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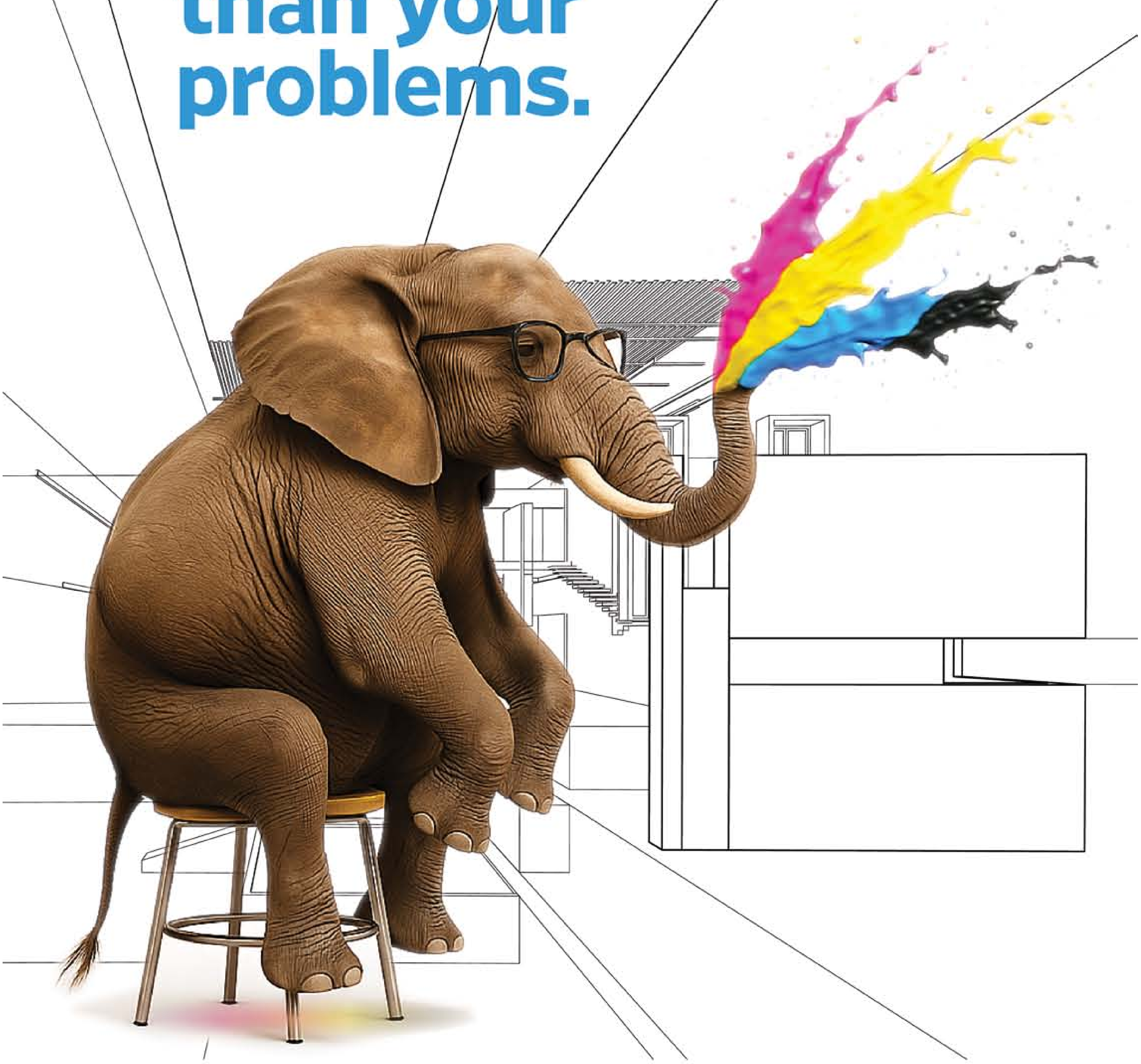

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Times of Oman
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51 YEARS OF LEGACY

Founded 1975 · Volume 51 No. 105 | 16 Pages · Baisas 200 · Subscription OMR63 | ISO 9001:2008 Certified Company | Chairman/Editor-in-Chief: Mohamed Issa Al Zadjali | Printed & Published by Muscat Media Group

ONGOING NEGOTIATIONS

Oman's Foreign Minister, GCC counterparts step up efforts to reduce tensions

MUSCAT: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, held a consultative meeting with the Foreign Ministers of the GCC countries on Tuesday via videoconferencing.

The Ministers exchanged views on the developments of the current phase, the latest updates on the ongoing negotiations, and the efforts exerted to advance them toward practical understandings that contribute to de-escalating tensions and enhancing the environment of regional security and stability.

Intensify coordination

The meeting discussed ways to intensify coordination and consultation among the GCC countries regarding issues related to the freedom and safety of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz.

This is to ensure the rights of passage, transit, and the seamless flow of maritime traffic, trade, and supplies, in accordance with the provisions of international law, and in a manner that preserves the sovereign rights of all littoral states bordering the Gulf waters.

The Ministers affirmed the importance of continuing joint action, prioritising political and diplomatic approaches, and creating favourable conditions to build trust and reach mutually acceptable solutions for all parties. -ONA

OMAN TURNS TO AI, SATELLITES AND DRONES TO TACKLE RISK FROM FLOODS

Oman advances disaster preparedness through smart flood risk analysis

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman is stepping up efforts to strengthen its resilience against floods by embracing artificial intelligence (AI), satellite imagery and drone technology to improve risk assessment, disaster preparedness and insurance services.

The move comes as the Financial Services Authority (FSA) convened a workshop on "Flood Risk Analysis Using Satellite and Drone Technologies", bringing together representatives from the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority, insurance companies, insurance brokers and technology experts to explore how emerging technologies can enhance the country's ability to predict, assess and respond to natural disasters.

The workshop was inaugurated by Muneer Ali Al Muneeri, Deputy President for Operations at Oman Investment Authority (OIA). The event focused on the latest technological innovations that can support flood risk analysis, particularly through the use of satellite imagery, drones, artificial intelligence and remote sensing.

Participants discussed how these tools can improve data collection, damage assessment, insurance underwriting and claims settlement, helping to make the insurance sector more efficient and better prepared for climate-related risks.

Speaking at the workshop, Ahmed Ali Al Maamari, Deputy CEO of the Financial Services Authority, said rapid advances in AI, data analytics and remote sensing technologies are fundamentally transforming the way risks are managed. >A2

FIRE PREVENTION

Oman records 5,560 fire incidents in 2025, up 12% from 2024

MUSCAT: Oman recorded 5,560 fire incidents in 2025, marking a 12 percent increase compared with the previous year, according to newly released data from the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The figures indicate that fire incidents continued to rise across the Sultanate, underscoring the importance of strengthening fire prevention measures and public awareness on safety practices.

While the NCSI data highlights the overall increase in incidents, authorities have consistently urged residents, businesses and industrial establishments to adhere to fire safety regulations, carry out regular maintenance of electrical systems and ensure the availability of functioning firefighting equipment.

Officials have also stressed the need for greater vigilance during the summer months, when high temperatures can increase the risk of fires, particularly in residential areas, farms and open spaces.

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN

Qairoon Hairiti Farm cultivates cocoa in Dhofar

1 The Qairoon Hairiti Farm, affiliated with the Royal Court Affairs, has cultivated cocoa after research, and propagation spanning over a decade. The cocoa tree is a tropical evergreen that requires precise care during its growth stages. It is characterised by the growth of its fruit on the trunk in the form of pods. >A4

SPORTS

Zidane named France's head coach

2 Zinedine Zidane has been appointed as the new manager of the France national team. Zidane was widely expected to succeed Didier Deschamps, whose 14-year tenure came to an end. >A8

WORLD

Strong earthquake shakes Japan

3 A powerful 7.1-magnitude quake struck Kumamoto Prefecture on Japan's island of Kyushu on Tuesday, triggering emergency warnings and prompting officials to assess the extent of the damage. >B4

BIG RISK

Bringing sweets from abroad? Be careful

Times News Service

Times Exclusive

MUSCAT: Planning to bring sweets or traditional delicacies from abroad for friends and family? Authorities are urging travellers to think twice and check the ingredients before packing them.

The reminder follows the detention of an Indian expatriate from Bihar at Abu Dhabi International Airport on July 23 after he was allegedly found carrying traditional Indian sweets containing poppy seeds.

Poppy (خشخاش) seed sweets, known in different parts of India as khus khus, posta dana or gasagase, is a popular part of cuisine.

The seeds are widely used in desserts, curries and halwa and are legally sold across India.

"White poppy seeds add a rich, nutty flavour and creamy texture to festive desserts," said Ravi Kumar, an Indian expatriate in Muscat.

However, in Oman and several other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, poppy seeds are prohibited or strictly regulated because of their association with the opium poppy.

According to the Royal Oman Police, poppy seeds fall under the list of prohibited narcotic substances, and importing or exporting such items can attract legal penalties.

The prohibited list comes under the Law on Combating Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances.

The expatriate, identified as Satish, was travelling from Bihar to Abu Dhabi via Ahmedabad and was reportedly carrying a box of raskadam, a popular Indian sweet, to share with colleagues after his vacation—a common tradition among expatriate workers returning from India.

Following his detention, Satish's family appealed to the Embassy of India in the UAE and India's Ministry of External Affairs to intervene and facilitate his release.

His employer has also reportedly approached the relevant authorities.

The incident serves as a timely reminder for expatriates and other travellers to carefully review customs regulations before carrying food items across international borders.

"Many ingredients that are perfectly legal and commonly used in India may be restricted or banned in destination countries. Carrying such items—even unknowingly—can lead to confiscation, detention, fines or legal proceedings," said a grocery shop owner in Ruwi.

With millions of passengers travelling between India and the Gulf every year, greater awareness of local import regulations can help prevent unnecessary legal complications.

In a recent advisory, the authority reminded travellers that certain goods are banned under the GCC Unified Customs Law and relevant national legislation. >A5

CDAA advises adventure tourists to stay safe on outdoor trips

The authority said that safety should always come first, encouraging adventure seekers to plan responsibly and enjoy landscapes

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority (CDAA), in cooperation with the National Risk Register, has issued safety guidelines for adventure tourists and outdoor enthusiasts, urging them to prepare carefully before embarking on trips and to know how to respond if they lose their way.

As part of its "What If?" awareness campaign, the CDAA stressed the importance of planning ahead and following approved safety measures to reduce risks during hiking and adventure tourism activities.

The authority advised the public to:

- Choose licensed adventure tourism companies and certified guides to ensure safe and well-organised trips.
- Stick to approved routes, inform others of travel plans, and carry essential safety equipment and reliable means of communication.
- Remain calm and stay in a safe location if they lose their way, immediately contact the relevant authorities or their guide, and avoid wandering aimlessly.
- Ensure trips are properly planned, as safe adventures begin with good preparation and end with everyone's safe return.
- The CDAA also noted that licensed guides possess the knowledge and expertise to assess risks, navigate approved trails, and respond effectively to emergencies.
- In case of an emergency, the public is urged to call 9999 or use the "Nida" emergency application to request assistance and share their location quickly.

The authority reiterated that safety should always come first, encouraging adventure seekers to plan responsibly and enjoy Oman's natural landscapes while following official safety guidelines.

MODERN TECHNOLOGIES

'Technologies can improve the speed of damage assessments'

< FROM A1

He noted that the insurance industry is increasingly relying on accurate data and predictive analysis to make faster and more informed decisions, enabling the development of better insurance products and improving customer services.

Al Maamari said accelerating climate change has reinforced the need to shift from responding to disasters after they occur to anticipating risks in advance and taking preventive measures to reduce their impact.

"Adopting modern technologies has become a strategic necessity to enhance institutional readiness and strengthen the efficiency of risk management systems," he said.

He added that the exceptional weather events experienced by Oman in recent years have underscored the importance of developing more accurate methods for assessing natural hazards and using advanced technologies to gather and analyse reliable data.

According to Al Maamari, these technologies can significantly improve the speed and accuracy of damage assessments while supporting faster and more informed decision-making.

Beyond the insurance sector, he said satellite and drone technologies also have wider applications in supporting the operations of the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority, emergency response planning, urban development and infrastructure protection, helping government agencies work together more effectively during extreme weather events.

The workshop featured technical presentations, research papers and an interactive simulation demonstrating practical applications of satellite and drone technologies in flood risk analysis. Experts showcased how these innovations can enhance risk modelling and improve operational efficiency within the insurance industry.

Participants concluded that continued investment in advanced technologies will be essential to strengthening Oman's insurance sector and improving national preparedness for natural disasters.

ADVERSE WEATHER CONDITIONS

ROP urges motorists to take precaution in rain and fog

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Royal Oman Police (ROP), in cooperation with the National Risk Register, has urged motorists to take extra precautions when driving during adverse weather conditions, particularly rain and fog.

In a public awareness campaign titled "What if weather conditions were difficult?", the authorities reminded drivers that reduced visibility and slippery roads significantly increase the risk of traffic accidents.

The campaign advises motorists to:

- Reduce speed according to road and weather conditions.
- Stay focused and maintain full control of the vehicle.
- Keep a safe following distance from other vehicles.
- Hold the steering wheel firmly with both hands.

The ROP stressed that safe driving practices are essential during periods of unstable weather and called on road users to remain vigilant and comply with traffic safety guidelines to protect themselves and others.

The awareness message comes as parts of the Sultanate continue to experience rainfall and changing weather conditions, reinforcing the importance of defensive driving and preparedness on the roads.

SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENT

Air Tanzania flights to Muscat inaugurated

MUSCAT: Oman Airports celebrated on Tuesday the official inauguration of the direct flights of Air Tanzania, connecting Julius Nyerere International Airport in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, and Muscat International Airport in the Sultanate of Oman.

Eng. Peter Rudolf Ulanga, Chief Executive Officer of Air Tanzania, stated that the inauguration of flights between Tanzania and Oman represents a highly significant development for the company.

It also enhances the existing cooperation between the two countries, explaining that the addition of this air link will contribute to increasing passenger traffic between Oman and Tanzania.

He added in a statement to journalists that the existence of direct flights between the two countries will provide an opportunity to attract Omani visitors to Tanzania.

He pointed out the diverse tourism elements that Tanzania boasts, starting from Zanzibar to the mainland, which hosts many sites with cultural and historical heritage linked to Omani-Tanzanian relations.

He mentioned that the demand for flights is witnessing a positive response from travelers from Muscat to Tanzania, and from there to other cities within the country and neighboring countries.

He affirmed that this route represents a promising opportunity and a sustainable path, given the deep cultural and historical ties between Tanzania and the Sultanate of Oman.

On his part, Saud Abdulaziz Al Azizi, Head of Corporate Support at Oman Airports, explained that Air Tanzania will operate three direct flights per week between Muscat International Airport and the United Republic of Tanzania.

He pointed out that this is in line with Oman Airports' orientations to add a number of flights and destinations to the airports of the Sultanate of Oman, adding that this connection will also enhance the economic and social fields between the two countries.

He added in a press statement that the launch of direct flights by Air Tanzania between Muscat and Dar es Salaam is a new route that bridges the distances between the GCC countries and East Africa.

The inauguration of flights between Tanzania and the Sultanate of Oman enhances the deep-rooted historical relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the United Republic of Tanzania.

It opens new horizons in the fields of tourism, trade, investment, and exchange between the two peoples. It also affirms the position of Muscat International Airport as a regional gateway connecting two markets with promising potential. -ONA

MEETINGS

Sayyid Badr bids farewell to Ukraine's Ambassador, receives copy of credentials of Brazil's Ambassador

MUSCAT: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, received on Tuesday Olga Selykh, Ambassador of Ukraine to the Sultanate of Oman, to bid her farewell upon the end of her tour of duty.

During the meeting, the Foreign Minister expressed his appreciation for the efforts exerted by the Ambassador in enhancing the bilateral relations between the two countries, wishing her continued success in her future assignments.

Separately, the Foreign Minister received yesterday a copy of the credentials of João Batista do Nascimento Magalhães, Ambassador-designate of the Federative Republic of Brazil to the Sultanate of Oman.

Sayyid Badr welcomed the Ambassador, wishing him success in performing his duties, and hoping for further development and growth in the bilateral relations between the two countries.

The two meetings were attended by a number of officials from the Foreign Ministry. -ONA

COMMENTARY

You Pay for It, But You Never See It: The Hidden Cost of Economic Friction

Have you ever wondered why a product that begins its journey at one Omani Rial finally reaches the consumer at fifteen Omani Rials? Where did the remaining fourteen rials go? Did the product suddenly become more valuable, or did something else happen along the way?

This question leads us to one of the least discussed yet most influential concepts in economics: economic friction. Unlike inflation, taxation, or interest rates, economic friction is rarely mentioned in everyday conversation. Yet it quietly accompanies almost every product we buy and every service we consume. We pay for it, but we seldom notice it.

Economic friction refers to all the obstacles, delays, costs, inefficiencies, and mark-ups that slow or complicate the movement of goods, services, information, and money through an economy. In a perfectly competitive market, resources would move smoothly from producers to consumers with minimal waste. Reality, however, is very different. Every additional layer in the supply chain introduces another cost, another commission, another approval, another delay, or another profit margin. Individually these additions may appear reasonable, but collectively they can transform a product worth one rial into one that costs fifteen.

The economist Ronald Coase argued that markets are not free from costs. Searching for information, negotiating contracts, monitoring quality, and enforcing agreements all create what economists call transaction costs. These costs are a major source of economic friction. Similarly, Nobel laureate Douglass North explained that institutions—the formal and informal rules governing economic activity—can either reduce or increase these frictions. Efficient institutions encourage trade and investment, while inefficient ones create barriers that slow economic growth.

Imagine a simple agricultural product. A farmer harvests tomatoes and sells them for OMR 1. The wholesaler adds transport costs and a profit margin. The distributor adds storage expenses. Another company packages the product. A retailer adds rent, electricity, staff salaries, and another profit margin. Marketing costs are added. Import or municipal fees may also appear. Finally, the customer pays OMR 5 or even OMR 10 for what originally left the farm for only OMR 1. Each participant may have created genuine value, but not every increase reflects value creation. Sometimes it simply reflects friction.

This phenomenon is not limited to agriculture. Consider the housing market. A family wishes to purchase a modest home. Before they receive the keys, they may encounter brokerage commissions, legal fees, valuation charges, bank processing fees, insurance premiums, registration expenses, and financing costs. None of these items is the house itself, yet together they can substantially increase the final price. The buyer pays them all, often without recognising that many are forms of economic friction.

The same applies to banking. Suppose a customer applies for a small business loan. Multiple forms, repeated documentation, long approval processes, and several administrative stages delay the release of funds. During this waiting period, the entrepreneur loses opportunities, projects are postponed, and employment may never materialise. The money has not disappeared; it has simply become trapped in friction.

