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DIGITAL TRANSFORMATIONS

Information Minister discusses enhancing joint media cooperation

MUSCAT: Dr. Abdullah Nasser Al Harrasi, Minister of Information, met today with Dr. Abdulrahman bin Abdulaziz Al Hazza, Director General of the Gulf Radio and Television Organization.

The meeting took place within the framework of enhancing joint Gulf media cooperation and exchanging expertise and experiences between media establishments in GCC countries.

During the meeting, the two sides reviewed the march of co-operation between the Ministry of Information and the Gulf Radio and Television Corporation, as well as the efforts exerted to enhance Gulf media integration.

Expanding cooperation

They also discussed a number of topics of common interest related to developing media work and expanding fields of cooperation across various media programs and initiatives.



The meeting also touched upon ways to elevate joint Gulf media content and boost the utilisation of digital transformations

and modern technologies in the media industry, in a manner that contributes to highlighting the developmental and cultural achieve-

ments of the GCC countries and consolidating their media presence at both the regional and international levels. -ONA

CABLES

HM greets Qatar Emir, presidents of Slovenia, Croatia

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, Emir of the State of Qatar, on the anniversary of his accession to power.

In the cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his heartfelt sentiments to the Emir on this auspicious occasion.

His Majesty wished the Emir continued success in leading the people of his country toward achieving further accomplishments and developments across all levels. His Majesty also lauded the deep-rooted relations between the two countries.

Slovenia's Independence Day

His Majesty the Sultan sent a cable of greetings to President Dr. Nataša Pirc Musar of the Republic of Slovenia, on her country's

Independence Day.

In the cable, His Majesty wished the President and the people of her country happiness and prosperity. His Majesty also wished the relations of cooperation and partnership between the two countries further growth and development in various fields.

Croatia's National Day

His Majesty the Sultan has sent a cable of greetings to President Zoran Milanović of the Republic of Croatia, on his country's National Day.

In the cable, His Majesty the Sultan lauded the relations of co-operation and friendship between the two countries. He also wished the President continued success in leading the friendly Croatian people and fulfilling their aspirations for further progress and stability. -ONA

26 JUNE

ROP to mark International Day Against Drug Abuse, Trafficking

MUSCAT: The Royal Oman Police (ROP) will join other countries of the world in observing the International Day Against Drug Abuse and Trafficking, which falls on 26 June every year. The event seeks to underscore the importance of intensifying efforts to address serious issues that threaten the security of societies and the health and stability of individuals.

This year emphasis will be laid on qualitative shifts in drug trafficking and patterns of drug abuse amid the emergence of new substances and the exploitation of modern technologies



and social media in promoting narcotics. Combating action includes holding public awareness programmes and expanding the scope of international cooperation to minimize the impact of this phenomenon.

As part of the programme, the ROP will organize a sports event at Al Mouj Walk in A'Seeb on 27 June 2026 from 5 to 9 pm. The event will be attended by various segments of society.

On 28 June 2026, the Directorate General for Combating Drugs and Psychotropic Substances will also organize an exhibition at Muscat Mall in the Wilayat of A'Seeb. The exhibition features the security roles that the Directorate General undertakes when dealing with the abuse of drugs and psychotropic substances. -ONA

OMAN AND QATAR

Joint efforts

< FROM A1 The two sides expressed their deep appreciation for the joint efforts exerted by Oman and Qatar, alongside the efforts of the GCC countries. These efforts come within a framework of integrated coordination and mutual understanding, serving in support of dialogue and peaceful endeavors aimed at reinforcing the pillars of security and stability. The meeting was attended by Sheikh Abdulaziz bin Abdullah Al Hinai, Ambassador-at-Large and Dr. Mohammed bin Abdulaziz Al Khulaifi, Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Qatar, along with a number of officials from both sides. - ONA

MEETING

Oman praised

< FROM A1 His Majesty the Sultan underscored the imperative of advancing these endeavours to secure peace and stability in the region, while emphasising the vital importance of harmonising the constructive initiatives undertaken by sisterly and friendly nations in this regard.

The guest praised the pivotal role undertaken by the Sultanate of Oman, under the leadership of His Majesty the Sultan, in supporting paths of dialogue, furnishing communication channels, and bridging views between the various parties.

From the Omani side, the audience was attended by HH

Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham Al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs, Sayyid Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, Dr. Hamad bin Said Al Aufi, Head of the Private Office and Sheikh Abdulaziz bin Abdullah Al Hinai, Ambassador-at-large at the Foreign Ministry.

From the Qatari side, it was attended by Dr. Mohammed bin Abdulaziz Al Khulaifi, Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Hamad bin Khamis Al Kubaisi, Deputy Secretary-General of the National Security Council, and Sheikh Mubarak bin Fahad Al Thani, Ambassador of Qatar to the Sultanate of Oman. - ONA

COMMENTARY

The Violet Blanket Octopus

Due to the scarcity of sources and scientific studies on this remarkable marine creature, famous for its striking purple "blanket," I initially assumed it was one of the mysterious inhabitants of the deep sea, much like the Vampire Squid. However, after taking a closer look and narrowing my search to some of the rarest cephalopods, particularly octopuses, I arrived at a surprising conclusion.

The extraordinary creature that approached the kayak of young sea enthusiast and paddler Abdullah bin Suleiman Al-Hadi in the early morning was in fact a female Violet Blanket Octopus (*Tremoctopus violaceus*), a species belonging to the genus *Tremoctopus*. Until recently, this species had never been scientifically documented in Omani waters.

Its first documented appearance came after I published an article about a specimen discovered by Ahmed bin Abdullah Al-Siyabi while fishing at night from Al Mawaleh North Beach in Seeb in January 2023.

A few days later, Fahad bin Khamis Al-Farsi managed to film another individual at Jebel Sifah Marina, capturing a short video of the octopus swimming gracefully and calmly beneath the boats. This was perhaps the first recorded daytime observation of the species in Oman and provided compelling evidence that its geographic range extends into Omani waters.

Although I subsequently received reports of several sightings near Ras Al Hadd, none were photographically documented. The only exception was an image said to show a specimen washed ashore at Makhaylif Beach in Saham, though I was unable to verify its source.

The recent footage recorded by Abdullah bin Suleiman Al-Hadi in the waters of Al Qurm therefore represents a third confirmed sighting and provides further proof that this fascinating oceanic species, while still rare, is becoming a recurring visitor to Oman's coastline.

The repeated appearance of the Violet Blanket Octopus along



Abdullah bin Suleiman Al-Hadi during a diving excursion in the waters of the Daymaniyat Islands, where his passion for the marine environment has contributed to documenting rare and remarkable marine species in Oman.

Oman's shores is unlikely to represent normal coastal behavior. Rather, it is probably a consequence of the Sultanate's unique geographical position. Oman overlooks the Sea of Oman, the Arabian Sea, and the Arabian Gulf, while maintaining direct access to the Indian Ocean. Its extensive coastline lies at the crossroads of complex oceanographic and climatic systems. Seasonal monsoon winds and

powerful storms generate strong surface currents capable of transporting pelagic organisms from the open ocean toward coastal waters. At the same time, the region experiences intense upwelling events, during which cold, nutrient-rich waters rise from the depths.

