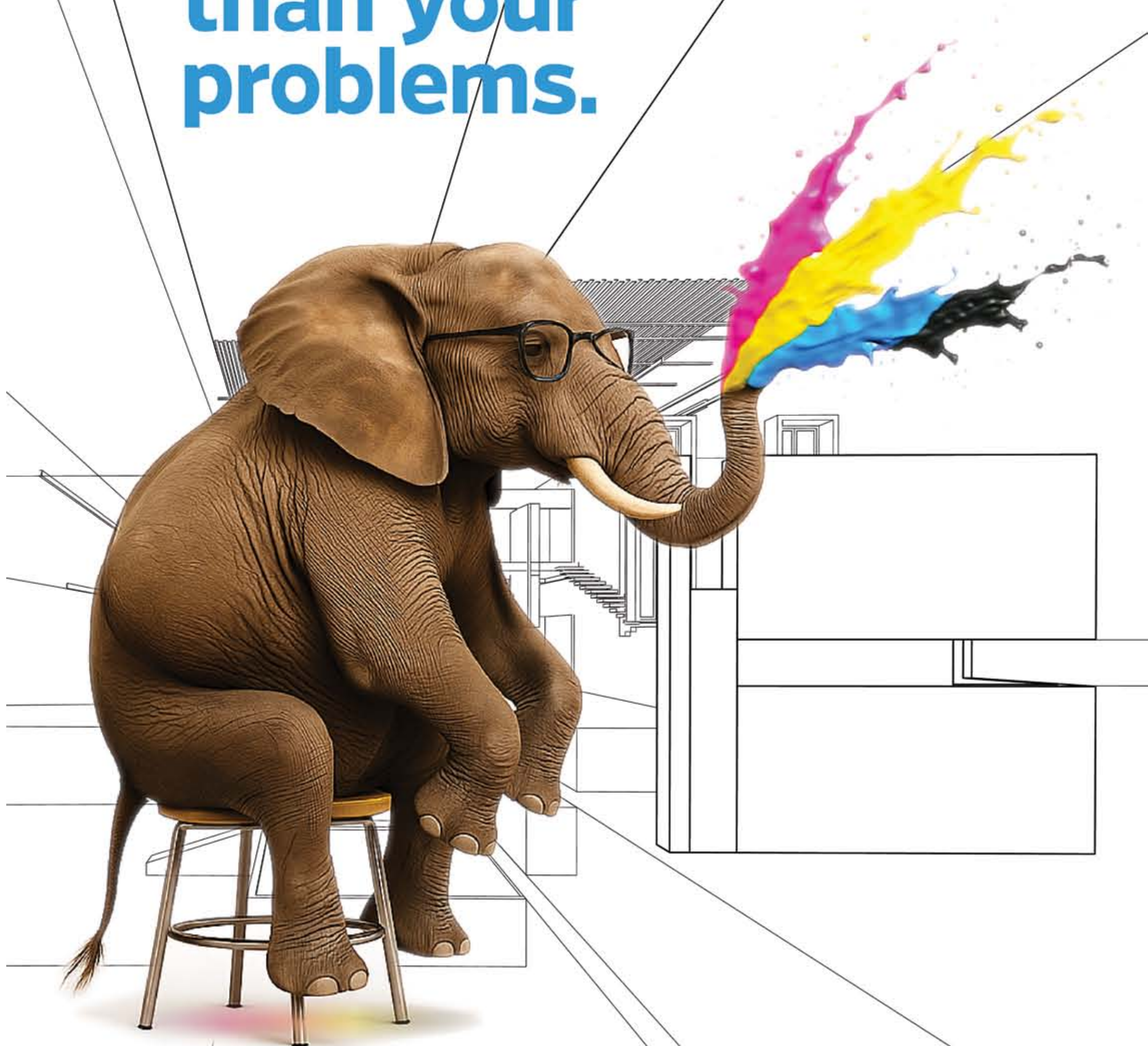


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WORLD CUP 2026

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TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

## OMAN Funding approved for 8 research projects

**1** The Research and Innovation Authority has announced the funding for eight collaborative research projects to be undertaken jointly by the Authority and seven local research institutions. **>A2**

## OMAN Information Minister discusses media work

**2** Dr. Abdullah Nasser Al Harrasi, Minister of Information, discussed with Eng. Masoud Said Al Hashmi, South Al Batinah Governor, means to enhance media work to highlight tourism components. **>A3**

## WORLD NATO faces rising fault lines before summit

**3** As leaders of the NATO prepare to meet in Ankara, the disagreements over strategic priorities and defence spending have become increasingly difficult to conceal. **>A7**

HEALTH REGULATIONS

## Dhofar Municipality intensifies food safety inspections during Khareef

Times News Service

**MUSCAT:** Dhofar Municipality has intensified its food safety inspections across the governorate during the Khareef season, carrying out 900 inspection visits over the past month that resulted in 150 health violations and the closure of 25 food establishments for breaching health regulations.

The inspection campaigns, conducted by the municipality's Health Affairs Department through its Health Control Section, are part of ongoing efforts to strengthen health oversight, protect consumers, and ensure food establishments comply with approved health and safety requirements.

The inspections were carried out during both morning and evening hours and covered a wide range of food businesses, including kitchens, restaurants, cafés, evening food outlets and mishkak vendors.

According to the municipality, inspectors recorded 150 health violations, issued 60 warnings and ordered the closure of 25 establishments found to be in breach of health regulations.

The intensified inspections come as Dhofar welcomes thousands of visitors during the annual Khareef (monsoon) season, one of Oman's biggest tourism events.



Running from June to September, the season transforms the governorate into a lush green landscape with cool temperatures, attracting tourists from across the Sultanate, the GCC and beyond.

The influx of visitors typically leads to a sharp increase in demand for food and hospitality services, prompting authorities to step up inspections to ensure food safety and protect public health.

Dhofar Municipality said the necessary legal action has been taken against the offending establishments and stressed the importance of full compliance with health requirements and preventive measures to safeguard consumers.

The municipality added that inspection campaigns will continue in coordination with the relevant authorities to ensure a safe food environment and maintain the quality of services provided to residents and visitors throughout the 2026 Dhofar Khareef season.

## OMAN AND UNESCO

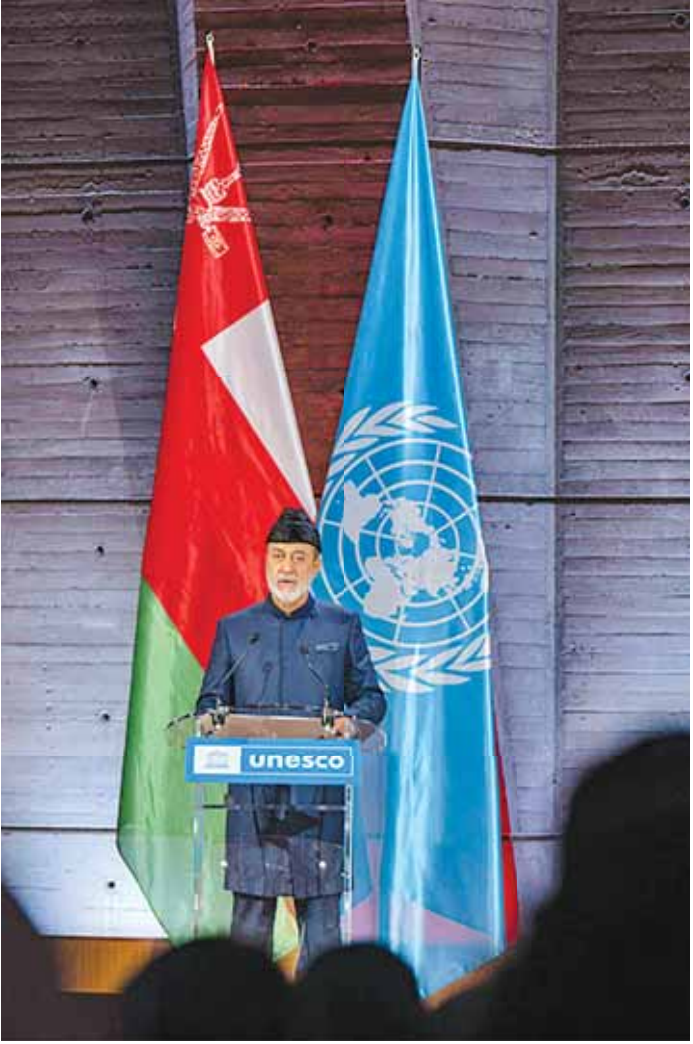
# HM'S VISIT TO UNESCO HIGHLIGHTS 54 YEARS OF DEEP-ROOTED RELATIONS

Oman's Permanent Delegate has helped consolidate its presence in UN body

**MUSCAT:** For more than five decades, the Sultanate of Oman has cultivated a deeply rooted civilisational partnership with UNESCO, since its accession to the Organization in 1972 — a milestone that marked a turning point in Oman's international presence.

Amna Salim Al Balushi, Oman's Permanent Delegate to UNESCO, told the Oman News Agency (ONA) that the Permanent Delegation in Paris was established to coordinate, communicate and document cooperation with member states, while strengthening Oman's participation in international committees and councils.

The delegation has helped consolidate Oman's presence within UNESCO through active engagement with other permanent delegations and representation in regional and geographic groups, reflecting Oman's commitment to multilateralism, she said. **>A3**



EXPECTATIONS HIGH

## Arab hopes rest on Salah, Hakimi as fans in Oman rally behind Egypt, Morocco

Times News Service

**MUSCAT:** The FIFA World Cup has been an emotional roller-coaster for football fans in Oman. With eight teams from the Arab world competing in the expanded 48-team tournament, there were high hopes that at least four would progress to the knockout stage.

Those expectations were only partly realised as Morocco, Egypt and Algeria advanced, while Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Iraq, Jordan and Tunisia bowed out in the group phase.

Following the Round of 32, only Morocco and Egypt remain in contention, with the Atlas Lions booking their place in the quarter-finals



with an emphatic 3-0 victory over co-hosts Canada.

Egypt face defending champions Argentina in Atlanta on Tuesday (8pm Oman time), while Morocco meet France in Friday's quarter-



final (midnight Oman time), with supporters across the region daring to believe another upset could be on the cards.

From Muscat and Sohar to Sur and Salalah, fans are eagerly



awaiting Tuesday's blockbuster between Lionel Messi's Argentina and Mohamed Salah's Egypt.

The early evening kickoff is a welcome change for supporters who have endured several late-night matches during the tournament, with fans in the Sultanate firmly throwing their weight behind the last two Arab nations standing.

While Salah and Morocco cap-

tain Achraf Hakimi remain the biggest crowd-pullers, the dynamic trio of Azzedine Ounahi, Brahim Diaz and Ismael Saibari has also captured the imagination of fans across Oman as the Arab dream gathers momentum.

Belief has only grown after unfancied Cape Verde pushed Argentina all the way before the South Americans escaped with a dramatic 3-2 extra-time victory, proving even the world champions can be rattled.

"After watching Cape Verde trouble Argentina for 120 minutes, why can't Egypt do the same?" said Ahmed Hassan, an Egyptian professional based in Muscat. **>A4**

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COMMENTARY

# What a Military Radio Station Taught Me

What comes to mind when thinking of a military radio station?

For many, the answer is straightforward: a platform dedicated to military news and content intended primarily for members of the armed forces. Historically, military broadcasting has indeed served those purposes, providing news, maintaining morale, and strengthening communication within military communities and for personnel deployed abroad. My experience with Al Sumood Radio of the Sultan's Armed Forces introduced me to a broader understanding of what such an institution can represent.

A year ago this July, I was contacted and asked whether I would be interested in presenting a programme on Al Sumood Radio. The invitation came as a genuine surprise. Radio had never been a path I had imagined for myself, and the opportunity to contribute to a station of such stature was an honour that came with a profound sense of responsibility. At the same time, I felt overwhelmed. I had no experience in radio, and I made that clear from the outset.

It was then that Commodore



Abdunnasser Al Abri, Head of Morale Guidance and Military Protocol, told me that the media field is vast and that experience is gained along the way. More importantly, he expressed his confidence and trust in my abilities. It was that expression of trust, whose significance has remained with me ever since, affirming the idea that trust can become the catalyst that unlocks potential already waiting to emerge.

After submitting a proposal and recording a demo episode, the programme was approved. It became the first English-language programme on Al Sumood Radio. I titled it 'Within the Path', a name that reflected the purpose I hoped it would

serve: exploring the ideas and strategies that shape the course of individuals, institutions, and nations, with each episode closing on a personal reflection. The programme delved into subjects such as leadership, diplomacy, strategic thought, identity, psychology, Islamic concepts, and moral philosophy, bringing together conversations that sought to understand the ideas that shape various paths.

Before recording the first episode, I remember sitting with my mother and sharing what seemed, at the time, to be my greatest concern:

"The first season is eighteen weekly episodes," I told her. "How am I going to find enough

topics?"

She smiled and replied with complete certainty: "You will." Then she offered a thought that remained with me throughout the journey: "Just imagine how much knowledge you'll accumulate by the end of the first season."

She was right.

At the time, I was only focused on completing the first season, taking on the challenge without fully appreciating the depth of commitment it would demand. I later came to understand it. Each episode required hours of research, preparation, reflection, writing, revision, and recording. By the end of two seasons, I had researched, written, and presented thirty-two episodes. The process reinforced the understanding that meaningful communication begins with meaningful learning. Looking back, the greatest achievement was the knowledge, perspective, and intellectual curiosity that continuously grew through the process.

My own programme, though, was only one part of a much larger picture. Working within Al Sumood also allowed me to see the station from the inside,

and to appreciate the impressive breadth of subjects it embraces. Its schedule includes discussions on economics, ethics, history, diplomacy, coexistence, and strategy — even extending to film, through a programme called *Aflam Al-Harb* ("War Films: When Cinema Becomes a Mirror of Memory"), which analyses international films made about war. Together, these programmes form an educational archive that speaks beyond the military sphere and to all who are interested.

That breadth is significant because institutions often reveal the character of the societies that build them. Al Sumood serves the Sultan's Armed Forces, while also reflecting a distinctly Omani understanding of service — one that recognises knowledge as an enduring source of strength. The station demonstrates that professional excellence and intellectual curiosity are mutually reinforcing; that discipline is enriched by learning; and that public service includes the cultivation of ideas, ethics, and informed citizenship.

That reach extends beyond the traditional boundaries of radio. Today, Al Sumood's programmes

are available across major podcast platforms, allowing listeners in Oman and abroad to gain insight into conversations taking place in the Sultanate. In doing so, the station has created a growing digital archive for audiences well beyond the moment of broadcast.

The Arabic word *sumood* means resilience. It is a term associated with perseverance, steadfastness, and strength in the face of challenge. During my time with the station, I came to appreciate another dimension of that concept. Resilience is also found in the discipline of learning continuously, asking thoughtful questions, refining one's understanding, and always returning with a renewed commitment to contribute something meaningful.

In a rapidly changing global media landscape, the presence of thoughtful, values-driven platforms becomes ever more important.

For me, Al Sumood became far more than a place to present a programme. It became an institution that reminded me that the pursuit of knowledge remains one of the most enduring forms of public service.

# RIA approves funding for eight collaborative research projects

This flagship programme is designed to catalyse cross-border research collaboration, equip Omani researchers and innovators with world-class competencies



**MUSCAT:** The Research and Innovation Authority (RIA) has announced the outcomes of the inaugural cycle of the "Collaboration Programme with Sultan Qaboos Academic Chairs," which has resulted in the approval of funding for a portfolio of strategic research projects.

This initiative forms part of the national drive to maximise the scholarly impact of these distinguished Chairs while deepening international research partnerships in alignment with the strategic objectives of "Oman Vision 2040."

