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BILATERAL MEETING

Oman and Saudi Arabia to boost bilateral ties

MUSCAT: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister received Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Saudi Arabia on Wednesday, as part of the exchange of fraternal visits between the two countries.

During the bilateral meeting, the two ministers discussed the trajectory of the strong fraternal relations between Oman and Saudi Arabia, which continue to witness steady growth across various spheres of cooperation.

They also reviewed a number of regional and political matters of mutual interest, along with ways to enhance coordination regarding them.

After that, an expanded talks session was convened with the participation of a number of ministers and senior officials from both sides. The discussions addressed various tracks of cooperation—including economic, investment and logistic domains—and explored opportunities for their development in a manner that supports integration, enhances the smooth flow of trade and opens broader horizons for practical partnership at both the bilateral and regional levels, as well as within the framework of Gulf cooperation among the GCC member states. >A6

OMAN CONDEMNS AIR STRIKES ON BAHRAIN, KUWAIT

Oman affirmed its full solidarity with the GCC to preserve their security and stability

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman has condemned the military strikes targeting the territories of the Kingdom of Bahrain and the State of Kuwait, as well as the attacks on two commercial vessels—one Saudi and one Qatari—in the Strait of Hormuz.

Oman affirmed its full solidarity with its fellow GCC nations in all measures aimed at preserving their security, stability, territorial integrity, sovereignty and national interests.

In a statement issued yesterday by the Foreign Ministry, the Sultanate of Oman further stressed that the escalating military tensions in the region pose a direct threat to regional security, maritime safety, the free flow of international trade and the stability of global energy supplies.

It reiterated its unequivocal rejection of any acts that undermine the security of states or endanger civilian and commercial shipping.

Oman calls upon all parties to exercise restraint, de-escalate tensions, prioritise dialogue and diplomatic solutions, and commit to the full implementation of existing understandings, in support of ongoing efforts to consolidate peace and security in the region.

-ONA/ Agencies

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN

Shura Council reviews labour legislation

1 The Shura Council hosted Prof. Mahad Baawain, Minister of Labour, as part of its ongoing engagement with the Ministry of Labour to discuss Ministerial Decision No.(602/2025) promulgating the Executive Regulation Governing Work Permits and Work Practice Permits, together with the amendments introduced under a Ministerial Decision. >A3

OMAN

Tax Authority ends awareness drive

2 The Tax Authority concluded yesterday an awareness campaign in the Dhofar Governorate titled "Sustainable Tax Partnership and Renewed Awareness." This comes within a field awareness programme implemented by the Authority across Oman. It aims to enhance tax awareness, consolidate the culture of voluntary compliance. >A2

MARKET

Trading of Omifco shares begins

3 Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) celebrated on Wednesday the listing of Oman India Fertiliser Company (Omifco) on the MSX and the commencement of trading on its shares, following the successful public offering of 25 percent of its capital. The listing ceremony of Omifco was held under the auspices of Abdulsalam Mohammed Al Murshidi. >B1

COMMENTARY

The biggest robbery ever in the World Cup!

MOHAMED ISSA AL ZADJALI
Chairman,
Muscat Media Group

The Round of 16 clash between Argentina and Egypt at the 2026 World Cup will stand as the definitive proof that modern football is no longer decided solely on the pitch.

When FIFA favours a narrative, a powerhouse nation, or a geopolitical interest, the rules bend, the technology blurs, and the system ensures the preferred side wins. At the centre of this manipulation is the Video Assistant Referee (VAR)—a tool explicitly sold to the public as objective, but weaponised here to engineer a specific outcome.

Selective Justice: The Tale of Two Decisions

The match perfectly exposed the double standard built into modern officiating. When Egypt scored a historic breakaway goal to go up 3-1, VAR triggered a meticulous review. The broadcast booth went back minutes into a separate phase of play, dragging the referee to the monitor to disallow the goal.

Yet, in the 92nd minute with the score tied 2-2, Argentina's Alexis Mac Allister overtly dragged down Egypt's Hamdy Fathy inside the penalty box. Had the rules been applied equally, Egypt would have had a spot-kick to win. Instead, VAR chose total leniency, allowing Argentina to counterattack immediately and score the 3-2 winner.

Furthermore, suspicions arose around Argentina's first goal. While Egyptian players frantically demanded a check, FIFA's Semi-Automated Offside Technology (SAOT) quickly ruled it onside. Critics argue that by manipulating the exact "kick point" video frame or hiding behind unbroadcasted 3D rendering, technicians can easily protect elite teams.

This hands-off approach was also seen in the first half when an Argentine player's apparent slap on an Egyptian opponent went completely unpunished by the VAR room.

Political Interference and Institutional Immunity

This pattern of protecting elite assets is not a localised glitch—it is an institutional policy that reaches the highest levels of global politics.

Earlier in the tournament, Lionel Messi was widely seen as escaping a blatant red card offence in his opening match.

In a shocking breach of sporting integrity, Donald Trump reportedly phoned the FIFA President directly to lobby for the decision to be buried, protecting the tournament's biggest commercial draws on American soil. Rather than upholding the rule book, the FIFA President complied, offering a convoluted, nonsensical narrative to justify why the blatant infraction was dismissed.

When world leaders can pull strings behind closed doors to alter disciplinary actions, the sport ceases to be a competition and becomes a scripted theatre.

Protecting the Gambling Cartel and Corporate Engines

To understand why these "errors" consistently favour football's elite, one must look at the financial incentives driving FIFA leadership and their commercial partners. A World Cup quarterfinal featuring Argentina, fuelled by global sponsorships and massive television markets, generates hundreds of millions of dollars more than one featuring Egypt.

Beyond broadcast revenue, an upset of this magnitude would have sent shockwaves through the global betting industry. Billions of dollars were wagered worldwide on Argentina to advance. Had Egypt successfully held their 3-1 lead or scored the late penalty, gambling companies stood to lose big time, facing catastrophic payouts to those who backed the massive underdog.

By turning a blind eye to Argentina's fouls and strictly policing Egypt's goals, VAR effectively protected the financial interests of the entire football gambling industry.

A Five-Decade Fan's Verdict: The Death of the Sport

For fans who have followed the World Cup live since 1974, watching the tournament evolve over more than five decades, the introduction of VAR has laid bare a heartbreaking reality. Technology has not cleaned up the game; it has simply provided a sophisticated mechanism to steer matches in favour of FIFA's corporate agenda.

What took place in the Argentina-Egypt match was nothing short of the biggest robbery ever witnessed in World Cup history. The beauty of football historically lay in its raw unpredictability and sporting merit. Today, that meritocracy is dead. If we are to save the soul of the sport and prevent fans from losing interest entirely, it is time for a massive, independent interrogation of FIFA officials from top to bottom. The current system is a farce, and without systemic accountability, football will remain an illusion of fairness managed by a corrupt elite.

COMMENTARY

Pakistan Ends Remittance Incentive Schemes: What It Means for Gulf-Based Workers and Their Families

Pakistan has introduced a significant change to its overseas remittance framework by discontinuing key incentive schemes that have supported the processing of billions of dollars in remittances from expatriate workers over the past several years.

The move has attracted considerable attention among overseas Pakistanis across the Gulf, particularly in Oman, the UAE and Saudi Arabia, where remittances remain a critical source of income for millions of families in Pakistan. Yet despite concerns among migrant workers, the policy change does not mean that remitters will immediately face charges when sending money home through formal channels.

Understanding the Policy Shift

Effective July 1, 2026, the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) discontinued the Telegraphic Transfer Charges Incentive Scheme (TTCIS), a mechanism under which participating financial institutions were reimbursed for eligible remittance-processing costs.

The central bank has also ended the Sohni Dharti Remittance Program, which rewarded overseas Pakistanis with loyalty points for using formal remittance channels. Both initiatives were designed to encourage remittances through regulated banking and exchange company networks and to reduce reliance on informal transfer systems.

While these schemes have been withdrawn, Pakistan's authorities have made it clear that the fundamental objective remains unchanged: promoting remittances through formal and transparent channels.

Will Overseas Pakistanis Have to Pay More?

The immediate answer appears to be no.

The State Bank of Pakistan has instructed participating institutions to continue facilitating eligible home remittances without imposing charges on senders or beneficiaries. As a result, expatriates using licensed banks, exchange houses and approved digital remittance platforms are unlikely to experience any immediate change in the cost of sending money home.

For workers in Muscat, Sohar, Salalah, Dubai, Abu Dhabi or Riyadh, the customer experience is expected to remain largely unchanged in the near term.

Why Did Pakistan End the Schemes?

The decision reflects Pakistan's broader efforts to rationalise expenditure and improve fiscal efficiency while maintaining support for overseas remittances.

Over the years, remittance inflows have become one of Pakistan's most important sources of foreign exchange. As remittance volumes reached record levels, the cost of maintaining incentive and reimbursement schemes also increased.

The policy shift therefore appears aimed at reducing direct fiscal commitments while preserving the overall attractiveness of formal remittance channels.

Why Remittances Matter

Few economic indicators are as important to Pakistan as overseas remittances.

Millions of Pakistanis working abroad support families, education, healthcare, housing and small businesses through regular transfers. These inflows also help strengthen Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves, support financial stability and contribute to economic growth.

The Gulf region remains the largest source of remittances to Pakistan, with Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Oman, Qatar, Kuwait and Bahrain collectively accounting for a substantial share of total inflows. For many households, remittances are not simply financial transfers. They represent school fees, medical expenses, housing payments and everyday living costs.

The Importance of the Oman-Pakistan Corridor

Oman continues to play an important role in Pakistan's remittance ecosystem.

The Sultanate is home to a sizeable Pakistani workforce employed across construction, services, retail, logistics, manufacturing and professional sectors. These workers contribute significantly to household incomes in Pakistan through regular remittances.

The Pakistan-Oman corridor has historically benefited from strong cooperation between banks, exchange houses and financial institutions on both sides. This collaboration has helped keep remittance services efficient, secure and competitively priced.

The continued strength of this corridor is important not only for Pakistani families but also for broader efforts to maintain transparent and regulated cross-border financial flows.

What Happens Next?

The withdrawal of government-funded incentive schemes represents a transition rather than a disruption.

The success of the new framework will depend on the ability of banks, exchange companies and digital remittance providers to maintain efficient services while continuing to encourage the use of formal channels.

Competition among service providers, advances in digital payments and long-standing partnerships between financial institutions are expected to support affordable remittance services in the foreseeable future.

At the same time, policymakers will be closely monitoring remittance trends to ensure that the shift away from direct incentives does not affect inflows or encourage a return to informal transfer mechanisms.

Looking Ahead

Pakistan's decision should not be interpreted as the end of fee-free remittances for overseas workers. Rather, it represents a move toward a more sustainable and market-oriented framework that seeks to preserve the benefits of formal remittance channels while reducing the fiscal burden of incentive programs.

For Pakistani expatriates in Oman and across the Gulf, the immediate outlook remains reassuring. Remittances continue to flow through regulated channels, service providers remain competitive, and the essential role of overseas workers in supporting Pakistan's economy remains as important as ever.

The true measure of success will be whether Pakistan can sustain strong remittance growth while maintaining affordability, efficiency and trust in the formal financial system.

(The author is the CEO of Gulf Exchange, Oman. The views expressed are his own)

Draft of biotechnology strategy discussed

The meeting was held in collaboration with the international consultancy firm executing the project

MUSCAT: The committee responsible for regulating the use of biotechnology and its products, as well as the protection of genetic data in the Sultanate of Oman, on Wednesday convened an expanded ministerial meeting with stakeholders across the biotechnology sector.

The meeting was attended by a number of ministers and senior officials from relevant authorities, members of the Steering Committee, and the central team affiliated with the committee.

It was held in collaboration with the international consultancy firm executing the project, with the presence of a representative from Oman India Fertilizer Company (Omifco), the project's funding entity.

This ministerial meeting was convened to reaffirm the imperative of achieving national consensus among decision-makers from various government entities, with the aim of discussing the final draft of the National Biotechnology Strategy for the Sultanate of Oman, in preparation for its submission to the Council of Ministers for approval upon its completion.

It is noteworthy that a series of specialised workshops have been conducted over the past months, with broad participation from specialists and technical professionals working in the biotechnology sector in the Sultanate of Oman.

These workshops resulted in the endorsement of the outputs of the project's third phase, which pertain to the prioritization of the pillars of the biotechnology sectors—namely red, green, and white biotechnology—alongside the adoption of the work plan for the fourth phase.

This phase includes governance proposals and an operational model for the preparation of preliminary feasibility studies for 12 short-term, actionable opportunities to be implemented within the Eleventh Five-Year Development Plan in the field of biotechnology, in accordance with the established timeline for the completion of the National Biotechnology Strategy project. -ONA

CONTRIBUTIONS OF WOMEN

Bahla Open Day highlights role of rural women

BAHLA: The activities of the Open Day were celebrated on Wednesday in the Wilayat of Bahla on the occasion of the International Year of Woman Farmers 2026.

The event aimed to shed light on the developmental contributions of women in the agricultural and livestock sectors, and to enhance partnerships between the academic and research sectors to support food sustainability and startups.

It was organised by the Department of Agricultural and Livestock Research in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, in cooperation with the Directorate General of Agriculture and Water Resources in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate and Al Zahra College for Women, with the strategic participation of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

Eng. Shadha Khamis Al Aufi, a livestock production researcher, stated that this celebration comes within the framework of empowering women as an essential partner in development and in appreciation of the role of women farmers in enhancing food security, coinciding with the International Year of Woman Farmers 2026.

She reviewed the efforts of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources in supporting and training rural women to achieve the objectives of Oman Vision 2040.

The event included the opening of an accompanying developmental exhibition that highlighted the innovations and products of rural women in the governorate, alongside a visual presentation by the FAO on the international dimensions of empowering women in the food production sector.

It also featured a real-life success story demonstrating the capability of Omani women to manage agricultural projects and overcome field challenges.

The celebration was also accompanied by various workshops focusing on marketing home-based and small businesses.

At the conclusion of the event, Dr. Musallam Ali Al Ma'ani, Dean of Al Zahra College for Women and chief guest of the occasion, honoured the participating institutions and entities. -ONA

IN DHOFAR

Tax Authority undertakes field awareness programme tour

SALALAH: The Tax Authority concluded on Wednesday an awareness campaign in the Dhofar Governorate titled "Sustainable Tax Partnership and Renewed Awareness."

This comes within a field awareness programme implemented by the Authority across the various governorates of the Sultanate of Oman.

It aims to enhance tax awareness, consolidate the culture of voluntary compliance, and contribute to achieving tax fairness through direct communication with the business community.

Tamim Salim Al Khawaldi, Director of the Tax Compliance Department for the Governorates, stated that the campaign comes within the framework of the Tax Authority's strategy aimed at enhancing the partnership between the Authority and taxpayers. This is achieved through direct meetings with institution and company owners and investors, answering their inquiries, and providing awareness regarding tax procedures, obligations, and legislation.

He added that the campaign reviewed commercial practices in the business sector, which contributes to raising the level of voluntary compliance, achieving tax fairness, and enhancing mutual trust between the Authority and taxpayers.

He explained that the campaign focused on consolidating the culture of tax compliance as a national responsibility that contributes to business sustainability and stimulates economic growth.

It also introduced the rights and duties of taxpayers and highlighted the role of adherence to tax legislation in supporting economic and social development, as well as enhancing an investment environment characterised by transparency and fairness.

It is worth noting that this campaign represents a sustainable awareness approach, as the Tax Authority will continue to implement its field campaigns periodically in all governorates of the Sultanate of Oman.

These campaigns will be renewed and repeated according to continuous awareness plans that take into account the needs of each governorate and the latest developments in the tax system.

This enhances partnership with the business community, raises the level of voluntary compliance, and enshrines the principles of fairness and transparency. Consequently, it consolidates a sustainable tax partnership and renewed tax awareness in support of the targets of Oman Vision 2040. -ONA

FOR STEALING TRUCK

Two Asians held

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Al Buraimi Governorate Police Command has arrested two Asian nationals for allegedly stealing a truck trailer from Al Buraimi Governorate and transporting it to Muscat Governorate, where they began altering its specifications in an apparent attempt to conceal its identity.