While these conditions may attract marine life toward the coast, they can also expose oce-



An exceptional frame captured from a video recorded by Abdullah bin Suleiman Al-Hadi in the early morning, showing a female Violet Blanket Octopus (*Tremoctopus violaceus*) swimming gracefully off Al Qurm Beach Road. The sighting represents the third documented record of the species in Omani waters.

anic species to sudden thermal stress, weakening their ability to resist currents and wave action. As a result, this highly adapted open-ocean traveler may find itself an unwilling visitor to Oman's shores.

The Violet Blanket Octopus is an exceptionally elegant and agile creature that inhabits tropical and subtropical waters throughout the Indian, Pacific, and Atlantic Oceans, as well as

the Gulf of Mexico, the Caribbean Sea, and the Mediterranean. Omani waters can now be added to the list of regions where this species has been documented.

Females can reach lengths of approximately two meters, whereas males rarely exceed three centimeters. The size difference between the sexes is among the most extreme examples of sexual dimorphism in the animal kingdom, with females

outweighing males by as much as forty thousand times. This represents the largest gender-size disparity of any non-microscopic animal on Earth.

A mature female may weigh around ten kilograms, while a male typically weighs no more than thirty grams. Females generally live between three and five years, whereas males rarely survive beyond two years.

Female Violet Blanket Octopuses feed on small fish, pteropod mollusks, crustaceans and other cephalopods, yet they themselves fall prey to larger predators such as blue sharks, tuna, and various billfish species.

One of the most remarkable features of the female is the expandable membrane stretching between her dorsal arms. Under normal circumstances, this "blanket" is barely noticeable. However, when threatened by a predator, she can unfurl the membrane dramatically, creating the illusion of a much larger animal in an attempt to startle or intimidate her attacker.

When I published my first article about this species three years ago, following the discovery and handover of a specimen by Ahmed bin Abdullah Al-Siyabi to the Marine Science and Fisheries Centre for documentation, I had hoped that the finding would inspire a dedicated scientific study rather than a brief technical note.

This species represents far more than a simple addition to Oman's growing list of recorded marine organisms. Its repeated appearance raises important scientific questions about marine biodiversity in Omani waters and the role of ocean currents, climate patterns, and seasonal oceanographic processes in bringing open-ocean species to the country's coastline.

Perhaps most importantly, it highlights the crucial role played by fishermen, sailors, divers, nature enthusiasts, and citizen scientists in documenting marine life. In many cases, major discoveries begin not in research laboratories but with a single observation made by someone with a keen eye and a passion for the natural world.

COMMENTARY

Lyari: The Mini Brazil of Pakistan

When people hear the word Brazil, they immediately think of football. They think of passion, rhythm, skill, and legends who transformed a simple game into an art form. Names such as Pelé, Zico, Romário, Ronaldo, Ronaldinho, Neymar, and many others come to mind. Yet, thousands of kilometers away from Brazil, in the heart of Karachi, Pakistan, there exists a place where the spirit of Brazilian football lives and breathes every day. That place is Lyari.

Lyari is often called the “Mini Brazil” of Pakistan. This title was not given because of political relations, economic partnerships, or geographical similarities. It was earned through one thing alone: football.

Last year, while visiting Karachi for medical treatment, I had the opportunity to visit Lyari. Although I had heard many stories about it before, seeing it with my own eyes was a completely different experience. The narrow streets, crowded neighborhoods, and vibrant atmosphere immediately revealed something

unique. Lyari may not possess modern infrastructure, luxury buildings, or wide highways, but it possesses something far more valuable: a deep love for football.

Many people outside Pakistan may not know that football is not equally popular across the country. Cricket dominates most conversations, playgrounds, and television screens. However, in Lyari and many parts of Balochistan, football enjoys a special status. It is not merely a sport; it is a culture, an identity, and for many young people, a dream.

The true spirit of Lyari becomes visible during the FIFA World Cup. During those weeks, the entire neighborhood transforms into a global football village. Walking through the streets feels like walking through an international football festival. Colorful flags of Brazil, Argentina, Germany, France, Spain, Portugal, and other footballing nations decorate houses, shops, and street corners.

What fascinated me most was the overwhelming presence of Brazilian colors. Green, yellow, and blue seem to dominate the



landscape. Young boys proudly wear Brazilian jerseys bearing the names of football legends. Some wear Pelé’s number with pride, while others choose Ronaldinho, Ronaldo, or Neymar. In recent years, Lionel Messi has also gained a massive following, especially after leading Argentina to World Cup glory. Yet despite the growing admiration for Messi, the emotional attachment to Brazil remains deeply rooted in Lyari’s football culture.

One may wonder why Brazil enjoys such popularity here. The answer perhaps lies in the style of football itself. Brazilian foot-

ball is not only about winning matches; it is about creativity, joy, and imagination. It transforms the game into a dance. For many young people in Lyari, who often grow up facing economic hardships and social challenges, football provides an escape and a source of hope. Watching Brazilian players perform magical skills on the field inspires them to dream beyond the limitations of their surroundings.

Ironically, Lyari itself continues to struggle with many basic necessities. Parts of the area still face challenges related to clean water, electricity supply, sanita-

tion, and infrastructure development. Some roads remain poorly maintained, and unemployment affects many families. Yet football has given Lyari something that poverty could not take away: pride.

In many ways, football serves as a social equalizer. On the football ground, wealth and status lose their importance. What matters is talent, determination, teamwork, and passion. A young boy playing barefoot in Lyari can dream of becoming the next Pelé, Messi, Cristiano Ronaldo, or Kylian Mbappé. Football allows dreams to flourish where opportunities are often limited.

History has shown that many of the finest football talents in Pakistan have emerged from Lyari and neighboring regions of Balochistan. Their dedication proves that talent does not depend on expensive academies or luxurious facilities. Sometimes it emerges from dusty streets, crowded neighborhoods, and communities united by a common passion.

As I walked through Lyari, I noticed children playing football

in every available space. Some used makeshift goalposts. Others played on rough surfaces that would hardly qualify as playgrounds. Yet their enthusiasm reminded me of something important: true love for a sport does not require perfect conditions. It requires only a ball and a dream.

Perhaps this is why Lyari deserves the title of Pakistan’s Mini Brazil. Not because it resembles Brazil economically or socially, but because it shares Brazil’s football soul. It is a place where football is celebrated, discussed, debated, and lived every day.

In a world often divided by politics, ethnicity, language, and class, football continues to unite people. Lyari stands as a beautiful example of this truth. The neighborhood reminds us that passion can survive hardship, dreams can flourish despite obstacles, and a simple game can bring dignity, hope, and identity to an entire community.

For me, Lyari is not merely a neighborhood in Karachi. It is a living testimony to the power of football and the enduring human capacity to dream.

MANAGEMENT OF PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES

State Council discusses Draft Unified Law



MUSCAT: The State Council discussed on Wednesday the “Draft Unified Law on the Management of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture for the Countries of the GCC” and the opinion of the Social and Cultural Committee regarding it.

This took place during the ninth session of the third regular annual sitting of the eighth term, chaired by Sheikh Abdulmalik Abdullah Al Khalili, Chairman of the State Council.

In his speech, the Chairman of the Council stated that the agenda of this session includes the discussion of the aforementioned draft law and the report of the Social and Cultural Committee concerning it, pursuant to the provisions of Article (49) of the Law of the Council of Oman.

He added that the agenda also includes discussing the study submitted by the Economic and Financial Committee on the “Study of the Framework for Developing the Government Performance Management System,” and discussing the study submitted by the Special Committee regarding “Analyzing the Business Environment in the Sultanate of Oman: Practical Steps to Enhance Entrepreneurship.”