Modern economists increasingly recognise that reducing friction can generate more prosperity than merely increasing production. Technology companies understand this well. Online banking, digital signatures, electronic payments, and automated approvals do not necessarily create new products; rather, they remove unnecessary obstacles between buyers and sellers. Their greatest innovation is often not the product itself but the elimination of friction.

Economic friction also affects the ordinary citizen in less visible ways. A young graduate searching for employment may possess the required education but lack access to professional networks. A small entrepreneur may have an excellent business idea but struggle to obtain financing because procedures are too complex. A talented craftsman may produce exceptional products yet remain invisible because he lacks access to digital markets. In each case, the obstacle is not a lack of ability or ambition but the presence of friction that prevents opportunity from flowing freely.

Perhaps the greatest irony is that free markets are often discussed as though they operate without obstacles. In reality, no market is entirely free. Every unnecessary regulation, every bureaucratic delay, every information gap, every monopoly, and every excessive intermediary acts like sand inside the gears of an economic machine. The engine still runs, but more slowly, less efficiently, and at a higher cost.

This does not mean that every intermediary or regulation is harmful.

Transport companies, retailers, banks, insurers, auditors, and regulators all perform essential economic functions. They reduce risks, improve quality, and facilitate exchange. The challenge is distinguishing between value-creating costs and friction-creating costs. The former enhance the economy; the latter merely slow it down.

As consumers, we often focus only on the price we pay. Perhaps we should instead ask a different question: How much of this price represents genuine value, and how much represents economic friction? That single question may reveal more about the health of an economy than many pages of statistical reports.

An economy does not become stronger simply because goods become more expensive. It becomes stronger when ideas, goods, services, and opportunities move with greater speed, lower cost, and higher trust.

ELITE MARTIAL ARTS ACADEMY

Fifth Khareef Dhofar taekwondo tourney to kick off on 31 July

MARTIAL ARTS: The championship features the participation of more than 160 male and female taekwondo players, representing various clubs and centres. - ONA

SALALAH: Competitions of the 5th Khareef Dhofar Taekwondo Championship will kick off next Friday, 31 July 2026.

The championship is organised by the Elite Martial Arts Academy, in cooperation with Oman Taekwondo Committee, under the supervision of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth.

The championship features the participation of more than 160 male and female taekwondo players, representing various clubs and centres nurturing the sport from within and outside the Sultanate of Oman.

The tournament also constitutes an important opportunity for the technical staff of national teams to select outstanding male and female players to represent the Sultanate of Oman in various upcoming external participations and competitions.

The championship includes Kyorugi competitions across most categories.

Technical committees will hold a meeting with the heads of participating academies and clubs next Thursday morning, while the weigh-in ceremony for tournament participants will take place in the evening at the Al Saada Sports Complex in Salalah.

Competitions will begin on Friday and conclude with the final rounds on Saturday, which will also witness the crowning and honouring of the winners. -ONA

MINISTRY OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Forum held on techniques for helping people with disabilities

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Social Development on Tuesday organised a public awareness forum titled "Techniques of dealing with people with disabilities".

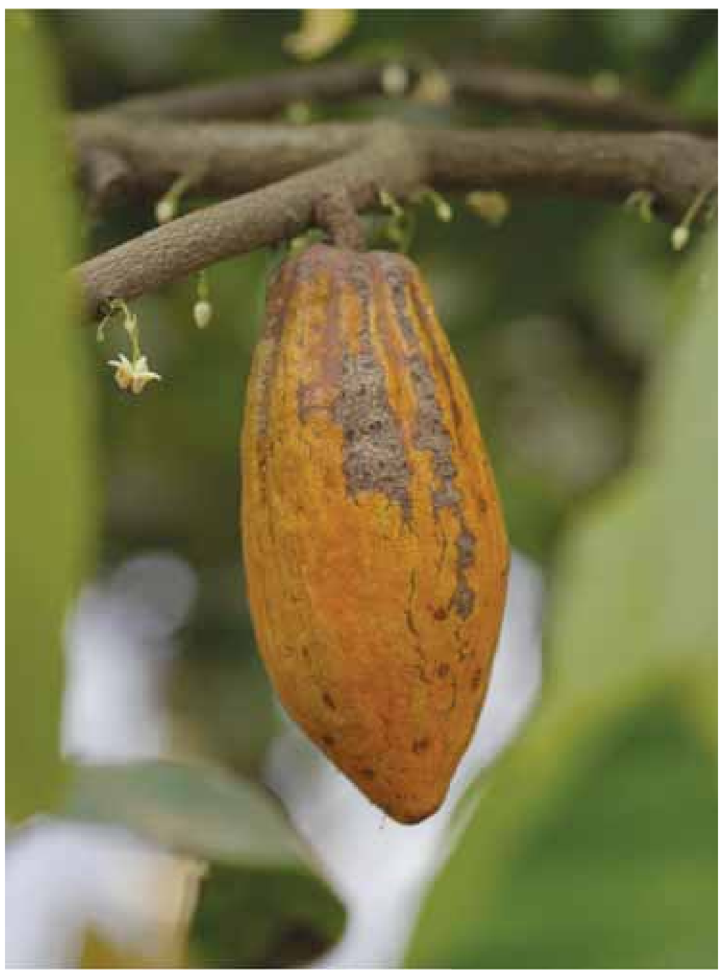
The event was held as part of the "Purple Saturday" initiative undertaken within the framework of the Ministry's efforts to foster the culture of social inclusion and highlight awareness about the rights of people with disabilities.

The event brought together employees and specialists from government units and the private sector. It aimed to encourage public and private sector establishments to adopt more inclusive practices in the interest of people with disabilities. The forum's activities included a working paper that debated the 'social model of disability' and stressed the need to develop a concept of 'comprehensive inclusion' that ensures equal opportunities to encourage the participation of people with disabilities in various fields of life in a manner that facilitates their independence.

The paper was presented by Majda Sabir Al Balushi, a researcher in the field of guidance and counselling.

She underlined the importance of applying global principles in public facilities, services, products and work environments to make related data available for all, right from the beginning. The researcher laid emphasis on professional etiquette in dealing with people with disabilities. She stressed the importance of applying correct methods of communicating with the disabled, including the use of approved legal terminology and avoiding concepts or phrases that imply pity or discrimination. She also called for respecting the privacy and independence of people with disabilities. This, she observed, includes considering the assistive devices and tools used by people with disabilities as part of their privacy. -ONA

Qairoon Hairiti Farm succeeds in cultivating cocoa in Dhofar



The Cocoa tree is characterised by the growth of its fruit on the trunk in the form of pods, with colours that gradually change as they mature

QAIROON HAIRITI: The Qairoon Hairiti Farm, affiliated with the Royal Court Affairs, has succeeded in cultivating cocoa after stages of development, research, and propagation spanning over a decade.

The cocoa tree is a tropical evergreen that requires precise care during its growth stages. It is characterised by the growth of its fruit on the trunk in the form of pods, with colours that gradually change as they mature.

Eng. Mohammed Ahmed Al Mashaikhi, Head of the Agricultural Services Section, stated that the cocoa tree is considered one of the most prominent tropical crops with high economic value.

He pointed out that the stages of its cultivation at the Qairoon Hairiti farm began in 2016 with the aim of determining the extent of its successful cultivation under the climatic conditions of the Dhofar Governorate.

He explained that during the harvest period, cocoa seeds are extracted, undergo a fermentation stage for several days, and then proceed to the drying, roasting, and grinding stages.

Cocoa powder is utilised in various industries, most notably the chocolate industry, some medical drugs, and certain cosmetics, while the outer shell is used as an organic fertiliser.

Regarding the care of cocoa trees, Eng. Salim Ahmed Al Shahri, a Plant Protection Specialist, said that the cocoa trees at the Qairoon Hairiti farm receive continuous monitoring and care to protect them from various pests and to preserve the quality of the fruits.

It is worth noting that the success of the Royal Gardens and Farms of the Royal Court Affairs in cultivating cocoa at the Qairoon Hairiti farm in the Dhofar Governorate represents a qualitative addition to the trajectory of agricultural experiments for tropical crops in the governorate, opening promising economic horizons in the agricultural sector within the Sultanate of Oman. -ONA

MINISTRY OF HERITAGE AND TOURISM

Al Hajar Geopark booklet issued to promote sustainable tourism

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism has issued the Al Hajar Geopark booklet in both Arabic and English. This comes within the framework of its efforts to introduce the pioneering national project that embodies the Sultanate of Oman's commitment to preserving geological heritage, enhancing sustainable ecotourism, and promoting the natural elements it abounds with at both the local and international levels.

Al Hajar Geopark project marks the inaugural step for geopark registration projects in the Sultanate of Oman. It reflects the role played by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism in preparing the requirements for establishing national geoparks and working to register them among the UNESCO Global Geoparks.

Through two main chapters, the booklet addresses the fundamental pillars of the project and its developmental impacts. The first chapter reviews the economic and cultural dimensions of the Al Hajar Geopark, its role in supporting sustainable tourism, highlighting the geological and natural heritage, and empowering local communities by creating economic and tourism opportunities based on the investment of natural and cultural elements.

The second chapter reviews 20 tourism products within the scope of the Al Hajar Geopark, which were selected for their unique geological, natural, and cultural elements. This contributes to enriching the visitor's experience and enhancing the geopark's status as an integrated tourism and cultural destination.

Furthermore, the Ministry issued the English version of the Al Hajar Geopark map, which illustrates the locations of tourism products and attractions within the scope of the geopark. The park extends across the northern Sultanate of Oman through the Al Hajar mountain ranges, encompassing three governorates: Al Dakhiliyah, South Al Batinah, and North Al Sharqiyah. It also includes eleven wilayats: Nizwa, Samail, Bidbid, Izki, Al Hamra, Jabal Akhdar, A'Rustaq, Al Awabi, Nakhal, Wadi Al Maawil, and Al Mudhaibi. -ONA

FEMALE CIVIL DEFENCE AND AMBULANCE AUTHORITY CADRES LEAD COMMUNITY SAFETY AWARENESS EFFORTS

The female cadres of Oman's Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority are playing a vital role in strengthening community awareness by promoting safety, emergency preparedness, and preventive measures across the Sultanate. Through educational campaigns, workshops, and public engagement activities, they continue to encourage a culture of safety while highlighting the importance of preparedness in protecting lives and property.

Oman and Algeria sign MoU for water meter reading project

The pilot project aims to cover 100 accounts as a first phase within a defined geographical area

ALGIERS: A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed in the Algerian capital, Algiers, between OTEC Company, represented by Future Cities Company "Tadom", the Oman Water and Wastewater Services Company "Nama Water Services", and the Water and Sanitation Company of Algiers "SEAAL", to cooperate in executing a pilot project for an Automated Meter Reading (AMR) system and Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) for water meters using LoRaWAN technology.

This came at the conclusion of a three-day official visit by a delegation from the Sultanate of Oman to the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, led by Dr. Ali Amir Al Shidhani, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology for Communications and Information Technology.

The visit aimed to enhance cooperation in technology and digital solutions, as well as to employ smart systems to elevate the efficiency of metering operations and improve water resource management.

The pilot project aims to cover 100 accounts as a first phase within a defined geographical area.

It includes supplying ultrasonic water meters and supervising their installation, conducting wireless planning for the communications network, supplying and installing terminal stations and connectivity components, and linking them to the cloud system within the local cloud, reflecting the keenness of both sides to exchange expertise and support technological innovation. -ONA

Indian School Muladha

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Ph. 26811234 / 26811184, Email: ismloman@gmail.com

Ref : ISML/TA/2026-27/002/A   Date -29-07-2026

TENDER NOTICE

Extension of Submission Deadline for Consultancy Services & Supply of IT Equipment

Sr.No.	Item	Description
1	**Consultancy Services - Construction of New Multi-Storied Building Block** [Ref: ISML/TA/2026-27/001]	Submission deadline **extended to 06 August 2026 (Thursday), 2:00 PM.** Bidders who have already submitted their bids need not resubmit — previously submitted bids remain valid and will be considered in the evaluation.
2	**Supply, Delivery, Installation & Commissioning of IT Equipment**	Tender invited for **Laptop Computers – 11 Nos. and Desktop Computers – 10 Nos.,** as per the specifications.

TENDER INSTRUCTIONS

- Tender documents, specifications & terms available at the School Office, 9:00 AM – 2:00 PM (working days)..
- Technical Bid and Financial Bid to be submitted in **separate sealed envelopes,** superscripted with Tender Ref. No. & Title.
- Sealed tenders to be submitted at the School Office, Indian School Muladha, by **10 August 2026**

The School reserves the right to reject any tender without providing any reason and does not find itself to accept the lowest or any tender.

BAGGAGE RULES

Travellers cautioned

< FROM A1 The prohibited list includes explosives, narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, all types of weapons, military-style clothing and equipment, toy guns resembling real firearms, concealed weapons disguised as everyday objects, natural ivory, electric stun devices, rifle scopes and night-vision equipment. Oman Customs said the restrictions are aimed at protecting public safety, strengthening national security and ensuring compliance with customs laws.

As summer travel continues and passenger traffic rises, authorities are urging travellers to inspect their luggage carefully and verify that any food items or personal belongings they carry comply with the laws of their destination country.A few minutes spent checking customs regulations before departure, officials say, can help travellers avoid confiscation of goods, fines, detention and unnecessary legal complications.

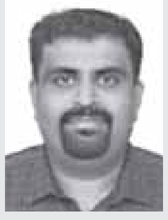
MAZOON COLLEGE

Accreditation

MUSCAT: The Oman Authority for Quality Assurance of Education (OAQA) has decided to cancel the institutional accreditation of Mazoon College.

The Authority has announced the outcome of the Exceptional Review (Review of Accreditation Status) conducted for Mazoon College. The review was undertaken as part of the Authority's mandate to assure the quality of public and private higher education institutions.

ANNOUNCEMENT



This is to inform all concerned that **MR. JACOB THATTIL JOY**, holder of **Indian Passport No. Z5304592** and **Oman Resident Card No. 81132184**, is no longer associated with **ALLIED OIL AND GAS SERVICES LLC** with effect from 29 July 2026. He is not authorized to represent, act for, or enter into any transaction on behalf of the company. Any person having pending matters relating to the company involving Mr. Jacob Thattil Joy must notify the company within five (5) days of this notice. Any dealings with him on behalf of Allied Oil and Gas Services LLC after the effective date shall be at the sole risk and responsibility of the concerned party, and the company shall not be liable for any such transactions.

MANAGEMENT
ALLIED OIL AND GAS SERVICES LLC

Asset Management Bank Muscat Oryx Fund

Investing in stocks on MENA markets (Daily subscription and redemption)

10 years*: 161.3%
*Absolute

Unaudited Statement of Comprehensive Income for 6 months ended 30th June 2026

	30-Jun-26 ﷼'000	30-Jun-25 ﷼'000
Income		
Dividends	1,690	1,245
	1,690	**1,245**
Expenses:		
Management fees	(582)	(580)
General and administrative	(412)	(321)
	(994)	**(901)**
Net Investment Income	**696**	**344**
Fair value Gain or (Loss)	(1,431)	2,545
Realised Gain or (Loss) on sale	(329)	(1,940)
Net Profit for the period	**(1,064)**	**949**
Earnings per unit	(0.005)	0.005

Unaudited Statement of Financial Position as at 30th June 2026

	30-Jun-26 ﷼'000	30-Jun-25 ﷼'000
Assets		
Investments - at Fair Value	52,314	61,604
Cash and Cash equivelent	8,462	1,156
Dividend Receivables	294	60
Total Assets	**61,070**	**62,820**
Liabilities:		
Accruals	(115)	(111)
	(115)	**(111)**
Net Assets	60,955	62,709
Composition of net assets:		
Unit Capital	19,947	19,400
Retained Earnings	41,008	43,309
Net Assets Value (NAV)	**60,955**	**62,709**
Net Asset Value (NAV) per unit (Rial)*	**0.3055904**	**0.3232492**

Note: Due to figures displayed in 000's, immaterial variance is likely with actual numbers. The complete accounts will be sent by mail to any Unitholder who requests them, in either Arabic or English, as requested, within 7 days of receipt of request.

***Note:** During previous year, Corporate action of unit split in the ratio of 1:10 was executed on 22 May 2025. Net asset value per unit is extended to 7 decimals from 3 decimals on 14 May 2025.

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UN-AUDITED CONDENSED INTERIM FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR SIX MONTHS ENDED 30 JUNE 2026

MANAGEMENT REPORT FOR SIX MONTHS ENDED 30 JUNE 2026

The year began with brisk business in the first quarter, supported by consistent performance in the apparel segment and robust festive demand propelled growth in the domestic business, which has been strategic focus of the company for last few years.

Different challenges emerged from beginning of third month of the current year due to sudden war in our region. Leaving aside increase in majority of input costs, logistics have been facing a major challenge because of the war. Management adopted various forward-thinking measures due to which your company could further achieve a reasonable increase in revenue and profit during second quarter as well.

The Company has been taking all possible swift actions to minimize adverse impact of prevalent situation in the region. However, this could be felt during second half of the year due to impact of continued increased input cost and logistical challenges.

Financial Results:

Revenue for the current period grew by about six percent to ﷼ 2,509,771 as against the revenue of ﷼ 2,373,515 achieved during the same period of last year. The six-months period ended with a net profit of ﷼ 319,010 after taxes, as against a net profit after taxes of ﷼ 253,558 achieved during the similar period of last year, a growth of about twenty-six percent.

Shareholders' fund:

Shareholders' fund as of 30 June 2026 was at ﷼ 2,549,931 as against ﷼ 2,324,916 as of 30 June 2025.

Operations:

During the six months of the current year, the company produced 793 metric tons of sewing thread as against 752 metric tons of sewing thread produced during same period of the last year. Export sales accounted for about seventy-seven percent of total revenue (last year eighty-two percent).

Omanization & training:

Company is committed towards employment of Omani youths and awarding suitable training for their overall growth.

Acknowledgement:

On behalf of the Board of Directors and employees of the company, I would like to express our sincere gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik for his wise leadership and generous support for the private sector.

On behalf of all the employees and Management, I also express our sincere gratitude to the Board of Directors for their guidance and support to the Management.

I would also like to place on record our gratitude to all employees for their dedication and hard work. We also thank the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment promotion, other government authorities/ ministries, the Financial Services Authority, Muscat Stock Exchange, Muscat Clearing & Depository Co., and our bankers for their support.

