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51

YEARS OF LEGACY

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WORLD CUP 2026

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BELGIUM



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TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN
Museum aims to woo
Khareef tourists

1 Oman Across Ages Museum has launched a drive coinciding with Khareef Dhofar. **A2**

OMAN
Oman condemns
terrorist plots

2 Oman has condemned the terrorist plots that targeted the security of Morocco. **A6**

WORLD
18 injured during
Macron's visit

3 A series of blasts rocked Damascus amid a visit from French President. **B6**

PORTUGUESE SUPERSTAR

The end of an era,
the birth of an
eternal legend

MOHAMED ISSA AL ZADJALI
Chairman
Muscat Media Group

The final whistle blew, and a heavy silence fell over football fans worldwide. Portugal's World Cup journey had come to an end at the hands of Spain. For Cristiano Ronaldo, a man who has redefined the limits of human athletic excellence, this may have been the final chapter on the grandest stage of world football.

Ronaldo may not have achieved his ultimate, lifelong goal of lifting the World Cup trophy, but what he achieved instead cannot be measured in gold: he won the hearts of billions of people.

A Legacy of Triumph
As a player, CR7 brought glory to every club he touched, but his greatest triumphs were for our country, Portugal.

I will never forget being there in France in 2016, witnessing the sheer emotion and pride when he led his country Portugal to victory in the UEFA European Championship.

It is a memory etched into the soul of his nation forever. Even in this tournament, Ronaldo continued to defy time. He stands proud as the oldest player to ever score in a World Cup—a testament to his unmatched work ethic and longevity.

A Hero Beyond the Pitch
Yet, Cristiano's true greatness extends far outside the green playground. Off the pitch, he has proven time and again to be a wonderful, deeply compassionate human being. From funding hospitals to supporting disaster relief, his philanthropy has changed countless lives.

Unlike many other detached celebrities, his humility remains unshakable. Whether it is a child running onto the pitch or a fan waiting outside a hotel, he always makes time for a picture and a smile.

The Legend Lives On
He will live forever in the hearts of his fans. He remains a living legend, with or without a World Cup medal.

And while many are treating this as a farewell, with Ronaldo, you can never say never. After all, who knows? We might just see him defying the odds once again in 2030.

Thank you, Don. For everything.



OMAN'S GDP AT CURRENT PRICES TOPS OMR10BN

Service activities continued to demonstrate robust growth, expanding by 8.5 per cent to reach OMR5.146 billion

MUSCAT: Preliminary data released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) indicate that the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the Sultanate of Oman at current prices amounted to approximately OMR10.293 billion by the end of the first quarter of 2026, compared to OMR 10.500 billion during the same period in 2025, registering a decline of 2 percent.

The results further revealed that oil-related activities recorded a downturn of 11.7 percent, with their value reaching OMR3,228.800 million, compared to OMR 3,656.100 million in the first quarter of 2025.

This decline is attributable to a 12.6 percent decrease in the value of crude oil activity, which amounted to OMR 2,406.900 million, against OMR 2,753.700 million during the corresponding period of the previous year.

Similarly, the value of natural gas activity fell by 8.9 percent, reaching OMR 821,900,000, compared to OMR 902,300,000.

Conversely, non-oil activities recorded a growth rate of 5.9 percent, with their value increasing from OMR 7,044.700 million in the first quarter of 2025 to OMR 7,462.600 million in the first quarter of 2026.

The agriculture and fishing sector witnessed a growth of 4.7 percent, reaching OMR 359,100,000, compared to OMR 343 million.

Meanwhile, industrial activities experienced a marginal decline of 0.1 percent, totalling OMR 1,957 million, against OMR 1,959.400 million during the same period of the preceding year.

Service activities continued to demonstrate robust growth, expanding by 8.5 percent to reach OMR 5,146.600 million, compared to OMR 4,742.300 million in the first quarter of 2025. This growth was underpinned by the expansion recorded across several economic activities, most notably financial intermediation and insurance, which surged by 25.4 percent; other services, which grew by 10.7 percent; information and communications activities, which rose by 8.3 percent; and professional, scientific, technical, and administrative services, which increased by 8.2 percent.

SOARING SHIPPING COSTS

Why Pakistani mangoes are costlier in Oman this year?

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Pakistani mangoes are selling at higher prices in Oman this summer as soaring shipping costs and changes in cargo routes have significantly increased import expenses, distributors told Times of Oman on Tuesday.

While consumers have seen only a modest increase in retail prices, importers and wholesalers say they are absorbing most of the additional costs.

"Last year, the shipping cost for one container was around \$1,000 to \$1,300. This year, because of the regional conflict, the cost has risen to between \$6,000 and \$7,000 per container," a retailer told Times of Oman. He added that most shipments this season are being routed through Salalah instead of So-

Workers sort and pack freshly harvested mangoes into plastic crates at a wholesale fruit market during the peak mango season in Pakistan

har, resulting in additional inland transportation and port clearance expenses of around \$1,000 per container. "Most of this increase is being absorbed by importers and wholesale traders, with only a small portion being passed on to

retailers and consumers," he said.

Oman imports an average of around 15,000 metric tonnes of mangoes from Pakistan each year. The fresh mango season typically begins in the first week of June and continues until the end of August.

Pakistani mangoes continue to remain the most popular variety of mango in Oman, and we will make every effort to ensure that our Omani brothers and sisters continue to enjoy this special treat from Pakistan

SYED NAVEED SAFDAR BOKHARI,
Pakistan's Ambassador to Oman

"However, we expect a slight decline in import volumes this year, mainly because of the sharp increase in shipping costs," the retailer said.

Pakistan's Ambassador to Oman, Syed Naveed Safdar Bokhari, said

Pakistan remains committed to ensuring that Omani consumers continue to enjoy its world-famous mangoes.

"Pakistani mangoes continue to remain the most popular variety of mango in Oman, and we will make

every effort to ensure that our Omani brothers and sisters continue to enjoy this special treat from Pakistan," the ambassador said.

Distributors in Oman say the popularity of Pakistani mangoes has expanded well beyond the Pakistani expatriate community. "Every year, demand increases significantly. Earlier, it was mainly Pakistani customers who bought them regularly, but now shoppers from many other nationalities specifically come looking for Pakistani mangoes," a distributor said. **A2**



Work continues on construction of internal roads in Al Buraimi

The asphalt paving stage has been completed at 10 sites, and work is underway to complete the necessary protections for them



AL BURAIMI: The Wilayat of Al Buraimi is witnessing continuous progress in the execution of a package of internal road and urban humanisation projects, within the framework of efforts exerted to enhance infrastructure, develop service and tourism facilities, and upgrade the efficiency of road networks in the governorate.

Regarding the progress of work on road paving projects, Eng. Obaid Salim Al Kaabi, Director of the Projects Department in Al Buraimi Governorate, stated that the governorate has completed

paving 25 kilometres under the first package, where the completion rate of basic works reached 84 percent, while the overall completion rate of the project's works reached 51 percent.

Meanwhile, 20 kilometres were paved in the second package, with a completion rate for its related works reaching 50 percent, bringing the total work completion rate in this package to 33 percent.

In the aspect related to the maintenance of roads affected by weather conditions, the Director

of the Projects Department in Al Buraimi Governorate mentioned that the overall completion rate has reached 16 percent.

The asphalt paving stage has been completed at 10 sites, and work is underway to complete the necessary protections for them, coinciding with the start of maintenance works at 10 other new sites distributed along the old road linking (Mahdah - Al Fayy) and a number of locations in the Wilayat of Al Buraimi.

He explained that on the front of

“urban humanisation” and public street development projects, the development project of the public street from Al Salam Roundabout to Al Khadra Roundabout was completed in February of the current year 2026.

The project was established on a total area of 35,450 square metres, and its works included the construction of health walkways with a length of 2,688 metres.

He confirmed that work is currently continuing on the development project of the public street

from Al Nahdah Roundabout to Al Salam Roundabout, which extends over an area of approximately 90,000 square meters and a length of 4,868 meters.

The project is distinguished by providing integrated and diverse facilities that enhance aesthetic and investment value, including health walkways, green spaces, water features, a bicycle track, alongside restrooms, investment buildings, canopies designated for cafes, and replacing the current lighting poles with modern poles for the public street.

In the same context, the Director of the Projects Department in Al Buraimi Governorate pointed out that the bicycle project is cur-

rently in the design stage.

The length of the project is 6 kilometres with a width of 3 metres, and it includes facilities and parking spaces dedicated for vehicles and bicycles on an area of 200 square metres, as well as constructing the necessary protections for the track to ensure the safety of its users.

It is worth noting that these projects come within the context of keeping pace with the urban expansion and commercial activity in the governorate, contributing to creating a healthy and ideal environment equipped with all recreational and service facilities for citizens, residents, and visitors.

-ONA

MUSEUM TOURISM

Oman Across Ages Museum launches drive to attract Khareef Dhofar tourists

MANAH: Oman Across Ages Museum has launched a campaign, coinciding with preparations for the 2026 Khareef Dhofar (monsoon) season.

The initiative aims to promote museum tourism and encourage visitors travelling to Dhofar Governorate to include the museum among their tourist destinations, offering them an opportunity to explore its distinctive cultural experience, which showcases the historical and civilisational heritage of the Sultanate of Oman across various eras.

Eng. Al Yaqdhan Abdullah Al Harthi, Director General the Oman Across Ages Museum, stated that the campaign is designed to reinforce the museum's presence on the cultural tourism map of the Sultanate and to highlight its role in presenting Omani civilisational heritage through its collections, artifacts and interactive halls.

He pointed put that the campaign encompasses a range of



media and marketing programs across social media platforms and various media outlets, while also utilizing promotional materials at selected locations both within and outside the Sultanate of Oman.

These efforts, he affirmed, aim to reach diverse visitor segments and familiarize them with the cultural and educational experience the museum offers.

He further noted that Oman Across Ages Museum plays a pivotal role in supporting cultural tourism by safeguarding national heritage and presenting it through modern exhibition techniques.

This contributes to deepening awareness of Oman's history and civilisational achievements while cementing the museum's status as a premier destination for visitors

and those with an interest in history and culture.

Heritage, cultural diversity

He explained that the campaign is part of the museum's broader efforts to stimulate tourism activity during Khareef Dhofar season, strengthen the synergy between tourism and cultural assets, and contribute to showcasing the rich historical, heritage and cultural diversity of the Sultanate of Oman—aligning with the developmental objectives of the tourism sector and the promotion of domestic tourism.

It is worth noting that the museum's previous campaigns have yielded positive results in attracting visitors, broadening the museum's recognition and its facilities, and reinforcing its presence across various media platforms—solidifying its standing as one of the Sultanate of Oman's most prominent cultural and tourism landmarks. -ONA

WITH MALAYSIA

MoU signed to combat money laundering



KUALA LUMPUR: The National Centre for Financial Information on Tuesday signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Malaysia's Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) on the sidelines of Egmont Group's plenary meeting held in Baku, Republic of Azerbaijan.

The MoU aims to coordinate

efforts in exchanging information and experiences and exploring the best practices in the field of combating money laundering, terrorism financing and the proliferation of weapons.

The MoU was signed by Col. Juma Matar Al Dhuhli, CEO of the National Center for Financial Information. -ONA

AL WUSTA

Four Asian nationals arrested

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Four Asian nationals, including one woman, were arrested for stealing electrical cables from one of the companies operating in the concession areas of Al Wusta Governorate.

The arrests were carried out by the Oil and Gas Installations Security Police Command, and legal procedures are being completed against them.

Medical evacuation

The ROP Air Wing carried

out a medical evacuation operation for a citizen from Jaalan Bani Bu Ali Hospital to Sur Reference Hospital after her health condition deteriorated. The patient was airlifted to receive specialised medical care and urgent treatment.

FOREIGN MINISTRY

Oman condemns two bombings in Damascus

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman has expressed its condemnation and denunciation of the two bombings that took place yesterday in Damascus. Oman affirmed its solidarity with Syria in confronting everything that targets its security and stability. In a statement by the Foreign Ministry, Oman reiterated its firm stance in rejecting all forms and manifestations of violence and terrorism. -ONA



FRESH HARVEST

Naturally ripened mangoes suited to premium markets

<FROM A1 Every summer, the orchards of Pakistan's river-fed plains in Sindh and Punjab come alive with the harvest of fresh, fragrant mangoes.

Pakistan produces more than 1.8 million tonnes of mangoes annually, making it one of the world's leading producers. However, industry experts say it is the fruit's exceptional quality—not just the volume—that distinguishes Pakistani mangoes in international markets.

Pakistani mangoes are renowned for their rich flavour, juicy pulp, low fibre content and distinctive aroma. Among the country's most celebrated va-

rieties is Sindhri, known for its long golden shape and honey-like sweetness, which marks the beginning of the mango season.

It is followed by Langra, prized for its creamy texture and bold flavour; Anwar Ratol, a small but intensely sweet variety; and Chausa, often regarded as the finest of them all for its exceptional juiciness, fragrance and soft texture.

“These are not generic exports; they are regional masterpieces, often grown in family-owned orchards passed down through generations and nurtured by growers who know exactly when to harvest and how to care for the fruit,” an official said.

Demand for Pakistani mangoes

continues to grow in Oman, with the fruit attracting an increasingly diverse customer base.

“There is growing international demand for naturally ripened, chemical-free fruit. Pakistani mangoes, often ripened naturally under the sun, are well suited to premium markets. With certification support and improved traceability, mango farms in Pakistan are gaining access to high-end retailers across Middle East, Europe and North America,” the official said. “In short, Pakistan's mango season represents much more than agriculture. It is a celebration of tradition, flavour and cultural connection that crosses borders and generations.”



Ministry of Labour

Tender Announcement

The Internal Tender Committee at the Ministry of Labour announces the following tender:

Tender No.	Tender title	Last date for tender purchase online	Bid submission date
16/2026	Providing a maintenance team for mechanical, electrical, and civil engineering for the Ministry's headquarters building.	Wednesday 15/07/2026	Sunday 26/07/2026

- Specialized establishments may obtain the tender's documents online through the following link, starting from Monday 06/07/2026 at 08:00 a.m.:
/https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om
- Bids shall be opened at 11:00 am on Sunday 26/07/2026.

(The Ministry shall not be bound to accept the lowest or any other bid)



labour_OMAN

Bank Muscat Drives Innovation Across Oman’s Financial Sector

How would you describe Bank Muscat’s digital transformation journey so far, and what have been the most impactful technology-led initiatives under your leadership?

Bank Muscat’s digital transformation journey has been driven by a long-term vision focused on enhancing customer experience, strengthening operational efficiency, and accelerating innovation across all areas of the business. Over the past few years, the Bank has made significant investments in digital infrastructure and smart banking solutions to ensure customers can access secure, seamless, and convenient services anytime and anywhere.

One of the most impactful initiatives has been the continuous enhancement of the Bank’s mobile and internet banking platforms, enabling customers to complete a wide range of banking services digitally, including account opening, payments, transfers, card management, and financing services. The Bank has also played a leading role in accelerating digital payments adoption in Oman through contactless payment solutions, mobile wallet integration, and QR-based payment capabilities.

On the corporate banking side, Bank Muscat has introduced integrated digital banking solutions and API-enabled platforms that allow businesses to connect banking services directly with their operational systems. A recent example is the Bank’s collaboration with major corporates to implement digitally integrated banking ecosystems that streamline financial operations, improve cash management efficiency, and support real-time transaction visibility.

The Bank has also expanded the use of automation and advanced analytics to improve internal processes and deliver more personalized customer experiences.

