology of the Philippines also addressed the Forum, expressing his country's aspiration to raise cooperation with Oman from dialogue to practical implementation.

He proposed launching an Oman–Philippines programme for digital innovation and smart logistics to strengthen collaboration in artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, digital infrastructure, data centres and digital trade, in order to support investment, innovation and shared development.

Other leading figures from the Philippines also addressed the Forum, including Ferdinand Ferrer, President of the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry, who praised Oman's business and investment environment, advanced logistics capabilities and modern seaports overlooking the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean.

He encouraged the Philippine business community to capitalise on these advantages and expand cooperation in sectors such as fisheries, agriculture and food security.

Michaela Yap, Honorary Consul of the Sultanate of Oman in Cebu, delivered remarks highlighting the significant increase in participation at this year's Forum, with more than 200 delegates from across the Philippines.

She said this reflected growing interest in trade and investment opportunities between the two countries, describing the Forum as another important step towards building sustainable partnerships and strengthening relations based on trust, peace and shared development.

The third Forum builds on the success of two previous Forums, as part of ongoing efforts to strengthen the Oman–Philippines partnership and expand economic and investment cooperation.

The Forum attracted leading Philippine business executives and investors, with discussions focused on solid connections, creating an enabling environment for investment, and exploring high-value partnerships across a range of sectors of mutual interest. The programme featured three main panel discussions covering trade and investment, logistics, and agriculture and fisheries.

MEETING

Oman and Philippines to boost bilateral cooperation

MANILA: Sayyid Badr Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, convened with Philippine Foreign Affairs Secretary Maria Theresa Lazaro on the sidelines of the 3rd Oman-Philippines Strategic Majlis Forum held in Manila on Sunday.

The meeting dealt with ways to boost bilateral relations, cooperation and partnership between the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of the Philippines in a manner that better achieves their common interests.

The two sides laid emphasis on the significance of the forum as a strategic platform that enhances institutional dialogue, opens up vistas for cooperation between the two governments, private sector establishments and academic institutions.

The forum also supports partnerships in the fields of trade, investment, logistics, tourism, energy and technology, helping the two countries to keep pace with their aspirations to realise sustainable and comprehensive development.

They valued their reciprocal confidence and commended the contribution of the Filipino community in the Sultanate of Oman.

The two ministers also discussed the latest regional and international developments and exchanged views about diplomatic efforts aimed at consolidating security, stability and peace.

They stressed the need to ensure the free and safe flow of navigation and supply chains along maritime and trade routes.

The meeting was attended by Eng. Nasser bin Said Al Manwari, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Republic of the Philippines, and senior officials from the two countries. -ONA

Al Wusta boosts food security with investments worth OMR857 million

The governorate is developing an integrated system of projects that aim to augment production, enhance food industries and attract quality investments

A'DUQM: Al Wusta Governorate is investing OMR857 million to optimise the use of its strategic location and natural resources.

The governorate is developing an integrated system of development projects that aim to augment production, enhance food industries and attract quality investments in line with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040.

Giving a breakout, Eng. Abdullatif bin Mohammed Al Balushi, Director General of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources in Al Wusta Governorate, said that the volume of existing investment in food security projects in Al Wusta Governorate stands at more than OMR655 million, distributed across the sectors of fisheries, livestock and agriculture.

He added that, earlier in 2026, new investment agreements worth OMR202 million were signed in aquaculture (to produce shrimps and sea cucumbers), in addition to growing onions and animal feed. The projects, he explained, raise the total value of investments in the food security sector to about OMR857 million by the end of 2026 in the governorate.

In a statement to the Oman News Agency (ONA), Al Balushi pointed out that Al Wusta Governorate boasts comparative advantages that enhance its ability to attract investments, most notably the governorate's coastal 700-km stretch along the Arabian Sea, its proximity to the Port of A'Duqm Port and Special Economic Zone, the availability of suitable sites for fish farming and the stability of its marine environment, which all constitute an integrated base for establishing industrial projects that support food security.

These factors, he explained, enabled Al Wusta to top the list of governorates of the Sultanate of Oman in terms of artisanal fishing output in 2025 (246,183 tons—the equivalent of 34% fish production that year).

This, he observed, enhanced the role of Al Wusta in supporting food security and increasing exports of marine products in Oman.

Al Balushi said that Al Wusta Governorate currently comprises 55 industrial and investment facilities in the fisheries sector, with investments worth about OMR79 million.

The facilities include factories for canning, processing and packaging of marine products, the production of fish oil and value-added industries, in addition to ice factories, which has contributed to raising production capacity, he added.

Speaking about infrastructure development, Al Balushi said that the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources is engaged in a variety of projects, which include the expansion of the fishing port, the operation of the fish market and the ice factory in Al Lakbi in the Wilayat of Al Jazir, the establishment of a residential complex for fishermen, a store for veterinary medicines and cold stores in the Wilayat of A'Duqm.

The Ministry also approved a project for the establishment of a sea fishing port in the Wilayat of Mahout at a cost of about OMR37 million, he said.

Livestock sector projects include the implementation of "Usool" poultry unit in the Wilayat of Haima to the tune of OMR61 million for the production of about 175 million fertilized eggs, he said, noting that the project will help minimize reliance on imports.

Al Balushi said that 21 investment opportunities will be offered in 2026 in the sectors of agriculture, livestock and water resources, with target investments worth approximately OMR30 million. -ONA

ENERGY AND MINERALS MEDIA FORUM

Energy forum highlights media's role in building trust

SALALAH: Participants in the main dialogue session of the Energy and Minerals Media Forum 2026, organised by the Ministry of Energy and Minerals in Dhofar Governorate on Sunday, emphasised the importance of partnership between sector institutions, media outlets, and the community.

This partnership contributes to highlighting the economic, social, and environmental impact of the energy and minerals sectors, enhancing corporate communication, and connecting the sector's achievements and future transformations with community life and needs.

Titled "Energy and Community: Partnership and Impact," the session discussed the strategic framework for the energy and minerals sectors, the future of exploration and production, the balance between local and international investment, the transition toward renewable energy, the security of electricity and water supplies, and the role of minerals in economic diversification.

In addition, it addressed the role of media and corporate communication in building trust and conveying sector information to the community accurately and responsibly.

Mohsin Hamad Al Hadhrami, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, emphasized that communication with the community represents a fundamental pillar in policymaking and plan implementation.

He noted that the Ministry continues to execute its targets aimed at maximising the added value of natural resources by expanding the offering of concession areas for the oil, gas, and minerals sectors, including offshore areas, thereby enhancing the competitiveness of the Sultanate of Oman and attracting quality investments.

He also explained that building trust between the sector and the community is based on transparency, sustainable communication, and information availability, affirming that media is a strategic partner in conveying the sector's messages and highlighting its achievements.

For his part, Dr. Aflah Said Al Hadhrami, Director General of Petroleum Development Oman (PDO), explained that the oil and gas sector possesses promising opportunities to continue exploration and production thanks to modern technologies.

He affirmed that the company works toward achieving a balance between maintaining production rates and adhering to safety and environmental protection standards, alongside investing in technologies and developing national competencies, noting that corporate communication contributes to highlighting the sector's impact in supporting development and in-country value.

Ashraf Hamad Al Maamari, Chief Executive Officer of OQ Group, pointed out that the Group's investments contribute to maximizing the economic value of natural resources, emphasizing that corporate communication and strategic marketing play an important role in highlighting the economic and social value of investments and enhancing the confidence of investors and partners.

Ahmed Amer Al Mahrizi, Chief Executive Officer of Nama Holding Group, stated that the electricity sector is one of the essential enablers of economic and social development, emphasising that the transition toward renewable energy strengthens energy security and raises the efficiency of the electrical system, while the media represents a strategic partner in conveying sector transformation messages and promoting a culture of responsible electricity and water usage.

Eng. Mattar Salim Al Badi, Chief Executive Officer of Minerals Development Oman, affirmed that the minerals sector represents one of the promising streams for economic diversification, pointing to the importance of expanding exploration activities, linking mining with manufacturing industries, and enhancing media presence to introduce the investment opportunities provided by the sector and its economic and environmental impacts.

The forum included a number of specialized working papers addressing investment in the energy and minerals sectors, the impact of in-country value on the development of national enterprises, the role of corporate social responsibility in achieving sustainable development impact, in addition to the national plan for net zero and the regulatory framework for carbon markets.

The forum comes as part of the Ministry of Energy and Minerals' efforts to enhance communication with the community and showcase the sector's achievements, coinciding with the holding of the Energy and Minerals Exhibition in the Ittin area in the Wilayat of Salalah, which will continue until 6 August, with the participation of several entities and companies operating in the sector. -ONA

OMAN

AWARENESS EVENT

Association for Children with Disabilities celebrates Purple Saturday

MUSCAT: The Association for Children with Disabilities celebrated the occasion of Purple Saturday by organising a recreational and awareness event aimed for children with disabilities and their families affiliated with the association's centres.

The event aimed to enhance the integration of persons with disabilities into society, consolidate the principles of inclusivity and equal opportunities, and raise awareness of their rights. It also sought to encourage institutions to provide more supportive and accommodating environments for them, thereby contributing to their empowerment and enhancing their active participation in various aspects of life.

The event featured a number of recreational and interactive activities, competitions, and various segments that brought joy and happiness to the children and their families. This took place in an atmosphere that reflected the institutions' commitment to their social responsibility toward persons with disabilities. — ONA

Omani military bands win top honours at World Music Competition in Scotland

The accolade was the result of a polished performance and unwavering discipline, reflecting a high standard of professionalism

DUMBARTON: The Royal Air Force of Oman (RAFO) Band opened its campaign at the World Music Competition with a commanding first-place finish overall in Category 4B, an achievement that underscores the band's accomplished standing on the international stage. The ensemble also topped the drum corps category in the same competition, held in Dumbarton, Scotland, which drew more than 130 bands across various divisions.

The accolade was the result of a polished performance and unwavering discipline, reflecting a high standard of musicianship and professionalism.

The Royal Army of Oman (RAO) Band today secured a new international milestone, earning first place as the best marching and discipline ensemble, along with a fourth-place finish in the World Level 3 (B) category at the Scottish Championships in Dumbarton. The event featured over 130 teams representing the world's finest military bands.

The achievement underscores the band's advanced capabilities in military musical performance, precision, execution and adherence to the highest standards of discipline and professionalism, following intense competition that highlighted the experience and artistry of participating ensembles.

The honour adds to the RAO Band's growing list of international accolades, confirming the competence of its personnel and the effectiveness of its continuous training and preparation programmes. It also reinforces Oman's distinguished presence in global competitions and reflects the Sultan's Armed Forces' commitment to talent development, capability enhancement and the instillment of excellence, discipline and professionalism in all international engagements. — ONA

AL DAKHILIYAH GOVERNORATE

Olive oil sales in Jabal Akhdar region exceeded OMR1 million last season

MUSCAT: The amount of olive oil produced in the Jabal Akhdar region of the Al Dakhiliyah Governorate last season reached 90,000 litres, valued at OMR 1,035,000 , according to data from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources.

The Ministry is currently preparing for the olive harvest season in Jabal Akhdar by monitoring olive presses and ensuring their readiness. This includes providing suitable areas for receiving the olives, ensuring proper storage, and verifying the equipment used for bottling and preserving the oil.

Engineer Saud bin Hamed Al Mayahi, Director of the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources in Jabal Akhdar, stated that the olive harvest season in the region begins at the start of September and continues until the end of November each year.

He added that the number of fruit trees in Jabal Akhdar exceeds 20,000, noting that the Department of Agricultural Wealth and Water Resources in Jabal Akhdar implements extension programs through field visits, training courses, and dialogue sessions.

These programmes focus on best practices in irrigation, fertilization, and pest and disease control, in addition to providing improved seedlings, technical services, and monitoring tree health. They also provide high-quality olive seedlings of varieties with high oil content, aiming to increase production efficiency, improve oil quality, expand cultivated areas, and rationalize water use.

Al Mayahi explained that the Jabal Akhdar olive industry includes several processing industries, such as packaging according to modern standards and the production of pickled olives, with opportunities for expansion into other industries, including cosmetics and natural soaps.

Al Mayahi pointed out that the Department of Agricultural Wealth and Water Resources in Jabal Akhdar is working to create opportunities for marketing the product both domestically and internationally. This includes providing seedlings of varieties suitable for the mountain's environment and expanding olive cultivation by encouraging agricultural investment and allocating land for cultivation in suitable locations, in line with food security and sustainable agricultural development plans.

Engineer Saud bin Hamed Al Mayahi, Director of the Department of Agricultural Wealth and Water Resources in the state of Jabal Akhdar, confirmed that the impact of the olive harvest season is not limited to the agricultural aspect only, but has become a tourist attraction in the state, through their viewing of the picking and pressing of the fruits and learning about the experience of producing local olive oil, which enhances agricultural tourism and supports the economic movement.

COMMENTARY

THE ODYSSEY: Merging Mythology & Metaphysics in Moviemaking

After delivering a superhero genre film, The Dark Knight, playing with the forces of physics in Interstellar, and delivering an Oscar-winning Oppenheimer, Christopher Nolan gambles with Greek mythology via his latest one, The Odyssey.

He brings extraordinary results by creating not merely another historical epic but an impressive, immersive, and engaging cinematic experience. It's a breathtaking spectacle, with profound human emotion delivered on screen. The Odyssey is rich in scale, philosophy, and adventure, and comfortably stands out in Nolan's finest works so far.

The Odyssey film, which is based on Homer's timeless epic, chronicles the challenging journey of Odysseus while returning to Ithaca after the Trojan War. Creatively enough, Nolan infuses the narrative with his signature themes of time, sacrifice, and the spirit of humanity.

With a remarkably well-created screenplay that balances the emotional moments and the grand, spectacular mythical sets, The Odyssey stands out. It has many thought provoking dialogues, poetic but easy to grasp, making every confrontation memorable. The film is a visual triumph, giving a super sensory experience and the best viewing experience on a large screen.

Towering cliffs, expanded seashores, lingering waters, infinite oceans, untamed forests, tall trees, and unexplored natural territories that feel astonishingly real go a long way in Nolan's storytelling. And from natural to supernatural, from human to superhuman, and from real to unreal, all have been built well in the storyline that delivers a true spectacle. In the journey of Odysseus back to his home, every location made its presence felt with a unique identity, story, and relevance in the story line.

Ancient fortresses, colossal shops, costumes, weaponry, and other settings speak of a great quality of production design as they completely take you into that era with their exceptional craftsmanship and authenticity.

Matt Damon as Odysseus delivers a robust performance. His toughness, fighting spirit, and the role of a commander-in-chief and a king all come across powerfully through the film. His emotional depth as a husband and as a father is simultaneously brightly evident. In the conventional sense, he is neither mythical nor invincible but comes across as a true human burdened with war and responsibility, with an unshakeable desire to return home.

Anne Hathaway as Penelope brings remarkable grace, delivering a nuanced performance. She is a queen whose tolerance and spirit are as heroic as the exploits of battlefield exploits of Odysseus. Tom Holland as Odysseus' son Telemachus also impresses, with his journey from a growing boy to the throne's contender. In the process of searching for his father, he discovers his own identity.

The mystical and intelligent goddess Athena is brilliantly portrayed by Zendaya, and Robert Pattinson as Antinous brilliantly showcases the arrogance and menace of the antagonist. Beyond the physical, there is a lot of metaphysical in the film, and they build the emotional core of the film. Mythical creatures, witchcraft, and divine interventions only add to the spectacular adventures of Odysseus returning home.

Today, cinema is dominated by visual effects-driven blockbusters, but The Odyssey proves that it can be combined with compelling storytelling and unforgettable performances too.

Praveen Nagda, Founder Festival Director, KidzCINEMA and Culture Cinema Film Festivals

FSA

Oman adopts new securities law

< FROM A1 Licensed banking institutions operating securities-related activities were granted a maximum grace period of three years to adjust their operations so that these services are delivered through an independent entity, except for custody, safekeeping, and underwriting activities, which banks may combine with their commercial operations pursuant to Article 2 of the regulation.