Mithilesh Kumar Singh
General Manager

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT

Amount in OMR

	30-June 2026 ﷼	30-June 2025 ﷼	31-Dec 2025 ﷼
ASSETS			
Non-current assets			
Property, plant and equipment	**695,710**	742,585	723,832
ROU assets	**140,334**	150,995	145,622
Deferred tax assets	**53,170**	55,800	53,765
Total non-current assets	**889,214**	949,380	923,219
Current assets			
Inventories	**1,471,743**	1,488,000	1,395,481
Trade & other receivables	**1,130,728**	943,084	1,069,161
Financial assets at fair value through profit or loss	**356,031**	-	278,245
Bank and cash	**55,116**	142,408	76,494
Total current assets	**3,013,618**	2,573,492	2,819,381
Total assets	**3,902,832**	3,522,872	3,742,600
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES			
Equity			
Share capital	**1,850,485**	1,762,366	1,762,366
Legal reserve	**296,858**	258,872	296,858
Reserve for bad and doubtful debts	**57,000**	33,400	44,400
Retained Earning	**345,588**	270,278	347,593
Total shareholders' equity	**2,549,931**	2,324,916	2,451,217
Liabilities			
Non-current liabilities			
Employees' end of service benefits	**181,274**	155,654	161,223
Non-current portion of lease liability ROU Assets	**174,548**	180,328	177,527
Total non-current liabilities	**355,822**	335,982	338,750
Current liabilities			
Trade and other payables	**886,421**	762,911	829,465
Bank borrowings	**-**	-	-
Current maturities lease liability ROU Assets	**5,792**	5,450	5,620
Income Tax payable	**104,866**	93,613	117,548
Total current liabilities	**997,079**	861,974	952,633
Total liabilities	**1,352,901**	1,197,956	1,291,383
Total equity and liabilities	**3,902,832**	3,522,872	3,742,600
Net assets per share	**0.138**	0.132	0.139

STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR SIX MONTHS ENDED

Amount in OMR

	30-June 2026 ﷼	30-June 2025 ﷼
Turnover/Revenue	**2,509,771**	2,373,515
Cost of Sale	**(1,669,872)**	(1,663,678)
Gross profit	**839,899**	709,837
Other Income	**9,480**	6,364
Distribution expenses	**(341,988)**	(286,066)
Administration & general expenses	**(131,166)**	(112,337)
Provision for slow moving inventories	**(1,999)**	10
Allowances for credit losses	**11,727**	(9,838)
Profit from operations	**385,953**	307,970
Finance expenses	**(10,046)**	(12,444)
Profit/(loss) for the period before taxes	**375,907**	295,526
Taxation	**(56,897)**	(41,968)
Total comprehensive income/ (loss) for the period	**319,010**	253,558
Earning per share	**0.017**	0.014

Note: The company does not have any items under other comprehensive income.

Note: The complete accounts are available on MSX website. If required, the same can also be provided by email or post in Arabic or English, in seven days, on receipt of written request from the shareholder.

QIC

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FOR THE SIX-MONTH PERIOD ENDED 30 JUNE 2026 · UNAUDITED · PREPARED UNDER IFRS 17

Dear Shareholders,

On behalf of the Board of Directors of Oman Oatar Insurance Company S.A.O.G. ("OQIC" or "the Company"), I am pleased to present the Company's unaudited financial statements for the six-month period ended 30 June 2026, prepared in accordance with IFRS 17. The Company delivered a profit after tax of ﷼ 2.70 million, an increase of 42% over ﷼ 1.91 million in the corresponding period of 2025. This strong growth was driven by an exceptional performance of the investment portfolio, which more than offset a softer underwriting result during the period.

BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

The global economy remains resilient but uneven, with growth projected at 3.0% in 2026 and 3.4% in 2027, according to the IMF's July 2026 update. The ongoing geopolitical in the Middle East continues to exert pressure on energy prices and inflation, which has paused its decline, complicating monetary policy and investment yields. Advanced economies are growing modestly, while AI-driven technology investment provides a meaningful offset, benefiting economies integrated into that value chain. For the insurance sector, this environment implies continued elevated claims costs from inflation and mixed investment returns amid interest-rate uncertainty.

The GCC economies continue to demonstrate resilience despite heightened geopolitical uncertainty and regional trade disruptions. The IMF projects regional GDP growth of 4.8% in 2026, supported by the gradual increase in OPEC+ oil production, resilient non-oil sector activity, and sustained government investment under national diversification agendas. While elevated energy prices have strengthened fiscal and external balances, geopolitical risks continue to weigh on trade and investment sentiment.

Oman's economic fundamentals remain robust, underpinned by prudent fiscal management and the continued implementation of Oman Vision 2040 and the 11th Five-Year Development Plan (2026–2030). The IMF projects real GDP growth of approximately 3.7% in 2026, with inflation contained at around 2.8%, while central government debt has declined to 34.7% of GDP. Supported by investment-grade sovereign credit ratings (BBB-/A-3 long- and short-term from S&P, with equivalent ratings from other agencies), Oman remains well positioned to sustain economic diversification and long-term growth.

COMPANY PERFORMANCE

The Omani insurance market remained intensely competitive among its sixteen licensed insurers, with total market premium growing by 7.92% to ﷼ 341.76 million from ﷼ 316.68 million in H1-2025 (FSA report, June 2026). OQIC ranked third in the market by gross written premium, with a 15% market share as at June 2026. Despite challenging and price-sensitive market conditions, the Company maintained a strong market presence, supported by a performance-driven approach and continuous attentiveness to evolving customer needs.

Across the market, loss ratios in the non-life business segments increased, driven by adverse weather condition in Oman in early April 2026. This has resulted in upward pressure on claims within the property and motor insurance segment, adversely affecting the underwriting income of insurers generally.

H1-2026 SNAPSHOT

The Company recorded gross written premium (GWP) of ﷼ 50.76 million in H1-2026, up 3.4% from ﷼ 49.08 million in H1-2025. Insurance revenue increased by 9% to ﷼ 35.09 million from RO 32.14 million in H1-2025. Revenue grew by 18% in Medical, 15.1% in Life, and 24.4% in Personal Lines. In contrast, Property & Casualty revenue declined by 3.3%, reflecting intense market competition and softer insurance rates, which reduced premium realization.

The Company reported an insurance service result of ﷼ (832) thousand in H1-2026, compared with ﷼ 127 thousand in H1-2025. This decline is primarily attributable to higher reported losses in the property and motor segments, together with prudent reserve strengthening within the medical and motor portfolios. In response, OQIC has implemented targeted initiatives to restore portfolio profitability, including stricter underwriting guidelines and reinforced claims management protocols.

Net investment and other income increased by 101% to ﷼ 4.62 million in H1-2026 from ﷼ 2.30 million in H1-2025. This strong performance was driven by robust returns on the Company's equity investments in the Omani market: the Oman equity index gained 28% in H1-2026, remaining largely insulated from regional equity performance amid the ongoing geopolitical situation. By contrast, the S&P GCC Composite Index recorded no growth over the period, with all GCC markets other than Saudi Arabia (+2.9%) posting negative returns. Consequently, profit after tax rose to ﷼ 2.70 million, a 42% year-on-year increase from ﷼ 1.91 million. It is noteworthy that the Company recognized a Pillar Two tax charge of ﷼ 373 thousand for the period (H1-2025: nil).

SHAREHOLDERS' RETURNS

The positive results achieved by the Company have generated attractive returns for investors. Net asset value (NAV) per share stood at 262 baizas as at 30 June 2026, on 161,218,570 equity shares outstanding, while market capitalization stood at ﷼ 29.66 million as of the same date.

APPRECIATION

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I extend my sincere thanks to the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion and to the Financial Services Authority for their continued guidance and support. We also express our gratitude to our clients and partners for their trust, to our shareholders for their steadfast confidence, and to the Company's management and staff for their dedication and continued efforts.

We extend our sincere best wishes to His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik and pledge our constant support and commitment to the economic development of the Sultanate and the achievement of the strategic directions and goals of Oman Vision 2040. We pray to Almighty Allah to protect His Majesty and to help Oman continue its progress and transformation under His Majesty's wise leadership.

Salem Khalaf Al-Mannai
Chairman

INTERIM CONDENSED CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS OF 30 JUNE 2026 (IFRS 17)

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

Amounts in OMR

	30 June 2026 ﷼ (Unaudited)	31 Dec 2025 ﷼ (Audited)
ASSETS		
Cash and cash equivalents	**11,455,046**	7,909,470
Bank deposits	**28,309,156**	23,845,621
Financial investments	**36,618,066**	39,794,532
Due from related parties	**1,320,474**	1,162,177
Other receivables	**721,552**	645,274
Reinsurers contract assets	**38,432,966**	34,911,301
Insurance contract assets	**3,513**	1,167
Property and equipment	**310,927**	356,103
Investment Property	**522,596**	530,400
Right of Use Asset	**31,838**	31,838
Intangible Asset	**1,391,500**	1,452,000
Total assets	**119,117,634**	110,639,883
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES		
Capital and reserves		
Share capital	**21,998,840**	21,998,840
Legal reserve	**2,780,143**	2,780,143
Contingency reserve	**13,548,139**	13,548,139
Insurance Finance Reserve	**(37,386)**	(41,177)
Fair value reserve	**219,570**	453,444
Retained earnings	**3,624,814**	1,967,154
Total equity	**42,134,120**	40,706,543
Liabilities		
Tax liability	**1,630,131**	1,186,117
Due to related parties	**2,164,277**	2,480,409
Other liabilities and accruals	**3,530,966**	2,967,521
Insurance contract liabilities	**68,198,375**	62,417,399
Reinsurance contract liabilities	**1,284,349**	730,426
Provisions for end of service benefits	**175,416**	151,468
Total liabilities	**76,983,514**	69,933,340
Total equity and liabilities	**119,117,634**	110,639,883

INTERIM CONDENSED CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 30TH JUNE 2026 (IFRS 17)

STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME

	30 June 2026 (Unaudited) ﷼	30 June 2025 (Unaudited) ﷼
Insurance revenue	**35,088,692**	32,144,888
Insurance service expenses	**(28,347,009)**	(14,968,370)
Net expenses from reinsurance contract	**(7,573,437)**	(17,049,359)
Insurance service result	**(831,753)**	127,159
Insurance finance (expenses)/income for insurance contracts issued	**(689,189)**	(1,275,505)
Reinsurance finance income / (expenses) for reinsurance contracts held	**770,539**	1,687,586
Net insurance financial results	**(750,404)**	539,239
Net Investment Income	**4,565,503**	2,277,852
Rental and Other Income	**62,685**	28,816
Total investment & other income	**4,628,188**	2,306,668
TOTAL INCOME	**3,877,785**	2,845,907
Operating and administrative expenses	**(668,221)**	(603,871)
Depreciation	**(130,889)**	(120,186)
Profit / (loss) for the period before taxation	**3,078,674**	2,121,850
Income tax expense	**(373,093)**	(212,053)
Profit / (loss) for the period after tax	**2,705,581**	1,909,797
Other comprehensive income / (expense)		
Net change in fair value of financial assets	**(233,874)**	236,130
Net finance income / (expense) from insurance contracts	**201,413**	10,476
Net finance income/(expense) from reinsurance contracts	**(197,622)**	(47,891)
Total comprehensive income/(expense) for the period	**2,475,498**	2,108,511
Earnings / (loss) per share-basic	**0.017**	0.012

WORLD

CLASHES BETWEEN TWO GROUPS

Indefinite curfew imposed in parts of Eastern Nepal

SUNSARI: An indefinite curfew has been imposed in parts of Sunsari District in eastern Nepal following clashes between two groups that escalated over the past few days. The Sunsari District Administration Office imposed the curfew from 3:30PM on Tuesday in sensitive areas of the district, with the order remaining in force until further notice. According to a notice signed by Chief District Officer (CDO) Ishwori Prasad Aryal, the curfew order was issued under Section 6(a) of the Local Administration Act, 1971 (2028 BS), to maintain law and order.

As per the notice, the curfew covers areas along the East-West Highway from Pakali Chowk in the east to the Koshi Barrage Bridge in the west, extending 200 metres on both the northern and southern sides of the highway. The entire Inaruwa market area has also been brought under the curfew.

During the curfew period, all movement within the designated areas has been prohibited. Public gatherings, rallies, demonstrations, meetings and sit-ins have also been banned.

The District Administration Office has urged residents to cooperate with authorities in maintaining peace and security and to comply with the curfew order.

The Chief District Officer of Sunsari, Ishwori Prasad Aryal, said the administration has refrained from using force despite escalating tensions following violence in Kaptanganj of Dewanganj Rural Municipality-3. — ANI

Times OF OMAN

Printed and published by: Muscat Media Group
Post Box: 770,
Postal Code: 112

Founder: Essa bin Mohammed Al Zedjali
Chairman / Editor-in-Chief: Mohamed Issa Al Zadjali
Deputy Editor-in-Chief: Anees bin Essa Al Zedjali
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NATIONWIDE SWITCH-OFF

Rwanda to phase out 2G, 3G networks

KIGALI: Rwanda's Ministry of Information and Communication Technology and Innovation (MINICT) has announced the decision to phase out 2G and 3G mobile network technologies.

The nationwide switch-off of 3G services is scheduled for June 30, 2027, followed by the retirement of 2G services.

The transition will free up network capacity currently used to run two generations of aging technology, allowing mobile operators to invest fully in expanding and strengthening 4G and, over time, 5G coverage across the country.

For consumers, this means faster internet, clearer calls, fewer dropped connections and better access to mobile banking, government e-services, education, and health platforms that increasingly depend on modern networks, the ministry said. Pilot shutdowns will be conducted later this year, ahead of the nationwide 3G switch-off, alongside continued expansion of 4G coverage and regular monitoring of progress.

Businesses and public institutions that use equipment or services running on 2G or 3G, including those related to mobile money, payments, utilities, transport, health, public safety and government services, should begin planning to replace or upgrade these systems, the statement said. — Xinhua

166 Indian seafarers remain near Strait of Hormuz: MEA

Ministry of External Affairs Spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said six Indian vessels are currently located west of the Strait of Hormuz in the Arabian Gulf, carrying 125 Indian seafarers. Additionally, 41 Indian seafarers are on board foreign vessels in the region

NEW DELHI: The Ministry of Shipping is closely monitoring six Indian vessels and the welfare of 166 Indian seafarers operating in the Arabian Gulf and near the Strait of Hormuz amid escalation in attacks on commercial vessels during the ongoing conflict in the region, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said on Tuesday.

Addressing the media briefing, MEA Spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said six Indian vessels are currently located west of the Strait of Hormuz in the Arabian Gulf, carrying 125 Indian seafarers. Additionally, 41 Indian seafarers are on board foreign vessels in the region.

"We have six Indian vessels west of the Strait of Hormuz, in the Arabian Gulf, and there are 125 seafarers on board these Indian ships. In addition, there are 41 Indian seafarers on board foreign ships in that area," Jaiswal said.

He said the Ministry of Shipping is in close coordination with relevant authorities to ensure the safety and welfare of Indian seafarers in the region.

"The Ministry of Shipping is closely monitoring our ships as well as our seafarers to ensure their well-being and welfare. Obviously, our missions in the region are in touch with the Ministry of Shipping to see if there is any requirement to support them, and they are offering any assistance that might be required," he added.

Responding to a query on the number of Indian seafarers operating in or transiting the Black Sea region, which has also witnessed attacks on commercial vessels leading to the death of Indian seafarers, Jaiswal said India has one of the world's largest seafaring communities, with many serving on both Indian and foreign vessels.

"We have the second-largest seafaring community. A lot of them are on Indian vessels, and a lot are also on foreign vessels. As to the exact number of Indian seafarers serving on ships in and around the Black Sea, I don't have the figure with me right now," he said.

On the recent reports of attacks on ships carrying Indian seafarers in the Black Sea region and talks with Russia and Ukraine on the matter, the MEA spokesperson reiterated India's position that commercial shipping, seafarers, civilians and civilian infrastructure should not be targeted.

"We have been very clear in articulating to both our partners and friends and to others also that under no circumstances can commercial shipping or the seafarers or civilians or civilian infrastructure be attacked and it must be avoided, and we have condemned those attacks which have happened recently in the Black Sea region," Jaiswal said.

On Monday, MEA summoned Ukraine's Ambassador to India, Oleksandr Polishchuk, and conveyed New Delhi's "serious concern" over the recent attack on the commercial vessel, MV OMORFI, in the Black Sea that resulted in the death of an Indian seafarer.

Earlier, the Indian Embassy in Ukraine said a merchant vessel, MV Ragnar, carrying four Indian nationals, was struck at the port of Odesa, with two crew members reported safe while information on the remaining two was awaited. — ANI

ON GAZA CEASEFIRE

Delegation from Hamas heads to Cairo for talks

GAZA: A delegation from the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) left for the Egyptian capital Cairo on Tuesday to continue negotiations on implementing the second phase of the Gaza ceasefire agreement, the movement said.

In a press statement, Hamas said the delegation will meet with Egyptian officials and mediators from Egypt, Qatar and Türkiye, as well as representatives of Palestinian factions, to consolidate the ceasefire.

The meetings will also focus on ensuring the implementation of commitments reached during talks in Egypt's Sharm El-Sheikh, particularly those related to the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip and the transition to the second phase of US President Donald Trump's peace plan, according to the statement.

The visit came two days after Israel approved the deployment of an international stabilization force in the Gaza Strip as part of Trump's 20-point Gaza peace plan.

The United States announced in January the launch of the plan's second phase, which includes a full Israeli military withdrawal from Gaza, the disarmament of Hamas, the start of reconstruction efforts, and the establishment of a transitional governing authority.

— Xinhua

Strait of Hormuz is 'pinnacle of our power': Iranian official

Iranian Deputy Parliament Speaker also warned Ukraine against any 'mischief' in the Caspian Sea

TEHRAN: Iranian Deputy Parliament Speaker Hamidreza Haji Babaei said Iran would "never reach an understanding with America," asserting that the Strait of Hormuz is "the pinnacle of our power" while reiterating support for the "resistance" and warning Ukraine against any "mischief" in the Caspian Sea, according to Iranian news agency ISNA.

According to ISNA, speaking during the parliament's public and closed session on Monday, Haji Babaei began by referring to Hezbollah's recent pledge of allegiance to Iran's leadership, saying it was "the high peak of the nation and the victorious face of the resistance," which had "many effects on the international stage and especially in the region" and demonstrated the strength of the "Islamic nation and the resistance," against which "America and the Zionist regime [Israel] were forced to retreat."

He also referred to remarks by late Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Hosseini Khamenei, saying Iran had made "preserving the territorial integrity of Lebanon and the complete and unconditional elimination of the Zionist regime's aggression" the first condition for any memorandum of understanding to end the "imposed war with the aggressor America."