These initiatives reflect Bank Muscat’s broader commitment to building a future-ready banking ecosystem aligned with evolving customer expectations and Oman’s digital transformation agenda.

In your view, what emerging digital technologies are most



Ahmed bin Omar Al Ojaili

is a seasoned technology and banking executive with more than 25 years of experience in IT management and leadership in the banking sector. He currently serves as General Manager-Technology at Bank Muscat. His expertise includes technology strategy, IT governance, digital transformation, and building secure and resilient enterprise technology infrastructures and enterprise strategic technology solutions. In a conversation with Times of Oman, he talks about Bank Muscat’s digital transformation journey and the innovation agenda, and the emerging technologies and their impact on banking as we move ahead.

critical for the future of the banking and financial services sector in Oman?

The banking sector in Oman is entering a new phase where technology will become increasingly central to customer engagement, operational resilience and financial innovation. In my view, artificial intelligence, advanced data analytics, cloud technologies, cybersecurity solutions and open banking frameworks will be among the most critical drivers shaping the future of financial services.

Artificial intelligence, for example, has significant potential in areas such as fraud prevention, personalized financial recommendations, intelligent customer service, and predictive analytics. AI-powered solutions can help banks better understand customer behavior while delivering faster and more efficient services.

Similarly, data analytics will continue to play an essential role in enabling smarter decision-making and more tailored banking experiences. Cloud-based infrastructure is also becoming increasingly important because it improves scalability, flexibility, and the ability to rapidly deploy innovative services.

In Oman specifically, digital payments and fintech collaboration are expected to accelerate further as customers increasingly adopt cashless and mobile-first banking solutions. Ini-

Gulf Leaders Circle



TOP DIGITAL LEADERS IN OMAN 2026 SERIES

IN ASSOCIATION WITH



tiatives supporting embedded finance and API integration will also help create a more connected financial ecosystem between banks, businesses, and technology providers. At the same time, cybersecurity innovation remains absolutely critical. As digital adoption increases, maintaining customer trust through robust cybersecurity frameworks, fraud monitoring systems, and data protection measures will remain a top priority for all financial institutions.

How do you balance innovation with security, compliance and risk management in an increasingly digital-first banking environment?

Balancing innovation with security and regulatory compliance is fundamental to sustainable digital transformation in banking. At Bank Muscat, innovation is pursued within a strong governance and risk management framework to ensure customer trust and operational resilience remain protected at all times.

The Bank follows a structured approach where cybersecurity, compliance, and risk considerations are integrated into the development and implementation of digital initiatives from the very beginning. This enables the Bank to innovate responsibly while remaining aligned with regulatory standards and international best practices.

For example, as the Bank con-

tinues expanding digital banking services and payment solutions, significant investments are simultaneously being made in cybersecurity infrastructure, fraud detection systems, real-time monitoring capabilities, and data protection technologies.

These measures help safeguard customer information and strengthen resilience against evolving cyber threats.

The Bank also maintains close collaboration with regulators and industry stakeholders to ensure innovation progresses in a secure and well-governed manner. This balanced approach allows Bank Muscat to continue introducing advanced digital solutions while maintaining the highest standards of security, compliance, and risk management

What role do talent development and organizational culture play in successfully driving digital transformation within large institutions?

Talent development and organizational culture are among the most important foundations of successful digital transformation. Technology alone cannot drive transformation unless institutions also invest in people, leadership capabilities, and a culture that embraces innovation and continuous learning.

At Bank Muscat, significant emphasis is placed on developing future-ready talent through learning and development initiatives focused on digital skills, leadership, innovation, and emerging technologies. The Bank also encourages collaboration between business, operations, and technology teams to create more agile and customer-centric solutions.

Programmes aimed at empowering Omani talent and strengthening professional capabilities continue to play a key role in supporting the Bank’s transformation journey. In addition, initiatives that encourage creativity, adaptability, and cross-functional collaboration help foster a culture where innovation can thrive.

Equally important is maintaining a customer-focused mindset across the organization. Digital transformation is not only about adopting new

technologies but also about rethinking how services are designed and delivered to create greater value for customers and businesses alike.

Looking ahead, what is your vision for the evolution of digital banking in Oman, and how do you see Bank Muscat contributing to the nation’s Vision 2040 agenda on innovation and digital technologies?

The future of digital banking in Oman will be increasingly shaped by intelligent technologies, seamless digital ecosystems, and highly personalized customer experiences. Banking services will continue evolving beyond traditional transactions toward integrated platforms that support customers’ financial and lifestyle needs in real time.

As Oman advances toward Vision 2040, the financial sector will play a central role in supporting economic diversification, innovation, entrepreneurship, and digital inclusion. Bank Muscat is committed to contributing to this transformation by continuing to invest in advanced technologies, digital infrastructure, and innovative banking solutions that enhance accessibility and efficiency across the financial ecosystem.

For example, the Bank’s ongoing investments in digital payments, smart banking platforms, integrated corporate banking solutions, and fintech collaboration initiatives are helping accelerate the shift toward a more digitally connected economy. The Bank also continues to support SMEs and emerging businesses through digital solutions designed to improve operational efficiency and enable growth.

Looking ahead, Bank Muscat aims to further strengthen partnerships with technology providers, fintech companies, corporates, and national institutions to help build a future-ready financial ecosystem that supports Oman’s long-term economic ambitions.

By combining innovation with responsible banking practices, investment in talent, and a strong customer-centric approach, Bank Muscat will continue playing a leading role in shaping the future of digital banking in Oman and supporting the objectives of Vision 2040.

ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS

Students develop waste sorting robot system

MUSCAT: In a step reflecting advanced environmental awareness and the ability to harness modern technology in service of society, female students Al Reem Rashid Al Issae and Al Noura Jaafar Al Ajmi have developed a project titled “Waste Sorting Using Robots.”

The system uses robots, sensors, cameras, programming and artificial intelligence (AI) to automatically classify waste into categories such as plastic, paper, metals and glass.

The project aims to promote recycling by separating reusable materials, reduce reliance on manual sorting, raise environmental awareness among students and the community, and encourage the use of modern technologies in waste management more efficiently and sustainably. Al Reem said the idea came from observing the challenges of waste accumulation and manual sorting difficulties. The project offers a technological solution to improve recycling efficiency through a robot that identifies waste types and directs them to the appropriate



container.

Using robots helps reduce mixed and contaminated waste and supports efforts to protect the environment and natural resources, she added.

Al Noura said the project is not limited to environmental benefits but also offers an applied educational experience combining science, technology, engineering and mathematics. It involved programming, sensor installation, motor control and problem-solving.

She affirmed that the project developed creative thinking and teamwork skills, while opening

the door to applying AI and computer vision to real-world problems.

Project supervisor Asmaa Abdullah Al Farsi said the innovation lies at the intersection of modern technology and environmental protection, offering a practical model for how robots can serve society and fostering a culture of innovation and sustainable solutions.

Such projects help prepare students for future skills, instil awareness of recycling, and reduce health risks associated with direct handling of waste during manual sorting, she added. -ONA

NORTH AL BATINAH

Man arrested in Shinas for theft

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The North Al Batinah Governorate Police Command has arrested an individual for allegedly stealing several air conditioning and refrigeration units, electric generators, and a gas cylinder from multiple locations in

the Wilayat of Shinas.

According to the Royal Oman Police, the suspect also caused a rented vehicle to catch fire after the stolen gas cylinder exploded inside the vehicle.

Legal procedures against the accused are currently being completed.



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Woman referees in Oman’s football: A rising presence and their global aspirations

Regarding the future of women’s refereeing in Oman, Maryam Salim Al Hadrami conveyed her optimism for a promising future, given the growing support from sports institutions

MUSCAT: Omani international referee Maryam Salim Al Hadrami has successfully established a distinguished presence in the field of football officiating at both domestic and international levels. Her journey, which began with a passion for the game, has evolved into a professional career through which she has carried the name of the Sultanate of Oman across numerous continental and international tournaments.

In an interview with Oman News Agency (ONA), International Referee Maryam Al Hadrami stated that her journey into refereeing originated from her profound interest in football and her desire to be an integral part of the sport. She noted that her deep immersion in the laws and intricacies of the game steered her to-



ward the field of officiating, which she described as “a comprehensive school in discipline, fairness and accountability.”

She further elaborated that she enrolled in the refereeing courses organized by Oman Football Association and began officiating local matches progressively starting in 2015, before attaining the international badge in 2020—a milestone she emphasized as a pivotal turning point in her athletic career.

Al Hadrami explained that reaching the international refereeing level represents both an honour and a national responsibility, particularly given her representation of the Sultanate of Oman in Asian and international

tournaments for both women and men, including the AFC Women’s Asian Cup and the AFC Asian Cup qualifiers for men. She affirmed that these participations have significantly refined her technical and physical expertise while affording her the opportunity to represent her nation in the most exemplary manner.

Addressing the challenges encountered, she indicated that women’s refereeing, in its early stages, faced some societal skepticism given the novelty of the experience for Omani women. Nevertheless, the support she received from her family and the Omani football system served as a driving force for perseverance and

for transforming challenges into achievements.

She emphasized that a successful referee requires thorough preparation, self-confidence and the ability to maintain focus and composure during matches. She clarified that officiating demands sustained effort to preserve physical and mental readiness, alongside the capacity to balance personal life with the requirements of athletic commitments.

She stated that Omani women have proven their presence and excellence across various domains of football—whether as players, coaches, administrators, or referees—expressing her pride in the athletic accomplishments Omani



women have achieved at both the regional and international levels.

Regarding the future of women’s refereeing in the Sultanate of Oman, She conveyed her optimism for a promising future, given the growing support that sports institutions are directing toward the development of female personnel. She affirmed that the coming years will witness an even more prominent presence of Omani female referees across various sporting arenas.

She underscored the pivotal role of sports institutions in supporting female referees through the provision of continuous training and development programs, facilitating participation oppor-

tunities in domestic and international tournaments and camps, and fostering an enabling environment that bolsters confidence and contributes to the enhancement of technical and physical capabilities.

She affirmed that football has taught her that success is not a matter of chance, but rather the outcome of persistent effort, patience and determination. It has also reinforced in her the values of discipline, responsibility and teamwork. She added that the challenges she encountered throughout her career have served as significant milestones for learning, growth and character development. -ONA

NINE CLUBS



Oman Football Association announces draw results for Women’s Futsal League

MUSCAT: The Women’s Committee of Oman Football Association has announced the results of the draw for the Women’s Futsal League for the 2026/2027 sports season, featuring the participation of nine clubs. The league competitions are set to commence in September of this year in Muscat Governorate.

The draw results revealed the distribution of participating clubs into two groups. Group One comprises Al Shabab Club, Salalah Club, Al Amerat Club, Qurayyat Club and Sohar Club, while Group Two includes Fanja Club, Al-Bashayer Club, Masirah Club and Saham Club.

Hajar Khamis Al Muzaini, member of the Board of Directors of Oman Football Association and Chairwoman of the Women’s Committee, stated that domestic competitions serve as the fundamental pillar for the development of women’s football, providing a sustained competitive environment that contributes to talent identification and the technical, physical, and mental development of players.

She further emphasized that the league constitutes a vital platform for player monitoring and performance evaluation, which directly impacts the quality of selection options available to the national teams across various age categories in the upcoming phase.

In a statement to Oman News Agency (ONA), she explained that following the closure of

registration for clubs wishing to participate, Oman Football Association ensured the convening of an introductory meeting with club representatives. During this session, the tournament regulations and system were reviewed, and all organizational and technical aspects were discussed to ensure clarity of roles and responsibilities.

The preparatory phase also includes the implementation of a comprehensive package of training courses and workshops tailored for team administrators, match observers and referees, aimed at enhancing the competence of national cadres and fostering a professional environment conducive to the success of the new season.

She added that the teams were allocated into two groups in accordance with the draw results, and the league will be conducted in two stages. In the first stage, teams will be classified into two groups following a specific mechanism, with the top-placed teams from each group advancing to the second stage of the league, which will be contested under a home-and-away round-robin format within a single group.

Meanwhile, the lower-ranked clubs will compete in a separate competition designated as the “Talent Cup,” designed to increase the number of competitive matches and elevate the technical standards of both clubs and players, she pointed out. -ONA

SUMMER ACTIVITIES

Diverse events included in ‘Summer of Sports 2026’ programme in Dhofar

SALALAH: The “Summer of Sports 2026” programme in Dhofar Governorate includes several diverse sporting events that cater to the desires of various segments of society. These events are held in different locations and attract various age groups of both genders, especially the youth, who are the target group for these summer activities and events designed to develop and discover talents in various sports.

The Directorate General of Culture, Sports and Youth in Dhofar Governorate attaches great importance to the Summer of Sports program, which began implementation on 21 June and will continue until 21 August 2026. The programme aims to promote physical activity and spread the culture of sports practice among various segments of society. It also seeks to utilise free time during the summer vacation by providing the youth with the opportunity to learn new skills, as well as discover and hone promising sporting talents.

The various sports facilities in Dhofar Governorate are witnessing positive momentum from the different age groups participating in the various activities and events included in this year’s Summer of Sports. The programme relies on four main tracks launched by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth to promote physical fitness and sports activity as part of daily life. The sports training centers, held at the Sultan Qaboos Youth Complex for Culture and Entertainment in Salalah and the Al Saada Complex, include several diverse sports. The open sports days encompass multiple recreational events targeting all age groups, in addition to dedicated programmes for persons with disabilities and the elderly.

The sports caravans aim to stimulate the sports aspect and physical activities in the various wilayats of the governorate that lack sports clubs. Furthermore, there are awareness programs focusing on promoting the concept



of voluntary work in the sports field and raising awareness of the importance of practicing sports to enhance public health.

The program includes a group of sports that cater to the desires of different age groups. This is represented in the swimming center, which is witnessing significant participation and attendance from the target group of 7 to 16 years, and bowling for the 7 to 16 years age group.

The outdoor facilities of the Sultan Qaboos Youth Compound for Culture and Entertainment in Salalah host a range of sports, most notably football for the 10 to 16 age group, basketball for the 16 and above age group, tennis for the 16 and above age group, volleyball for the 16 and above age group, and badminton targeting the 7 to 16 age group.

The physical fitness event enjoys large participation and attendance from the target group of 18 years and above, held in the sports hall and the outdoor track. Additionally, this year’s Summer of Sports program includes an open day for the elderly, an awareness lecture on the importance of physical activity, a workshop on sports volunteering in sports clubs, an open sports day for persons with disabilities, a sports caravan in the Wilayat of Sadah, and an open sports day in cooperation with the Mirbat Club. This is in addition to sports and recreational events for families and children, which will be held at the modern waterfront in the Atin Plain.

The Women’s Activity Center, during the implementation of the Summer of Sports 2026 programmes in Dhofar Governorate, includes a set of events targeting various age groups of women, represented in swimming, bowling, and physical fitness, along with an awareness lecture on the importance of physical activity.

The various sports facilities in Dhofar Governorate are experiencing significant momentum during the summer period. This is especially true for the facilities of the Sultan Qaboos Youth Complex for Culture and Entertainment in Salalah, which is considered an integrated edifice that embraces the energies of the youth through the availability of 28 cultural and sports facilities. This aims to create an ideal environment for honing talents, practicing physical activities, and enhancing sportsmanship and community participation among all segments of society. Women’s Committee of Oman Football Association has announced the results of the draw for the Women’s Futsal League for the 2026/2027 sports season, featuring the participation of nine clubs. The league competitions are set to commence in September of this year in Muscat Governorate.