Ahmed Ali Al Maamari, Executive Vice President of the Authority, explained that the issuance of the regulation follows a comprehensive review of the legislative structure governing Oman's capital market sector, aiming to position the sector as a primary financing vehicle to achieve national priorities under Oman Vision 2040.

In a statement to Oman News Agency (ONA), Al Maamari said the regulation represents a structural transformation in Oman's capital market by redesigning its regulatory framework and detailing specific provisions for capital market institutions and operating entities, most notably their minimum capital requirements and obligations.

He added that the regulation incorporates investment banking into the licensed activities for securities entities, enhancing the operational role of these institutions in stimulating the primary issuance market and providing liquidity.

As intermediaries and advisors between companies and investors, investment banks help align financing with project scope and timelines, furthering capital market growth.

He noted that the regulation revised existing rules governing crowdfunding activities based on an evaluation of past performance, aiming to foster growth in the next phase and expand innovative financing solutions for small, medium, and micro enterprises in the local market.

Al Maamari emphasised that the regulation outlines regulatory objectives and operational risks for regulated institutions, allowing them to take necessary measures to achieve objectives and mitigate risks under the Authority's supervision.

Risk-based supervision provisions

This is supported by risk-based supervision provisions, including capital adequacy reporting, market, credit, and operational risk management, and business continuity planning.

He added that the updated formulation restructures fees associated with capital market services and activities to balance regulatory requirements with easing operational burdens, thereby boosting market competitiveness.

Additionally, it establishes a framework to register and regulate local and international credit rating agencies in the Sultanate of Oman, which will enhance the credit rating ecosystem, localize expertise, improve the reliability of credit evaluations, elevate risk assessment efficiency, and support investors and decision-makers.

License activities

He stated that the regulation empowers the Financial Services Authority to license activities associated with modern financial technologies and innovative financial instruments lacking specific legislation under a regulatory sandbox.

These activities will operate under flexible, market-responsive criteria set by the Authority to accommodate emerging financial products.

He affirmed that this step encourages innovation, supports digital solution development, and attracts fintech investments in the securities domain, while preserving market integrity, stability, and investor protection. -ONA

BASEL TATTOO 2026

RAO Music Band concludes participation

BASEL: The Royal Army of Oman (RAO) Music Band has concluded its participation in the Basel Tattoo military music festival, held in the city of Basel in the Swiss Confederation, with the participation of several military music bands from various countries around the world.

During its participation, the Royal Army of Oman Music Band delivered musical and show performances that reflected a high level of professionalism.

This participation embodies the keenness of the Royal Army of Oman Music Band to be present at international events, which contributes to broadening the horizons of cooperation with the participating military music bands from various countries. -ONA

Tender Notice

وزارة الثروة الزراعية والسمكية وموارد المياه

Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources

The Ministry of Agricultural, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources Announces the following Retender: -

Tender no.	Tender Title	Tender Document Sales Start Date	Tender Document Sales End Date	Bid Submission Closing	Companies that are eligible to participate	Tender Document fee (R.O)
493/2026/ MAFWR/HQ-34	Consultancy Services for the Design and Construction Supervision of the Food Safety and Quality Center	Monday 20/7/2026	Sunday 9/8/2026	Sunday 30/8/2026	Specialized companies registered with, Excellent grade	(300/-) Omani riyals for local companies (10/-) Omani riyals for SMEs
496/2026/ MAFWR/HQ-35	Renewal of cloud hosting, Backup and Storage services for MAFWR systems 2027	Tuesday 21/7/2026	Sunday 9/8/2026	Sunday 30/8/2026	Specialized companies registered with, Excellent, First Second, Third, fourth grades	(76/-) Omani riyals for local companies (15/-) Omani riyals for SMEs

- Above mentioned Grade) may obtain Tender documents from the E-Tendering website: https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om.
- The value of the document will be paid & submitted on line on given website.
- The Tenderer should attach Bid Commitment Declaration for local companies.
- All correspondence pertaining to the tender inquiry must be online at e-tendering System.
- All correspondence pertaining to the e-tendering System technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number: +968 24402244 or etenderhd@ptlc.gov.om.

TENDERS COMMITTEE
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources

OmanCables الكابلات العمانية

OMAN CABLES INDUSTRY (SAOG)

REPORT OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Report of the Board of Directors

Oman Cables Industry (SAOG) "Oman Cables" has the pleasure in submitting the report on the performance of the Parent Company and the Group for six months period ended 30 June 2026.

Parent Company - "Oman Cables".

The Group - Oman Cables and its two fully owned subsidiaries: Oman Aluminum Processing Industries SPC in Sohar "OAPIL" and Associated Cables Private Ltd in India "ACPL".

Sustainable Growth

Our Group is committed to creating long-term sustainable value through responsible growth, placing the safety, health, and wellbeing of its people at the forefront while integrating sustainability principles across its operations and decision-making. By advancing innovative and responsible energy solutions, promoting environmental stewardship, and fostering meaningful stakeholder engagement, our Group embeds sustainability and strong governance into its culture and strategy, going beyond compliance to deliver lasting positive impact.

Group Performance

While closely monitoring developments across the region, the Group has continued to operate with resilience and confidence, supported by robust governance, agile supply chain management, and comprehensive business continuity measures. Ongoing scenario-based assessments have enabled the Group to mitigate potential disruptions effectively, with no material impact on operations, financial performance, or strategic execution during the reporting period.

Our Group continues to pursue growth by leveraging its integrated solutions platform, offering customers a comprehensive portfolio of cables, innovative solutions, technologies and services. This strategic positioning enhances the Group's ability to address evolving market needs, expand into adjacent opportunities, and strengthen its competitive leadership across key markets.

The Sales of the Group for the six months period ended 30 June 2026 are RO 172.2 million compared to RO 137.5 million for the same period last year, increase of 25.19%.

The Group Net Profit after tax (NPAT), for the six months period ended 30 June 2026 is RO 11.4 million compared to RO 11.3 million during the same period in 2025.

The Earnings Before Interest, Tax, Depreciation and Amortization (EBITDA) for the period is RO 14.6 million compared to RO 14.3 million during the same period in 2025.

Oman Cables (Parent) Performance

Oman Cables is a leading enabler of the region's energy and digital transformation, delivering innovative solutions that support the transition towards a low-carbon, interconnected future. Through technology leadership, sustainable innovation, and strategic investments, the Company contributes to advancing decarbonization, enhancing energy resilience, and creating long-term value for society and stakeholders alike. The Sales of Oman Cables for the six months period ended 30 June 2026 are RO 129.1 million compared to RO 103.8 million in the same period last year, increase of 24.34%. The NPAT for the six months period ended 30 June 2026 is RO 8.8 million as compared to RO 8.2 million for the same period in 2025 increase of 6.9%..

EBITDA for the period is RO 10.9 million compared to RO 10.1 million during the same period in 2025. During the six-month period ended 30 June 2026, the Company delivered strong revenue growth, supported by favorable metal price trends, increased domestic market demand, and continued momentum across various business sectors. Profitability remained robust, underpinned by disciplined execution of dynamic pricing strategies, ongoing design-to-cost initiatives, rigorous cost management, and a continued shift towards higher-value, innovation-driven products and services.

Oman Aluminum Processing Industries SPC, Sohar (OAPIL) (subsidiary) and Associated Cables Private Ltd (ACPL), India (Subsidiary)

In the six months ended 30 June 2026, OAPIL continued delivering profitable results and resilience amid ongoing market circumstances. Performance was supported by a continued focus on higher-value products, optimized sales mix, disciplined financial management, and proactive pricing and cost-efficiency measures. OAPIL remains focused on expanding its footprint, enhancing competitiveness, and capturing future growth opportunities while enhancing quality control process in line with the best technologies.

During the six months ended 30 June 2026, ACPL sustained a positive performance, underpinned by continued operational efficiency improvements, innovation-led initiatives, and an expanding market presence. These efforts strengthened the company's competitive positioning, enhanced resilience, and supported its ongoing focus on delivering sustainable growth and long-term value creation.

Oman Cables is recognizing the support extended by various Government Authorities and wish the best for our beloved Oman to further develop under the leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, in line with Oman Vision 2040.

On behalf of the Board of Directors
Oman Cables Industry SAOG

STATEMENT OF INCOME FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 30 JUNE 2026

	6 Months ended 30 June 2026 Group	6 Months ended 30 June 2026 Parent Company	6 Months ended 30 June 2025 Group	6 Months ended 30 June 2025 Parent Company
Revenue	172,153,892	129,102,381	137,513,896	103,827,889
Cost of sales	(152,843,048)	(114,655,259)	(119,050,087)	(89,856,219)
Gross profit	19,310,844	14,447,122	18,463,809	13,971,670
Other income	379,317	354,478	335,843	328,554
Administrative expenses	(3,633,566)	(2,815,961)	(3,419,923)	(2,717,162)
Selling and distribution expenses	(3,576,713)	(2,410,941)	(3,280,167)	(2,915,720)
Net allowances for expected credit losses	(33,323)	(33,323)	50,624	51,106
Operating profit	12,446,559	9,541,375	12,150,186	8,718,448
Finance costs	(207,592)	(119,666)	(6,686)	99,507
Finance income	1,477,155	1,134,043	1,273,974	945,610
Profit before income tax	13,716,122	10,555,752	13,417,474	9,763,565
Income tax expense	(2,272,174)	(1,764,235)	(2,101,752)	(1,542,626)
Profit for the period	11,443,948	8,791,517	11,315,722	8,220,939
Basic and diluted earnings per share attributable to ordinary equity holders of the parent company	0.128	0.098	0.126	0.092
Gross profit margin	11.22%	11.19%	13.43%	13.46%
Net profit margin	6.65%	6.81%	8.23%	7.92%

STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 30 JUNE 2026

	6 Months ended 30 June 2026 Group	6 Months ended 30 June 2026 Parent Company	6 Months ended 30 June 2025 Group	6 Months ended 30 June 2025 Parent Company
Profit for the period	11,443,948	8,791,517	11,315,722	8,220,939
Other comprehensive income				
Items that may be reclassified subsequently to statement of income or loss, net of tax:				
Net movement in hedging reserve, net of tax	(2,413,834)	(2,289,947)	1,908,416	1,480,569
Net movement in foreign currency translation reserve, net of tax	91,538	-	(37,164)	-
Other comprehensive (loss) for the period	(2,322,296)	(2,289,947)	1,871,252	1,480,569
Total comprehensive income for the Period	9,121,652	6,501,570	13,186,974	9,701,508

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AT 30 JUNE 2026

	As on 30 June 2026 Group	As on 30 June 2026 Parent Company	As on 31 December 2025 Group	As on 31 December 2025 Parent Company
ASSETS				
Non-current assets				
Property, plant and equipment	22,525,034	12,606,876	22,402,557	13,259,532
Intangible asset	262,481	262,481	229,235	229,235
Right-of-use assets	5,167,135	3,650,772	5,277,444	3,730,136
Investment in subsidiaries		7,789,908	-	7,789,908
Financial assets at fair value through other comprehensive income	36,622	36,622	36,622	36,622
Deferred tax assets	940,262	863,873	255,516	222,651
Total non-current assets	28,931,534	25,210,532	28,201,374	25,268,084
Current assets				
Financial assets at amortized cost	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000
Inventories	45,690,663	41,472,523	25,060,750	21,776,095
Derivative financial instruments			1,796,174	1,289,563
Trade and other receivables	87,908,494	66,606,839	62,907,588	46,080,789
Short term deposits	55,219,003	41,867,875	59,990,542	46,867,875
Cash and cash equivalents	8,603,161	3,854,694	30,761,804	26,566,035
Total current assets	198,421,321	154,801,931	181,516,858	143,580,357
Total assets	227,352,855	180,012,463	209,718,232	168,848,441
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES				
Equity				
Share capital	8,970,000	8,970,000	8,970,000	8,970,000
Share premium	977,500	977,500	977,500	977,500
Legal reserve	4,445,333	2,990,000	4,445,333	2,990,000
General reserve	20,746,741	19,593,802	20,746,741	19,593,802
Retained earnings	128,839,585	101,529,158	125,961,987	101,303,991
Other reserves	2,559,326	1,828,293	4,326,622	3,707,240
Total equity	166,538,485	135,888,753	165,428,183	137,542,533
Non-current liabilities				
Deferred tax liability	87,954	-	-	-
Lease liabilities	5,531,996	3,822,874	5,697,210	3,888,379
Term Loan	877,716	-	-	-
Employees' end of service benefits	1,952,179	1,648,303	1,943,089	1,664,135
Total non-current liabilities	8,449,845	5,471,177	7,640,299	5,552,514
Current liabilities				
Trade and other payables	47,824,709	34,812,100	31,407,648	22,008,971
Bank borrowings	-	-	-	-
Lease liabilities	319,131	215,631	255,553	247,976
Derivative financial instruments	1,405,541	1,405,541	-	-
Taxation	2,815,144	2,219,261	4,986,549	3,496,447
Total current liabilities	52,364,525	38,652,533	36,649,750	25,753,394
Total liabilities	60,814,370	44,123,710	44,290,049	31,305,908
Total equity and liabilities	227,352,855	180,012,463	209,718,232	168,848,441
Net assets per share	1.857	1.515	1.844	1.533

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OMAN

SMES DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Riyada continues to support project owners

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During the first half of the year, the number of advisory beneficiaries reached 10,832, encompassing legal, financial, administrative, and marketing consultations, alongside specialised consultations in other fields.

Riyada also continued supporting project owners by preparing and reviewing economic feasibility studies, as the number of beneficiaries from workshops on preparing economic feasibility studies reached 6,113 during the first half of this year.

Furthermore, Riyada continues empowering technology- and innovation-based startups by developing capacities, facilitating access to finance and investment, and enhancing the supportive legislative environment for this sector. The programme comprises three main pillars: capacity building, funding and investment, and developing the legislative environment, contributing to creating a stimulating environment for startup growth.

The number of registered enterprises holding the Startup Card during the first half of 2026 reached approximately 321 enterprises, while the number of beneficiaries from workshops disseminating the culture of entrepreneurship, startups, and innovative financing mechanisms reached 17,755 enterprises.

The Entrepreneur Readiness Programme continued its role in developing entrepreneurial and managerial skills for SME owners and preparing them to meet labor market challenges and enhance the sustainability of their projects.

The programme targets aspiring individuals wishing to establish new projects, as well as existing enterprises, through foundation and enhancement tracks that focus on skill development in administration, marketing, finance, legislation, feasibility studies, innovation, and modern technologies.

During the first half of the year, the number of participants in the program reached 8,200 trainees, of whom 7,601 received the Entrepreneur Readiness Certificate.

Riyada also continues its efforts to support artisans and craft enterprises by providing support programs and facilities that contribute to developing craft products and raising their production efficiency, alongside streamlining support procedures via electronic services.

During the first half of the year, the total value of craft support approvals reached OMR4,209,013. The Authority received 8,394 applications, approving 3,469 of them based on beneficiaries' actual needs for equipment, supplies, and machinery.

The total number of craft training programs offered by the Authority during the first half of this year reached 86 programmes, with total beneficiaries reaching 1,828.

The Authority, in cooperation with the Development Bank, continued implementing financing programs directed at small and medium enterprises, helping empower them to expand and enhance their sustainability.

These programmes include financing local in-country value (ICV) projects, industrial projects, commercial franchising, working capital, and incubated enterprises, alongside the "Damin" (Guarantor) programme, which aims to facilitate SME access to finance.

During the first half of this year, the Authority received 555 financing applications with a total value of OMR48,928,711.

The Authority continues developing its digital ecosystem to streamline procedures and raise the efficiency of services provided to entrepreneurs through the electronic services portal, website, and entrepreneurship system.

The digital system offers an integrated suite of services, including issuing and renewing the Entrepreneurship Card, applying for advisory services, training programmes, and incubation services, and tracking requests electronically, in addition to updating enterprise data and displaying their products and services on the platform.

The Authority's website also continues to provide comprehensive content in both Arabic and English, comprising electronic services, programmes and initiatives, and legislation regulating the SME sector, alongside introductory information and supporting services, thereby enhancing ease of access to information and supporting digital transformation in the sector.