This flagship programme is designed to catalyse cross-border re-

search collaboration, equip Omani researchers and innovators with world-class competencies, and foster the production of high-impact studies that yield evidence-based solutions to pressing national challenges.

In so doing, it further consolidates the Sultanate of Oman's standing within the global research and innovation ecosystem.

The first cycle attracted substantial engagement and intense competition from the academic community, with a total of 46 research proposals submitted by nine Omani research institutions.

These proposals were coordinated in partnership with twelve Sultan Qaboos Chairs hosted by pre-eminent universities and academic institutions worldwide.

Following a rigorous final evaluation process, funding was approved for eight collaborative research projects to be undertaken jointly by the Authority, seven local research institutions, and the respective international Chair holders.

The approved projects span five priority research domains aligned with national development needs.

In the field of international relations, Middle Eastern studies, religion and shared human values, the project "Transformations in the Contemporary Middle East: Artificial Intelligence, Gender and Culture" has been sanctioned.

The principal investigator is Dr. Rukhshana Bano of Muscat College, in collaboration with the Sultan Qaboos Chair for Middle

Eastern Studies at the University of Tokyo, Japan.

Within the discipline of Arabic and Islamic studies, the project "The Belt and Road Initiative as a Framework for Strategic Hedging in Sino-GCC Relations (2013-2025)" has been approved. It is led by Dr. Imran Al Abri of Sultan Qaboos University, working alongside the Sultan Qaboos bin Said Chair for Arabic Studies at Peking University in the People's Republic of China.

In the water and desert agriculture sector, two projects have received support. The first, "Seawater Desalination Using High-Performance Capacitive Deionization Technology for Desert Farming Applications," is headed by Dr. Mohammad Asim Siddiqui of the University of Technology and Applied Sciences - Shinas Branch, in cooperation with the Sultan Qaboos bin Said Chair for Desert Agriculture at the Arabian Gulf University in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

The second project, "Environmental Studies on Water Flow in Porous Media Using Remote Sensing, Geographic Information Systems, and Geospatial Artificial Intelligence for Sustainable Agriculture and Environmental Management in Oman," is directed by Dr. Khalifa Al Kindi of the University of Nizwa, in partnership with the Sultan Qaboos Chair for Quantitative Water Management at Utrecht University in the King-

dom of the Netherlands.

In the information technology domain, two further projects have been endorsed. The first, entitled "Hardware Accelerator for Post-Quantum Cryptography," is led by Dr. Adnan Kabbani of the University of Al Sharqiyah, in association with Oman Chair for Information Technology at NED University of Engineering and Technology in Pakistan.

The second, "AMaOO-AD: Adaptive Multi-Objective Optimisation Techniques for Amphibious Unmanned Aerial Vehicles," is spearheaded by Dr. Gopal Rathinam of the University of Al Buraimi.

In the mathematical sciences, two projects focusing on energy and intelligent modelling have been funded. The first introduces an "Intelligent Flow Assurance Model for Multiphase Pipelines Integrating Fuzzy Knowledge Maps and Computational Fluid Dynamics," under the leadership of Dr. Aliya Al Farsi of the Middle East College, in collaboration with the Sultan Qaboos Fellowship in Mathematics at Corpus Christi College, University of Cambridge, United Kingdom.

The second project, "Electrolysis for Green Hydrogen Production: A GPU-Accelerated and HPC-Enhanced First-Principles Model Supported by Machine Learning Optimization," is directed by Dr. Ali Taqi of Sultan Qaboos University.

These approved research endeavours represent a significant step forward in the knowledge exchange between the Sultan Qaboos Academic Chairs and Omani national institutions. They further demonstrate the Programme's success in forging research bridges that serve domestic priorities while contributing to the sustained development of local research capabilities.

The Research and Innovation Authority plays a pivotal role as an active conduit between international Chair holders and researchers within Omani academic and research institutions, thereby enhancing opportunities for joint scholarly collaboration, facilitating the exchange of expertise, and generating innovative responses to national, regional and global challenges.

It is worth noting that the Sultan Qaboos Academic Chairs, Professorships, and Fellowships constitute a pioneering initiative that embodies the Sultanate of Oman's civilizational commitment to advancing human knowledge and fostering intercultural dialogue and rapprochement between the Arab world and nations across the globe.

Their disciplinary breadth—encompassing the humanities, social sciences, applied sciences and technology—reflects the comprehensive vision underpinning Oman's dedication to the advancement of research and learning. -ONA

400TH ANNIVERSARY

## Oman military band excels at France music festival



**MUSCAT:** The joint Omani military music band on Monday wound up its participation in Albertville International Military Music Festival held in the Republic of France in celebration of the 400th anniversary of the foundation of the French Na-

tional Navy.

The Omani band thrilled the audience with dazzling musical performances and marching displays at various venues of the Albertville Festival, including the Olympic Hall.

The performances reflected the

Omani band's high level of discipline and professionalism.

The festival's closing ceremony was attended by the Military Attaché at the Embassy of the Sultanate of Oman in the Republic of France and the Mayor of Albertville. -ONA

ENHANCE THE QUALITY OF SERVICES

## Training programme on hospitality etiquette and protocol for services

Times News Service

**MUSCAT:** The Assistant Secretariat General for Administrative and Financial Affairs at the Shura Council organised a training programme titled 'Hospitality Etiquette and Protocol' for staff of the Services Department at the Secretariat General.

The programme forms part of the Secretariat General's ongoing efforts to develop staff competencies, enhance the quality of services provided, and foster a culture of excellence in institutional performance in accordance with the official protocols and established practices governing the reception of delegations and the organisation of the Council's events and official functions.

The 15-hour training programme is designed to equip participants with the professional skills required to deliver hospitality services to the highest standards, reflecting the Council's institutional image and further enhancing the quality of services provided during official events and



occasions.

The programme covered a range of specialised topics, including the importance of hospitality and its impact on institutional reputation, effective communication skills, personal etiquette, approaches to dealing with different personality types, reception and welcoming etiquette, professional communication skills, teamwork, time management, and managing workplace pressures.

It also reviewed official hospitality protocols, the etiquette of serving food and beverages, and the selection of appropriate

equipment and materials for hospitality services in accordance with recognised professional standards.

The programme adopts interactive training methods that combine lectures, presentations, practical exercises, video demonstrations, group discussions, and role-playing activities, enabling participants to apply theoretical concepts in practical workplace scenarios while enhancing their readiness to deliver hospitality services in accordance with best professional practices and official protocols.

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# Plan to highlight South Al Batinah’s potentials

The Information Minister sought better coverage of historical, cultural, economic, and tourism components of the governorate



**’RUSTAQ:** Dr. Abdullah Nasser Al Harrasi, Minister of Information, discussed on Monday with Eng. Masoud Said Al Hashmi, Governor of South Al Batinah, means to enhance media work in a manner that contributes to highlighting the historical, cultural, economic, and tourism components that the governorate boasts. The discussions also covered shedding light on the developmental achievements and their impact on the lives of individuals and society across the various wilayats of the governorate. The meeting, held at the office

of the Governor of South Al Batinah, addressed boosting media efforts to present a comprehensive image of South Al Batinah Governorate. This is to be achieved by introducing the governorate’s components and opportunities, highlighting developmental projects and initiatives, and reviewing their impacts on the lives of individuals and society, along with their role in enhancing local development, thereby boosting societal awareness and keeping pace

with the targets of comprehensive development. The two sides emphasised the importance of providing media content that reflects the governorate’s identity, highlights the uniqueness of its wilayats and their diverse components, and sheds light on the success stories and transformations the governorate is witnessing across various fields. This aims to enhance its media presence and introduce the opportunities and potential it possesses. Furthermore, they exchanged views on a number of topics of mutual interest. This meeting comes within the framework of enhancing cooperation and coordination between the Ministry of Information and the Office of the Governor of South Al Batinah. It supports the efforts aimed at presenting an integrated media image of the governorate, highlighting its various components, and reflecting the impact of the march of development on individuals and society. -ONA

## Oman inks MoUs on combating money laundering

**BAKU:** The National Centre for Financial Information today signed two Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with the Joint Financial Intelligence Unit of Hong Kong (People’s Republic of China) and the Anti-Money Laundering Council of the Republic of the Philippines. These MoUs are designed to define the frameworks for joint collaboration and coordinate efforts towards the exchange of information, expertise and best practices in the fields of combating money laundering, terrorist financing and proliferation financing. The Memoranda were signed by Colonel Juma Mattar Al Thuhli, Chief Executive Officer of the National Center for Financial Information. -ONA



## ‘Several Omani scholars have been commemorated’

**< FROM A1** The establishment of the Oman National Commission for Education, Culture and Science in 1974 further laid a permanent framework for cooperation at the national level. She added that in 1989, the late Sultan Qaboos bin Said visited UNESCO headquarters in Paris — a landmark moment that strengthened cooperation and launched pioneering initiatives, including the UNESCO-Sultan Qaboos Prize for Environmental Conservation, the voyage of the Royal Yacht Fulk al-Salamah “Ship of Peace” to study the Silk Road, and UNESCO’s conferment of its highest medal upon the late Sultan in 1993 in recognition of his efforts in peace and intercultural dialogue. The royal visit of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to UNESCO headquarters in June 2026 reaffirmed Oman’s commitment to international cooperation in culture, education and science, and its dedication to UN initiatives on heritage preservation and intercultural dialogue, the ambassador said. She added that the same year saw the launch of the UNESCO-Sultan Haitham Prize for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, underscoring His Majesty’s role in protecting and transmitting heritage to future generations. **Strong presence** She pointed out that Oman has a strong presence on UNESCO’s lists: Bahla Fort (1987), Bat, Al-Khutm and Al-Ayn (1988), the Land of Frankincense (2000), the Aflaj Irrigation System (2006) and the ancient city of Qalhat (2018) are inscribed on the World Heritage List. She said that Oman’s presence on the Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage has also grown, with inscriptions between 2010 and 2025 including Al-Bar’ah, Al-Azi, Al-Taghrood, Al-Ayala, Al-Razfa, Arabic coffee,



the Majlis, Horse and Camel Ardha “Traditional horse and camel show”, the palm tree, camel racing, Arabic calligraphy, the Khanjar “Dagger”, Al-Harees, henna, Al-Bisht and Arabic kohl. Shabab Oman vessel was also inscribed on the Register of Good Safeguarding Practices. Under the Memory of the World Programme, the ambassador said that the manuscript “Ma’dan al-Asrar fi Ilm al-Bihar” (A Treasury of Secrets on Ocean Navigation) was inscribed in 2017, followed by the Al-Nuniyah Al-Kubra (The Great Nuniyah) of navigator Ahmed bin Majid in 2025, affirming Oman’s historical contributions to marine science and navigation. Several Omani scholars and historical figures have also been commemorated, including Al-Khalil bin Ahmed Al-Farahidi, Rashid bin Omira, Sheikh Noor al-Din al-Salmi, Ibn al-Dhahabi, Abu Muslim al-Bahlani, Ahmed bin Majid, Humaid bin Ruzaig, Mohammed bin Yazid al-Azdi, Abdullah bin Ali al-Khalili, and Jabrin Fort as a historical event in 2023. She affirmed that Oman’s engagement extends to UNESCO’s programmes and networks: 44 Omani schools are part of the Associated Schools Network, and

Muscat, Sur and Nizwa were inscribed on the Global Network of Learning Cities in 2024, with more cities under consideration. The Jabal Akhdar and Al Sireen reserves were added to the World Network of Biosphere Reserves in 2025, reflecting Oman’s commitment to biodiversity conservation. **UNESCO conventions** She added that Oman has ratified key UNESCO conventions, including the 1977 Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in Armed Conflict, the 1981 World Heritage Convention, the 2005 Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, the 2020 Convention on Underwater Cultural Heritage, and acceded to the 2026 Convention against Discrimination in Education. She also pointed out that Oman has served on UNESCO’s Executive Board (2023-2027), the Intergovernmental Committee for Intangible Cultural Heritage, the MOST Intergovernmental Council, the International Bioethics Committee and the MAB International Coordinating Council, reflecting international confidence in Oman’s role in shaping UN policies and fostering cooperation. **Artificial intelligence, educational psychology** She further said that Omani higher education institutions host several UNESCO Chairs covering artificial intelligence, educational psychology, ophiolite rocks, marine biotechnology, earthquake and tsunami risk, world heritage, aflaj, renewable energy, environmental innovation and waste-to-energy conversion. Ambassador Al Balushi concluded that these achievements embody the depth of Oman’s partnership with UNESCO, consolidating Oman’s position as a trusted international partner in heritage preservation, cultural and scientific advancement, and global efforts for sustainable development and peace. -ONA



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NO COUNTERFEIT

# Oman women’s basketball team to compete in Asia Cup for the first time

The team is currently undertaking the final phase of its preparatory programme through a training camp at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher

**MUSCAT:** The Omani Women's National Basketball Team is set to participate for the first time in the Asia Cup, hosted by the Kingdom of Thailand from 13 to 19 July. This milestone marks a significant turning point for Omani women's basketball and reflects the dedicated efforts of Oman Basketball Association in cultivating a generation capable of representing the Sultanate of Oman on the continental stage.

The team is currently undertaking the final phase of its preparatory programme through a training camp at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher, ahead of its departure for Thailand on 10 July. During this period, the technical staff is intensively focused on enhancing both technical and physical readiness while reinforcing cohesion and synergy among the players prior to the commencement of the tournament.

The team's preparatory programme has spanned approximately two years, during which a completely new squad was assembled through the identification,



recruitment and comprehensive technical and physical development of players. Concurrently, the programme has instilled core principles of discipline, collective teamwork and a culture of professionalism, thereby establishing a robust foundation for the future of women's basketball in the Sultanate of Oman.

The preparation phase incorporated participation in regional Gulf tournaments, the organization of dedicated training camps, and the arrangement of friendly fixtures, all designed to provide competitive exposure and facilitate the acquisition of international experience. This strategy has yielded tangible improvements in the players' technical proficiency and overall team cohesion.

In recent months, the technical staff has implemented an integrated training regimen en-

compassing physical conditioning, technical skill development, tactical acumen, and mental and psychological preparation. Comprehensive analyses of rival teams have also been conducted, with tailored game plans devised for each encounter, building upon the intensive three-week camp that followed the conclusion of the academic examination period.

The players have demonstrated marked progress in both technical and physical performance indicators, accompanied by a strengthening of team spirit and discipline—factors that collectively enhance the squad's readiness for its inaugural official appearance on the Asian stage.

The team delegation will be headed by Hiba Khalfan Al Na'ebi, with the administrative and technical support staff comprising Nasra Salim Al Harthy as Team

Administrator, Wafa Zaghdoud as Head Coach, Nidal Majid Al Mughairi as Assistant Coach, and Maryam Mohammed Al Mahrooqi as Physiotherapist.

The squad roster features the following players: Noor Ahmed Al Kharusi, Zeina Louay Battash, Malak Sulaiman Al Salimi, Aisha Husam Al Yafi, Zainab Khalifa Al Busaidi, Asila Yasser, HH Sayyida Lamar Mohammed Al Said, Asma Fahmi Al Harmali, Alisar Nasser Al Tae'e, Mithaa Fahd Al Maawali, Alaya Said Al Habsi and Mayar Said Al Maskari.

This historic debut represents the commencement of a strategic long-term project aimed at cementing the presence of Omani women's basketball on the continental stage and developing a national team endowed with a distinct technical identity capable of competing in future tournaments and qualifying events. -ONA

## WORLD CUP

### Morocco team’s campaign has become a pride for the entire Arab world

**<FROM A1** “Salah, Omar Marmoush and the rest of the team have already made history by reaching the knockout stage for the first time. Now they have nothing to lose and everything to gain.”