Following that, the session discussed the opinion of the Social and Cultural Committee on the “Draft Unified Law on the Management of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture for the Countries of the GCC.”

The session also discussed the study submitted by the Economic and Financial Committee regarding the “Development of the Government Performance Management System,” which seeks to support the achievement of “Oman Vision 2040,” develop government planning methodology, establish an integrated institutional framework for performance management, enhance spending efficiency, increase productivity, achieve sustainability, and improve the quality of services.

The session discussed the study submitted by the Special Committee on “Analysing the Business Environment in Oman: Practical Steps to Enhance Entrepreneurship.”

This study seeks to examine the current state of the business environment in the Sultanate of Oman across various sectors and institutional sizes, review the main challenges facing enterprises and entrepreneurs. -ONA

Call to boost exports to international markets

Discussion held on challenges and obstacles Omani exporters face in various markets



MUSCAT: The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion held a meeting on Wednesday at the Ministry’s headquarters with a number of exporting Omani companies.

The meeting sought to enhance partnership with exporters in a manner that contributes to developing national exports and raising their competitiveness in regional and international markets.

The meeting aimed to get acquainted with the participating companies and their export activities, identify their actual needs, and listen to their views and proposals regarding the development of government services supporting exports.

Furthermore, it discussed the challenges and obstacles these companies face in various markets. This dialogue contributes to aligning government support programs with the realistic requirements of exporters and building practical, applicable mechanisms that enhance the efficiency of the export ecosystem.

Anwar Hilal Al Jabri, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, affirmed that

the Ministry is proceeding with enhancing direct communication with business owners and exporters, as they are a key partner in achieving economic diversification targets. He pointed out that developing the export environment represents one of the fundamental pillars in supporting the competitiveness of the national economy.

He stated that the Ministry is working on preparing the necessary enablers to expand the base of Omani exports and open new markets for national products, thereby enhancing their presence in global markets and raising their added value. For his part, Eng. Ghalib Said Al Maamari, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion for Commerce and Industry, explained that this meeting comes as part of a sustainable participatory approach.

This approach aims to build ef-

fective communication channels with exporters, allowing for a direct understanding of challenges and working to address them through clear executive mechanisms. He noted that the Ministry places improving the efficiency of procedures and facilitating the movement of exports at the forefront of its priorities.

He stressed that developing the export ecosystem requires the integration of efforts between the public and private sectors, as well as enhancing the utilisation of available enablers.

This includes national programs to support exports and regional and international trade agreements, which collectively contribute to enhancing access to foreign markets.

The meeting reviewed the opportunities and government enablers available to boost exports, primarily utilizing existing free trade agreements, the GCC agree-

ments, and the Greater Arab Free Trade Area (GAFTA). This is in addition to the trade agreement with the United States of America, the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement with the Republic of India, and other agreements currently under negotiation, alongside export promotion programs and support packages for accessing new markets.

Within the framework of supporting the growth of Omani exports and enhancing the competitiveness of companies, the Ministry conducted a comprehensive questionnaire to collect accurate data on the target markets of exporting companies, the nature of exported products, and the estimated values of exports.

It also monitored the most prominent challenges facing companies in each market, enabling the formulation of policies that are more responsive to the actual needs of the export sector. -ONA

ACADEMIC YEAR 2025/2026

SQU Council approves updated draft for undergraduate studies

MUSCAT: The Council of Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) held its fourth meeting for the academic year 2025/2026 on Wednesday, chaired by Dr. Madiha Ahmed Al Shaibani, Minister of Education and Chairperson of the University Council.

The Council reviewed the latest developments regarding the progress of work at the university across various relevant aspects, alongside the executive status of the various decisions and recommendations issued during its previous meetings.

During its meeting, the Council approved the draft of the updated academic regulations for undergraduate studies. This comes within the framework of the university’s continuous efforts to develop and modernize its academic system to keep pace with the latest developments and best practices in higher education institutions.

The Council also agreed to add articles to resolve tie-break situations within the admission requirements for bachelor’s programs at the College of Edu-

cation, thereby enhancing the principles of fairness and objectivity in the selection procedures among applicants.

Within the framework of developing academic programs to keep pace with modern scientific developments and meet the requirements of development and the labor market, the Council approved the introduction of a minor specialisation in nanotechnology at the College of Science.

This aims to provide the labor market with competencies possessing knowledge and skills in the field of nanotechnology by integrating multidisciplinary scientific concepts related to chemistry, physics, biology, and materials science.

This step contributes to preparing graduates who possess scientific and technical competencies in one of the fastest-growing and most globally impactful scientific fields, enhancing their readiness to contribute to research, development, and advanced technology industries.

Furthermore, the Council ap-



proved the introduction of a specialization in Special Education within the Master of Arts in Psychology program at the College of Education.

This aims to prepare specialised national cadres and enhance sci-

entific research and professional practices in the field of special education, in a manner that meets the needs of society and the requirements of the labor market.

On the institutional development front, the Council approved

changing the name of the Preparatory Studies Center at Sultan Qaboos University to the College of Preparatory Studies.

This aligns with the nature of its academic roles and actual competencies, further enhancing its role

in education, scientific research, and community service.

The Council also reviewed the strategic risk management register and system for Sultan Qaboos University.

It commended them as institutional tools for enhancing readiness, managing potential challenges, supporting business sustainability, and achieving the university’s institutional goals in accordance with governance principles and best practices.

On the financial side, the Council approved the draft annual budget of the university for the fiscal year 2027.

It praised the university’s efforts in raising efficiency and ensuring the optimal utilization of resources in a way that supports the achievement of its educational, research, and institutional goals.

The Council concluded its proceedings by approving the lists of the university’s mid-year graduates for the academic year 2025/2026, comprising both undergraduate and postgraduate students. -ONA

Exploring Dhofar: The best places to visit this Khareef

As Khareef continues to attract visitors from across the GCC and beyond, Dhofar is further strengthening its reputation as a must-visit destination for all

Times News Service

MUSCAT: As the Khareef season transforms Dhofar into a lush green paradise, Salalah is preparing to welcome visitors with its stunning landscapes, waterfalls, mountain viewpoints, beaches and heritage attractions.

The city experienced light rain-fall for a second consecutive day on Wednesday, bringing welcome relief from the summer heat and signalling the gradual arrival of the much-awaited monsoon season.

To help visitors make the most of their journey, here is a practical guide to some of the most popular destinations across Dhofar's eastern, central and western regions.

Eastern Region: Taqah and Mirbat

The Eastern Region, encompassing Taqah and Mirbat, remains one of Dhofar's most attractive destinations for visitors seeking a blend of natural beauty, cultural heritage and outdoor adventure.

The region offers a diverse range of attractions, from waterfalls and wadis to historic landmarks and panoramic mountain viewpoints, making it a favourite among both domestic and international tourists during the annual monsoon season.

Among the key attractions are Ain Hamran, Ain Tobruk and Ain Athum, renowned for their scenic landscapes and seasonal water flows that come alive during Khareef. Visitors can also explore Jabal Nashib, which offers breathtaking views of the surrounding mountains and valleys.

For history enthusiasts, Taqah Castle remains a major draw. The centuries-old fort provides insights into Oman's rich cultural heritage and traditional way of life while reflecting the region's historical significance.