Riyada also works on marketing and promoting SME products and services, creating partnership opportunities for their development and qualification to boost their competitive and innovative capabilities, and offering support in building corporate identity for SMEs and startups through participation in domestic and international events and exhibitions. Up to the first half of this year, the Authority participated in 37 international exhibitions and 438 local exhibitions, with 28,275 enterprises benefiting from marketing programs and events, while 1,045 enterprises benefited from e-commerce.

The Omani Craft House serves as an outlet and platform gathering Omani products under one roof, encompassing 238 enterprises and showcasing 2,448 products across 8 craft categories. This enables SMEs and artisans to reach a broader customer base and bolster their market presence. The number of Omani Craft House branches reached 6, all linked to the digital platform, enhancing the market reach of craft products, boosting their competitiveness, and turning crafts into sustainable opportunities.

Riyada seeks to ensure that SMEs obtain business opportunities from procurements, contracts, and services within in-country value (ICV), in coordination with relevant entities. It works on developing local SME suppliers in innovative industries for ICV initiatives and studying and analysing investment opportunities arising from the ICV supply chain. Total business opportunities up to the first half of this year reached 2,176 opportunities, while the number of beneficiaries from the supplier development program reached 4,312. Additionally, the "Tas'eed" programme contributed to the transition of 296 small enterprises to medium enterprises, and 45 medium enterprises to large enterprises, following evaluation against precise and objective criteria, as part of efforts to support enterprise growth, enhance market sustainability and competitiveness, and expand their contribution to the national economy.

The results achieved during the first half of 2026 reaffirm the ongoing efforts of the SMEs Development Authority to develop the entrepreneurship ecosystem through executing qualitative programs and initiatives that respond to entrepreneurs' needs, promote SME growth, and elevate their capacity for innovation and competition, supporting sustainable economic development targets and bolstering this vital sector's contribution to the national economy. — ONA

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RECOGNITION

Made-in-Oman board game wins international award

Times News Service

MUSCAT: A board game designed and developed in Oman has earned international recognition after Abu Dhabi-based agribusiness group Al Dahra Holding won the Training Initiative of the Year award at the ICA Compliance Awards APAC & MENA 2026 for its ethics and compliance training programme built around the board game Fish Tycoon.

Developed by Muscat-based Arab Board Games, Fish Tycoon is a story-driven tabletop game that places participants in realistic workplace ethics and compliance dilemmas. Players vote, debate and make difficult decisions, with every choice shaping the outcome of their characters' stories and encouraging meaningful discussions around ethical conduct.

Corporate learning

Hasan Al Lawati, Founder of Arab Board Games, said the international recognition reflects the growing potential of Omani innovation in corporate learning.

"This award is a testament to the quality of Omani game design and our belief that training should be engaging, immersive and memorable. We have transformed learning from passive presentations into interactive experiences where participants become part of the story, making every decision count."

Over the past three years, Arab Board Games has developed a range of customised training games covering ethics and compliance, codes of conduct, health and safety, leadership, communication, alliance building and soft skills. The company has delivered its game-based learning experiences to organisations across Oman and the wider region, demonstrating how a product designed in Oman can compete successfully on the international stage.

Oil tanker explodes after hitting naval mine in Strait of Hormuz

Tasnim News Agency said Iran had "repeatedly warned beforehand that if ships deviate from Iran's designated route, they would bear the consequences themselves"

TEHRAN: Iranian media on Sunday reported that an oil tanker exploded after allegedly striking a naval mine in the Strait of Hormuz after deviating from a shipping route designated by Tehran.

According to Iran's Tasnim News Agency, the incident involved a "rogue" oil tanker that had reportedly departed from the route specified by Iranian authorities before colliding with a sea mine.

Tasnim said Iran had "repeatedly warned beforehand that if ships deviate from Iran's designated route, they would bear the consequences themselves."

Iranian authorities had not officially commented on the reported incident at the time of publication.

As per the CBS report, the regional officials both indicated that the US bombing was intentionally paused so as not to disrupt the delicate in-person diplomacy. It added that the White House and CENTCOM did not reply to requests for comment.

According to a report by The New York Times, military leaders cautioned that a broader campaign could dangerously deplete supplies of Patriot antimissile interceptors, exposing US troops, Gulf partners, and key installations to retaliatory strikes, while senior aides voiced concern over wider economic instability and escalating regional crises.

Earlier on July 25, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi accused the United States of deliberately violating the Iran-US memorandum of understanding by establishing an unauthorised alternative shipping route in the Strait of Hormuz and redirecting commercial vessels away from corridors designated by Tehran.

"It appeared that they insisted on creating other routes alongside the one Iran had designated to ensure safe and free passage [through the Strait of Hormuz]," Araghchi said, according to Press TV.

On Saturday (July 25), naval forces of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) targeted four commercial ships in the southern Strait of Hormuz over 24 hours, aiming to force the vessels to halt and alter course.

Iranian state broadcaster IRIB reported that the vessels were navigating an "illegal and unsafe route", though official channels did not disclose the names or nationalities of the intercepted ships.

Iran's FM Araghchi accuses US of deliberately violating MoU

Meanwhile, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi on Saturday accused the United States of deliberately violating the Iran-US memorandum of understanding by establishing an unauthorised alternative shipping route in the Strait of Hormuz and redirecting commercial vessels away from corridors designated by Tehran.

Citing the Foreign Minister's remarks from an interview with the Iran daily, Press TV reported that Araghchi emphasised that Article 5 of the memorandum was unambiguous and that Washington's actions went beyond a simple misunderstanding.

"It appeared that they insisted on creating other routes alongside the one Iran had designated to ensure safe and free passage [through the Strait of Hormuz]," Araghchi said, according to Press TV.

The foreign minister stated that American forces actively directed vessels away from the safe transit corridor specified by Iran, encouraging them instead to navigate the US-established alternative route.

Detailing the agreement, Araghchi clarified that Article 5 explicitly grants Tehran the authority to oversee shipping arrangements during the transitional post-war period. "When Article 5 says that 'Iran will make arrangements', it means that Iran determines the required route and mechanisms to restore traffic to pre-war levels within a month," Araghchi said.

According to the foreign minister, the designated one-month timeline was required to perform critical mine-clearing operations and implement essential safety measures before full commercial maritime operations could resume safely. Araghchi reiterated that setting up a "separate" route unilaterally was fundamentally inconsistent with the terms of the memorandum. He noted that under Article 5, any modifications or additions to shipping corridors required prior consultation with Iranian authorities.

"Article 5 explicitly stipulates that responsibility for demining lies with Iran," Araghchi affirmed, adding that U.S. deployment of a southern route roughly 10 days after reopening the strait was "truly a spiteful move".

Addressing broader regional relations following the conflict, Araghchi emphasised that Iran holds no hostility toward neighbouring nations and remains committed to building mutual trust.

While noting that diplomatic contact with regional neighbours remains continuous, Araghchi criticised countries that made their facilities available to US forces during the hostilities.

"There is no doubt that tensions currently exist in relations [with some regional countries] and this issue is quite natural and clear given the conflicts that have taken place," Press TV cited Araghchi as saying.

The Foriegn Minister further defended Iranian strikes against regional US bases and military installations, reiterating that "we believe this action was carried out entirely within the framework of our right to self-defence. "

Looking forward, Araghchi highlighted the need for a "period of trust-building," asserting that lasting regional stability must be achieved collectively rather than through reliance on external military powers.

"They also seek stability and economic progress, and we too seek a stable region. In fact, a collective understanding has now formed in the region that security and stability must be ensured collectively." Araghchi added. — Agencies

IN UKRAINE

Vessel carrying four Indians struck at Odesa port, two confirmed safe

KYIV: A merchant vessel carrying four Indian nationals on board was struck at the port of Odesa and two of them are safe while information is awaited regarding the other two persons, India's Embassy in Ukraine said on Sunday.

In a post on X, the Embassy said that search and rescue operations are being carried out.

The Indian Embassy also said that it is in touch with the concerned authorities.

Closely monitoring the situation

"Embassy of India in Ukraine is closely monitoring the situation following the incident involving MV AGN Ragnar which was struck at the Port of Odesa, on 25 July. Four Indian nationals were on board the vessel. As per the latest information, two have been confirmed safe, and information is awaited regarding the other two nationals. Search and rescue operations are underway. The Embassy is in constant touch with the concerned authorities," the Embassy said in a post on X.

The Indian Embassy also informed about the point of contact.

"Point of Contact, Embassy of India, Ukraine cons.kyiv@mea.gov.in, cons1.kyiv@mea.gov.in Our Emergency contact no. - +380933559958 Mr. Aji Kumar, SS (Consular) @MEAIndia," it said.

With the security situation in and around the Black Sea and adjoining maritime areas remaining highly volatile due to the Russia-Ukraine conflict, the government has advised Indian nationals intending to undertake employment on commercial vessels operating in the region to carefully assess the prevailing security risks before accepting such assignments.

In a detailed advisory for Indian nationals undertaking employment on commercial vessels operating in Black Sea region, the Ministry of External Affairs said it should be ensured that the terms of employment comply with applicable international maritime standards.

It said Indian nationals requiring consular assistance are advised to contact the Embassy of India or Consulates in the region. — ANI

SUDAN CIVIL WAR

Civilians used as 'human shields'

EL OBEID: Flattened houses and rubble where a school once stood: These are the scenes that have appeared in footage of the Sudanese city of El Obeid published by Ayin Network, a nonpartisan Sudanese media outlet. Drone attacks by the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) have caused enormous damage to civilian infrastructure, including power grids, transformers, water treatment plants, schools, universities and hospitals in the capital of North Kordofan.

The local population is struggling to survive, according to Ahmed Awad, project manager for the UK children's rights organisation Plan International, and a native of El Obeid. The city — whose population previously numbered half a million but has now become home to several hundred thousand internally displaced persons (IDP) — is under siege, he added.

There is a shortage of medical supplies as well as food and safe, clean water, and Awad said he saw long queues of IDPs at just one water pump: "Sometimes you can spend all day to get one liter of water for two or three days."

He added that a drone had hit a primary school and killed three children, which had caused trauma among other children, many of whom no longer dared go to school.

"One of the mothers said three of her children cannot sleep because always they are in fear of something happening again," he said, adding that Plan International tried "to provide psychosocial support" for people scared of drones that could hit a classroom at any time.

El Obeid: Trading hub in the desert

El Obeid is a strategically important location. The city is a trading hub in the middle of the desert on the only major route between Sudan's capital, Khartoum — which is controlled by the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) — and the western Darfur region, large parts of which are under the control of the RSF. Since the war began in 2023, the city has been captured by the RSF and recaptured by the army and allied militias many times.

El Obeid is currently controlled by the army, which has some 13,000 soldiers stationed there, and has been on the front line since fighting shifted from Darfur to Kordofan at the beginning of the year. The RSF has deployed troops to about 30 kilometers (18.6 miles) beyond the city limits, and has been using drones to bomb civilian infrastructure.

Analysts, aid organisations and the United Nations have warned that the RSF could soon capture El Obeid. They fear a similar scenario to that which unfolded in the city of El Fasher in the neighboring state of North Darfur in October 2025, when the RSF began by bombing infrastructure before storming the city after an 18-month siege.

Earlier this year, a UN Fact-Finding Mission for the Sudan presented to the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva detailed atrocities in the capture of the El Fasher and identified "hallmarks of genocide."

A joint appeal issued by several human rights organisations warned that an escalation of the situation could lead to a repeat of atrocities and human rights violations, as documented in El Fasher. "We are alarmed by the ongoing hostilities around the city, including frequent drone strikes," said Pekka Haavisto, the UN secretary general's personal envoy for Sudan, in June: "These are already affecting the civilians and affecting humanitarian aid to the city. Any further escalation of the situation would place thousands of people at risk."

Adam Mousa Eshag, director of the Sudanese organisation Darfur Victims Support Organisation (DVS), is currently based in Kampala, the capital of Uganda. He is in constant contact with people in Sudan and El Obeid for his research, for which he also spoke to SAF soldiers. He explained that one reason the RSF was bombing schools is that SAF soldiers had turned classrooms into barracks.

He said that this was also the case in El Fasher, when the army "used schools and even hospitals as barracks." He said soldiers were repeating this scenario in El Obeid and that was "the problem," as when the RSF attacked, "civilians paid the price" because they were being used as "human shields."

Francesco Lanino, deputy country director of Save the Children in Sudan, said the drone strikes targeting schools and IDP camps were causing severe trauma. "We met several children who refused to talk," he said, reporting on a recent visit to the Tawila IDP camp near El Fasher. "It's hard for them to understand why all of this is happening."

— DW

UNWAVERING COMMITMENT

Macron pledges national recovery as wildfires ravage France and Spain

PARIS: Pledging that the nation will overcome its ongoing crisis, French President Emmanuel Macron on Saturday praised the resilience of emergency crews and citizens as "a united people, standing shoulder to shoulder" against raging wildfires.

Macron, in a post on X, confirmed full civil and military deployment, including water-bomber planes and military transport aircraft.

"In these hours when the flames are severely testing our country, France reveals what it is: a united people, standing shoulder to shoulder. Thank you to our firefighters, our military personnel, the civil security forces, our gendarmes and police officers, as well as to the farmers and entrepreneurs, who through their commitment and courage, relentlessly combat the fires," Macron stated, noting that "All civil and military resources are mobilised: civil security aerial resources, Canadair, Dash, water-bomber helicopters, reinforcements from across France. One first illustrates the adaptability of our armed forces: the A400M is engaged in support of operations."

The fires have heavily impacted Gironde, Landes, Occitanie, Var, Hautes-Alpes, and Haute-Corse.

Acknowledging the scale of destruction, Macron noted that "thousands of hectares have been ravaged, homes destroyed, activities disrupted, lives upended".

However, the President assured affected residents, displaced families, local mayors, and prefects of the government's unwavering commitment and said, "We will rebuild, we will repair, and we will be there as long as it takes."

The French President further thanked Romania, Croatia, Germany, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia for dispatching critical emergency aid.

"This is Europe," Macron declared. "In times of trial, it brings to life the solidarity that defines it".

He also extended solidarity to neighbouring countries enduring similar conditions, adding that France's "thoughts also go to Spain, Italy, Greece, and all the peoples who are also facing wildfires".

Meanwhile, French Interior Minister Laurent Nunez, describing the crisis as a "historic situation" requiring a "historic mobilisation," announced that nearly 100,000 hectares have burned across the national territory. With around thirty fires simultaneously active, more than 167,000 people have been evacuated to ensure their safety.

The situation remains particularly critical in Gironde, where sudden weather shifts have altered the fire's dynamics.

"After a slight improvement last night and this morning, the forecasts are once again becoming unfavourable," Nunez warned. "The coming hours could be difficult."

Following a second interministerial crisis meeting within 24 hours, additional reinforcements have also been dispatched to Landes, Var, Corsica, and Hautes-Alpes.

"The ground resources of the firefighters have been massively redeployed to the Southwest in order to concentrate our efforts where the situation is most critical. 1,400 firefighters, 1,500 military personnel, and 1,700 internal security forces are now engaged in fighting the fires, protecting populations, and securing evacuated areas," he wrote in a post on X.

He noted that the healthcare network is actively managing the human toll, distributing 2.5 million FFP2 masks to protect against smoke, deploying 20 military ambulances, and delivering 3,500 camp beds. — ANI

SPORTS

AUSTRALIA SERIES

Major injury blow for Bangladesh

DHAKA: Bangladesh's preparations for their historic two-match Test series in Australia suffered a major setback on Saturday, with pace spearhead Nahid Rana ruled out after sustaining a Grade 2 left side strain.

The 23-year-old speedster is expected to be sidelined for six to eight weeks, making him unavailable for Bangladesh's first Test tour Down Under in 23 years.

Rana's absence is a major blow for Bangladesh; he has taken 44 international wickets this year, the most by any bowler, at an average of 18.31, including four five-wicket hauls, according to ESPNcricinfo.

"He is expected to require approximately four weeks for tissue healing, followed by a further two to four weeks of bowling workload progression," a BCB statement said, as quoted by ESPNcricinfo.

-ANI

Indian Sub-Junior Men's team defeat Pakistan 3-1 to win Gold

Goals from Romit Pal (5'), captain Ketan Kushwaha (12'), and Shahrukh Ali (13') crowned India as the Asian Champions

MUSCAT : The Indian Sub-Junior Men's Hockey Team produced a clinical performance to defeat arch-rivals Pakistan 3-1 in the Gold Medal match of the FIH Youth Hockey5s Asian Championship 2026 in Muscat.