For Moroccan expatriate Youssef El Idrissi, his team's campaign has become a source of pride for the entire Arab world. “Hakimi leads from the front, but this team is much more than one superstar,” he said.

“Ounahi's goals, Brahim Díaz's creativity and Saibari's energy have shown the depth of our squad. France will be a huge challenge, but this Morocco side fears nobody,”

Many Omanis have also em-

braced the Arab cause.

“We'll be cheering for both Egypt and Morocco,” said Mohammed Al Amri, a football enthusiast from Muscat. “When an Arab team succeeds on the world stage, the whole region celebrates. Cape Verde showed Argentina are far from invincible, and if Egypt defend well and Salah gets his chance, anything is possible. Morocco have already shown they belong among the world's best.”

Whether it is Salah chasing another iconic World Cup moment or Hakimi leading Morocco's fearless challenge, fans across Oman will be united in hope that the Arab adventure still has a few memorable chapters left.

## IN MUTTRAH

### Four held over attempted gold shop robbery

Times News Service

**MUSCAT:** Four Asian expats were arrested for allegedly attempting to rob a gold shop in Muttrah after breaking through a wall to gain access to the premises, the Royal Oman Police (ROP) said.

According to the ROP, the suspects were apprehended following investigative operations carried out by the Muscat Governorate Police Command in cooperation with the North Al Batinah and Dhofar Police Commands.

Police said the four individuals are accused of sabotaging the



shop and attempting to steal gold jewellery after demolishing a wall to enter the premises.

Legal procedures against the suspects are currently being completed. The police reiterated their commitment to combating crime and safeguarding people and property through coordinated security operations.

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MINISTRY OF INFORMATION

Campaign for optimal use of social media concludes

**MUSCAT:** The Ministry of Information concluded on Monday the second phase of the awareness campaign for the optimal use of social media, “Tabseer,” which was implemented over a period of two weeks across social media platforms.

The campaign saw the participation of the Royal Oman Police (ROP), the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA), and the Ministry of Social Development, within the framework of national efforts aimed at enhancing awareness of the responsible and safe use of digital platforms.

This campaign comes within the initiatives of the development workshop launched by the Ministry of Information in 2025, titled “Towards a National Framework for Dealing with Social Media,” in cooperation with a number of government and private entities and the civil society.

The campaign, which was launched on 22 June 2026, aimed to raise the level of community awareness regarding the importance of positive social media use, promote responsible digital behavior, and limit practices that may result in negative consequences, particularly on the youth, by providing educational content addressing the legal, technical, social, educational, and family aspects associated with the digital space.

The campaign came in response to the rapid global expansion in the use of digital platforms and what they represent as influential tools in shaping societal awareness and behaviour.

This expansion necessitates enhancing digital literacy and instilling principles of conscious and responsible use among the youth, in a manner that maximizes the benefits of the potentials provided by these means and mitigates the risks associated with their misuse.

The awareness messages focused on spreading a culture of



respect for the systems and laws regulating the use of social media, raising awareness about the importance of protecting privacy and personal data, and enhancing digital security, alongside highlighting the role of the family in guiding children toward a balanced use of modern technologies, thereby contributing to building a safer and more stable digital environment.

The partnership among the participating entities formed a model of institutional integration, as each entity provided awareness content reflecting its specialisation, within a unified framework and common objectives.

The Ministry of Information addressed awareness regarding dealing with social media, interacting with issues that arise and circulate on it, and the extent of its impact on children.

The Royal Oman Police handled awareness on the dangers of using social media and the legal aspects associated with its responsible use.

Meanwhile, the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority focused on cybersecurity concepts, personal data protection, and raising awareness of sound technical practices. Moreover, the

Ministry of Social Development focused on social and family aspects, the importance of enhancing family dialogue, and consolidating positive values when dealing with social media.

The campaign relied on diverse digital content designed to suit the nature of social media platforms through brief awareness messages.

Care was taken in their preparation to ensure they are clear, attractive, and easily accessible, thus contributing to delivering the messages to the largest possible segment of followers and motivating them to interact with them.

The participating entities also maintained their independent visual identities across all published materials, while adhering to the main goals and messages of the campaign. This allowed for diversity in presentation methods and content, and contributed to enhancing the campaign's presence and its reach to larger and more comprehensive segments.

The execution of the campaign was accompanied by monitoring of interaction with the hashtag #Tabseer, alongside tracking reach and engagement indicators with the content published across digital platforms, to measure the impact of the campaign and the spread of its messages, and to utilize the results in developing future awareness initiatives and enhancing the efficiency of digital media campaigns.

The “Tabseer” campaign comes within the framework of the interest of the Ministry of Information and its partners in enhancing community awareness and consolidating a culture of optimal social media use, supporting the building of a conscious digital society capable of utilising modern technologies in a positive and responsible manner, in line with national development targets in human development and promoting digital culture. -ONA

Liva Insurance Wins Best Brand in Customer Experience Award in Insurance Category



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

Liva Insurance has consistently demonstrated a strong commitment to customer experience by delivering innovative insurance solutions backed by responsive service, digital convenience and a customer-first approach. Offering a comprehensive portfolio of life, health, motor, travel, home and commercial insurance products, the company continues to simplify insurance while helping customers protect what matters most.

With a strong focus on accessibility, transparency and seamless customer interactions, Liva Insurance has invested in digital platforms and streamlined processes that make purchas-

ing policies, managing accounts and processing claims faster and more convenient. Its commitment to understanding customer needs and providing timely support has helped build lasting trust among individuals, families and businesses across Oman.

Driven by a vision to make insurance simple, reliable and customer-centric, Liva Insurance continues to set benchmarks in service excellence within the insurance sector. Through continuous innovation, technology-driven solutions and a dedicated team of professionals, the company reinforces its position as one of Oman's leading insurance providers and a trusted brand in customer experience.

The Best Brand in Customer Experience (CX) Awards are instituted by Times of Oman, in collaboration with Muscat Media Group, Gulf Leaders Circle and TEvents. They are presented to the leading brands that are ahead of the curve in meeting and exceeding customer expectations. The winners are selected based on an extensive consumer survey conducted by the Times of Oman.

Co-located with:



For more information, contact: 78471944/97221630

ANNUAL SITTING

State Council to review development projects in meeting



**MUSCAT:** The State Council will discuss on Tuesday, during its tenth session of the third regular annual sitting of the eighth term, the study submitted by the special committee on “Demographics and Their Impact on the Future of Development in the Sultanate of Oman.”

The session will also include a discussion of the study submitted by the special com-

mittee regarding “The Agricultural (Plant) Sector in the Sultanate of Oman: Challenges and Solutions.”

Furthermore, the session will include the approval of the minutes of the ninth session of the third regular sitting of the term, in addition to reviewing the Secretary General's report on the activities of the Council's bodies during the past period. -ONA

IN LONDON

Oman participates in IMO session

**LONDON:** The Sultanate of Oman participated on Monday in the 137th session of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) Council, which was held at the IMO headquarters in London.

The delegation of the Sultanate of Oman was headed by Eng. Khamis Mohammed Al Shamakhi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology for Transport, with the participation of representatives from a number of military and civil entities concerned with the maritime sector.

This participation comes as an affirmation of the Sultanate of Oman's active presence in the



work of the International Maritime Organization. It highlights its role in enhancing the security and safety of maritime navigation, protecting international sea lanes, and supporting international cooperation in a manner that ensures the smooth flow of global trade and the sustainability of maritime transport. -ONA

COMMENTARY

The Marriage Trap: How fear of stigma is killing the institution it was once meant to protect

**B**engaluru: The details of the Lohagad Fort murder case read like a crime thriller. A young woman. A fiancé she did not want. A lover. A scouted location. A rehearsed signal and a murder, bringing a young man's life to a tragic end. Siya Goyal was twenty years old. Ketan Agarwal, the man she is accused of killing, was twenty-five.

When I discussed this topic with an old colleague from my reporting days, he was unimpressed by its novelty. “This is not new,” he said. “It is just that the excuses are becoming flimsier nowadays.” He vaguely mentioned a case in Bengaluru in the early 2000s, but couldn't remember details. This sent me on a hunt.

In 2003-era Bengaluru, when the city was yet to become the traffic-jinxed nightmare it is today, a law student named Shubha Shankaranarayan got engaged to BV Girish, a software engineer. Their families had been neighbours for fifteen years. Four days after the engagement, Shubha asked Girish to take her to a viewpoint near the HAL Airport inside the city to watch the planes take off. While he stood watching, a man attacked him from behind on her instruction and fled. Girish died of his injuries. Shubha, it emerged, had been seeing a college junior and had conspired with him to remove Girish from the picture rather than simply telling her family the truth.

Twenty-two years separate Shubha and Siya. Different decades, different technology, same architecture: a young woman who could not find a way to say “I don't want this” to the people who needed to hear it, and who found, in that silence, room for something far worse to grow.

In July last year, the Indian Court upheld Shubha's life sentence. But before it did, the bench made an observation worth far more attention than it received. It noted that the tragedy might never have occurred had her family been more sympathetic to her state of mind



- and, more broadly, that social stigma does not merely limit a person's choices, it distorts their very perception of freedom, making resistance feel impossible, even immoral. Shubha, the court found, was an adult who was nonetheless unable to make an independent decision for herself, caught between what she wanted and what her family was prepared to hear. The court did not excuse what she did. The sentence stands. But it named, plainly, what helped create the conditions for it.

That is not just a story about one troubled young woman or man. It is a story about what happens, repeatedly, generation after generation, when a society refuses to accept that choosing a partner or choosing not to marry at all are legitimate exercises of individual will, rather than decisions to be made on someone's behalf by caste, class, religion, and horoscope. Both Shubha and Siya were not fleeing relationships they had chosen. They were unable to refuse relationships they hadn't.

India has the lowest divorce rate in the world at just 1%. This number is frequently cited with quiet pride, as evidence of the sanctity with which this country treats marriage. It is worth asking what it actually measures. The same society that produces that statistic also produces, in large numbers, couples living as strangers under one roof, engagements nobody felt able to break, and periodically, a fiancé pushed off a cliff or bludgeoned near an airport because saying no out loud was

never made to feel possible.

Across South Asia, numbers tell a similar story: Sri Lanka's divorce rate sits at a barely visible 0.15 per cent, Pakistan and Bangladesh are not far behind. The stigma travels too: South Asians in the diaspora, settled in countries with far more permissive social norms, still divorce at significantly lower rates than other ethnic groups around them. In Pakistan, researchers have documented marriages held together by the fear of stigma alone, even where one partner had a severe, untreated mental illness. The architecture is regional, not exceptional to any one country or family.

There is a reason the 1% figure looks the way it does, and it isn't marital bliss. India also has one of the highest marriage rates in the world: the vast majority of women are married by the time they reach 25, and singlehood past a certain age remains, for most families, not a lifestyle but a failure to be managed. Almost everyone enters marriage. Almost no one leaves it. That combination only makes sense if either Indian marriages are uncommonly well-matched at a population scale, which no other data suggests, or if both the entry and the exit are far less voluntary than the culture likes to claim. A society that cannot yet accept a young woman's right to stay single, by choice, is not well positioned to ask why she didn't simply say no to a fiancé instead of scripting a murder.

Here is the part that should worry the institution's defend-

ers more than any murder case: the generation watching all this is slowly and without drama, choosing to opt out.

I interact regularly with a group of twenty-somethings in my gym, the kind of conversations that start off as small talk and turn serious without warning. They told me they had been ambivalent about marriage. Now, watching cases like these, watching friends and cousins trapped in unhappy unions that they are not allowed to exit cleanly, several of them said they were simply against it. Not against love, not against commitment, but against the institution as currently practised in their own families, where a wedding is viewed as a trade with no returns possible.

That is the real casualty here, and it is one that nobody enforcing the stigma seems to notice. Families that punish honesty in the name of protecting marriage are not protecting it. They are teaching their children that marriage is a trap, and their children, watching closely, are declining the invitation.

Girish, Ketan Agarwal, and the hundreds of women murdered in similar circumstances across the country, all deserved better, and all deserve justice, which the courts must continue to deliver in full. But accountability without understanding is just punishment without prevention. If we want fewer such cases, we need families that can hear “I don't want this,” whether it is a fiancé, a wedding, or marriage itself, long before it becomes something unspeakable; and an institution that earns the next generation's trust by allowing an honest exit, and an honest refusal, rather than demanding impossible endurance.

The 1% divorce rate is not something to be proud of. Read alongside a marriage rate that leaves almost no room for choice, it isn't evidence of sanctity at all. It is a warning, written in the smallest number a society can produce. We would do well to finally read it.

# Oman participates in first session of UN

Oman's delegation to the global dialogue on AI governance is led by Dr Ali bin Amer Al Shidhani, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology for Communications and Information Technology

**Geneva:** The Sultanate of Oman today took part in the first session of the United Nations Global Dialogue on Artificial Intelligence (AI) Governance. The session, which kicked off at the Palexpo international convention centre in Geneva, Switzerland, is being attended by representatives of United Nations member states, global technology companies, civil society organizations, academic institutions and the global technical community.

Oman's delegation to the global dialogue on AI governance is led



by Dr Ali bin Amer Al Shidhani, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology for Communications and Information Technology. The delegation includes Dr. Idris Abdul Rahman Al Khanjari, Permanent Representative of the Sultanate of Oman to the United Nations and International Organizations in Geneva, as well as specialists from the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology and the Foreign Ministry.

Speaking at the opening of the session, the UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, said that this is the first time that every UN member state is given a seat at the dialogue, to help activate countries' participation into global

action aimed to make artificial intelligence safer, fairer and more accessible to all.

For her part, Annalena Baerbock, President of the United Nations General Assembly, said that global dialogue is not restricted to regulating technology, but rather to developing a common vision in which progress goes hand in hand with human dignity, fairness and sustainable development.

She pointed out that responsible and collective governance of artificial intelligence will provide new and powerful tools to benefit from the technology in the fields of healthcare, education, research, crisis management and agriculture.

Dr. Ali Al Shidhani affirmed that the Sultanate of Oman possesses enough capabilities to contribute

to the global action to shape a responsible AI system within the framework of Oman Vision 2040.

He expressed the Sultanate of Oman's readiness to join hands with the United Nations and all partners for the sake of developing a safe, reliable and sustainable artificial intelligence that realizes the prosperity and dignity of peoples.

The session highlighted many issues related to artificial intelligence, including the fact that AI capabilities are developing at a pace that exceeds the ability to measure and govern them. It was also pointed out that training in leading AI models is restricted to a limited number of actors and that AI inputs and outputs are unequal geographically and linguistically, among other issues. -ONA



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## SRI LANKA

### Prison clashes leave 25 people dead

**COLOMBO:** At least 25 people were killed and more than 100 injured in a prison clash in Negombo, Sri Lanka, officials confirmed on Monday.

They said that the clash originally began on Sunday, between convicted criminals residing in the prison and those in detention awaiting the next steps of the judicial process. It was not immediately clear what had sparked the fight, nor whether any security personnel were amongst the dead or injured.

Military on site to assist

The Sri Lankan military told Reuters news agency it was on "standby," outside the jail on Monday, ready to assist local law enforcement if needed.

Local media showed footage of injured inmates being brought out to buses that then left for local hospitals.

Negombo is a coastal city of about 137,000 people about 35 km (20 miles) north of Colombo.

Sri Lankan prisons are known



to be stretched to the breaking point, with 39,000 inmates being housed in a system designed to hold only 10,000.

Police and hospital sources confirmed that the wounded were rushed to the local Negombo hospital as authorities fought to bring the situation back under control during the early hours of Monday.