Quoting the current Supreme Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Mojtaba Hosseini Khamenei, Haji Babaei said, "There is no other way forward but jihad and resistance, and persistence in this path will bring the promised divine victory to the mujahideen of the true path."

Turning to the United States, Haji Babaei said, "America should not be allowed to fight whenever it wants and declare a ceasefire whenever it wants. The Islamic Republic of Iran must stand strong against America's will and not allow America to be an active player in the region."

He argued that "the will of the great Iranian nation has shown that America is passive, and America must remain passive in our politics as well," adding, "America's war is war, its peace is war, and its dialogue is war; therefore, we must be careful, because we will never reach an understanding with America, and it is the will of the nation that can always be decisive."

On the strategic Strait of Hormuz, through which a significant share of global oil shipments passes, Haji Babaei said, "The Strait of Hormuz created great power for the Iranian nation, and today it is the pinnacle of our power. This peak of power and dignity of the great Iranian nation must definitely be supported and protected." In reference to the recent strikes in the Caspian Sea on Iranian vessels, Haji Babaei issued a warning to Ukraine, saying, "We warn Ukrainian employers that any mischief by your contractor in the region and the Caspian Sea will result in a regretful response from the great Iranian nation."

— ANI

FOREIGN MINISTRY STATEMENT

President Putin defends Russian war effort, blasts West

MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin declared that Russia would achieve its objectives in the "special military operation" in Ukraine, while accusing the West of pursuing a campaign of "Russophobia" and attempting to undermine the country, according to a statement released by the Russian Foreign Ministry.

Addressing deputies of the 8th State Duma of the Federal Assembly in Moscow on Monday, Putin said the past five years had been "difficult and exceptionally consequential" for Russia, describing the period as one in which "the fate and future of our people" had been at stake.

"We will achieve our goals and, together, do everything for victory - for Russia," Putin said.

He thanked lawmakers for their joint efforts to strengthen Russia's sovereignty and defend its national interests, adding that Russia continued to uphold its security and independence.

"The participants in the special military operation are heroically fighting for Russia and their homeland. They have the support of our entire nation and society," Putin said.

In his remarks, Putin asserted that Russia had historically responded to external threats with national unity and said the same spirit was evident today.

He also accused Western countries of applying "double standards" by selectively invoking the UN Charter while ignoring the principle of national "self-determination" when it did not suit their interests.

Claiming that Western sanctions had failed to achieve their objectives, Putin said that since 2022, "the West has set its Russophobic machine running at full speed," imposing a record number of sanctions that he described as ineffective.

The Russian president further alleged that Russia's opponents, having failed to defeat the country "on the battlefield," had resorted to "outright terrorist methods" against the Russian people.

"But the people of Russia can never be broken. They never have been - and they never will be," he said.

Putin also defended Russia's political system, saying its institutions were built on "sovereign foundations" in accordance with the country's Constitution and were capable of repelling any hostile actions against the state.

The remarks come as the conflict in Ukraine continues, with Russia maintaining its military campaign while facing continued sanctions and military support for Ukraine from Western countries.

Meanwhile, as Zelenskyy has arrived in the US, Trump's meeting with the Ukrainian President in the Oval Office is expected to focus on the ongoing peace process between Russia and Ukraine. A White House official told CNN that "now is the time to end the war."

Earlier on Monday, Trump dismissed Zelenskyy's allegation that Russia was providing Iran with intelligence on US military bases, saying, "I don't think they've been doing it, certainly not at a high level."

US STATE

Wisconsin tornado cuts power in over 390,000 homes

WISCONSIN: More than 390,000 customers across parts of the US were without power on Monday after severe thunderstorms swept through the Midwest, while an "extremely dangerous" tornado ripped through Menasha and Appleton in northeast US state Wisconsin, damaging homes, uprooting trees and prompting authorities to urge residents to stay indoors, according to media report.

According to CNN, the tornado tore roofs off homes, destroyed properties, uprooted and split trees, and left thousands without electricity in northeastern Wisconsin. The National Weather Service (NWS) described the tornado as "extremely dangerous" and issued a particularly dangerous situation tornado warning shortly after noon local time. A preliminary damage survey rated the tornado at least EF-2, with assessments still underway.

"If you are currently in your home or currently stuck in the area that has been damaged, we ask that you shelter in place and stay inside," Menasha Police Chief Matthew Albrecht said during a news conference.

He said first responders from multiple agencies were assessing the damage and searching for victims.

The Menasha Police Department also urged residents to remain indoors.

"We are aware of severe damage in broad areas. We are asking the public to stay indoors, watch out for downed power lines, do not drive around road closures, and do not drive around the area unless absolutely necessary," the department said in a Facebook post cited by CNN.

Winnebago County officials reported extensive damage, including downed power lines, fallen trees and other hazardous conditions, though many roads remained impassable, making it difficult to assess the full extent of the destruction. — ANI

FICCI AND EY

India's cities require $2.4 trillion investment by 2050: Joint report

NEW DELHI: India's cities will require an estimated $2.4 trillion in investments by 2050 to become climate-resilient and low-carbon, but municipal corporations have so far mobilised only a fraction of the required capital, according to a joint report released by FICCI and EY on Tuesday.

The report said that only 20 municipal corporations have accessed capital markets to date, collectively raising about $476 million, highlighting the significant financing gap facing India's urban development.

According to the report, urban areas currently contribute more than 60 per cent of India's GDP while housing nearly one-third of the country's population.

However, municipal corporations collectively generate revenues equivalent to only about 0.6 per cent of GDP, limiting their ability to finance infrastructure and public services.

The report estimates that India will require around $840 billion in urban infrastructure investments over the next 15 years, translating into nearly $55 billion annually. It also noted that nearly 70 per cent of the urban infrastructure required by 2047 has yet to be built.

India's urban population is projected to rise to nearly 600 million by 2036, contributing around 70 per cent of GDP. By 2050, the urban population is expected to reach 877 million, accounting for nearly 75 per cent of the country's economic output, underscoring the need for substantial investments in infrastructure and governance.

The report said financing, rather than infrastructure creation itself, has emerged as the key challenge in achieving the government's Viksit Bharat 2047 vision.

Raj Menda, Chairman of the FICCI Committee on Urban Development and Real Estate and Chairman of the Supervisory Board at RMZ, said India's next phase of urban development should focus on building economically competitive and investment-ready cities.

"India's next phase of urban development must move beyond infrastructure creation to building economically competitive, investment-ready cities. Strong governance, innovative financing and integrated planning will be critical to unlocking the full potential of our cities and accelerating India's journey towards Viksit Bharat 2047," he said.

The report described the Union government's Rs1 lakh crore Urban Challenge Fund as an important step towards making cities financially self-reliant. The fund requires urban local bodies to mobilise 50 per cent of project costs from capital markets and is expected to catalyse nearly Rs4 lakh crore in investments.

To strengthen urban development, the report proposed six strategic shifts. These include moving from service delivery to economic leadership, promoting a network of growth cities instead of concentrating development in a few metros, transforming cities into investment-ready entities, focusing on economic competitiveness rather than only infrastructure creation, using data as strategic economic intelligence, and building climate-resilient cities.

The report also highlighted the uneven distribution of economic activity across urban India. While the country's top 10 cities contribute nearly 30 per cent of GDP, many Tier-II and Tier-III cities remain underutilised despite accommodating a large share of the urban population.

It recommended developing a polycentric urban growth model linked through economic corridors and the PM Gati Shakti initiative to unlock the economic potential of these emerging cities.

The report noted that India has already laid a strong foundation through flagship urban development programmes. More than 8,000 projects worth over Rs1.64 lakh crore have been implemented under the Smart Cities Mission, while Rs2.7 lakh crore has been committed under AMRUT across nearly 500 cities. In addition, 1.25 crore houses have been sanctioned under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban).

Emphasising the importance of cities in India's long-term growth story, Menda said, "The success of Viksit Bharat 2047 will depend on the success of India's cities." He added that cities with transparent financial systems, strong governance and investment-ready balance sheets would be better placed to attract long-term capital and sustain economic growth. — ANI

Zinedine Zidane named France's new head coach after Deschamps' 14-year tenure

Zidane was widely expected to succeed Didier Deschamps, whose 14-year tenure came to an end following the 2026 FIFA World Cup

PARIS : Zinedine Zidane has been appointed as the new manager of the France national team, the Federation Francaise de Football (FFF) announced on Tuesday.

Zidane was widely expected to succeed Didier Deschamps, whose 14-year tenure came to an end following the 2026 FIFA World Cup. Deschamps had announced early last year that he would leave the role, opening the door for Zidane's return to management.

The former France captain has signed a four-year contract. Regarded as one of France's greatest-ever players, Zidane transitioned into coaching after retiring from football. Four years after hanging up his boots, he returned to Real Madrid as a special adviser to the first team.

In 2013, he became assistant coach under Carlo Ancelotti before taking charge of Real Madrid Castilla. Zidane was promoted to lead the senior side in early 2016, replacing Rafael Benitez.

During his first stint as Real Madrid manager, Zidane guided the club to an unprecedented three consecutive UEFA Champions League titles.

He stepped down just days after leading the team to its 13th European Cup, saying the club needed a change.

Zidane returned to the position in 2019 following unsuccessful spells under Julen Lopetegui and Santiago Solari.

Under his leadership, Real Madrid won the Covid-affected 2019-20 La Liga title, his second league triumph with the club after winning the competition in 2017.

Zidane resigned again after Real Madrid ended the 2020-21 season without a trophy. The 1998 Ballon d'Or winner has remained without a managerial role since then.

France, despite dominating a large part of the group and knockout stages, fell to Spain 2-0 and to England 4-6 in the third-place match. Despite Mbappe being the leading goal-scorer of the tournament with 10 goals and surpassing Lionel Messi's tally to become the all-time highest FIFA World Cup scorer with 22 goals, Mbappe could not get the ending he wanted.

Nonetheless, his run from the 2018 FIFA World Cup title win to the 2026 semifinals, which also included a runners-up finish in 2022, where he gave Messi-led Argentina a scare in the final with a hat-trick, is one of the finest runs in FIFA World Cup history. -ANI

TRANSFER WINDOWS

Real Madrid facing crucial decisions after summer spending spree

MADRID: Real Madrid has enjoyed one of Europe's busiest transfer windows with Jose Mourinho returning as head coach and several high-profile signings already secured, but the Spanish giant still faces key decisions before the market closes.

The club moved quickly to strengthen a defense that was exposed too often last season, signing center back Ibrahima Konate on a free transfer and bringing in World Cup-winning left back Marc Cucurella from Chelsea.

Netherlands international Denzel Dumfries has replaced veteran right back Dani Carvajal, whose contract expired at the end of last season, while Bernardo Silva adds creativity in midfield and attack. Brazilian striker Endrick also returns after an impressive loan spell in France with Lyon.

Spanish media reports say Madrid is close to completing a deal worth around 125 million euros for RB Leipzig and Cote d'Ivoire winger Yan Diomande, while rumors linking the club Manchester City's Rodri refuse to go away.

Any further arrivals are likely to trigger departures as Mourinho trims an increasingly crowded squad.

The additions of Silva and the expected arrival of Diomande, combined with Endrick's return, have left Madrid well stocked in attacking positions. Young forward Gonzalo Garcia appears the most likely casualty despite impressing last season.

Garcia is reportedly close to joining Fulham, where he could reunite with former Real Madrid youth coach Alvaro Arbeloa. The Premier League side has also been linked with Madrid's 18-year-old winger Franco Mastantuono, although the Argentine is more likely to leave on loan after an underwhelming first season in Spain.

Brazil forward Rodrygo was also the subject of transfer speculation earlier this year, but a knee ligament injury is expected to rule out any move until at least the January transfer window.

The future of Morocco international Brahim Diaz remains uncertain. The midfielder is attracting interest elsewhere and could be sold if Madrid cannot offer him regular first-team football.

Rodri's possible arrival would also create fierce competition in midfield, with Eduardo Camavinga emerging as the player most likely to leave. The France international endured a disappointing campaign, missed out on his country's World Cup squad and continues to attract interest from Premier League clubs.

Perhaps the biggest issue facing Madrid, however, is Vinicius Junior.

The Brazil international's contract expires in June 2027, meaning he could leave on a free transfer a year from now if no extension is agreed. Madrid is keen to tie the winger to a new long-term deal, but reports suggest the club would consider selling him rather than risk losing one of its biggest stars for nothing.

Premier League champion Arsenal has been linked with a move that could break the British transfer record, making Vinicius' contract negotiations one of the biggest storylines still to unfold before the transfer window closes.

Record revenue as stadium income climbs

Real Madrid generated a record 1.221 billion euros (1.4 billion U.S. dollars) in revenue during the last financial year, according to figures approved by the club's board of directors on Tuesday.

The Spanish club said revenue rose 3.1 percent from the previous season, adding that no other sports organization has surpassed that level of annual income.

The increase was driven primarily by an 11 percent rise in revenue from the Santiago Bernabeu Stadium and a 6 percent increase in marketing income, boosted by sponsorship and commercial partnerships.

The club posted a pre-tax profit of 26.3 million euros, extending its run of annual profits to 26 consecutive years.

Real Madrid also reported net assets of 624 million euros, cash reserves of 83 million euros and net debt of 9 million euros.

The debt figure does not include financing related to the redevelopment of the Santiago Bernabeu Stadium, where total investment has reached 1.407 billion euros. -Xinhua

PREMIER LEAGUE CLUB

Man City confirms 'successful' back surgery for Rodri

LONDON: Manchester City confirmed on Tuesday that midfielder Rodri has undergone successful back surgery and will begin rehabilitation, with no timetable set for his return.

The Premier League club said the Spain international had been experiencing discomfort in his back for some time before undergoing the procedure.

"The surgery was successful and Rodri will now begin a short period of rehabilitation," City said in a statement.

City coach Enzo Maresca had said earlier that Rodri needed time to rest and recover before returning to the squad.

The club is scheduled to face Arsenal in the Community Shield on August 16 before opening its Premier League season against Bournemouth on August 23.

City has not indicated whether Rodri will be available for either match.

Rodri, whose contract expires at the end of the season, helped Spain win the FIFA World Cup earlier this month and was named the tournament's best player.

The 30-year-old has struggled with injuries over the past two seasons, including a torn anterior cruciate ligament that sidelined him for most of the 2024-25 campaign. -Xinhua

INSTAGRAM POST

FIFA boss Infantino takes aim at World Cup critics

BERLIN: Gianni Infantino is not a man used to apologising. And even though he said sorry three times on the second slide of a 15-page Instagram post, that remains the case.

"To everyone who missed our beautiful game, the emotions, the celebrations, the laughter, the crying, the deception, and the joy. To all of you who missed watching kids, babies, grandparents, and parents come together for the beautiful game, I say sorry that the matches are now over and sorry that you missed all that joy and togetherness. Sorry that you were so consumed by hate and criticism that you missed it all," read a missive from the FIFA president posted on FIFA's website, his personal Instagram account, and FIFA's online and social channels. Comments were turned off.

The Swiss executive went on to claim that the World Cup, had brought "no violence, no incidents, 100% safety and security, only joy and happiness!" The exclamation mark was not the only part of the message reminiscent of US President Donald Trump's communication style.

"While you spread hatred, we worked tirelessly to unite two countries at war. Iran entered the United States without incident or conflict," Infantino wrote.

In fact, Iran were treated differently to any of the other 47 teams at the World Cup. They were forced to stay in Mexico and travel to their games in the US and had further last minute restrictions imposed on them after their matches.

Iran head coach Amir Ghalenoei said his team were the "most oppressed" at the World Cup after the travel chaos came on top of several support staff being denied visas.

Travel bans and visa refusals were a running theme of the tournament. Trump's travel bans denied entry to fans from several participating countries, including Haiti, Senegal, Iran and the Ivory Coast, which faced varying levels of bans or restrictions.

Furthermore Somali referee Omar Artan was denied entry to the US due to unsubstantiated US government claims that he had an "association with suspected members of terror organizations," despite the fact that he held a diplomatic passport and the had been issued the correct visa.

But, Infantino said, people should instead be looking at FIFA's successes.

"You mentioned the few people denied visas and overlooked the millions who were approved, from all parts of the world. Because football unites the world, and it was demonstrated impressively this summer," he added.

Infantino's relationship with Trump has been another bone of contention for many. After awarding Trump the newly introduced FIFA Peace Prize in December, Trump admitted to phoning Infantino to lobby on behalf of US striker Folarin Balogun, whose red card ban was suspended in a near-unprecedented move at a World Cup.

Could Europe's football union ditch FIFA?

"Indeed, 'arguable' referees' decisions or 'strange' disciplinary rulings such as for instance potentially mistaken red or yellow cards or subsequent decisions not to ban players in certain situations are routine and widely accepted in some of the biggest leagues worldwide," Infantino wrote.

However, FIFA's own rules state that red card bans at World Cups cannot be appealed or overturned, which Balogun's, in a World Cup context at least, was.

"It's curious that the same countries employing these practices are the ones criticising," continued Infantino in what appeared to be a shot at European governing body UEFA, which publicly said FIFA had "crossed a red line" in the Balogun incident. UEFA President Aleksander Ceferin failed to attend the World Cup final, a move widely understood to have been in protest — with FIFA and its biggest continental association at loggerheads.

Trump wants Infantino as UN Secretary-General

Shortly after the final, Trump recommended Infantino for the post of secretary-general of the United Nations, which is up for grabs at the end of this year.

But, despite the thoughts of his "close friend," Infantino looks set to remain at FIFA, where he is expected to be elected unopposed once again next year. In Sunday's message he praised his own organization for delivering despite the further criticism of hydration breaks and FIFA breaking their own rules to extend halftime in the final. "To the pens and papers, to all the screens, may you find love and peace where the people behind you couldn't.

May you find peace; we at FIFA have found ours and we deliver it, by delivering the most outstanding FIFA World Cup. May football rise above all hate."

It is a message that the Iranian team, Haitian fans and Omar Artan may well have shared, had they been allowed to enjoy the World Cup with the same freedoms as Infantino. -DW

OMAN OIL PRICE FALLS

The price of Oman crude oil has decreased, with prices for delivery by September 2026 reaching $77.04. The price of Oman crude oil fell by $5.37 from the price of Monday, which was $82.41. -ONA

MARKET
BUSINESS & FINANCE

WWW.TIMESOFOMAN.COM
WEDNESDAY, JULY 29, 2026

MSX INDEX ENDS HIGHER

The MSX index closed at 7,247.19 points, up by 0.86% from previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 1.55% at 578.08 points. Salalah Port Services, up 10.00%, was the top gainer while, Sharqiyah Desalination, down 2.42%, was the top loser.