Goals from Romit Pal (5'), captain Ketan Kushwaha (12'), and Shahrukh Ali (13') crowned India as the Asian Champions. With this victory, the Indian Men's team completed a dominant, unbeaten campaign, having also finished at the top of the Elite Pool table, according to a press release.

The summit clash saw India take early control with sharp passing and disciplined structure. Romit Pal (5') broke the deadlock in the first half, striking past the Pakistani goalkeeper to give India a 1-0 lead at half-time.

India extended their dominance early in the second half as captain Ketan Kushwaha (12') found the back of the net, followed immediately by a strike from Shahrukh Ali (13') to make it 3-0.

Pakistan pulled one goal back through Muhammad Usman (16'), but the Indian defence stood firm in the closing minutes to secure a 3-1 win and lift the trophy.

By virtue of reaching the final, both India and Pakistan have qualified for the inaugural FIH Youth Hockey5s World Cup.

In the women's competition, the Indian Sub-Junior Women's Team bagged the Silver Medal after a hard-fought contest in their final against China, ensuring both Indian contingents return home with medals.

Celebrating the stellar performances of both squads, Hockey India announced cash rewards for the teams. Each player of the Gold medal-winning Indian Men's Team will be rewarded with Rs 2 Lakhs, while each member of the support staff will receive Rs 1 Lakh.

Additionally, each player of the Silver medal-winning Indian Women's Team will receive Rs 1 Lakh, with Rs 50,000 awarded to each member of their support staff.

Women's Hockey team

Indian Women's Hockey team conclude FIH Youth Hockey5s Asian Championship with silver medal The Indian Women's Hockey Team finished as runners-up at the FIH Youth Hockey5s Asian Championship in Muscat, Oman, after going down 2-4 to China in the Final on Saturday.

India booked their place in the summit clash with a commanding 8-1 victory over Kazakhstan in the Semi-Final, according to a press release. China made a strong start to the Final, taking the lead through Tongtong Lu in the opening minute. Kexin Tang doubled China's advantage in the 5th minute before Jiaxin Guo made it 3-0 a minute later. India responded after the break as Nousheen Naz found the back of the net in the 13th minute to reduce the deficit.

However, Chen Ge restored China's three-goal lead in the 19th minute. Pushpa Manjhi scored in the 20th minute to give India hope, but China held on to register a 4-2 victory and lift the title.

Earlier in the Semi-Final, India produced a dominant display against Kazakhstan. Sandeepa Kumari opened the scoring in the 5th minute before Pushpa Manjhi struck in the 6th minute and added two more goals in the 8th minute to put India firmly in control.

Kazakhstan's Ayanat Mazhim scored in the 10th minute, but India continued to dictate the game. Captain Diya scored twice in the 13th and 16th minutes, while Shruti Kumari also found the net in the 16th minute. Nousheen Naz completed the scoring in the 20th minute as India sealed an emphatic 8-1 victory to book their place in the Final.

-ANI

TEST SERIES AGAINST PAKISTAN

We want to make him proud: Roston Chase says West Indies determined to honour Sir Gary Sobers' memory against Pakistan

PORT OF SPAIN: West Indies captain Roston Chase said Sir Garry Sobers' passing was a deeply emotional moment for West Indies cricket, adding that the team is determined to honour the legendary cricketer's legacy by giving their best in the two-match Test series against Pakistan, starting Saturday at the Brian Lara Stadium, Tarouba, Trinidad.

In a video posted by ESPNcricinfo, Chase said the West Indies team is determined to honour Sir Garry Sobers' legacy following his passing. He added that the team will give their best effort to make the legendary cricketer, themselves and the entire region proud.

"Sir Garry's a very important figure in West Indies cricket, so we really want to go out there and do it for him. Obviously, he passed away; that's a sad moment in the cricketing fraternity. But like I said, we just want to go out there and make him proud, make ourselves proud and make the entire region proud, so we're going to go out there and give it our all," Chase said.

Sobers, who passed away on July 17, represented the West Indies in 93 Test matches between 1954 and 1974, scoring 8,032 runs at an average of 57.78, including 26 centuries, while also claiming 235 wickets. His ability to excel as a left-handed batter, a versatile left-arm bowler capable of seam, orthodox spin and wrist spin, and a brilliant fielder earned him universal acclaim as one of the game's complete cricketers.

Among his greatest achievements was his unbeaten 365 against Pakistan in 1958, then the highest individual score in Test cricket, a record that stood for 36 years.

In 1968, while playing county cricket for Nottinghamshire, he became the first player to hit six sixes in a single over in first-class cricket, achieving the feat against Malcolm Nash of Glamorgan.

Knighted by Queen Elizabeth II in 1975 for his services to cricket, Sobers was later named one of Wisden's Five Cricketers of the 20th Century in 2000.

His legacy also lives on through the prestigious Sir Garfield Sobers Trophy, the ICC's annual award presented to the outstanding men's international cricketer across all formats.

Sobers' passing marks the end of one of cricket's most celebrated chapters, with tributes continuing to pour in from across the sporting world.

SERIE A

Neymar brace rescues Santos against Chapecoense

RIO DE JANEIRO: Neymar scored twice as Santos salvaged a 2-2 home draw with Chapecoense in Brazil's Serie A on Saturday.

Playing his first game since Brazil's elimination to Norway in the World Cup round of 16, Neymar opened the scoring with a first-time shot into the far corner following a slick exchange with Alvaro Barreal.

Marcinho equalized just after halftime before Joao Ananias gifted the visitors the lead by turning the ball into his own net.

Neymar put his side back on level terms in the 89th minute, converting a penalty after Gustavo Caballero was brought down by Bruno Matias.

The result leaves Santos 14th in the 20-team standings with 22 points, 12 ahead of last-placed Chapecoense.

In Curitiba, goals either side of halftime from Leozinho and Kevin Viveros gave Athletico Paranaense a 2-0 home win over Internacional.

Paranaense is third with 36 points while Internacional is 15th, 15 points further back.

In Saturday's only other fixture, Andres Gomez cancelled out Igor Formiga's first-half goal as Vasco da Gama earned a 1-1 home draw with Mirassol. -Xinhua

GCC STATES LEAD

Data released by the GCC Statistical Centre (GCC-Stat), indicate that GCC states achieved advanced global rankings across several key competitiveness indicators.

MSX INDEX ENDS HIGHER

The MSX index closed at 7,165.03 points, up by 0.67% from previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 0.12% at 573.03 points. Oman & Emirates Investment, up 9.82%, was the top gainer while, Muscat Finance, down 3.13%, was the top loser.

Duqm welcomes one of the world's largest container ships

The ship has a capacity of 18,000 TEUs and its arrival underscores the advanced operational readiness of ASYAD Container Terminal – Duqm and its ability to handle the latest generation of mega container ships efficiently and safely

Times News Service

MUSCAT: ASYAD Container Terminal – Duqm welcomed the CMA CGM Vasco da Gama on its maiden voyage, marking a new milestone as the largest container ship to call at the terminal since it began operations. This confirms the terminal's readiness to receive the new generation of mega container ships.

The ship has a capacity of 18,000 TEUs (20-foot equivalent units). Its arrival underscores the advanced operational readiness of ASYAD Container Terminal – Duqm and its ability to handle the latest generation of mega container ships efficiently and safely, thanks to its modern infrastructure, berths with suitable operating depths, and operational capabilities that meet the growing demands of the global container shipping sector.

Omar bin Mahmoud Al Mahrizi, CEO of ASYAD Ports and Freezones, stated that the arrival of the CMA CGM Vasco da Gama on its maiden voyage to ASYAD Container Terminal – Duqm demonstrates the terminal's advanced operational capabilities and reflects the growing confidence of major international shipping companies in the Sultanate of Oman.

He noted that as handling volumes and industrial investments in Duqm continue to grow, the terminal remains committed to providing world-class services and contributing to Duqm's position as a strategic gateway connecting regional and global markets.

ASYAD Container Terminal – Duqm enjoys a strategic location that enables it to meet the growing demand for import, export, and transshipment services by providing reliable and highly efficient container handling services focused on meeting customer needs and enhancing the competitiveness of supply chains.

FINANCIAL SERVICES AUTHORITY

Accounting and Auditing Profession Forum highlights global best practices

MUSCAT: The Accounting and Auditing Profession Forum in Oman commenced on Sunday under the theme "Professional Rules to Enhance Credibility."

Organised by the Financial Services Authority (FSA) with the participation of representatives and personnel from accounting and auditing firms, the two-day event aims to discuss key industry trends.

The interactive forum seeks to regulate and develop the accounting and auditing profession, keep pace with international developments, enhance the efficiency of operating institutions, and elevate the quality of professional practices in line with best international standards as well as legislative and regulatory advancements.

Ahmed Ali Al Maamari, Executive Vice CEO of the Financial Services Authority, emphasised that the forum comes as an extension of the Authority's efforts to develop and regulate the accounting and auditing profession, continuing an ongoing dialogue with industry practitioners. He added that the seminar serves as an open space for dialogue, experience exchange, listening to perspectives and feedback, and discussing practical challenges facing practitioners.

He pointed out that effective regulation begins with building awareness, disseminating knowledge, establishing professional values, and enabling practitioners to address and rectify shortcomings before resorting to regulatory measures required by laws, noting that rules and regulations define the minimum level of compliance, whereas professional culture creates excellence.

He added that the Authority aspires to build a professional environment based on partnership and shared responsibility, where roles integrate and visions align, thereby contributing to elevating audit quality, bolstering the reliability of financial reporting, protecting the public interest, supporting the national economy, and enhancing the standing and competitiveness of the accounting and auditing profession both locally and internationally.

The forum addressed three main pillars aimed at developing the accounting and auditing profession and enhancing practice quality. The first pillar centered on the initiative to activate the register of trainee accountants, aimed at surveying trainee accountants and constructing an integrated database for them. This will contribute to designing training programmes aligned with their needs and outlining clear career paths that support the qualification and development of national talents. Furthermore, technical updates to the electronic system and registration mechanism were reviewed, along with the desired objectives of activating this register.

In the second pillar, the Authority reviewed the most prominent violations detected during regulatory inspection visits to accounting and auditing firms to raise professional awareness and boost compliance with regulatory requirements and professional standards. These violations included issuing audit reports without conducting actual audit procedures, non-compliance with International Standards on Auditing, enabling unlicensed individuals to practice the profession, and combining audit services with the preparation of financial statements for audit clients, thereby impacting auditor independence.

The forum also included a panel discussion addressing key developments occurring in the accounting and auditing profession, the main challenges and opportunities facing the sector, and ways to advance the profession and elevate accounting and auditing quality.

The forum highlighted major legislative and regulatory developments in the profession. The Authority prepared the draft of the new Executive Regulation of the Law and referred it for approval. Additionally, during 2026, it issued an external circular regarding the retention of audit files within the Sultanate of Oman and an external circular regarding the completion of registration and licensing procedures to practice accounting and auditing, as part of its ongoing efforts to develop the regulatory environment, enhance compliance with professional requirements, and keep pace with regulatory and supervisory developments.

The forum also reviewed the mechanism for activating the register of trainee accountants, as well as the requirements of the International Standard on Quality Management (ISQM) and key practices associated with its implementation in firms, alongside its role in enhancing audit quality and raising the efficiency of quality management systems in line with modern professional requirements.

The first day of the forum concluded with an open dialogue session bringing together the Authority and representatives of accounting and auditing firms to address their inquiries and hear their views and suggestions, thereby contributing to developing the profession's regulatory environment and strengthening partnerships with practitioners. During the second day, a number of International Standards on Auditing will be reviewed to deepen practitioners' understanding of their requirements and application mechanisms.

As part of its ongoing efforts to develop the profession, the Financial Services Authority continues preparing to launch a national initiative aimed at developing workforce competencies in the accounting and auditing sector, set to roll out starting next year to build professional capabilities and elevate practice quality.

It is worth noting that holding the forum comes within the 2026 regulatory plan of the Financial Services Authority, as part of its efforts to enhance the quality of the accounting and auditing profession and raise compliance levels with regulatory and professional requirements by reviewing major supervisory developments, exchanging expertise, and discussing challenges and opportunities that contribute to developing the profession. -ONA

LAUNCHES NATIONAL EMPLOYMENT POLICY

Work Forum opens to shape Oman's future labour market

SALALAH: The activities of the Work Forum 2026 commenced at the Sultan Qaboos Youth Complex for Culture and Entertainment in Salalah on Sunday.

Organised by the Ministry of Labour, the forum is part of its ongoing efforts to foster national dialogue on the future of the labour market, develop policies and legislation, and foresee economic and technological transformations, thereby contributing to building a more efficient, flexible, and sustainable labour market. The event will run through 13 August.

The opening of the forum was held under the auspices of Sheikh Salim Mustahail Al Maashani, Advisor at the Diwan of Royal Court, in the presence of several officials from within and outside Oman.

Nasser Salim Al Hadrami, Director General of the Directorate General of Labour in Dhofar Governorate, delivered a speech emphasising that the Ministry of Labour is moving steadily towards developing the labour market through partnership and innovation.

He noted that the launch of the National Employment Policy represents a strategic milestone laying the groundwork for a new phase in national talent development and converting it into a driving force for economic growth, thus enhancing the labor market's readiness for future requirements.

For his part, Fayez Ali Al Mutairi, Director-General of the Arab Labour Organization, praised the qualitative development achieved by the Sultanate of Oman over the past two years in its labour system.

This has been realised through completing executive frameworks for the Labour Law, updating the social protection system, and issuing legislation and regulations governing modern work patterns, alongside developing the unified system for extending insurance protection to GCC citizens working outside their home countries, and issuing the occupational diseases regulation, thereby strengthening the social protection ecosystem and establishing a safer and more stable work environment.

In turn, Mohammad Hassan Al Obaidli, Director General of the Executive Bureau of the Council of Ministers of Labour and Council of Ministers of Social Affairs in the GCC States, affirmed that GCC countries have achieved tangible progress in developing labor legislation, social insurance, employment and training programs, digital transformation, and occupational safety. He underscored the importance of enhancing Gulf coordination, exchanging expertise, developing joint indicators to anticipate labor market needs, and building regional and international partnerships that contribute to supporting the development journey.

The opening ceremony witnessed the launch of the National Employment Policy, which aims to address employment challenges, organise supply and demand sides in alignment with economic and social policies, and provide decent and fair job opportunities.

This is to be achieved by developing the skills of the national workforce, aligning them with current and future labour market needs, enhancing labour market governance, raising the efficiency of its institutions and programmes, and mitigating the repercussions of crises, thereby supporting labour market recovery and placing human capital at the core of development.

The opening ceremony also featured the screening of three visual films titled "Oman: Land of Beauty and Opportunity," "Empowerment and Localization," and "Inspiring Entrepreneurs," alongside honoring strategic partners, success partners, and a number of entrepreneurs.

On the sidelines of the forum, the student projects exhibition "Future Talents: Thought and Action" was inaugurated. Running until 29 July, the exhibition showcases examples of student projects and innovations, reflecting youth capabilities for innovation, promoting an entrepreneurial culture, and linking entrepreneurial ideas with labor market needs.

The forum's activities also include organising the Work Horizons Forum titled "Toward a Safe and Sustainable Labor Market," a meeting between the Minister of Labour and business owners, labor market labs, an excellence and leadership honoring ceremony, the Individual and Institutional Excellence System Forum, and the "Government Readiness for a Sustainable Future" conference.

It is worth noting that the forum serves as a national platform for dialogue, experience exchange, and partnership building, as well as discussing priority labor market issues to contribute to policy development, productivity enhancement, national talent empowerment, and the establishment of a more competitive and sustainable work environment, ultimately leading to a labor market capable of keeping pace with changes and turning challenges into developmental opportunities. -ONA

MARKET

MSX index ends higher

Oman & Emirates Investment, up 9.82%, was the top gainer while, Muscat Finance, down 3.13%, was the top loser

MUSCAT: The MSX index closed at 7,165.03 points, up by 0.67% from previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 0.12% at 573.03 points. Oman & Emirates Investment, up 9.82%, was the top gainer while, Muscat Finance, down 3.13%, was the top loser. Shares of Sohar International Bank were the most active in terms of number of shares traded while Bank Muscat were the most active in terms of turnover.