— Agencies

## DEVELOPING OMANI TALENT

### MoU signed to accelerate Omanisation in IT sector



**MUSCAT:** Introdut Group has signed a Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) with the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MTCIT) to strengthen the development of Omani talent and accelerate the localization of skills within the Sultanate's rapidly growing technology sector. The collaboration supports the Ministry's efforts to prepare national talent for the digital economy by providing practical, industry-led training that bridges the gap between academic education and real workplace requirements. Through the initiative, 60 graduates from various Information Technology disciplines will receive hands-on training designed to improve their employability and readiness to contribute to Oman's digital transformation.

The partnership reflects Introdut's long-term commitment to building a sustainable technology ecosystem driven by Omani professionals.

Beyond technical training, the company aims to create pathways that connect education, industry, and employment, ensuring graduates develop the practical experience and professional competencies sought by employers.

"Building a globally competitive technology workforce cannot be achieved by one stakeholder alone. It requires a strong and sustained partnership between government, academia, and industry, with each playing a complementary role in developing the next generation of Omani technology professionals," said Tariq Al Barwani, Strategic Advisor to Introdut

## SAFETY AND WELL-BEING

### India-Bahrain discuss bilateral cooperation

**MANAMA:** Indian External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Monday met Bahrain's Foreign Minister Abdullatif bin Rashid Al Zayani and held discussions on further strengthening the relationship between the two countries.

Sharing details in a post on X, Jaishankar expressed deep appreciation for ensuring the well-being of the Indian community and said, "Discussed deepening our bilateral cooperation. Exchanged views on ongoing developments in the region."

Earlier, Jaishankar on Sunday met with his Qatari counterpart and Prime Minister of Qatar Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al-Thani as part of his multi-nation visit in Doha, during which both sides explored new opportunities for deepening the strategic partnership.

In a post on X, Jaishankar described the meeting as "a pleasure" and thanked the Qatari leadership for ensuring the safety and well-being of the Indian community in the Gulf nation.

He said the discussions covered a wide range of areas of bilateral cooperation, including energy, trade, investments, connectivity, security and people-to-people ties.

"A pleasure to meet Qatar PM



& FM Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al-Thani in Doha today. Thanked him for ensuring the safety and well-being of the Indian community. Reviewed various facets of our bilateral cooperation especially energy, trade, investments, connectivity, security and people-to-people ties. Explored new opportunities for deepening our Strategic Partnership," the post stated.

External Affairs Minister S Jais-

hankar is on a multi-nation visit to Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, US and Belgium, the Ministry of External Affairs said on Saturday.

As per the MEA, Jaishankar will be on an official visit to Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait and Oman from July 5-10. During the visit to these countries, he will be meeting with his counterparts and the leadership.

The visit will focus on enhancing our bilateral relations with the four countries and also provide an

opportunity to exchange views on regional developments and issues of mutual interest, the press release by MEA noted.

For the US-leg, EAM will visit New York on July 13 to launch India's official campaign for the UN Security Council tenure 2028-29. Later, he will attend the 3rd India-EU Trade and Technology Council meeting and interact with his EU and Belgian counterparts in Brussels on July 14-15.

— ANI

## FINNISH FOREIGN AFFAIRS MINISTER

### 'India and EU FTA to intensify trade, bring investments, jobs to both sides'

**HELSINKI:** As India and Finland strengthen their ties, Finnish Foreign Affairs Minister Elina Valtonen on Monday said that the India-European Union Free Trade Agreement (FTA) would benefit both sides in terms of investments and jobs.

India and the EU reached an agreement on an FTA in January 2026, eliminating tariffs on several goods including textiles, apparel, leather, footwear, marine products, gems and jewellery, handicrafts, engineering goods, and automobiles.

The formal signing of the FTA is expected in December 2026.

Speaking to ANI, the Finnish Minister said that "Finland and India's ties have never been better," and the two nations can further strengthen relations in trade, green energy and security sectors.

She said, "Finland will do everything in its power to have the FTA implemented as soon as possible in the European Union.



Nationally, we do see plenty of potential in fulfilling this agreement, both for our businesses, for intensifying trade, for having more and more investments on both sides, bringing jobs and prosperity to our people, but also from a political standpoint."

Noting a "special friendship" with India, Valtonen said that

two countries which value people making their own choices should cooperate together closely.

"It is important that countries that value a future where people can make their own choices cooperate ever closer together, and certainly Finland and India have a very special friendship also in this regard," the Finnish Minister said.

She added that Finland discussed strengthening the ties with India on common agendas during External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar's visit to the European nation in June.

Valtonen said, "I think the relationship between Finland and India has never been better. There's plenty of potential for deepening and widening the common agenda even further. And this is indeed something we had the chance to dwell on when my counterpart Dr Jaishankar was visiting Finland just recently."

"There is plenty we can do on the business trade and investment

side, in digitalisation, in the green transition, in also, you know, security-related matters in space and groundbreaking technologies in general. Now, I think the foundation for that is the free trade agreement between the European Union and India, which has been extremely well-received, and I'm sure that will be a very good basis for ever-deepening cooperation," she added.

Further, Valtonen said that Finland will "happily assist" India in achieving carbon neutrality.

"Finland is one of the leading countries in the world that aims to be carbon-neutral by 2035. We are happy to assist our close friends in achieving climate neutrality as soon as possible, because it's not only important for the entire planet, but also for people to be able to live in clean surroundings. It's also important for our businesses, because actually clean energy is a pretty attractive business case as well," she said. —ANI

## ANTI-DRUG AGENCIES MEETING

### 'BRICS will focus on drug problem'

**GUWAHATI:** On the sidelines of the BRICS Heads of Anti-Drug Agencies Meeting 2026, which began on Monday in Guwahati, participating leaders affirmed that they are bound by a common aim of combating the drug consumption situation.

Delegates from BRICS member countries are participating in the two-day meeting organised by the Narcotics Control Bureau under the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Nebiyu Tedla, Charge d' Affaires, Ethiopia to New Delhi, told reporters that the BRICS session will focus on anti-drug works conducted under the platform of the BRICS.

"First of all, we would like to thank our Indian colleagues for their chairmanship and host since our arrival in the beautiful city of Guwahati. Today's BRICS session will focus, as you have said, on anti-drug works that we conducted in the platform of the BRICS collection. The drug problem is a prob-

lem not only at the national level, but also at an international level. So platforms like BRICS will create the opportunity to collaborate, exchange information, and make a better collective effort towards addressing the problem. So we believe that today's exchange will help us towards reaching that collective goal," he said.

Tedla further said that Ethiopia will showcase their experience and will learn from other members here to combat the issue.

"Ethiopia, like any other country, has a challenge in this aspect. Definitely, we will bring and showcase our experience in dealing with the fighting against drug dissemination and its effect on the socio-economic situation of the country. And we are also here to learn from other colleagues and we believe that the session will bring out best practices from each delegation where we can learn from each other," he said. — ANI

# NATO faces deepening fault lines ahead of major summit in Ankara

The summit, set for Tuesday and Wednesday, comes against a backdrop of diverging approaches to the recent US military operation against Iran, continued debate over ambitious defence spending targets, and growing public criticism of NATO in parts of Europe

**ANKARA:** As leaders of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) prepare to meet in Ankara this week, the alliance is seeking to project unity at a time when disagreements over strategic priorities, defence spending, and its long-term purpose have become increasingly difficult to conceal. The summit, set for Tuesday and Wednesday, comes against a backdrop of diverging approaches to the recent US military operation against Iran, continued debate over ambitious defence spending targets, and growing public criticism of NATO across parts of Europe. The latest signs of discord emerged after the United States and Israel carried out military



strikes against Iran starting in late February. While several NATO allies expressed political support for Washington's stated objective of preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons, none agreed to take a direct role in the operation. The reluctance of NATO allies to send warships to support US efforts to "reopen" the Strait of Hormuz prompted criticism from US President Donald Trump, who harshly accused European allies of benefiting from US security guarantees while avoiding the risks associated with military action. Oytun Orhan, a senior researcher at Ankara's Centre for Middle Eastern Studies, said many European members viewed the US strikes on Iran primarily through the prism of regional stability rather than solidarity with Washington. "A direct military role could have exposed them to retaliation, disrupted energy supplies, and increased migration pressures at a time when many countries are already facing significant domestic

challenges," Orhan said. Serkan Demirtas, an Ankara-based foreign policy analyst and journalist specializing in NATO affairs, said the European response reflects lessons learned from previous conflicts. "Experiences in Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya have made many European governments much more reluctant to participate in military operations without broad international legitimacy and clearly defined objectives," he said. For Hasan Unal, a professor of international relations and director of the New World Research Center, a think-tank based in Ankara, the differing responses reveal that Washington and its European allies no longer automatically share identical strategic priorities. "European governments increasingly distinguish between NATO's collective defense obligations and military operations initiated by the United States outside the alliance's formal framework," he said, noting that the episode illustrates a broader transformation

within the alliance. "The transatlantic relationship is becoming more transactional. European countries are far more cautious today about joining military interventions whose long-term consequences remain uncertain," Unal told Xinhua. Demirtas noted that although disagreements over Iran should not be interpreted as an immediate crisis for NATO, they demonstrate that building consensus within the alliance has become more difficult. "Security priorities are becoming more diverse across the alliance. The United States increasingly focuses on global strategic competition, while many European governments remain concerned with stability on the continent and in neighboring regions," he explained. A major issue expected to dominate the summit is the implementation of the agreement reached at last year's NATO Summit in The Hague, where allies committed to increasing defense-related expenditure to 5 percent of gross



domestic product by 2035. The target is widely seen as a key part of the Trump administration's push for what it has called "NATO 3.0," which aims to shift the primary responsibility for Europe's conventional defense from Washington to European member states. Trump has long threatened to reconsider U.S. security guarantees for NATO allies if they do not increase defense spending. While the 5-percent target has been set, analysts question whether all member states will be able to meet it. Unal said several European governments accepted the target mainly to avoid confrontation with Washington. "Agreeing to a target for 2035, which is still a decade ahead, was politically easier than opposing the United States directly, which could create serious tensions," he said. Unal argued that implementation faces major obstacles, as some European countries are experiencing slow economic growth, high public debt, and aging populations. Domestic politics, he added, could become an equally important constraint as European societies generally place health care, education, and social welfare ahead of defence spending.

"Governments may find it difficult to convince voters that such dramatic military budget increases are necessary," he said. Demirtas agreed that translating political commitments into national budgets will not be easy, as governments across Europe may face growing parliamentary opposition if higher defense spending comes at the expense of social programs. "The NATO spending issue has become a reality check regarding defense budgets for welfare state nations," he noted. Beyond disputes over its policy, NATO itself is confronting public scepticism. Ahead of the summit, anti-NATO demonstrations were held in Ankara, Istanbul and Izmir, with protesters denouncing the alliance as an "imperialist war organisation" threatening peace and stability, and accusing it of taking resources away from education, health care, and workers' pay. The demonstrators carried banners reading "NATO wants war, workers want peace," "Budget for the people, not for NATO," and "No to NATO, no to war," while chanting slogans against the alliance. Similar demonstrations took place in 2025 and 2026 in the Netherlands and Spain. —DW

NEW TECHNICAL ADMINISTRATION



## Hamas to dissolve Gaza governing body

**GAZA:** Hamas has announced that it will hand over power in Gaza to a new technical administration. This had been agreed to by the Board of Peace, which has been overseeing the implementation of last year's ceasefire agreement between the militants and the Israeli government. Hamas has governed the Gaza Strip for nearly 20 years, since region-wide elections were last held in 2006. The Gaza Strip is considered occupied under international law as Israel continued to control all borders even after it withdrew its settlements and soldiers in 2005. Since the beginning of the Israeli ground invasion following the October 7 terrorist attacks in 2023, Israeli soldiers have been back in Gaza. **What did Hamas officials say?** "The head of the government's emergency committee Mohammed al-Farra has officially submitted his resignation," said Ismail al-Thawabta, a Hamas media spokesman, to French news agency AFP. "He has also decided to dissolve the committee to facilitate the administrative and governmental transition to the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza (NCAG)." The NCAG was established by US President Donald Trump as part of the peace deal between

Hamas and Israel signed last year and partly brokered by the United States. There were no immediate details on when and how the handover would take place, as Israel has reportedly blocked NCAG members from entering Gaza for months. The Israeli government and Hamas remain at odds over certain measures in their peace agreement, including the complete disarmament of the organization and the withdrawal of Israeli troops from the territory. Israel has also been accused of blocking the delivery of much-needed aid to Gaza over these sickening points. **NCAG says it is ready to govern** "We affirm that the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza is fully prepared to assume its national responsibilities as soon as the necessary resources and capabilities are available," committee chief Ali Shaath wrote on X. "The fundamental requirements for the committee's success are a single authority, a single law with a clear mandate, and a single armed force under the authority of this single entity." Trump's Board of Peace said it had taken note of the Hamas announcement, adding that it must ensure that all of its weapons are also handed over to the NCAG. —DW

RECEIVED AT AIRPORT BY PRESIDENT

## Indian PM Modi reaches Indonesia in the first leg of three-nation visit

**JAKARTA:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday arrived in Indonesia in the first leg of his three-nation tour. He was accorded a warm welcome. In a special gesture, PM Modi was received at the airport by Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto. Fighter jets from the Indonesian Air Force accompanied the PM's plane from the time he entered their airspace. PM Modi is on a three-day visit to Indonesia. He watched a cultural display after he arrived in Jakarta. India and Indonesia elevated bilateral ties to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership during PM Modi's first visit to Indonesia in 2018. This is his first bilateral visit to Indonesia after the elevation of our bilateral ties and follows the state visit of President Prabowo, who was the chief guest at our Republic Day celebrations on January 26, 2025. In his departure statement, PM Modi said that India and Indonesia share strong civilizational and people-to-people ties and his visit will further deepen all aspects of the multifaceted partnership. "During this visit, I will also interact with the Indian diaspora in Indonesia and visit the Prambanan Temple complex at Yogyakarta with President Prabowo, which is another remarkable testament to our close cultural ties," he said. From Indonesia, PM Modi will travel to Australia. He will also visit New Zealand. India and Indonesia have shared two millennia of close cultural and commercial contacts. Since the adoption of India's 'Look East Policy' in 1991, there has been a rapid development of bilateral relations in political, security, defence, commercial and cultural fields. **PM Modi receives warm welcome from Indian diaspora in Jakarta** Prime Minister Narendra Modi received a rousing welcome from the members of the Indian diaspora in Indonesia upon his arrival in Jakarta as he began the first leg of a



three-nation tour. PM Modi is visiting Indonesia from July 6-8 at the invitation of President Prabowo Subianto, who was present at the airport with other leaders to personally receive the visiting Prime Minister. PM Modi was welcomed with the chants of "Bharat Mata ki jai" and "Modi, Modi" by the Indian community. He witnessed a cultural performance upon his arrival at the airport. Prior to the Indian Prime Minister's touchdown in Jakarta, members of the Indian diaspora expressed joy at his visit. "This is the first time I will see PM Modi up close. I am super excited" one member of the diaspora said. Another said, "We welcome you with affection and love." Prime Minister Modi said

he was touched by President Prabowo Subianto's gesture of welcoming him at the Jakarta airport and said they will hold discussions aimed at adding even more momentum to this partnership across diverse sectors. The Prime Minister said he and the Indonesian President Prabowo will also visit the Prambanan Temple complex at Yogyakarta. "Landed in Jakarta. I'm touched by President Prabowo Subianto's gesture of welcoming me at the airport. In 2018 we elevated our relations to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, which has benefitted our people," he said in a post on X. "During this visit, President Prabowo Subianto and I will hold discussions aimed at adding even more momentum to this partnership across diverse sectors. President Prabowo and I will visit the Prambanan Temple complex at Yogyakarta. This will ensure closer cultural linkages between our nations. While in Indonesia, I also look forward to interacting with the Indian community," he added. The PM was accorded a grand welcome on his arrival in Jakarta today with Indonesian Air Force fighter jets escorting the PM's aircraft upon entering Indonesian airspace,

marking a ceremonial welcome. This high-profile engagement marks the Prime Minister's fourth visit to the maritime neighbour and is the first bilateral visit since the relationship was formally elevated to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership in May 2018. Indonesia is India's second-largest trading partner within the ASEAN region, with bilateral trade reaching USD 24.78 billion during the 2025-26 fiscal year. Currently, more than 130 Indian enterprises maintain active investments across diverse sectors of the Indonesian economy. Critical mineral cooperation is also set to take centre stage during the bilateral talks. Indonesia is a prominent player in the critical minerals sector, commanding roughly 21 per cent of the world's nickel reserves and ranking prominently among the top global producers of copper, bauxite and tin. The Prime Minister's visit is slated to structurally strengthen bilateral institutional mechanisms and trade channels in this vital domain. His three-day official visit is aimed at reviewing bilateral ties and deepening the comprehensive strategic partnership between the two nations. —ANI



**OMAN OIL PRICE RISES**  
The price of Oman crude oil has increased, with prices for delivery by September 2026 reaching \$63.84. The price of Oman crude oil rose by \$0.12 from the price of Friday, which was \$63.72. -ONA

# MARKET

## BUSINESS & FINANCE



**MSX INDEX ENDS HIGHER**  
The MSX index closed at 7,581.56 points, up by 0.23% from previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 0.13% at 604.22 points. Financial Corporation, up 5.26%, was the top gainer while, Sohar Power, down 9.80%, was the top loser.