Other popular destinations include Khor Rori (Sumhuram Archaeological Park), Wadi Darbat Viewpoint, Tayq Sinkhole, Teeq Cave, Jabal Samhan and Mirbat Beach. Tourism officials say the eastern region is particularly appealing to nature lovers and history enthusiasts, offering opportunities for sightseeing, photography, hiking and cultural exploration in a unique setting where mountains, greenery and the Arabian Sea converge.

With its combination of natural wonders and historical treasures, Taqah and Mirbat continue to strengthen their reputation as must-visit destinations during the Khareef season.

Central Region: The Heart of Khareef Salalah

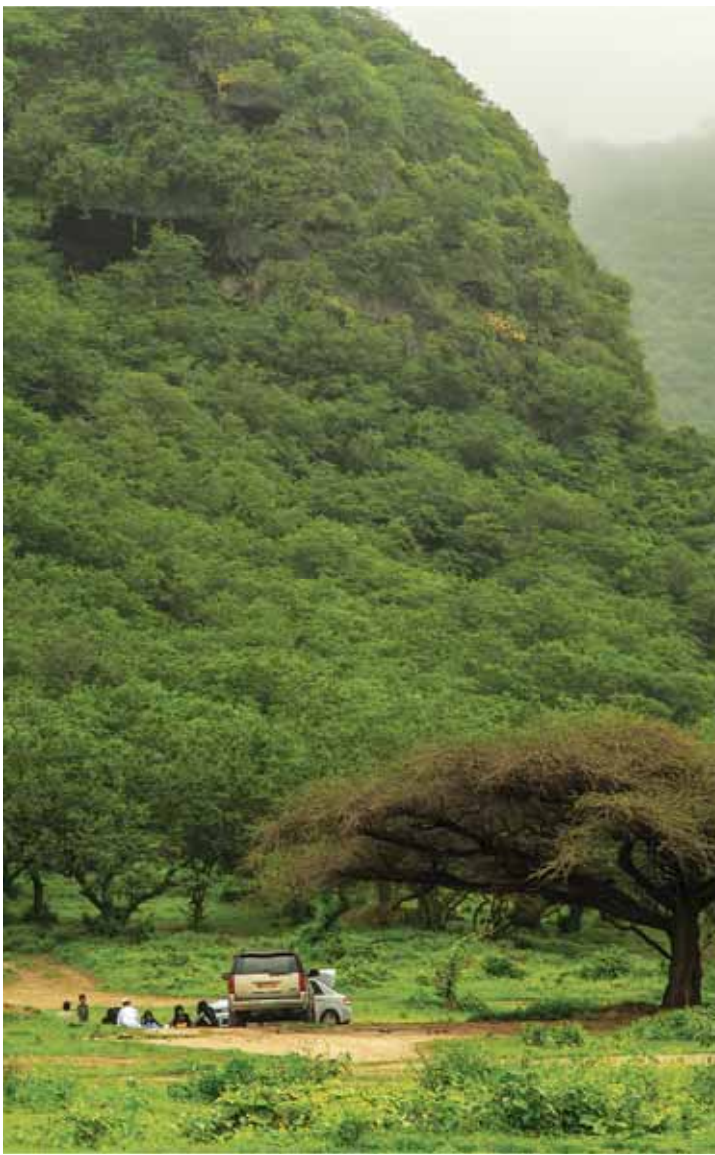
The Central Region of Dhofar, often described as the heart of Khareef Salalah, attracts thousands of visitors each year with its unique combination of natural beauty, mountain landscapes, historical sites and cultural landmarks.

Located close to Salalah city, the region is ideal for day trips, offering easy access to some of the governorate's most popular attractions. Among the highlights are the lush springs of Ain Razat and Ain Sahalnoot, which become major gathering spots for families and tourists during Khareef. The region is also home to Ain Jarziz, another scenic destination known for its tranquil surroundings and seasonal greenery.

Mountain lovers can explore Jabal Ittin, Jabal Shair and Jabal Jarjeeb, all of which provide breathtaking views of mist-covered hills, valleys and coastal landscapes. Wadi Nahiz offers visitors an opportunity to experience Dhofar's dramatic terrain and seasonal streams.

The Central Region also showcases Dhofar's rich history and cultural heritage. The Museum of the Frankincense Land offers insights into Oman's ancient frankincense trade and maritime history, while the Prophet Umran Tomb remains an important religious and historical landmark.

Ad Dahariz, known for its scenic coastline and traditional atmosphere, adds another dimension to the visitor experience by combining natural beauty with local culture.



Western Region: Dramatic Coastal Landscapes

Visitors seeking dramatic coastal scenery and off-the-beaten-path adventures are encouraged to explore Dhofar's Western Region, a stretch of coastline renowned for its rugged cliffs, pristine beaches and spectacular mountain views.

Often described as one of Oman's most scenic road-trip destinations, the Western Region offers a unique blend of natural attractions that become even more captivating during the Khareef season, when mist, greenery and



cooler temperatures transform the landscape.

Among the region's standout destinations is Ain Khor, a remote attraction accessible only by four-wheel-drive vehicles. Nearby Iftalqoot, another destination requiring off-road access, rewards visitors with panoramic views and untouched natural beauty.

One of the area's most popular attractions is Al Mughsail Blowholes, where powerful seawater jets surge through natural rock formations, creating a spectacular display that draws tourists throughout the year.

Further west, the villages and coastal settlements of Shaat, Dalkut and Rakhyut offer visitors a glimpse of Dhofar's rugged terrain and stunning ocean vistas. These locations are particularly striking during the monsoon season, when low clouds and mist blanket the mountains.

Sarfait, located near the Oman-Yemen border, is famous for its scenic mountain roads and sweeping views of the coastline and surrounding valleys.

Tourism officials say the Western Region is ideal for travellers looking to experience some of the Sultanate's most dramatic landscapes, with routes that combine coastal drives, mountain viewpoints and opportunities for outdoor exploration.

As Khareef continues to attract visitors from across the GCC and beyond, Dhofar is further strengthening its reputation as a must-visit destination for adventure seekers, photographers and nature lovers eager to experience one of the Arabian Peninsula's most spectacular seasonal transformations.

Oman re-elected to UN panel on child rights

The election took place on the sidelines of the 21st Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child

NEW YORK: The Sultanate of Oman was elected for the second consecutive time as a member of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child for the period (2027-2031). The election took place on the sidelines of the 21st Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, held at the United Nations Headquarters



in New York. The re-election of the Sultanate of Oman to the Committee on the Rights of the Child for a second consecutive term underscores the prominent standing that Oman enjoys on the international stage. It also reflects the keenness of member states to see Oman represented in this highly significant committee. The membership of the Sultanate of Oman will provide opportunities to enhance cooperation

with other members and contribute effectively to achieving the Committee's goal of protecting children's rights globally. Furthermore, it supports the shared ambition of providing a safe, healthy, and prosperous environment for all children. Oman's membership in the Committee on the Rights of the Child serves as an affirmation of its unwavering commitment to promoting and protecting children's rights. This aligns seamlessly with its obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols, as Oman continues to dedicate its efforts to advancing a balanced, constructive, and cooperative approach to addressing children's rights issues on a global scale. The Sultanate of Oman is represented in the Committee by Dr. Thuwaiba Ahmed Al Barwani, who currently holds the position of Vice-Chairperson of the Committee. -ONA