A total number of 8698 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating turnover of RO 45.92 million, with more than 167.38 million shares changing hands.

Out of 77 traded securities, 27 advanced, 19 declined, and 31 remained unchanged. At the session close, GCC & Arab investors were net buyers for RO 779K while domestic investors were net sellers for RO 723K, followed by foreign investors for RO 55K worth of shares.

Financial Index closed at 12,755.59 points, up 0.72%. Prices of Oman & Emirates Investment, Al Batinah Development Company, Al Madina Investments, Sohar International Bank, Global Financial Investments were up by 9.82%, 9.09%, 6.06%, 3.49%, 2.08% respectively. Prices of Muscat Finance, Al Madina Takaful, Oman United Insurance were down by 3.13%, 0.87%, 0.63% respectively.

Industrial Index closed at 9,402.90 points, up 0.40%. Prices of Galfar Engineering, Gulf Mushroom Products, A'Saffa Foods were up by 4.35%, 0.24%, 0.13% respectively. Prices of Oman Chlorine, Al Maha Ceramics, Gulf International Chemicals, Jazeera Steel Products were down by 2.45%, 1.59%, 1.45%, 0.60% respectively.

Services Index was up by 0.46% before closing at 2,854.39 points. Prices of Al Batinah Power, Al Suwadi Power, Barka Desalination, Barka Desalination, Musandam Power were up by 6.25%, 6.25%, 3.13%, 3.13%, 3.03% respectively. Prices of Al Jazeera Services, Renaissance Services, Sembcorp Salalah, Barka Water & Power Company, Abraj Energy were down by 1.89%, 1.05%, 0.77%, 0.63%, 0.55% respectively. — United Securities

OMAN STOCKS

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE

INDICES

Index	High	Low	Value	Prev . Value	Diff	Diff %
MSX 30 INDEX	7,165.20	7,087.34	7,165.03	7,117.20	47.83	0.67 %
FINANCIAL INDEX	12,755.59	12,533.97	12,755.59	12,664.06	91.53	0.72 %
Industry Index	9,416.88	9,347.61	9,402.90	9,365.19	37.71	0.40 %
Services Index	2,863.40	2,840.05	2,854.39	2,841.36	13.03	0.46 %
MSX Shariah Index	574.18	571.81	573.03	572.37	0.66	0.12 %
MSX TR INDEX	11,085.39	10,964.93	11,085.13	11,011.13	74.00	0.67 %
FINANCIAL TR IDX	15,682.33	15,409.87	15,682.33	15,569.80	112.53	0.72 %
INDUSTRIAL TR IDX	12,060.64	11,971.92	12,042.72	11,994.43	48.29	0.40 %
SERVICES TR IDX	3,836.41	3,805.13	3,824.35	3,806.88	17.46	0.46 %
FIXED INCOME INDEX	1,253.83	1,253.83	1,253.83	1,253.83	0.00	0.00 %

Trading Summary

Volume	Turnover	Trades	Market Cap	Up	Down	Equal	Sec. Traded
167,387,554	45,918,886	8,698	37,285,407,482	27	19	31	77

SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR SUNDAY, JULY 26

REGULAR MARKET

ISIN	SECURITY NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR.	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF (RO)	DIFF %	LAST PR	LAST BID	LAST OFFER	PAR VALUE	MARKET CAP
OM0000001681	OMAN EMIRATES HO.	8,429	1,016	5	0.112	0.123	0.112	0.123	0.112	0.011	9.821	0.123	0.108	0.123	0.100	15,740,156
OM0000004925	ALBATINAH POWER	99,880	16,797	19	0.164	0.175	0.164	0.170	0.160	0.010	6.250	0.170	0.170	0.173	0.100	114,730,863
OM0000004933	AL SUWADI POWER	388,186	63,817	30	0.160	0.170	0.160	0.170	0.160	0.010	6.250	0.170	0.170	0.170	0.100	121,449,078
OM0000003398	SOHAR INTERNATIONAL BANK	44,538,129	7,678,184	1,465	0.172	0.178	0.170	0.178	0.172	0.006	3.488	0.178	0.174	0.178	0.100	1,366,329,010
OM0000008710	BARKA DESALINATION	155	26	1	0.165	0.165	0.165	0.165	0.160	0.005	3.125	0.165	0.158	0.165	0.100	12,461,130
OM0000007811	MUSANDAM POWER	112	38	1	0.340	0.340	0.340	0.340	0.330	0.010	3.030	0.340	0.320	0.340	0.100	23,932,600
OM0000003125	GLOBAL FINANCIAL INVESTMENT HO.	175,300	51,372	13	0.290	0.295	0.290	0.294	0.288	0.006	2.083	0.294	0.280	0.290	0.100	58,800,000
OM0000009908	OQ BASE INDUSTRIES (SFZ)	34,913,496	8,238,240	1,946	0.235	0.238	0.235	0.238	0.234	0.004	1.709	0.238	0.236	0.238	0.040	823,358,822
OM0000010120	ASYAD SHIPPING	11,545,142	2,842,327	1,080	0.244	0.248	0.244	0.247	0.243	0.004	1.646	0.247	0.248	0.247	0.000	1,286,559,837
OM0000004420	BANK NIZWA	271,732	36,325	34	0.133	0.135	0.133	0.134	0.133	0.001	0.752	0.134	0.134	0.135	0.100	299,751,706
OM0000002796	BANK MUSCAT	24,842,193	9,536,610	1,342	0.383	0.385	0.383	0.385	0.383	0.002	0.522	0.385	0.386	0.385	0.100	2,889,962,869
OM0000001533	OMINVEST	2,000	765	2	0.382	0.383	0.382	0.383	0.382	0.001	0.262	0.383	0.382	0.383	0.100	430,053,049
OM0000002267	GULF MUSHROOM PRODUCTS	195,505	81,263	45	0.419	0.420	0.410	0.420	0.419	0.001	0.239	0.420	0.420	0.420	0.100	21,143,798
OM0000002804	ASAFFA FOODS	20,530	15,399	3	0.748	0.754	0.748	0.750	0.749	0.001	0.134	0.754	0.754	0.759	0.100	90,000,000
OM0000001152	OMAN NATL ENGINEERING & INVEST	30,000	4,350	3	0.145	0.145	0.145	0.145	0.145	0.000	0.000	0.145	0.145	0.149	0.100	21,750,000
OM0000001483	NATIONAL BANK OMAN	4,112,365	1,850,440	10	0.450	0.450	0.448	0.450	0.450	0.000	0.000	0.450	0.448	0.455	0.100	731,675,860
OM0000001509	DHOFAR INTL DEVELOPMENT & INVEST	4,770	1,244	9	0.260	0.261	0.260	0.261	0.261	0.000	0.000	0.261	0.261	0.261	0.100	129,470,653
OM0000001707	OMAN CABLES INDUSTRY	5,554	18,328	4	3.296	3.300	3.296	3.300	3.300	0.000	0.000	3.300	3.300	3.300	0.100	296,010,000
OM0000001749	OMAN CEMENT	1,500	868	2	0.580	0.580	0.575	0.575	0.575	0.000	0.000	0.575	0.556	0.600	0.100	190,251,808
OM0000002077	AL OMANIYA FINANCIAL SERVICES	11,834	1,787	1	0.151	0.151	0.151	0.151	0.151	0.000	0.000	0.151	0.000	0.155	0.100	47,627,967
OM0000002374	UNITED FINANCE	291,969	26,282	10	0.091	0.091	0.090	0.090	0.090	0.000	0.000	0.090	0.088	0.090	0.100	32,051,457
OM0000002440	AL SHARQIYA INVESTMENT HO.	24,560	2,466	7	0.102	0.102	0.100	0.100	0.100	0.000	0.000	0.100	0.100	0.103	0.100	9,000,000
OM0000002549	BANK DHOFAR	155,000	35,122	71	0.228	0.230	0.224	0.224	0.224	0.000	0.000	0.224	0.220	0.224	0.100	680,914,871
OM0000003000	Al MAHA PETROLEUM PRODS MRKTNG	300	345	1	1.150	1.150	1.150	1.150	1.150	0.000	0.000	1.150	1.150	1.150	0.100	79,350,000
OM0000003661	VOLTAMP ENERGY	27,143	4,437	20	0.163	0.165	0.163	0.163	0.163	0.000	0.000	0.164	0.164	0.164	0.010	163,000,000
OM0000004248	SMN POWER HOLDING	2,850	576	2	0.202	0.202	0.202	0.202	0.202	0.000	0.000	0.202	0.182	0.200	0.100	40,326,391
OM0000005963	PHOENIX POWER	1,281,216	314,118	71	0.245	0.247	0.245	0.245	0.245	0.000	0.000	0.245	0.245	0.246	0.100	358,337,358
OM0000009072	OQ GAS NETWORKS	24,383,454	4,716,499	1,231	0.195	0.195	0.192	0.195	0.195	0.000	0.000	0.195	0.192	0.195	0.100	844,471,664
OM0000003968	OOREDOO	30,215	9,626	14	0.320	0.320	0.316	0.318	0.319	-0.001	-0.313	0.318	0.315	0.318	0.100	207,000,265
OM0000003026	OMAN TELECOM	3,290,076	4,266,655	117	1.297	1.300	1.292	1.293	1.298	-0.005	-0.385	1.293	1.293	1.293	0.100	969,750,000
OM0000002572	OMAN OIL MARKETING	800	960	1	1.200	1.200	1.200	1.200	1.205	-0.005	-0.415	1.200	1.200	1.200	0.100	73,530,000
OM0000009759	OQ EXPLORATION AND PRODUCTION	7,133,335	3,117,990	204	0.440	0.440	0.437	0.438	0.440	-0.002	-0.455	0.438	0.400	0.438	0.010	3,504,000,000
OM0000008934	ABRAJ ENERGY SERVICES	5,508,320	2,004,571	125	0.364	0.365	0.362	0.362	0.364	-0.002	-0.549	0.362	0.363	0.362	0.100	278,812,400
OM0000002176	JAZEERA STEEL PRODUCTS	361,540	298,271	73	0.825	0.825	0.825	0.825	0.830	-0.005	-0.602	0.825	0.824	0.825	0.100	103,040,817
OM0000003141	BARKA WATER AND POWER	2,870	457	5	0.160	0.160	0.159	0.159	0.160	-0.001	-0.625	0.159	0.159	0.169	0.100	25,440,000
OM0000001087	OMAN UNITED INSURANCE	13,897	4,378	4	0.315	0.315	0.315	0.315	0.317	-0.002	-0.631	0.315	0.311	0.315	0.100	33,075,000
OM0000004735	SEMBCORP SALALAH	26,444	6,788	12	0.257	0.257	0.256	0.257	0.259	-0.002	-0.772	0.257	0.251	0.258	0.100	245,324,991
OM0000004768	MADINA TAKAFUL	23,000	2,636	7	0.115	0.115	0.114	0.114	0.115	-0.001	-0.870	0.114	0.114	0.115	0.100	19,950,000
OM0000003224	RENAISSANCE SERVICES	114,755	32,380	12	0.284	0.284	0.282	0.282	0.285	-0.003	-1.053	0.282	0.275	0.282	0.100	66,667,620
OM0000002226	ALJAZEERA SERVICES	10,000	2,600	1	0.260	0.260	0.260	0.260	0.265	-0.005	-1.887	0.260	0.245	0.270	0.100	11,139,178
Total	40	163,848,556	45,286,351	8,003												

Parallel Market

ISIN	SECURITY NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR.	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF (RO)	DIFF %	LAST PR	LAST BID	LAST OFFER	PAR VALUE	MARKET CAP
OM0000001962	AL MADINA INVESTMENT HOLDING	60,900	1,950	7	0.033	0.035	0.031	0.035	0.033	0.002	6.061	0.035	0.030	0.035	0.100	2,975,000
OM0000003521	GALFAR ENGINEERING & CONTRACTING.	22,950	3,728	9	0.165	0.168	0.162	0.168	0.161	0.007	4.348	0.168	0.162	0.168	0.100	34,101,723
OM0000007910	AMAN REAL ESTATE	1,211	90	4	0.074	0.077	0.074	0.077	0.074	0.003	4.054	0.077	0.071	0.077	0.100	15,400,000
OM0000001160	NATIONAL GAS	245,261	26,241	40	0.105	0.110	0.105	0.109	0.105	0.004	3.810	0.109	0.107	0.115	0.100	9,265,000
OM0000004776	TAKAFUL OMAN	2,020	133	3	0.066	0.066	0.066	0.066	0.065	0.001	1.538	0.066	0.064	0.066	0.100	16,500,000
OM0000008447	OMAN REIT FUND	11,960	1,275	9	0.106	0.108	0.106	0.108	0.107	0.001	0.935	0.108	0.108	0.108	0.100	90,905,753
OM0000005260	OMAN ARAB BANK	185,448	45,069	88	0.243	0.244	0.243	0.244	0.242	0.002	0.826	0.244	0.244	0.243	0.100	488,669,373
OM0000008868	THE PEARL REIF	3,751	661	4	0.176	0.177	0.176	0.177	0.176	0.001	0.568	0.177	0.173	0.177	0.100	104,684,328
OM0000001889	SALALAH MILLS	1,000	671	1	0.671	0.671	0.671	0.671	0.671	0.000	0.000	0.671	0.671	0.671	0.100	41,912,716
OM0000001897	MAJAN COLLEGE	124	16	1	0.133	0.133	0.133	0.133	0.133	0.000	0.000	0.133	0.131	0.133	0.100	13,167,000
OM0000002168	AL ANWAR CERAMIC	76,493	10,103	17	0.137	0.137	0.130	0.134	0.134	0.000	0.000	0.134	0.133	0.134	0.100	29,480,000
OM0000002200	AHLI BANK	5,454	1,158	2	0.193	0.214	0.193	0.214	0.214	0.000	0.000	0.214	0.193	0.220	0.100	594,554,256
OM0000007084	MUSCAT CITY DESALINATION	23,350	2,055	3	0.088	0.088	0.088	0.088	0.088	0.000	0.000	0.088	0.088	0.091	0.100	13,688,435
OM0000007407	DHOFAR GENERATING	5,000	400	1	0.080	0.080	0.080	0.080	0.080	0.000	0.000	0.080	0.075	0.085	0.100	17,779,200
OM0000009569	JABAL REIF	20,000	2,080	1	0.104	0.104	0.104	0.104	0.104	0.000	0.000	0.104	0.104	0.104	0.100	18,096,000
OM0000011151	OMIFCO	2,076,636	392,237	445	0.190	0.190	0.187	0.189	0.190	-0.001	-0.526	0.189	0.189	0.189	0.000	1,264,291,875
OM0000010823	OMAN GATEWAY FUND	2,832	2,763	5	0.975	0.980	0.975	0.980	0.994	-0.014	-1.408	0.980	0.970	0.990	0.000	26,798,344
OM0000002028	GULF INTERNATIONAL CHEMICALS	61,585	4,244	11	0.069	0.069	0.068	0.068	0.069	-0.001	-1.449	0.068	0.068	0.069	0.100	1,428,000
OM0000005005	ALMAHA CERAMICS	5,626	1,459	4	0.260	0.260	0.247	0.247	0.251	-0.004	-1.594	0.247	0.238	0.276	0.100	13,585,000
OM0000002341	OMAN CHLORINE	5,000	795	2	0.159	0.159	0.159	0.159	0.163	-0.004	-2.454	0.159	0.151	0.159	0.100	11,369,906
OM0000001590	MUSCAT FINANCE	63,640	4,105	7	0.066	0.066	0.059	0.062	0.064	-0.002	-3.125	0.062	0.061	0.065	0.100	19,043,072
OM0000003711	SOHAR POWER	271	64	2	0.267	0.267	0.220	0.220	0.243	-0.023	-9.465	0.220	0.220	0.245	0.100	4,400,000
Total	22	2,880,512	501,296	666												

GCC-STAT

GCC economies excel in key global competitiveness indicators

MUSCAT: Data released by the GCC Statistical Centre (GCC-Stat), indicate that GCC states achieved advanced global rankings across several key competitiveness indicators. These results reflect the strength of their economic and institutional performance and their leadership in numerous areas of development.