According to the Royal Oman Police (ROP), the suspects were apprehended after investigations led authorities to the stolen trailer. Legal procedures against the two individuals are currently being completed.

The ROP reiterated its commitment to combating theft and protecting property through swift investigation and enforcement measures across the Sultanate.

Shura discusses labour licencing regulation and its impact on jobs

The Minister of Labour reaffirmed his commitment to working closely with the Shura Council and keeping it informed of the objectives behind labour market regulations

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Shura Council hosted on Wednesday Prof. Mahad Baawain, Minister of Labour, as part of its ongoing consultative engagement with the Ministry of Labour to discuss Ministerial Decision No.(602/2025) promulgating the Executive Regulation Governing Work Permits and Work Practice Permits, together with the amendments introduced under Ministerial Decision No.(44/2026).

The meeting was chaired by Said Al Saadi, Deputy Chairman of the Shura Council, and attended by Ahmed Al Nadabi, Secretary General of the Shura Council, Members of the Youth and Human Resources Committee, and Members of the Economic and Financial Committee.

At the outset of the meeting, the Deputy Chairman welcomed the Minister of Labour, expressing his appreciation for the Minister's participation and emphasising that such meetings between the Shura Council and the Ministry reflect the consultative approach founded on constructive dialogue regarding legislation affecting the labour market and its workforce, while safeguarding labour market stability, improving productivity, protecting rights, and supporting the growth and expansion of private sector enterprises.

He further noted that this comes at a time when the Government places considerable reliance on the private sector to provide employment opportunities for job seekers, recognising its role as a principal driver of economic growth and national development.

He also stressed that decisions relating to the labour market attract considerable public interest because of their implications for all stakeholders within the productive sectors of the economy, making consultation and the exchange of views an essential approach to enhancing legislation governing this sector.

For his part, the Minister of Labour expressed his appreciation for the role undertaken by the Shura Council in discussing national issues, affirming the Ministry's commitment to engaging with the Council and keeping it informed of the objectives and rationale underpinning the Ministry's decisions aimed at regulating the labour market.

He emphasised that this reflects the principle of partnership between the Ministry and the Council and contributes to strengthening institutional cooperation between the legislative and executive authorities.

The Minister then delivered a visual presentation outlining the principal objectives and foundations of the Ministerial Decision, explaining that it forms part of broader efforts to enhance the regulatory framework governing the labour market and strengthen private sector compliance with national employment policies, thereby maintaining an appropriate balance between economic development requirements and labour market sustainability.

He explained that the Decision is intended to support the achievement of national employment targets by serving as one of the regulatory instruments for regularising the status of private sector establishments and strengthening their role in expanding employment opportunities for the national workforce.

He further noted that the Decision includes regulatory measures and incentives, including transitional implementation periods to enable private sector establishments to regularise their status.

The Minister also explained that the Ministry accompanied the implementation of the Decision with a comprehensive communication strategy aimed at raising awareness of the Regulation and its positive impact on labour market governance through a series of publications, media engagements, and press releases.

These efforts were designed to ensure that information reached all target groups, particularly employers, investors, expatriate workers, and recruitment agencies, thereby strengthening awareness of the legislation governing the labour market.

Employment requirements

The Minister further presented the preliminary indicators of the Regulation's implementation, noting that they showed an increase in the number of establishments complying with employment requirements, alongside the continued entry of new and active businesses into the labour market.

He also reviewed the Ministry's responses to the observations submitted by the Youth and Human Resources Committee concerning the legislative background of the Decision, the impact of the Regulation, the balance between labour market regulation and economic sustainability, the enhancement of national economic competitiveness, and the mechanisms for continuously monitoring and evaluating the Regulation's implementation.

Following the presentation, Members of the Shura Council raised a number of observations, inquiries, and proposals focusing on the Decision's economic and social dimensions.

Discussions addressed its impact on self-employment and small and medium enterprises (SMEs), as well as the implications of the prescribed fees for their financial sustainability and business continuity.

Members also sought clarification regarding the methodology for calculating fees and penalties associated with non-compliance with Omanisation requirements, and the extent to which these take into account the circumstances of SMEs.

Members also discussed the rationale for regulating the recruitment of workers from certain nationalities to work in the Sultanate of Oman and the implications of such measures for operating costs borne by employers and entrepreneurs.

They emphasised the importance of adopting policies that support the private sector and reduce production costs in order to strengthen the competitiveness of the national economy and ensure the sustainability of SMEs as a key pillar of economic activity.

Members further called for greater transparency regarding employment statistics and increased public awareness of the Decision's objectives and anticipated outcomes to promote broader public understanding of its national objectives.

The discussions also examined the anticipated impact of the Regulation on various economic sectors.

Members raised a number of inquiries regarding its role in addressing structural imbalances within the labour market, limiting irregular labour practices, supporting sustainable employment opportunities for job seekers, and its implications for the business environment, operating costs, and the prices of goods and services.

They also discussed the regulatory framework governing the recruitment of expatriate workers, the ability of SMEs to comply with the Regulation and bear the prescribed fees, and the mechanism for utilising the anticipated revenues generated from its implementation to support national employment programmes.

The discussions further emphasised the importance of maintaining an appropriate balance between labour market regulation and the sustainability of economic activities by taking into consideration the challenges facing private sector establishments, particularly SMEs, ensuring alignment between the needs of economic sectors and national workforce employment objectives, assessing the effectiveness of incentives and penalties associated with Omanisation targets, and examining the Regulation's impact on national competitiveness and investment attractiveness.

They also addressed the implications of labour costs for the implementation of public and private sector projects, in addition to reviewing the Ministry of Labour's approach to evaluating and reviewing the Regulation during the coming phase and further developing labour market policies in line with evolving economic and development priorities.

This meeting reflects the shared commitment of the Shura Council and the executive authorities to strengthening institutional dialogue and consultation, reinforcing the principle of national partnership in addressing priority issues, advancing the legislative and regulatory framework, enhancing the effectiveness of public policies, responding to citizens' aspirations, and supporting the objectives of comprehensive development through effective cooperation between the legislative and executive authorities, thereby contributing positively to the Sultanate of Oman's development process.

PACEMAKER ELECTRODES

Royal Hospital conducts five rare surgeries

MUSCAT: The National Heart Centre, at the Royal Hospital, recently conducted five successful procedures to extract pacemaker electrodes via the veins.

The procedure, the first accomplishment of its kind in the Sultanate of Oman, underscores efforts undertaken by the National Heart Center to offer specialized services and to localise advanced technologies in treating heart rhythm disorders. The procedure was conducted during a training workshop held as part of the National Heart Center's programme to develop specialized services and raise the efficiency of medical staff.

The extraction of pacemaker electrodes via the veins constitutes one of the most complex operations in the field of cardiac electrophysiology. It is conducted in conditions that require the extraction of pacemaker electrodes due to the inflammation or malfunctioning of the pacemaker electrodes or when the need arises to replace the electrodes.

The procedure calls for a high level of preparedness among medical teams to ensure the safety of patients and to realise the best therapeutic outcomes. -ONA

1447 AH PILGRIMAGE SEASON

Hajj Mission satisfaction rate reaches 98.6%

MUSCAT: Oman Hajj Mission for the 1447 AH pilgrimage season yesterday held a press conference to review the most prominent indicators and achievements of the past season, as well as the developmental initiatives implemented to serve the pilgrims from the Sultanate of Oman.

Ahmed Salim Al Rashdi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs and Head of Oman Hajj Mission for 1447 AH, stated that the season's success stemmed from close collaboration with various government and private entities and the significant efforts they exerted.

He noted that the approved quota for the Sultanate of Oman stood at 14,000 pilgrims, with a fulfillment rate of 100 percent.

He added that first-time pilgrims constituted 90 percent of the total, while volunteer pilgrims and those performing Hajj on behalf of others accounted for 10 percent.

The quota distribution by gender was 52 percent male and 48 percent female, with the 45–60 age group representing the highest proportion at 40 percent, followed by the 30–44 age group at 38 percent.

He indicated that 10,966 pilgrims from the Sultanate of Oman performed the Hajj rituals via air travel, representing 78 percent, while the number of pilgrims travelling by land amounted to 3,034, or 22 percent. The average cost of Hajj via air was OMR2,013, while the average cost via land was OMR1,647.

He further explained that the Ministry organised the second Hajj and Umrah Conference and Exhibition, with the participation of more than 60 government, private, local and international entities.

This was accompanied by the delivery of 19 working papers and training workshops, the signing of 4 memoranda of understanding, and the launch of the "Hajj Lab" initiative, which contributed to the study of over 133 developmental ideas and the convening of more than 32 meetings with relevant stakeholders, all aimed at enhancing the Omani pilgrim's experience.

Reduction in airfare prices

He reported that the aviation initiative contributed to strengthening coordination between Hajj companies and airlines, resulting in a reduction in airfare prices by approximately OMR40 per pilgrim, with a total saving exceeding OMR490,000.

Additionally, the number of pilgrims travelling by land was reduced from 5,122 in the 1446 AH season to 3,034 in the 1447 AH season—a decrease of over 2,000 pilgrims—thereby enhancing pilgrim safety and the quality of services provided.

During the press conference, He also reviewed the social and service initiatives implemented by the mission, including the "Awqaf Beit Al Rabat" initiative, which provided support exceeding OMR200,000 to eligible groups, and the initiative to enhance medical capacity by requiring Hajj companies to secure a physician permit, thereby strengthening health services.

The undersecretary noted that the mission implemented a series of upgrades at the Mina and Arafat camps, including the installation of air-conditioning in the Mina camp with a heat-insulating roof covering an area exceeding 22,800 square meters, the addition of 75 restrooms and 250 new washbasins, the installation of 1,600 automatic fire extinguishers and 14,400 new hydraulic mattresses, along with a comprehensive upgrade of service facilities.

He indicated that the results of opinion surveys revealed high satisfaction levels among pilgrims, with satisfaction rates reaching 99.9 percent for electronic registration services, 99.4 percent for entry and exit services at land and air ports, 96.2 percent for services provided at the Mina camp, and 97.9 percent for services at the Arafat camp.

Religious guidance services recorded a satisfaction rate of 98.6 percent, while health services achieved 99 percent.

Overall satisfaction with the season reached 98 percent, compared to 96.6 percent in the previous season.

A total of 4,329 pilgrims participated in the service evaluation process, while 7,175 pilgrims assessed the performance of Hajj companies. -ONA

OMAN

9-10 JULY

Indian EAM Dr. S. Jaishankar to visit the Sultanate of Oman

MUSCAT: Indian External Affairs Minister (EAM) Dr. S. Jaishankar will pay an official visit to the Sultanate of Oman from 9–10 July 2026. The visit follows his visits to Qatar, Bahrain and Kuwait from 5–9 July 2026.

"During his visit to Oman, the EAM will hold bilateral discussions with the Foreign Minister of Oman H.E Sayyid Badr Al Busaidi. The two sides are expected to review the full spectrum of India–Oman bilateral relations and take stock of the implementation of decisions taken during the visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Oman in December 2025. This may also include the road map for the implementation of the India–Oman Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), which entered into force on 1 June 2026," a statement by the Indian Ministry of External Affairs said.

The two Ministers will also exchange views on regional and international developments of mutual interest.

"Following his visit to Oman, the EAM will travel to New York to launch, on 13 July 2026, India's official campaign for election to the United Nations Security Council for the 2028–29 term. He will thereafter visit Brussels on 14–15 July 2026 to participate in the 3rd India–EU Trade and Technology Council (TTC) Meeting and hold discussions with his counterparts from the European Union and Belgium," the statement further said.

The visit is expected to further strengthen the India–Oman Strategic Partnership and reinforce the longstanding friendship and multifaceted cooperation between the two countries.

ELECTRONIC RISKS

TRA launches 'Turs' platform to enhance digital protection system

MUSCAT: The Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) launched the "Turs" (Shield) platform to enhance the digital protection system and elevate readiness for responding to electronic risks.

This initiative comes within the framework of TRA's continuous efforts to develop the digital security system and promote a safe and reliable digital environment that keeps pace with rapid technological transformations. The platform is an advanced digital project dedicated to managing, tracking, and monitoring reports related to electronic fraud and digital risks.

The platform relies on the latest digital technologies in addressing electronic fraud through a unified system designed to receive reports, analyze digital data, monitor fraudulent patterns, and handle digital risks in accordance with advanced operational mechanisms that support rapid decision-making and enhance integration with relevant authorities.

The "Turs" platform monitors and follows up on various harmful electronic practices, including tracking suspicious local and international numbers, analyzing malicious electronic links, detecting phishing messages, and handling offensive accounts or accounts with offensive comments on social media. Additionally, it tracks digital content that violates societal values and misleading electronic publications, ensuring these practices are addressed with high efficiency.

The platform enables individuals and institutions to report various suspicious electronic practices through a unified channel. This reflects positively on enhancing digital transformation, raising cybersecurity readiness, consolidating digital governance, and supporting the building of a trustworthy digital economy, in addition to contributing to boosting international competitiveness indicators related to digital security and digital trust. -ONA

South Al Batinah's Grape Festival boosts tourism, supports local products

The South Al Batinah Governorate has witnessed significant tourism and economic activity, reflecting the success of local events in supporting sustainable development and promoting Omani agricultural products

MUSCAT: The second edition of the Grape Festival, held in South Al Batinah Governorate has attracted more than 1,000 visitors over two days. The South Al Batinah Governorate has witnessed significant tourism and economic activity, reflecting the success of local events in supporting sustainable development and promoting Omani agricultural products.

The second edition of the Grape Festival, held in the Wilayat of Al Awabi in the South Al Batinah Governorate, achieved remarkable success on both the agricultural and tourism levels, attracting 1,340 visitors over two days. This confirms the festival's growing importance as a platform for supporting the agricultural sector and stimulating tourism and economic activity in the governorate.

The festival recorded total sales exceeding OMR 10,000 , including the sale of various grape varieties for which the farms of Wadi Bani Kharous are famous, in addition to figs, dates, mangoes, and agricultural seedlings. Modern irrigation equipment, handicrafts, and products from productive families were also sold, providing direct marketing opportunities for farmers and artisans and contributing to the revitalization of related commercial and service activities.

The festival is an initiative aimed at highlighting local grapes, a seasonal crop of significant economic and social value. It supports farmers, encouraging them to expand grape cultivation and develop production methods, while also strengthening the village's agricultural identity and showcasing farmers' efforts in improving production techniques. The festival has also served as a tourist and social event, reinforcing the region's position as a prominent agricultural and heritage destination within the governorate.

Sami bin Ali Al Bahri, a participant in the second edition of the Grape Festival, stated that the festival has become a genuine platform for marketing agricultural products and introducing visitors to the quality of local produce.

Al Bahri added that the festival provides a valuable opportunity for farmers to market their produce directly to consumers without intermediaries.

He noted that the large turnout of visitors positively impacted sales volumes and contributed to raising awareness of the local grape varieties for which the villages of Wadi Bani Kharous are renowned.

For her part, Samia bint Salem Al Dhahli, Head of the Omani Women's Association in Al-Awabi, explained that the festival offers productive families a chance to showcase their traditional and artisanal products to a wide audience and introduce them to the distinctive local products of the region.

For his part, Maher bin Hamdan Al Riyami, one of the participants, said that the festival serves as an important platform to encourage young people to invest in agricultural and tourism projects.

He pointed out that the diversity of events and exhibits promotes a culture of entrepreneurship and opens new horizons for investment in industries related to the agricultural sector.

As part of future development plans, the festival organizers announced their intention to expand the event space within the village and create new facilities to accommodate a larger number of visitors. They also plan to extend the festival's duration from two days to a full week in the future and to organize accompanying programs and events before and after the grape season, thus enhancing the continuity of tourism and agricultural activity throughout the year. -ONA

AL BURAIMI

First integrated fruit tree project implemented in Mahadha

MAHADHA: The first integrated investment project specialising in fruit trees in Al Buraimi Governorate is being implemented in the Zaroub area of the Wilayat of Mahadha, with an investment value exceeding RO 171,000.