Rehabilitation programme at Al Wafa Centre ends



SHINAS: Al Wafa Centre for the Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities, in the Wilayat of Shinas, North Al Batinah Governorate, yesterday held a ceremony to mark the conclusion of the 2025-2026 rehabilitation programme. The ceremony was held under the auspices of Dr. Abdullah bin Hamoud Al Harthi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Social Development for Persons with Disabilities Affairs. The ceremony included a visual presentation that highlighted the efforts made at the centre during the past year, in addition to paintings and an exhibition featuring models, products and the skills gained by the participants in the rehabilitation programme. -ONA

Muriya Tourism Development Wins Best Brand in Customer Experience Award in Real Estate



Muriya Tourism Development was felicitated with the 'Times of Oman Best Brand in Customer Experience (CX) Award in Real Estate Category' at the Oman CX Awards 2026. The awards presentation was co-located with Oman CX Forum 2026, held at Hotel Kempinski, Muscat. The premier event was attended by over 325 CX leaders across sectors in Oman. Muriya Tourism Development has consistently demonstrated a strong commitment to customer experience by creating integrated lifestyle destinations that combine world-class residential communities, hospitality, leisure, and tourism experiences. Through landmark developments such as Hawana Salalah and Jebel Sifah, the company has transformed the real estate landscape in Oman by delivering exceptional value and memorable experiences for residents, investors, and visitors alike. With a customer-centric approach embedded across every stage of the customer journey, Muriya focuses on quality, innovation, community living, and long-term relationship

building. Its commitment to understanding customer needs, delivering premium services, and enhancing the overall living and investment experience has helped establish the company as one of Oman's leading real estate developers. By continuously investing in sustainable development, destination management, hospitality excellence, and community engagement, Muriya Tourism Development continues to set benchmarks in customer experience within the real estate sector. Its ability to create vibrant, integrated destinations that enrich lifestyles and foster lasting connections reinforces its position as a trusted and admired brand in Oman. The Best Brand in Customer Experience (CX) Awards are instituted by Times of Oman, in collaboration with Muscat Media Group, Gulf Leaders Circle and TEvents. They are presented to the leading brands that are ahead of the curve in meeting and exceeding customer expectations. The winners are selected based on an extensive consumer survey conducted by the Times of Oman.

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Sultan Qaboos cancer centre maintains global accreditation

MUSCAT: The Sultan Qaboos Comprehensive Cancer Care and Research Centre, affiliated to the University Medical City, has maintained its international accreditation awarded by the Joint Commission International (JCI), according to the outcome of a global assessment survey from 15 to 17 June 2026. The Sultan Qaboos Cancer Care Centre obtained its first international accreditation in June 2023 and it has ever since maintained its status as the only government health institution in the Sultanate of Oman accredited by the JCI. The JCI accreditation is based on comprehensive assessment of a health institution's healthcare system. The assessment covers patient safety, the quality of clinical



services, governance and leadership, risk management, infection control, staff efficiency, medication management, healthcare environment and ongoing amelioration. The importance of the JCI accreditation lies in the fact that it measures a health institution through an integrated system of verifiable standards. It links international recognition to a health institution's ability to maintain performance, not merely by meeting the standards of a specific evaluation visit. -ONA

New book examines shifts in family, childhood structures

MUSCAT: A new book titled "Family and Childhood: A Sociological Analysis of Contemporary Transformations in the Sultanate of Oman" has been published by Bain Al Sutoor Publishing House. The book examines shifts in family and childhood structures in Oman from a sociological and educational perspective, against the backdrop of changes linked to education, urbanisation, women's employment, technology, the digital space and artificial intelligence. The work is the result of a joint research collaboration between Dr. Hilal bin Ahmed Al Habsi, Dr. Humaid bin Musallam Al Saeedi, Dr. Ahmed bin Said Al Hadhrami and Dr. Amal bint Abdullah Al Harmali. It explores the reality of the Omani family and its contemporary transformations, and their impact on socialisation patterns,

value formation and social relations within society. Across seven interconnected chapters, the book provides a conceptual grounding for issues of family, childhood and social change, drawing on sociological theories to understand contemporary transformations. It then analyses the Omani family's reality, particularly the shift from extended to nuclear family structures, and the effects of education, urbanisation, women's employment and technology on family structure and functions. The book examines childhood in Omani society, children's rights, socialisation institutions, and the impact of digital transformations on parenting, along with the psychological and social challenges that arise. It considers challenges facing the family and offers scenarios for future change, exploring the role of social policies and educational institutions in supporting families in the digital age. The authors raise questions about the contemporary family's ability to remain a fundamental unit in building society and guiding behaviour, and whether the family can retain its primary role in shaping children's perceptions amid the expanding digital space and new patterns of social interaction. The book concludes with findings and recommendations for policymakers, educational institutions and families on protecting childhood, strengthening family cohesion and preserving cultural identity, making it a valuable reference for researchers, policymakers and those concerned with family and community development. -ONA

ACADEMIC AND RESEARCH PROGRAMMES

Oman reviews Moroccan experience in legal field and academic work

RABAT: The Sultanate of Oman explored the pioneering experiences and successful practices of the Kingdom of Morocco in the fields of training, qualification, and research relating to judicial, legal, and academic work. This came during the official visit paid by Dr. Abdullah Mohammed Al Saidi, Minister of Justice and Legal Affairs to the Kingdom of Morocco. The visit included a number of specialised scientific and training institutions in the capital, Rabat. During this visit, the Minister was briefed on the approved training and qualification system, the specialised academic and research programmes, and the



mechanisms for preparing and qualifying personnel working in the legal and judicial professions, in a manner that contributes to the development of the judicial work system.

This step comes within the framework of the two countries' keenness to enhance cooperation and exchange expertise in the judicial, legal, and academic fields, reflecting the depth of the bilateral relations. It supports the paths of partnership and mutual cooperation in various areas of shared interest. Furthermore, it aligns with both sides' orientation toward enhancing cooperation in the fields of training, qualification, and the exchange of expertise, in light of the memorandum of understanding signed by the two countries regarding the training and qualification of lawyers, legal professionals, and experts. -ONA

INDIAN SCHOOL DARSAIT
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TENDER NOTICE

REF: ISD/ADMIN/TENDER/2026-27/004

Indian School Darsait invites bids from suitably qualified vendors for:

SL. NO.	NAME OF THE TENDER	REF NO.
1.	Wi-Fi Infrastructure, Firewall, Networking & Associated Works (Senior School & Primary School)	ISD/ADM/T 2026-27/004

Interested parties shall collect the Tender documents from the school admin office against the payment of **RO 10/-** as a non-refundable Tender fee from **25 June 2026 to 02 July 2026** during the working days (**Sunday to Thursday**) of the school between **08:00 a.m. and 01:00 p.m.**
The completed Tender shall be dropped in the Tender Box kept in the school office on or before **05 July 2026 by 2.00 p.m.**
The school reserves the right to reject any tender without providing any reason and does not bind itself to accept the lowest or any tender.
The Tender document should be submitted in a sealed envelope, addressed to **The Head Purchase Subcommittee, Indian School Darsait, PO Box 1551, PC114, Darsait, Muscat.**

Principal

Concession pact inked for Block 80 in Musandam

Block 80 is located in Musandam Governorate, spanning an area of approximately 5,737 square kilometres

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Energy and Minerals signed a concession agreement yesterday for Block 80 with OQ Exploration and Production (OQEP) - Musandam Offshore and Turkish Petroleum Overseas Company Limited (TPOC).

This comes within the framework of the Ministry's efforts aimed at developing and utilizing energy sources with high efficiency and innovation, and maximizing the benefit from hydrocarbon resources to support economic growth and boost the goals of Oman Vision 2040.