The data is based on the findings of the IMD World Competitiveness Yearbook 2026 issued by the International Institute for Management Development (IMD).

The Sultanate of Oman ranked sixth globally in the Tax Policy indicator under the Government Efficiency factor. This achievement reflects the competitiveness of its tax environment and its role in enhancing investment attractiveness.

The United Arab Emirates ranked first globally in the International Trade indicator and also topped the Economic Performance factor, underscoring the strength of its trade openness and the competitiveness of its economy.

The State of Qatar ranked second globally in the Labor Market indicator under the Business Efficiency factor, reflecting the efficiency and attractiveness of its labour market.

Meanwhile, the Kingdom of Bahrain ranked third globally in the Price Stability indicator under the Economic Performance factor, highlighting the success of its policies in maintaining economic stability.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia ranked third globally in the Basic Infrastructure indicator under the infrastructure factor, reflecting the continued development of infrastructure projects and their role in supporting economic growth.

Under the Government Efficiency factor, Kuwait ranked third globally in the Public Finance indicator, reflecting the strength of its fiscal position and the efficient management of public resources.

These results highlight the advanced standing of GCC states in international competitiveness indicators and reaffirm the success of the economic policies and structural reforms implemented by GCC countries to strengthen their business environments, achieve sustainable development and enhance their competitiveness globally. -ONA

RECOGNITION

BankDhofar wins Excellence in Digital Transformation in Financial Services Award 2026

MUSCAT: BankDhofar was awarded the Excellence in Digital Transformation in Financial Services Award 2026 at the Muscat Daily Cyber Security & Cloud Conference and Awards, recently held in Muscat, in recognition of its continuous efforts to enhance its digital banking services and adopt the latest technologies and innovative solutions that improve customer experience and increase operational efficiency.

This achievement reflects the successful execution of the bank's digital strategy through the launch of a range of advanced digital services and platforms that keep pace with developments in the banking sector and meet the evolving needs of both individual and corporate customers, further reinforcing BankDhofar's position as a leading institution in digital transformation within the Sultanate of Oman.

BankDhofar reaffirmed its ongoing commitment to advancing secure digital banking services and strengthening its leadership in cybersecurity through its participation in the conference.

Mohammed Ali Al Mahruqi, Head of IT Security Technology Infrastructure at BankDhofar, participated as a speaker alongside a distinguished group of experts and specialists from the banking, cybersecurity, and technology sectors in a panel discussion titled "FinTech Security, Fraud Prevention and Digital Trust."

The session explored the growing challenges associated with protecting digital financial services amid the rapid adoption of artificial intelligence, instant payment systems, and digital banking platforms. Speakers also discussed strategies for enhancing cyber resilience and maintaining customer trust as financial institutions accelerate their digital transformation initiatives and embrace emerging technologies.

BankDhofar's participation reflects its growing position as one of Oman's leading digitally enabled financial institutions, with secure digital infrastructure, cybersecurity, and customer trust forming key pillars of the bank's digital transformation strategy.

Over the past few years, the bank has made significant investments in developing secure digital banking services through the launch of several innovative initiatives, including the Intilaqa digital account opening application, Dhofar Pay, Samsung Pay, and a dedicated digital banking platform for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). These solutions are supported by advanced security controls designed to protect customer data, secure digital transactions, and ensure the resilience and efficiency of the bank's technology infrastructure.

SUMMER BENEFITS

Drive into summer with Jetour - Exclusive offers and four X90 Plus SUVs to be won

MUSCAT: MHD Automobiles, the authorised distributor of Jetour vehicles in the Sultanate of Oman, is giving customers an exciting opportunity to drive home a new Jetour with exceptional summer benefits available only until 1 August.

As part of the limited-time offer, customers purchasing a new Jetour can enjoy a range of complimentary ownership benefits, including:

- Free insurance and registration
- Free service up to 50,000 km on select models
- Free window tinting on the Jetour G700
- A chance to win one of four Jetour X90 Plus SUVs

Customers can also take advantage of attractive starting prices across some of Jetour's most popular models:

- Jetour T1 2.0T 2WD COM from OMR 9,990

- Jetour T2 2.0T 4WD 7DCT from OMR 11,990
- Jetour G700 2.0T COM from OMR 19,990

Commenting on the campaign, Mohsin Hani Al Bahrani, CEO of MHD ACERE, said: "The Jetour Summer Tactical Offer has been designed to provide our customers with exceptional value while making premium, feature-rich mobility more accessible. In addition to competitive prices and complimentary ownership benefits, customers also have the exciting opportunity to win one of four Jetour X90 Plus SUVs. With the campaign ending soon, we encourage customers to visit their nearest Jetour showroom and take advantage of this outstanding offer before it concludes."

Jetour's growing line-up in Oman combines bold design, advanced technology, spacious interiors and strong performance, making the brand an attractive choice for customers seeking capable and versatile SUVs.

The offer is available at Jetour showrooms in Azaiba, Mabela, Barka, Sohar, Buraimi, Salalah and the Mall of Oman.

CONNECT PRINT EDITION

RENT

CARGO

VACANCY

JOB WANTED

ENGINEER

Diploma holder, experienced MEP engineer with 12yrs of expertise in electrical, mechanical and plumbing works, possesses a valid D/L. Looking for a suitable opportunity in Oman.

Contact, WA +968 79880602, +91 7200747471

ENGINEER

MECHANICAL ENGINEER (Indian)

B.Tech with 14 yrs of Oman experience as an Estimation Engineer, specializing in steel sheet metal fabrication. Currently in India, available for immediate joining.

WA/Call: +968 95945230, +91 7356745478

Email: arungopalakrishnan85@yahoo.com

FINANCE

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

CONTACT : 75156709

JOB VACANCY

Al ABRAR ENGINEERING LLC

REQUIRED URGENTLY

Reputed SME Subcontractors

Project: Hay Al Wafaa - Sultante Haitham City, Al Seeb

1) Concrete works including Formwork and Bar bending
2) Plastering
3) Tile works
4) Painting works
5) False ceiling works
6) Electrical works
7) Plumbing works
8) Landscaping works
9) Marble fixing

Contact Person: Mr. Jawed Tariq,
Procurement Specialist - [Mob.: +968 9986 1679]

SALES & MARKETING

Seeking a suitable position in

SALES, MARKETING

having 16 yrs of experience in Oman & 25 yrs of total experience in the field of Infrastructure, Industrial and Building material products.
BE Mechanical, DIM, Valid D/L

Contact: 9497 6056

SUPPLY CHAIN

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

Contact : 92813310

FINANCE

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

Contact/WA: +968-95877725

ADVERTISE WITH US

Send your advt. to: amcoman@choueirigroup.com

JOB WANTED

ACCOUNTS/FINANCE

Accountant in Oman seeks a job. Contact : 92106856

CA (Inter), 26 yrs experience as an Internal auditor in RGO , Oman,and 8 yrs experience in manufacturing unit accounts & finance Manager. Looking for a suitable position. Immediate Joining. Contact 96027715

40yr female (MBA finance) as accountant 14 yrs experience in Oman with D/L & own car. Contact: 98582376

Indian finance professional, male, with 32+ yrs of experience in financial management, budgeting, and accounting, having Omani D/L with car & valid visa with NOC . Contact +968-97078438. Email santhu2006@hotmail.com

ACCOUNTS/FINANCE

Doing CA, 30 yrs experience in accounts, trading, FMCG, manufacturing unit , can handle accounts department individually till finalisation and Vat returns. Looking for a suitable position. Immediate joining Contact 74169035

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

ARCHITECT

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.

DESIGNER/AUTOCAD D/MAN

Experienced Indian male, 23 yrs old, seeks job in Interior designing. Skilled in AutoCAD and 3D design software. Contact: 95863868.

DRIVER

Driver with 13 yrs experience looking for job in Muscat. Contact: 93381270, 79737474

EDUCATION/ TRAINING

TESOL /TEFL certified Montessori, kindergarten teacher seeking a position in a reputed school/ kindergarten. Currently in Oman on a family visa with a valid Oman D/L. Contact: 76963122. Email: sajiresmi@gmail.com

ENGINEER

Electrical Engineer (B.Tech) with more than 2 yrs of experience in Oman, seeking an opportunity in the Electrical or MEP field, valid Oman D/L and available to join immediately. Contact: 75220047 Email: harikrishnanmini @gmail.com

Mechanical Engineer with 11+yrs experience in projects & marketing in Oman having valid D/L. Seeking suitable placement. Contact : 91162085

Biomedical Engineer, Clinical engineer (B.Tech)- female skilled in MATLAB, Proteus, LabView. Contact: 79902099

Cep electrical engineer seeks placement. Contact 94768845

IT

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

LOGISTICS

Business Administration finalist specializing in Transportation & Operations, with 2+ years of experience in logistics holding valid Oman D/L. Contact: +968 90102466 Email: thejasak18@gmail.com

Experienced male seeking a position as Senior warehouse, logistics inventory lead position. Contact: +968 9583 9151 Email:jpeer78@gmail.com

MBA Logistics & supply chain professional with 1+ yr GCC-region logistics experience seeking opportunities in logistics, supply chain, operations or warehouse. Available immediately in Oman. Contact: +968 93185044.

MANAGER

Business development & project management professional with 20+ yrs of experience in oil & gas trading, tendering, business systemization, planning, procurement and ISO QMS. possesses managerial and team lead skills. Contact: 91799438

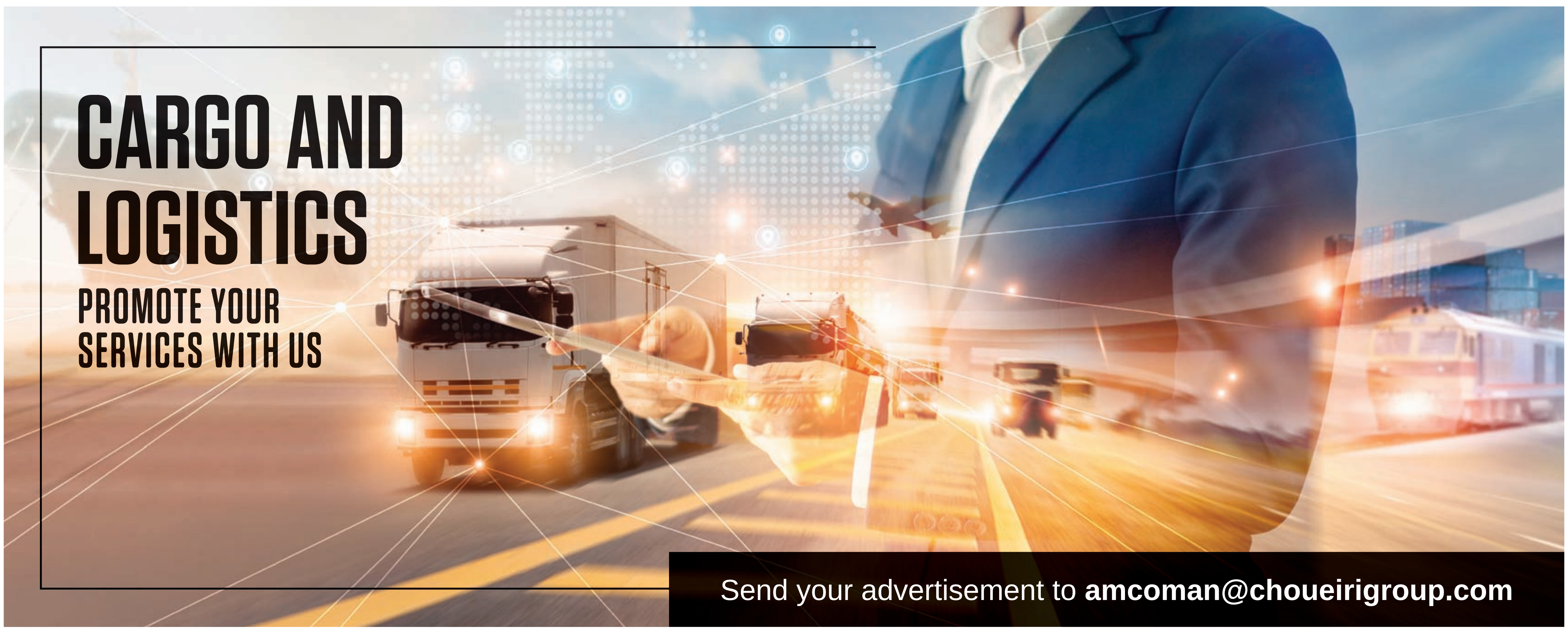
SALES/MARKETING

Sales Exe. 17+yrs GCC retail, outdoor exp. Any sales. Arabic, hindi, malayalam. Omani license. Contact: +96898353365

Indian male, BBA, 3 yrs gulf experience in Sales & logistics. Currently in Oman with valid D/L, seeks suitable position. Contact: +968 75103313.Email : Basimismail008@gmail.com

Indian M(36) MBA with Oman 10 yrs exp in FMCG industry in Oman Contact: 79755795

Indian male, BBA, 20 yrs experience in Sales & marketing in Oman,holding valid Oman D/L seeks suitable placement. Contact: 93011232. Email: jitinjoshua920@gmail.com



Brazil denies entry to two Trump officials ahead of elections in Oct

A spokesperson for Brazil's foreign office said that Assistant Secretary Riley M. Barnes from the US State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labour, had requested a visa on July 20, along with Samuel Samson, a deputy assistant secretary. The delegation's visa request was rejected on Friday, the spokesperson said

BRASÍLIA: Brazil has denied visas to two officials from United States President Donald Trump's administration who had sought to travel to the country to meet with electoral authorities ahead of the October presidential election.

A spokesperson for Brazil's foreign office said on Saturday that Assistant Secretary Riley M. Barnes from the US State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labour, had requested a visa on July 20, along with Samuel Samson, a deputy assistant secretary.

The delegation's visa request was rejected on Friday, the spokesperson said.

The Washington Post had first reported on the planned visit of the two envoys, citing senior Brazilian officials who said they had learnt of a US "ploy" that was "completely incompatible with Brazilian democracy."

The denial of the visas was based on "evidence pointing to a renewed attempt to politically exploit the situation and undermine the electoral system", news agency Reuters quoted a Brazilian official as saying.

What has Washington said?

The US State Department said later on Saturday that Barnes and Samson planned to go to the South American country's capital, Brasilia from July 27 to 30 to discuss "election integrity," religious freedom and freedom of expression with government officials, religious leaders and others.

The Associated Press quoted the department as saying that the visit was routine and "any insinuation of a 'ploy' to undermine a democratic nation's election is a baseless lie."

Brazil gears up for elections

Brazil's presidential election is slated to be held on October 4.

President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva is seeking reelection against Flavio Bolsonaro, son of Brazil's former President Jair Bolsonaro.

The right-wing Liberal party confirmed Flavio as their candidate for the presidential race on Saturday.

The senior Bolsonaro, Jair, is under house arrest as he serves a 27-year sentence for plotting a coup after his defeat to Lula in the 2022 election.

The former Brazilian leader had also presented unsubstantiated allegations that his country's electronic voting system was vulnerable to fraud.

Flavio recently repeated some of his father's claims.

Bolsonaro-Trump ties

Jair is a friend and ally of Trump and the Bolsonaro family has ties with the Trump administration.

In May, Flavio and his brother Eduardo had visited US officials in Washington, including Trump.

The Trump administration classified two of Brazil's largest drug-trafficking groups as foreign terrorist organisations, in a move opposed by Lula.

Jair was dubbed "Trump of the Tropics" during his tenure.

Trump had railed against Jair's trial, deeming it a "witch hunt".

Flavio Bolsonaro gets party nod to run against Brazil's Lula

Meanwhile, Flavio Bolsonaro, son of Brazil's former President Jair Bolsonaro, was confirmed Saturday as his father's Liberal Party candidate to challenge incumbent President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva.

"Bolsonaro's blood flows here," he declared at the party convention in Sao Paulo.

His father has been sentenced to 27 years in prison for plotting a coup following his loss to Lula in the 2022 election.