The project targets the cultivation, production and marketing of fig, lemon and mango crops. This step embodies the partnership with the private sector to harness natural and financial resources in sustainable agricultural ventures. It further aims to strengthen the food security system and enhance the investment attractiveness of the agricultural sector in support of the local economy.

Dr. Ahmed Saif Al Amri, Director General of Agricultur and Water Resources in Al Buraimi Governorate, stated that the project's completion rate has exceeded 80 percent across the cultivated areas, with high efficiency and rapid execution. He noted that planting operations commenced in March 2025, and the project reached the actual production stage in October of the same year—an indicator of the quality of planning and the adoption of modern agricultural practices.

He further indicated that the total area of the project stands at 30 feddans, which have been utilized in a well-considered manner to ensure diversity and meet the demands of the local market. The current land allocation includes approximately 6 feddans for lemon cultivation, approximately 5.5 feddans for fig cultivation and 2 feddans for mango cultivation.

He added that work is currently underway to prepare an additional area of 7 feddans, to be fully allocated as a new fig field. He affirmed that this diversity contributes to supplying the markets with fresh, high-quality products, pointing out that the continued expansion reflects the project's economic viability in doubling production and enhancing the competitiveness of local produce. -ONA

DEEPER ENGAGEMENT

Azerbaijan and Oman: From enduring friendship to a strategic partnership for the future

RASHAD ISMAYILOV, Ambassador of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the Sultanate of Oman.

In today's rapidly changing world, lasting international partnerships are built not only on diplomacy, but on mutual trust, shared interests and a common vision for the future. The Republic of Azerbaijan and the Sultanate of Oman are excellent examples of two friendly nations whose relationship continues to evolve into a modern strategic partnership.

Our bilateral relations have gained remarkable momentum in recent years. The opening of the Embassy of the Republic of Azerbaijan in Muscat marked a new chapter, strengthening political dialogue, expanding institutional cooperation and creating fresh opportunities in trade, investment, tourism, culture and education.

Our countries share fundamental principles of foreign policy: respect for sovereignty, adherence to international law, dialogue, moderation and mutually beneficial cooperation. These values provide a strong foundation for deeper engagement across many sectors.

Today, both Azerbaijan and Oman are implementing ambitious national development agendas. Oman Vision 2040 and Azerbaijan's long-term socio-economic strategy both seek diversified, innovation-driven and sustainable economies. Their shared priorities—including private-sector growth, logistics, renewable energy, digital transformation and human capital—create a natural platform for cooperation.

Under the leadership of President Ilham Aliyev, Azerbaijan has become an important transport, logistics and energy hub linking Europe and Asia through the Middle Corridor, the Port of Baku, the Alat Free Economic Zone and modern railway infrastructure. Oman, under the leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, continues to strengthen its position as a global logistics gateway through the ports of Duqm, Sohar and Salalah.

Closer cooperation between these transport ecosystems would strengthen regional connectivity, diversify supply chains and create new commercial opportunities linking the Gulf, the South Caucasus, Central Asia and Europe.

Energy remains another pillar of our partnership. Azerbaijan has long contributed to international energy security and is now investing heavily in renewable energy and green electricity. Oman has emerged as a regional leader in green hydrogen and clean-energy development. Combining expertise, investment and technology could create mutually beneficial projects supporting the global energy transition.

Investment also offers enormous opportunities. Azerbaijan provides a stable macroeconomic environment, modern legislation, industrial parks and free economic zones, while Oman offers world-class infrastructure, investor-friendly policies and a dynamic private sector. Stronger interaction between sovereign wealth funds, investment agencies, chambers of commerce and leading companies can unlock new projects in manufacturing, healthcare, food security, logistics, tourism and digital technologies.

Tourism is another promising field. Oman captivates visitors with its landscapes, heritage and hospitality, while Azerbaijan offers the Caspian coast, mountain resorts, wellness tourism and a rich multicultural history. Enhanced promotion and improved connectivity would significantly increase visitor flows between our countries.

Agriculture and food security deserve equal attention. Azerbaijan's agricultural potential and Oman's strategic investment priorities create favourable conditions for joint ventures in food production, agribusiness, agricultural technologies and sustainable farming.

Business-to-business engagement should become one of the principal drivers of bilateral relations. Oman's respected enterprises and Azerbaijan's expanding investment opportunities can transform political goodwill into tangible economic success.

People-to-people contacts remain equally important. Academic exchanges, innovation partnerships, youth cooperation and cultural dialogue strengthen mutual understanding and ensure that future generations continue building upon today's achievements.

As Ambassador of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the Sultanate of Oman, I have witnessed the genuine goodwill that characterises our relations. I firmly believe that forthcoming high-level exchanges and growing business dialogue will elevate our partnership to a new level, opening the door to new agreements, greater investment and broader cooperation.

The Embassy of the Republic of Azerbaijan in Muscat will continue facilitating dialogue, encouraging investment, promoting business partnerships and strengthening ties between our governments and peoples.

The friendship between Azerbaijan and Oman is built on confidence, respect and shared aspirations. Today, that friendship is steadily evolving into a comprehensive strategic partnership that will contribute not only to the prosperity of our two nations but also to regional connectivity, sustainable development and long-term stability. I am confident that the best chapters of Azerbaijan–Oman relations are still ahead of us.

Abbas Najwani Honoured with the 'Outstanding Contribution to Customer Experience' Award

Abbas Najwani, a renowned Customer Experience (CX) strategist, banking executive, and thought leader, was felicitated with the 'Outstanding Contribution to Customer Experience' Award 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.

With more than 24 years of experience in retail banking, customer service, and organizational transformation, Abbas Najwani has played a pivotal role in advancing customer experience practices across the Sultanate. Throughout his career, he has led strategic initiatives spanning customer experience strategy, employee experience, customer journey design, Voice of the Customer (VoC), complaints management, service transformation, and digital experience, helping organizations place customers at the heart of their business.

As the founder of CX Majlis Oman, Abbas Najwani has created an influential platform dedicated to promoting customer experience knowledge, fostering collaboration, and sharing best practices among professionals across industries. Through this initiative, he has helped strengthen the CX community in Oman by encouraging dialogue, professional development, and the exchange of innovative ideas.

A Certified Customer Experience Professional (CCXP) with an MBA and internationally recognized CX credentials, Abbas Najwani is widely respected as a speaker, trainer, mentor, and industry advocate. His contributions through executive training, thought leadership, and published articles on customer experience, digital transformation, employee experience, and artificial intelligence have inspired organizations and professionals to embrace customer-centric thinking and drive meaningful business outcomes.

Instituted by Times of Oman in association with Muscat Media Group, Gulf Leaders Circle and TEvents, the Oman Customer Experience (CX) Awards celebrate exceptional professionals, organisations, and brands that have distinguished themselves through excellence in customer experience.

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The awards recognise those who continue to lead the way in understanding, meeting, and surpassing customer expectations while setting new standards of service excellence and customer-centric innovation.

DECENTRALISATION

Al Suwaiq Hospital performs specialised oral surgeries

AL SUWAIQ: A specialised medical team from Al Nahda Hospital recently performed two specialised oral and maxillofacial surgeries at Al Suwaiq Hospital, the first operations of their kind at Al Suwaiq Hospital.

The surgeries also enhanced the concept of decentralisation, integration and expansion of specialised medical services across the governorates of the Sultanate of Oman.

The two surgeries also aimed to spare the hospital the need to transfer patients to referral hospitals, and, in the meantime to facilitate beneficiaries' access to specialised medical services near their places of residence.

Dr. Salma Musallam Al Jahdhami, Head of the Department of Dentistry, Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery at Al Nahda Hospital, told Oman News Agency that the operations were in pursuance of efforts undertaken by Al Nahda Hospital to promote medical expertise and to enhance the principle of integration among referral hospitals and other health establishments in a manner that contributes to upgrading health services and making them more accessible to the beneficiaries.

Dr. Salma added that Al Nahda Hospital is pressing ahead with its drive to implement specialized medical programmes in the governorates of the Sultanate of Oman, in line with the approach of the Ministry of Health to improve medical care and minimize the need to refer patients to referral hospitals. -ONA

Oman calls for transparent intellectual property system

During the WIPO Assemblies, the Omani delegation held a meeting with the Director General of WIPO

GENEVA: The Sultanate of Oman is participating in the Assemblies of the Member States of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), hosted by the Swiss city of Geneva from 7 to 15 July 2026.

Idris Abdulrahman Al Khanjari, Permanent Representative of the Sultanate of Oman to the United Nations and other international organizations in Geneva, headed the Omani delegation, which included officials from the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, as well as Oman Association for Intellectual Property.

Al Khanjari delivered a statement during the assemblies, in which he underscored the importance of the Organization's continued efforts to develop the international intellectual property system to be more efficient, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of member states. He also emphasised the importance of entrenching the principles of transparency, efficiency and equitable geographic representation in the filling of senior and other positions within the Organization, in a manner that reflects its international character.

He expressed the Sultanate of Oman's pride in its close partnership with WIPO, which has resulted in the implementation of programs and initiatives in the areas of strategic planning, capacity-building and training in collaboration with the WIPO Academy, supporting the development of the national intellectual property system.

He reaffirmed the Sultanate of Oman's commitment to continuing constructive cooperation with WIPO and all member states, contributing to the development of a more efficient, inclusive and balanced global intellectual property system that supports innovation and creativity for the achievement of sustainable development for the benefit of all.

During the WIPO Assemblies, the Omani delegation held a meeting with the Director General of WIPO, as well as participating in bilateral meetings with the Director of the Arab Bureau for Intellectual Property, the official responsible for the WIPO Academy, and the official in charge of training and technical cooperation at the World Trade Organization. The meetings explored ways to enhance cooperation with the Sultanate of Oman.

The Assemblies of the WIPO Member States represent the Organization's highest decision-making body, convening annually with the participation of all member states to conduct a comprehensive review of achievements, chart the course for the upcoming phase and assess the work accomplished by WIPO's various committees and unions over the course of the year. The Assemblies discuss an agenda encompassing a number of intellectual property-related topics. -ONA

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SMES

Oman, Bahrain review means of enhancing trade

MUSCAT: A webinar titled "Enhancing Trade Relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of Bahrain" was held on Wednesday.

It was jointly organised by Youth Projects "Sharakah" and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), in cooperation with the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion in the Sultanate of Oman and the Ministry of Industry and Commerce in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

The webinar aims to support the growth of SMEs and enable them to access new markets by reviewing the trade and investment opportunities available in both countries and introducing the regulations and procedures followed for trade exchange, thereby contributing to building sustainable partnerships and increasing the volume of trade exchange between the two countries.

The importance of the webinar lies in the growing economic relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of Bahrain, which underscores the significance of enhancing the participation of SMEs in cross-border trade activities.

It also represents a practical opportunity to introduce available investment and trade opportunities, exchange expertise and success stories, and discuss the main challenges facing companies when entering new markets, alongside creating direct communication channels between business owners and institutions supporting the private sector, thereby enhancing trade and investment cooperation opportunities between SMEs in both countries.

The programme targets entrepreneurs, as well as at least 70 SMEs from both countries wishing to expand into each other's markets, alongside exporters, importers, entities supporting the SME sector, and relevant investment and trade institutions.

The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, represented by "Oman Exports," participated with a working paper titled "Export Opportunities for Small and Medium Enterprises in Oman and the Mechanism for Entering Foreign Markets." During the session, it reviewed the most prominent export opportunities available to SMEs, mechanisms for accessing foreign markets, and supporting services to enhance the competitiveness of Omani exports. -ONA

PARTNERSHIP INITIATIVES

Oman, Saudi Arabia discuss issues of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz

< FROM A1

The two sides also addressed partnership initiatives within the framework of the Joint Omani-Saudi Coordination Council, building upon the comparative advantages available to both countries, the shared objectives between Oman Vision 2040 and Saudi Vision 2030, and the role of the private sector in the partnership tracks.

In the context of regional and international issues, the two sides discussed developments pertaining to navigation in the Strait of Hormuz, emphasising the strategic importance of this waterway to the stability of international trade and energy security.

They underscored the imperative of prioritising de-escalation, avoiding any steps that could expand the scope of risks, and working through diplomatic channels to identify practical pathways that alleviate tensions and preserve the safety and freedom of maritime navigation.

Participants in the expanded talks session from the Omani side included Sultan bin Salim Al Habsi, Minister of Finance, Anwar bin Hilal Al Jabri, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, Sheikh Abdulaziz bin Abdullah Al Hinai, Ambassador-at-Large at the Foreign Ministry, Sheikh Khalid bin Hashil Al Maslahi, Undersecretary of the Foreign Ministry for Administrative and Financial Affairs and Mohsen bin Hamad Al Hadhrami, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Energy and Minerals

Participants from the Saudi side included Dr. Rumaih bin Mohammed Al Rumaih, Deputy Minister of Transport and Logistics Services, Dr. Saud bin Mohammed Al Sati, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs for Political Affairs, Eng. Majid Al Otaibi, Deputy Minister of Energy for Technical and Regulatory Affairs for Petroleum and Gas, Ibrahim bin Saad bin Bishan, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the Sultanate of Oman, Along with a number of senior officials from both sides. -ONA

Trump says memorandum of understanding with Iran 'over'

"It's just a waste of time dealing with them," Trump said at the NATO summit in Ankara, referring to the Iranian government and calling the leadership in Tehran sick people

WASHINGTON DC: US President Donald Trump says the interim accord to end the conflict with Iran is "over."

"As far as I'm concerned, it's over," Trump said at the NATO summit in Ankara when questioned as to whether the truce with Iran was now finished.

"It's just a waste of time dealing with them," Trump said, referring to the Iranian government and calling the leadership in Tehran "sick people."

He added that US representatives can continue negotiations, but said they would be "wasting their time."

Speaking to journalists at the NATO summit in Turkey, Trump categorically stated that the Peace process was over and he would not deal with Iran any longer

"To me, I think it's over. I don't want to deal with them anymore. They're scum... They're led by sick people... I'll speak to our negotiators. They want to negotiate--they're good people... but they have to come back to me. As far as I'm concerned, it's just a waste of time dealing with them," he said.

"We attacked, very powerfully last night, the very dangerous people from Iran... There's something wrong with them. We say, 'Go and do your funeral stuff,' and instead of that, they start shooting rockets at ships yesterday. So we hit them very hard last night," he added.

Earlier, amid spiralling regional tensions, Iran's top negotiator and Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf strongly hit back at Washington, detailing numerous breaches of bilateral agreements by the United States.

In a post on X, the senior Iranian official enumerated several "major violations" of the MoU committed by the US administration, indicating a severe breakdown in diplomatic commitments between the two countries.

According to the Parliament Speaker, these American actions include "violating Iranian adjustments in the Strait", "persistent threats of further strikes", "reinstating oil sanctions", "attacks on southern Iran", and "continued Zionist aggression" in Lebanon.

Issuing a firm warning against Washington's hardline approach and asserting Tehran's refusal to back down under intense military and economic pressure, Ghalibaf concluded his statement on a defiant note.

Era of bullying and extortion is over

"The era of bullying and extortion is over. It leads nowhere," he wrote on X. "We don't fold."

This fierce rhetorical retaliation from Tehran comes in direct response to a dramatic escalation of hostilities, with the United States launching extensive military operations against Iranian targets following fresh maritime incidents.

The military actions were initiated after three vessels were struck while navigating the strategic Strait of Hormuz, an act Washington attributes directly to the Iranian armed forces.

According to an official communication from the US Central Command, the "powerful" strikes were deployed as a direct countermeasure to Iranian operations against international shipping lanes and were explicitly designed to "impose heavy costs for targeting and attacking commercial shipping."

US strikes on Iran 'absolutely necessary,' says NATO chief

NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte has backed the latest US strikes on Iran, calling them "absolutely necessary."

"When you have a ceasefire and Iran is basically violating the ceasefire, we see what happened yesterday with ships being attacked, I think it is totally crucial that the US forcefully reacts," Rutte told reporters before a summit of NATO allies in Ankara.

The NATO chief also indicated that Iran would be on the agenda at Wednesday's talks. "I expect allies today to reconfirm that Iran should never ever get its hands on a nuclear capability and secondly that the principle of the freedom of navigation, so the Strait of Hormuz completely opening up again," is essential, he added.