The draw results revealed the distribution of participating clubs into two groups. Group One comprises Al Shabab Club, Salalah Club, Al Amerat Club, Qurayyat Club and Sohar Club, while Group Two includes Fanja Club, Al-

Bashayer Club, Masirah Club and Saham Club.

Hajar Khamis Al Muzaini, member of the Board of Directors of Oman Football Association and Chairwoman of the Women’s Committee, stated that domestic competitions serve as the fundamental pillar for the development of women’s football, providing a sustained competitive environment that contributes to talent identification and the technical, physical, and mental development of players.

She emphasised that the league constitutes a vital platform for player monitoring and performance evaluation, which directly impacts the quality of selection options available to the national teams across various age categories in the upcoming phase.

In a statement to Oman News Agency (ONA), she explained that following the closure of registration for clubs wishing to participate, Oman Football Association ensured the convening of an introductory meeting with club representatives. During this session, the tournament regulations and system were reviewed, and all organizational and technical aspects were discussed to ensure clarity of roles and responsibilities.

The preparatory phase also includes the implementation of a comprehensive package of training courses and workshops tailored for team administrators, match observers and referees, aimed at enhancing the competence of national cadres and fostering a professional environment conducive to the success of the new season.

She added that the teams were allocated into two groups in accordance with the draw results, and the league will be conducted in two stages. In the first stage, teams will be classified into two groups following a specific mechanism, with the top-placed teams from each group advancing to the second stage of the league, which will be contested under a home-and-away round-robin format within a single group. -ONA

COMMENTARY

MSX offers investors diverse opportunities for steady returns

Backed by a stable economy, transparent regulations and government's continuous efforts under Oman Vision 2040, the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) provides a whole range of opportunities for investors looking for steady returns.

As Oman continues to benefit from strengthening macroeconomic fundamentals, ongoing structural reforms, and improving investor confidence, investors can remain positive on the equity market outlook and also identify some compelling opportunities. Oman's stock market has evolved into one of the most promising investment destinations in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region, analysts said.

Trading data issued by the MSX last week showed a return of liquidity to trading, with the value of trading rising by 52 percent to OMR247.8 million, compared to OMR162.6 million in the previous week. The number of executed transactions also rose by 25.2 percent to 48,000 transactions, compared to 38,000 transactions executed in the previous week.

The MSX also recorded gains in its market capitalisation during the week, estimated at OMR667.4 million, ending its trading at OMR36.83 billion, benefiting from the return of leading stocks to an upward trend.

The overall year-to-date returns of Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) remains in double-digit territory, standing at 28%, the highest in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).

Looking ahead, MSX aims to further strengthen its regulatory framework, expand investor outreach initiatives, and cultivate an environment conducive to sustainable economic growth, according to a report last week.

Analysts say that there are several key sectors that are



driving Oman's stock market performance and giving it an upward momentum as well shaping future opportunities for investors.

The energy sector remains the major contributor to Oman's gross domestic product (GDP). However, the country is now shifting from dependence on crude oil exports to energy diversification and industrial expansion. Companies in oil and gas services, manufacturing, mining, and industrial logistics have become attractive investments.

Also, the banking sector which has become the cornerstone of Oman's economy and dominates the MSX in both capitalisation and trading volume. These include among others, Bank Muscat, National Bank of Oman and Bank Dhofar which have been consistently delivering solid returns, high liquidity, and stable dividend payouts.

Oman's telecom sector has seen steady growth due to digitalisation, 5G rollout, and

increasing internet penetration.

Also, Oman's geographic position along the Indian Ocean and its modern port facilities, such as Port of Sohar, Duqm, and Salalah make it a strategic logistics hub for international trade.

Companies in transportation, warehousing, and construction sectors benefit from massive infrastructure projects linked to Vision 2040 and the Belt and Road initiative.

By enhancing its reputation as a gateway for international investment and adhering to global best practices in financial markets, MSX further seeks to consolidate its position as a leading choice for investors interested in opportunities in Oman's dynamic capital market.

Investing in MSX? Investing in Oman's stock market offers a powerful combination of low taxation, stable governance, and growing corporate performance.

With no capital gains tax, strong dividend culture, and reforms encouraging transparency and expansion, the Muscat Stock Exchange stands as one of the most investor-friendly markets in the Middle East.

Whether you're looking for long-term wealth creation or steady dividend income, the MSX provides the tools, regulation, and opportunities to achieve your investment goals in Oman.

SIKA Wins Best Brand in Customer Experience Award in Waterproofing Solutions Category



SIKA was felicitated with the 'Best Brand in Customer Experience (CX) Award in Waterproofing Solutions 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.

SIKA has consistently demonstrated a strong commitment to customer experience by delivering innovative and high-performance waterproofing solutions that meet the evolving needs of the construction industry. Renowned for its advanced technologies and reliable products, SIKA supports residential, commercial, and infrastructure projects with solutions designed to enhance durability, sustainability, and long-term performance.

With a customer-centric approach built on technical expertise, quality assurance, and on-site support, SIKA

works closely with contractors, consultants, architects, and developers to provide tailored waterproofing systems that deliver dependable results. Its commitment to product innovation, technical training, and responsive customer service has helped establish lasting relationships and earned the trust of customers across Oman and the region.

By continuously investing in research and development, sustainable construction technologies, and comprehensive customer support, SIKA continues to set benchmarks in customer experience within the waterproofing solutions sector. Its ability to combine innovation, performance, and service excellence reinforces its position as a trusted partner in the construction industry.

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 custom-

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er expectations. The winners are selected based on an extensive consumer survey conducted by the Times of Oman.

Omani thinkers urge conscious reading to foster critical thinking

Conscious reading has emerged as a vital tool for restoring intellectual balance and cultivating critical awareness



MUSCAT: In a world of accelerating events and an unprecedented multiplication of information sources, the challenge is no longer access to knowledge, but the ability to understand it and distinguish what builds genuine awareness from what adds mere intellectual noise.

In an age of competing notifications, overlapping digital platforms, and shrinking distances between events and their reception, conscious reading has emerged as a vital tool for restoring intellectual balance, cultivating critical awareness, and reshaping the individual's relationship with knowledge.

This question takes on deeper significance amid the transformations of contemporary society, where knowledge is no longer simply accumulated information, but a means of shaping the self, forming consciousness, and building the capacity for understanding, analysis and engagement with the world.

A central question arises: how can reading restore human equilibrium in an age of rapid content consumption, particularly among young people?

As life accelerates and space for reflection shrinks beneath the deluge of digital content, writer and cultural enthusiast Labeed bin Mubarak Al Amri argues that conscious reading is no longer a cultural choice but an existential

necessity for recalibrating inner balance. Reading, he said, is not merely consuming texts, but an act of "internal engineering" that helps repair the soul and reshape the mind. When one reads, they do not simply store words, but build a mental library that serves as a roadmap for understanding themselves and the world.

The rapid pace of modern life, with its constant notifications and accelerating content, drives people toward intellectual superficiality and diminishes their capacity for reflection, making deep reading a necessary practice to resist fragmentation, he said.

Thoughtful reading is not a withdrawal from reality but a deeper engagement with it, granting individuals the ability to view events from a wider analytical distance, fostering understanding over reaction, and awareness over consumption. Reading, he affirmed, is a counterforce to the culture of rapid consumption, as a deep reader imposes their own intellectual rhythm rather than having it imposed upon them.

The solitude that accompanies reading is not emptiness, but a fertile space for reflection and self-reconstruction — in contrast to the "digital alienation" experienced amid abundant connectivity yet scarce meaning.

The rise in psychological disorders in the modern era is partly linked to the accelerating digital pace, he noted, suggesting that

conscious reading could serve as one of the most important tools for psychological and intellectual balance in this context. Visual artist Sanaa Said Al Humaidi views reading as a fundamental pillar of human development and a strategic tool for building a knowledge society, aligned with Oman Vision 2040, which places human beings at the heart and purpose of development.

Reading, she said, is no longer merely a means of acquiring information but a civilisational practice that shapes individual and collective consciousness, building the intellectual and cultural capital needed to keep pace with rapid global change.

She described reading as an effective tool for developing critical thinking, enhancing creative capacities, and producing knowledge that moves beyond reception to creation and impact. Translating the impact of reading from the individual to the community represents a direct investment in people as the axis of development.

Establishing a reading culture among young people requires an integrated system, she said: beginning with the family as the primary incubator of knowledge, extending to educational institutions that foster thinking and innovation, and reaching cultural and media institutions responsible for entrenching reading as a sustainable societal value.

Reading clubs, intellectual fo-

ums, cultural initiatives and exhibitions help transform reading from an individual activity into a productive community movement, opening space for dialogue, expertise exchange and idea generation. Knowledge does not flourish in isolation, but grows through interaction and participation, she added.

Her experience as a visual artist and researcher in culture and leadership has reinforced her conviction that reading is the primary source of creativity, she explained. Any successful artistic work, cultural project or community initiative is preceded by an accumulation of knowledge that enriches the imagination and deepens vision.

Reading is not the consumption of knowledge but its reproduction in more innovative forms, she said. A conscious reader does not simply receive ideas, but reshapes, develops and applies them in reality.

She stressed the importance of moving from traditional reading to interactive reading based on analysis, reflection and connecting knowledge to real-world contexts. Translating books into intellectual, creative or community projects represents the essence of the true value of reading.

She concluded by affirming that reading serves as a bridge between tradition and modernity, enhances Omani soft power, and helps showcase national cultural achievements regionally and internationally. Reading is not an end in itself, but a means of building individuals capable of thinking, creating and shaping the future.

If the previous perspective focused on reading as an investment in intellectual capital and the building of a knowledge society, Hajer Ali Al Masfari shifts the dialogue toward a deeper dimension: reading's capacity to transform knowledge into behaviour and shape a value system that guides individuals in their daily decisions — particularly among young people.

She said that while the world today experiences an unprecedented flow of information and speed of access, this does not necessarily translate into higher levels of understanding or deeper knowledge. The essential difference, she stressed, lies between those who consume information and those who transform it into genuine awareness.

Conscious reading is the means by which one distinguishes fleeting information from lasting knowledge, she explained. Its impact may not be immediately apparent, but it accumulates gradually to reshape behaviour and one's view of self and the world.

She added that fleeting information is consumed quickly and forgotten quickly — news, numbers and daily facts — while lasting knowledge is that which transforms into conviction and principle, reflected in behaviour, thinking and one's approach to life.

She said that conscious reading is based on reflection, not consumption, and on asking fundamental questions such as: What is the author trying to say? Do I agree? Why? How does this relate to my reality? This kind of reading requires taking notes, connecting meanings and rethinking texts, she said.

She elaborated that a conscious reader is not a passive recipient but a critical reader who seeks meaning rather than quantity, and reads for transformation rather than mere entertainment, she added. True understanding is achieved only through selection, reflection, connection and application.

She explained that transforming knowledge into an internal compass is the essence of conscious reading, through which a person develops a value system that helps them make sound decisions, understand themselves, and distinguish the important from the trivial.

She pointed out that this compass is built through reflective reading, self-review and applying

knowledge in reality. Its effects appear in daily decisions such as choosing relationships, managing time and setting priorities, and are reflected in behaviour through emotional regulation and constructive handling of disagreements.

Different fields of reading produce different behaviours, she added. One who reads about time management becomes more aware of its value; one who reads about ethics reflects that in their fairness and dealings; one who reads biographies learns patience and perseverance.

The greatest obstacle to transforming knowledge into genuine awareness is digital distraction, hasty reading without reflection, and consumption without application, she said. True reading, she stressed, is that which becomes impact, not merely stored information.

Qais Yousef Al Seyyabi said that reading itself is an active force in shaping a reader's consciousness and directing their thinking, alongside other factors that build intellectual character. The level of prior awareness may influence book choice, he explained, but it does not replace the importance of a systematic approach to reading.

The quality of books a reader chooses helps map their thinking and acts as a "magnetic field" guiding their intellectual compass, particularly when reading follows a clear plan rather than randomness, he said.

Random reading, though it broadens horizons and diversifies knowledge, often provides only general, surface-level understanding, he explained. Systematic reading, by contrast, builds a solid knowledge foundation and enhances the ability to analyse and grasp subjects more deeply.

A reader who follows a well-considered reading plan, treating each book as a step within an integrated knowledge project, is better equipped for specialisation and deep understanding, he said. **-OMA**

FOREIGN MINISTRY

Oman condemns terrorist plots targeting security and stability of Morocco

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman has voiced its unequivocal condemnation and denunciation of the terrorist plots that targeted the security and stability of Morocco. Oman reaffirmed its full solidarity with the Kingdom in all measures it undertakes to safeguard its national security, territorial integ-

ity and societal well-being. In a statement on Tuesday by the Foreign Ministry, Oman reiterated its steadfast and principled stance, rejecting all forms of violence, extremism, terrorism and incitement thereto, irrespective of the motives or justifications invoked. -ONA





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

EDITORIAL: Telephone: 24726666, Fax: 24813153, E-mail: editor@timesofoman.com
ADVERTISING: Telephone: 22009004, E-mail: amcoman@choueirgroup.com
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Shura Council receives Royal orders for conclusion of session

The accomplishments of Shura’s reflect its commitment to advancing the objectives of Oman Vision 2040

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Shura Council has received the Royal Orders of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik directing the conclusion of the Third Ordinary Session (2025–2026) of the Tenth Term (2023–2027) of the Shura Council, effective Sunday, 12 July 2026, pursuant to Article (41) of the Council of Oman Law (Royal Decree No. (7/2021), which stipulates that the convening and adjournment of the Council of Oman, in both its ordinary and extraordinary sessions, shall be by Royal Order.

Ahmed Mohammed Al Nadabi, Secretary General of the Shura Council, who stated that the Council successfully completed its legislative work during the Third Ordinary Session, adding further achievements to those accomplished during the first and second sessions of the Tenth Term.

These accomplishments reflect the Council’s commitment to advancing the objectives of Oman Vision 2040 by developing a robust legislative framework that supports national priorities, while carrying out the competencies assigned to it under the Council of Oman Law.

This was clearly demonstrated through the Council’s legislative and oversight activities across a wide range of sectors.

He added that, over the course of the first three ordinary sessions of the Tenth Term, the Council achieved(73) legislative accomplishments, including the review of draft laws and international agreements referred by the Government, as well as proposing new legislation and amendments to existing laws in support of the Sultanate of Oman’s ongoing develop-



ment and modernisation. The Council also strengthened its oversight role through the active engagement of Members of the Shura Council in both standing committee work and plenary discussions.

Across the first three sessions, the Council recorded (647) oversight instruments, held (48) ordinary sittings, convened (40) Bureau meetings, and completed (309) committee assignments covering economic, social, developmental, cultural, health, food security, and water security issues. observations and recommendations with a view to strengthening national programmes and strategies.

In addition, the Council attached great importance to holding meetings and consultations aimed at enhancing integration and dialogue between the Council and the Government, as well as with State institutions and citizens, in line with its mandate to advance national aspirations.

Sustained legislative performance

The Secretary General stated that the Council’s legislative activity during the Third Ordinary Session maintained the momentum of previous sessions.

During the session, the Government referred (31) legislative instruments, including (17) Draft laws and (14) international agreements, while the Council also submitted (2) legislative proposals.

He added that the Council held (22) ordinary sittings, including (5) sittings dedicated to ministerial statements delivered by ministers responsible for key

service sectors. These statements reviewed the status of government performance, discussed challenges facing the implementation of development plans, and outlined future policies and programmes.

The Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Social Development, the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, and the Ministry of Agricultural, Fisheries and Water Resources delivered the ministerial statements.