# Treasury bills worth OMR60.8mn issued

Treasury bills are short-term highly secured financial instruments issued by the Ministry of Finance, and they provide licensed commercial banks the opportunity to invest their surplus funds

**MUSCAT:** Oman's central bank raised OMR60.8 million by way of allotting treasury bills on Monday. The value of the allotted treasury bills include OMR0.2 million, for a maturity period of 28 days. The average accepted price reached OMR99.750 for every OMR100, and the minimum accepted price arrived at OMR99.750 per OMR100. The average discount rate and the average yield reached 3.25893% and 3.26710%, respectively. Additionally, treasury bills amounting to OMR43.8 million for a maturity period of 91 days



was also issued. The average accepted price reached OMR98.033 for every OMR100, and the minimum accepted price arrived at OMR98.030 per OMR100. The average discount rate and the average yield reached 3.87821% and 3.91607%, respectively. Moreover, treasury bills amounting to OMR16.8 million for a maturity period of 182 days was also issued. The average accepted price reached OMR98.065 for every 100, and the minimum accepted price

arrived at OMR98.060 per 100. The average discount rate and the average yield reached 3.88147% and 3.95808%, respectively. Treasury bills are short-term highly secured financial instruments issued by the Ministry of Finance, and they provide licensed commercial banks the opportunity to invest their surplus funds. The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) acts as the Issue Manager and provides the added advantage of ready liquidity through discounting and

repurchase facilities (Repo). It may be noted that the interest rate on the Repo operations with CBO is 4.25% while the discount rate on the Treasury Bills Discounting Facility with CBO is 4.75%. Furthermore, treasury bills promote the local money market by creating a benchmark yield curve for short-term interest rates. Additionally, the government may also resort to this instrument whenever felt necessary for financing its recurrent expenditure. -ONA

### RAISE PRODUCTION TARGETS



## Oil prices ease as Opec+ agrees to boost output from August

**SINGAPORE:** Oil prices edged lower on Monday after Opec+ agreed to raise production targets further from August 2026, as exports from major producers continue to recover, potentially adding to global supply. Brent crude futures fell 24 cents, or 0.33 percent, to \$71.88 a barrel, after closing 0.45 percent higher on Friday. US West Texas Intermediate crude steadied at \$68.58 a barrel, down 11 cents, or 0.16 percent. Both benchmarks saw little change last week, having mostly declined in recent weeks as investors closely tracked US-Iran talks on the future of shipping, while also monitoring the recovery of oil exports from Gulf states. Opec and its allies, including Russia — the group known as Opec+ — agreed on Sunday to

raise output targets by 188,000 barrels per day from August 2026, following similar increases in June and July. Opec oil output rose by 3.3 million barrels per day in June from the previous month, reaching 19.43 million barrels per day, recovering from its lowest level in more than two decades. Gulf oil exports surged by more than three million barrels per day in June from May, exceeding ten million barrels per day, though volumes remained 40 percent below pre-war levels. Oil shipments from Russia's western ports reached a record high in June and are expected to remain at that level in July, as Russian refineries sustained damage from Ukrainian drone attacks, forcing Moscow to increase crude exports. -ONA

### RESEARCH REPORT



## Industrial credit set to emerge as next growth driver for Indian banks

**NEW DELHI:** Industrial credit could emerge as the next growth driver for the Indian banking sector as government measures to boost manufacturing gather pace after a decade of modest performance, according to a recent research report by Anand Rath. The banking sector thematic report highlighted that industrial lending has strengthened after a prolonged period of slow growth and is showing renewed momentum. Industrial credit, which constitutes approximately 21 per cent of total bank credit, has seen its year-on-year growth accelerate sharply from around 7 per cent in April 2025 to nearly 15 per cent in April 2026. "The segment was a key driver of banking credit over FY04-14, compounding at rate of more than 20 per cent CAGR. However, it clocked a modest 4 per cent Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) between FY14 and FY 25, as Indian corporates underwent an extended deleveraging cycle -- during which industrial credit as a per cent of industrial GDP compressed from approximately 79 per cent to approximately 50 per cent. "With the government promoting manufacturing in India through subsidy and credit schemes, we believe, industrial credit could be new growth driver for Indian banks," the report said. The brokerage said, "Banking sector continues to show healthy trends with accelerating credit growth, stable asset quality and return ratios."

It added that Credit growth accelerated to approximately 17.7 per cent year-on-year in May 26 from 9.5 per cent in Jun 25, noting that "industrial credit has shown material uptick and momentum in recent quarters." According to the report, "Credit growth should sustain 14-15 per cent," with "new FCNR deposit rules to boost deposit growth by 150-200bps, which should lead to 14-15 per cent credit growth in FY27e. Industrial credit could be new demand driver given several govt policies to boost manufacturing in India." The report also said banks continue to maintain healthy balance sheets. On the front of financial stability, the report characterized asset quality as "healthy." The gross slippage ratio - representing the rate at which good loans turn into bad ones- improved by approximately 9 basis points (bps) quarter-on-quarter and 35 bps year-on-year, standing at 0.97 per cent in Q4FY26. Public Sector Banks emerged as top performers in this category. The report stated that PSBs remained "best-in-class" with gross slippages staying below the 1 per cent mark and net slippages remaining near zero. The report maintained a positive outlook for the sector, forecasting a steady growth and Return on Equity (RoE) trend of 14-15 per cent. "Notably, valuations appear to be reasonable given these trends," the report added. -ANI

### SPECIALISED PROFESSIONAL TRAINING

## BankDhofar strengthens national financial talent through ACI certification training programme

**MUSCAT:** Reinforcing its commitment to talent development and the advancement of professional excellence within Oman's financial sector, BankDhofar recently organised a preparatory training programme for the internationally recognised ACI (Financial Markets Association) certification, equipping participants with specialised knowledge and skills in treasury and financial markets operations. The programme brought together 20 participants from various government entities, underscoring BankDhofar's commitment to fostering strategic partnerships with public sector institutions through knowledge sharing, capacity building and professional development. The initiative forms part of the bank's broader efforts to support the development of highly skilled national talent capable of contributing to the resilience, competitiveness and sustainable growth of Oman's financial sector. Delivered over 10 consecutive days, the programme provided participants with in-depth exposure to key areas of global financial markets, including Foreign Exchange, Money Markets, interest rate markets, derivatives and financial instruments and market



conventions. Designed to prepare candidates for the ACI certification examination, Risk Management the training also focused on strengthening analytical capabilities, technical expertise and practical understanding of financial market operations. The programme was led by Juma bin Mohammed Al Jabri, Assistant General Manager - Treasury and Investments at BankDhofar, who shared insights drawn from his extensive experience in treasury

management and financial markets. Through a combination of theoretical learning and practical case studies, participants gained valuable perspectives on market dynamics, risk management and international best practices. Commenting on the initiative, Al Jabri highlighted the importance of specialised professional training in enhancing institutional capabilities and supporting the development of a future-ready workforce.

"Programmes such as these play a vital role in strengthening collaboration between the banking sector and government institutions while providing a valuable platform for the exchange of knowledge and expertise. By equipping professionals with internationally recognised competencies, we contribute to building a highly qualified workforce capable of navigating the evolving landscape of global financial markets and supporting Oman's economic aspirations," he said. Through initiatives such as the ACI certification training programme, BankDhofar continues to reinforce its position as a trusted partner in advancing Oman's financial sector, supporting innovation, nurturing national talent and building impactful partnerships that contribute to the goals of Oman Vision 2040. As the second-largest bank in the Sultanate by branch network, BankDhofar serves customers through more than 145 branches across Oman. The bank also operates an extensive network of over 400 ATMs, cash deposit machines, multifunctional kiosks and interactive banking terminals, ensuring convenient access to banking services across the country.

### GLOBAL AVIATION INDUSTRY

## Air transport industry preparing to move 10 billion passengers yearly: SITA

**GENEVA:** The global aviation industry is preparing to move twice as many passengers within a generation, without doubling the airports, the fleet, or the people standing at the borders. SITA's Impact Report 2025 sets out how the industry is closing that gap, and the answer is increasingly software rather than concrete. The industry will carry 8 billion passengers a year within 20 to 25 years, heading toward 10 billion

by 2050, according to the International Air Transport Association (IATA). **Principal way** Drawn from a year of work with airlines, airports, governments and travel partners worldwide, the SITA Impact Report 2025 tracks how technology is becoming the principal way the industry adds capacity, manages disruption and reduces its environmental footprint.

"With passenger numbers heading toward 10 billion a year by 2050, the question is unavoidable: how do we move twice as many travellers without doubling our infrastructure? The SITA Impact Report 2025 shows how that shift is already underway," said David Lavorel, CEO of SITA. **Scaling capacity** "Airports are scaling capacity within the buildings they already

have, avoiding the cost and timelines of new construction. Governments are clearing borders before passengers ever reach a queue or an officer's booth. AI is moving out of pilot programmes and into the operations rooms where flights are run. None of this is one company's achievement. It is a shared tech transformation, where airlines, airports, governments and partners are powering the future of air transport together," he added. -WAM

# MARKET

## MSX index ends lower

Financial Corporation, up 5.26%, was the top gainer while, Sohar Power, down 9.80%, was the top loser

**MUSCAT:** The MSX index closed at 7,581.56 points, up by 0.23% from previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 0.13% at 604.22 points. Financial Corporation, up 5.26%, was the top gainer while, Sohar Power, down 9.80%, was the top loser. Shares of Sohar International Bank were the most active in terms of number of shares traded while Bank Muscat were the most active in terms of turnover.

A total number of 8131 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating turnover of RO 45.81 million, with more than 157.56 million shares changing hands.

Out of 74 traded securities, 24 advanced, 20 declined, and 30 remained unchanged. At the session close, GCC & Arab investors were net buyers for RO 1030K while foreign investors were net sellers for RO 725K, followed by domestic investors for RO 305K worth of shares.

Financial Index closed at 13,268.70 points, up 0.12%. Prices of Financial Corporation, Oman & Emirates Investment, Al Anwar Investment, Bank Muscat, Taageer Finance were up by 5.26%, 1.25%, 1.18%, 1.00%, 0.84% respectively. Prices of Al Madina Investments, Al Batinah Development Company, Bank Dhofar, Oman Qatar Insurance, National Finance were down by 3.03%, 1.43%, 1.30%, 1.02%, 0.47% respectively.



Industrial Index closed at 9,755.08 points, up 0.08%. Prices of Oman Fisheries, Oman Chlorine, Gulf Mushroom Products, Oman Flour Mills, Jazeera Steel Products were up by 4.35%, 2.42%, 1.16%, 0.89%, 0.48% respectively. Prices of Oman Chromite, A'Saffa Foods, Al Anwar Ceramics, Voltamp Energy were down by 7.93%, 2.06%, 0.67%, 0.57% respectively.

Services Index was up by 0.02% before closing at 3,054.87 points. Prices of National Gas, OQ Gas Networks, Sembcorp Salalah, OQ Exploration & Production, Al Batinah Power were up by 1.85%, 1.36%, 0.77%, 0.67%, 0.52% respectively. Prices of Gulf Hotels, Oman National Engineering, Al Maha Marketing, Phoenix Power, Majan College were down by 4.17%, 3.23%, 2.04%, 1.98%, 0.78% respectively. – **United Securities**

### OMAN STOCKS

## MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE

### INDICES

| Index              | High      | Low       | Value     | Prev. Value | Diff. | Diff% |
|--------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-------------|-------|-------|
| MSX 30 INDEX       | 7,581.56  | 7,530.37  | 7,581.56  | 7,564.22    | 17.34 | 0.23% |
| FINANCIAL INDEX    | 13,268.70 | 13,178.48 | 13,268.70 | 13,253.24   | 15.46 | 0.12% |
| Industry Index     | 9,772.42  | 9,736.33  | 9,755.08  | 9,747.30    | 7.78  | 0.08% |
| Services Index     | 3,057.09  | 3,038.76  | 3,054.87  | 3,054.27    | 0.60  | 0.02% |
| MSX Shariah Index  | 604.82    | 601.25    | 604.22    | 603.43      | 0.79  | 0.13% |
| MSX TR INDEX       | 11,728.82 | 11,649.63 | 11,728.82 | 11,701.99   | 26.82 | 0.23% |
| FINANCIAL TR IDX   | 16,302.87 | 16,192.02 | 16,302.87 | 16,283.87   | 19.00 | 0.12% |
| INDUSTRIAL TR IDX  | 12,515.99 | 12,469.76 | 12,493.78 | 12,483.82   | 9.96  | 0.08% |
| SERVICES TR IDX    | 4,095.92  | 4,071.37  | 4,092.95  | 4,092.14    | 0.81  | 0.02% |
| FIXED INCOME INDEX | 1,253.83  | 1,253.83  | 1,253.83  | 1,253.83    | 0.00  | 0.00% |

### Trading Summary

| Volume      | Turnover   | Trades | Market Cap     | Up | Down | Equal | Sec. Traded |
|-------------|------------|--------|----------------|----|------|-------|-------------|
| 157,568,155 | 45,807,747 | 8,131  | 37,942,896,550 | 24 | 20   | 30    | 74          |

## SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR MONDAY, JULY 6

| SEC. NAME | VOLUME | TURNOVER | TRADES | OPEN PRICE | HIGH | LOW | CLOSE PR. | PREV. CLOSE | DIFF (RD) | DIFF % | LAST PR. | LAST BID | LAST OFFER | PUR VALUE | MARKET CAP |
|-----------|--------|----------|--------|------------|------|-----|-----------|-------------|-----------|--------|----------|----------|------------|-----------|------------|
|-----------|--------|----------|--------|------------|------|-----|-----------|-------------|-----------|--------|----------|----------|------------|-----------|------------|