Iran must understand 'serious negotiations' are needed: Germany

German Foreign Minister Johann Wadephul says the latest US attacks on Iran were warranted.

"Iran must now truly understand that serious negotiations are necessary and that further military strikes are warranted," Wadephul told German broadcaster NDR Info.

Wadephul said he did not believe the latest escalation in hostilities had undermined the ceasefire as the foundation for further talks between the US and Iran.

"I believe there is still a chance that these negotiations will actually take place," he said.

"This may be a show of force before the actual negotiations begin, and that is, of course, regrettable, because we finally need calm in the Strait of Hormuz," Wadephul said.

The strait must be "free" and "accessible" to international shipping, the German foreign minister stressed, adding that: "Iran is largely preventing that."

Khamenei's funeral procession crosses into Iraq

The funeral procession of slain Iranian leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has moved into Iraq's holy city Najaf.

Thousands of people have been accompanying Khamenei's coffin on his six-day funeral procession.

Najaf holds particular significance for Shiite Muslims because it is the burial site of Imam Ali, the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet Mohammad.

The procession is expected to continue to the shrine city of Karbala before returning to Iran, where Khamenei is set to be buried Thursday at the Shiite imam tombs in Mashhad.

— Agencies

IMMIGRATION AND CUSTOMS ENFORCEMENT

US ICE agent fatally shoots man at Texas traffic stop

HOUSTON: US authorities confirmed late on Tuesday that Lorenzo Salgado Araujo was fatally shot by an Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agent during a traffic stop in Houston, Texas.

ICE has said that the agent acted in self defense after Salgado Araujo, a Mexican national, attempted to evade arrest and rammed the officer's vehicle.

Calls for an independent investigation

There were calls from Democrats and Latin American groups for an independent inquiry, however, as in the past — such as the killing of Renee Good in Minnesota in January — agents' accounts of an officer-involved shooting have differed significantly from video evidence.

"All available footage, communications, and other evidence should be preserved and reviewed as part of a full and impartial investigation," said Sylvia Garcia, who represents the Houston-area district where the shooting took place in Congress.

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has said that Salgado Araujo was in the United States illegally, while his son Ronaldo Salgado told reporters that he had been in the process of obtaining an official work permit.

"My father did not deserve this," he added.

Local resident Juliet Martinez said that she took video of the scene as she drove past it on Tuesday, saying it depicted a bloody man groaning in pain laying on the ground, handcuffed.

DHS has said that Salgado Araujo died while being transported to a local hospital.

A small protest sprang up at the site of the shooting, as well as a makeshift memorial to Salgado Araujo.

ICE surge has led to at least 8 deaths

This is at least the eighth officer-involved shooting from ICE since the second administration of President Donald Trump began, with the victims including at least two US citizens.

Trump has funneled significant resources into a surge of ICE activity, including a mass hiring drive that critics have said fails to adequately train new officers in law enforcement procedures.

— DW

MULTI-NATION TOUR

India's Jaishankar discusses boosting bilateral ties with Kuwait's Crown Prince

KUWAIT CITY: Indian External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Wednesday called upon Kuwait's Crown Prince Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah and held discussions on further expanding the ties.

Jaishankar's visit to Kuwait is part of his multi-nation tour covering Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, the United States and Belgium.

In Kuwait, he was received by Deputy Foreign Minister Hamad Suleiman Mashaan Al-Mashaan upon arrival.

Jaishankar thanked Kuwait's Crown Prince for sharing insights into the developments in the Gulf region and in a post on X, Jaishankar said, "Privileged to call on Crown Prince His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah of Kuwait this morning. Conveyed warm greetings of PM @narendramodi. Deeply appreciate his commitment to take forward our bilateral cooperation. Thank him for his sharing of perspectives on developments in the Gulf." Before arriving in Kuwait, Jaishankar visited Bahrain, where he reaffirmed India's commitment to further deepening the longstanding partnership with the Gulf nation.

According to the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), Jaishankar had an audience with Bahrain's King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa in the presence of Crown Prince and Prime Minister Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa. He also called on Deputy Prime Minister Khalid bin Abdullah Al Khalifa.

During the meetings, Jaishankar conveyed the greetings of President Droupadi Murmu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi and reaffirmed India's commitment to strengthening the longstanding and friendly bilateral partnership with Bahrain. He also thanked the Bahraini leadership for ensuring the safety, security and well-being of the Indian community in the country.

The MEA said Jaishankar also held bilateral talks with Bahrain's Foreign Minister Abdullatif bin Rashid Al Zayani. The two sides reviewed bilateral ties, discussed ways to expand cooperation across diverse sectors and exchanged views on regional and international developments of mutual interest.

Jaishankar also congratulated Bahrain on its election as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council for the 2026-27 term.

During his Bahrain visit, the External Affairs Minister interacted with members of the Indian community and appreciated their contribution to Bahrain's economic development and their role in strengthening people-to-people ties between the two countries.

Earlier, Jaishankar concluded his visit to Qatar, where he held extensive bilateral discussions with Qatar's Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani. — ANI

ANKARA NATO SUMMIT

Zelenskyy and Meloni discuss anti-ballistic cooperation

ANKARA: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Wednesday said that he and Italian Prime Minister Georgia Meloni discussed strengthening anti-ballistic cooperation and Ukraine's air defence needs on the sidelines of the Ankara NATO Summit, as Russia continued its strikes on Ukrainian cities.

In a post on X, Zelenskyy said he briefed Meloni on the latest security situation in Ukraine, noting that Russia had carried out fresh ballistic missile and drone attacks.

He said, "Russia does not stop attacking our cities and communities. Today, there were ballistic missile strikes again, and attack drones were launched as well. Sadly, there are people killed in Kyiv, Kharkiv, and Kherson. Russia has taken the lives of five people. My condolences to their families and loved ones."

Zelenskyy said that the two leaders discussed prospects for joint work in Europe to enhance anti-ballistic capabilities and strengthen regional security. He said, "We discussed the prospects for our joint work in Europe on anti-ballistic capabilities to provide greater protection for everyone - both Ukraine and every country."

He added that the talks also focused on the need for additional missile interceptions for Ukraine's air defence. He said, "We spoke about the need for additional interceptors, and we are counting very much on support. Italy has always helped in a principled way to protect life."

Earlier, US President Donald Trump on Tuesday expressed optimism about the prospects of a peace agreement between Russia and Ukraine, while maintaining that "nothing has changed" in his assessment of the conflict, CNN reported.

Speaking alongside Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Ankara during the NATO summit, Trump said he had a "very good talk" with Russian President Vladimir Putin a day earlier and had also spoken with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky.

"I think they both want to make a deal. It's too bad it took so long, but I think there's going to be -- something's going to come out," Trump said, as quoted by CNN.

"They (Putin and Zelensky) both wanna get it settled now... I think we're going to get it settled. Hopefully soon," he added.

When asked whether anything had changed to make him more optimistic, including whether Putin was willing to make concessions, Trump replied, "Never changed."

"I just don't want them killing people," Trump said, referring to the ongoing war and the reported monthly death toll. According to CNN, Trump also said the conflict affects Europe more directly than the United States.

"It doesn't affect us. It affects Europe much more. We're there to help Europe, but it doesn't affect the United States. We have an ocean in between. But, you know, it's just I can't stand watching what's happening," he said.

Trump added that he had seen images from the battlefield and described the scale of the violence.

— ANI

SPORTS

RECORD DEFEAT FOR VISITORS

England rout India in third T20I

NOTTINGHAM: England inflicted a record defeat on India in the third T20I at Trent Bridge on Tuesday to give the home side a 2-0 lead with two matches in the series remaining.

Pace bowlers Jofra Archer and Josh Tongue were sensational to ensure the world champions - including 15-year-old batting superstar Vaibhav Sooryavanshi - never got to grips with a chase of 202.

Sooryavanshi was bounced out for 13 as part of Archer's 3-29, India reduced to 52-5 after five overs to effectively end the contest.

Tongue, on his home ground, claimed 4-28. India were bowled out in only 11.4 overs for 76, their second-lowest all-out total in T20 cricket, while the margin of 125 runs is India's largest defeat in a T20 international.

Phil Salt's 70 from 44 deliveries underpinned England's 201-7, Sam Curran providing late impetus with an unbeaten 41 off 24 balls.

On a true pitch surrounded by short boundaries, the target looked around par, before Archer and Tongue ensured India would not get close.

England cannot lose the series and would win it with victory in the fourth match in Bristol on Thursday. It was thrilling stuff from England's new-ball bowlers, who both went over 90mph to produce the kind of hostility the hosts believed would bring success in Test cricket. The high-speed, short-pitched attack also leaves questions for the vaunted India top-order, who folded in the face of the sustained barrage.

Abhishek Sharma, Ishan Kishan and Shreyas Iyer were all caught in the deep, square of the wicket, but the crucial moment was the fall of Sooryavanshi. In his second international, the left-hander sliced the second ball he faced, off Archer, for six over third man.

With the noisy crowd falling silent every time he faced, Sooryavanshi clipped his next delivery, off Tongue, over mid-wicket for another six. But England had a plan to test him with the short ball. In Archer's next over, he served up a 90mph bouncer that Sooryavanshi gloved to wicketkeeper Jos Buttler.

Before the powerplay was over, Archer also had Tilak Varma edge behind, the first time India have lost five wickets in the powerplay of a men's T20 international.

The rest was a procession. Adil Rashid took two wickets, fellow spinner Will Jacks one, while Tongue came back to record his best figures in any T20 in his second international appearance.

There was a comedy moment when Arshdeep Singh skied Tongue for what seemed a simple catch, only for the ball to be left to each other by Curran and Buttler.

It was the only thing England did wrong all evening. It took 70 deliveries for India to be dismissed, their shortest all-out innings in a T20. - Agencies

WEST INDIES VS SRI LANKA

Draw gives WI rare series victory

NORTH SOUND: West Indies completed their first home Test series triumph for four years when the second and final match against Sri Lanka petered out into a tame, rain-affected draw on the last day in Antigua on Tuesday.

Needing victory to square the series after a crushing innings loss in the first Test a week earlier at the same venue, the tourists declared their second innings at 251 for nine just after lunch, setting their hosts the daunting target of 302 in less than two sessions for a sweep of the two-match duel.

However the West Indies' opening pair of John Campbell and Brandon King put together an unbroken opening stand of 89, interrupted first by a brief shower and by longer, sustained precipitation which extinguished any prospect of an outright result either way.

Fulfilling the often tedious formalities of the traditional game in situations like this, play resumed in afternoon for 40 minutes of cricket when the match was called off as a draw with the West Indies at 109 with loss.

West Indies' last Test series win on home soil was a 2-0 hammering of Bangladesh in 2022 when comfortable victories were achieved at this venue and then at the Daren Sammy Stadium in St Lucia.

Their last series victory over Sri Lanka was in 2003 at home when they won 1-0 in a two-match series.

Brief scores: Sri Lanka 549/9 decl. (Udara 188, Dinusha 92; Seales 2-98, Shamar 2-98) and 251/9 decl. (Chandimal 71; Alzarri 2-44) drew with West Indies 499 (Greaves 180, Hope 112,;Asitha 5-130) and 109/0 (Campbell 51*, King 51*). - Agencies

Djokovic's victory sets up semi-final clash with Sinner

The Serb edged past Auger-Aliassime in a five-set thriller to book a spot in the Wimbledon semis

WIMBLEDON: Novak Djokovic produced an astonishing performance on Tuesday to beat Felix Auger-Aliassime in a five-set thriller lasting over five hours to set up a blockbuster Wimbledon semi-final against defending champion Jannik Sinner.

Bidding for a record 25th Grand Slam title, having been tied with Margaret Court since the 2023 US Open, it seemed like Djokovic's latest bid was on the brink when he pulled up with a leg injury in the first set. But a medical time-out and a massage appeared to solve the problem and the 39-year-old was still fighting hard four sets later against third seed Auger-Aliassime.

After entertaining a packed Centre Court for five hours and 15 minutes, it was Djokovic who stood with his arms aloft in triumph after a 7-6 (12-10), 3-6, 6-3, 6-7 (4-7), 7-6 (10-4) victory.

"I won that match with a racquet and a lot of heart," an exhausted Djokovic said. "What can I say? These are the kind of moments I still play tennis for.

"I wish it was the final so I don't need to worry about how the body will feel tomorrow, but I'm happy that I won." Djokovic is now, once again, two wins away from claiming the standalone record for the most Grand Slam singles titles in history.

World No.1 Sinner, who defeated Jan-Lennard Struff earlier on Tuesday, will be hoping to derail the Serb's efforts in a repeat of last year's semi-final.

The Italian dismissed Djokovic effortlessly on Centre Court 12 months ago - a defeat that left the seven-time Wimbledon champion lamenting his age.

"I don't think it's bad fortune. It's just age, the wear and tear of the body," he said at the time.

At five hours and 15 minutes, Djokovic and Auger-Aliassime played the longest Wimbledon quarter-final in history

Alexander Zverev was also victorious on Tuesday as he returned for his fourth-round tie against Czech Jiri Lehecka after the match was stopped on Monday night because of the Wimbledon curfew.

Zverev led by two sets to love when play was suspended, but Lehecka forced a fourth set on the resumption. German second seed Zverev ultimately came through 6-4, 7-5, 3-6, 7-6 (8-6) to reach his first Wimbledon quarter-final, where he will face American sixth seed Taylor Fritz.

Muchova advances

In the women's singles, Coco Gauff reached her first Wimbledon semi-final with a battling victory over Jessica Pegula to set up a clash with Karolina Muchova for a place in the final.

Muchova, the Czech 10th seed, ended Naomi Osaka's impressive run in a high-quality contest.

Muchova reached a first Wimbledon semi-final - having lost at this stage in 2019 and 2021 - with a 7-6 (7-4) 6-4 win over Japan's Osaka on Court One.

Osaka has been one of the stories of this year's championships, proving a showstopper both on and off the court.

The 28-year-old four-time major winner stunned world No.1 Aryna Sabalenka in a brilliant performance to reach the last eight and has dazzled crowds with her various walk-on outfits - including paying tribute to her nation's culture in a kimono.

But that impressive run came to an end against Muchova, who raised her level to dominate the first-set tie-break before ending Osaka's resistance deep in the second set. - Agencies

OMAN OIL PRICE RISES

The price of Oman crude oil has increased, with prices for delivery by September 2026 reaching $71.36. The price of Oman crude oil rose by $5.01 from the price of Tuesday, which was $66.35. -ONA

MARKET
BUSINESS & FINANCE

MSX INDEX ENDS HIGHER

The MSX index closed at 7,637.53 points, up by 0.91% from previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 0.65% at 607.00 points. Phoenix Power, up 9.62%, was the top gainer while, Galfar Engineering, down 4.37%, was the top loser.

Muscat Stock Exchange celebrates Omifco listing and trading debut

The company's market capitalisation at the time of listing reached approximately OMR1.04 billion, in a step reflecting the great confidence investors place in the company, its future prospects, and its ability to achieve long-term sustainable value

MUSCAT: Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) celebrated on Wednesday the listing of Oman India Fertiliser Company (Omifco) on the MSX and the commencement of trading on its shares, following the successful public offering of 25 percent of its capital.

The listing ceremony of Omifco was held under the auspices of Abdulsalam Mohammed Al Murshidi, Chairman of Oman Investment Authority (OIA).

Omifco shares began on Muscat Stock Exchange following the offering of 1,672,243,750 ordinary shares to investors. The company's market capitalisation at the time of listing reached approximately OMR1.04 billion (equivalent to about $2.7 billion), in a step reflecting the great confidence investors place in the company, its future prospects, and its ability to achieve long-term sustainable value.

The success achieved by the Initial Public Offering (IPO) highlights the company's solid investment foundations and its role in supporting the global food security system, as well as its contribution to attracting investments and consolidating the position of the Muscat Stock Exchange as a promising market for local and international investors.

Ashraf Hamad Al Mamari, CEO of OQ Group, said that listing Omifco on the Muscat Stock Exchange represents a major national milestone in OQ's investment journey, and a culmination of a path that began with "Abraj" and extended to five public offerings within just three years. He noted that this journey was based on a disciplined investment approach that balances maximising the value of national assets, expanding the ownership base, and freeing capital to redirect it toward future growth opportunities serving the Omani economy.