The Third Ordinary Session also witnessed deliberations on the State General Budget for the Fiscal Year 2026 and the Eleventh Five-Year Development Plan (2026–2030).

He explained that members activated a total of (181) oversight instruments, including (134) requests for briefing covering service, health, education and social sectors, (27) Wishes addressing a wide range of national issues, (7) parliamentary questions, and (7) urgent statements concerning matters of direct public interest.

During the same period, the Bureau of the Shura Council held (16) meetings, while the Council’s standing committees convened (74) meetings, completing work on (82) subjects arising from Wishes submitted within their respective areas of competence.

The committees also produced reports on official hearings, field visits and the work of their specialised task forces, including a major study on the knowledge economy.

Integration and Partnership in National Action Highlighting institutional cooperation with State bodies, Ahmed Mohammed

Al Nadabi noted that, since the beginning of the Tenth Term, a series of meetings had been held between the Council of Ministers and the Bureau of the Shura Council, as well as between the Ministerial Coordination Committee and the Bureau.

These meetings sought to strengthen continuous coordination among State institutions and develop shared visions that contribute to advancing the Sultanate’s economic, social and development sectors.

During the most recent meeting, held in May 2026, participants commended the Shura Council’s efforts in serving the nation and its citizens and acknowledged its important role in supporting Oman’s comprehensive development journey, safeguarding its achievements and broadening its future prospects.

This spirit of partnership was equally reflected within the Council of Oman, through the close cooperation between the State Council and the Shura Council.

He noted that this cooperation represents a practical implementation of the provisions of the Council of Oman Law (Royal Decree No. 7/2021), which provides for the exercise of the two Councils’ legislative powers through continuous coordination between their respective Bureaus, standing committees and joint coordination committees.

In addition, the Law provides for joint sittings whenever differences arise regarding provisions of draft legislation under consideration by the two Councils.

During the Third Ordinary Session, several joint coordination

meetings were held to examine outstanding provisions in a number of draft laws.

Two joint sittings subsequently approved)12) Draft laws referred by the Government.

During the first joint sitting, the Council of Oman approved (7) Draft laws, namely: Draft Real Estate Register Law; Draft Civil Society Institutions Law; Draft Law Amending Certain Provisions of the Arbitration in Civil and Commercial Disputes Law (Royal Decree No. 47/97); Draft Cybercrime Law; Draft Law Amending Certain Provisions of the Cultural Heritage Law; Draft National Geospatial Data and Information Law; and Draft Sports Associations Law.

The second joint sitting approved (5) additional draft laws: Unified Law (Regulation) on International Road Transport among the GCC States; Draft Law Amending Certain Provisions of the Personal Data Protection Law; Draft Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law; Draft Law Amending Certain Provisions of the Penal Law; and Draft Law Amending Certain Provisions of the Mineral Resources Law.

These outcomes clearly demonstrate the effectiveness of institutional cooperation and coordination within the Council of Oman and their contribution to advancing the legislative process.

Active parliamentary diplomacy

Al Nadabi affirmed that the Shura Council continues to engage actively with parliamentary developments at both the regional and international levels.

Through its participation in parliamentary meetings, conferences and official visits, the Council contributes to discussions on issues of mutual interest while presenting the Sultanate of Oman’s legislative experience, national priorities and perspectives.

The Council also remains committed to strengthening cooperation with legislative councils, parliamentary unions and international organisations through the exchange of expertise and best practices, thereby supporting parliamentary cooperation in a manner that serves the Sultanate’s strategic interests and reinforces its relations with brotherly and friendly countries.

Since the beginning of the Tenth

Term, the Council has participated in (65) parliamentary events, including conferences, meetings and official visits at the regional and international levels.

Enhancing public engagement and community partnership

Ahmed Mohammed Al Nadabi affirmed that strengthening community engagement and public communication remains one of the General Secretariat’s highest priorities.

In line with the Council’s commitment to transparency, sustained efforts continue to enhance public awareness of the Council’s constitutional and legislative roles through active participation in national events and direct engagement with the community.

The Council also welcomes visiting delegations from academic and military institutions, both within and outside the Sultanate, in addition to students from higher education institutions and schools, enabling them to gain first-hand knowledge of the Council’s legislative and oversight responsibilities.

The Council maintains close cooperation with various media outlets by providing timely information, statistics and official updates on its legislative and oversight activities through integrated media releases and publications.

In this context, the Council will publish its Media Report on the Outcomes of the Third Ordinary Session of the Tenth Term (2023–2027) on Sunday, 12 July 2026, coinciding with the conclusion of the current ordinary session.

The report will include comprehensive information and statistical data on the Council’s legislative and oversight performance and will be made available through the Council’s official social media platforms and website to ensure broad public access and engagement.

The Secretary General concluded by reaffirming that the Shura Council remains fully committed to carrying out its constitutional and legislative responsibilities in accordance with the Basic Law of the State and the Council of Oman Law.

The Council will continue to develop an integrated institutional framework that supports the Sultanate’s national plans, strategies and development priorities, while preserving the distinguished role

TENTH SESSION

State Council discusses demographics, their impact on future of development

MUSCAT: The State Council discussed on Tuesday, during the proceedings of its tenth session of the third regular annual sitting of the eighth term, the study submitted regarding “Demographics and Their Impact on the Future of Development in the Sultanate of Oman” and the study on “The Agricultural (Plant) Sector in the Sultanate of Oman: Challenges and Solutions.”

The session was chaired by Sheikh Abdulmalik Abdullah Al Khalili, Chairman of the State Council.

In his speech, the Chairman of the Council stated that the proceedings of the tenth session of the third regular sitting of the eighth term of the Council include discussing the study submitted by the special committees.

He emphasised the role undertaken by the members and the Secretariat General of the Council during the third regular sitting of the eighth term.

The session included a discussion of the study submitted by



the special committee on “Demographics and Their Impact on the Future of Development in the Sultanate of Oman,” which aims to highlight and analyse the characteristics and features of the demographics in the Sultanate of Oman.

It also seeks to clarify the impact of demographic shifts on various developmental sectors, in addition to reviewing the poli-

cies adopted to achieve population balance and analysing their effectiveness.

The committee clarified that the study aimed to propose a set of solutions and recommendations that would contribute to creating the desired balance in the demographics and preserving the demographic characteristics of the Omani society.

This supports the sustainabil-

ity of comprehensive development and enhances future planning based on clear scientific foundations.

The session’s proceedings also included a discussion of the study submitted by the special committee regarding “The Agricultural (Plant) Sector in the Sultanate of Oman: Challenges and Solutions,” which examined the economic impact of the agricultural sector on the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), employment, imports, and exports.

The committee indicated that the study addresses the challenges facing the agricultural sector in the Sultanate of Oman, along with reviewing the latest technological developments in the agricultural sector and how to apply them in the Sultanate of Oman.

At the conclusion of its proceedings, the session discussed a number of reports and topics, in addition to reviewing the Secretariat General’s report on the activities of the Council’s bodies during the past period. -ONA

URBAN INFRASTRUCTURE

Development plan of A’Rustaq discussed

A’RUSTAQ: A meeting was held yesterday in South Al Batinah Governorate, chaired by Eng. Masoud Said Al Hashmi, Governor of South Al Batinah, and attended by representatives from the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning, the Municipality of South Al Batinah, along with the consulting firm entrusted with preparing A’Rustaq Structural Plan.

The session addressed the latest developments in the plan’s preparation and the planning fundamentals aimed at advancing the urban infrastructure and strengthening the developmental assets of the Wilayat of A’Rustaq.

The meeting reviewed a number of key themes related to the future of urban planning in the wilayat, including proposals for city development that align with population and economic growth, while striking a balance between urban expansion and the preservation of heritage identity.

Discussions also covered the expansion of residential neighbourhoods in accordance with

modern planning standards, the establishment of industrial zones to diversify economic activities, and the development of the road network and basic infrastructure to enhance connectivity efficiency across various areas.

Tourism activity

Furthermore, the meeting addressed the importance of rehabilitating and revitalising the wilayat’s heritage areas, reflecting their historical and civilisational significance, while contributing to the stimulation of tourism activity and the attraction of investments, alongside supporting small and medium-sized enterprises linked to the tourism sector.

The meeting is part of South Al Batinah Governorate’s ongoing efforts to support urban and economic development, adopt forward-looking planning visions that contribute to achieving comprehensive development goals, and enhance the quality of life in the Wilayat of A’Rustaq.

-ONA

Omani inventor turns colours into sensory experiences for the blind

The educational tool called ‘Sensory Colours’ helps the blind and visually impaired individuals to recognise and understand colours through touch, smell and sound

MUSCAT: Driven by her conviction that innovation begins with an idea that addresses a human need, Omani inventor Azza Mohammed Al Malki has developed an educational tool called “Sensory Colours” to help blind and visually impaired individuals recognise and understand colours through touch, smell and sound — expanding inclusive learning through innovative solutions.

“The initial spark came from my belief that creativity is a right for everyone, and that losing sight does not mean losing the ability to imagine or feel colours,” Al Malki told the Oman News Agency (ONA). She said the idea evolved from a human question into a real project, born from a genuine need in the community and a desire to make an impact that touches a group deserving to learn and create in ways that suit



their sensory world.

The innovation has been recognised with several awards, including the Economic Vision Award in Social Responsibility and Sustainability from leading Arabic newspaper in Oman in 2025, and the Creativity and Excellence Award from a leading Omani magazine — motivating further development and transformation into a sustainable initiative.

She explained that colours are linked to textures, scents, sounds and environmental associations, enabling a blind person to form a mental and emotional image of each hue. When a child touches or smells a colour, they begin to build associations that help them understand and interact with it in a way closer to their daily experience —

making learning more inclusive, engaging and humane.

She pointed out that materials were chosen with great care: safe, eco-friendly and sensory, with different textures to distinguish between colours and non-toxic dyes suitable for children. The focus was on enhancing each colour’s sensory experience clearly and comfortably.

She added that the innovation helps blind individuals form a mental and emotional image of colours through other senses, opening space for imagination, creativity and expression. The integration of senses significantly enhances memory, as the mind interacts more strongly with information linked to emotions and sensory experiences.

“When a colour is associated with a familiar scent or special texture, it becomes easier and deeper to remember than a purely theoretical description,” Al Malki said. “This creates a beautiful emotional relationship between the blind person and the world, giving them a greater sense of inclusion, confidence and the ability to express themselves.”

She explained that sensory colours can be used in schools and rehabilitation centres, not only for teaching colours but also for developing sensory skills, enhancing communication and stimulating artistic creativity. Global studies have shown that using touch, sound and scents helps visually impaired individuals understand and interact with



colours more deeply.

She said that the innovation can also be applied in art therapy, drawing activities and classroom exercises, helping students express themselves and build confidence. Teachers and rehabilitation specialists can use it to develop more inclusive methods that consider diverse learning needs.

She pointed out that challenges included providing safe, high-quality materials that combine sensory and educational aspects, adapting the product for different age groups and degrees of impairment, raising awareness about sensory education, and establishing partnerships with schools and rehabilitation centres.

Al Malki noted that modern technologies such as artificial intelligence and smart applications could further enhance the innovation, offering a more advanced educational experience. Global research is increasingly moving towards multisensory systems to help visually impaired individuals understand colours and arts more comprehensively.

She explained that the innovation could be extended to raised drawing, sensory stories, interactive exhibitions and educational tools based on different senses. It could also be applied in music, theatre and interactive arts, linking colours to emotions, sounds and textures for an integrated artistic experience. Specialised training programmes and workshops could help blind individuals discover their talents and participate more fully in creative fields.

She concluded that this innovation gives blind individuals a greater opportunity to interact with daily details linked to colours, arts, emotions and the environment. When colour becomes a tangible experience, a blind person feels closer to understanding the world around them — enhancing their sense of inclusion, independence and self-confidence, and opening the door to artistic expression and creative participation. — ONA

DEFENCE INDUSTRY FORUM

NATO summit opens in Ankara

ANKARA: The NATO leaders’ summit opened in the Turkish capital of Ankara on Tuesday with a Defence Industry Forum, unveiling major defence industry initiatives aimed at accelerating weapons production and procurement, amid growing concerns over the alliance’s expanding militarisation.

Marking its first inclusion in a NATO summit, the forum brought together senior NATO officials and representatives from major Western defence companies to discuss efforts to integrate military supply chains across member states.

At the event, NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte launched the Drone Edge Initiative aimed at strengthening counter-drone capabilities, saying member states would commit more than \$40 billion to the sector over the next five years.

He also unveiled a new Front

Door platform designed to facilitate private defence companies’ access to alliance contracts, and a \$2.8-billion industrial cooperation initiative under which US defence companies, including Lockheed Martin, could partner with European firms to produce US-designed weapons, such as Abrams tanks and ATACMS missiles, in Europe.

As part of broader efforts to expand logistical and operational capacity, several allies, including Türkiye, launched new joint procurement initiatives to enlarge NATO’s fleets of strategic transport and aerial refueling aircraft.

The latest initiatives come as Rutte continues to press allies to raise defence spending to 5 percent of gross domestic product by 2035, amid calls from Washington for European members to shoulder a greater share of the alliance’s defence responsibilities. — DW

STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIP

India’s Jaishankar, Bahrain Deputy PM discuss bilateral cooperation

MANAMA: External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Tuesday met Bahrain’s Deputy Prime Minister and held discussions on further strengthening the partnership between the two countries.

Sharing details in a post on X, he said that they also discussed the regional situation.

“A pleasure to meet Deputy Prime Minister of Bahrain H.E Khalid bin Abdulla Al Khalifa this morning. Discussed taking forward our bilateral cooperation across various sectors. Also exchanged views on the regional situation.”

Earlier, 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.”

On Sunday, he 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.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar 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. — ANI

UNITED STATES AND IRAN

From the frontline: Funeral, fireworks, and fault lines

TEHRAN: These days, Tehran is a city dressed in black.

Since Saturday, millions of Iranians have poured into the streets of the capital to bid farewell to their late Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, who was killed late February at the onset of the US-Israeli war with Iran.

More than four months later, they finally found a moment to give voice to their grief and their anger.

Weeping mourners held pictures of the late supreme leader and waved thousands of red banners symbolising revenge. They chanted slogans against the United States and Israel, called for vengeance over his killing, and pledged to continue his path.

More than 10,000 km away, Washington has been lit by celebration.

Saturday marked the 250th anniversary of the United States. At the National Mall, US President Donald Trump delivered an impassioned speech celebrating what he described as the nation’s greatness and glory.

Themes of freedom, equality, and justice echoed through the address, punctuated by bursts of ap-



plause from an exuberant crowd.

The US president also referred to Iran in his speech, framing the war against Tehran as part of a broader narrative of American strength and triumph. “You look at Venezuela, you look at Iran. We wiped it out, wiped out their military,” he claimed.

Abou Saba, a 27-year-old housewife who travelled from the central Iranian city of Isfahan to Tehran to pay her last respects, said she was overwhelmed with sor-

row as she bid a final farewell to the late leader.

But her grief, she said, was inseparable from a burning desire for revenge. “They have martyred our leader, and we will not rest until we have taken our revenge.”

The United States and Iran, after their respective celebrations and funeral ceremonies, are expected to hold a new round of technical talks and continue with their difficult path toward ending the war.

But the stark emotional divide

between the two cities in recent days has become a vivid measure of how deep the rift between the two sides runs, and how tall an order it will be to reach any real consensus in the near future.

As night fell on Saturday, mourners kept moving through the streets in Tehran, while in Washington fireworks kept rising into the sky.