The agreement was signed on behalf of the Government of the Sultanate of Oman by Eng. Salim Nasser Al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals. On behalf of OQEP - Musandam Offshore, it was signed by Mahmoud Salim Al Hashmi, CEO of the company, and on behalf of Turkish Petroleum Overseas Company Limited by Cagri Sirin, the company's Head of International Projects.

Block 80 is located in Musandam Governorate, spanning an area of approximately 5,737 square kilometers. It includes the producing Bukha and West Bukha fields, making it a strategically important area in the exploration and production sector. Under the agreement, OQEP will operate the block with a 50 percent stake, while Turkish Petroleum holds the remaining 50



percent, reflecting the confidence in the Sultanate of Oman's oil and gas sector and its ability to attract specialised international partnerships and investments.

The exploration program for the block includes two main phases. The first phase, spanning four years, includes conducting 3D seismic surveys over 500 square kilometers and drilling two exploration wells and one appraisal well, with mandatory estimated investments of no less than USD 60 million.

The second phase, also spanning four years, includes drilling an additional exploration or appraisal well based on the results of the first phase, with mandatory estimated investments of no less than USD 30 million.

Eng. Salim Nasser Al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, emphasized that signing the concession agreement for Block 80 represents a new step in the development of promising offshore areas in the Sultanate of Oman. It reflects the growing confidence of international companies specialized in exploration and production in the investment environment of

the oil and gas sector.

He pointed out that the block lies within a maritime zone of strategic importance and promising geological potential, benefiting from data and expertise accumulated in neighboring offshore areas, particularly in Musandam Governorate, which contains fields that have proven their economic viability, most notably the Bukha and West Bukha fields.

This enhances the chances of making new discoveries that contribute to supporting national reserves and production sustainability in the long term.

He added that the Ministry continues to implement its vision to develop and utilize energy resources efficiently and innovatively by building strategic partnerships with national and international companies and employing the latest technologies in exploration, evaluation, and development, including advanced seismic surveys and offshore drilling techniques, which contribute to raising operational efficiency and enhancing success chances in offshore areas.

The Minister of Energy and Minerals noted that offshore ex-

ploration projects represent an important tributary for boosting investment in the oil and gas sector and contribute to attracting specialized international investments and expertise. The opportunities they provide for transferring knowledge and modern technologies and developing national competencies enhance the capabilities of Omani cadres in managing and operating advanced offshore projects and support the local content targets for the sector.

For his part, Eng. Mahmoud Abdullah Al Hashmi, CEO of OQ Exploration and Production - Musandam Offshore, explained that signing the exploration and production sharing agreement for Block 80 confirms OQEP's commitment to employing its extensive experience to capture new growth opportunities and enhance its contribution to the exploration and production sector in the Sultanate of Oman. He added that the addition of offshore Block 80 to the company's asset portfolio, as the fifth concession block operated by OQEP in cooperation with a global partner, is proof of the company's high operational efficiency. -ONA



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BAKU

Oman takes part in OIC meeting



BAKU: The Sultanate of Oman on Wednesday took part in the 20th session of the Conference of the Parliamentary Union of OIC Member States, held in Baku, Republic of Azerbaijan.

Khalid bin Hilal Al Maawali, Chairman of the Shura Council, delivered the Sultanate of Oman's speech at the conference. He stressed the importance of consolidating parliamentary cooperation among OIC member states with the aim of supporting sustainable economic development efforts.

Al Maawali pointed out that the rapid economic development, coupled with growing global challenges, necessitate the intensification of through joint parliamentary action, notably in terms

of developing legislative frameworks that support investment and innovation, enhance governance and transparency and establishing more resilient economies.

Al Maawali reiterated the Sultanate of Oman's firm stance in support of the Palestinian cause. He stressed the need to prioritize dialogue and boost international efforts aimed at enhancing security, stability and peace.

Later, the Shura Council participated in a consultative meeting of the Arab Group affiliated to the Union of Councils of OIC Member States.

The conference participants discussed regulatory issues, including the election of a chairman for the 21st session of the conference. -ONA

ENHANCE QUALITY OF SERVICES

Municipal work contest launched



SUR: The South Al Sharqiyah Governorate on Wednesday launched the second edition of the "Municipal Work Competition" initiative for 2026.

The initiative seeks to develop the system of municipal action, enhance the quality of services rendered to citizens and residents and promote institutional innova-

tion in the governorate's municipal departments.

The initiative is scheduled to highlight successful models and outstanding experiences in municipal work and achieving added value for the community as part of ongoing efforts to support the march of comprehensive development in Oman. -ONA

OMAN ACROSS AGES MUSEUM

Al Dakhiliyah launches 'Afaq' strategy

MANAH: Al Dakhiliyah Governorate launched the "Afaq" strategy for the 2026-2030 period during its annual media briefing held yesterday at Oman Across Ages Museum.

The strategy serves as the comprehensive strategic framework driving the governorate's development process in the upcoming phase, enhancing its institutional readiness, as well as its economic, investment, and tourism competitiveness, within an integrated development vision aligned with the objectives of the Oman vision 2040.

During the briefing, the governorate reviewed the achievements regarding the implementation, awarding, and monitoring of 282 developmental, service, and investment projects across its various wilayats, with a total value exceeding OMR92 million.

This is in addition to positive growth indicators in the economic, investment, tourism, and service sectors, reflecting the scale of developmental momentum witnessed by the governorate.

The launch of the "Afaq" strategy culminated extensive participatory efforts encompassing various segments of society, the private sector, and government entities.

More than 330 participants and 46 governmental, private, and community entities took part in its preparation through 32 interactive sessions and specialized workshops. Furthermore, 9 field visits covering all the governorate's wilayats and over 50 interviews with diverse community groups were conducted, ensuring the strategy stems from realistic needs and societal aspirations.

The strategy aims to enhance the institutional readiness of the governorate, stimulate economic growth, raise the governorate's investment and tourism competitiveness, foster financial sustainability, and achieve balanced development that capitalises on the comparative and competitive advantages of each wilayat.

This will be achieved through an integrated system comprising the vision, mission, strategic objectives, the investment map, and

a performance measurement and follow-up mechanism.

Sheikh Mahmoud Rashid Al Saadi, Acting Governor of Al Dakhiliyah, emphasised that the qualitative projects and initiatives currently underway in the governorate reflect the integrated efforts between the governorate, government entities, the private sector, and the community.

He noted that the "Afaq" strategy represents the governorate's developmental roadmap for the forthcoming phase, and a practical translation of the society's ambitions, sustainable development goals, and the Oman Vision 2040.

He stated that the governorate is proceeding with the implementation of its development projects according to a methodology based on measuring impact and maximizing the utilisation of the economic, tourism, and heritage assets abundant in the governorate. This approach aims to enhance its competitiveness, elevate the quality of life, and open new horizons for investment and economic growth.

Al Saadi also reviewed indica-

tors of local economy support. Al Dakhiliyah Governorate ranked first among the governorates of the Sultanate of Oman in implementing local content policies, achieving a rate of 90.3 percent during 2025, according to the index of the Authority for Projects, Tenders, and Local Content. Meanwhile, the awarding rate to small and medium enterprises (SMEs) reached 52.8 percent, reflecting the governorate's success in enhancing the participation of national enterprises in implementing developmental projects and creating added value for the local economy.