### REGULAR MARKET

|              |                                  |            |             |            |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |               |
|--------------|----------------------------------|------------|-------------|------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|---------------|
| OM0000009072 | OQ GAS NETWORKS                  | 30,756,664 | 6,765,149   | 1,686      | 0.220 | 0.223 | 0.218 | 0.223 | 0.220 | 0.003 | 1.364 | 0.223 | 0.223 | 0.223 | 0.100 | 965,729,134   |
| OM0000001681 | OMAN EMIRATES HO                 | 86,676     | 13,868      | 14         | 0.160 | 0.162 | 0.159 | 0.162 | 0.160 | 0.002 | 1.250 | 0.162 | 0.162 | 0.162 | 0.100 | 19,743,750    |
| OM0000001772 | ALANWAR INVESTMENT               | 429,749    | 73,667      | 21         | 0.170 | 0.172 | 0.170 | 0.172 | 0.170 | 0.002 | 1.176 | 0.172 | 0.172 | 0.187 | 0.100 | 52,891,637    |
| OM0000002267 | GULF MUSHROOM PRODUCTS           | 60,114     | 25,851      | 14         | 0.430 | 0.435 | 0.430 | 0.435 | 0.430 | 0.005 | 1.163 | 0.435 | 0.435 | 0.454 | 0.100 | 21,898,934    |
| OM0000002796 | BANK MUSCAT                      | 19,738,034 | 7,906,911   | 1,265      | 0.402 | 0.405 | 0.400 | 0.405 | 0.401 | 0.004 | 0.998 | 0.405 | 0.407 | 0.405 | 0.100 | 3,040,090,810 |
| OM0000000406 | QCBASE INDUSTRIES (SFT)          | 26,314,718 | 6,785,007   | 1,338      | 0.258 | 0.260 | 0.256 | 0.260 | 0.258 | 0.002 | 0.775 | 0.260 | 0.260 | 0.260 | 0.100 | 886,467,621   |
| OM0000004735 | SEMBCORP SALALAH                 | 357,097    | 92,163      | 43         | 0.258 | 0.261 | 0.257 | 0.261 | 0.259 | 0.002 | 0.772 | 0.261 | 0.260 | 0.260 | 0.100 | 249,143,279   |
| OM0000009759 | OQ EXPLORATION AND PRODUCTION    | 9,996,460  | 4,495,521   | 488        | 0.447 | 0.452 | 0.447 | 0.450 | 0.447 | 0.003 | 0.671 | 0.450 | 0.447 | 0.450 | 0.100 | 3,600,000,000 |
| OM0000001533 | OMINVEST                         | 78,538     | 28,196      | 14         | 0.381 | 0.383 | 0.381 | 0.383 | 0.381 | 0.002 | 0.325 | 0.383 | 0.383 | 0.382 | 0.100 | 430,053,049   |
| OM0000004925 | ALBATINAH POWER                  | 46,700     | 9,040       | 8          | 0.191 | 0.194 | 0.191 | 0.193 | 0.192 | 0.001 | 0.521 | 0.193 | 0.194 | 0.193 | 0.100 | 130,253,274   |
| OM0000002176 | JAZEERA STEEL PRODUCTS           | 220,850    | 184,157     | 203        | 0.832 | 0.834 | 0.832 | 0.834 | 0.830 | 0.004 | 0.482 | 0.834 | 0.834 | 0.844 | 0.100 | 104,164,899   |
| OM0000001309 | DHOFAR INTL DEVELOPMENT & INVEST | 12,010     | 3,539       | 5          | 0.294 | 0.295 | 0.294 | 0.295 | 0.294 | 0.001 | 0.340 | 0.295 | 0.290 | 0.290 | 0.100 | 146,336,562   |
| OM0000003125 | GLOBAL FINANCIAL INVESTMENT HO   | 25,012     | 7,339       | 9          | 0.292 | 0.296 | 0.292 | 0.298 | 0.297 | 0.001 | 0.337 | 0.298 | 0.298 | 0.309 | 0.100 | 59,600,000    |
| OM0000001483 | NATIONAL BANK OMAN               | 6,001,500  | 2,988,749   | 4          | 0.488 | 0.489 | 0.488 | 0.489 | 0.489 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.489 | 0.494 | 0.494 | 0.100 | 811,347,231   |
| OM0000001707 | OMAN CABLES INDUSTRY             | 2,075      | 6,700       | 2          | 3.225 | 3.230 | 3.225 | 3.230 | 3.230 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 3.230 | 3.230 | 3.260 | 0.100 | 289,731,000   |
| OM0000001749 | OMAN CEMENT                      | 10,387     | 5,925       | 9          | 0.570 | 0.572 | 0.570 | 0.570 | 0.570 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.571 | 0.571 | 0.571 | 0.100 | 188,497,445   |
| OM0000002374 | UNITED FINANCE                   | 48,500     | 4,536       | 4          | 0.093 | 0.094 | 0.093 | 0.094 | 0.094 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.094 | 0.093 | 0.094 | 0.100 | 33,475,966    |
| OM0000002440 | AL SHARQIYA INVESTMENT HO        | 90,581     | 9,238       | 6          | 0.102 | 0.104 | 0.101 | 0.104 | 0.104 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.104 | 0.102 | 0.104 | 0.100 | 9,360,000     |
| OM0000002372 | OMAN OIL MARKETING               | 6,062      | 6,614       | 2          | 1.091 | 1.091 | 1.091 | 1.091 | 1.091 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 1.091 | 1.091 | 1.091 | 0.100 | 66,851,025    |
| OM0000003224 | RENAISSANCE SERVICES             | 316,852    | 97,178      | 23         | 0.307 | 0.307 | 0.304 | 0.307 | 0.307 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.307 | 0.304 | 0.307 | 0.100 | 72,577,870    |
| OM0000003398 | SOHAR INTERNATIONAL BANK         | 33,450,548 | 6,362,830   | 1,466      | 0.192 | 0.192 | 0.190 | 0.192 | 0.192 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.192 | 0.195 | 0.192 | 0.100 | 1,270,511,284 |
| OM0000004248 | SMN POWER HOLDING                | 1,000      | 200         | 1          | 0.200 | 0.200 | 0.200 | 0.200 | 0.200 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.200 | 0.196 | 0.202 | 0.100 | 39,921,200    |
| OM0000004420 | BANK NUZWA                       | 394,200    | 51,043      | 21         | 0.140 | 0.141 | 0.140 | 0.141 | 0.141 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.141 | 0.142 | 0.142 | 0.100 | 315,410,378   |
| OM0000004768 | MADINA TAKAFUL                   | 51,335     | 6,314       | 7          | 0.123 | 0.123 | 0.123 | 0.123 | 0.123 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.123 | 0.119 | 0.123 | 0.100 | 21,525,000    |
| OM0000008934 | ABRAJ ENERGY SERVICES            | 8,619,928  | 3,361,317   | 37         | 0.391 | 0.392 | 0.388 | 0.392 | 0.392 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.392 | 0.380 | 0.392 | 0.100 | 100,301,918   |
| OM0000001010 | ASTAD SHIPPING                   | 751,450    | 209,743     | 497        | 0.280 | 0.280 | 0.277 | 0.280 | 0.280 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.280 | 0.281 | 0.280 | 0.100 | 1,438,448,398 |
| OM0000003026 | OMAN TELECOM                     | 1,789,299  | 2,430,524   | 190        | 1.378 | 1.378 | 1.369 | 1.372 | 1.375 | 0.003 | 0.218 | 1.372 | 1.372 | 1.372 | 0.100 | 1,029,000,000 |
| OM0000003968 | OQREDOO                          | 568,245    | 188,562     | 47         | 0.336 | 0.336 | 0.331 | 0.334 | 0.335 | 0.001 | 0.299 | 0.334 | 0.330 | 0.335 | 0.100 | 217,415,373   |
| OM0000004933 | AL SUWADI POWER                  | 2,500      | 479         | 2          | 0.192 | 0.192 | 0.191 | 0.191 | 0.192 | 0.001 | 0.521 | 0.191 | 0.181 | 0.196 | 0.100 | 136,451,611   |
| OM0000003681 | VOLTAMP ENERGY                   | 694,831    | 122,089     | 80         | 0.177 | 0.177 | 0.175 | 0.175 | 0.176 | 0.001 | 0.568 | 0.175 | 0.175 | 0.175 | 0.100 | 173,000,000   |
| OM0000002549 | BANK DHOFAR                      | 3,302,866  | 744,792     | 47         | 0.230 | 0.230 | 0.224 | 0.227 | 0.230 | 0.003 | 1.304 | 0.226 | 0.220 | 0.226 | 0.100 | 690,034,267   |
| OM0000005963 | PHOENIX POWER                    | 4,533,333  | 1,130,386   | 182        | 0.254 | 0.254 | 0.247 | 0.247 | 0.252 | 0.005 | 1.984 | 0.247 | 0.248 | 0.248 | 0.100 | 361,262,561   |
| OM0000003000 | AI MAHA PETROLEUM PRODS MRKTNG   | 500        | 800         | 2          | 1.200 | 1.200 | 1.200 | 1.200 | 1.225 | 0.025 | 2.041 | 1.200 | 1.111 | 1.232 | 0.100 | 82,800,000    |
| OM0000002804 | ASAFA FOODS                      | 62,233     | 47,301      | 25         | 0.705 | 0.705 | 0.700 | 0.700 | 0.706 | 0.016 | 2.962 | 0.700 | 0.760 | 0.760 | 0.100 | 91,200,000    |
| OM0000001152 | OMAN NATIONAL ENGG & INVESTMENT  | 90,000     | 13,630      | 3          | 0.154 | 0.154 | 0.150 | 0.150 | 0.155 | 0.005 | 3.226 | 0.150 | 0.146 | 0.170 | 0.100 | 22,500,000    |
| Total        |                                  | 35         | 148,859,279 | 44,180,177 | 7,765 |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |               |

### Parallel Market

|               |                                  |           |           |           |       |       |       |       |       |        |        |       |       |       |       |             |
|---------------|----------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------|--------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------------|
| OM0000002911  | FINANCIAL CORPORATION            | 9,000     | 908       | 3         | 0.102 | 0.102 | 0.100 | 0.100 | 0.095 | 0.005  | 5.263  | 0.100 | 0.096 | 0.102 | 0.100 | 7,002,996   |
| OM0000002341  | OMAN CHLORINE                    | 300       | 51        | 1         | 0.169 | 0.169 | 0.169 | 0.169 | 0.165 | 0.004  | 2.424  | 0.169 | 0.165 | 0.175 | 0.100 | 12,084,994  |
| OM0000001160  | NATIONAL GAS                     | 88,613    | 9,738     | 17        | 0.109 | 0.110 | 0.109 | 0.110 | 0.108 | 0.002  | 1.852  | 0.110 | 0.110 | 0.110 | 0.100 | 9,350,000   |
| OM0000001400  | OMAN FLOUR MILLS                 | 2,510     | 1,417     | 4         | 0.560 | 0.565 | 0.560 | 0.565 | 0.560 | 0.005  | 0.893  | 0.565 | 0.565 | 0.616 | 0.100 | 98,108,719  |
| OM0000003281  | TAGEER FINANCE                   | 43,312    | 5,142     | 5         | 0.118 | 0.120 | 0.117 | 0.120 | 0.119 | 0.001  | 0.840  | 0.120 | 0.116 | 0.120 | 0.100 | 34,042,894  |
| OM0000008868  | THE PEARL REEF                   | 14,230    | 2,523     | 8         | 0.176 | 0.178 | 0.176 | 0.178 | 0.177 | 0.001  | 0.565  | 0.178 | 0.178 | 0.178 | 0.100 | 105,275,785 |
| OM0000005260  | OMAN ARAB BANK                   | 241,616   | 56,535    | 165       | 0.234 | 0.234 | 0.232 | 0.234 | 0.233 | 0.001  | 0.429  | 0.234 | 0.233 | 0.234 | 0.100 | 468,641,940 |
| OM0000005265  | AL MAHA CERAMICS                 | 235       | 42        | 1         | 0.262 | 0.262 | 0.262 | 0.262 | 0.261 | 0.001  | 0.383  | 0.262 | 0.259 | 0.267 | 0.100 | 14,410,000  |
| OM0000003301  | DHOFAR FOODS AND INVESTMENT      | 5,000,000 | 1,030,000 | 1         | 0.206 | 0.206 | 0.206 | 0.206 | 0.206 | 0.000  | 0.000  | 0.206 | 0.206 | 0.000 | 0.100 | 40,721,446  |
| OM0000001368  | CONSTRUCTION MATERIAL INDUSTRIES | 2,394     | 180       | 1         | 0.075 | 0.075 | 0.075 | 0.075 | 0.075 | 0.000  | 0.000  | 0.075 | 0.068 | 0.075 | 0.100 | 4,687,500   |
| OM0000003028  | GULF INTERNATIONAL CHEMICALS     | 100       | 7         | 1         | 0.073 | 0.073 | 0.073 | 0.073 | 0.073 | 0.000  | 0.000  | 0.073 | 0.073 | 0.073 | 0.100 | 1,533,000   |
| OM0000002275  | SHELL OMAN MARKETING             | 19,710    | 15,259    | 12        | 0.800 | 0.800 | 0.773 | 0.773 | 0.773 | 0.000  | 0.000  | 0.773 | 0.773 | 0.773 | 0.100 | 73,435,000  |
| OM0000003521  | GALFAR ENGINEERING & CONTRACTING | 1,681,000 | 308,782   | 20        | 0.184 | 0.184 | 0.181 | 0.181 | 0.181 | 0.000  | 0.000  | 0.181 | 0.179 | 0.182 | 0.100 | 36,740,547  |
| OM0000004776  | TAKAFUL OMAN                     | 1,500     | 101       | 1         | 0.067 | 0.067 | 0.067 | 0.067 | 0.067 | 0.000  | 0.000  | 0.067 | 0.066 | 0.068 | 0.100 | 16,750,000  |
| OM0000007407  | DHOFAR GENERATING                | 44,500    | 3,649     | 2         | 0.082 | 0.082 | 0.082 | 0.082 | 0.080 | 0.000  | 0.000  | 0.082 | 0.080 | 0.082 | 0.100 | 18,223,680  |
| OM0000007910  | OMAN REAL ESTATE                 | 15,500    | 1,097     | 7         | 0.071 | 0.075 | 0.070 | 0.075 | 0.075 | 0.000  | 0.000  | 0.075 | 0.069 | 0.075 | 0.100 | 15,000,000  |
| OM0000008447  | OMAN REIT FUND                   | 22,134    | 2,368     | 7         | 0.107 | 0.107 | 0.107 | 0.107 | 0.107 | 0.000  | 0.000  | 0.107 | 0.105 | 0.107 | 0.100 | 69,800,623  |
| OM0000008550  | JABAL REEF                       | 110       | 114       | 2         | 0.104 | 0.104 | 0.104 | 0.104 | 0.104 | 0.000  | 0.000  | 0.104 | 0.100 | 0.104 | 0.100 | 15,000,000  |
| OM0000002948  | NATIONAL FINANCE                 | 71,059    | 15,275    | 6         | 0.215 | 0.215 | 0.214 | 0.214 | 0.215 | -0.001 | -0.465 | 0.214 | 0.212 | 0.214 | 0.100 | 19,348,815  |
| OM00000010823 | OMAN GATEWAY FUND                | 880       | 911       | 4         | 0.103 | 0.104 | 0.103 | 0.103 | 0.104 | -0.005 | -0.481 | 0.103 | 0.103 | 0.104 | 0.000 | 28,302,135  |
| OM0000004669  | SHARQIYAH DESALINATION           | 5,230     | 910       | 3         | 0.174 | 0.174 | 0.174 | 0.174 | 0.175 | -0.001 | -0.571 | 0.174 | 0.172 | 0.174 | 0.100 | 17,017,578  |
| OM0000002168  | AL ANWAR CERAMIC                 | 430,408   | 64,466    | 37        | 0.152 | 0.152 | 0.148 | 0.149 | 0.150 | -0.001 | -0.667 | 0.149 | 0.149 | 0.150 | 0.100 | 32,780,000  |
| OM0000001897  | MAJAN COLLEGE                    | 31,000    | 3,978     | 3         | 0.129 | 0.129 | 0.128 | 0.128 | 0.129 | -0.001 | -0.775 | 0.128 | 0.128 | 0.132 | 0.100 | 12,672,000  |
| OM0000006979  | OMAN QATAR INSURANCE             | 1,000     | 194       | 1         | 0.194 | 0.194 | 0.194 | 0.194 | 0.196 | -0.002 | -0.120 | 0.194 | 0.000 | 0.196 | 0.100 | 31,276,403  |
| OM00000001962 | AL MADINA INVESTMENT HOLDING     | 188       | 5         | 1         | 0.032 | 0.032 | 0.032 | 0.032 | 0.033 | 0.001  | 0.939  | 0.032 | 0.030 | 0.033 | 0.100 | 27,280,000  |
| OM00000001111 | GULF PETROLEUM [P.M.]            | 2,616     | 8,655     | 3         | 3.460 | 3.450 | 3.460 | 3.450 | 3.450 | -0.010 | -3.460 | 3.450 | 3.440 | 3.460 | 0.000 | 11,375,000  |
| OM00000001020 | OMAN CHROMITE                    | 250       | 753       | 2         | 0.670 | 0.670 | 0.670 | 0.670 | 0.690 | -0.230 | -3.931 | 0.670 | 0.700 | 3.000 | 1,000 | 9,692,100   |
| OM00000001111 | SAHARA POWER                     | 500       | 138       | 2         | 0.276 | 0.276 | 0.276 | 0.276 | 0.296 | -0.030 | -9.804 | 0.276 | 0.276 | 0.276 | 0.100 | 5,520,000   |
| Total         |                                  | 28        | 7,231,081 | 1,534,219 | 319   |       |       |       |       |        |        |       |       |       |       |             |