Initiative promotes financial literacy, investment awareness

'Safe Investment Journey' initiative seeks to spread financial literacy through an interactive experience that simulates the investor's journey

SALALAH: The "Safe Investment Journey" initiative, organised by the Financial Services Authority (FSA), Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX), and Muscat Clearing and Depository Company, embodies the efforts of the participating institutions to enhance financial literacy and investment awareness.

The initiative is part of the events of the Khareef Dhofar (monsoon) season 2026 and will continue until the second of August at the Salalah Gardens Mall commercial complex.

The initiative seeks to spread financial literacy through an interactive experience that simulates the investor's journey.

It begins with learning the basics of investment and the procedures for opening an investor number, moving through exploring investment opportunities and products, verifying licensed entities, and monitoring the performance of investment portfolios, culminating in making conscious investment decisions that promote safe investment and mitigate risks.

The initiative includes a station titled "A Session with a Financial Advisor," allowing visitors to meet daily with specialists in the securities sector to provide awareness guidance and consultations, and to answer their inquiries.

This aims to enhance their confidence and enable them to invest according to sound principles.

The corner also features a pavilion dedicated to children, offering a daily program of educational and interactive workshops and activities under the supervision of specialists in children's literature. This includes storytelling, educational games, colouring, competitions, and practical activities, with the aim of simplifying financial and investment concepts, developing financial awareness, and enhancing thinking skills and sound financial decision-making among children in a manner suited to various age groups.

The organizing entities affirmed that spreading financial and investment literacy represents one of the fundamental pillars for building a more efficient and sustainable capital market.

They noted that raising the level of awareness among investors contributes to enhancing market confidence, mitigating investment risks, and consolidating the principles of transparency and responsible investment.

This supports the objectives of Oman Vision 2040 in developing the financial sector and enhancing its contribution to the national economy. -ONA

BRIEFS

Oil prices tumble as US-Iran hostilities halt

SINGAPORE: Oil prices retreated by more than a dollar per barrel yesterday following a halt in hostilities between the United States and Iran. Brent crude futures fell USD 1.47, or 1.66 percent, to settle at USD 86.89—its lowest level since 20 July—while West Texas Intermediate crude registered USD 81.16 per barrel, down USD 1.45, or 1.76 percent, also marking its weakest level since 20 July. Both benchmarks had tumbled approximately 8 percent in the previous session after the United States abruptly suspended airstrikes against Iran at the start of the week. Prices were also weighed down by reports that the Caspian Pipeline Consortium's Black Sea terminal on the Russian coast had resumed oil loading operations following a week-long halt in the wake of Ukrainian drone attacks. -ONA

Dollar holds near one-month peak as Fed rate-hike odds persist

TOKYO: The dollar clung to its one-month peak yesterday, as prospects for a rate hike at the Federal Reserve's upcoming meeting remained on the table, even as sliding oil prices tempered some inflation concerns. The dollar index, which measures the US currency against a basket that includes the yen and the euro, edged up 0.03 percent to 101.55, while the euro dipped 0.01 percent to USD 1.1366. Against the yen, the dollar rose 0.05 percent to 163.82, while sterling eased 0.02 percent to USD 1.3284. The Federal Reserve is set to convene a two-day monetary policy meeting concluding Wednesday. Among other major currencies, the Australian dollar slipped 0.11 percent against the greenback to USD 0.6981, while the New Zealand dollar lost 0.12 percent to USD 0.5766. In the cryptocurrency space, Bitcoin fell 1.88 percent to USD 63,694.59, while Ether declined 2.83 percent to USD 1,890.30. -ONA

BUSINESS GROWTH

Bank Muscat organises seminar on use of artificial intelligence in content marketing for Najahi customers in Dhofar

MUSCAT: As part of its ongoing commitment to supporting entrepreneurs and small and medium enterprises (SMEs), while fostering a culture of innovation and digital transformation across the business community, Bank Muscat organised a specialised seminar titled "Content Marketing for Business Growth Using AI" in Salalah, Dhofar Governorate.

The seminar formed part of the Bank's series of knowledge-sharing initiatives and educational programmes offered to Najahi Business Banking customers from various business sectors. These initiatives aim to equip entrepreneurs with the latest knowledge and practical skills to help them grow their businesses and keep pace with the rapid developments across different industries.

The seminar was delivered by Musab Al Tuwaijri, a specialist in digital marketing and content creation, and attracted a number of entrepreneurs and SME owners. Participants explored the latest trends in content marketing and the growing role of artificial intelligence in enhancing digital marketing strategies, improving customer experience, and strengthening brand presence. The session also featured practical applications and innovative AI-powered tools that enable businesses to create more impactful and efficient marketing content.

The seminar covered several key topics, including how to leverage AI tools in developing marketing content, analysing target audience needs, improving the effectiveness of marketing campaigns, and adopting best practices for building a strong digital identity. It also highlighted how businesses can utilise emerging technologies to transform ideas into real growth opportunities, thereby enhancing the competitiveness of SMEs in today's marketplace.

Through organising this seminar, Bank Muscat reaffirmed its commitment to delivering value that extends beyond traditional banking services by offering educational and awareness initiatives that help strengthen the capabilities of entrepreneurs and enable them to benefit from the latest technologies that support sustainable business growth.

Commenting on the initiative, Taya bin Eid Bait Sabeea, Deputy General Manager Interior Regions, at Bank Muscat said: "The success of small and medium enterprises today depends largely on their ability to embrace digital transformation and leverage modern technologies to develop their businesses. Through the Najahi programme, we are committed to organising specialised seminars and workshops that provide entrepreneurs with practical knowledge and expertise to enhance their competitiveness and achieve sustainable growth.

"This seminar comes at a time when artificial intelligence is evolving rapidly and has become one of the most valuable tools for businesses to enhance marketing content, strengthen customer engagement, and improve operational efficiency. Bank Muscat will continue investing in initiatives that support the entrepreneurial ecosystem in Oman, reflecting our firm belief in the vital role of SMEs in driving the national economy."

In his speech, Barham bin Mohammed Al Balushi, Head- Najahi Business Banking, extended appreciation to Najahi customers for their attendance and their continuous trust in the Bank Muscat. He indicated that the seminar is part of the bank's continued efforts to enhance the value proposition offered to Najahi customers. The Bank regularly organises training programmes and specialised workshops covering a wide range of management, financial, and marketing topics to help SME owners strengthen their capabilities, overcome market challenges, and seize new opportunities created by emerging technologies.

Through Najahi, Bank Muscat continues to provide a comprehensive range of banking solutions and services tailored to the needs of SMEs, alongside educational initiatives and strategic partnerships designed to support entrepreneurs and strengthen their contribution to Oman's economic diversification goals and Oman Vision 2040.

INDIA

Public Sector Banks' net profits surge

NEW DELHI: Public Sector Banks (PSBs) witnessed a robust improvement in asset quality in FY 2025-26, with Gross Non-Performing Assets (GNPA) falling to a record-low 1.9 per cent and combined net profit hitting an all-time high of Rs 1.98 lakh crore, the Ministry of Finance said.

As per a statement by the Finance Ministry, the aggregate business of PSBs crossed Rs 283 lakh crore in FY26, alongside robust credit growth, with MSME and retail lending rising 19.6 per cent and 19.8 per cent, respectively.

"The financial health of Public Sector Banks (PSBs) have shown significant improvement with healthy balance sheets, historically high profits and multi-decadal low level of gross non-performing assets (GNPAs)," the Ministry said in the release.

As per the release, total deposits rose from Rs 107.2 lakh crore in FY22 to Rs 156.3 lakh crore in FY26 for PSBs. Likewise, total loans and advances increased from Rs 74.3 lakh crore to Rs 127 lakh crore during the same period. Net profit also surged from Rs 0.67 lakh crore in FY22 to Rs 1.98 lakh crore in FY26. Meanwhile, Gross NPAs declined steadily from 7.3 per cent to 1.9 per cent.

Capital adequacy also strengthened, with the Capital to Risk-weighted Assets Ratio (CRAR) rising from 14.6 per cent to 16.6 per cent over the five-year period.

"PSBs have recorded sustained credit growth across different sectors of the economy," it said. – ANI

MARKET

MSX index ends higher

Salalah Port Services, up 10.00%, was the top gainer while, Sharqiyah Desalination, down 2.42%, was the top loser

MUSCAT: The MSX index closed at 7,247.19 points, up by 0.86% from previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 1.55% at 578.08 points. Salalah Port Services, up 10.00%, was the top gainer while, Sharqiyah Desalination, down 2.42%, was the top loser. Shares of OQBI were the most active in terms of number of shares traded as well as in terms of turnover.

A total number of 9936 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating turnover of RO 57.95 million, with more than 201.19 million shares changing hands. Out of 70 traded securities, 33 advanced, 14 declined, and 23 remained unchanged. At the session close, GCC & Arab investors were net buyers for RO 4417K while foreign investors were net sellers for RO 3887K, followed by domestic investors for RO 530K worth of shares.

Financial Index closed at 12,835.15 points, up 0.44%. Prices of Muscat Finance, Global Financial Investments, Oman Arab Bank, Al Sharqia Investment, Al Madina Investments were up by 4.84%, 4.24%, 3.61%, 3.06%, 2.94% respectively. Prices of Bank Nizwa, Bank Dhofar were down by 1.50%, 1.35% respectively.

Industrial Index closed at 9,450.26 points, up 1.30%. Prices of Voltamp Energy, Gulf International Chemicals, Oman Flour Mills, Al Anwar Ceramics, Gulf Mushroom Products were up by 6.33%, 2.90%, 2.66%, 1.54%, 0.24% respectively. Prices of Galfar Engineering, Jazeera Steel Products, A'Saffa Foods were down by 1.22%, 0.60%, 0.40% respectively.

Services Index was up by 2.08% before closing at 2,904.11 points. Prices of Salalah Port Services, Sohar Power, Phoenix Power, Al Batinah Power were up by 10.00%, 10.00%, 6.94%, 6.94%, 5.75% respectively. Prices of Sharqiyah Desalination, Majan College, Barka Water & Power Company, Abraj Energy, OQ Gas Networks were down by 2.42%, 2.26%, 0.63%, 0.56%, 0.50% respectively.— United Securities

OMAN STOCKS

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE

INDICES

Index	High	Low	Value	Prev . Value	Diff	Diff %
MSX 30 INDEX	8,275.79	8,232.18	8,275.79	8,235.84	39.96	0.49
FINANCIAL INDEX	12,865.35	12,801.64	12,830.20	12,845.20	-15.00	-0.12
Industry Index	9,990.43	9,872.91	9,915.08	9,916.14	-1.06	-0.01
Services Index	3,319.91	3,283.69	3,318.67	3,311.27	7.40	0.22
MSX Shariah Index	656.63	649.44	654.64	652.07	2.57	0.39
MSX TR INDEX	12,778.28	12,710.94	12,778.28	12,716.59	61.69	0.49
FINANCIAL TR IDX	15,785.59	15,707.43	15,742.47	15,760.87	-18.40	-0.12
INDUSTRIAL TR IDX	12,795.21	12,644.69	12,698.70	12,700.05	-1.35	-0.01
SERVICES TR IDX	4,436.26	4,387.87	4,434.60	4,424.71	9.89	0.22
FIXED INCOME INDEX	1,209.68	1,209.68	1,209.68	1,209.68	0.00	0.00

Trading Summary

Volume	Turnover	Trades	Market Cap	Up	Down	Equal	Sec. Traded
201,198,558	57,946,895	9,936	37,476,059,079	33	14	23	70

SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR TUESDAY, JULY 28

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
OM0000004933	AL SUWADI POWER	1,683,156	297,218	114	0.174	0.183	0.170	0.181	0.168	0.013	7.738	0.181	0.181	0.181	0.100	129,307,548
OM0000005963	PHOENIX POWER	6,484,707	1,655,826	298	0.245	0.266	0.245	0.262	0.245	0.017	6.939	0.262	0.262	0.262	0.100	383,201,583
OM0000003661	VOLTAMP ENERGY	4,800,453	789,325	146	0.159	0.168	0.159	0.168	0.158	0.010	6.329	0.168	0.160	0.168	0.010	168,000,000
OM0000004925	ALBATINAH POWER	495,634	87,176	34	0.174	0.187	0.172	0.184	0.174	0.010	5.747	0.184	0.184	0.184	0.100	124,179,287
OM0000003968	OOREDOO	1,556,225	501,460	45	0.318	0.334	0.316	0.334	0.319	0.015	4.702	0.334	0.330	0.334	0.100	217,415,373
OM0000009908	OQ BASE INDUSTRIES (SFZ)	56,787,127	13,688,524	2,118	0.236	0.248	0.236	0.246	0.235	0.011	4.681	0.246	0.246	0.246	0.040	851,034,749
OM0000003125	GLOBAL FINANCIAL INVESTMENT HO.	410,960	119,428	36	0.290	0.295	0.285	0.295	0.283	0.012	4.240	0.295	0.290	0.298	0.100	59,000,000
OM0000002440	AL SHARQIYA INVESTMENT HO.	12,184	1,218	3	0.099	0.101	0.099	0.101	0.098	0.003	3.061	0.101	0.101	0.101	0.100	9,090,000
OM0000004768	MADINA TAKAFUL	1,138	132	2	0.116	0.116	0.116	0.116	0.114	0.002	1.754	0.116	0.115	0.116	0.100	20,300,000
OM0000009759	OQ EXPLORATION AND PRODUCTION	25,328,096	10,790,376	1,165	0.428	0.438	0.420	0.434	0.427	0.007	1.639	0.434	0.385	0.434	0.010	3,472,000,000
OM0000002374	UNITED FINANCE	362,000	32,997	14	0.091	0.092	0.091	0.091	0.090	0.001	1.111	0.091	0.081	0.091	0.100	32,407,584
OM0000001772	ALANWAR INVESTMENT	4,360	732	2	0.167	0.168	0.167	0.168	0.167	0.001	0.599	0.168	0.168	0.168	0.100	51,661,599
OM0000003398	SOHAR INTERNATIONAL BANK	41,088,998	7,487,853	1,406	0.180	0.188	0.179	0.183	0.182	0.001	0.549	0.183	0.164	0.183	0.100	1,404,709,038
OM0000001533	OMINVEST	213,928	82,160	22	0.382	0.388	0.380	0.387	0.385	0.002	0.519	0.387	0.387	0.388	0.100	434,544,465
OM0000004735	SEMBCORP SALALAH	291,473	74,510	32	0.256	0.258	0.255	0.256	0.255	0.001	0.392	0.256	0.256	0.260	0.100	244,370,419
OM0000001087	OMAN UNITED INSURANCE	14,364	4,525	4	0.315	0.315	0.315	0.315	0.314	0.001	0.318	0.315	0.311	0.315	0.100	33,075,000
OM0000003026	OMAN TELECOM	5,491,245	7,032,284	272	1.287	1.291	1.273	1.290	1.286	0.004	0.311	1.290	1.273	1.290	0.100	967,500,000
OM0000002267	GULF MUSHROOM PRODUCTS	97,100	40,492	18	0.420	0.423	0.416	0.423	0.422	0.001	0.237	0.423	0.417	0.423	0.100	21,294,825
OM0000003000	Al MAHA PETROLEUM PRODS MRKTNG	1,850	2,149	4	1.170	1.170	1.160	1.161	1.160	0.001	0.086	1.161	1.150	1.180	0.100	80,109,000
OM0000002572	OMAN OIL MARKETING	400	480	1	1.201	1.201	1.201	1.201	1.200	0.001	0.083	1.201	1.201	0.000	0.100	73,591,275
OM0000001483	NATIONAL BANK OMAN	2,500	1,138	2	0.455	0.455	0.455	0.455	0.455	0.000	0.000	0.455	0.455	0.455	0.100	739,805,592
OM0000001509	DHOFAR INTL DEVELOPMENT & INVEST	115,852	30,198	27	0.262	0.264	0.259	0.259	0.259	0.000	0.000	0.259	0.259	0.260	0.100	128,478,541
OM0000001681	OMAN EMIRATES HO.	1,000	130	1	0.130	0.130	0.130	0.130	0.130	0.000	0.000	0.130	0.126	0.130	0.100	16,635,938
OM0000001707	OMAN CABLES INDUSTRY	3,151	10,398	3	3.300	3.300	3.300	3.300	3.300	0.000	0.000	3.300	3.275	3.300	0.100	296,010,000
OM0000001749	OMAN CEMENT	8,837	5,046	8	0.570	0.575	0.568	0.575	0.575	0.000	0.000	0.575	0.575	0.575	0.100	190,251,808
OM0000002796	BANK MUSCAT	18,829,036	7,451,180	1,459	0.394	0.399	0.391	0.395	0.395	0.000	0.000	0.395	0.395	0.395	0.100	2,965,026,839
OM0000003224	RENAISSANCE SERVICES	41,230	11,544	9	0.280	0.280	0.280	0.280	0.280	0.000	0.000	0.280	0.277	0.280	0.100	66,194,800
OM0000004248	SMN POWER HOLDING	12,300	2,327	5	0.185	0.190	0.185	0.190	0.190	0.000	0.000	0.190	0.187	0.195	0.100	37,930,764
OM0000002226	ALJAZEERA SERVICES	50,408	12,440	19	0.255	0.255	0.245	0.255	0.256	-0.001	-0.391	0.255	0.250	0.255	0.100	10,924,963
OM0000002804	ASAFFA FOODS	5,220	3,871	13	0.750	0.750	0.720	0.747	0.750	-0.003	-0.400	0.747	0.721	0.747	0.100	89,640,000
OM0000010120	ASYAD SHIPPING	3,907,668	961,129	543	0.247	0.249	0.243	0.245	0.246	-0.001	-0.407	0.245	0.245	0.245	0.000	1,276,142,349
OM0000009072	OQ GAS NETWORKS	14,001,696	2,842,210	952	0.203	0.204	0.200	0.201	0.202	-0.001	-0.495	0.201	0.201	0.209	0.100	870,455,408
OM0000008934	ABRAJ ENERGY SERVICES	1,855,117	662,269	187	0.358	0.358	0.355	0.355	0.357	-0.002	-0.560	0.355	0.355	0.355	0.100	273,421,000
OM0000002176	JAZEERA STEEL PRODUCTS	240,861	199,929	19	0.832	0.835	0.829	0.829	0.834	-0.005	-0.600	0.829	0.829	0.836	0.100	103,540,409
OM0000003141	BARKA WATER AND POWER	12,848	2,041	4	0.158	0.159	0.157	0.159	0.160	-0.001	-0.625	0.159	0.157	0.159	0.100	25,440,000
OM0000002549	BANK DHOFAR	290,500	64,073	69	0.223	0.223	0.220	0.220	0.223	-0.003	-1.345	0.220	0.218	0.220	0.100	668,755,677
OM0000004420	BANK NIZWA	618,684	81,789	76	0.133	0.133	0.131	0.131	0.133	-0.002	-1.504	0.131	0.131	0.132	0.100	293,040,847
Total	37	185,122,306	55,030,579	9,132												