The briefing reviewed investment contracts and new opportunities offered by the governorate during the recent period, which included commercial, tourism, entertainment, and service projects. These were alongside investment contracts linked to the Jabal Shams frontage project, investment opportunities for the operation and management of several public facilities, and new investment opportunities at the Nizwa Public Park. -ONA

DHOFAR

Arabica coffee project opens investment horizons

SALALAH: The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources is pressing ahead with efforts to diversify the agricultural production base and tap the comparative advantages of Oman's governorates, introducing high-value cash crops to boost food security, raise farmers' incomes and create sustainable investment opportunities in rural areas.

Mountain agriculture in Dhofar Governorate is emerging as a promising sector, with its unique climate and environment making it ideal for premium crops such as Arabica coffee, a crop of growing global demand and high commercial value.

Eng. Radhwan bin Abdullah Al Ibrahim, Director of the Agricultural Development Department in Dhofar and Project Manager for the Arabica coffee initiative, said



the project is a strategic move to harness the governorate's natural resources and revive a crop that could become a new economic pil-

lar for farmers and investors.

The first phase began in October 2025, coinciding with Omani Agriculture Day, he told Oman

News Agency (ONA). The project provides seedlings, technical support, training on modern farming practices, and assistance with

planting holes and irrigation systems to improve water efficiency and sustainability.

He added that the initiative follows earlier turmeric and ginger projects launched in 2022 and 2023, and marks a new phase in developing mountain agriculture and high-value crops.

He pointed out that trials in the Qairoon Hairitti area had already shown success with Arabica varieties, particularly the Adeni and Al Dawairi types, strengthening the case for expansion across the governorate.

Salalah, Taqah and Mirbat

He said that the first phase targeted 30 farmers in Salalah, Taqah and Mirbat. A second phase is underway, reaching 20 additional farmers, bringing the total to 50 beneficiaries.

The project will run until the end of 2028, with a third phase planned for late 2026 to expand both farmer numbers and cultivated areas.

Beyond boosting production, he affirmed that the project aims to create a new economic activity in mountainous areas, enhance farm incomes and open investment opportunities in Omani coffee production and marketing, adding value to the agricultural sector and supporting sustainable development in Dhofar Governorate.

He concluded that the Arabica coffee project offers a model for future agricultural ventures that combine economic viability with environmental sustainability, turning local natural resources into long-term economic and social benefits. -ONA

Rubio vows ‘commitment’ to UAE security in meeting with President

The visit underscores Washington’s proactive diplomatic outreach to traditional allies in the Arabian Gulf. During the deliberations, the US Secretary of State reassured the Emirati leadership of continued US support amid the shifting regional security architecture

ABU DHABI: US Secretary of State Marco Rubio met with UAE President Mohamed bin Zayed on Wednesday to discuss the recent US-Iran diplomatic breakthrough, reinforcing Washington’s strategic security commitments to its Gulf partners during the opening leg of his regional tour.

The high-level meeting was confirmed by Rubio’s spokesperson, Tommy Pigott, who detailed the core focus of the bilateral discussions between the two leaders.

“They discussed President Trump’s memorandum of understanding with Iran, efforts to secure full and safe transit through the Strait of Hormuz, and the importance of peace and stability in the region,” Pigott said.

The visit underscores Washington’s proactive diplomatic outreach to traditional allies in the Arabian Gulf. During the deliberations, the US Secretary of State reassured the Emirati leadership of continued American support amid the shifting regional security

architecture.

Rubio “reaffirmed the US commitment to the security of the Emirates”, Pigott added.

Prior to the high-level meeting, the US Secretary of State spoke to reporters upon his arrival in Abu Dhabi on Tuesday (local time), stating that lasting peace and stability in West Asia cannot be achieved as long as Iranian-backed proxy groups continue launching attacks and engaging in militant activities across the region.

Stressing that discussions over a Lebanon ceasefire are separate from ongoing negotiations with Iran, Rubio warned that Iranian proxies operating from Iraq continue to threaten regional security through missile and drone attacks.

“You can’t have the end of hostilities and conflict in the region as long as Iranian proxies are launching missiles and drones from Iraq and are participating in terrorism,” Rubio said.

Addressing questions about Lebanon, Rubio underscored that



any ceasefire arrangement involving Lebanon would be negotiated independently of talks concerning Iran, as Lebanon is a sovereign country with its own government.

“Well, that process is separate. It’s separate because Lebanon is a sovereign country. It has a government. And when it comes to Lebanon and what’s happening inside of Lebanon, we’re going to negotiate a deal directly with the

Lebanese Government,” the US Secretary of State said.

He added that he had recently spoken with Lebanon President Joseph Aoun, alongside US Vice President JD Vance, and that US officials were currently engaged on the ground in Lebanon.

Rubio’s visit to the Persian Gulf region, scheduled from June 23 to June 25 with upcoming stops in Kuwait and Bahrain, comes days

after the conclusion of the initial rounds of technical talks between Iran and the US in Switzerland, which formed part of the 14-point memorandum of understanding (MoU) aimed at ending regional hostilities.

The multi-nation trip is explicitly aimed at consulting regional allies, including representatives of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), as Washington advances

discussions with Tehran.

“We’re really here to hear from them more than we are to talk,” Rubio told reporters, emphasizing that Washington wants to fully take into account the economic and security viewpoints of its Gulf partners in the aftermath of the weekend talks in Switzerland.

The Secretary of State noted that while regional allies support efforts aimed at reducing tensions, significant challenges remain ahead.

“All of them are on board for peace. Obviously, it all depends on the details of that peace as we work through,” Rubio said, describing the framework as a work in progress where good groundwork was laid over the last 72 hours.

Rubio also dismissed suggestions that Washington would seek financial contributions from regional partners for a proposed USD 300 billion reconstruction fund for Iran, clarifying that such discussions were still “far down the road”.

On the broader issue of Iran’s future role in the region, Rubio concluded that Tehran’s leadership faces a fundamental choice between continuing its revolutionary agenda and pursuing a more constructive path. “If Iran’s leadership makes a decision that they want to be a country instead of a revolutionary movement that exports terror, they’re going to have an opportunity to do incredible things,” he said, adding that progress on the activities of Iranian-backed groups would remain essential to any future diplomatic breakthroughs. —ANI

DIPLOMATIC ENGAGEMENT



Iran President invites Indian PM Modi to Ayatollah Khamenei’s funeral next month

TEHRAN: Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian has invited Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the state funeral and burial ceremonies for Ali Khamenei, the former Supreme Leader of Iran, sources said.

The official invitation marks a significant diplomatic engagement following the death of the 86-year-old leader, who was killed in a joint US-Israeli airstrike on February 28. Having headed the Islamic Republic for 36 years, Khamenei was killed on the first day of the military strikes directed against Tehran.

According to Iranian state media, the multi-day funeral ceremonies are scheduled to begin on July 4. The rituals will include events in Qom, a holy city south of Tehran, on July 7 and will conclude with his final burial on July 9 in his hometown, the holy city of Mashhad in northeastern Iran.

While Islamic jurisprudence typically dictates that a deceased person be buried as soon as possible, ideally within 24 hours, exceptions are permissible, particularly during a state of war.

Speculation regarding the timeline of the final ceremonies had been mounting since February, with early reports suggesting a late June date before state media officially confirmed the July schedule.

The state funeral is anticipated to draw close to 20 million mourners across Tehran, Mashhad, and Qom. A large number of foreign dignitaries, including Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz

According to Iranian state media, the multi-day funeral ceremonies are scheduled to begin on July 4

Sharif, are expected to attend the ceremonies.