The two cities belonged to the same world, yet they seemed worlds apart. — Xinhua



SPORTS

ECSTASY FOR ARGENTINA, AGONY FOR EGYPT

From despair to delight: Argentina produced a stunning comeback from 2-0 down to beat Egypt 3-2 in a breathtaking Atlanta thriller, booking their place in the World Cup quarter-finals and denying the Pharaohs one of the greatest upsets in tournament history



ATLANTA: Argentina produced a comeback for the ages to edge Egypt 3-2 in the Round of 16 at the FIFA World Cup 2026 on Tuesday. Yasser Ibrahim and Mostafa Zico had Hossam Hassan's Pharaohs on the cusp of one of the competition's greatest upsets at Atlanta Stadium, but late goals from Christian Romero, Lionel Messi and Enzo Fernandez transformed the outcome. The defending champions will next face either Switzerland or

Colombia in quarterfinals on Saturday in Kansas City, Missouri. Argentina are bidding to become the first team to win back-to-back titles since Brazil did so in 1958 and 1962. Yasser Ibrahim headed Egypt into a shock lead, before Mostafa Shoubir protected it magnificently. The goalkeeper dived south-west to save a Messi penalty, which Nicolas Tagliafico had craftily earned, and made superb stops from Alexis Mac Allister and Julian Alvarez.

Egypt thought they had made it two just before the hour. Haissem Hassan made an imperial dash down the right and fed Salah, who enabled Zizo to ripple the net. The goal was, however, ruled out for a foul in the build-up. It merely delayed the Al Ahly man doubling the lead, though, as he finished off a rapid counter-attack involving Salah and Hassan. It left Egypt on the cusp of victory, but after Christian Romero



pulled one back, Messi's brilliant finish equalised and Fernandez completed an epic survival story with a stoppage time goal. It was Romero who saved Argentina in the Round of 32 against Cape Verde with a header that went off a defender and into the net to seal advancement against the African underdogs, and his goal against Egypt gave his nation hope. Messi, who was in tears after the final whistle, scored his eighth

goal of this year's tournament in the 83rd minute to level the score at 2-2. It was his record-extending 21st at the World Cup. Shoubir, who repelled a spot-kick from Iran's Mehdi Taremi in the group stage, became only the fourth goalkeeper to save two penalties in games in one World Cup. The 26-year-old emulated Pole Jan Tomaszewski, American Brad Friedel and another Pole in Wojciech Szczesny. - Agencies

INAUGURATION TODAY

LULU EXPRESS

Al Morooj-Salalah, Sultanate of Oman

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FORMER AFGHAN PACER

Shapoor Zadran dies after prolonged illness

DELHI: Former Afghanistan fast bowler Shapoor Zadran died one day short of his 39th birthday after spending his last months battling Hemophagocytic Lymphohistiocytosis (HLH) in a Delhi hospital on Tuesday. The news was confirmed by his younger brother Ghamai Zadran, who was with Shapoor since he was moved to Delhi for treatment in January. Shapoor was suffering from an advanced stage of HLH, a rare disease in which the immune system starts failing. Shapoor was one of the most recognisable faces of Afghanistan's cricket during their rise in the 2000s and 2010s, 6'2" tall, sprinting in of a long run, his long hair flowing as he did. He had, as the Afghanistan Cricket Board said in a statement, a foundational impact on the game there, playing 44 ODIs and 36 T20Is between 2009 and 2020, and taking a total of 80 international wickets. He shone especially in the 2015 ODI World Cup - the only World Cup he played - ending up as Afghanistan's leading wicket-taker



in Australia and New Zealand with 10 wickets. He played in four T20 World Cups from 2010 to 2016, taking nine wickets in nine matches. Shapoor was widely known among contemporaries for his generosity and kindness and was a mentoring figure to several younger players, including Rashid Khan. Rashid, former Afghanistan captain Asghar Afghan, and several other prominent cricketers were in touch with Shapoor through his treatment. "With profound grief and deep sorrow, the Afghanistan Cricket Board mourns the passing of former Afghanistan fast bowler Shapoor Zadran," the board said in a statement. - Agencies

WIMBLEDON

Sinner reaches semis, Fery upsets Dimitrov

LONDON: Jannik Sinner moved a step closer to defending his Wimbledon title with a straight-set victory over Germany's Jan-Lennard Struff to reach the semi-finals on Tuesday. The world No.1 has yet to hit his best form at the Championships but acted decisively in key moments to secure a 7-5, 7-6 (7-4), 6-3 win over 74th-ranked Struff. Earlier on Monday, Britain's Arthur Fery continued his outstanding run with a thrilling five-set victory over Grigor Dimitrov to reach the quarter-finals. The world No.114 Fery has been the only British player left in singles draw since the second round and kept home hopes alive with a 7-5, 3-6, 4-6, 6-4, 7-6 (10-7) victory. The 23-year-old is the first British wildcard to reach a Grand Slam quarter-final.



Gauff in last four In the women's singles, Coco Gauff reached her first Wimbledon semi-final after defeating fellow American Jessica Pegula. Two-time Grand Slam singles champion Gauff had never previously gone beyond the fourth round at the All England Club and suffered a first-round exit last year. However, she recovered from an error-strewn start against world No.4 Pegula, who was the highest-ranked player left in the draw, to win 4-6, 6-3, 6-3. - Agencies

Muscat to host Women's Junior AHF Cup from July 12

MUSCAT: Five Asian nations will vie for the top honours at the Hockey Oman organised Women's Junior AHF Cup Muscat 2026 from July 12-18. Though Oman girls will not be in action, the stage is set for some thrilling action from Hong Kong, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Uzbekistan girls as compete for qualification to the Women's Junior Asia Cup China 2026. In a press statement,

Hockey Oman said: "Hosting this prestigious event further reinforces the Sultanate of Oman's growing reputation as a trusted and capable host of major international sporting events. Following the successful organisation of several continental and world-level hockey championships, Hockey Oman remains committed to delivering events that meet the highest international standards."

OMAN OIL PRICE RISES

The price of Oman crude oil has increased, with prices for delivery by September 2026 reaching \$66.35. The price of Oman crude oil rose by \$2.51 from the price of Monday, which was \$63.84. -ONA

MARKET
BUSINESS & FINANCE



MSX INDEX ENDS LOWER

The MSX index closed at 7,568.85 points, down by -0.17% from previous close. The Sharia Index ended down by -0.19% at 603.06 points. Oman Chromite, up 10.00%, was the top gainer while, Oman Fisheries, down 4.17%, was the top loser.

Total credit granted by Oman’s banking sector rises to OMR37.4bn



Total deposits with the banking sector recorded a growth of 13.1 percent, reaching OMR36.5 billion by the end of May 2026

MUSCAT: The consolidated balance sheet data of conventional and Islamic banks, or what is known as other depository corporations within the banking sector in the Sultanate of Oman, revealed an 11.5 percent increase in the total credit granted by these corporations, reaching OMR37.4 billion by the end of May 2026.

Regarding the credit granted to the private sector, it recorded a growth of 8.7 percent to reach OMR30.3 billion by the end of May 2026.

The data related to its distribution across various sectors indicates that the non-financial corporate sector acquired the largest share, amounting to 48.1 percent by the end of May 2026, followed by the retail sector at 43.4 percent. The remaining percentage was distributed between the financial corporate sector at 6 percent and other sectors at 2.5 percent.

Total deposits with the banking sector recorded a growth of 13.1 percent, reaching OMR36.5 billion by the end of May 2026.

Within this total, private sector deposits with the banking system witnessed a 10.7 percent increase, reaching OMR24.2 billion by the end of May 2026. When examining the distribution of the total private sector deposit base across various sectors, the figures indicate that the retail sector acquired the largest share at approximately 49.5 percent, followed by the non-financial corporate sector and the financial corporate sector with shares of 33.4 percent and 15.1 percent, respectively. The remaining 2 percent was distributed among other sectors. -ONA



MINERALS DEVELOPMENT OMAN

MDO signs partnership to explore copper exploration project in North Al Batinah

MUSCAT: Minerals Development Oman (MDO) has signed a strategic partnership agreement with Kazakhstan-based Solidcore Resources, one of Central Asia’s leading gold producers, to explore and develop a copper project in North Al Batinah Governorate.

Under the agreement, Solidcore Resources will earn up to a 60% stake in the project through a phased investment structure tied to the achievement of defined technical and investment milestones, supporting a disciplined approach to exploration and project development.

The project is located within MDO’s Block 11B concession, approximately 29 kilometres from Sohar. Over the past several years, MDO has completed extensive exploration work, including drilling campaigns, airborne and ground geophysical surveys, geological and geochemical studies, and satellite imagery analysis. The results have confirmed promising copper and gold mineralisation of the Volcanogenic Massive Sulphide (VMS) type, together with additional exploration targets across the concession area.

Eng. Mattar Salim Al Badi, Chief Executive Officer of MDO, said the partnership reflects the company’s strategy of accelerating the development of high-value mining assets through collaboration with globally recognised mining companies.

“Solidcore Resources was selected following a comprehensive evaluation of its operational track record, technical expertise, and financial strength. This partnership



will accelerate exploration and project evaluation while attracting quality investment, strengthening local content, facilitating knowledge transfer, and supporting Oman Vision 2040.”

Vitaly Nesis, Chief Executive Officer of Solidcore Resources, described the agreement as the company’s first exploration investment outside Kazakhstan, marking a strategic step in expanding its

international portfolio.

“Oman offers compelling geological potential and an attractive investment environment. We look forward to working alongside MDO to unlock the project’s value and develop it in line with international mining standards.”

The next phase of the project will focus on additional drilling and advanced technical studies to upgrade mineral resource confi-

dence and complete the economic assessments required for future development.

The agreement underscores growing international confidence in Oman’s mining sector and supports MDO’s strategy to attract international investment, accelerate project development, and position the Sultanate of Oman as a regional hub for the mining and minerals industry. -ONA

REPORT



Global LNG trade hits record high in 2025, despite Asian demand dip

LONDON: Global liquefied natural gas (LNG) trade reached a record high in 2025, driven by robust US exports and surging European imports that offset a decline in Asian demand, according to the International Gas Union.

The report, however, warned that the Middle East conflict could trigger a contraction this year.

“The Gulf conflict has damaged LNG infrastructure, clouded the outlook for expansion projects in the region, and left Asian buyers facing uncertainty over flows and higher prices,” said International Gas Union President Andrea Steiger.

Global LNG trade rose 6.3 percent to 436.98 million tonnes in 2025, the fastest growth since 2022.

Europe saw the biggest import increase, rising 26.1 million tonnes to 126.2 million tonnes, as it worked to rebuild stocks and offset lower Russian pipeline gas.

The Asia-Pacific remained the largest importing region at 168.7 million tonnes, despite a 9.2 million tonne drop in Asian purchases, mainly due to weaker demand in China and India.

China remained the world’s top LNG importer at 69.77 million tonnes, though imports fell 8.9 million tonnes year-on-year.

The report noted diverging trends in Asia: China’s LNG imports fell on higher domestic supply and increased Russian pipeline gas, while lower production in parts of Southeast Asia boosted spot LNG purchases.

Japan ranked second among importers at 67.37 million



The Gulf conflict has damaged LNG infrastructure, clouded the outlook for expansion projects in the region, and left Asian buyers facing uncertainty over flows and higher prices

Andrea Steiger
International Gas Union President

tonnes, while South Korea’s imports rose 1.7 million tonnes to 48.67 million.

Prolonged high LNG prices could weigh on demand growth in emerging Asian economies, particularly in South and Southeast Asia, the IGU said.

The United States remained the world’s largest LNG exporter, shipping 110.74 million tonnes, followed by Qatar with about 81.51 million tonnes and Australia with about 80.32 million tonnes.

The IGU represents more than 130 member countries, accounting for over 90 percent of the global gas market. -ONA

EASING GEOPOLITICAL TENSIONS

Oil edges higher as supply growth and demand outlook take focus



TOKYO: Oil prices edged higher yesterday though gains were capped as traders turned their attention to supply growth and demand prospects, while largely brushing aside easing geopolitical tensions in the Middle East.

Brent crude futures rose 28 cents, or 0.39 percent, to \$72.29 a barrel, while US West Texas Intermediate crude gained 29 cents, or 0.26 percent, to \$68.84 a barrel, after settling near pre-war levels on Monday.

US-Iran talks

Investors are closely watching US-Iran talks for signals on the future of shipping through the Strait

of Hormuz, while also tracking the recovery of Gulf oil exports.

Pre-war levels

Data showed the UAE raised crude output to more than 3.8 million barrels per day in June, its highest since April 2020 and above pre-war levels, after leaving the OPEC+ alliance in May 2026.

Raise output targets

OPEC and its allies, including Russia, agreed on Sunday to raise output targets by 188,000 barrels per day from August 2026, following similar increases approved for June and July. -ONA

MARKET

MSX index ends lower

Oman Chromite, up 10.00%, was the top gainer while, Oman Fisheries, down 4.17%, was the top loser

MUSCAT: The MSX index closed at 7,568.85 points, down by -0.17% from previous close. The Sharia Index ended down by -0.19% at 603.06 points. Oman Chromite, up 10.00%, was the top gainer while, Oman Fisheries, down 4.17%, was the top loser. Shares of Sohar International Bank were the most active in terms of number of shares traded while Oman Telecom were the most active in terms of turnover.

A total number of 8346 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating turnover of RO 30.1 million, with more than 92.36 million shares changing hands. Out of 71 traded securities, 16 advanced, 30 declined, and 25 remained unchanged. At the session close, GCC & Arab investors were net buyers for RO 361K while domestic investors were net sellers for RO 186K, followed by foreign investors for RO 176K worth of shares.

Financial Index closed at 13,209.15 points, down -0.45%. Prices of Al Omaniya Financial Services, Al Madina Investments, Financial Services, Bank Nizwa, National Finance were up by 3.23%, 3.13%, 1.25%, 0.71%, 0.47% respectively. Prices of Al Sharqia Investment, Oman & Emirates Investment, Muscat Insurance,



Bank Muscat, Muscat Finance were down by 1.92%, 1.85%, 1.75%, 1.48%, 1.47% respectively.

Industrial Index closed at 9,756.79 points, up 0.02%. Prices of Oman Chromite, Galfar Engineering, Oman Refreshment, Jazeera Steel Products were up by 10.00%, 1.11%, 0.83%, 0.72% respectively. Prices of Oman Fisheries, Raysut Cement, Al Anwar Ceramics, Salalah Mills, Oman Chlorine were down by 4.17%, 2.11%, 1.34%, 0.73%, 0.59% respectively.

Services Index was down by -0.64% before closing at 3,035.35 points. Prices of Sohar Power, Oman Telecom, OQ Exploration & Production were up by 8.70%, 2.26%, 0.22% respectively. Prices of Al Jazeera Services, Al Suwadi Power, Al Batinah Power, Abraj Energy, SMN Power Holding were down by 2.50%, 1.57%, 1.55%, 1.02%, 1.00% respectively.