For his part, Haitham Salim Al Salmi, CEO of Muscat Stock Exchange, explained that listing Omifco constitutes a qualitative addition to the capital market and reflects continuous efforts to expand the investor base in strategic national companies. He pointed out that Omifco, as one of the leading companies in fertiliser production, undertakes a pivotal role in supporting the industrial sector and global food supply chains.

He said that this listing enhances the Sultanate of Oman's position as an attractive investment destination, supports economic diversification efforts, and confirms the growing role of Muscat Stock Exchange in attracting distinguished investment opportunities.

Sunder Singh Yadav, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Omifco, said that listing the company's shares on Muscat Stock Exchange reflects the confidence the company received from investors during the offering, emphasising that as a listed company, it will continue to build on its successes, focusing on operational excellence, sustainable growth, and achieving sustainable value and rewarding returns for its shareholders.

Dr. Ahmed Said Al Marhoubi, CEO of Omifco, said that listing the company's shares represents the beginning of a new phase in the company's journey, recording the highest levels of turnout for an initial public offering in the Sultanate of Oman. He valued the great confidence granted by investors throughout the stages of the offering, noting that this unprecedented demand reflects investors' firm conviction in its business model, which is based on an integrated production platform for ammonia and urea, long-term contractual arrangements, an infrastructure prepared for export, and an operational performance that has proven its efficiency over the years.

He added that, through this path, OQ continues to transform producing assets with a solid track record into public platforms for growth and investment, thereby enhancing the development of the capital market and expanding its investment base, consolidating the role of the Muscat Stock Exchange as an effective channel for financing development, and supporting economic diversification targets within Oman Vision 2040.

Mustafa Ahmed Salman, Chairman and CEO of United Securities, stressed that listing Omifco on the Muscat Stock Exchange represents a highly important step, being the first offering of an industrial company of this scale. He noted that the listing will enhance the market value of Muscat Stock Exchange by approximately 5 percent of total listed capital.

He explained that this offering will contribute to rebalancing the general index of the stock exchange by strengthening the weight of the industrial sector alongside the banking and oil sectors, pointing out that the industrial sector has begun to take its place better within the market components.

He pointed out that the huge turnout for the subscription, which exceeded 70,000 applications, along with the volumes witnessed by the subscription, reflects great confidence in the company and the strength of its financial position, noting that one of the company's most prominent advantages is the absence of any debts, and that it distributes about 90 percent of its realised profits to shareholders.

He stated that during the past period, the company benefited from the significant rise in urea product prices in global markets, expecting this to reflect positively on its financial results during the coming period, especially in light of prices continuing at levels considered higher than their averages over past years, emphasising that the continuation of these price levels represents an important addition to the plant.

He indicated that listing the company will add more than OMR1 billion to the market value of the Muscat Stock Exchange, representing about 5 percent of the total market value of listed shares.

The final offering price was set at 156 baisas per share, which is the upper limit of the announced price range, for all categories of the offering. The offering also raised total gross proceeds of about OMR261 million (equivalent to around $678 million). The company will not receive any of the offering proceeds, as they will be paid entirely to the selling shareholders.

The offering attracted subscription applications with a total value of approximately OMR4.7 billion (equivalent to more than $12.2 billion) from local, regional, and international investors within the first and second categories, with demand oversubscribing the size of offered shares by 18.0 times at the final offering price.

Omifco is an integrated fertiliser production company that operates a world-class industrial complex in the Wilayat of Sur in the Sultanate of Oman. Its facilities, which include two ammonia plants and two urea plants, enable the conversion of ammonia into the higher-value urea, supporting operational efficiency and enhancing business flexibility. Furthermore, the strategic location of the Sultanate of Oman, along with long-term gas supply arrangements, stable marketing relationships, and dedicated export infrastructure, provides Omifco with reliable access to global markets.

The company intends to distribute base dividends for the financial year 2026 worth approximately OMR71.2 million ($185 million) in two equal installments due in September 2026 and April 2027. In addition, the company intends to distribute special dividends worth OMR9.6 million ($25.0 million) coinciding with the first expected dividend distribution in September 2026, bringing the total expected dividend distribution for the financial year ending on 31 December 2026, to approximately OMR80.8 million ($210.0 million), of which OMR45.2 million ($117.4 million) will be distributed by September 2026. -ONA

EXPAND NETWORK OF RELATIONS

SME expo opens new investment opportunities in Al Dakhiliyah

NIZWA: The 'Outstanding Funded Enterprises Exhibition 2026' opened on yesterday in the Wilayat of Al Dakhiliyah governorate.

Organised by the SMEs Development Department in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, the two-day exhibition features the participation of 20 SMEs and a number of funding bodies supporting the sector.

The exhibition aims to highlight the products and services of funded small and medium enterprises, enhance their marketing opportunities, and expand their network of relations with investors and funding bodies, thereby contributing to building effective partnerships, opening new investment horizons, and showcasing the impact of funding programmes in supporting the growth and sustainability of these enterprises.

The exhibition witnessed the participation of enterprises representing various economic sectors, including the industrial, consumer, manufacturing, construction, educational, and service sectors, reflecting the diversity of economic activities and entrepreneurship in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate.

The exhibition allows its visitors to learn about the products and services offered by the participating enterprises and to meet with supporting bodies to exchange experiences and explore investment opportunities.

The opening of the exhibition was held under the auspices of Dr. Mohammed Ali Al Mahri, Wali of Adam. -ONA

JOINT INVESTMENT COOPERATION

Omani-Jordanian investment company with capital of OMR38.5mn established

MUSCAT: Oman Investment Authority (OIA) and Jordan's Social Security Investment Fund (SSIF) have signed an agreement to establish an Omani-Jordanian investment company with a capital of OMR38.5 million.

This step marks the beginning of a new phase of joint investment cooperation between the two countries and further strengthening their deeply rooted historical ties and growing economic relations.

The company, owned equally by both parties, will focus on investing in a number of vital and promising sectors that serve the economic priorities of both nations—including those outlined in Oman Vision 2040.

These sectors encompass telecommunications and information technology, agricultural wealth and food security, medical equipment and pharmaceuticals, energy, mining, tourism and logistics services. This will contribute to enhancing economic diversification, stimulating local markets, and generating added value that supports the growth and integration of companies in both countries.

This strategic partnership extends the OIA's established approach of enhancing the geographic and sectoral diversity of its investment portfolio, which serves as a strategic instrument for asset protection, risk distribution, and the development of investment platforms that ensure sustainable economic returns and continued capital inflows.

Mulham Basheer Al Jarf, Deputy Chairman of Oman Investment Authority for Investment stated that this Omani-Jordanian strategic partnership represents a landmark moment in the trajectory of bilateral relations, translating the directives of the leaderships of both countries into tangible projects that reinforce economic ties. It builds upon a legacy of cooperation, knowledge exchange and investment in promising ventures with sustainable economic and developmental impact, advancing the shared interests of both nations, he pointed out.

Economic diplomacy

He further emphasised that this partnership strengthens the Authority's role in implementing economic diplomacy, deepening collaborative bridges with partners in Arab states, directing investments toward priority sectors and enhancing the geographic and sectoral diversification of the Authority's portfolio.

Dr. Ezz Eddin Kanakrieh, Chairman of Jordan's Social Security Investment Fund, remarked that this agreement represents a strategic milestone in the cooperation journey between the Fund and Oman Investment Authority, embodying a shared vision grounded in the effective deployment of capital and institutional expertise to develop economically viable investments in priority sectors. The agreement extends the Fund's ongoing approach to expanding its regional and international presence.

The agreement ushers in a new phase of joint investment operations founded on governance and efficiency, following the Authority's previous partnerships with Qatar, Turkiye, China, Uzbekistan, Vietnam, Pakistan, Spain, Azerbaijan, India, Brunei Darussalam, Kazakhstan and Belarus.

It further reaffirms Oman Investment Authority's commitment to enhancing the Sultanate of Oman's position as a regional hub for high-value investments and a driver of sustainable economic growth, through the development of long-term partnerships that facilitate knowledge transfer, attract capital, and strengthen the competitiveness of the Omani economy across its various sectors. -ONA

MARKET

MSX index ends higher

Phoenix Power, up 9.62%, was the top gainer while, Galfar Engineering, down 4.37%, was the top loser

MUSCAT: The MSX index closed at 7,637.53 points, up by 0.91% from previous close. The Shariah Index ended up by 0.65% at 607.00 points. Phoenix Power, up 9.62%, was the top gainer while, Galfar Engineering, down 4.37%, was the top loser. Shares of OQBI were the most active in terms of number of shares traded while OQEP were the most active in terms of turnover.

A total number of 21124 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating turnover of RO 95.66 million, with more than 430.98 million shares changing hands. Out of 60 traded securities, 23 advanced, 13 declined, and 24 remained unchanged. At the session close, GCC & Arab investors were net buyers for RO 17031K while domestic investors were net sellers for RO 13070K, followed by foreign investors for RO 3961K worth of shares.

Financial Index closed at 13,256.59 points, up 0.36%. Prices of Oman United Insurance, Al Sharqia Investment, DIDIC, Global Financial Investments, Sohar International Bank were up by 5.88%, 1.96%, 1.36%, 1.36%, 1.05% respectively. Prices of Bank Dhofar, Bank Nizwa, National Finance were down by 1.32%, 0.70%, 0.47% respectively.

Industrial Index closed at 9,736.65 points, down -0.21%. Prices of Al Maha Ceramics, Muscat Thread Mill were up by 1.15%, 0.48% respectively. Prices of Galfar Engineering, Gulf International Chemicals, Jazeera Steel Products, Gulf Mushroom Products were down by 4.37%, 1.37%, 0.36%, 0.23% respectively.

Services Index was up by 1.45% before closing at 3,079.37 points. Prices of Phoenix Power, OQ Exploration & Production, Barka Desalination, Dhofar Generating, Al Suwadi Power were up by 9.62%, 4.21%, 3.17%, 1.22%, 1.06% respectively. Prices of SMN Power Holding, Sembcorp Salalah, Ooredoo were down by 0.51%, 0.38%, 0.30% respectively.— United Securities

OMAN STOCKS

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE

INDICES

Index	High	Low	Value	Prev . Value	Diff	Diff %
MSX 30 INDEX	7,637.53	7,557.03	7,637.53	7,568.85	68.68	0.91 %
FINANCIAL INDEX	13,256.59	13,136.47	13,256.59	13,209.15	47.44	0.36 %
Industry Index	9,760.73	9,651.91	9,736.65	9,756.79	-20.15	-0.21 %
Services Index	3,079.37	3,014.84	3,079.37	3,035.35	44.01	1.45 %
MSX Shariah Index	607.00	600.17	607.00	603.06	3.94	0.65 %
MSX TR INDEX	11,816.14	11,691.61	11,816.14	11,709.16	106.98	0.91 %
FINANCIAL TR IDX	16,298.29	16,150.61	16,298.29	16,229.71	68.58	0.42 %
INDUSTRIAL TR IDX	12,501.01	12,361.65	12,470.17	12,495.97	-25.80	-0.21 %
SERVICES TR IDX	4,125.77	4,039.32	4,125.77	4,066.80	58.97	1.45 %
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
430,985,601	95,660,075	21,124	38,256,090,781	23	13	24	60

SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR WEDNESDAY, JULY 8

REGULAR MARKET

ISIN	SECURITY NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR.	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF (RO)	DIFF %	LAST PR	LAST BID	LAST OFFER	PAR VALUE	MARKET CAP
OM0000005963	PHOENIX POWER	11,593,477	2,876,936	356	0.238	0.262	0.225	0.262	0.239	0.023	9.623	0.262	0.245	0.254	0.100	383,201,583
OM0000001087	OMAN UNITED INSURANCE	11,100	3,616	3	0.325	0.360	0.325	0.360	0.340	0.020	5.882	0.360	0.326	0.365	0.100	37,800,000
OM0000009759	OQ EXPLORATION AND PRODUCTION	17,026,806	7,842,260	669	0.451	0.472	0.451	0.470	0.451	0.019	4.213	0.470	0.469	0.470	0.010	3,760,000,000
OM0000008710	BARKA DESALINATION	8,500	1,386	2	0.163	0.163	0.163	0.163	0.158	0.005	3.165	0.163	0.160	0.163	0.100	12,310,086
OM0000009908	OQ BASE INDUSTRIES (SFZ)	24,978,949	6,588,702	1,461	0.263	0.268	0.260	0.268	0.262	0.006	2.290	0.268	0.265	0.266	0.040	927,143,548
OM0000002440	AL SHARQIYA INVESTMENT HO.	20,610	2,143	3	0.104	0.104	0.104	0.104	0.102	0.002	1.961	0.104	0.102	0.104	0.100	9,360,000
OM0000001509	DHOFAR INTL DEVELOPMENT & INVEST	87,509	25,837	14	0.294	0.300	0.294	0.299	0.295	0.004	1.356	0.299	0.290	0.299	0.100	148,320,786
OM0000003125	GLOBAL FINANCIAL INVESTMENT HO.	89,000	26,418	7	0.292	0.299	0.292	0.299	0.295	0.004	1.356	0.299	0.294	0.296	0.100	59,800,000
OM0000004933	AL SUWADI POWER	523,920	99,129	25	0.190	0.190	0.186	0.190	0.188	0.002	1.064	0.190	0.189	0.190	0.100	135,737,205
OM0000003398	SOHAR INTERNATIONAL BANK	7,621,609	1,451,915	1,257	0.190	0.192	0.189	0.192	0.190	0.002	1.053	0.192	0.190	0.191	0.100	1,270,511,284
OM0000009072	OQ GAS NETWORKS	9,762,818	2,177,291	1,720	0.222	0.224	0.221	0.224	0.222	0.002	0.901	0.224	0.222	0.223	0.100	970,059,758
OM0000001533	OMINVEST	7,033	2,684	4	0.381	0.383	0.381	0.383	0.381	0.002	0.525	0.383	0.381	0.382	0.100	430,053,049
OM0000001483	NATIONAL BANK OMAN	3,000	1,497	1	0.499	0.499	0.499	0.499	0.497	0.002	0.402	0.499	0.492	0.499	0.100	811,347,231
OM0000010120	ASYAD SHIPPING	780,777	216,022	237	0.278	0.279	0.275	0.278	0.277	0.001	0.361	0.278	0.275	0.278	0.000	1,448,030,910
OM0000008934	ABRAJ ENERGY SERVICES	414,764	161,009	226	0.387	0.389	0.385	0.389	0.388	0.001	0.258	0.389	0.386	0.389	0.100	299,607,800
OM0000002796	BANK MUSCAT	7,008,907	2,781,540	1,366	0.399	0.400	0.395	0.400	0.399	0.001	0.251	0.400	0.398	0.398	0.100	3,002,558,825
OM0000001707	OMAN CABLES INDUSTRY	15,100	48,770	23	3.225	3.230	3.225	3.230	3.230	0.000	0.000	3.230	3.100	3.230	0.100	289,731,000
OM0000001749	OMAN CEMENT	1,190	657	2	0.550	0.570	0.550	0.570	0.570	0.000	0.000	0.570	0.555	0.570	0.100	188,597,445
OM0000001772	ALANWAR INVESTMENT	110,819	19,061	9	0.172	0.172	0.172	0.172	0.172	0.000	0.000	0.172	0.172	0.180	0.100	52,891,637
OM0000002374	UNITED FINANCE	24,200	2,251	3	0.093	0.093	0.093	0.093	0.093	0.000	0.000	0.093	0.093	0.102	0.100	33,119,839
OM0000003000	Al MAHA PETROLEUM PRODS MRKTNG	227	272	2	1.200	1.200	1.200	1.200	1.200	0.000	0.000	1.200	1.200	1.225	0.100	82,800,000
OM0000003026	OMAN TELECOM	4,696,939	6,595,334	112	1.404	1.416	1.402	1.403	1.403	0.000	0.000	1.403	1.402	1.406	0.100	1,052,250,000
OM0000003224	RENAISSANCE SERVICES	77,010	23,420	13	0.305	0.305	0.303	0.305	0.305	0.000	0.000	0.305	0.300	0.305	0.100	72,105,050
OM0000003661	VOLTAMP ENERGY	1,349,843	233,823	113	0.174	0.174	0.173	0.174	0.174	0.000	0.000	0.174	0.173	0.174	0.010	174,000,000
OM0000004768	MADINA TAKAFUL	18,796	2,303	9	0.122	0.123	0.122	0.122	0.122	0.000	0.000	0.122	0.110	0.125	0.100	21,350,000
OM0000004925	ALBATINAH POWER	372,703	70,285	29	0.190	0.190	0.188	0.190	0.190	0.000	0.000	0.190	0.188	0.190	0.100	128,228,612
OM0000002267	GULF MUSHROOM PRODUCTS	650	282	2	0.434	0.434	0.434	0.434	0.435	-0.001	-0.230	0.434	0.417	0.435	0.100	21,848,592
OM0000003968	OOREDOO	225,871	74,838	29	0.332	0.332	0.330	0.330	0.331	-0.001	-0.302	0.330	0.325	0.330	0.100	214,811,596
OM0000002176	JAZEERA STEEL PRODUCTS	25,000	20,982	26	0.837	0.840	0.837	0.837	0.840	-0.003	-0.357	0.837	0.837	0.837	0.100	104,539,593
OM0000004735	SEMBCORP SALALAH	224,725	58,399	29	0.260	0.265	0.256	0.260	0.261	-0.001	-0.383	0.260	0.256	0.260	0.100	248,188,707
OM0000004248	SMN POWER HOLDING	2,000	392	2	0.195	0.197	0.195	0.197	0.198	-0.001	-0.505	0.197	0.195	0.217	0.100	39,328,213
OM0000004420	BANK NIZWA	314,273	44,351	27	0.142	0.142	0.141	0.141	0.142	-0.001	-0.704	0.141	0.141	0.142	0.100	315,410,378
OM0000002549	BANK DHOFAR	814,500	184,947	192	0.228	0.229	0.224	0.225	0.228	-0.003	-1.316	0.225	0.220	0.227	0.100	683,954,670
Total	33	88,212,625	31,638,749	7,973												