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
OM0000002333	SALALAH PORT SERVICES	1,011	534	1	0.528	0.528	0.528	0.528	0.480	0.048	10.000	0.528	0.500	0.000	0.100	94,954,147
OM0000003711	SOHAR POWER	1,000	220	1	0.220	0.220	0.220	0.220	0.200	0.020	10.000	0.220	0.201	0.220	0.100	4,400,000
OM0000001590	MUSCAT FINANCE	980	61	2	0.061	0.065	0.061	0.065	0.062	0.003	4.839	0.065	0.063	0.065	0.100	19,964,511
OM0000001160	NATIONAL GAS	409,225	44,796	53	0.108	0.112	0.108	0.111	0.107	0.004	3.738	0.111	0.105	0.111	0.100	9,435,000
OM0000005260	OMAN ARAB BANK	568,733	143,823	80	0.250	0.258	0.248	0.258	0.249	0.009	3.614	0.258	0.254	0.258	0.100	516,707,780
OM0000001962	AL MADINA INVESTMENT HOLDING	228	8	2	0.035	0.035	0.035	0.035	0.034	0.001	2.941	0.035	0.031	0.034	0.100	2,975,000
OM0000002028	GULF INTERNATIONAL CHEMICALS	104,300	7,402	8	0.070	0.071	0.070	0.071	0.069	0.002	2.899	0.071	0.071	0.075	0.100	1,491,000
OM0000001400	OMAN FLOUR MILLS	842	477	3	0.561	0.585	0.561	0.580	0.565	0.015	2.655	0.580	0.565	0.580	0.100	100,713,375
OM0000002168	AL ANWAR CERAMIC	637,416	83,193	43	0.131	0.134	0.130	0.132	0.130	0.002	1.538	0.130	0.130	0.132	0.100	29,040,000
OM0000002648	NATIONAL FINANCE	10,132	2,180	5	0.229	0.229	0.215	0.215	0.212	0.003	1.415	0.215	0.212	0.215	0.100	139,899,510
OM0000010823	OMAN GATEWAY FUND	2,100	2,064	2	0.983	0.983	0.982	0.982	0.980	0.002	0.204	0.982	0.985	0.983	0.000	26,853,035
OM0000001095	DHOFAR INSURANCE	20,000	6,800	4	0.340	0.340	0.340	0.340	0.340	0.000	0.000	0.340	0.340	0.345	0.100	39,559,336
OM0000002911	FINANCIAL CORPORATION	100	10	1	0.100	0.100	0.100	0.100	0.100	0.000	0.000	0.100	0.090	0.110	0.100	7,002,996
OM0000005005	ALMAHA CERAMICS	2,193	539	1	0.246	0.246	0.246	0.246	0.246	0.000	0.000	0.246	0.242	0.246	0.100	13,530,000
OM0000008447	OMAN REIT FUND	115,090	12,315	20	0.107	0.108	0.107	0.107	0.107	0.000	0.000	0.107	0.107	0.110	0.100	90,064,033
OM0000008868	THE PEARL REIF	33,772	6,016	6	0.179	0.179	0.178	0.178	0.178	0.000	0.000	0.178	0.176	0.179	0.100	105,275,765
OM0000009569	JABAL REIF	31,407	3,265	4	0.104	0.104	0.103	0.104	0.104	0.000	0.000	0.104	0.103	0.104	0.100	18,096,000
OM0000011151	OMIFCO	13,336,203	2,523,580	486	0.188	0.191	0.187	0.187	0.187	0.000	0.000	0.187	0.187	0.187	0.000	1,250,913,125
OM0000003521	GALFAR ENG'G & CONTRACTING	44,120	7,093	23	0.160	0.164	0.160	0.162	0.164	-0.002	-1.220	0.162	0.158	0.165	0.100	32,883,804
OM0000001897	MAJAN COLLEGE	22,440	2,929	6	0.132	0.132	0.130	0.130	0.133	-0.003	-2.256	0.130	0.130	0.131	0.100	12,870,000
OM0000004669	SHARQIYAH DESALINATION	10,000	1,630	3	0.165	0.165	0.161	0.161	0.165	-0.004	-2.424	0.161	0.155	0.165	0.100	15,746,148
OM0000007407	DHOFAR GENERATING	5,403	405	2	0.075	0.075	0.075	0.075	0.078	-0.003	-3.846	0.075	0.076	0.085	0.100	16,668,000
Total	22	15,356,695	2,849,341	756												

'BOLD STEPS, GOLDEN REWARDS'

30 customers receive gold bars as Sohar International and Sohar Islamic conclude rewards campaign

MUSCAT: Underscoring its focus on making banking more rewarding, Sohar International, together with its Islamic banking window, Sohar Islamic, celebrated a total of 30 winners of its 'Bold Steps, Golden Rewards' programme at a special event held at Intercity Hotel, Muscat.

Each winner was presented with a gold bar, bringing the initiative to a memorable conclusion and giving tangible form to a campaign built around rewarding meaningful financial choices.

Eng. Aisha Al Saifi, Chief Transformation Officer, and Fahad Al Zadjali, Head of Islamic Banking, attended the event, welcoming and congratulating the winners, reflecting the institution's active role in the campaign and the importance its leadership placed on the occasion.

Commenting on the campaign, Abdul Qadir Al Sumali, Chief Retail & Premier Banking Officer at Sohar International, said, "Customers have a genuine choice in where and how they bank, and we do not take that choice for granted. 'Bold Steps, Golden Rewards' was intended to encourage more customers to begin a relationship with Sohar International and give existing customers further reasons to engage with us. Behind each of those decisions is a measure of confidence and ambition. By linking them to the chance to win gold, we wanted the campaign to reflect the progress that comes with making a positive change."

Fahad Al Zadjali, Head of Islamic Banking, added, "Our focus now is to build on the relationships the campaign helped create and strengthen. Sustaining them requires consistency and the same care at every stage. Throughout the initiative, we had several opportunities to interact with customers, while the winners' event added a personal dimension to the overall experience. This is how individual moments develop into relationships that continue well beyond a campaign."

Customers earned entries through a range of qualifying banking actions, including opening a new account and transferring their salary, applying for and activating a credit card, and using the card during the campaign. Each completed step increased their chances of winning, while every eligible retail card transaction of OMR 50 or more counted as one entry.

This multi-action format gave customers more than one route to qualify and allowed them to increase their chances throughout the campaign. Draws were held at weekly intervals, creating recurring opportunities to win before the grand draw. The value of the offer therefore extended beyond a single banking action or one moment of participation.

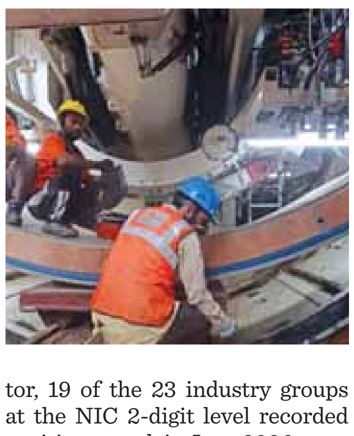
The campaign reflects Sohar International's customer-focused approach to developing relevant, accessible products and initiatives that deliver clear benefits. This approach will continue to guide the bank as it advances its retail proposition in response to evolving customer needs.

INDEX OF INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTION

India's IIP growth accelerates to 7.3% in June

NEW DELHI: India's Index of Industrial Production (IIP) grew by 7.3 per cent YoY growth in June 2026, accelerating from a revised 5.0 per cent in May, supported by strong growth in manufacturing and electricity and gas supply sector.

As per a statement by the Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation IIP growth rate for the month of June 2026 grew to 7.3 per cent from 5.1 per cent (Quick Estimate) in May 2026. This growth was mainly driven by a 7.8 per cent growth in the manufacturing sector and a 10.6 per cent surge in electricity and gas supply, it said.



Within the manufacturing sector, 19 of the 23 industry groups at the NIC 2-digit level recorded positive growth in June 2026 compared with June 2025, it said.

The leading contributors were manufacture of electrical equipment, which grew 34.0 per cent, followed by motor vehicles, trailers and semi-trailers at 17.5 per cent, and food products at 10.8 per cent, as per the release.

Mining and quarrying, manufacturing, electricity and gas supply, and water supply, sewerage and waste management grew 1.0 per cent, 7.8 per cent, 10.6 per cent and 6.1 per cent, respectively, in June 2026, as per the release.

"The Quick Estimate of IIP stands at 123.1 against 114.7 in June 2025. The indices of Industrial Production for Mining & Quarrying, Manufacturing, Electricity & Gas Supply and Water Supply, Sewerage & Waste Management for the month of June 2026 stand at 110.0, 123.3, 131.0 and 145.7 respectively," it noted.

As per the release, intermediate goods, primary goods and capital goods were the top three contributors to overall IIP growth during the month. It further added, under the Use-Based Classification, IIP growth in June 2026 over June 2025 stood at 4.9 per cent for primary goods, 14.2 per cent for capital goods, 9.3 per cent for intermediate goods, 7.5 per cent for infrastructure/construction goods, 7.7 per cent for consumer durables and 4.9 per cent for consumer non-durables. -ANI

CHINA INTERNATIONAL IMPORT EXPO

Rising CIIE participation signals foreign firms' strong confidence in China's resilient economy

SHANGHAI: Foreign enterprises are showing renewed optimism and expressing stronger confidence in China's resilient economy amid the 100-day countdown to the 9th China International Import Expo (CIIE).

The expo, scheduled from Nov. 5 to 10, has already secured commitments from over 1,200 companies across 99 countries and regions, with strong eagerness to expand their footprint in the world's second-largest economy. The roster includes 265 Fortune Global 500 companies and industry leaders, 10 more than last year.

Broader trend

This robust turnout reflects a broader trend of foreign companies upgrading their engagement with China, shifting from mere exhibitors to long-term investors and innovation partners.

As a first-time exhibitor at the expo, Dutch coatings and chemicals enterprise AkzoNobel said they look forward to not only introducing their world-leading technologies to China, but also driving innovation based on deep insights into the Chinese market and showcasing their latest local sci-tech achievements to the world.

"We have tremendous confidence in the remarkable resilience of China's economy, and we deeply value the boundless potential and vibrant innovation ecosystem of this vast market," said Yin Tao, president of AkzoNobel China.

The appeal of the Chinese market is backed by solid fundamentals. Despite global headwinds, China's economy grew 4.7 percent in the first half of the year, with new growth drivers contributing over 40 percent to the expansion.

The International Monetary Fund recently raised its full-year growth forecast for China by 0.2 percentage points, making it one of the few major economies to receive an upward revision.

Foreign firms are increasingly integrating their global strategies with China's high-quality development goals.

L'Oreal, a perennial participant at the CIIE, has leveraged the expo's open platform to innovate with Chinese enterprises. One such collaborative product, the Lancome beauty device, has been launched in over 20 countries and regions.

"The CIIE turns China's vast market into opportunities. For us, it's been the best launchpad for new brands and star products," said Vincent Boinay, president of L'Oreal North Asia Zone and CEO of L'Oreal China.

"L'Oreal's stories with the CIIE further strengthen our long-term confidence in China, as reflected in continuous investment in China's ecosystem," Boinay added.

An action plan

An action plan released last month on optimising foreign investment has pledged wider market access in sectors such as services, finance and pharmaceuticals, along with easier cross-border mergers and acquisitions, data flows and reinvestment by foreign firms.

Almost 4,800 foreign-funded enterprises made additional investments in China in the first half of 2026, while the number of newly established foreign-invested enterprises rose 5.3 percent year on year, according to China's Ministry of Commerce.

A recent report by the US-China Business Council found that 92 percent of surveyed companies were profitable in China in 2025.

Business confidence

Meanwhile, the European Union Chamber of Commerce in China's business confidence survey this year revealed that 75 percent of respondents considered their China operations more productive than those elsewhere in the world.

The CIIE's magnetic pull extends beyond multinational giants, serving as a vital springboard for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and the Global South.

With China expanding its zero-tariff treatment on imports from all 53 African countries with which it has diplomatic relations, the upcoming expo will feature an upgraded Asia-Africa product zone to help these nations better tap into the Chinese market.

-Xinhua

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JOB WANTED

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

PROCUREMENT
PROCUREMENT & SUPPLY CHAIN PROFESSIONAL
18+ years' GCC experience in Procurement, Supply Chain, Warehousing & Logistics. Available for suitable positions in Oman.
Contact : 91257663

PROCUREMENT
Procurement, postgraduate 15+yrs experience in Oman oil & gas, EPC, PEB & structural steel projects also has sound knowledge in import, customs clearance and freight & logistics.
Contact : 75123132

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

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
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

JOB VACANCY
TRUCK AUTO SPARE PARTS DIVISION
REQUIRED:
SALES MAN AND STORE KEEPER
- Priority for experienced
- **Valid GCC driving license** will be given preference

Interested candidates can send cv to:
hrrecruitmentautoparts@gmail.com

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

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

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Kebeer (holder of Indian passport No. Z 3339411) son of Ibrahim having permanent residence in 5-25/2, Faraz manzil Ullal (complete postal address in India) and presently residing in Post Box No. 1088, Postal code 133,al Khuwair Muscat (complete postal address in Oman) intend to change my name from **KEBEER** (old name) to **KEBEER IBRAHIM** (new name) for all practical purpose. Any objection towards my name may please be communicated to Embassy Of India, Muscat, Diplomatic Quarters, Al Khuwair, P. Box. No. 1727, Postal Code 112, Ruwi, Sultanate Of Oman

JOB WANTED

ACCOUNTS/FINANCE

Accountant in Oman seeks a job. Contact : 92106856

Indian male B.com Accountant looking for suitable job. 13 yrs experience in Oman. D/L & NOC available. Contact 90302933

42 yrs female (M-com) working as finance manager 18yrs of exp overall (15yrs in Oman) currently working in a reputed shipping company Contact: 98184705

ACCOUNTS/FINANCE

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

DRIVER

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

ENGINEER

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

Pakistani male, Diploma in Mechanical Engineering, having 10+yrs experience as Sales Engineer in UAE,15 yrs experience as operation manager in Oman with D/L, looking for job. Contact: 99495131. Email : Manzoor.ahmed1997@gmail.com

ENGINEER

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

Cep electrical engineer seeks placement. Contact: 94768845

LOGISTICS

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

SALES/MARKETING

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

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

WORLD

Powerful 7.1-magnitude quake hits Japan's Kumamoto island

According to report, at least 50 people were hospitalised after the earthquake. Media also reported that "many people" were trapped inside a shopping mall damaged by the earthquake

TOKYO: A powerful 7.1-magnitude earthquake struck Kumamoto Prefecture on Japan's southern island of Kyushu on Tuesday afternoon, triggering emergency warnings and prompting authorities to assess the extent of the damage.

According to NHK, at least 50 people were hospitalised after the earthquake. Japan's public broadcaster reported that 12 houses collapsed, trapping people inside.

The NHK also reported that "many people" were trapped inside a shopping mall damaged by the earthquake. Earlier, the local police reported an explosion at the Aeon Mall in Kumamoto, though there was no immediate information about damage or casualties.

Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi also said initial reports indicated multiple injuries, damage to civilian infrastructure, and fires in several affected areas.

"We are still assessing the extent of injuries and property damage, but I have been informed that there have already been several injuries," Takaichi said.

"Power outages and fires are happening in some areas, and roads and bridges have been damaged and buildings collapsed," she added.

Although the earthquake caused widespread disruption and temporarily raised fears of a tsunami, officials later confirmed that the threat had subsided and that Japan's coastline was no longer in danger.

"This earthquake occurred inland, and no tsunami activity has been observed so far," a spokesperson for the Japan Meteorological Agency (JMA) said. "For this reason, we hope to lift the tsunami advisory at a relatively early stage, depending on future sea level conditions."

Power and nuclear facilities remain safe

Japan's Nuclear Regulation Authority reported that no abnormalities were detected at three nearby nuclear power plants, providing reassurance in a country still sensitive to nuclear safety concerns following the 2011 Fukushima disaster.

However, the earthquake disrupted electricity supplies across the region. According to Kyushu Electric Power, approximately 45,000 households and facilities in Kumamoto temporarily lost power following the tremor.

Several major industrial facilities are located near the earthquake zone, including operations belonging to Sony and Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC), the world's largest contract chipmaker. Sony stated that it was evaluating conditions at its facilities, while TSMC did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Japan's long history of major earthquakes

Kumamoto is no stranger to devastating seismic events.

In 2016, the region was struck by two major earthquakes, first a magnitude 6.5 quake and then a magnitude 7.3 tremor two days later. The disaster claimed 273 lives, injured more than 2,800 people. Thousands of buildings were either damaged or destroyed, making it one of Japan's most destructive recent earthquake disasters.

More recently, a magnitude 7.2 earthquake struck northern Japan on June 25, causing little damage and no fatalities. Earlier this year, on April 20, a magnitude 7.7 earthquake in northern Japan injured at least ten people and shook high-rise buildings as far away as Tokyo, prompting authorities to issue a temporary advisory warning of an increased risk of even stronger earthquakes. That advisory was lifted a week later.

One of the world's most earthquake-prone nations

Japan sits along the western edge of the Pacific "Ring of Fire," one of the most active seismic zones on Earth where four major tectonic plates meet.

Home to approximately 125 million people, the country experiences hundreds of earthquakes every year and accounts for roughly 18% of the world's seismic activity.

While most tremors are relatively minor, Japan remains haunted by memories of the catastrophic magnitude 9.0 earthquake and tsunami that struck the country's northeast coast in March 2011. The disaster killed or left missing around 18,500 people and triggered the Fukushima nuclear crisis.

Tuesday's earthquake demonstrated the country's preparedness systems, emergency response capabilities, and monitoring of critical infrastructure. Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi office also posted a safety guideline on X, assuring that their safety remains their top priority. — Agencies

IRANIAN DRONES

Multiple explosions rock Erbil near US consulate in Iraq

ERBIL [Iraq]: Several explosions rocked Erbil in northern Iraq early Tuesday, including near the US Consulate, as Iranian drones targeted multiple locations across the region.

Citing police sources, Al Jazeera reported that at least four Iranian drones targeted locations in northern Iraq's Khalifan and Soran areas, located northeast of Erbil.

The attack caused huge fires in and around the targeted areas, with police reporting that two drones crashed near the targeted sites.

At least seven explosions were also heard across Erbil, including in areas near the U.S. Consulate, Al Jazeera reported, citing Iraqi local media.

In response to the suspected Iranian drone attack, police sources told Al Jazeera that "more than ten US warplanes and drones are reportedly flying over Erbil."