United Securities

OMAN STOCKS

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE

INDICES

Index	High	Low	Value	Prev. Value	Diff.	Diff%
MSX 30 INDEX	7,568.85	7,568.85	7,568.85	7,581.56	-12.71	-0.17
FINANCIAL INDEX	13,209.15	13,209.15	13,209.15	13,268.70	-59.54	-0.45
Industry Index	9,756.79	9,756.79	9,756.79	9,755.08	1.71	0.02
Services Index	3,035.35	3,035.35	3,035.35	3,054.87	-19.52	-0.64
MSX Shariah Index	603.06	603.06	603.06	604.22	-1.16	-0.19
MSX TR INDEX	11,709.16	11,709.16	11,709.16	11,728.82	-19.65	-0.17
FINANCIAL TR IDX	16,229.71	16,229.71	16,229.71	16,302.87	-73.16	-0.45
INDUSTRIAL TR IDX	12,495.97	12,495.97	12,495.97	12,493.78	2.19	0.02
SERVICES TR IDX	4,066.80	4,066.80	4,066.80	4,092.95	-26.15	-0.64
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
92,361,448	30,099,615	8,346	37,880,086,275	16	30	25	71

SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR TUESDAY, JULY 7

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

OM0000002077	AL OMANIYA FINANCIAL SERVICES	200	32	2	0.160	0.160	0.160	0.160	0.155	0.005	3.226	0.160	0.140	0.000	0.100	50,466,720
OM0000003026	OMAN TELECOM	5,480,887	7,875,377	278	1.371	1.406	1.370	1.403	1.372	0.031	2.259	1.403	1.361	1.376	0.040	1,052,250,000
OM0000003806	QJ BASE INDUSTRIES (SF2)	16,962,383	4,318,683	1,200	0.261	0.263	0.259	0.262	0.260	0.002	0.769	0.262	0.260	0.267	0.004	906,386,633
OM0000002176	JAZEERA STEEL PRODUCTS	41,129	34,479	154	0.836	0.840	0.836	0.840	0.834	0.006	0.719	0.840	0.832	0.844	0.100	104,914,286
OM0000004420	BANK NIZWA	837,225	118,291	57	0.141	0.143	0.141	0.142	0.141	0.001	0.709	0.142	0.137	0.141	0.100	317,647,231
OM0000002549	BANK DHOFAR	775,589	177,083	223	0.227	0.230	0.227	0.228	0.227	0.001	0.441	0.228	0.224	0.230	0.100	650,074,065
OM0000009759	OQ EXPLORATION AND PRODUCTION	5,566,045	2,499,715	473	0.448	0.451	0.448	0.451	0.450	0.001	0.222	0.451	0.440	0.456	0.010	3,608,000,000
OM0000001509	DHOFAR INTL DEVELOPMENT & INVEST	21,050	6,205	6	0.295	0.295	0.290	0.295	0.295	0.000	0.000	0.295	0.000	0.310	0.100	146,336,562
OM0000001077	OMAN CABLES INDUSTRY	41,580	134,303	161	3.230	3.230	3.230	3.230	3.230	0.000	0.000	3.230	3.225	3.255	0.100	288,731,000
OM0000001749	OMAN CEMENT	200	114	1	0.570	0.570	0.570	0.570	0.570	0.000	0.000	0.570	0.000	0.000	0.100	185,597,445
OM0000001772	ALANWAR INVESTMENT	57,265	9,850	10	0.172	0.172	0.172	0.172	0.172	0.000	0.000	0.172	0.155	0.173	0.100	52,891,637
OM0000002804	ASAPPA FOODS	10,390	7,896	2	0.760	0.760	0.760	0.760	0.760	0.000	0.000	0.760	0.684	0.000	0.100	91,200,000
OM0000004735	SEMO CORP SALALAH	1,535,761	382,096	84	0.258	0.262	0.255	0.261	0.261	0.000	0.000	0.260	0.000	0.268	0.100	248,143,279
OM0000001483	NATIONAL BANK OMAN	2,350	1,165	4	0.494	0.497	0.494	0.497	0.499	-0.002	-0.401	0.497	0.487	0.000	0.100	808,095,338
OM0000009072	OQ GAS NETWORKS	18,617,628	4,130,527	1,675	0.223	0.223	0.221	0.222	0.223	-0.001	-0.448	0.222	0.221	0.227	0.100	961,398,510
OM0000001533	OMINVEST	1,283	489	2	0.381	0.381	0.381	0.381	0.383	-0.002	-0.522	0.381	0.000	0.000	0.100	427,807,242
OM0000003661	VOLTAMP ENERGY	307,641	53,787	60	0.177	0.177	0.174	0.174	0.175	0.001	0.571	0.174	0.172	0.177	0.100	174,000,000
OM0000003224	RENAISSANCE SERVICES	273,735	83,755	10	0.307	0.307	0.305	0.305	0.307	-0.002	-0.651	0.305	0.305	0.308	0.100	72,105,050
OM0000004768	MADINA TAKAFUL	17,360	2,131	7	0.123	0.123	0.122	0.122	0.123	0.001	-0.813	0.122	0.000	0.000	0.100	21,350,000
OM0000003968	COREDPO	67,700	22,567	12	0.334	0.334	0.331	0.331	0.334	-0.003	-0.888	0.331	0.330	0.336	0.100	215,462,540
OM0000004248	SMN POWER HOLDING	11,741	2,325	5	0.200	0.200	0.198	0.198	0.200	-0.002	-1.000	0.198	0.000	0.000	0.100	39,527,849
OM0000003125	GLOBAL FINANCIAL INVESTMENT HO	111,738	32,948	21	0.296	0.296	0.294	0.295	0.298	-0.003	-1.007	0.295	0.296	0.298	0.100	59,000,000
OM0000008834	ABRAJ ENERGY SERVICES	3,116,962	1,218,840	220	0.392	0.392	0.388	0.388	0.392	-0.004	-1.020	0.388	0.389	0.408	0.100	298,637,600
OM0000003358	SOHAR INTERNATIONAL BANK	22,614,043	4,344,382	1,298	0.191	0.192	0.190	0.190	0.192	-0.002	-1.042	0.190	0.190	0.192	0.100	1,257,276,791
OM0000002374	UNITED FINANCE	362	34	1	0.093	0.093	0.093	0.094	0.094	0.001	-1.064	0.093	0.091	0.000	0.100	33,119,839
OM0000001020	ASAD SHIPPING	1,398,230	386,638	302	0.281	0.281	0.275	0.277	0.280	-0.003	-1.071	0.277	0.277	0.284	0.000	1,442,822,166
OM0000004925	ALBATTINAH POWER	9,060,582	3,632,677	1,521	0.405	0.405	0.397	0.399	0.405	-0.006	-1.481	0.399	0.408	0.405	0.100	2,960,052,428
OM0000004933	AL SUWADI POWER	548,795	105,176	21	0.193	0.193	0.190	0.190	0.193	-0.003	-1.554	0.190	0.191	0.212	0.100	128,228,612
OM0000001681	OMAN EMIRATES HO	463,346	87,928	30	0.191	0.192	0.188	0.188	0.191	-0.003	-1.571	0.188	0.191	0.210	0.100	134,308,392
OM0000002440	AL SHARQIA INVESTMENT HO	70,100	7,150	3	0.102	0.103	0.102	0.102	0.104	-0.002	-1.923	0.102	0.102	0.106	0.100	9,180,000
OM0000002226	AL JAZEERA SERVICES	349	95	1	0.273	0.273	0.273	0.273	0.280	-0.007	-2.500	0.273	0.000	0.300	0.100	11,696,137
OM0000005963	PHOENIX POWER	1,578,285	381,098	120	0.247	0.247	0.239	0.239	0.247	-0.008	-3.239	0.239	0.241	0.252	0.100	349,561,749
Total		89,470,742	29,782,171	7,983												

Parallel Market

OM0000001020	OMAN CHROMITE	518	1,521	3	2.937	2.937	2.937	2.937	2.670	0.267	10.000	2.937	0.000	0.000	1.000	10,661,310
OM0000003711	SOHAR POWER	244	71	4	0.303	0.303	0.303	0.303	0.276	0.024	8.696	0.300	0.000	0.303	0.100	6,000,000
OM0000001962	AL MADINA INVESTMENT HOLDING	1,000	33	1	0.033	0.033	0.033	0.033	0.032	0.001	3.125	0.033	0.000	0.000	0.100	2,805,000
OM0000001384	FINANCIAL SERVICES	200	49	1	0.243	0.243	0.243	0.243	0.240	0.003	1.250	0.243	0.000	0.000	0.100	4,860,000
OM0000003521	GALFAR ENGINEERING & CONTRACTING	100	18	1	0.183	0.183	0.183	0.183	0.181	0.002	1.105	0.183	0.188	0.186	0.100	37,146,520
OM0000001426	OMAN REFRESHMENT	145	175	1	1.210	1.210	1.210	1.210	1.200	0.010	0.833	1.210	0.000	0.000	0.100	60,500,000
OM0000002848	NATIONAL FINANCE	750	161	1	0.215	0.215	0.215	0.215	0.214	0.001	0.467	0.215	0.000	0.000	0.100	139,899,510
OM00000010823	OMAN GATEWAY FUND	910	943	2	1.036	1.036	1.036	1.036	1.035	0.001	0.097	1.036	1.035	1.060	0.000	28,329,678
OM0000001160	NATIONAL GAS	8,122	844	5	0.113	0.113	0.108	0.110	0.110	0.000	0.000	0.110	0.109	0.120	0.100	9,350,000
OM0000001897	MAJAN COLLEGE	63,000	8,066	18	0.129	0.129	0.128	0.128	0.128	0.000	0.000	0.128	0.125	0.000	0.100	12,672,000
OM0000002028	GULF INTERNATIONAL CHEMICALS	65,000	4,745	8	0.073	0.073	0.073	0.073	0.073	0.000	0.000	0.073	0.000	0.075	0.100	1,533,000
OM0000002200	AHLI BANK	77,619	16,340	9	0.210	0.220	0.201	0.210	0.210	0.000	0.000	0.210	0.000	0.000	0.100	583,441,092
OM0000002275	SHELL OMAN MARKETING	7,640	5,906	3	0.773	0.773	0.773	0.773	0.773	0.000	0.000	0.773	0.000	0.000	0.100	73,435,000
OM0000005260	OMAN ARAB BANK	300,000	70,200	172	0.234	0.234	0.234	0.234	0.234	0.000	0.000	0.234	0.215	0.252	0.100	468,641,940
OM0000007084	MUSCAT CITY DESALINATION	4,900	446	2	0.091	0.091	0.091	0.091	0.091	0.000	0.000	0.091	0.090	0.000	0.100	14,155,088
OM0000008447	OMAN REIT FUND	8,610	919	5	0.106	0.107	0.106	0.107	0.107	0.000	0.000	0.106	0.106	0.000	0.100	69,800,623
OM0000009569	JABAL REIF	5,330	575	2	0.104	0.104	0.104	0.104	0.104	0.000	0.000	0.104	0.094	0.000	0.100	18,096,000
OM0000008868	THE PEARL REIF	14,075	2,491	6	0.176	0.177	0.176	0.177	0.178	-0.001	-0.562	0.177	0.000	0.188	0.100	104,684,328
OM0000002341	OMAN CHLORINE	1,000	168	1	0.168	0.168	0.168	0.168	0.169	-0.001	-0.592	0.168	0.000	0.000	0.100	120,1485
OM0000001889	SALAH MILLS	1,052	717	5	0.680	0.700	0.680	0.680	0.685	-0.005	-0.730	0.680	0.000	0.700	0.100	42,074,884
OM0000007910	AMMAN REAL ESTATE	37,712	2,733	6	0.074	0.074	0.070	0.074	0.075	-0.001	-1.333	-0.074	0.074	0.000	0.100	14,800,000
OM0000004546	AL ANWAR PETROLEUM	45,186	4,518	3	0.916	0.916	0.916	0.917	0.917	0.000	0.000	0.917	0.917	0.917	0.100	10,147,147
OM0000001590	MUSCAT FINANCE	40,000	2,680	3	0.067	0.067	0.067	0.067	0.068	-0.001	-1.471	-0.067	0.068	0.069	0.100	20,578,804
OM0000001806	MUSCAT INSURANCE	661	370	1	0.560	0.560	0.560	0.560	0.570	-0.010	-1.754	0.560	0.000	0.000	1.000	6,174,206
Total		24	944,963	165,400	294											



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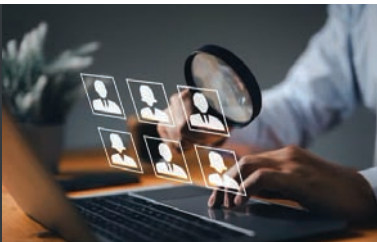
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BRIEFS

Egypt coach: Anyone who doesn't feel for Palestinian people is 'not human'



ATLANTA: Egypt coach Hossam Hassan gave an impassioned monologue about the plight of the Palestinian people on Monday. Hassan, who waved a Palestinian flag after Egypt's victory over Australia in the last round, spoke for more than four minutes on the subject on Monday and was applauded by many of the assembled media. "If there is anyone in the world who does not feel for the Palestinian people, then they are not human — whether they are Arab, European, or American," Hassan said at news conference ahead of his team's game against holders Argentina. "Everywhere in the world, including in Europe or America, if someone hurts an animal, we see animal rights being defended and the whole world reacts," Hassan said. "It has become normal to hear that two or three thousand people die in a single day because of a missile." "Regardless of religion. ... I am a human before being Arab or anything else. My message, through football, is this: Please, just as FIFA's slogan calls for respect among us, I hope there will be respect for people's right to live," Hassan said.

Mbappé condemns Paraguayan senator over racist remarks



NEW YORK: France star Kylian Mbappé on Monday condemned a Paraguayan senator over racist remarks she made following Paraguay's loss to France in the round of 16 at the World Cup. Mbappé called Celeste Amarilla, a senator from Paraguay's Liberal Radical Party, a "despicable woman" who was "unworthy" of serving in Paraguay's Congress. "Through your recklessness and your brazen racism, the entire world has already forgotten the journey and the historic effort that your players accomplished during this World Cup," Mbappé wrote on X. Amarilla posted a series of racist comments on X after Mbappé converted the winning penalty in France's victory over Paraguay on Saturday, mocking the French captain's origins, upbringing, education and appearance. Late Monday, Amarilla issued an open letter in French and Spanish to Mbappé on social media, in which she said her problem was with the player, not the country of France. She wrote that she regretted mistreating Mbappé with "the same insults" she's received as a mixed-race person and that she had deleted her post. But she also demanded an apology from Mbappé, accusing him of gender-based violence in his comments about her, and threatening legal action if he didn't retract them. The Paraguayan government released a statement Monday afternoon condemning Amarilla's remarks as "contrary to the values and principles that inspire peaceful coexistence and respect for human dignity that our country promotes." It added that the senator's comments do not represent either the Paraguayan government or the Paraguayan people. France's president, Emmanuel Macron, and sports minister Marina Ferrari voiced support for the national team's captain.