Parallel Market

ISIN	SECURITY NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR.	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF (RO)	DIFF %	LAST PR	LAST BID	LAST OFFER	PAR VALUE	MARKET CAP
OM0000007407	DHOFAR GENERATING	10,000	830	1	0.083	0.083	0.083	0.083	0.082	0.001	1.220	0.083	0.080	0.083	0.100	18,445,920
OM0000005005	ALMAHA CERAMICS	4,000	1,060	1	0.265	0.265	0.265	0.265	0.262	0.003	1.145	0.265	0.265	0.287	0.100	14,575,000
OM0000005260	OMAN ARAB BANK	481,000	113,516	268	0.236	0.236	0.236	0.236	0.234	0.002	0.855	0.236	0.232	0.236	0.100	472,647,427
OM0000002036	MUSCAT THREAD MILLS	5,500	1,150	2	0.209	0.209	0.209	0.209	0.208	0.001	0.481	0.209	0.209	0.212	0.100	3,867,513
OM0000001608	OMAN PACKAGING	950	200	1	0.210	0.210	0.210	0.195	0.195	0.000	0.000	0.210	0.195	0.000	0.100	6,324,993
OM0000001889	SALALAH MILLS	6,000	4,080	2	0.680	0.680	0.680	0.680	0.680	0.000	0.000	0.680	0.000	0.680	0.100	42,474,884
OM0000001962	AL MADINA INVESTMENT HOLDING	45,860	1,506	4	0.032	0.033	0.032	0.033	0.033	0.000	0.000	0.033	0.033	0.034	0.100	2,805,000
OM0000002168	AL ANWAR CERAMIC	445,515	65,458	40	0.145	0.147	0.145	0.147	0.147	0.000	0.000	0.147	0.146	0.146	0.100	32,340,000
OM0000002275	SHELL OMAN MARKETING	14,236	11,004	5	0.773	0.773	0.773	0.773	0.773	0.000	0.000	0.773	0.770	0.773	0.100	73,435,000
OM0000004776	TAKAFUL OMAN	14,224	953	3	0.067	0.067	0.067	0.067	0.067	0.000	0.000	0.067	0.065	0.067	0.100	16,750,000
OM0000007910	AMAN REAL ESTATE	13,150	937	6	0.070	0.074	0.070	0.074	0.074	0.000	0.000	0.074	0.070	0.074	0.100	14,800,000
OM0000008868	THE PEARL REIF	55,770	9,866	10	0.176	0.177	0.176	0.177	0.177	0.000	0.000	0.177	0.176	0.177	0.100	104,684,328
OM0000009569	JABAL REIF	1,800	187	2	0.104	0.104	0.104	0.104	0.104	0.000	0.000	0.104	0.103	0.104	0.100	18,096,000
OM0000010823	OMAN GATEWAY FUND	3,300	3,411	4	1.036	1.041	1.033	1.033	1.036	-0.003	-0.290	1.033	1.035	1.041	0.000	28,247,642
OM0000002648	NATIONAL FINANCE	8,600	1,842	4	0.215	0.215	0.214	0.214	0.215	-0.001	-0.465	0.214	0.213	0.214	0.100	139,248,815
OM0000008447	OMAN REIT FUND	25,219	2,696	11	0.107	0.107	0.106	0.106	0.107	-0.001	-0.935	0.106	0.105	0.107	0.100	69,148,281
OM0000002028	GULF INTERNATIONAL CHEMICALS	1,400	102	5	0.073	0.073	0.072	0.072	0.073	-0.001	-1.370	0.072	0.072	0.073	0.100	1,512,000
OM0000001160	NATIONAL GAS	121,483	13,067	19	0.109	0.109	0.106	0.108	0.110	-0.002	-1.818	0.109	0.108	0.108	0.100	9,180,000
OM0000003521	GALFAR ENGINEERING & CONTRACTING.	30,000	5,185	4	0.170	0.175	0.170	0.175	0.183	-0.008	-4.372	0.175	0.172	0.177	0.100	35,522,628
Total	19	1,288,007	237,051	392												

CRITICAL PILLAR OF LONG-TERM FINANCIAL SECURITY

Building wealth with confidence: How BankDhofar is shaping asset management in Sultanate of Oman

Juma Mohammed Al Jabri, AGM & Head of Treasury & Investment Banking

MUSCAT: In an increasingly complex financial landscape, asset management has evolved from a niche service for high-net-worth individuals into a critical pillar of long-term financial security for a broader segment of society. In Oman, this shift is being driven by rising financial awareness, economic diversification, and a growing appetite for structured, goal-oriented investment strategies, all aligned with Oman Vision 2040 which aims for sustainable and inclusive growth

At its core, effective asset management is about more than chasing returns—it is about building wealth with confidence and clarity. The Vision emphasises financial sustainability and economic resilience, making it essential for investors to adopt robust strategies that align with the nation objectives.

A well-thought-out investment strategy begins with a clear understanding of financial goals, risk tolerance, and time horizons. Whether planning for retirement, funding education, or preserving intergenerational wealth, investors must align their portfolios with their life objectives. This requires discipline, diversification, and a long-term perspective—principles that resonate strongly in today's volatile global markets.

Sound portfolio management is equally critical. A balanced mix of asset classes—equities, fixed income, real estate, and alternative investments—can help mitigate risk while capturing growth opportunities. Regular portfolio reviews, rebalancing, and responsiveness to macroeconomic trends ensure that investments remain aligned with evolving market conditions. In Oman, where local opportunities are complemented by access to regional and global markets, investors are increasingly seeking professional guidance to navigate this complexity.

Effective financial planning ties these elements together. It transforms fragmented financial decisions into a cohesive roadmap, enabling individuals and institutions to make informed choices with confidence. From tax efficiency and liquidity management to estate planning, a holistic approach is essential for sustainable wealth creation.

Midway through this evolving landscape stands BankDhofar, a financial institution that has built a strong reputation for delivering sophisticated asset management solutions tailored to the needs of its clients. With decades of experience in Oman's banking sector, BankDhofar combines deep local market insight with access to global investment opportunities, positioning itself as a trusted partner in wealth creation.

The bank's asset management capabilities are underpinned by a disciplined investment philosophy and robust research framework. Its offerings span discretionary portfolio management, advisory services, and access to diversified investment products across asset classes and geographies. Clients benefit from customised strategies that reflect their financial goals, risk profiles, and investment horizons.

BankDhofar has also demonstrated a strong commitment to innovation and client-centricity. Its digital platforms enable seamless portfolio monitoring and reporting, enhancing transparency and empowering clients with real-time insights into their investments. At the same time, the bank's relationship managers provide personalized guidance, ensuring that clients remain well-informed and confident in their financial decisions.

Notably, BankDhofar's initiatives in financial literacy and investor education have contributed to a more informed investment community in Oman.

By hosting seminars, publishing market insights, and engaging with clients proactively, the bank is helping to demystify asset management and promote a culture of prudent investing.

As Oman continues its journey towards economic diversification and sustainable growth, the role of asset management will only become more significant. Investors who embrace disciplined strategies, sound portfolio management, and comprehensive financial planning will be better positioned to navigate uncertainty and capitalize on emerging opportunities.

In this context, institutions like BankDhofar are not merely service providers—they are enablers of financial confidence and clarity. By aligning their expertise and innovations with the principles of Oman Vision 2040 they are helping shape a future where wealth is not only created but managed with purpose and foresight.

PROLONGED CONFLICT

Indian markets tank after Trump signals end of peace negotiations with Iran, late sell-off triggered

MUMBAI: The Indian stock market tanked immediately after US President Donald Trump signalled an end to the ongoing peace deal negotiations between US and Iran claiming that the deal was over.

In a news conference at the sidelines of the NATO Summit at Ankara said, "To me, I think it's over. I don't want to deal with them anymore. They're scum... They're led by sick people... I'll speak to our negotiators. They want to negotiate - they're good people... but they have to come back to me. As far as I'm concerned, it's just a waste of time dealing with them."

The US President also acknowledged renewed strikes on Iran which took place on Tuesday night. The US President accused Iran of reneging on its promise to restrain itself from firing at vessels in the Strait of Hormuz.

"We attacked, very powerfully last night, the very dangerous people from Iran... There's something wrong with them. We say, 'Go and do your funeral stuff,' and instead of that, they start shooting rockets at ships yesterday. So we hit them very hard last night," he said.

The remarks from the US President triggered a sharp wave of risk-off sentiment in the final hour of trade, as fears of a renewed rise in Oil prices sank in.

The Nifty 50 plunged over 500 points, or more than 2 per cent, to 23,887.45, while the Sensex tumbled over 1,600 points, or around 2 per cent, to 76,555.

Broader markets also came under heavy selling pressure, with Nifty Financial Services and Nifty PSU Bank among the worst-performing indices. India VIX surged over 28 per cent, reflecting heightened market volatility.

Market experts said Trump's comments intensified concerns over a prolonged conflict in West Asia, sending oil prices sharply higher. Brent crude rose nearly 4 per cent to USD 76.71 per barrel.

"The sudden collapse of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the US and Iran has triggered a sharp wave of risk-off sentiment across global financial markets, hitting Indian equities particularly hard," said market and banking expert Ajay Bagga.

"President Trump's declaration that the peace process is 'over' injects severe geopolitical uncertainty right back into the critical Strait of Hormuz transit corridor. With crude oil prices surging rapidly on renewed supply and security fears, India--as a major energy importer--faces a double whammy of potential imported inflation and fiscal pressure," Bagga said.

He added that investors were rushing to cut exposure. "Investors are aggressively shedding risk, leading to the sharp sell-off on the D-Street today as the global market landscape rapidly recalibrates for a prolonged, volatile standoff in West Asia."

Bagga noted that markets were rapidly pricing in the risk of further escalation. "We still believe this is posturing from both sides to cater to their domestic compulsions, but the risk of escalation remains on the table and markets are pricing it in a hurry. Hopefully, the regional powers will prevail upon both the US and Iran to come back to the negotiation table," he said.

With crude oil prices climbing and geopolitical risks back in focus, Bagga expect market volatility to remain elevated until there are clearer signs of de-escalation. -ANI

RENEWED STRIKES

Gold wavers as Middle East tensions fuel inflation, rate concerns

TOKYO: Gold prices swung between gains and losses yesterday as renewed US strikes on Iran drove oil and the dollar higher, stoking inflation fears and reinforcing expectations of higher interest rates, ahead of the Federal Reserve's June meeting minutes.

Spot gold rose 0.5 percent to $4,125.59 per ounce, after earlier touching its lowest level since 2 July 2026, while US gold futures for August delivery slipped 0.5 percent to $4,136.30 per ounce.

US oil prices jumped about three percent in early trading, Treasury yields climbed, and the dollar held at its strongest level of the week against most major currencies.

Investors are awaiting the minutes of the Federal Open Market Committee meeting held on 16-17 June, due later yesterday, for fresh signals on the rate path under new Fed Chair Kevin Warsh.

Spot silver rose 0.8 percent to $60.47 per ounce, platinum fell 0.3 percent to $1,635.45 per ounce, and palladium declined 0.6 percent to $1,268.64 per ounce. -DNA

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FINANCE
An Indian CA with over 25 years of experience in manufacturing, retail and construction industry in accounting, banking arrangements, Tax, VAT, budgeting and cash flow management seeks managerial position.
CONTACT : 75156709

FINANCE
Chartered Accountant, presently Finance Controller, with 22 plus years' experience as Finance Head in leading companies of Oman as well in Auditing firm. Well versed with Banking, IFRS and taxation seeks suitable position.
Contact: 94274470
Email: azamca7@gmail.com

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27 yr Indian male holding MBA (UK) looking for job in Accounts & Sales.Contact 77198066

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ADMINISTRATION
Indian male (BBA graduate) experienced professional seeking administration, junior accountant, sales marketing (Immediate joining) in Oman Contact: +968 99055336. Email: athulgvr12345@gmail.com

DRIVER
Bangaladeshi driver with 11 yrs experience looking for job.Contact 94247262

ENGINEER
Mechanical Engineer having piping experience & completed Masters in supply chain management & logistics from UK, seeking Job opportunities,having 6 yrs of experience. Contact : 91251757. Email: jighilthooprath@gmail.com

Seeking opportunities, telecom (RF) & fiber optic engineer (7+ yrs). Ex-Nokia, Huawei. expert in 4G/5G RF planning, optimization, and fiber management. Seeking Oman roles. Available immediately. Contact +9687182 2875. Email: Shamnadh1@gmail.com

ENGINEER
Sudanese Civil engineer with over 17 yrs of experience, including 1 year in Oman seeking a position in Project management or any administrative role. OSE membership and a valid Omani D/L. Contact: 92323037

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

IT
Indian female MBA in Data science & business analytics looking for suitable positions in Business management or in finance. Available for Immediate joining. Contact: 99057950, Email: sardarnamira64@gmail.com.

MANAGER
Real estate Property admin manager in Oman, Contact: 77336141

Business development & operations manager, MBA, Indian male, 13+ yrs exp, working in Oman with Omani D/L seeking opportunity Contact : 77648022

'WE HAVE SUFFERED INJUSTICE: EGYPT COACH AFTER DEFEAT TO ARGENTINA

Egypt were left seething after squandering a two-goal lead and losing 3-2 to Messi's Argentina

ATLANTA: For Mohamed Salah and Egypt, what could have been a glorious celebration turned ugly at the end on Tuesday as the Pharaohs went down 3-2 to defending champions Argentina.

On the cusp of upsetting the holders, Egypt squandered a two-goal lead late in the game and fell to Lionel Messi and Argentina in the round of 16.

The winning tally came two minutes into stoppage time and set off a wild scene in front of the Egyptian bench. A red card was shown to goalkeeping coach Saafan El-saghir, who had to be physically restrained from going after French referee Francois Letexier. Multiple yellow cards were doled out to those griping vehemently about Argentina's final goal.

Egypt coach Hossam Hassan held up both arms in an "X" shape — the signal in football for calling out racial abuse — and stated flatly that his upstart squad was victimised by a football establishment that wanted Messi and Argentina to advance to the quarter-finals in their pursuit of a second straight title. "We have been treated unfairly today," Hassan said. "We have suffered injustice."