Additionally, Iranian state broadcaster IRIB, citing Iraqi sources, reported the destruction of an American drone in Al Anbar province, with local media publishing images of a US drone crash near the Haditha Dam.

The strikes were accompanied by wider military activity across northern and western Iraq. IRIB reported that the Khor Mor gas field in Sulaymaniyah was attacked.

The strikes come as US President Donald Trump said on Monday that he is prepared to resume "very strong military action" against Iran if ongoing diplomatic efforts fail, even as he confirmed that he had paused planned strikes on the Islamic Republic to allow negotiations another opportunity, according to a report by Axios.

According to Axios, the current negotiations are focused on reaching a new agreement that would reopen the Strait of Hormuz and revive discussions on a broader nuclear deal with Iran.

The talks are being led primarily by Iran and Oman, with Qatar, Pakistan, Egypt, and Trump's Special Envoy Steve Witkoff and Senior Adviser Jared Kushner also playing active roles.

Speaking to Axios, Trump indicated that while diplomacy remains the preferred path for now, military action remains an option if negotiations do not produce results. — ANI

UNITED STATES

Judge allows Trump to amend $15 billion defamation suit against New York Times

WASHINGTON, DC: President Donald Trump on Monday declared that The New York Times has failed in what he described as a "desperate attempt" to drop his high-profile defamation lawsuit, citing a procedural win after a judge granted his legal team a chance to amend his $15 billion defamation lawsuit against the news outlet.

In a post on his Truth Social platform, Trump framed the court's directive as a step forward in his legal battle against the NYT, accusing the news outlet of longstanding bias and reporting with actual malice.

"The Failing New York Times, after 10 years of harassment, slander, and libel, just failed again in their desperate attempt to have our powerful Defamation Lawsuit against them dropped. As we requested, the Highly Respected Judge has called for an updated complaint, which will lay out, in extreme detail, all the ways in which The Times has repeatedly and consistently acted, with actual malice in defaming me, my family, our Great MAGA Movement, and America, itself," Trump wrote.

Reaffirming his intention to continue pursuing media organisations in court, Trump concluded, "We will continue to hold The Times and their 'comrades' in the Mainstream Media accountable for publishing, promoting, and dealing in Fake News. Thank you for your attention to this matter!"

His remarks come after a judge granted his legal team a chance to amend his $15 billion defamation lawsuit against The New York Times, Fox News reported.

Citing a filing in the US District Court for the Middle District of Florida in Tampa, Fox News reported that Trump's legal team has been given until August 27 to submit an amended complaint in his high-profile defamation lawsuit against The New York Times.

The lawsuit accuses the newspaper of engaging in decades of slander and libel, targeting its coverage on a range of topics including his reality television show "The Apprentice" and articles alleging he engaged in suspect tax manoeuvres, Fox News reported.

The legal action names several high-profile defendants, including The New York Times Company, reporters Susanne Craig, Russ Buettner, Peter Baker, and Michael S. Schmidt, as well as publisher Penguin Random House. The publisher released "Lucky Loser: How Donald Trump Squandered His Father's Fortune and Created the Illusion of Success," a book authored by Craig and Buettner.

However, addressing the broader legal action, a spokesperson for The Times previously told Fox News Digital, "As we said when this was first filed and again after the judge's ruling to strike it: this lawsuit has no merit. Nothing has changed today. This is merely an attempt to stifle independent reporting and generate PR attention, but The New York Times will not be deterred by intimidation tactics."

Earlier in October 2025, President Trump had re-filed the $15 billion defamation lawsuit against the New York Times after the judge dismissed the original complaint for being unnecessarily long, Axios reported.

In September, US District Judge Steven D Merryday for the Middle District of Florida had given the president's legal team 28 days to refile the case and shorten the complaint from 85 pages to no more than 40 pages. — DW

HAMPER FIREFIGHTING EFFORTS

Heat wave threatens to worsen France, Spain wildfires

PARIS: A forecast of an incoming heat wave across France and Spain this week is threatening to hamper firefighting efforts as some of Europe's worst wildfires in decades rage on.

France's weather service forecast temperatures of up to 40 degrees Celsius (100 degrees Fahrenheit) from Tuesday, while Spain's AEMET warned of a new heat wave from Wednesday till the end of the week, with highs of 42 degree Celsius in the northeast and 39 degrees Celsius in central regions.

Authorities said soaring temperatures, dry winds and low humidity would push wildfire danger to "extreme" levels, even as forests turned tinder-dry by successive heat waves this year.

Thousands of firefighters and water-dropping aircraft raced to contain the blazes before temperatures rise further.

Experts linked the scale of the fires to increasingly frequent and intense heat waves driven by climate change, as hotter and drier conditions are making wildfires more destructive.

Macron warns of 'hard' times

In France, President Emmanuel Macron said one fire in the Landes region had been contained, but a much larger wildfire near Bordeaux continued to burn after scorching about 42,000 hectares, forcing around 220,000 people to evacuate and destroying hundreds of homes.

"The weeks ahead will be hard. We must hold firm," Macron said.

Overnight on Tuesday, firefighters prevented a massive wildfire along the Atlantic coast west of Bordeaux from spreading, authorities said. According to officials, 93 firefighters have been injured since the operation began.

Aid from Germany arrived in the region on Monday in the form of two transport helicopters and an A400M transport aircraft carrying equipment.

In Spain, wildfires west of Madrid and in other regions have forced about 60,000 people to flee.

With the coming heat wave threatening to fuel further spread of the wildfires, Spanish Interior Minister Fernando Grande-Marlaska said firefighters in Spain made progress after a "positive night" against wildfires to the west of Madrid.

"It has been a reasonably positive night, thanks to the tremendous effort of all the public emergency services," Grande-Marlaska said. "We are in critical hours."

Some 150,000 hectares of land have burned in Spain and 115,000 hectares in France since the start of this year.

At a campsite near Navaluenga, west of the capital, ravaged by Spain's worst wildfire on record, the site co-owner Maria Angeles Canete said her family lost everything. "We had this campsite, we had another one, and we've lost it all. We have nothing," she told the AFP news agency.

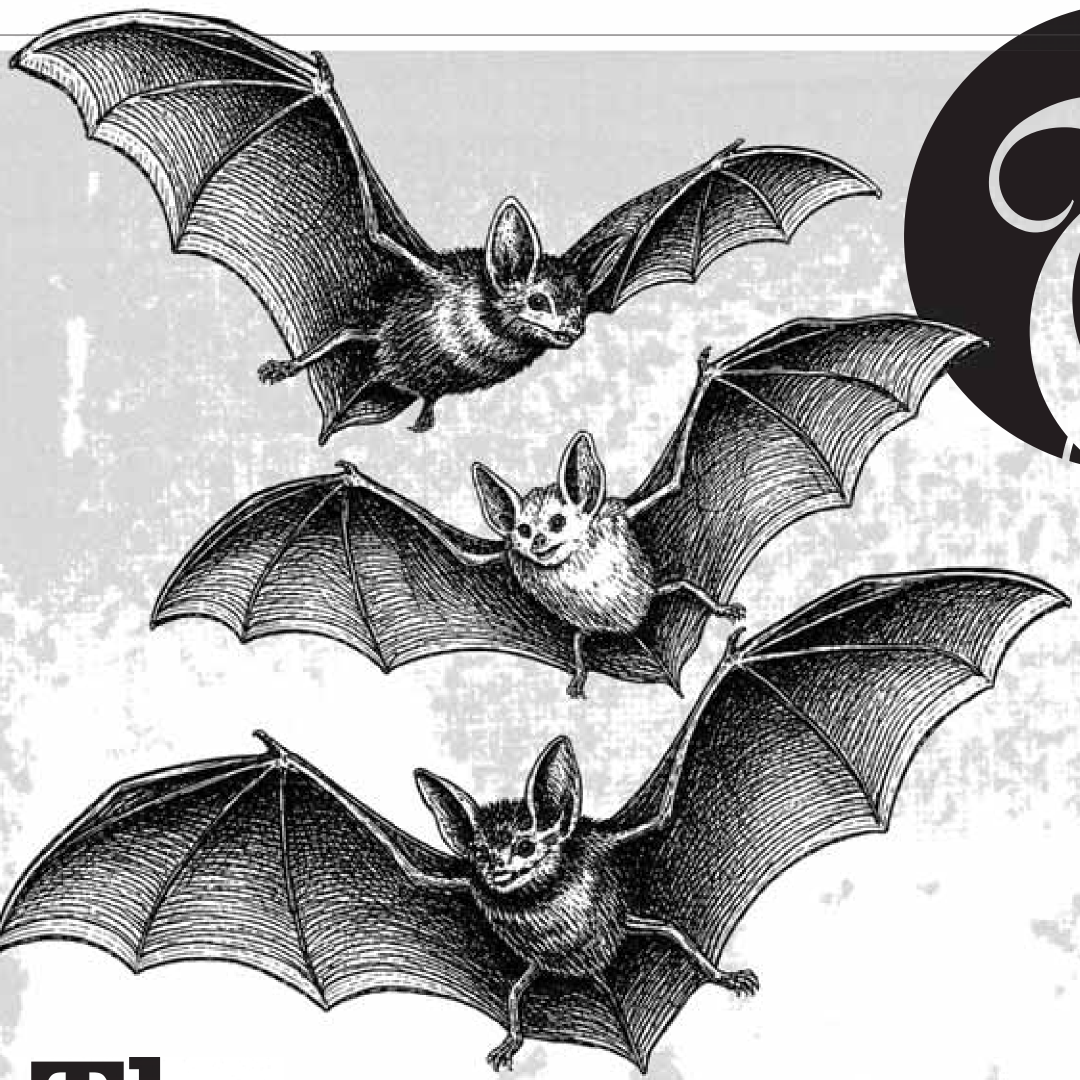
EU firefighting resources stretched thin

The European Union deployed additional firefighting aircraft to France, while EU commissioner Hadja Lahbib warned that resources are under growing strain as extreme fire conditions spread across southern and central Europe.

"Extreme conditions are looming for Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic, in addition to France, the Iberian Peninsula... where the situation is expected to worsen, including in Portugal starting today," Lahbib said.

— ANI

LIFESTYLE



Most people have only heard of the plague as the disease that ravaged Europe in the Middle Ages. But it's still around today, such as in Madagascar, and just as lethal as ever

The *plague* is as deadly today as in the *Middle* Ages

THE FIRST SYMPTOMS that Paul Gaylord noticed felt like a common flu. Two days earlier, he had been bitten by his cat, which had appeared ill. At first, he was prescribed antibiotics to treat cat scratch fever — a bacterial infection that can be transmitted from cats to humans through bites and scratches.

But the medication didn't help. Gaylord's condition worsened, he was admitted to intensive care, and eventually slipped into a coma. Doctors determined that he wasn't suffering from a case of the flu or cat scratch fever, but from the plague. This infectious disease is more commonly associated with the Black Death of the 14th century than with modern-day Oregon, USA, where Gaylord lived.

The infection has not lost any of its deadly potency, but its non-specific symptoms and rare occurrence in modern times make it difficult to identify. Gaylord barely survived, and in 2014, he shared his experience with the British newspaper The Guardian.

Three forms of plague: Bubonic, pneumonic, septicemic

The plague is caused by the bacterium yersinia pestis, which can spread extremely rapidly after entering the body in several possible ways. Once there, the bacterium can damage organ tissue and cause bleeding. If left untreated, it is nearly 100% lethal.

The most common type of plague caused by yersinia pestis is the bubonic plague, which is mostly spread by fleas, the so-called "vectors" of the disease. They transport the bacteria by first biting a plague-infected rodent and then carrying it to humans. Yersinia pestis spreads through the lymph nodes, causing painful swelling.

If the pathogen reaches the bloodstream, for example, through the bite of an infected mammal, it can lead to septicemic plague.

In the case of pneumonic plague, the pathogen enters the lungs through airborne droplets or aerosols from another person or animal infected with pneumonic plague. This is the only type of plague that is likely to be transferable from one human to another.

The plague: a pandemic in the Middle Ages, rarer today

According to the Robert Koch Institute (RKI), Germany's government agency for disease control and prevention, some 3,000 cases of plague were reported across the globe between 2010 and 2015, resulting in over 500 deaths. The most affected regions currently include the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda, and — above all — Madagascar, where the last large outbreak occurred in 2017, and several hundred new infection cases are reported each year. The western United States has also seen occasional cases.

In the Late Middle Ages, between 1346 and 1353, the plague claimed between 25 and 50 million lives. The second in three waves of plague pandemic, it wiped out up to half of Europe's population in just a few years.

Why is there no plague left in Europe?

In Europe, the last reported cases of flea-born plague were recorded in France and Italy in 1945. Holger Scholz, molecular biologist and head of the Consultant Laboratory for Yersinia Pestis at the RKI's Center for Biological Threats and Special Pathogens, said that this low occurrence is largely down to the fact that rodents infected with the pathogen are no longer coming and going from people's homes.

In the Middle Ages, on the other hand, homes sheltered humans and rats side-by-side, providing fleas carrying yersinia pestis ample opportunity to spread the disease.

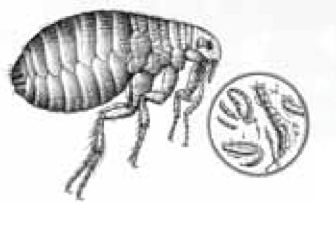
"Rats, especially black rats, normally aren't actual reservoir animals," said Scholz. Instead of being a long-term host for the pathogens they carry, "they will get sick and die." But research suggests that rats living in endemic areas have been able to build up a certain tolerance to the plague through persistent contact over the years.

According to the US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), reservoir animals also include certain rat species, such as the pack rat, as well as various rodents of the squirrel family, such as the tarbagan marmot. In Europe, however, the remaining rodent population doesn't seem to be suitable for spreading the pathogen.

A matter of life and death: quick diagnosis and treatment

Holger Scholz and his team at the RKI work closely with partners in regions where the plague is still endemic, including Madagascar's Ministry of Public Health and the Laboratoire d'Analyses Médicales Madagascar. He says one of their main goals is to build up lab capacity in the country to help improve plague detection.

He says capacity-building is urgently needed, as diagnosis remains one of the key bottlenecks to effective treatment. To illustrate the point, Scholz tells DW of an incident involving a young man in the US, a jogger, who visited a doctor with flu-like symptoms but was just sent home to recover. "He died," Scholz says, "because nobody thought to check for the plague."



But effective antibiotic treatments are available. Nevertheless, each outbreak starts with "the first patients dying because they aren't properly diagnosed at first and therefore cannot be treated in time," Scholz says.

In many places, prompt treatment poses another hurdle. On Madagascar, for example, Scholz explains that it sometimes takes days for the antibiotics to get to where they're needed. Patients with pneumonic plague don't have that kind of time — without treatment, they usually only live another 48 hours after showing the first symptoms.

Could we see another plague pandemic?

Although yersinia pestis keeps causing local outbreaks, Scholz is confident that a fourth plague pandemic is highly unlikely, as it does not spread as easily as airborne viruses like SARS or COVID-19.

Plus, "we have entirely new methods for combating the disease," compared to the Middle Ages, Scholz points out.

But it would be an entirely different matter if the pathogen were to be genetically engineered and used as a biological weapon. Scholz's Center for Biological Threats and Special Pathogens also addresses the issue of bioterrorism.

Genome analysis makes it possible not only to distinguish between the countless strains of yersinia pestis, it also makes it possible to assign them to specific regions. "We can also determine whether it is a naturally occuring strain, or whether it may have been manipulated," Scholz explains.

Of course, plague pathogens can also be reintroduced to Europe and Germany by travelers returning from abroad, but researchers say the likelihood is extremely low. "Though you can never rule it out with absolute certainty," Scholz adds.

"We need to be able to detect a plague pathogen in any kind of material," Scholz says — whether in natural samples collected from patients and the environment, or other materials that, for example, might be installed in subway ventilation systems. To be able to do this, he says, diagnostic methods are constantly being developed and improved. And as they do, the risk of another big outbreak steadily lowers. - DW

SPORTS

Justin Greaves scripts history with five consecutive wicket maidens

Greaves achieved the feat during a match-changing spell either side of lunch on the third day of the first ICC World Test Championship Test against Pakistan in Trinidad, where he tore through the visitors' batting line-up

PORT OF SPAIN: West Indies' Justin Greaves scripted history on Monday by becoming the first bowler in Test cricket, since comprehensive records became available, to register five consecutive wicket maidens.

Greaves achieved the feat during a match-changing spell either side of lunch on the third day of the first ICC World Test Championship Test against Pakistan in Trinidad, where he tore through the visitors' batting line-up, according to the ICC. The spell also marked Greaves' maiden five-wicket haul in Test cricket. He surpassed the previous record of four successive wicket maidens, registered by former England fast bowler Stuart Broad against South Africa in Johannesburg in January 2016.

Greaves said he kept his approach simple during the spell, following the advice of West Indies captain Roston Chase to bowl consistently in the right areas and trust the process.

"When I came on captain Roston Chase just said 'continue to be disciplined in what you are doing' and to see if I can get some wickets for the team," Greaves said, as quoted by ICC.

The ball nipped around and I got some reward. Anytime I get the ball in hand the team looks to me to be that solid player for them (and) try to dig us out of situations. To get five wickets for the first time in Test cricket, I'm really happy, but there's still a lot of work to do in the game," he added.

Pakistan appeared to be in a strong position to build a sizeable first-innings lead after reaching 244/3, with Shan Masood having completed his century. However, Greaves dismissed the former Pakistan captain to trigger a dramatic collapse.

The West Indies all-rounder then removed Aamer Jamal, Ali Usman and Mohammad Rizwan in successive overs without conceding a run, leaving Pakistan struggling at 267/8 at lunch in reply to the hosts' first-innings total of 311.

Greaves continued his impressive spell after the break, having Mohammad Abbas caught behind in his opening over to complete five consecutive wicket maidens. Pakistan were eventually bowled out for 282 following a superb display of seam bowling from the experienced right-armer.

However, Pakistan hit back before the close of play, reducing the West Indies to 126/7 and limiting their overall lead to 155. Shamar Joseph, unbeaten on 22, and Kemar Roach, on five, will resume batting on the fourth day. -ANI

FIFA

Cabral's stunner against Argentina wins Goal of 2026 World Cup

GENEVA: Cape Verde player Sidny Lopes Cabral's curling strike against Argentina in the round of 32 at the 2026 FIFA World Cup was voted Goal of the Tournament, FIFA announced on Monday.

The African side forced extra time after the match finished 1-1 after 90 minutes. Lisandro Martinez restored the lead for the 2022 World Cup champion before Lopes Cabral equalized in spectacular fashion.

In the 103rd minute, the Cabo Verde left-back collected the ball on the left, cut inside Alexis Mac Allister and curled a perfectly placed right-footed shot into the top corner beyond Emiliano Martinez.