Henderson set to miss rest of World Cup with arm injury

NEW YORK: England's Jordan Henderson will be sidelined for the remainder of the World Cup, Sky Sports reported on Monday, with the midfielder requiring surgery on the freak arm injury he suffered during the celebrations after the team's 3-2 round-of-16 win over Mexico. The experienced Brentford midfielder landed awkwardly when he slipped while climbing over a barrier at the Azteca Stadium on Sunday, with video footage showing his forearm buckling. After leaving the field on a stretcher and receiving oxygen, Henderson was taken to a hospital in Mexico City and did not travel back to England's training base in Kansas City with the rest of Thomas Tuchel's squad. A member of England's medical staff stayed behind with him. The 36-year-old Henderson was an unused substitute against Mexico, but the former Liverpool captain is among the squad's most respected figures, providing leadership, experience and a calming influence. - *Agencies*

MERINO FIRES SPAIN INTO QUARTERS AS RONALDO BOWS OUT



La Roja will now play Belgium on Friday in California for a place in the semi-finals

ARLINGTON: Mikel Merino was still on the bench in the final minutes of regulation, with Spain coach Luis de la Fuente worried about hanging on to his substitutes as long as possible because of looming extra time. The Arsenal forward made all that fretting moot. Merino scored in the first minute of second-half stoppage time, and Spain beat Portugal 1-0 on Monday to advance to the FIFA World Cup quarter-finals and end the World Cup career of Portuguese superstar Cristiano Ronaldo. Merino had just been knocked down, and a foul was called. While Portugal's Bernardo Silva argued, Merino played the ball back in, ran toward the goal and easily

beat goalkeeper Diogo Costa after a series of passes capped by Ferran Torres' nifty ball through the middle. "He's one of the best in his position worldwide, and he has given us a fantastic result and a fantastic goal," de la Fuente said through a translator. "I want to express the importance of substitutes that came in later in the game. Not just today, but the contribution in other games has been enormous." Spain, who have a 35-game unbeaten streak, advanced to the quarter-finals for the first time since winning their only World Cup title in 2010. La Roja will play Belgium, a 4-1 winner over the United States, on Friday in Inglewood, California. Ronaldo was trying to get Por-

tugal to the quarter-finals in a second consecutive tournament for the first time. Instead, the career on football's biggest stage is over for the all-time leader in international goals (146) and appearances (233). Merino didn't enter until the 85th minute, and his heads-up play showed some of the versatility that helped Arsenal win their first Premier League title in more than 20 years this spring. The World Cup was in doubt for Merino, who turned 30 during the tournament, after right foot surgery cut short his Arsenal season. In the biggest moment of the year for Spain, there he was with fresh legs, finishing with his left foot into the left corner of the net. After emerging from a group hug with his team-mates, Merino made a circle around the flag in a corner before letting out a guttural scream while clenching both fists. "It was a great match. Two superb teams," de la Fuente said. "As we had said it, it was like an anticipated final. As it was expected, we had to suffer until the very end." Until Spain didn't have to suffer anymore — thanks to its superb sub. - *Agencies*

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Spain coach sings Lamine's praises

ARLINGTON: Spain coach Luis de la Fuente hailed Lamine Yamal's performance in Monday's victory over Portugal as one of the most important of the 18-year-old's burgeoning career as the European champions advanced to the World Cup quarter-finals. Substitute Mikel Merino struck in the 91st minute in Arlington to send Spain into the last eight. "For me, Lamine has played one of the most important matches of his life," de la Fuente said. "Beyond whether he was brilliant or not, for me it has been one of the matches that will help him grow the most." Against Portugal, the Barcelona forward had three attempts

on goal, including two on target, helping Spain maintain the pressure before Merino's late winner. De la Fuente suggested that the physical toll of trying to stop Lamine may have contributed to Portugal defender Nuno Mendes' injury in the 56th minute, when he was forced off and replaced by Nelson Semedo. "Lamine did a spectacular job. He suffered for the team, he defended for the team. When he had the ball, he always created doubt and uncertainty for the opponent. He generated a lot of fear," de la Fuente said. "We still need Lamine in this World Cup, to keep growing and delivering these kinds of performances," he added. - *Agencies*

'I've given my best'



ARLINGTON: Cristiano Ronaldo walked off the pitch after his final World Cup match for Portugal with a stoic look on his face and only the slightest hint of emotion. There was a brief wave to acknowledge cheering fans, and the same feeling he has had after past losses. "Sad — it's normal after being eliminated like this," said Ronaldo, who briefly shielded his eyes with his right hand after the match. The sixth and final World Cup for the 41-year-old superstar ended with a 0 loss to border rival Spain in a round of 16 game on Monday. "I've given everything. I've given my best, and I leave with a clear conscience," he said.

"This is football, this is life for a football player. Sometimes you win and sometimes you lose." "I gave my best. I won three titles with Portugal. Before Cristiano, Portugal hadn't won any title. So, I'm happy. The biggest title that I won with the national team was in 2016 (European Championship), which for me had the same dimension as a World Cup, honestly." Ronaldo, the only player to score goals in six World Cups in a row and the career leader in international goals with 146, said the day before that he hoped it wouldn't be his final match in this run and wanted to enjoy it to the fullest. But he reiterated then — and again after the loss to Spain —

that this was his last time in the tournament that's played every four years. The deepest he ever went in the World Cup was the semifinals in his 2006 debut. As for his other future plans, he wasn't ready to say. "Yes, it was my last World Cup, but everything else I'll have time to think about, to be with my family, and not make any decision hot-headed and move on with life," he said. "He is an example, a role model to follow. This is somebody that we need to celebrate. We're talking about a football icon," Portugal coach Roberto Martinez said in translated remarks. "There aren't too many Cristiano Ronaldos out there.

I think we need to thank him. His dream was to win the World Cup and he did this as an amazing example in the locker room." Portugal had never won a major international tournament before Ronaldo. The first was the 2016 European Championship, before adding Nations League titles in 2019 and 2025. Ronaldo's finale on football's biggest stage came eight years after he recorded a World Cup hat-trick at age 33. That made him the oldest to have one, and that stood until then-38-year-old Lionel Messi scored three goals for Argentina in a 3-0 win over Algeria on June 16. He scored three goals in this World Cup, and his 11 overall are tied for ninth on the career list.



Portugal coach Martinez quits

ARLINGTON: Portugal manager Roberto Martinez said he was leaving his role after Spain beat his side 1-0 in the World Cup last 16 on Monday, calling the defeat the end of a cycle for the team. Martinez said his contract ended on Monday and Portugal's football leadership now had the chance to appoint a new coach. The Spaniard said he had come to Portugal to win the World Cup and saw no point in continuing after failing to achieve that target. Martinez, praised 41-year-old Ronaldo as an exemplary captain and thanked him for his contribution to Portugal, while avoiding

further comment on the player's future. The 52-year-old, who was consistently criticised for sticking with ageing captain Cristiano Ronaldo no matter what, had been in charge since 2023. Before that he was manager of Belgium, following tenures in British football with Swansea, Wigan and Everton. "Thank you to the Portuguese people because it was an incredible period, a pride which I can't describe," said Martinez. "All that strength, energy we had from all the fans, from all the Portuguese people was incredible. "Thank you for this and I take with me a memory for life."

SEATTLE STADIUM

Belgium dash USA's World Cup dreams

SEATTLE: Belgium booked their place in the FIFA World Cup 2026 quarter-finals with a 4-1 victory over USA at Seattle Stadium on Monday. Charles De Ketelaere's brace, Hans Vanaken's first World Cup goal and a late strike from substitute Romelu Lukaku set up a last-eight meeting with Spain, while USA became the final co-hosts to exit the tournament after Canada and Mexico had already bowed out in the Round of 16. The warning signs were there for Mauricio Pochettino's side when Timothy Castagne's 18-yard strike forced Matt Freese into a flying save at the end of Belgium's first meaningful attack. Youri Tielemans then went within inches of turning home Dodi Lukebakio's cross before Rudi Garcia's men took a deserved lead. Leandro Trossard's teasing

delivery into the box caused all manner of problems for the USA defence, with Nicolas Raskin firing across for De Ketelaere to tap home. Belgium appeared to be cruising, but their lead was cancelled out after 31 minutes when Malik Tillman's deflected free-kick wrong-footed Thibaut Courtois. However, the scores were level for just 116 seconds as Trossard's cross from the left found De Ketelaere, who headed home his second goal of the contest. USA's task was made even harder just before the hour mark when a defensive mishap gifted Belgium a third goal. Freese raced out of his area to clear but missed the ball, allowing De Ketelaere to steal possession before Vanaken's long-range effort evaded Tim Ream's attempted block and found the empty net. The Stars and Stripes showed

signs of life in the closing stages as substitute Sebastian Berthel fired wide and Courtois denied Polarin Balogun, only for Lukaku to pounce on a loose clearance and finish with aplomb in stoppage time to put the result beyond any doubt. Spain await Belgium at Los Angeles Stadium on July 10 after eliminating Cristiano Ronaldo's Portugal. Belgium coach Rudi Garcia said: "To everyone who got up in the middle of the night to support us, I'd like to say a huge thank you. They should be happy and proud of their players today. We showed that Belgium is a great football nation." Mauricio Pochettino, USA coach, said: "It was really tough from the beginning. We congratulate Belgium, they were better than us. It wasn't our day. We need to learn, we need to assess

the game and understand why we did not approach the game in the same way we did as we did in the rest of the World Cup." "It stinks," US player Tyler Adams said. "This was a moment to have an opportunity to advance and really try and do something special. We fell short." While the US were boosted by the presence of star forward Polarin Balogun, whose one-game red-card suspension was controversially lifted by FIFA, American defenders were at fault in a pair of first-half goals and Freese's howler gave the Red Devils a third early in the second half. The US hadn't allowed that many goals in a World Cup game since a 5-1 loss to Czechoslovakia in the Americans' 1990 opener, when they returned to football's biggest stage after a 40-year absence. - *Agencies*



There's justice in life, says Raskin

SEATTLE: Belgium midfielder Nicolas Raskin said his side's 4-1 World Cup last-16 win over the United States on Monday felt like a measure of justice after FIFA's decision to allow US striker Polarin Balogun to play despite his red card in the previous game. Balogun had been sent off against Bosnia and Herzegovina in the round of 32, and while a dismissal normally carries an automatic one-match suspension, FIFA suspended the ban under Article 27 of its Disciplinary Code after US President Donald Trump asked FIFA President Gianni Infantino to review the case. Infantino said FIFA's judicial bodies operated "independently and autonomously" and that he had told Trump the Balogun case was subject to an ongoing legal process. FIFA's disciplinary committee



said it had the authority to suspend the one-match ban. The decision triggered widespread criticism, including from Belgium's football federation, which unsuccessfully challenged

Balogun's eligibility hours before kickoff. Belgium, however, made the controversy irrelevant on the pitch, sweeping aside the hosts 4-1 to reach the quarter-finals. "Like I said, I think there was always a justice somewhere in life and the fact that something can happen like that, you can put it all you want, but we don't think that was fair," Raskin told reporters. "And today, I think it just brings us a little bit of luck. We needed to win the game and the message throughout." "Our job was to show on the pitch that we are here for football," Veteran goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois apparently wasn't upset by the pre-match drama. "I read things and I laughed," he said. "I was more sure of beating the USA than Senegal, because Senegal is a better team than the United States" - *Agencies*

Asean cornerstone of India’s Act East policy, says Indian PM Modi

Addressing the Parliament of Indonesia PM Modi recalled how Indonesia’s G20 presidency in 2022, followed by India’s presidency in 2023, brought the conversation about prioritising the demands of developing countries to the global forefront

JAKARTA: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday underlined how New Delhi places ASEAN at the core of India’s Act East Policy and gave a call for further strengthening the priorities of the Global South.

Addressing the Parliament of Indonesia PM Modi recalled how Indonesia’s G20 presidency in 2022, followed by India’s presidency in 2023, brought the conversation about prioritising the demands of developing countries to the global forefront. “India is a staunch supporter of a free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific. India advocates for freedom of navigation in the Indo-Pacific region. We have placed ASEAN at the centre of this approach; our ‘Act East Policy’ is also ASEAN-centric. The comprehen-



sive strategic partnership between India and ASEAN continues to advance steadily. Therefore, it is essential that India and Indonesia must continue to work together in this direction”

He noted how India’s vision of strategic autonomy, and Indonesia’s Bebas-Aktif (Independent and Active) approach brings the two countries closer while addressing important global issues.

Highlighting how Indonesia recently became the full-member of the BRICS grouping, PM Modi underlined the opportunity ahead of the two nations and said that with India at the helm this year, the two countries can work in tandem to bring the priorities of the Global South to the forefront.

Noting the rapidly evolving global order, Prime Minister Modi said that countries like India and Indonesia are seeking equal participation and a significant role.

“In this global landscape, India firmly believes that reform of the

UNSC can no longer be delayed,” he said.

Shortly after his address to the Parliament, in a post on X, Prime Minister Modi called it an honour.

“India and Indonesia are connected by centuries of shared history, culture and people-to-people ties. Together, we will continue to work towards a future defined by friendship, cooperation and shared prosperity,” he said.

In a post on X, Ministry of External Affairs Spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal highlighted how PM Modi spoke about the enduring civilisational bonds and shared democratic values linking India and Indonesia, and called for a future-oriented partnership aligned with the aspirations of Viksit Bharat 2047 and Golden Indonesia 2045.

He underlined how PM Modi reaffirmed India’s commitment to working with Indonesia to further deepen the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, strengthen the voice of the Global South and

advancing a free, open, inclusive and rules-based Indo-Pacific and called for a new beginning in India-Indonesia relationship based on the Ganga-Mahakam Vision for bilateral engagement.

Prime Minister Modi is on a three-day state visit to Indonesia.

The Ministry of External Affairs in a statement noted that during the meeting between the two leaders, they exchanged perspectives on regional and global issues of mutual interest. They discussed further strengthening of the ASEAN-India Comprehensive Strategic Partnership and reaffirmed their commitment towards a free, open and rules-based Indo-Pacific.

“In this context, Prime Minister underlined India’s MAHASAGAR (Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions) vision. President Prabowo conveyed Indonesia’s full support for India’s ongoing Presidency of the BRICS in 2026,” the statement said. — ANI

Indonesian President’s candid praise for PM steals the show

JAKARTA: In a light-hearted moment carrying a deeper strategic message, Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto drew smiles from dignitaries during a banquet lunch by openly acknowledging his admiration for India’s growth model.

Addressing PM Modi directly, President Subianto praised India’s developmental strides and candidly stated, “I follow your career and I copied many of your programmes. I don’t mind admitting, because if it succeeds for hundreds of million people with the same background as Indonesia, the same problems, we are making the same, we have the same problems of big population, we have agriculture in background, we face many natural disasters, and yet India has achieved many progress. So I openly admit that I follow your career and I copied a lot of your programmes.”

The Indonesian leader further highlighted that these adapted strategies are already delivering positive outcomes on the ground, adding, “And it’s proving to be successful for us. So, thank you very much. I’m very happy there’s no copyright to all your programmes.”

Demonstrating that this policy alignment is actively translating into bilateral exchange, President Subianto revealed that a delegation from Jakarta recently concluded an intensive study of India’s agricultural



innovations.

“In fact, just I think yesterday, a team from Indonesia just came back from I think two or three weeks of study of the achievements many Indian groups have achieved in making arid land to be arable again. It’s called permaculture. So we are studying this closely and we have a lot to learn and we are not afraid of learning,” the President noted.

In a major boost to these expanding bilateral relations, PM Modi and President Subianto on Tuesday announced a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on BrahMos-Astra missiles, alongside New Delhi’s plans to establish Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) and Indian Institute of Management (IIM) campuses in the Southeast Asian nation.

The key developments came as the two maritime neighbours moved decisively to deepen their defence, education, and strategic ties. — ANI

SYRIA



Explosions injure 18 during Macron’s visit in Damascus

DAMASCUS: Syria’s Interior Ministry confirmed that a series of explosions rocked the capital, Damascus, on Tuesday amid a visit from French President Emmanuel Macron.

Local reports indicated that the blasts, which wounded at least 18 people, happened near the Four Seasons hotel where Macron is staying.

However, they occurred while the French president was meeting with his Syrian counterpart, Ahmad al-Sharaa, in the presidential palace.

Macron is the first Western European head of state or government to visit Syria since al-Sharaa came to power following the ouster of strongman Bashar Assad in December 2024.

Authorities told reporters that Macron and al-Sharaa were unharmed. The bombs were placed in a parked car and a garbage bin near the hotel, police said, which is on a busy street in the heart of the city near the National Museum.