Brazil's presidential election is scheduled to be held on October 4. If no candidate wins an outright majority, a runoff will take place on October 25.

The younger Bolsonaro still lacks a running mate and centrist backing, while the absence of major political figures at Saturday's party convention highlighted his struggle to build an anti-Lula alliance before October.

He did, however, get support from Argentine President Javier Milei, who endorsed his bid for the presidency.

"I firmly believe there is no one else capable of putting an end to the Lula risk hanging over Brazil," Milei, who attended the party convention, said.

Bolsonaro also showed a short video message of support from Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Bolsonaro's campaign faces challenges

He has also developed ties with US conservatives and Donald Trump's administration. In May, he posted pictures he took in the Oval Office with the US president on social media.

The Trump administration has, however, since imposed new tariffs on Brazilian exports of up to 37.5%.

A poll released Friday shows Lula would defeat Flavio Bolsonaro in a potential runoff, 48% to 43%. A June survey showed Lula ahead 47% to 43%.

— DW

AFTER SHIP SINKS IN SOUTH CHINA SEA

Vietnam thanks China for helping rescue 45 people

HANOI: Vietnam on Sunday thanked China for its assistance in search and rescue operations after a Vietnamese cargo vessel, sank in the South China Sea, with 45 of the 62 people on board rescued as search efforts continued for the remaining crew, according to Xinhua news agency.

The Vietnamese vessel, 'Khoi Nguyen 18', was carrying 62 people when it sank in unfavourable weather conditions near Yongshu Reef in the Nansha Islands in the South China Sea, Xinhua reported.

A joint operation

Chinese and Vietnamese rescue teams have mounted a joint operation involving multiple vessels and a rescue helicopter.

According to Xinhua, Vietnamese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Pham Thu Hang said Vietnamese authorities "launched rescue operations immediately after the incident" and coordinated closely with Chinese rescue forces and vessels operating near the scene.

She thanked the Chinese authorities for their "prompt support in search and rescue operations" and expressed hope that " both sides would continue to coordinate closely in the search for those still missing."

According to the Global Times, China dispatched six vessels and one rescue helicopter to assist in the operation, while seven Vietnamese ships also joined the onsite search and rescue effort.

According to the report, "China and Vietnam have set up a joint, unified search and rescue command system," with the Chinese rescue vessel Nanhai Jiu 115 serving as the on-site commander. It added that "rescue forces from both countries have demonstrated strong overall coordination, regional synergy, and efficient collaboration", citing Sansha authorities.

The Global Times further reported that Nanhai Jiu first rescued 29 Vietnamese nationals from a life raft on Saturday evening while returning to Sanya.

The survivors informed rescuers that the Khoi Nguyen had sunk on Friday night about 220 nautical miles east of Vietnam's Khanh Hoa Province with 62 Vietnamese nationals on board.

— ANI

CENTCOM

12 commercial vessels redirected, two 'non-compliant' ships disabled

WASHINGTON, DC: US Central Command said on Saturday (that the American naval blockade against Iran remains in full effect, emphasising that two ships that didn't comply with orders were "disabled," while two others were boarded "to ensure total compliance."

In a post on X, CENTCOM disclosed that coalition forces have redirected 12 commercial vessels attempting to breach the perimeter as part of an ongoing effort to restrict unauthorised maritime transport bound for Iranian ports.

Detailing specific interdictions across key Middle Eastern maritime corridors, CENTCOM reported that US forces completed a verification inspection in the Arabian Sea. "Earlier today, U.S. forces completed a verification boarding aboard Comoros-flagged M/T Charminar in the Arabian Sea, and the tanker is now continuing its journey," the statement read.

By contrast, US forces took direct action against another commercial vessel operating in the Gulf of Oman.

"CENTCOM forces disabled Mozambique-flagged M/T Lavine in the Gulf of Oman, July 24, after the crew attempted to violate the blockade multiple times and ignored repeated warnings," CENTCOM stated, noting that "the ship is no longer transiting to Iran."

The command underscored that maritime interdictions will continue indefinitely across key regional waterways.

"The U.S. naval blockade against Iran remains in full effect," CENTCOM emphasised, adding that American forces "remain highly vigilant, focused, lethal, and ready."

The latest interdictions highlight ongoing vigilance across key Middle Eastern maritime corridors, including the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea.

Earlier in the day, the naval forces of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) targeted four commercial ships in the southern Strait of Hormuz over 24 hours, aiming to force the vessels to halt and alter course.

Iranian state broadcaster IRIB reported that the vessels were navigating an "illegal and unsafe route", though official channels did not disclose the names or nationalities of the intercepted ships. No reports of casualties or structural damage have emerged following the intercepts in the crucial oil transit corridor.

This follows a separate attack on a commercial vessel within Iranian territorial waters on Friday, involving the Mozambique-flagged LPG tanker DISHA, which carried 28 Indian crew members.

Confirming the incident, the Indian Embassy in Tehran stated that it was actively monitoring the situation alongside local authorities, reassuring that all personnel aboard remained unharmed.

Subsequently, dozens of vessels continued to navigate the narrow Bab el-Mandeb Strait despite persistent threats from Iran-backed Houthi rebels, according to a New York Times analysis of shipping data.

However, the report highlighted that growing uncertainty regarding the conflict and maritime safety is forcing several ships to alter course and execute U-turns before completing their journeys.

In the past week, Houthi rebels in de facto control of Yemen targeted at least three oil tankers, with the latest strike occurring on Friday. Any sustained disruption in the Red Sea threatens to deal a fresh blow to global commerce, which is already reeling under the strain of the expanding Middle East conflict.

The war between the United States and Iran, now in its fifth month, has severely curtailed transit through the Strait of Hormuz, a crucial maritime corridor that previously carried approximately one-fifth of global oil supplies. — ANI

REPORT

Ships continue Red Sea transit despite attacks and Houthi blockade

WASHINGTON, DC: Dozens of vessels continue to navigate the narrow Bab el-Mandeb Strait despite persistent threats from Iran-backed Houthi rebels, according to a media report.

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The war between the United States and Iran, now in its fifth month, has severely curtailed transit through the Strait of Hormuz, a crucial maritime corridor that previously carried approximately one-fifth of global oil supplies.

In response to the hostilities, Saudi Arabia has been rerouting millions of barrels of crude oil daily via an overland pipeline connecting the Persian Gulf to the Red Sea. A significant portion of that crude oil subsequently exits through the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, a narrow choke point situated adjacent to Houthi-controlled territory.

That alternative supply line faces heightened risk after the Houthis announced plans earlier this week to target shipping linked to Saudi Arabia.

Initial indicators reflected immediate disruption, with nearly a dozen vessels either turning back or completely avoiding the strait, according to tracking data from maritime firm Kpler.

Nevertheless, Kpler data indicated that maritime activity has not slowed uniformly, recording 43 vessels crossing the Bab el-Mandeb on Thursday, an increase from 35 the previous day, even after the Houthis claimed responsibility for attacks on Saudi oil tankers.

A Saudi-linked vessel was also targeted in the Red Sea on Friday, with officials confirming minor damage and zero casualties, allowing the ship to proceed along its transit route.

The Red Sea region has served as a recurring geopolitical flashpoint. In 2024, the Houthis repeatedly launched attacks against vessels linked to Israel, framing the operations as a response to the conflict in Gaza.

As maritime risks escalate, several shipping operators are considering northern transit options via the Suez Canal. However, the route is both longer and more expensive, while the canal itself cannot accommodate fully laden supertankers, forcing logistical transfers to smaller vessels or pipelines, which tighten overall market capacity and elevate operational costs.

— ANI

LIFESTYLE

LENACAPAVIR MAY SLOW HIV INFECTIONS ‘BUT THERE’S NOT ENOUGH’

Lenacapavir is one injection, twice a year. It’s a big improvement for people in high-risk groups, currently taking a pill a day against HIV infection. But its long-term impact depends on it reaching those very people

For a healthy young woman in South Africa, the greatest risk of HIV may come from someone she wants to trust, but can’t.

She may not know her partner’s HIV status, may not always be able to insist they use a protection, and may have little control over whether he has other partners.

There is an option: Daily Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) pills keep antiretroviral drugs in the body at high enough levels to stop HIV before it can establish an infection.

But PrEP only works if she keeps taking the medication. Miss too many doses and drug levels can fall too low to provide sufficient protection.

She may forget, resent having to take a daily pill, or fear that a partner or relative will find the medication, causing stigma. She may also experience side effects from PrEP or struggle to obtain new supplies.

How can lenacapavir help?

Taking medication consistently — known as adherence — is a challenge for people with conditions like hypertension and diabetes. With PrEP, however, the difficulty is even greater.

“You’re asking people who are healthy, who don’t have any illness, to take a tablet every day,” said Salim Abdool Karim, director and co-founder of the Centre for the AIDS Programme of Research in South Africa. “That’s a high bar.”

“Repeated studies, including our own, show that patients who start taking PrEP, by month three, about half of them have given it up. By the end of the year, you’re left with only a handful that are still taking PrEP,” Abdool Karim told DW.

Lenacapavir sharply reduces that daily burden: It requires just one injection every six months.

“That’s infinitely easier to do than to remember to take a tablet every day,” he said. “For those who receive the injection every six months without fail, it works superbly because adherence is effectively complete.”

But lenacapavir is still too expensive in some regions and access is low.

How does lenacapavir last so long in the body?

Most established PrEP drugs block enzymes that allow the virus to reproduce and spread — it uses the enzymes to copy its own genetic material and insert it into a human cell’s DNA.

Lenacapavir works completely differently. It is the first PrEP drug to target the capsid, a cone-shaped shell that surrounds the viral genetic material. But the capsid is also essential to the virus’ replication process, and therefore a promising target.

“[Lenacapavir] is the most potent molecule we know of against HIV,” Wesley Sundquist, a University of Utah biochemist and leading expert on the HIV capsid, told DW.

Sundquist said lenacapavir remains effective over long periods and that it is potent even at low concentrations.

“It sets up a little depot that slowly dissolves,” said Sundquist.

Which groups would benefit from lenacapavir?

Abdool Karim pointed to three groups where HIV incidence remains stubbornly high and greater PrEP uptake is urgently needed:

In South Africa, a rollout for people at risk began in June 2026, backed by a July 2025 agreement between the drug’s developer, Gilead, and a public-private financing organisation called the Global Fund.

Gilead agreed to supply lenacapavir at no profit to up to 2 million people over three years.

Earlier, in October 2024, Gilead also agreed to allow the production of cheaper, generic versions of the drug in 120 resource-limited countries, where HIV infection rates are high.

But some countries still lack access to the drug.

Latin American countries excluded from lenacapavir deals

Melissa Scharwey of Doctors Without Borders said some Latin American countries, including Brazil, Mexico, Peru and Argentina have been excluded from recent rollouts of lenacapavir, despite having participated in clinical trials.

Even within eligible countries, vulnerable groups may still be missed, Scharwey told DW.

“There’s by far not enough of it,” said Scharwey, calling on Gilead to increase supply and sell directly to MSF at an affordable price of around $40 per shot.

The decisive question in driving down HIV, according to University of Washington epidemiologist Monisha Sharma, is whether the drug reaches the people and places where HIV is spreading most rapidly.

“In our modeling of South Africa, Zimbabwe, and western Kenya, providing lenacapavir to approximately 2–4% of the adult population, with targeted uptake among people at greatest risk, averted approximately 12–18% of new infections over ten years,” Sharma told DW.

Lenacapavir ‘unlikely to eliminate HIV on its own’

“Lenacapavir could substantially accelerate progress toward lowering incidence, but it is unlikely to eliminate HIV transmission on its own,” said Sharma.

“This impact is highly dependent on affordable lenacapavir drug prices, efficient distribution channels, and targeted uptake among people with the highest HIV risk,” she added.

That final condition is what gives Abdool Karim his greatest concern. Lenacapavir can largely solve the adherence problem for people who receive it. It cannot solve the harder problem confronting HIV specialists: identifying and reaching those in greatest danger.

“The problem is that those at highest risk need to come forward to take the medication. And often those at the highest risk don’t see themselves at risk. That’s why they’re at risk,” said Abdool Karim. “If we cannot reach those at highest risk, then we’re not going to make a dent in this epidemic in the manner in which we were hoping.” - DW

SPORTS

26-YEAR-OLD FORWARD

Premier League champions Arsenal eye Real Madrid forward Vinicius Jr

LONDON: The reigning Premier League champions Arsenal are interested in signing Brazil and Real Madrid star Vinicius Junior, with the young footballer out of his deal with the Spanish super-giants next summer.

As per journalist David Ornstein of The Athletic, as quoted by Goal.com, Arsenal have the 26-year-old forward among their priorities as they aim to add more firepower to their attack. As per the report, the interest is still in its early stages, and no talks have been held yet. Inside the Arsenal camp, the move to bring the Brazilian to English shores has plenty of support.

Vinicius' future largely depends on his ongoing contract situation at Real Madrid. Talks over a renewal have not reached a breakthrough so far, and if the situation remains unresolved, the Spanish gaints could be forced to consider a sale rather than risk losing him on a free transfer after the contract expires.

Madrid would rather hold on to the Brazilian and hope to strike an agreement with him over the extension of his deal.

Vinicius' value stays high after another excellent season, including four goals in five matches for Brazil in the recently concluded FIFA World Cup. However, his heroics did not matter as Brazil exited in the round of 16 to Norway.

Last season, across all competitions, Vinicius scored 22 goals for Real Madrid, proving his value to the club. But the club stayed without any major trophy for the second successive year and were second-placed to FC Barcelona in La Liga, behind their arch-rivals.

After moving from Flamengo to Real Madrid in 2018, Vinicius has turned into one of the club's biggest stars, having made 375 appearances for the club and scoring 128 goals, providing 100 assists.-Xinhua

Norris edges Hamilton to take Hungarian GP pole

Norris clocked the fastest lap of one minute 17.207 seconds to secure his first pole position of the 2026 season. Hamilton finished second, while his teammate Charles Leclerc completed the top three

BUDAPEST: McLaren's Lando Norris claimed pole position for the Formula One Hungarian Grand Prix on Saturday after edging Ferrari's Lewis Hamilton by 0.012 seconds in qualifying at the Hungaroring.

Norris clocked the fastest lap of one minute 17.207 seconds to secure his first pole position of the 2026 season. Hamilton finished second, while his teammate Charles Leclerc completed the top three.

Mercedes driver Kimi Antonelli finished fourth, ahead of McLaren's Oscar Piastri in fifth and Red Bull's Max Verstappen in sixth.

Penalties

However, Hamilton and Antonelli were both handed three-place grid penalties, with Hamilton penalized for impeding Piastri, and Antonelli for failing to slow down enough under a yellow flag.

The penalties mean that Hamilton will start at fifth and Antonelli at seventh on the grid in Sunday's race.

Hamilton had led after the first runs in the final phase of qualifying before Norris produced the fastest lap of the session to take pole.

"Very, very happy to be back on top," Norris said after qualifying. "Ferrari has been very quick all weekend. Qualifying was extremely close. We brought some upgrades this weekend and they definitely helped today."

Hamilton said he had felt comfortable throughout qualifying, but admitted Ferrari had gone out early for the final runs and was unable to fully capitalize on the improving track conditions.

"We were quick throughout qualifying, but in the end we just missed out on pole," he said. -Xinhua

AT HARARE

India get first T20I series win under skipper Iyer, beat Zimbabwe by 90 runs

HARARE: Team India got their first-ever series win under new T20I skipper Shreyas Iyer as a clinical, all-round effort helped Men in Blue crush Zimbabwe by 90 runs in the second T20I at Harare on Saturday.

India has won the series 2-0, after registering a 0-2 whitewash loss to Ireland and a 0-4 series loss to England during their UK tour. But with this win, Iyer finally has a series win to his name.

Being put to bat first, blazing knocks from Ishan Kishan (81 in 44) and Tilak Varma (60* in 29) took India to 219/5. In the chase, Abhishek Sharma (3/17), Yash Thakur (2/30) and Prince Yadav (2/10) struck frequently, wiping Zimbabwe clean for 129 runs in 17.5 overs.