In a tournament already marred by allegations that US President Donald Trump influenced FIFA to overturn a one-game suspension for an American player, Egypt turned up the heat on football's governing body.

"I just would like to say that we would have deserved to earn this win," Hassan said, "but we are leaving with honour, with pride, regardless of this defeat."

Hassan, who has been outspoken in his support of the Palestinians during the tournament, was upset that a potential second goal was overturned by a video review that showed a foul by Egypt at the start of an end-to-end play.

Egypt took a 2-0 lead anyway on Mostafa Zico's goal in the 67th minute, but there was still enough time for Argentina to pull off a comeback for the ages in the stadium that is normally the home of NFL's Atlanta Falcons.

Cristian Romero gave the champions hope in the 79th. Messi blasted in the tying goal off the crossbar just four minutes later. And Enzo Fernández won it for Argentina in the second minute of stoppage time — a play that began at the opposite end of the field with Salah being stripped of the ball as he tried to dribble into the penalty area, winding up face down on the turf.

Hassan was still seething that the video assistant referee didn't feel the need for Letexier to review what Egypt felt was a foul on Salah in the area, denying a potential penalty kick in the waning minutes.

"The effect of this outcome goes way beyond the defeat itself because we haven't seen neither respect nor fair play," Hassan said. "There has not been respect or fair play because a penalty was ruled out. A second ball that should have been called as a penalty for us was not even checked by the VAR."

When Salah led a break out of the Egyptian zone that led to Zico's goal, it appeared the African underdogs — a team that had never won a World Cup game until this tournament — was headed to the quarter-finals.

Egypt fell into a defensive shell, looking to protect its seemingly safe lead, only to have Argentina pull off another wild escape. La Albiceleste needed extra time to beat Cape Verde 3-2 in the round of 32. This was an even closer call for Messi and company.

It was all too much for Hassan and his players to bear.

"What I told the referee was just that this is unfair," the coach said.

"I was saying maybe he's carrying a scar, maybe he has something to hide. Whoever has something to hide sometimes fails to hide what he is hiding and this was exactly what I felt during that conversation."

Argentina moved on to face Switzerland in the quarterfinals.

For Hassan, the tournament is over.

He has no intention of watching any more football. "I promise you, from the moment I go back, I'm not going to continue following the matches of this FIFA World Cup," he said. "This is my internal fight, my internal objection, my own way of speaking up and standing up.

"I am not going to watch, not a single match of this tournament."

Hassan told BeIN: "Perhaps they wanted to keep the world champions in the competition. Perhaps they wanted Messi to stay in the running. "In football, there are sometimes external factors that go beyond the technical aspects. The world champions received support at every level."

The match took fans on an emotional rollercoaster - from hope, to belief, to outright elation... before anger and finally anguish.

"Watching Egypt rise from their first ever World Cup win to going toe-to-toe with Argentina is something I'll never forget. Nothing can dim what these players showed the world today." - Agencies

Egypt file complaint against referee after controversial exit

ATLANTA: The Egyptian football federation on Wednesday said it had asked for the officiating team who handled the Pharaohs loss 3-2 last-16 to Argentina to be thrown out of the World Cup. "Hany Aburida, President of the Egyptian Football Federation, filed a complaint with FIFA, demanding an investigation into the French referee Francois Letexier... after the serious refereeing mistakes committed by the team of referees and double standards, which caused the Egypt team to lose the match and leave the World Cup," said a statement from the federation.

"Aburida demanded the investigation of the entire team of referees, including the video technology referees, because of the blatant errors and insisting on not reviewing some of the footage that we believe are in favour of the Egyptian national team, and we see in it the Pharaohs' right to a correct goal and a penalty," said the Egyptian statement. It added that the president had also "demanded the exclusion of the referee and the entire crew from the World Cup after investigating these mistakes and proving the crime of discrimination against the Egyptian national team".

BRIEFS

Belgium's Onana out for remainder of World Cup

WASHINGTON: Belgium midfielder Amadou Onana, who injured his right knee in the 19th minute of Monday's 4-1 win against the United States in the round of 16, will miss the remainder of the World Cup. In a statement released by the Belgian soccer federation, team doctor Brahim Hacene said medical examinations confirmed that Onana ruptured the anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) in his knee. "This is devastating news," Hacene said, "both for him personally and for the team." The 24-year-old Onana appeared in four games at the World Cup for Belgium, and made his second start of the tournament against the Americans. Onana also played in two games at the 2022 World Cup in Qatar, and scored a goal in a 5-2 blowout win over the US in a World Cup warmup match in March. Onana has been with Aston Villa of the Premier League since 2024, and previously played for Everton.

Rodri sorry after spat with longtime City team-mate Silva

ARLINGTON: Spain midfielder Rodri expressed regret at celebrating in the face of Bernardo Silva after his former Manchester City team-mate missed a late chance to equalise for Portugal in their heavyweight World Cup match. Silva had a chance to take the round-of-16 game — won 1-0 by Spain on Monday — to extra time but headed over the crossbar after six minutes of stoppage time. As the Portugal playmaker lay on the ground with his head in his hands, Rodri walked up to Silva and clenched his fist in a taunting gesture. Silva stood up and confronted Rodri, brushing aside his arm and pointing in his face. The two players have played together in City's midfield since 2019. Silva left this summer after running down his contract, and has since joined Real Madrid. Rodri told reporters after the game that he'd said sorry to Silva. "I made a mistake," the 2024 Ballon d'Or winner said, "because I celebrated when he had missed. I apologised to him immediately. "But that's all, because of the trust we have."

Norway's Solbakken praises unique Haaland as England clash looms

FLORIDA: Norway coach Stale Solbakken has said Erling Haaland is one of a kind as his side gears up for a World Cup quarter-final showdown with England on Saturday that will see the giant striker go up against defenders he meets regularly in the Premier League. Haaland has been in sensational form at his first World Cup, Norway's first finals since 1998, popping up in the right place at the right time to bang in seven goals so far that have powered his team into the last eight of the tournament. "All great players have a need to show themselves, if they are not involved in the game, they often seek to move out the pitch to say, 'here I am'. Erling is indifferent to that," Solbakken told reporters. "He knows what he is best at, he knows what he can help the team with, and that was the case on Sunday ... there has never before been a footballer who plays in this way." The 58-year-old coach was referring to Haaland's late brace to give his side a sensational 2-1 win over Brazil that put them through to the quarter-finals, with Norwegian fans now scrambling to get across the Atlantic to see the game. - Agencies

RUBEN VARGAS CONVERTS DECISIVE PENALTY

Shootout sends Swiss through as Colombia pay the penalty

VANCOUVER: In a match with few fireworks, the Swiss were patient against the Colombians and their enthusiastic fans.

After a scoreless draw, Ruben Vargas converted the decisive penalty and Switzerland advanced to the World Cup quarterfinals, beating Colombia 4-3 in a shootout on Tuesday.

Switzerland will face defending champion Argentina on Saturday at Arrowhead Stadium in Kansas City, Missouri. Argentina defeated Egypt 3-2 earlier in the day.

Switzerland had not reached the quarter-finals of a World Cup since hosting the tournament in 1954. The Swiss were also short-handed on Tuesday without young midfielder Johan Manzambi, who was injured in training on Monday.

Vargas, who has scored two goals in the World Cup, also left Monday's training early but came on in stoppage time at the end of regulation.

In the shootout, Colombia defender Davinson Sánchez's penalty attempt hit the crossbar and Switzerland goalkeeper Gregor Kobel saved an attempt by Cucho Hernández.

FIFA President Gianni Infantino, a Swiss citizen, was among those at BC Place, where the sell-out crowd of 52,497 was overwhelmingly clad in yellow in support of Colombia.

"They had the crowd on their side, so it was a tough game for us," Kobel said. "We know we had some stretches of the game where we had to defend and stay strong mentally. Obviously we had a few players missing so, yeah, it was a big challenge for us."

Colombia failed to qualify for the last World Cup in 2022. Los Cafeteros made the quarter-finals at the 2014 tournament in Brazil, defeating Uruguay in the round of 16 before losing to the host country 2-1. "The dream was enormous," Colombia midfielder Jhon Arias said. "The country showed us that it believed in us, that it lived every moment with us, and I think that only makes the pain even greater." - Agencies

SWITZERLAND COACH

Right subs at the right time were key: Yakin

VANCOUVER: Switzerland stayed patient and benefited from the right substitutes at the right time to edge past Colombia on penalties on Tuesday and reach the World Cup quarterfinals, Swiss coach Murat Yakin said.

The shootout swung in Switzerland's favour when its goalkeeper Gregor Kobel saved Cucho Hernandez's penalty after Davinson Sanchez had earlier hit the crossbar for Colombia.

Substitute Ruben Vargas then converted the winning spot kick for Switzerland to beat the South Americans 4-3 following a game that finished 0-0 after 120 minutes.

He was one of several substitutions, including that of forward Cedric Itten a few minutes earlier and Zeki Amdouni a little later, that refreshed the Swiss frontline after the 87th minute. "It was difficult in the beginning but we stayed in it and showed great mentality," Yakin said.

"Then I brought on the right players at the right moment. In the end it was important for the players who scored the penalties to be on the pitch then."

"It was just amazing, to see him smash that (Vargas penalty) in. I was so relieved and happy," Yakin said. "This is a historic moment. We have reached the best ever for the Swiss team but the trip goes on."

Even before the game Yakin had to improvise with midfielder Johan Manzambi being ruled out with an injury he suffered in training on Monday. Yakin said replacement Ardon Jashari did a good job.

"Every little decision was important. Every piece of the puzzle fit. The absence of Johan was a bitter blow but we did it well as a team. We knew it was a historic match, round of 16 and a chance to be part of the last eight is not an everyday event," Yakin said. - Agencies

‘Wasted cause’: Trump lashes out at Spain over NATO spending

Trump criticised Spain’s role in the alliance, calling it a “terrible partner” and stating that he doesn’t want to do anything with Spain. “Spain is a wasted cause. We don’t want to do any trade business with Spain anymore, by the way,” he added

ANKARA: US President Donald Trump on Wednesday lashed out at the Spanish government over its defence spending within the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), calling the country a “wasted cause” and saying that the United States would not be doing trade business with it “anymore”.

Speaking to reporters during his meeting with NATO General Secretary Mark Rutte on the sidelines of the 2026 NATO Summit in Ankara, Trump criticised Spain’s role in the alliance, calling it a “terrible partner” and stating that he doesn’t want to do anything with Spain.

“Spain is a wasted cause. We don’t want to do any trade business with Spain anymore, by the way,” Trump said.

“Spain is a terrible partner in NATO. They don’t participate, they don’t pay. I don’t want anything to do with Spain,” he added.

Spain remains the only NATO member to refuse to commit to the alliance’s new defence spending target, which was announced last year at the 2025 Summit in The Hague, where the allies committed to a spending target of 5 per cent of their Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by 2035. Madrid secured an exemption allowing it to cap military spending at 2.1 per cent of its GDP instead of adopting the 5 per cent target. Spain is also among the alliance’s lowest defence spenders as a share of GDP.

The comments mark the latest in Trump’s repeated criticism of European allies over what he describes as insufficient contributions to collective defence.

Throughout his presidency, Trump has urged NATO members to increase military spending and has frequently accused several allies of relying disproportionately on the United States for security.

Trump has also repeatedly targeted Spain in recent months, particularly over differences in foreign policy.

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez was among the few European leaders to publicly criticise the US military action against Iran, and his government’s earlier decision to bar the use of US military facilities in southern Spain in support of the Iran strikes further strained ties with Washington.

Continuing his criticism, Trump further stated that the Spanish government were “hopeless” and “bad people” and he wants “no business” with them.

“Don’t even talk to them. They’re hopeless, bad people. They make so much money with us, and we’re going to see that they make a lot less. I want no business with them,” Trump stated.

Speaking alongside alliance Secretary General Rutte, US President Donald Trump said he was “very upset” with NATO over the way allies responded to his plans for further US presence in Greenland.

“I’m not happy with NATO because of what they did with Greenland, and I’m not happy with NATO because of the fact that they didn’t want to help us with the number one state sponsor of terror, that’s Iran. They were unwilling to help us,” he said. On the subject of Iran, Trump said that he considered the ceasefire “over” but that he was still willing to continue negotiations with Tehran.

President Ahmad al-Sharaa of Syria has landed in Turkey, where he is due to meet his US counterpart on the sidelines of the summit.

Initially invited by Ankara, Trump welcomed al-Sharaa’s presence, saying “he’s done an amazing job in a year and a half,” since ousting longtime strongman Bashar Assad. — DW

Spain downplays Trump’s “wasted cause” remark, says bilateral relations “excellent”

MADRID: Following US President Donald Trump’s sharp criticism and his directive to halt trade with the country, Spain on Wednesday played down the remarks made by the US President, stating that Madrid “enjoys excellent” bilateral ties with the United States.

Responding to the remarks, the Spanish Prime Minister’s Office said that it had no intention of allowing the comments to affect the longstanding relationship between the two countries.

“Our country enjoys excellent social, cultural, and economic relations with the US, and it is not our intention for that to change,” the Prime Minister’s Office said in an official statement, as quoted by Al Jazeera.

The response came after Trump described Spain as a “wasted cause” and said the United States would no longer do trade business with the country, accusing Madrid of failing to contribute adequately to NATO’s defence spending.

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— ANI

UNIFIED PAYMENTS INTERFACE

Indonesia looks beyond UPI, eyes India’s digital payments system

NEW DELHI: India’s hugely successful digital payments system, which transformed the way millions transfer money instantly using their mobile phones, is increasingly being viewed as a powerful instrument of economic diplomacy, analysts say.

The country’s homegrown digital public infrastructure, led by its widely used instant payment network, has become one of India’s biggest technological success stories and is now attracting growing international interest.

That potential is becoming particularly evident in Indonesia, Southeast Asia’s largest economy, where officials are examining whether India’s low-cost digital payment architecture can be adapted to support the country’s own financial and digital transformation goals.

Experts say the growing interest reflects India’s expanding role in exporting digital public infrastructure, enabling partner nations to build efficient, affordable and inclusive payment systems while strengthening economic cooperation and technological ties.India’s Unified Payments Interface (UPI) will be integrated with Indonesia’s payment system, a move expected to make cross-border payments easier and strengthen trade, tourism and business between the two countries, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced on Tuesday during his visit to Jakarta.

Union Minister for Electronics and Information Technology Ashwini Vaishnaw shared the announcement made by PM Modi.

Earlier PM Modi, while addressing a joint statement with Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto after bilateral talks stated, “India’s UPI is going to integrate with Indonesia’s payment system. This will strengthen both ease of doing business and ease of travel.”

President Prabowo Subianto also confirmed that both countries will work on establishing cross-border QR payment linkages.

The two leaders reviewed cooperation across trade, investment, digital and financial technology, defence, energy, healthcare, space and critical minerals. They also welcomed the launch of the Indonesia Open Network (ION), which is based on India’s Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC), reflecting deeper collaboration in digital public infrastructure.

The UPI integration is expected to allow users from both countries to make digital payments more seamlessly, reducing dependence on cash and simplifying transactions for travellers and businesses. It is also expected to support cross-border commerce by making payments faster and more convenient.

The move builds on India’s growing efforts to expand UPI internationally. The payment platform is already operational in countries including Singapore, the UAE, Bhutan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, France, Mauritius, Qatar, Cambodia and Greece, enabling Indian users to make merchant payments and, in some markets, transfer money directly using UPI-linked applications. — ANI

POWER OUTAGES

When heat waves cripple the grid

LONDON: In late June, a heat wave in France left nearly 70,000 households without power after a transformer failed under high temperatures. For about 24 hours, as the mercury hovered near 40 degrees Celsius (104 Fahrenheit), residents in parts of Brittany sweltered in deadly heat without fans or air conditioning.

Then as the United States baked in extreme heat in the run up to its 250th birthday celebrations, federal authorities issued blackout warnings. Grid operators were allowed to order large energy users, such as data centres, to switch to backup generators to maintain power to homes and emergency services like hospitals.