The incident comes just days after 10 people were killed when a bomb went off in a Damascus cafe located near the Justice Ministry.

Syria is trying to strengthen international ties and boost investment after more than a decade of

devastating civil war that killed nearly half a million people and displaced thousands.

No group or individual has claimed responsibility for any of the recent violence in the capital.

The explosions highlight the immense security challenges remaining in Syria, where President Macron is the first European Union head of state to visit since rebels led by Ahmed al-Sharaa toppled Bashar al-Assad in 2024. Shortly after the incident, state television reported that President Macron and President Sharaa had successfully met at the Syrian Presidential Palace for scheduled talks.

President Macron’s historic visit underscores the significant geopolitical transformation Syria is undergoing under the leadership of President Sharaa, a former al-Qaeda commander. Since taking power, he has established close ties with Western and Middle Eastern nations that had previously shunned the Assad regime, as he looks to rebuild a country devastated by thirteen years of war. During the protracted conflict, numerous militant factions, including Islamic State, managed to establish a strong presence across the nation.

— Agencies

OVER 20,000 HECTARES DEVASTATED

Firefighters battle wildfires in Europe

LISBON: Wildfires across Portugal, Spain, France, Greece and other countries have forced mass evacuations and threatened the Tour de France.

The fires, which have already devastated more than 20,000 hectares (50,000 acres) of land, come as the region has just come out of major heat waves in May and June that have been blamed for thousands of deaths.



French authorities ban spectators at Tour de France stage

In southwestern France, 10,500 people were told to evacuate their homes near Perpignan amid a wildfire in the Pyrenees that has ravaged more than 4,600 hectares.

Monday’s third stage of the Tour de France cycle race through the Pyrenees is to take part without spectators amid the threat of fire, authorities said.

Only riders and their team vehicles will be allowed on the 196-kilometre (122-mile) stage crossing from Spain into France.

Regional prefect Pierre Reg-

nault de la Mothe told reporters: “I regret having to say this: It will be, in France at least, a stage of the Tour de France without spectators.” Another fire in a mountainous district of the southeastern Drome department is being combated by hundreds of firefighters.

Spain, Greece and Portugal see major blazes

In the northeastern Girona region of Spain, a wildfire that erupted on Friday and threatened the tourist beaches of the Costa Brava has

burnt out nearly 2,200 hectares (5,400 acres) of land and was still not under control on Monday.

Temperatures in the country have risen to more than 40 degrees Celsius (104 degrees Fahrenheit) in some parts of the country, fueling fears of new blazes.

In Greece, a forest fire set alight two factories in Thessaloniki in the north of the country, with authorities to evacuating the surrounding area and issuing warnings to residents to keep windows closed.

In Portugal, a wildfire that devastated some 13,000 hectares of forest and scrub land in a northern district has reportedly been brought under control. Four regions in the country still remained on a heat alert on Monday.

Scientists agree that the burning of fossil fuels by humans is changing the climate in such a way that heat waves and other extreme weather phenomena are much more likely and severe, thus increasing the risk of both wildfires and flooding. — DW

DIPLOMATIC FRICTION

Italian minister downplays Trump’s jibe at Meloni

ROME: Senior Italian government officials have urged restraint after US President Donald Trump shared a mocking image targeting Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni on social media, emphasising that bilateral relations remain resilient despite the public friction.

The diplomatic tension escalated on Sunday when Trump uploaded a photograph of Meloni observing him on Truth Social, accompanied by the caption, “RE-STRAINING ORDER NEEDED,” renewing a political dispute that emerged last month.

The initial friction began after Trump asserted to an Italian television network that Meloni had “begged” him for a photograph during a G7 summit, an allegation that the Italian Prime Minister



subsequently refuted.

Responding to the development, Italian Defence Minister Guido Crosetto downplayed the incident during a broadcast on Italy’s Sky TV, stating, “I did not have any re-

action. The fundamental thing is to maintain relations with a key ally like the USA,” while adding that, “People come and go, but relationships remain.” Italy’s Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Min-

ister Antonio Tajani echoed these sentiments, affirming that the historical alliance between Rome and Washington remains unaffected by specific remarks.

“From the very start, we stated that we would not respond to such statements, so let’s move on. We are convinced that transatlantic relations go far beyond individual statements,” Tajani said.

In contrast to the government’s measured approach, domestic opposition leaders reacted sharply to the social media post. Carlo Calenda, the leader of the Azione party, publicly condemned the US President’s actions on the social media platform X.

Calenda described Trump as a “despicable, cheap bully” while expressing full solidarity with Meloni. — DW



LIFESTYLE

SCIENTISTS DISCOVER WHY SOME DNA-DOUBLED CELLS DON'T DIE: STUDY

Before a cell can divide into two separate cells, it first has to copy all of its DNA so each new cell receives a full genetic blueprint. In some cases, the DNA is copied successfully, but the cell never fully splits

Scientists have uncovered a surprising twist in how cells behave when division goes wrong. Sometimes a cell successfully copies its DNA but fails to split into two, leaving it with double the genetic material, a mistake linked to ageing, cancer, and other major diseases. Researchers discovered that not all of these failures are equal. Every second, countless cells in the human body divide to create new cells. It is one of the most important processes in biology, and it depends on thousands of molecules working together with incredible precision. But sometimes the process breaks down in unexpected ways. Before a cell can divide into two separate cells, it first has to copy all of its DNA so each new cell receives a full genetic blueprint. In some cases, the DNA is copied successfully, but the cell

never fully splits. The result is a single cell containing twice the normal amount of DNA, a condition known as whole genome duplication (WGD). Scientists have long known that whole genome duplication can have major consequences. Cells with extra DNA may stop functioning normally, become inactive, die, change into other cell types, accumulate age-related damage, or contribute to diseases, including cancer. Researchers at Hokkaido University wanted to understand whether the specific way a cell fails during division changes what happens afterwards. The team focused on two major causes of whole genome duplication: cytokinesis failure and mitotic slippage. During cytokinesis failure, the cell goes through almost the whole division process but cannot complete the final step of physically splitting into two daughter cells. In mitotic slippage, the cell enters mitosis but prematurely exits before its chromosomes are correctly separated. “While whole genome duplication occurs through multiple cellular processes, it has been unclear whether differences in the route affect the characteristics of the resulting cells,” says Associate Professor Ryota Uehara, corresponding author of the study. Although both mistakes leave cells with doubled DNA, the researchers discovered that the outcomes are dramatically different. Using live cell imaging and chromosome-specific labelling techniques, the scientists

tracked how cells behaved after undergoing whole genome duplication through the two different mechanisms. Cells created through cytokinesis failure were much more stable and had a higher chance of surviving. Cells produced through mitotic slippage, however, often showed uneven chromosome distribution and lower survival rates. The researchers found that chromosome organisation was the key factor behind these differences. In mitotic slippage, chromosomes are frequently divided unevenly, creating a severe genetic imbalance that reduces a cell’s ability to survive. In cytokinesis failure, chromosome distribution remains more balanced, allowing cells to stay more stable. The team also found that when they experimentally improved chromosome separation in cells undergoing mitotic slippage, the cells became significantly more viable. The findings could have important implications for cancer treatment and prevention. Whole genome duplication is commonly found in cancer cells, and some cancer therapies can unintentionally trigger it as well. Cells that survive after gaining extra DNA may continue multiplying and potentially contribute to tumour recurrence. The new research suggests that targeting chromosome separation processes could help prevent abnormal cells from surviving and continuing to grow. “There are different mechanisms through which whole genome duplication can occur, but their distinct impacts have largely been overlooked,” says Uehara. “We challenged this conventional view by comparing cells formed through different mechanisms and found that these differences can influence cell behaviour over the long term.” - ANI

ROUND-UP

Experience curated luxury of Lincoln Corsair this summer

Running until 12 July, this ongoing summer showcase highlights the compact luxury SUV’s brilliant balance of performance and refined styling, pairing its meticulous craftsmanship with an elite suite of promotional advantages

MUSCAT: Lincoln Oman’s seasonal “Signature Rewards” campaign continues to attract luxury enthusiasts across the Sultanate of Oman, turning the spotlight onto the agile elegance of the Lincoln Corsair.

Running until 12 July, this ongoing summer showcase highlights the compact luxury SUV’s brilliant balance of performance and refined styling, pairing its meticulous craftsmanship with an elite suite of promotional advantages.

Guests who select the Lincoln Corsair during this campaign period benefit from extensive ownership privileges designed to deliver absolute peace of mind. The exclusive package features a comprehensive 5-year or 100,000 km service package covering 10 scheduled maintenance intervals, alongside a matching 5-year or 100,000 km manufacturer’s warranty. To further elevate the summer benefits, new owners receive complimentary first-year private vehicle registration, a collection of premium accessories, and a guaranteed 3M “Golden 7” Pack for advanced window tinting and ceramic



ic surface protection. The seasonal initiative also continues to feature unique lifestyle rewards, including an iPhone 17 raffle draw for test-drive participants and a grand raffle offering buyers a chance to win one of two iPhone 17 units.

Engineered for effortless cruising and precise handling, the Lincoln Corsair delivers a highly responsive performance perfectly suited for both urban streets and scenic coastal highways. At its heart lies a potent 2.0-litre turbo-

charged engine that generates 260 horsepower and 396 Nm of torque, seamlessly mated to an advanced 8-speed automatic transmission with SelectShift technology. For a personalized driving experience, the Lincoln Drive Modes allow the vehicle to seamlessly modify traction and steering response to adapt to varying road conditions.

The exterior layout greets guests with an exquisite sensory welcome, utilizing approach detection and signature illuminated entry

to project a beautiful sequential lighting display and a custom Lincoln logo welcome mat onto the ground. This visual sophistication extends to the dynamic LED lighting and jeweled headlamps, which work in perfect harmony with the Lincoln Co-Pilot360 2.0 Vision safety suite. This sophisticated protective ecosystem integrates a 360-degree camera, blind-spot detection, lane-keeping assist and intelligent adaptive cruise control to ensure high situational awareness

and a relaxing travel experience.

Inside, the cabin opens up as a calm, curated sanctuary defined by a thoughtful horizontal architecture that emphasizes physical space and airiness. Hand-selected materials adorn the interior, beautifully accented by natural Paldao wood detailing and customizable ambient lighting. Modern connectivity is anchored by the SYNC 4 infotainment system displayed on a crisp 13.3-inch touchscreen, while dual-zone climate control

and a premium 10-speaker audio system establish a serene micro-climate. Complete with unique details like Symphonic Chimes and a panoramic Vista Roof, the Corsair creates a restorative retreat for those who appreciate fine luxury. Lincoln Oman invites all to visit the Lincoln showroom in Wattayah to explore the Signature Rewards program in person.

In Oman, Lincoln vehicles are brought to you by Arabian Car Marketing Co.

APPLY, SPEND & WIN

Over 200 customers set to win this summer with Bank Muscat Visa credit cards

MUSCAT: In line with its ongoing commitment to delivering exceptional value to its customers, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, has launched an exclusive offer titled Apply, Spend & Win in partnership with Visa. The campaign underscores the bank’s continued efforts to enrich the banking experience through a carefully curated portfolio of products and services that reflect its standing as a trusted financial partner.

The offer runs from 1 July through to 30 September and is open to all customers applying for a Bank Muscat Visa credit card for the first time. Throughout the campaign period, the Bank will conduct monthly draws offering valuable prizes of an Apple iPhone 17 Pro and Apple Watch Series 11. Each monthly draw will reward 72 winners: 30 winners receiving an Apple iPhone 17 Pro, and 42 winners receiving an Apple Watch Series 11.

Customers wishing to be eligible for the Apple Watch Series 11 prize draw are required to make a minimum spend of OMR 100 using their new credit card. To be in with a chance of winning the Apple iPhone 17 Pro, a minimum spend of OMR 200 is required. Customers who are not selected in one draw will automatically retain their eligibility for subsequent draws, provided they continue to meet the minimum spend each month. This applies to all local and international transactions through point-of-sale terminals or e-commerce platforms, providing cardholders with full flexibility across all modes of payment. Participation is exclusively open to new Bank Muscat Visa credit cardholders who have issued their cards for the first time during the



campaign period. Supplementary, reissued or replacement cards are not included.

On this occasion, Abdulnasir Al Raisi, General Manager - Personal Banking at Bank Muscat, said: “This campaign embodies our partnership with Visa to deliver exceptional experiences through credit cards, enabling a broad segment of our customers to benefit from the latest digital payment solutions and enjoy the wide-ranging privileges we offer. We are continuously committed to developing our banking services, products and offers to provide our customers

with a distinguished banking experience. I would like to invite our customers to participate in this exclusive offer and seize the opportunity to win one of these valuable prizes this summer.”

Bank Muscat has launched this exclusive offer to enable customers to enjoy a premium experience with its comprehensive suite of credit cards, including the Private Banking Visa Infinite Credit Card, Asalah Signature Visa Credit Card, Al Jawhar Visa Platinum Credit Card, Bank Muscat Visa Gold Credit Card and Bank Muscat Oman Air Visa Platinum Credit Card. These cards deliver an extensive range of travel, shopping and lifestyle benefits including the opportunity of earning reward points on credit card applications and spends which can be redeemed for valuable benefits including flights, hotel bookings, shopping and eVouchers through Bank Muscat Rewards, accessible via the Mobile Banking App.

Customers can apply for a Bank Muscat Visa Credit Card through Bank Muscat Mobile Banking or through their nearest branch and have the card delivered to them with complimentary courier service.

COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP



Piyush Goyal meets UAE Ambassador Alshaali, appreciates efforts to strengthen India-UAE partnership

NEW DELHI: Union Minister of Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal on Monday met Abdunnasser Alshaali, Ambassador of the UAE to India, with discussions centred on deepening the India-UAE Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.

According to a social media post by the Minister’s office, Goyal appreciated the Ambassador’s efforts in strengthening bilateral ties and also extended best wishes for his future endeavours.

“Minister @PiyushGoyal held a meeting with Dr. Abdunnasser Alshaali, Ambassador of the UAE to India. Minister appreciated his efforts towards strengthening the India-UAE Comprehensive Strategic Partnership and also extended best wishes for his future endeavours,” the Minister’s office said in a post on X.

The meeting comes at a time when trade and investment relations between India and the UAE have seen significant momentum following the India-UAE Com-

prehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), which came into effect in May 2022. The agreement has been a key driver for boosting two-way trade, easing market access, and encouraging investment flows across sectors including energy, infrastructure, logistics, fintech and food processing.

The UAE is one of India’s top trading partners and a major source of foreign direct investment. Bilateral trade has grown steadily post-CEPA, with both countries targeting USD 100 billion in non-oil trade by 2030. The partnership also covers collaboration in renewable energy, food security, digital payments, and supply chain resilience.

Alshaali has been instrumental in taking forward several India-UAE initiatives during his tenure as Ambassador. These include expanding cooperation under the India-UAE Virtual Trade Corridor, collaboration in education and skill development, and

strengthening people-to-people linkages given the large Indian Diaspora in the UAE.

The Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between the two countries, elevated in 2017, now spans trade, defence, energy, health, space and climate. Both sides have also been working closely in multilateral forums and on regional connectivity projects.

The meeting with the UAE envoy is part of a broader push by the Commerce Ministry to engage with key partner nations to unlock new export opportunities and attract investment into India. With global supply chains realigning, officials have been focusing on leveraging FTAs and strategic partnerships to enhance India’s presence in West Asia and beyond.

The India-UAE relationship is expected to remain a priority area for the government, given the UAE’s role as a trade hub and its investments in Indian infrastructure, ports and food parks. -ANI



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