In the run-chase, Brian Bennett started off aggressively against the pace duo of Yash Thakur and Mayank Yadav. In the fourth over, Yash got his first-ever international wicket, removing the hard-hitting opener for a 19-ball 32, with three fours and three sixes. Zimbabwe was 34/1 in 3.5 overs.

Following that, Zimbabwe's innings started to fall apart, with Prince Yadav getting Ben Curran (1) in the fifth over and Dion Myers was removed by Ravi Bishnoi for 12 in nine balls. Zimbabwe was 49/3 in six overs.

Prince also got the prized wicket of Sikandar Raza for a duck, reducing Zimbabwe to 49/4 in 6.2 overs. However, the pacer felt something was wrong with his hamstring and left the field, with Shivam Dube completing the over and conceding two fours from Ryan Burl.

In the ninth over, Dube struck, removing Wesley Madhvere for just two. Zimbabwe was five down for 65 runs.

At the end of 10 overs, Zimbabwe was 69/5, with Tadiwanashe Marumani (3*) and Burl (17*) unbeaten.

Burl was removed for a 18-ball 20 by Tilak Varma in the 12th over, courtesy a fine diving catch from Rinku Singh. Zimbabwe was 82/6 in 11.2 overs.

Brad Evans and Tadiwanashe Marumani took Zimbabwe past the 100-run mark in the 14th over, with Brad unleashing some big hits. However, Abhishek Sharma's part-time spin pushed back Zimbabwe again by removing Brad (19) and Newman Nyamhuri (3). Zimbabwe was 119/8 in 15.2 overs.

Yash got his second wicket, making a mess of Marumani's stumps for 19-ball 24, with a four and a six. Zimbabwe was 121/9 in 16.1 overs.

Abhishek ended the innings with the wicket of Richard Ngarava, removing him for just one. Zimbabwe was all out for 129 runs in 17.5 overs.

Abhishek (3/17), Yash (2/30) and Prince (2/10) were among the best bowlers for India.

Earlier, India posted a formidable 219/5 after being asked to bat first, with Ishan Kishan smashing a blistering 81 and Tilak Varma remaining unbeaten on 60 to power the visitors to a commanding total.

Despite losing early wickets, India recovered through a crucial partnership between Kishan and Tilak, before the duo accelerated the scoring rate in the middle and death overs to put Zimbabwe under pressure.

After being put in to bat, India made a shaky start, losing opener Abhishek Sharma for just eight runs when pacer Blessing Muzarabani dismissed him off the fifth ball of the second over. India was 10/1 in 1.5 overs.

In the third over, Vaibhav Sooryavanshi struck three fours and a six against Richard Ngarava, but the Zimbabwe pacer had the last laugh, dismissing the 15-year-old on the final delivery. Sooryavanshi scored 20 off nine balls, with three fours and a six. India was 29/2 in three overs.

Captain Shreyas Iyer and Ishan Kishan then steadied the innings as India reached 51/2 at the end of six overs.

Runs continued to come at a steady pace as India reached 80/2 at the end of nine overs. However, just as the partnership began to take shape, Brian Bennett dismissed skipper Shreyas Iyer for 25 off 20 balls, including four boundaries. India finished the 10th over at 95/3.

On the first ball of the 13th over, Ishan Kishan brought up his 12th half-century in T20 cricket, reaching the milestone in 31 balls with six fours. India moved to 134/3 by the end of the 14th over.

Kishan and Tilak Varma then launched an assault in the 15th over, smashing 21 runs off skipper Sikandar Raza's over as India raced to 158/3.

On the final delivery of the 17th over, Tilak Varma brought up his ninth half-century in just 23 balls as India strengthened their position, reaching 188/3. Tilak's knock included five fours and two sixes.

On the first ball of the 18th over, Newman Nyamhuri dismissed the dangerous Ishan Kishan, who scored a 44-ball 81, including nine fours and two sixes, as India moved to 196/4.

India crossed the 200-run mark in the 19th over after Tilak Varma and Rinku Singh combined to collect 14 runs. Brad Evans then dismissed Rinku for 12 in the final over, with India finishing their innings at 219/5.

Tilak remained unbeaten on 60 off 29 balls, smashing five fours and three sixes. For Zimbabwe, Blessing Muzarabani, Richard Ngarava, Brad Evans, Newman Nyamhuri and Brian Bennett picked up one wicket each.

ZIMBABWE SKIPPER

We can be better in field: Sikandar Raza after 90-run loss to India

HARARE: Zimbabwe skipper Sikandar Raza admitted that his side's fielding and shot selection let them down during their 90-run defeat against India in the second T20I, while praising the visitors for their impressive batting display.

Raza said Zimbabwe bowled well in patches but credited India for the quality of shots and skills they displayed during their innings.

"I thought the boys bowled well in patches, but credit to India as well. Some of the shots they played and the skill they showed today were certainly admirable," Raza said during the post-match presentation.

The Zimbabwe skipper also acknowledged that his team needs to improve its fielding, saying better support from the fielders could help put additional pressure on the opposition.

"We've been saying for some time now that we can be better in the field, and if the fielding department can support the bowlers a bit more, it'll add extra pressure on the opposition. But I don't want to take anything away from the Indian batters. The display they put on today is certainly something we can learn from," he said.

Raza also lauded India's Ishan Kishan, who played a crucial knock in the first innings, and said the batter is enjoying a strong run of form at number three.

"Ishan has done that quite regularly and consistently. I think he's going through a really good patch and batting very well, especially at number three, which can be a very tricky role. He and Tilak batted really well and, like I said, the skill they have and what they showed us today is something we can learn from. Hopefully, it'll help us improve as well," Raza added.

"We were always going to go for it. If you look at our openers, they gave us exactly the sort of start we needed. Unfortunately, it comes down to inexperience at times and sometimes shot selection, which is where we're letting ourselves down," he said.

Raza also took responsibility for his own recent batting struggles, admitting that he needs to contribute more with the bat for the team.

"But most importantly, I think I've been letting the team down as captain with my batting. The onus is on me to get it right because the team needs my runs, and unfortunately that hasn't been the case over the last two T20 games. But, Inshallah, I'll do my best to turn it around because the team could really do with my runs," the Zimbabwe skipper said.

India's wicketkeeper-batter Ishan Kishan emphasised the importance of staying focused on his own game rather than comparing himself to others or worrying about external opinions.

He stressed that a No. 3 batter must assess the match situation, understand the pitch conditions, and adapt accordingly.

"I don't give so much focus on what's happening outside. I know the way I have to play. What's important is to just be in the moment, not think about what's going on in the outside world, who is getting more, thinking about that this guy is hitting more. Everyone can have that image in the team. But at the same time, as a No. 3 batter, if two wickets are down, you need to understand what's important. Do you keep taking chances or do you build a partnership? Is it easy to hit? You need to understand the wicket and play accordingly," Ishan Kishan said.

-ANI

OVERTAKE ENGLAND

India reclaim No. 1 T20I ranking after sealing series against Zimbabwe

NEW DELHI: India have reclaimed the No 1 spot in the ICC Men's T20I Team Rankings after taking an unassailable 2-0 lead in the T20I series against Zimbabwe in Harare. The reigning ICC Men's T20 World Cup champions moved back to the top of the rankings, overtaking England, who had briefly claimed the summit following a 4-0 T20I series sweep at home, according to the ICC website.

India's batters starred in the second T20I after the team secured a dominant victory in the series opener, where the bowlers laid the foundation and Vaibhav Sooryavanshi produced a record-breaking knock.

After losing two early wickets, Ishan Kishan and Shreyas Iyer came together to stitch a 66-run partnership, before Tilak Varma notched up a superb knock. (60 off 29 balls).

The highest scorer of the game, Kishan (81 off 44 balls), while speaking to the reporters post the match, said, "We were down two wickets, but at the same time, as a batter batting at no.3, your job is to just watch the ball and play your natural game."

"You also have to understand the wicket; there were a lot of thoughts going on whether we want to end up getting 250, 230 or if the wicket is just about getting 170-180 runs.

"Shreyas Iyer came in, and we just wanted to build a partnership and take the innings deep. And I think we executed our plans in a good manner."

Chasing a tall target of 220, the Chevrons lost five wickets inside the first nine overs and were eventually bundled out for 129 as India took an unassailable lead in the T20I series.

-ANI

IN PICTURES

A Lijian-1 Y15 carrier rocket carrying five satellites blasts off in northwest China
A Lijian-1 Y15 carrier rocket carrying five satellites blasts off from the Dongfeng commercial space innovation pilot zone in northwest China. The rocket successfully placed the satellites into their designated orbits. Xinhua

Sunset scenery over the Moskva River in Moscow
This photo shows the sunset scenery over the Moskva River in Moscow, Russia. Xinhua

Film producer Boney Kapoor's daughter Anshula Kapoor and Rohan Thakkar's wedding reception
Social media influencer and Bollywood film producer Boney Kapoor's daughter Anshula Kapoor and her husband Rohan Thakkar pose with Bollywood actor Jackie Shroff during their wedding reception, in Mumbai. ANI Photo

Ceylon Chamber of Women Entrepreneurs Fashion Week held in Colombo
A model showcases a designer's creation during the Ceylon Chamber of Women Entrepreneurs (CCWE) Fashion Week in Colombo, Sri Lanka. The CCWE Fashion Week is dedicated exclusively to women entrepreneurs, the event highlights inclusive and sustainable fashion while promoting women's entrepreneurship and economic empowerment. Xinhua

Sighisoara Medieval Festival celebrated in Romania
Local residents attend a parade during the Sighisoara Medieval Festival in Sighisoara, Romania. First launched in 1992, the festival is now a distinctive historical celebration in Europe, which revives medieval culture and traditions through various activities. The historic centre of Sighisoara was inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage in 1999. Xinhua

British Prime Minister Andy Burnham speaks to staff at No10 North office in Manchester
British Prime Minister Andy Burnham speaks to staff at No10 North office in Manchester, Britain. British Prime Minister Andy Burnham on Thursday began working from a new government office in Manchester, dubbed "No10 North," as part of his plan to shift economic decision-making away from Westminster and devolve more powers to local authorities.

African elephants are seen at Tsavo West National Park in Kenya
African elephants are seen at Tsavo West National Park in Taita-Taveta County, Kenya. Xinhua

Meethaq showcases its banking solutions at Gardens Mall in Salalah

Throughout the event, visitors are invited to stop by the Meethaq booth, where a dedicated team will be available to showcase the wide range of Sharia-compliant banking products and solutions, provide information, respond to customer enquiries and help visitors better understand the range of products and services available

MUSCAT: As part of its ongoing efforts to make its banking solutions more accessible to customers across Oman, Meethaq Islamic Banking, from Bank Muscat will be present at Gardens Mall in Dhofar Governorate with a dedicated booth from 23 to 30 July, daily from 10 am to 10 pm. The initiative reflects Meethaq's commitment to strengthening customer engagement and bringing its Sharia-compliant banking products and services closer to the community.

Throughout the event, visitors are invited to stop by the Meethaq booth, where a dedicated team will be available to showcase the wide range of Sharia-compliant banking products and solutions, provide information, respond to customer enquiries and help visitors better understand the range of products and services available.

Among the key products to be showcased during the activation is the Meethaq Savings Plan, a structured savings solution that enables customers to build their savings through regular contributions starting from as little as OMR 10 per month, with flexible payment frequencies including monthly, quarterly, semi-annual or annual instalments via direct debit or standing orders. The plan offers customers a competitive profit rate credited to their saving plan on a monthly basis, in addition to life Takaful coverage, making it a practical solution for customers seeking to achieve their medium- to long-term financial goals, whether for education, marriage, retirement or other life milestones.

Visitors will also learn about Meethaq's Salary Transfer service, which allows customers to transfer their monthly salary to their Meethaq account through a simple and convenient process, enabling them to manage their everyday banking needs conveniently. The service also gives customers access to a range of banking benefits/products and value-added features linked to salary accounts, in addition to enhancing their eligibility for Meethaq's various financing solutions on preferential terms.

Visitors can also learn about Meethaq's Credit Card Fee Reversal offer, which reflects Meethaq's commitment to delivering added value to holders of its diverse range of credit cards, including the Meethaq Lulu Credit Card, Meethaq Visa Gold Credit Card, Meethaq Platinum Credit Card and Hafawa Visa Signature Credit Card. Cardholders can benefit from an easy payment plan enabling "Buy Now, Pay Later" purchases at Meethaq's partner merchants across the Sultanate, over instalments of up to 12 months with no extra payment, in addition to a reversal of the first-year joining fee upon activating and using the card within the specified period from the date of issuance.

Visitors will also be introduced to Meethaq's Home Finance solutions, which offers a range of financing options covering property purchase and construction, as well as facilities to consolidate other housing-related obligations. The product features competitive financing rates against property value, a straightforward application process and the flexibility to access the service through Meethaq's extensive branch network across the Sultanate, along with the option to choose from a wide selection of pre-approved properties from Meethaq's partner real estate developers.

Through this initiative, Meethaq continues to strengthen its engagement with customers while increasing awareness of its comprehensive portfolio of Sharia'a compliant banking solutions. The initiative also reflects Meethaq's ongoing commitment to expanding community outreach and making its service more accessible across the Sultanate.

All Meethaq products and services are developed in accordance with the guidelines of the Central Bank of Oman and undergo rigorous Sharia compliance review and endorsement by Meethaq's Sharia Supervisory Board, ensuring they align with the principles and provisions of Sharia while meeting the financial needs and aspirations of customers.

Meethaq operates the largest Islamic banking branch network in the Sultanate, with 30 branches across all governorates. The network is complemented by more than 64 ATMs and cash deposit machines, while customers also have access to over 900 Bank Muscat ATMs and CDMs across the Sultanate, ensuring seamless and convenient access to banking services and solutions.

SUMMER BENEFITS

Chery Tiggo 7 Champion now available with Big Chill benefits

MUSCAT: Unlocking an exceptional pathway to premium SUV ownership, the Chery Big Chill summer campaign is currently transforming the automotive market in Oman by placing the intelligent Chery Tiggo 7 Champion within easy reach. Running through July 30.

Every qualifying purchase of the Tiggo 7 Champion during this ongoing promotion comes fully loaded with free insurance (valid in Oman only), free registration, and a complimentary 3-year or 30,000 km service package. To deliver maximum comfort during the hottest months, the package also includes free 3M window tinting and a complimentary fuel card worth OMR 50 (equivalent to 200 liters of petrol)—all anchored by Chery's reassuring 6-year or 200,000 km manufacturer warranty.

Versatile partner

Built around the philosophy of being "All the way with you," the Tiggo 7 Champion stands out as a highly versatile partner for ambitious professionals and young, tech-savvy families who require a seamless transition between corporate schedules and weekend escapes. The exterior commands an elegant yet energetic presence on Omani roads, highlighted by the signature All-New Diamond Front Grille that projects an instant impression of precision luxury.

Its sleek, aerodynamic profile is further elevated by a Suspended Sky Roof and a layered rear wing, complemented by Integrated Crescent-Shaped LED Tail Lamps that create a sharp nighttime signature.

The interior shifts the focus toward a high-quality living experience, treating occupants to an Intelligent Entertainment Cockpit where connectivity is effortless. The tech-forward layout maximizes cabin roominess, offering generous legroom, smart storage solutions, and an ultra-large panoramic sunroof that fills the space with natural light. Premium materials and intuitive digital interfaces come together beautifully, ensuring that every drive—from daily Muscat traffic to long-distance highway cruises—is defined by total passenger comfort and stress-free control.

Delivering the mechanical excellence to back up its bold styling, the Tiggo 7 Champion is powered by the celebrated 1.5TGDI Chery Power engine. Pushing out a robust 154 horsepower, this advanced powertrain provides immediate responsiveness and smooth acceleration whether conquering steep highway inclines or navigating busy urban lanes. The driving dynamics are defined by an agile, quiet and fuel-efficient performance, proving that modern drivers can enjoy the ideal balance of responsive power and everyday practicality without compromise.


10:38
Times of Oman
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Made in Oman, for Oman.
Maal
The National Payment Card
'SERIOUS NEGOTIATIONS NOW NEEDED FOR A LASTING PEACE'
The 'Workable' Peace – Diplomacy or a Tactical Trap?
OMR3.3bn investments in logistics
A5
Eshhar