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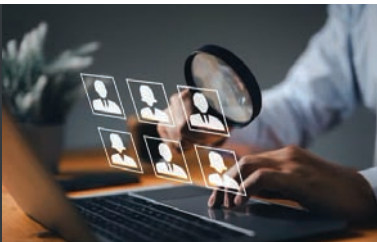
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BRIEFS

Integrity of game at stake over FIFA's Balogun decision: UEFA



to enforce Balogun's mandatory one-game ban, after the world football body came under pressure from US President Donald Trump. FIFA's ruling Sunday — to defer Balogun's ban for one year of probation — shockingly deviated from football's traditional rule of law and drew stinging criticism globally including from former World Cup stars and coaches at this tournament. "It's a bad, bad, bad, bad, bad decision that will hurt the World Cup," Norway coach Ståle Solbakken said on Sunday after his team beat Brazil to reach the quarterfinals. UEFA, whose member federations include Belgium, insisted: "Sometimes rules are open to interpretation. In this case not." "When the certainty of rules is no longer guaranteed by its guardians, the integrity of the game is at stake and the credibility of a competition is undermined," said the European football body, which has often clashed with FIFA President Gianni Infantino during his decade in power. "We express our disbelief at such an unprecedented, incomprehensible and unjustifiable decision," said UEFA, where Infantino was its CEO-like general secretary from 2009 until being elected to lead FIFA in February 2016.

Ronaldo: 'This World Cup with Portugal will be my last'



people who love you. I share hotels with the staff, Latino people, and those are spectacular memories. Yesterday on the flight, there was an Argentine flight attendant. And knew she was Argentine by the way she looked at me: 'I knew you were Argentine by the way you looked at me. If you look away quickly, it means you don't like Cristiano.' Ronaldo said in translated remarks Sunday, breaking into a smile. "I want to enjoy what will be my last World Cup to the fullest," Ronaldo continued. "Hopefully, tomorrow won't be my last match. That way, you can keep bashing me some more." Ronaldo, the career leader in international goals with 146, made similar comments in a television interview late last year, a few months after Portugal won the UEFA Nations League title with a riveting victory over Spain in a penalty shootout. Many of the questions for the 41-year-old during a 25-minute session at the home of the NFL's Dallas Cowboys referred to what everybody in the packed room was assuming: This was it for Ronaldo. Before the end, he joked with reporters that they were pushing him out the door. Just about every time he did, though, he would turn philosophical. "There's nothing missing," Ronaldo said. "God was so generous toward me. He gave me everything I never expected to win, especially at the national team. And personally, the same thing. So it's enjoying every moment. I'm not going to be more Cristiano or less Cristiano because I win the World Cup. Of course, we all have hopes, myself especially, and we all want all the conditions to win. But we know that only one is going to win." Ronaldo's finale on football's biggest stage — whenever that happens — will come eight years after he was the oldest to record a World Cup hat-trick at 33. That was in a 3-3 draw with Spain in a group stage opener considered one of the World Cup's best matches, although both didn't reach the knockout stage.

Queiroz quits as Ghana coach after team's World Cup exit



try late on Sunday. Ghana was on a four-game losing run when the 73-year-old Portuguese coach was appointed in April as the fired Otto Addo's replacement. "Football, like life, teaches us one timeless lesson: you either win or you learn," Queiroz wrote. "I leave this journey with pride in what we achieved, but also with the healthy dissatisfaction of those who always wanted more. Reaching a higher level should never be the destination — it should be the beginning of even greater ambitions." He appeared to blame the Ghana Football Association for not doing enough to support the team. "The future of the Black Stars will not be built only on the pitch. Black Stars success must start off the field, by creating the best possible environment to prepare, protect and develop Ghana's extraordinary football talent," he wrote. - Agencies

# HAALAND'S DOUBLE DUMPS BRAZIL, FIRES NORWAY INTO HISTORIC QUARTERS



The lanky striker's tally of goals rose to seven in the tournament as his side booked a last-eight clash against England

**EAST RUTHERFORD:** Erling Haaland scored, and Andreas Schjelderup jumped on his teammate's back. Haaland scored again, and Schjelderup leapt up again. Heading in the go-ahead goal in the 79th minute and scoring again before the end of regulation time, Haaland put Norway on his back and carried them into the World Cup quarter-finals for the first time with a 2-1 defeat of five-time champions Brazil on Sunday that showcased the towering striker on football's biggest stage. "Maybe this will write history in Norway," Haaland said. "Everyone just need to enjoy themselves. This is just an insane day. It's one of the most insane days in Norwegian history. Just enjoy it, embrace it and enjoy the moment." After being a nonfactor for much of the afternoon and having limited touches, Haaland spoke at the second-half hydration break with coach Ståle Solbakken, who told him to drain his energy and go for it. Haaland turned it on when it mattered most, getting the right side of his head on the ball after a perfect setup by Andreas Schjelderup, who entered at half-time.



Haaland scored a little over minutes later for his seventh of the tournament, through Daniilo's legs to tie Argentina's Lionel Messi and Kylian Mbappé of France in the race for the Golden Boot. "It felt it was a gift from God that it actually went into the net," Haaland said after scoring in a 14th consecutive competitive match internationally. He has 27 in that stretch and 62 in 54 with Norway. At the other end, goalkeeper Ørjan Nyland scored his first goal in the 2-1 victory. "Obviously when you are able to save a penalty that early (it is then) very hard to beat you. It was a great moment for myself but also for the team to give ourselves some breathing space," Nyland told reporters. "In the end we also managed to score at the right moments, so that was amazing." Nyland, 35, said he hoped the win would inspire children in Norway. "We have written some history so hopefully many young kids in Norway can relive this moment when they go to play football or soccer and that they can dream to one day be in the same position as me and that it is possible no matter where you come from," Nyland said. - Agencies

'Penalty save inspired Norway'



**EAST RUTHERFORD:** Norway goalkeeper Ørjan Nyland said his country's stunning FIFA World Cup win against Brazil had been launched by his penalty save during the 2-1 victory. "Obviously when you are able to save a penalty that early (it is then) very hard to beat you. It was a great moment for myself but also for the team to give ourselves some breathing space," Nyland told reporters. "In the end we also managed to score at the right moments, so that was amazing." Nyland, 35, said he hoped the win would inspire children in Norway. "We have written some history so hopefully many young kids in Norway can relive this moment when they go to play football or soccer and that they can dream to one day be in the same position as me and that it is possible no matter where you come from," Nyland said. - Agencies

Neymar calls time on Brazil career

**EAST RUTHERFORD:** Neymar said on Sunday he is done playing for Brazil's national team, making the announcement after he and his team-mates were knocked out of the World Cup with a loss to Norway in the round of 16. "I tried," Neymar said. "It started here at MetLife Stadium, and I finished here. It is now over." Neymar, 34, played his first game for Brazil on August 10, 2010 — a friendly against the US at the stadium in the Meadowlands in northern New Jersey. Against Norway, he scored on a penalty kick in the final minutes after subbing in off the bench. Because of a nagging right calf injury, Neymar appeared in only two of Brazil's five games in the tournament. He also was on the field for 15 minutes against Scotland in group play. Brazil's best player for more than a decade had been slowed by injuries in recent years that limited his impact. The country is now entering a period of transition, with the next generation taking over.



"We ask that people will have the patience with the new generation and support them from the get-go," captain Marquinhos said. - Agencies

WIN 3-2

## Bellingham's brace as England edge Mexico into last eight

**MEXICO CITY:** Jude Bellingham and Harry Kane carried England to the World Cup quarter-finals, overcoming a raucous crowd, the elevation of Estadio Azteca and a man disadvantage in the second half to beat Mexico in a 3-2 thriller on Sunday night. In the same stadium where England fell victim to Diego Maradona's Hand of God goal in the 1986 World Cup against Argentina, it was the foot of Kane that gave the nation redemption 40 years later. "I am just proud of the mentality and the attitude... round of 16 it is a moment in tournaments when you find a way to win and we did it with pure mentality and heart," England coach Thomas Tuchel said. "We overcame every obstacle that was thrown our way." Bellingham scored two goals 98 seconds apart in the first half. And six minutes after Jarell Quansah was sent off, Kane converted a penalty to restore England's two-goal lead. "It was a crazy game. We had to fight," Kane said, his voice hoarse. "I can't really talk, but the occasion, the team, everything against us, we found a way."



Bellingham stunned the crowd of 80,824 at a venue where Mexico were unbeaten in 10 World Cup matches, including three this tournament, when he scored on a header in the 36th minute and again in the 38th on a pass from Kane. "We've done something incredible tonight, no doubt about it, and we'll enjoy it. And we'll sing songs until we lose our voices on the plane and whatnot, but we'll have a couple of days recovering, then it's straight back to business in terms of facing Norway," Bellingham said. Julián Quiñones scored for El Tri in the 42nd minute, and the game appeared to turn in Mexico's favour when Quansah was shown a red card in the 54th for a dangerous foul on Jesús Gallardo. But England were awarded a penalty for a challenge by Mexico goalkeeper Raúl Rangel, and Kane converted for his sixth goal of this tournament and 14th of his World Cup career. Kane then committed a foul that

made him the first player since at least 1966 to score and concede a penalty in a World Cup game. Raúl Jiménez converted the kick with a stutter-step approach to move El Tri within 3-2. "Forty, 50 minutes with 10 men — even on sea level it's almost impossible to overcome but we did it. We did it in altitude," Tuchel said. "They're almost too exhausted to celebrate. It's just beautiful that players on that kind of level just give everything for the win and for the country and for that shirt." Mexico attacked relentlessly over the final 21 minutes, plus 11 minutes of stoppage time, but goalkeeper Jordan Pickford and England's defenders held steady. "This is probably one of the biggest England wins in a while, probably the biggest one I can remember as a fan or player," Bellingham said. "The best night of my England career." Midfielder Jordan Henderson was taken to a hospital after the match with a wrist injury, Tuchel said. He was hurt when he tumbled over an advertising board during the postgame celebration. - Agencies



ENGLAND HEAD COACH

## World Cup referees are just not good enough, says Tuchel



**MEXICO CITY:** England head coach Thomas Tuchel said referees at the World Cup "are just not good enough" after the dramatic last-16 win over Mexico. England were reduced to 10 men and also had a controversial penalty awarded against them in a thrilling game at the Azteca Stadium. "It's just not good enough," Tuchel told BBC Sport. "The referees are just not good enough; fourth officials are just not good enough. That's the bottom line. "Is this a clear and obvious error for the penalty? For sure not. They overturned a situation where he doesn't even give a foul." Tuchel had the fire in his eyes

even when he addressed the media at the Azteca on Saturday. He had never looked as excited as he did here. He could not disguise his anticipation. This was a coach relishing the big occasion. And he got his strategy spot on as England stayed deep in the early stages, sitting off and controlling possession for long periods to draw the sting from Mexico's players, if not their fans. Tuchel had heroes everywhere, every player rising to the task, especially when England went down to 10 men. He said: "It was beautiful to see players proud to play for their country. When I ask them to do

anything they just do it. "What drama from the first minute. What a crazy game. What an emotional rollercoaster. What a national anthem from the Mexican people. I am so proud I was part of it." "It was a fight for a long time with 10 men. There is a lot to love about this team. "It is too good to be true. When we saw the draw, it was like 'wow'. It is a special night." Kane echoed Tuchel when he said: "So many heroes out there. "I spoke after the last game about hero moments, but the whole team were heroes here. "This was one of my favourite nights in my career." - Agencies

# Millions attend funeral of Ayatollah Khamenei and his family in Tehran

The official period of mourning for Khamenei began on Saturday and will end on Thursday with Khamenei’s burial at the Imam Reza shrine in Mashhad, his birthplace

**TEHRAN:** A procession carrying the remains of Iran’s late supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, has been attended by millions of people in the Iranian capital, Tehran.

Khamenei and several members of his family, whose coffins are at the focus of the procession, were killed in an airstrike at the very outset of the war launched on the Islamic Republic by the US and Israel on February 28.

The massive turnout was encouraged by Iran’s regime to give a show of what it says is the country’s continued strength and unity as it holds negotiations on a permanent end to the war.

**Calls to avenge Khamenei’s death**

Iranian state television showed images taken by helicopter of a crowd stretching from Tehran’s Azadi (Freedom) Square for kilometres (miles) down the street bearing the same name.

The coffin of Khamenei, who was 86 at the time of his death, and those of his relatives killed in the air strike were carried on board a truck adorned with the



kind of ornamental grating used around the shrine of an imam. Many people alongside the truck and elsewhere on the procession

route carried placards, signs and banners calling for the death of US President Donald Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin

Netanyahu.

Misted water was sprayed on people attending the procession to cool them amid high temperatures.

The coffin of Khamenei, who was 86 at the time of his death, and those of his relatives killed in the air strike were carried on board a truck

birthplace. Ali Khamenei’s son, Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei, who was appointed to succeed his father as supreme leader, has so far not appeared at any of the funeral ceremonies.

He is believe to be in hiding after being reportedly badly wounded in the air strike that killed his father.

Israel has threatened to kill him as it has done with several leading Iranian figures in the past. Three others of Ali Khamenei’s sons did make a rare public appearance at the funeral on Sunday.

Talks between the US and Iran on putting an end to the war seem to be on hold until the funeral events for Ali Khamenei have ended.

The negotiations have until now centered on issues such as the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz, a vital oil and gas transport route virtually closed by Iran during the conflict, and Tehran’s nuclear program, which the US says aims to develop nuclear weapons — something Iran denies. — **dw**

DIPLOMATIC ENGAGEMENT

## Bangladesh PM Tarique Rahman to visit Saudi Arabia

**DHAKA:** Bangladesh Prime Minister Tarique Rahman is scheduled to visit Saudi Arabia shortly, following an official invitation from the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, Mohammed bin Salman, which the Prime Minister has formally accepted.