"It was simply surreal," Lopes Cabral told FIFA. "It's an enormous honor and the kind of recognition every player dreams of. I'm incredibly grateful for everyone who voted my goal as the best of the tournament."

"Now the challenge is to keep working to score more goals like that and, above all, to help both my club and country to win matches. Receiving this award is a very special honor for me."

Argentina eventually won the thriller through a deflected header from Cristian Romero.

Goals from Uzbekistan's Eldor Shomurodov and Haiti's Wilson Isidor finished second and third, respectively. Lopes Cabral joined Maxi Rodriguez, Diego Forlan, James Rodriguez, Benjamin Pavard and Richarlison as a winner of the award. -Xinhua

TWO-MATCH TEST SERIES

Gill to captain India in Sri Lanka Tests, Bumrah's availability subject to fitness

MUMBA: The Men's Selection Committee of the BCCI has announced India's squad for the upcoming two-match Test series against Sri Lanka, with Shubman Gill named captain and KL Rahul appointed vice-captain.

Ahead of the Test series, India will play a four-day practice match in Colombo, beginning August 7.

The two-match Test series will begin with the first Test at the Galle International Cricket Stadium (GICS) from August 15 to 19, followed by the second Test at the Sinhalese Sports Club (SSC) in Colombo from August 23 to 27.

Lead pacer Jasprit Bumrah has been named in the squad, though his availability will depend on fitness clearance from the BCCI Centre of Excellence (COE). Similarly, B Sai Sudharsan's participation will also be subject to clearance from the COE.

Spin-bowling all-rounder Washington Sundar will miss the first Test due to a hamstring injury, with Saransh Jain included in the squad as his replacement, who received his maiden call-up to the Test side.

Meanwhile, veteran all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja returns after recovering from a tennis elbow injury sustained during the 2026 Indian Premier League in May. His comeback will strengthen India's spin attack in the subcontinental conditions. The squad also includes Yashasvi Jaiswal, Rishabh Pant, Dhruv Jurel, Kuldeep Yadav, Manav Suthar, Mohammed Siraj, Prasidh Krishna, Gurnoor Brar, and Devdutt Padikkal.

The two-match Test series will be part of the ongoing ICC World Test Championship 2025-27 cycle.

The Asian giants are currently fifth in the ICC World Test Championship (WTC) standings, with four wins, four losses and one draw from nine matches. Led by Shubman Gill, India have 52 points and a Points Percentage (PCT) of 48.15.

India's squad for Tests against Sri Lanka:

Shubman Gill [C], KL Rahul [VC], Yashasvi Jaiswal, Rishabh Pant [WK], Sai Sudharsan*, Dhruv Jurel [WK], Ravindra Jadeja, Kuldeep Yadav, Manav Suthar, Jasprit Bumrah*, Mohd. Siraj, Prasidh Krishna, Gurnoor Brar, Devdutt Padikkal, Saransh Jain

NETHERLANDS CRICKETER

Ryan ten Doeschate steps down as India men's assistant coach

NEW DELHI: Ryan ten Doeschate has stepped down as India's men's assistant coach following the conclusion of the white-ball series in England, according to ESPNcricinfo. The former Netherlands cricketer informed the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) about his decision during the UK tour, where India suffered defeats in both the T20I and ODI series. India lost 4-0 to England in the T20I series and 2-1 in the ODI series. According to the report, Ryan ten Doeschate is set to take up a coaching role with IPL franchise Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR).

Ryan ten Doeschate, the former Netherlands captain, had been part of India's coaching set-up since Gautam Gambhir took over as head coach after Rahul Dravid stepped down following India's 2024 T20 World Cup triumph. Personally selected by Gambhir, Doeschate became an important member of the support staff, contributing across both batting and fielding departments.

During his tenure with India, Doeschate was part of the coaching group that helped the team win the 2025 Asia Cup and successfully defend the 2026 Men's T20 World Cup title. However, India's Test side endured a difficult transition during the same period, suffering a Border-Gavaskar Trophy defeat in Australia and a home series whitewash against New Zealand (0-3) and South Africa (0-2). If the Dutch coach joins the KKR camp, he will reunite with Abhishek Nayar, with whom he previously worked as an assistant coach in the India set-up and earlier at the IPL franchise. -ANI

IN OCTOBER

Malaysia to host one-off Bahrain GP as F1 preserves 2026 calendar

BEIJIN: Malaysia will return to the Formula 1 calendar for the first time since 2017 by hosting a one-off Bahrain Grand Prix in October after the Gulf state's race was cancelled because of the conflict in the Middle East.

Formula 1 announced on Sunday that Sepang International Circuit, near Kuala Lumpur, will stage the Bahrain Grand Prix on October 4, one week before the Singapore Grand Prix, allowing the championship to maintain a 23-race calendar. The race will be officially titled the Bahrain Grand Prix in Malaysia, reflecting Bahrain's financial backing of the event despite it being held around 6,000 kilometres from Bahrain.

"The arrangement means we will deliver 23 races for the 2026 season, and the rest of the schedule remains unchanged," Formula 1 said in a statement.

The Bahrain and Saudi Arabian Grands Prix, originally scheduled for April, were called off in March because of the conflict involving the United States, Israel and Iran. While hopes of Bahrain returning later in the year faded as regional tensions continued, Formula 1 sought an alternative venue to fill the vacant October slot.

Following discussions involving Formula 1, the FIA and the governments of Bahrain and Malaysia, an agreement was reached for Sepang to host the race, with Bahrain helping cover much of the hosting costs.

The arrangement was heavily influenced by Bahrain Crown Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, who has championed the country's Formula 1 project since Bahrain joined the championship in 2004. Bahrain's sovereign wealth fund is also the majority owner of the McLaren Formula 1 team.

Formula 1 president and chief executive Stefano Domenicali said the agreement demonstrated the sport's ability to respond to unforeseen circumstances.

"We are delighted to confirm that Malaysia will host the Bahrain Grand Prix in 2026," Domenicali said. "Once again, the sport has demonstrated its ability to adapt, find solutions, and deliver, creating an exciting moment for everyone who follows Formula 1."

He thanked Bahrain's King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, Crown Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Malaysia's King Sultan Ibrahim and both governments for making the agreement possible.

"Malaysia is an incredible country, and Sepang holds a special place in Formula 1 history," Domenicali added. "It will provide a spectacular setting for racing and an unforgettable experience for fans at the circuit and watching around the world."

Sepang hosted Formula 1 from 1999 through 2017 before dropping off the calendar because of rising hosting costs, despite remaining one of the sport's most popular circuits among drivers and fans.

The race still requires formal approval from the FIA World Motor Sport Council, although that is expected to be a procedural step.

While the Malaysia agreement resolves one gap in the calendar, uncertainty remains over the season-ending races in Qatar and Abu Dhabi because of the continuing regional conflict.

Formula 1 is working on contingency plans should either event prove impossible to stage. A final decision is not expected until September, with Italy's Imola considered the leading replacement venue. Portugal's Portimao and Turkey's Istanbul Park are also under consideration, although both face logistical challenges because of ongoing construction work ahead of their planned returns to the calendar next year.

Formula 1 is keen to stage at least 21 races this season, as falling below that threshold could trigger contractual clauses requiring refunds to broadcasters and potentially affecting sponsorship agreements with teams. -Xinhua

IN PICTURES

Bollywood actors Sunny Deol and Dia Mirza, the cast and crew of Netflix original film IKKA, pose for a picture during a special Success party: Bollywood actors Sunny Deol and Dia Mirza, the cast and crew of Netflix original film IKKA, pose for a picture during a special Success Party, in Mumbai on Monday. — ANI Photo

Fujin National Wetland Park in Fujin City: A drone photo shows a view of the Fujin National Wetland Park in Fujin City, northeast China's Heilongjiang Province. Thanks to years of ecological restoration, the park now features a thriving ecosystem and breathtaking natural beauty. — Xinhua

Tunisia's Sidi Bou Said village inscribed on UNESCO World Heritage List: Visitors walk on an alley in the blue and white village of Sidi Bou Said, north of Tunisia. Tunisia's iconic village of Sidi Bou Said has been inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List, the country's Ministry of Cultural Affairs said. — Xinhua

7th edition of Amman International Film Festival held in Jordan: Actresses pose for group photos during the opening of the Amman International Film Festival in Amman, Jordan. — Xinhua

Homemade electric double-decker buses exported to Britain: A drone photo shows a car carrier loaded with homemade electric double-decker buses and other commercial vehicles departing from the Yantai Port in Yantai, east China's Shandong Province. A total of 35 Chinese bus maker Yutong's U11DD electric double-decker buses were shipped from the Yantai Port to Britain. — Xinhua

Vietnam beats Thailand to claim Men's SEA Volleyball Cup title: Team Vietnam pose for photos after the awarding ceremony after the final match between Vietnam and Thailand of the Men's SEA Volleyball Cup 2026 Second Leg at Velodrome Stadium in Jakarta, Indonesia. — Xinhua

Green pioneers explore path, partnership at Boao forum Perth conference: People attend the opening ceremony of the Boao Forum for Asia (BFA) Perth Conference in Perth, Australia, July 27, 2026. A high-level meeting has brought together experts, policymakers and industry leaders in the capital city of Western Australia, with a spotlight on the global green transition. — Xinhua

Go farther this summer: iCAUR V27 now available with exclusive benefits

To deliver complete peace of mind during the hottest months, the iCAUR V27 is paired with an exceptional package of ownership rewards, including 1-year comprehensive insurance, free registration and a complimentary service package for 2 years or 30,000 km (whichever comes first), allowing drivers to kick off their journeys with zero initial maintenance costs

MUSCAT: Bringing its signature "Born to Play" energy to the season, the flagship iCAUR V27 SUV is currently available across the Sultanate with high-value advantages through the ongoing iCAUR summer campaign.

Running through July 31, this seasonal initiative is designed to ensure that summer is a time for total cooling and outdoor discovery. To deliver complete peace of mind during the hottest months, the iCAUR V27 is paired with an exceptional package of ownership rewards, including 1-year comprehensive insurance, free registration and a complimentary service package for 2 years or 30,000 km (whichever comes first), allowing drivers to kick off their journeys with zero initial maintenance costs.

Designed to bridge the gap between urban sophistication and rugged exploration, the iCAUR V27 is a highly versatile flagship solution built for the Sultanate's unique terrain. It is engineered to redefine long-distance travel through advanced Range Extended Electric Vehicle (REEV) technology, which utilizes a high-efficiency engine solely as a generator to power the electric motors. The system delivers a massive, anxiety-free total driving range of over 900 km, giving Omani adventurers pure, uninterrupted freedom to drive from the city deep into the desert for a midnight campfire and return before dawn without ever needing to search for a charging plug or an immediate refuelling station.

True to its playful yet powerful soul, the V27 effortlessly matches its off-road capabilities with sports car thrills. Beneath its rugged, boxy silhouette lies a powerhouse generating a staggering 449 HP, rocketing the SUV from 0 to 100 km/h in just 5.9 seconds. Inside, the V27 serves as a spacious, whisper-quiet sanctuary on wheels, offering class-leading space for the entire crew and their gear.

The premium cabin features an incredible 48 dedicated storage compartments alongside a class-leading 715L boot.

A key highlight of this summer campaign is iCAUR's signature 99.9% UV protection technology, perfectly embodied in the V27's segment-only "Stellar Porthole" dual panoramic sunroof. Specially engineered for high-temperature regions, this advanced laminated glass structure blocks 99.9% of harmful ultraviolet rays and features just 2% light transmission. This drastically reduces cabin heat build-up, ensuring that whether drivers are exploring Oman's coastal roads or desert highways, they can enjoy uninterrupted views of the breath-taking landscape in cool, heat-resistant comfort.

NOW AVAILABLE IN OMAN

Huawei Pura90s Pro Max empowers you to shoot like a pro

MUSCAT: Huawei ushers in a new chapter of mobile aesthetics and technology with the global rollout of the Huawei Pura90s Series. Built around the powerful philosophy of Now is Your Moment, the Huawei Pura 90s Series blends advanced imaging innovations with a fresh design language, empowering users to capture every moment with effortless authenticity. Starting at OMR 299.9, the Huawei Pura90s Series is now available in Oman, with prices starting from OMR 299.9. Customers can purchase the devices through the official Huawei Store and all authorized retail outlets across the Sultanate.

5G+ connectivity

The new Huawei Pura90s Series arrives with full 5G+ connectivity, delivering ultra-fast speeds, lower latency, and a more stable network experience across the Sultanate of Oman. Supporting all three major telecom operators in Oman, Omantel, Ooredoo, and Vodafone, the new series ensures seamless performance for streaming, gaming, real-time content creation, and lightning-fast sharing and uploads. This reaffirms Huawei's commitment to bringing advanced mobile innovation and next-generation connectivity to users across the Sultanate of Oman.

200MP large sensor telephoto camera

The Huawei Pura90s Series marks a major leap forward in flagship smartphone photography, delivering significant advancements in telephoto macro imaging, main camera performance, and colour accuracy.

Leading the lineup, the Huawei Pura90s Pro Max features an industry-leading 200MP Ultra Large Sensor Telephoto Camera, setting a new benchmark for long-range photography with exceptional clarity and stability. It also debuts chip-level 200MP RAW real-time processing technology, enabling remarkably crisp 20x telephoto video recording. Complementing these capabilities is an industry-leading CIPA 7.0 image stabilisation system that effectively minimises handheld blur, even in challenging shooting conditions.

Powered by the True-to-Colour Camera 2.0, the HUAWEI Pura90s Series delivers a 43% improvement in colour accuracy and a 34% wider colour gamut, faithfully reproducing every scene with vibrant, true-to-life colours.

The upgraded AI Composition feature serves as an intelligent framing assistant, instantly recognising subjects such as people, architecture, and landscapes to provide real-time composition guidance. AI De-glare removes distracting reflections from windows, glass, and screens while restoring natural skin tones and revealing details hidden behind reflective surfaces. Meanwhile, AI Move unlocks new creative possibilities by allowing users to isolate, reposition, or duplicate elements within an image, with the system intelligently reconstructing backgrounds and matching lighting for seamless results.

Vibrant colour palettes

Inspired by the Rhythm of Colour design philosophy, the Huawei Pura90s Series embraces a refined flat-edged design across the lineup, creating a signature look that is both understated and elegant. The HUAWEI Pura90s Pro Max is available in four striking finishes: Blush Gold, inspired by the first light of dawn; Orange Ocean, capturing the warmth of the evening afterglow; Blaze Purple, evoking the beauty of twilight in bloom; and Graphite Black, reflecting the quiet depth of the cosmos.

The Orange Ocean variant also debuts the industry's first Dual-tone Gradient Metal Mid-frame, creating a distinctive layered texture and premium visual appeal.

The Huawei Pura90s Pro adopts a more playful aesthetic inspired by refreshing holiday beverages. Available in Guava Soda, Orange Soda, Coconut White, and Mulberry Black, each colourway brings vibrant holiday-inspired hues together with a clean, sophisticated finish.

Built to endure

The Huawei Pura90s Pro Max features Anti-Reflection and Scratch-resistant Kunlun Glass, which reduces screen reflections by up to 70%, ensuring vibrant visibility even under direct sunlight. It also offers enhanced resistance to everyday scratches while minimising fingerprint smudges, helping the display stay pristine and comfortable to use. The Huawei Pura90s Series also introduces the brand-new system-level AI assistant, Celia, delivering a smarter and more intuitive user experience.

Powering the series is a large 6000mAh battery for extended all-day usage. The Huawei Pura90s Pro supports 66W Huawei SuperCharge, while the Huawei Pura90s Pro Max takes charging even further with 100W Huawei SuperCharge, allowing users to power up in less time and spend more time capturing every moment.

ASSOCIATION

MS Dhoni joins Malabar Gold & Diamonds as brand ambassador

MUMBAI: Malabar Gold & Diamonds, the world's fourth-largest jewellery retailer and a responsible jeweller, announced MS Dhoni as its brand ambassador, marking the beginning of a long-term association centred around The responsible jeweller, the brand's philosophy of taking responsibility beyond jewellery.

At a time when consumers are placing greater emphasis on transparency, authenticity and trust, Malabar Gold & Diamonds is reinforcing its commitment to responsibility across every stage of the value chain.

The Responsible Jeweller is Malabar Gold & Diamonds' long-term commitment to responsible business practices across the jewellery value chain. It reflects the brand's approach to ethical sourcing, trusted quality, transparent pricing, responsible manufacturing and customer-first policies, reaffirming its belief that every jewellery purchase should be backed by confidence, accountability, trust and responsibility to all stakeholders.

This commitment is brought to life through Malabar Promises, a comprehensive framework of customer-first commitments. These include 100% BIS Hallmarked jewellery, 28 quality checks for every natural diamond, transparent pricing with no hidden charges, guaranteed buyback, lifetime maintenance, complimentary insurance, best-value exchange programmes and responsible sourcing practices, enabling customers to make every purchase with confidence.

One of India's most admired sporting icons, MS Dhoni is the only captain in the history of international cricket to lead India to victory in all three ICC white-ball tournaments. Admired for his integrity, consistency and humility, he embodies the values that have defined Malabar Gold & Diamonds for over 33 years since its inception in 1993.

The campaign will roll out through one of Malabar Gold & Diamonds' largest integrated consumer programmes, spanning television, print, digital, social media, radio, cinema, out-of-home media, retail experiences and owned platforms, reaching consumers through more than 450 Malabar Gold & Diamonds stores globally.

Commenting on the partnership, M.P. Ahammad, Chairman, Malabar Group, said:"Consumers today expect more from the brands they choose. Beyond exceptional products, they seek transparency, authenticity and confidence in every purchase. We believe the jewellery industry has a responsibility to meet these expectations through ethical business practices, uncompromising quality and a customer-first approach. That belief has shaped Malabar Gold & Diamonds for over 33 years and continues to guide every decision we make.

MS Dhoni has earned the respect and trust of millions through his integrity, discipline and consistency, qualities that resonate deeply with our own values. We are delighted to welcome him to the Malabar family and look forward to inspiring greater confidence in jewellery buying while reinforcing our commitment to responsible business practices."

MS Dhoni said: "Throughout my career, I have believed that trust is earned through actions and consistency. That is what makes this association with Malabar Gold & Diamonds meaningful for me. What resonated with me was the brand's unwavering commitment to transparency, responsibility and customer confidence. I look forward to supporting Malabar Gold & Diamonds in encouraging more people to make informed jewellery-buying decisions and choose with confidence."

Through this long-term association, Malabar Gold & Diamonds aims to encourage consumers to choose jewellery backed not only by exceptional craftsmanship, but also by transparency, responsibility and trust.