Power grids worldwide are struggling under intense heat waves and other extreme weather events — and in the US, outages are already happening. Heat-season power outages in the country, some linked to hot temperatures, rose about 60% over the past decade compared with the 2000s, according to data from the nonprofit Climate Central. Having no access to cooling in heat waves is especially dangerous for children, the elderly and those with chronic illness. That trend is expected to continue as human-induced climate change drives longer, more frequent and intense heat waves, making it crucial for energy networks to adapt.

“As it gets hotter, things stop working quite so well,” said Iain Staffell, associate professor of sustainable energy at Imperial College London. That means one “should expect faults to be more common at these very high temperatures.”

“I think we do need to adapt the power system to cope with the changing weather,” added Staffell, referring to Europe, which is warming much faster than the rest of the world.

Why are heat waves a problem for power networks?

When heat waves hit, electricity demand surges as people turn to ACs, fans and other cooling devices for relief. That strains the power grid, especially later in the day when heat lingers but solar power starts to fade.

At the same time, the infrastructure that keeps electricity flowing — from power plants to transformers — is vulnerable to heat stress. Transmission lines moving power across the country expand as temperatures rise, for instance. This causes them to sag, sometimes enough to brush against trees or other obstacles, increasing the risk of short circuiting or outages.

“The grid operator has to reduce the amount of power that flows down these wires in the very hottest temperatures to make sure everything remains safe,” said Staffell.

Heat and sagging lines were contributing factors in 2003 when around 50 million people across the northeastern US and parts of Canada were left without power during high temperatures. It was the largest blackout in North American history. While grid operators have since introduced safeguards to prevent a repeat outage of that scale, experts say extreme weather still poses a threat.

Thermal power plants are not immune either. In extreme heat, cooling in coal, gas and nuclear plants becomes less effective, meaning operators sometimes have to reduce output.

“Efficiency of coal and gas as well as nuclear power stations falls by roughly 1% for every degree it gets hotter,” Staffell said — so they’re 10% less effective at 35 C than at 25 C.

During Europe’s heat wave in June, several nuclear facilities in France and Switzerland had to reduce output or temporarily shut down because the rivers they use for cooling had become too warm. Regulations require plants to limit the temperature of discharged water to protect ecosystems and aquatic life.

Renewable energy sources are affected as well. Low water levels can hamper electricity production from hydropower, for instance. And solar panels become slightly less efficient in high temperatures, while wind speeds often drop during heat waves, reducing their output.

These factors, taken together, can contribute to grid instability, with operators needing to source energy from elsewhere if the mismatch between demand and supply becomes too tight.

If cheap solar or wind isn’t available during these critical crunch times, grid operators often have to rely on more expensive backup sources to fill the gap. And those tend to be planet-heating fossil fuels.

Even when blackouts don’t occur, heat can drive up wholesale electricity prices, which are sometimes passed on to consumers depending on the market and the contract. During the recent European heat wave, power prices spiked across countries, including in France and Germany, especially during evening peak hours.

Can we heat-proof energy systems?

There are some smaller fixes “that can have a really big impact,” said Staffell. That includes upgrading grid components to withstand heat and installing better cooling systems for powerlines, transformers and other equipment. That could be as simple as “bolting on additional fans for putting a shade over the top of them,” added Staffell.

Nuclear power plants, for example, could be built with “hybrid cooling systems, so they are not so reliant on the rivers,” said the sustainable energy expert.

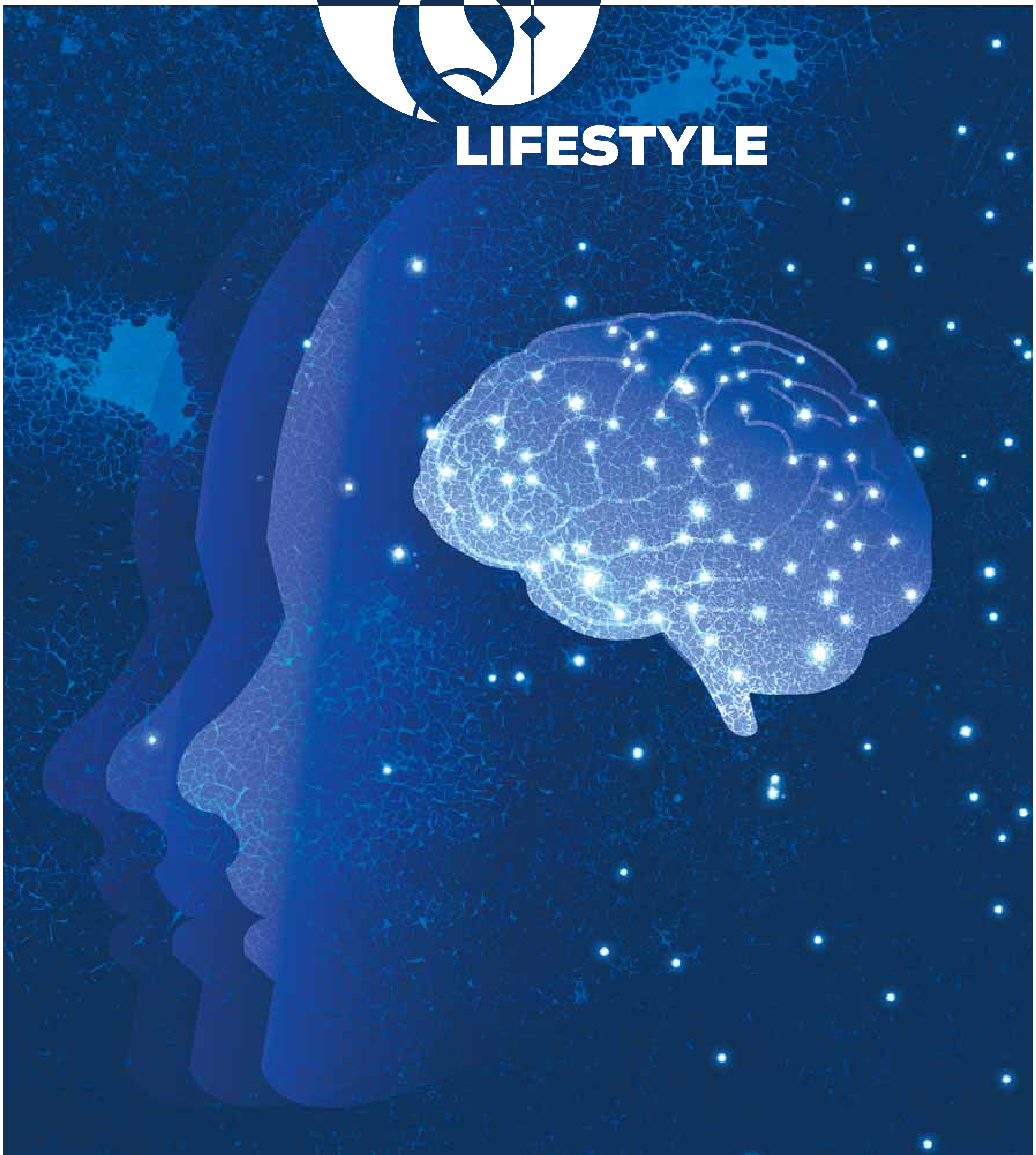
While the European electricity grid is one of the most resilient in the world, the infrastructure is aging, says Alexander Roth, an energy and climate policy fellow at Brussels-based economics think tank Bruegel.

At the same time, countries are transitioning to renewable energy systems largely based on electricity that will power everything from electric cars and data centers to heat pumps and air conditioning.

— DW

Full story @ timesofoman.com/world

LIFESTYLE



SCIENTISTS REPROGRAMME BRAIN IMMUNE CELLS TO FIGHT ALZHEIMER'S: STUDY

The compound, known as OLE, appears to "reprogramme" microglia, the brain's immune cells, allowing them to regain some of their protective abilities

A newly discovered molecule, OLE, restored the brain's immune cells to a more protective state in Alzheimer's disease models. The treatment reduced the accumulation of toxic plaques and improved memory performance, highlighting its potential as a promising new therapeutic strategy.

Researchers in Spain and Switzerland have identified an experimental molecule that may help restore the brain's natural defences against Alzheimer's disease. The compound, known as OLE, appears to "reprogramme" microglia, the brain's immune cells, allowing them to regain some of their protective abilities.

The research was led by Jose Vicente Sanchez Mut of the Institute for Neurosciences (IN), a joint center of the Spanish National Research Council (CSIC) and Miguel Hernandez University of Elche (UMH), together with Johannes Graff of the École Polytechnique Federale de Lausanne (EPFL). Their findings were published in the journal Cell Death and Disease.

According to the study published by Sciencedaily, OLE helps microglia surround and contain beta-amyloid plaques, reducing both their size and their harmful effects. In animal studies, the treatment also led to better performance on memory tests.

How OLE targets Alzheimer's disease

One of the hallmarks of Alzheimer's disease is the buildup of beta-amyloid plaques in the brain. At the same time, microglia, which normally help remove these toxic deposits, gradually become less effective.

As their protective functions decline, they can contribute to damage in brain cells.

Researchers discovered that OLE, a molecule produced by the PM20D1 gene, can restore microglia to a more protective state. Following treatment, the microglia migrated toward beta-amyloid plaques and formed a barrier around them, reducing direct contact between the plaques and surrounding neurons. As a result, the harmful effects of the plaques on brain tissue were significantly diminished.

"One of the most significant findings is that we have identified a molecule capable of restoring microglia's protective function," explains Sanchez Mut. "In Alzheimer's disease, these cells become progressively impaired. Our results suggest that this process can be reversed, pointing to new therapeutic and research avenues to counteract the disease," adds the researcher, who leads the Functional Epi-Genomics of Aging and Alzheimer's Disease laboratory at the IN CSIC-UMH.

Testing OLE in worms and mice

To evaluate the effects of OLE, the researchers used several experimental models.

The first involved genetically modified worms (C. elegans) that produce beta-amyloid. Because these worms develop disease-related damage quickly, they provide a useful way to study toxicity. Treatment with OLE reduced the buildup of protein aggregates and improved the animals' movement, indicating a protective effect.

The team then tested the compound in mouse models of Alzheimer's disease. Mice received OLE for three months, after which researchers examined both memory and brain changes. The treated animals performed better on memory tests and showed fewer beta-amyloid plaques than untreated mice.

Microglia show the strongest response

To better understand how OLE works, the researchers examined the activity of thousands of individual cells in the brain. Their analysis revealed that microglia were the cells most strongly affected by the treatment.

Following exposure to OLE, microglia activated pathways involved in clearing beta-amyloid and regained their ability to move toward plaques and contain them.

"Single-cell analysis allowed us to determine that microglia were the cells that responded most strongly to the treatment," says Victoria Pozzi, first author of the study. "From there, we observed that the compound helped these cells move toward beta-amyloid plaques and better contain the damage associated with the disease," adds the researcher.

Additional experiments in cell cultures produced similar results. Microglia treated with OLE were more effective at moving toward beta-amyloid deposits and helping remove them. In separate neuronal cultures exposed to conditions resembling those seen in Alzheimer's disease, OLE improved cell survival, suggesting the compound may also directly protect neurons.

Potential for future Alzheimer's therapies

The findings are covered by two European patents, including one owned by the CSIC. The researchers say this strengthens the translational potential of the work and supports future efforts to develop therapeutic applications based on the discovery. - ANI

Elevate your drive with Big Chill summer offers on Chery Arrizo 6

Crafted to leave a lasting impression on any road, the Chery Arrizo 6 commands attention with a highly dynamic, refined, and sporty aesthetic

MUSCAT: Bringing a wave of premium value to the season, the sophisticated Chery Arrizo 6 sedan is moving into the spotlight across the Sultanate through the ongoing Chery Big Chill summer campaign.

Running through July 30, this seasonal initiative is designed to deliver complete peace of mind and exceptional financial ease during the peak summer months.

To ensure a seamless and premium ownership experience right from the start, every qualifying purchase of the Arrizo 6 currently comes packed with a comprehensive suite of benefits, including 1-year free insurance (valid in Oman only), free registration, a complimentary 3-year or 30,000 km service package, free 3M window tinting, and a complimentary OMR 50 fuel card (equivalent to 200 litres of petrol)—all backed by an outstanding 6-year or 200,000 km manufacturer warranty.

Crafted to leave a lasting impression on any road, the Chery Arrizo 6 commands attention with a highly dynamic, refined, and sporty aesthetic. Its exterior design language perfectly blends elegance with a modern edge, highlighted by a bold front grille, sleek LED headlamps, and a beautifully sculpted aerodynamic silhouette. This sophisticated look is matched by an advanced turbocharged engine tucked under the hood, engineered to deliver an exhilarating balance of responsive power and enhanced fuel efficiency. Paired with a smooth Dual-Clutch Transmission (DCT), the powertrain ensures effortless acceleration and quiet gear transitions, making every daily city commute or open highway cruise an absolute pleasure.

Inside, the cabin serves as a luxurious, driver-centric sanctuary built with premium materials and an incredibly spacious layout. Occupants are welcomed by plush leather seating, customizable ambient lighting, and an intuitive dashboard that collectively elevate the overall interior ambiance. Staying connected and entertained on the move is entirely seamless thanks to the crisp 10.25-inch touchscreen infotainment system, which integrates effortlessly with Apple CarPlay and Android Auto. Furthermore, smart conveniences such as intelligent keyless entry, push-start ignition, an advanced climate control system, and a hands-free voice control system allow drivers to easily operate essential functions while maintaining total focus on the road.

Safety and dynamic handling remain absolute priorities in the Arrizo 6, which is heavily equipped with cutting-edge technologies to protect all occupants.

The sedan features an advanced Electronic Stability Program (ESP) for superior control, alongside a sophisticated 360-degree camera system, blind-spot monitoring, and a lane departure warning system that act like an extra pair of eyes in tight spots.

This intelligent driver-assist framework is anchored by a reinforced, high-strength body structure, a high-performance braking system, and a comprehensive multi-point airbag layout, guaranteeing a confident, highly secure and memorable driving experience across Oman's diverse terrains.

Chery vehicles are distributed in Oman by Saud Bahwan Group.

UNIQUE BANKING EXPERIENCE

Bank Muscat launches limited-edition FIFA World Cup 2026 Visa Cards to celebrate passion for football

MUSCAT: As part of its ongoing commitment to offering innovative banking products that enrich customer experiences and cater to their diverse interests and aspirations, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, has announced the launch of special limited-edition Visa cards featuring an exclusive FIFA World Cup 2026 inspired design, courtesy of Visa.

The offering includes the Bank Muscat Visa Gold Credit Card and the Bank Muscat Visa Prepaid Card, launched in celebration of the global excitement surrounding FIFA World Cup™ matches and to provide football enthusiasts with a unique banking experience.

On this occasion, Abdulnasir Al Raisi, General Manager of Personal Banking at Bank Muscat, said: "The bank continues to invest in developing innovative banking solutions that enhance the customer experience and deliver value beyond traditional banking services. The launch of the limited-edition FIFA World Cup™ Visa cards, courtesy of Visa reflects our commitment to offering unique products and services that align with the interests of various segments of society, while providing customers with the opportunity to enjoy comprehensive banking benefits through an exceptional design that celebrates their passion for football. We encourage all customers and football enthusiasts to seize this opportunity and apply for these exclusive limited-edition Visa cards to join in celebrating this global sporting event."

Bank Muscat remains committed to enriching customer experiences and strengthening engagement with its brand through innovative products that combine functionality with distinction. This initiative also reflects the bank's dedication to keeping pace with major global events and interests that attract widespread appeal across different customer segments.

Customers can apply for the limited-edition Visa Gold Credit Card through Bank Muscat Internet Banking, the Mobile Banking, or by visiting any of the bank's branches across the Sultanate. The limited-edition Visa Prepaid Card can also be obtained directly through the bank's digital channels, with the added convenience of complimentary card delivery to the customer's preferred location. Customers who apply for these cards during the campaign period will automatically receive the exclusive design, subject to availability.

Bank Muscat continues to strengthen its leadership position in the banking sector by offering a comprehensive range of innovative products and services designed around customer needs and aspirations. These solutions provide flexibility, convenience, and security while supporting the bank's strategy of driving digital transformation and elevating the overall customer experience.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