The development was shared with journalists on Monday by the Foreign Affairs Adviser to the Prime Minister, Humayun Kabir.

Elaborating on the bilateral interaction, Kabir stated, “Basically, I wanted to brief you on a call by His Excellency Dr. Abdullah Jafar H. Bin Abiyah, the Honourable Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. This morning, he called on the Honourable Prime Minister, Tarique Rahman, at the Cabinet Secretariat.”

“And a very cordial discussion took place, along with an exchange of pleasantries. The Honourable Ambassador conveyed greetings from His Highness the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia and extended an invitation from His Highness the Crown Prince to our Honourable Prime Minister, Tarique Rahman, to visit the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia,” Kabir said.

The Adviser further noted that the diplomatic engagement points towards a reciprocal high-level visit from Riyadh to Dhaka.

“The Ambassador also conveyed that His Highness the Crown Prince, His Excellency Mohammed bin Salman, is very much interested in visiting Bangladesh at a convenient time,” the Foreign Affairs Adviser stated.

Underscoring the trajectory of the long-standing geopolitical relationship, Kabir emphasised Dhaka’s commitment to deepening its engagement with Riyadh across critical domains.

“So, from this exchange, you can see that we are very positive about having strategic cooperation and partnership with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Histor-



ically, our bilateral relations have always been good. We will further strengthen them, and the ties will reach, Inshallah, new heights,” he added.

The Adviser highlighted that the upcoming high-level interactions are poised to unlock substantial economic opportunities, noting a surge in commercial interest from both public and private entities in Saudi Arabia.

“We will strengthen our diplomatic relations, as well as the volume of trade and investment in our partnership. There has been tremendous interest this morning from Saudi Arabia, both from the private sector and the government, in investing in Bangladesh,” Kabir observed.

“It is also a significant moment in our bilateral relations. You can see ahead that not only has the Prime Minister been invited to visit the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, but the Crown Prince has also expressed his interest in visiting Bangladesh. So, it’s both ways,” the Adviser said.

Reflecting on the diplomatic strides made by the administration since assuming office, Kabir traced the breakthrough to sustained, proactive regional outreach over the last four months.

“It only shows how significant these four months have been for the Government of Bangladesh after our new government was elected and that we have established brotherly ties across the Middle East. — **ANI**

RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR

## Russian bombardment of Kyiv kills 14 people: Ukrainian President

**KYIV:** Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Monday urged the United States and its European allies to take “strong decisions” to strengthen Ukraine’s air defences after a massive overnight Russian missile and drone strike killed at least 14 people in Kyiv and the surrounding region.

In a post on X, Zelenskyy said Russia launched 68 missiles and 351 attack drones overnight, damaging more than 10 locations across Kyiv, including residential buildings.

He said, “Last night, Kyiv came under a massive Russian attack. Russia launched 68 missiles and 351 attack drones. Response efforts are still underway. Damage has been recorded at more than 10 locations across the city, including residential buildings.”

Zelenskyy said rescue operations were continuing, and 64 people, including two children, were rescued from the affected areas.

He said, “All necessary services are on the ground, doing everything possible to rescue people and provide assistance to everyone who needs it. So far, 64 people have been rescued, including two children. As of now, it has been confirmed that, tragically, eleven people were killed in this attack. My condolences to their families and loved ones. Around 60 more people were injured.”

He added that three people were killed and 16 injured in the Kyiv region, where emergency crews were continuing firefighting and evacuation operations.

He said, “In the Kyiv region, sixteen people were injured, and three people were killed. My condolences to their families and loved ones. A fire is still burning at the site of the missile strike in Vyshneve. People are being evacuated from a residential area. More than 400 first responders and police officers have been deployed to deal with the aftermath of the attack.”

Calling for additional air defence support, Zelenskyy said



Ukraine’s forces had successfully intercepted drones and cruise missiles but lacked enough interceptor missiles to stop Russian ballistic missiles.

He said, “Our warriors performed well today in intercepting drones and cruise missiles, but unfortunately not Russian ballistic missiles. And the reason lies in the insufficient supply of interceptor missiles.”

He added that it was critically important for the United States and Israel to come up with “strong decisions” in support of Ukraine’s air defence and the

protection of the lives of ordinary people after the NATO Summit in Ankara, Türkiye.

“It is critically important that the world - first and foremost the United States and our European partners - come out of the NATO Summit in Ankara with strong decisions in support of our air defence, and thus the protection of ordinary people’s lives. As long as Patriot missiles remain in our allies’ stockpiles, Russia is only encouraged to keep “vanquishing” residential buildings. The United States and Europe have enough strength to stop this terror,” he added.

Russia launched a ballistic mis-

sile attack on Ukraine’s capital Kyiv early Monday morning, with the assault coming a day before a key NATO summit in Turkey that US President Donald Trump is expected to attend, CNN reported.

According to CNN, Ukraine’s air force said the attack involved ballistic missiles, drones and cruise missiles. Explosions were heard across central Kyiv in the early hours as the assault unfolded.

Kyiv Mayor Vitaliy Klitschko said at least two districts of the city reported fires or damage caused by falling debris. Air raid sirens had been activated across the capital shortly before the explosions.

The latest attack came after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky warned on Sunday that intelligence suggested Russia was “preparing a new massive strike.”

“Intelligence once again indicates that the Russians are preparing a new massive strike. This is typical of Putin: right after America’s Independence Day and before the NATO Summit in Ankara. Russia wants to bring more evil and kill people,” Zelenskyy said in a post on X.



# OCTOPUSES CAN USE MIRRORS TO LOCATE FOOD: STUDY

Researchers at Dartmouth found that octopuses can learn to use mirrors to locate food hidden behind them, a skill previously seen only in vertebrates like mammals and birds.

After training, the animals correctly identified the food's location about 73% of the time, showing they could use a mirror as a tool rather than simply reacting to a reflection.

Octopuses have long been known for their remarkable intelligence. One famous example was Inky, the octopus that escaped from New Zealand's National Aquarium in 2016 by squeezing through a drainpipe and making its way back to the ocean.

Now, researchers at Dartmouth have uncovered another impressive ability. A new study published in Current Biology found that octopuses can learn to use mirrors to locate food hidden from direct view, demonstrating sophisticated spatial thinking.

"Our findings are the first to demonstrate that invertebrates can use mirrors to understand their environment to find prey," says lead author Mary Kieseler, '25, who conducted the research as a PhD student in the Department of Psychological and Brain Sciences at Dartmouth and is now a postdoc at Switzerland's

University of Fribourg. "It's a skill that previously has only been documented in vertebrates, such as in some mammals and some birds."

## Octopuses learn to use mirrors

The research team worked with three California two-spot octopuses (*Octopus bimaculoides*) housed in Dartmouth's Octopus Lab.

Their goal was to determine whether the animals could learn to use a mirror to identify the location of a food source that was out of sight. Instead of attacking the reflected image, the octopuses needed to figure out where the stimulus was actually located and move toward it.

The animals were first given time to become familiar with a mirror placed in their habitat. Next, researchers trained them to understand the relationship between a reflection and the real world. During this phase, a live crab was placed inside a glass jar positioned so the octopus could see it only through the mirror. To reach the crab, the animal had to turn 90 degrees and move around a corner.

"We don't enter the world knowing how to use a mirror," says senior author and cognitive neuroscientist Peter Tse, a professor of psychological and brain sciences at Dartmouth. Just as new driv-

ers learn to use a rear-view mirror to track other vehicles, "Octopuses can also learn how to use a mirror to infer where things are in the world."

## Testing spatial cognition

Octopuses possess chemoreceptors that allow them to smell and taste through touch, which could have affected the results if real prey had been used during testing. To avoid that issue, the researchers relied on a virtual crab image instead.

For the experiment, each octopus was placed inside a start box that was open at the front and top. A mirror was positioned directly in front of the animal. The virtual crab image appeared behind the octopus, either on its left or right side, but was visible only through the mirror.

To earn a reward, the octopus had to recognise where the image was actually located and move toward that position. Instead of approaching the mirror itself, the animals turned around and headed toward the correct side, where they received a live crab reward. Some octopuses even climbed over the side of the box to reach the location of the projected image

rather than swimming around it.

The animals chose the correct side about 73% of the time.

Researchers tracked a point between the octopus's eyes on the mantle, the part of the body comparable to a head, using overhead observations. They also measured the routes the animals took while seeking the reward. Although the octopuses did not always choose the shortest path, they became faster at reaching the correct location as the trials progressed.

## Clues about the evolution of intelligence

According to the researchers, the findings may offer new insights into how intelligence evolves.

"Octopuses are among the most evolutionarily distant animals from humans, as our last common ancestor was a worm that lived 350 to 500 million years ago," says Kieseler. "Given that such a remote organism has independently evolved the means to use a mirror as a tool to process spatial cognition suggests that the underlying cognitive processes might be subject to convergent evolution, where different species evolve similar neural solutions to the same challenge."

The environments where octopuses live, including coral reefs and the seafloor, are often highly complex and filled with obstacles.

"Octopuses are like cats: they will sneak up on their prey and pounce, and they want to do so as fast as possible, so that they don't become

*A new study published in Current Biology found that octopuses can learn to use mirrors to locate food hidden from direct view, demonstrating sophisticated spatial thinking*

preyed upon," Tse says.

Researchers believe this kind of hunting strategy may benefit from an internal understanding of the surrounding environment.

"Hunters are very effective when they have a mental map of their territory, so that they know where they are in relation to their environments," says Tse. "Our work suggests that octopuses might also have internal maps, an internal representation of space."

The team emphasises that more research will be needed to determine whether octopuses truly maintain such mental maps. Even so, the study adds another remarkable skill to the growing list of abilities that make octopuses some of the most fascinating animals in the ocean. -ANI

ROUND-UP

‘Ford Festive Overdrive’ brings big summer rewards to Ford Explorer



Tailored for families and thrill-seekers who demand both adventure and absolute peace of mind, this exclusive promotion offers exceptional value for those looking to conquer Oman’s diverse landscapes before the event concludes

**MUSCAT:** For drivers who refuse to compromise between rugged capability and premium comfort, the Ford Explorer continues to set the benchmark for the modern SUV. As a major highlight in the highly anticipated “Ford Festive Over-

drive” campaign, the Explorer now pairs its legendary performance with an unprecedented suite of ownership rewards. Tailored for families and thrill-seekers who demand both adventure and absolute peace of mind, this exclusive pro-

motion offers exceptional value for those looking to conquer the Sultanate’s diverse landscapes before the event concludes on 12 July.

**Benefits**  
At the core of this seasonal event is a commitment to stress-free ownership. The highlight is an attractive 5-year or 100,000 km service package, meticulously designed to cover 10 scheduled maintenance intervals under standard driving conditions. Ford is reinforcing this promise with a matching 5-year or 100,000 km manufacturer’s warranty, completely complimentary vehicle registration for the first year, and a selection of custom accessories. To combat the intense regional climate, every purchase also includes the premium 3M Golden 7 Pack, delivering professional-grade window

tinting and durable ceramic paint protection. Furthermore, the showroom experience itself has been elevated; anyone who schedules a test drive will automatically enter a raffle for the chance to win one of four brand-new iPhone 17 devices.

**Engineered to dominate**  
Beyond the showroom floor, the Explorer is engineered to dominate. Motivation comes from a potent 2.3-litre turbocharged EcoBoost engine capable of generating a massive 316 horsepower along-side 420 Nm of torque. This sheer power is managed by a sophisticated, all-new 10-speed automatic transmission that ensures rapid, seamless gear shifts regardless of the driving conditions. True versatility is achieved through Ford’s Intelligent All-Wheel-Drive setup and

an advanced Terrain Management System. By offering seven distinct, selectable drive modes—including a dedicated Sand Mode—the vehicle easily masters everything from smooth city highways to the most challenging off-road trails. Stepping inside reveals an intelligently crafted environment where technology and comfort intersect. The focal point of the dashboard is an 8-inch digital touchscreen utilizing the highly intuitive SYNC 3 infotainment interface. Featuring split-screen functionality for simultaneous map and audio viewing, the system also supports Apple CarPlay to keep drivers connected without distraction. Passenger convenience is prioritized through a wireless charging pad and multiple modern type-C USB outlets. For audiophiles, the available 980-

watt, 12-speaker B&O premium sound system transforms the cabin into a rolling concert hall, while a power liftgate at the rear guarantees that loading cargo for any excursion is completely effortless. Ford has integrated its most advanced safety architecture into the Explorer. The comprehensive Ford Co-Pilot360 suite comes standard, actively protecting occupants through Pre-Collision Assist with Automatic Emergency Braking, Pedestrian Detection, Forward Collision Warning, Dynamic Brake Support, and a Blind Spot Information System featuring Cross-Traffic Alert. A Lane-Keeping System and Auto High-Beam Headlamps provide constant reassurance on long journeys. In Oman, Ford vehicles are brought to you by Arabian Car Marketing Co.

ESPORTS TOURNAMENT

Over 500 players compete in Sohar International E-Football Elite

**MUSCAT:** Sohar International concludes its first-ever Sohar International E-Football Elite, a large-scale esports tournament organized in collaboration with the Omani Gaming and Esports Committee. Held at Mall of Oman from 25 June to 2 July, the tournament brought together more than 500+ players from across the Sultanate in one of Oman’s largest e-football competitions, creating a high-energy public experience that combined competitive gaming, football culture, youth engagement, and family-friendly entertainment. Saif Said Al Rashdi, AGM & Head of branches at Sohar International, said, “Football has always held a powerful place in society, but the way people experience the game is changing. For many young people today, it is no longer limited to the pitch or the screen; it has become interactive, digital, and community-led. Esports sits at the intersection of sport, technology, entertainment, and youth culture, and its growth in Oman reflects how new forms of talent are emerging. At Sohar International, we believe meaningful engagement starts with understanding what matters to people now. E-Football Elite is part of that commitment. It allows us to connect with various gaming communities, encourage constructive digital participation, and create a platform that brings people together around something they genuinely enjoy.” The tournament followed a single-elimination knockout format, with players taking part daily between 4:00 PM and 10:00 PM until the final matches on 2 July 2026. Participants competed for a total prize pool of OMR 5,000, with OMR 3,000 awarded to the champion, OMR 1,500 to the runner-up, and OMR 500 to the third-place winner. Designed to mirror the intensity and anticipation of major



football tournaments, Sohar International E-Football Elite gave players a focused platform to test and showcase their skills. Beyond the tournament matches, the event featured a dedicated entertainment and engagement zone designed to extend the experience to visitors of all ages. The zone brought together interactive

gaming experiences, exciting competitions and challenges, audience engagement activities, daily giveaways, and prizes, creating a family-friendly environment throughout the tournament period. This wider activation gave families, fans, and gaming enthusiasts the opportunity to support players, enjoy the event, and take part in the atmosphere be-

yond the main gaming arena. The championship also contributed to the growing momentum of esports in the Sultanate. As gaming evolves from a recreational activity into a more structured ecosystem, initiatives such as the Sohar International E-Football Elite play an important role in giving local players greater visibility, encouraging

participation, and strengthening Oman’s gaming landscape. For Sohar International, the tournament reflects a broader approach to engagement, one that recognizes the importance of meeting younger audiences through platforms that are relevant to the way they connect today. Through E-Football Elite, Sohar

International continues to expand beyond traditional banking, creating innovative platforms that resonate with the next generation. The tournament underscores the Bank’s commitment to championing digital innovation, nurturing local talent, and supporting the continued growth of Oman’s gaming and esports community.



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