If the projected turnout is met, it will break the record of 10 million attendees set during the 1989 funeral of the Islamic Republic’s founder, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.

Following the event, the late leader’s 56-year-old son, Mojtaba Hosseini Khamenei, took charge as the Supreme Leader of Iran on March 8. However, widespread speculation continues to surround his current health and exact location, with prominent US officials, including Marco Rubio and Pete Hegseth, stating that he is presently in a coma.

The invite arrives amidst a cooling of geopolitical tensions. Following months of severe conflict that disrupted global energy lines and triggered a major fuel crisis, Iran and the United States have agreed to a peace framework. —ANI

EUROPE HEAT WAVE

France records hottest-ever day

PARIS: France’s national weather agency, Météo-France, said Tuesday was the hottest day ever recorded since 1947, with the average of daytime and nighttime temperatures across 30 stations reaching 29.8 degrees Celsius (85.6° F), according to provisional data.

Daytime highs above 40° C (104° F) were also recorded in many individual weather stations, the agency added.

This included preliminary readings of 44.3 degrees Celsius in the Atlantic coast town of Pissos on Tuesday afternoon.

The previous record of 29.4°C (84.9°F) dated back to heat waves of August 2003 and July 2019.

The record-breaking day comes after the hottest night France has experienced since record-keeping began in 1947, according to an X post from Météo-France earlier Tuesday.

The night from Monday into Tuesday saw the average temperature compiled from 30 record-keeping stations reach 21.6 degrees Celsius (70.8 F).

“As of noon this Tuesday, 54 departments are under a red heat-wave alert—another unprecedented situation,” the post said.

According to Prime Minister Sebastian Lecornu, 40 people have drowned since the heat wave set in on Thursday, many of them minors.



Heatwave knocks out power in France

Authorities in northern France were racing to restore power to thousands of homes after outages during a blistering heat wave sweeping Europe.

Officials said the cuts, blamed on a transformer failure linked to extreme heat, hit on Tuesday, with hospitals and care homes prioritized for backup generators.

“The incident was accidental and related to the current heat wave,” they said. “No one was injured.”

Teams worked through the night to fix the issue, which took place late Tuesday.

More than 100,000 clients of the French national power network were left without electricity by late Tuesday, as the scorching temperatures strained infrastructure.

Meteorologists have said the heat wave, driven by a so-called Omega block weather pattern, could intensify further in the coming days.

ACs selling out fast in France

Residents in Europe are taking to buying more AC units to make it

through the very hot temperatures across countries on the continent.

France saw its hottest day ever on Tuesday, and punishing temperatures extended to the UK and Spain.

On Monday, Carrefour, France’s biggest supermarket group, said it sold 30,000 units by 6:30 p.m. local time.

That was “a thousand times more than on a normal day,” CEO Alexandre Bompard said.

Sales on Amazon nearly doubled last week compared to the same period in 2025, while French electronics outlet Fnac Darty reported double-digit growth.

Louvre reduces hours due to extreme heat

The Louvre Museum will reduce its operating hours due to the heat wave in Paris.

From Tuesday until Saturday, the famed art gallery will close two hours early at 4 p.m.

“Due to the extremely high temperatures starting [...] we encourage you to adjust the pace of your visit and protect yourself from the heat,” the museum said in a statement.

“Take your time, wear light

clothing, and stay hydrated!”

The museum added: “Some galleries may be closed during the heat wave to protect the artworks.”

Red Cross calls heat wave ‘a matter of life and death’ for the elderly

The heat wave engulfing swathes of Europe poses serious health risks for the most vulnerable members of society, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) said on Tuesday afternoon.

“The coming days pose serious health risks,” Mary Friel, the IFRC’s senior climate policy officer, told a press conference in Geneva.

“For thousands of people across Europe, extreme temperatures, without action, can quickly become a matter of life and death.”

According to the IFRC, elderly people, children, pregnant women, people with chronic illnesses, outdoor workers and homeless people usually suffer the “most extreme impacts” of heat waves.

“IFRC is urging people to take this heatwave seriously and to look out for those most at risk to save lives,” Friel said.

She added that climate change and the extreme heat that follows had become “one of the defining humanitarian challenges of our time.”

Eiffel Tower closes early due to heat wave

As Paris sees temperatures of up to 36 degrees Celsius (97 degrees Fahrenheit), the Eiffel Tower announced that it will close early at early at 4 p.m. instead of the usual closing time of midnight.

“Due to the high temperatures forecast, the Eiffel Tower will be adjusting its operations,” the landmark’s operator said.

“Remember to protect yourself from the sun and stay hydrated. Water fountains are available in the walkways leading to the plaza,” the statement added.

Visitors with tickets from early afternoon onwards will be automatically refunded. Those who have not yet purchased tickets have been asked to postpone their visit.

Dozens of UK schools closed due to heat

Dozens of schools in England and Wales said they would close early on Tuesday due to the warm weather.

Some of them said they would remain shut for two or more days. The UK Met Office has issued a rare red alert for Wednesday and Thursday.

“Most of our buildings cannot be cooled adequately and there is little shade outside,” one school in southeastern Buckinghamshire said.

In addition to the health dangers, the extreme heat also makes it difficult to learn.

—DW

SPORTS

FIFA WORLD CUP UPDATES

Trump to attend World Cup final and present trophy

NEW YORK: United States president Donald Trump will attend the World Cup final and help present the trophy, according to FIFA president Gianni Infantino.

Trump, 80, is yet to attend a game at the World Cup, but may still make an appearance before the final on July 19 at MetLife Stadium in New Jersey.

The World Cup started on 11 June and takes place in Canada, Mexico and the United States.

“We will be together with the president enjoying the final and handing the trophy to the winner, of course,” Infantino, now a close friend of Trump, told Fox.

Asked if they would make the presentation together, Infantino



added: “Of course, we are together all the time.”

The United States is hosting 78 of the 104 matches at the tourna-

ment, which is also being held in Mexico and Canada.

Andrew Giuliani, the executive director of the White House’s

World Cup task force, told the Telegraph, that Trump likes to “leave people watching” and is yet to attend a game because of his busy schedule.

Trump was at the UFC White House event last week, and was recently booed in New York as he became the first US president to attend the NBA Finals, watching game three which the eventual champions the New York Knicks lost 111-115 to the San Antonio Spurs.

Last summer, Trump remained on the winners’ podium at MetLife Stadium after handing the Club World Cup trophy to Chelsea’s Reece James, which caused apparent confusion to some of the

players involved. “They told me that he was going to present the trophy and then exit the stage and I thought that he was going to exit the stage, but he wanted to stay,” said James.

France coach Deschamps’s mother passes away

France head coach Didier Deschamps will miss his side’s final World Cup group game following the death of his mother, the French Football Federation (FFF) has confirmed.

Deschamps, 57, learned of his mother’s passing on Tuesday morning and has been given permission by FFF president Philippe Diallo to fly back to

France to attend the funeral.

France, who have already qualified for the knockout stages after beating Senegal and Iraq in their opening two games, face Norway on Friday in Boston to determine the winner of Group I.

In a statement, the FFF said assistant coach Guy Stephan will take charge of the squad until Deschamps returns.

As a player, Deschamps won the World Cup in 1998 and the European Championship in 2000 with France. He became manager of the national side in 2012, and leading them to a World Cup final victory in Russia in 2018 and a defeat by Argentina in the final in 2022.

Sooryavanshi to change separately from India team-mates in UK

LONDON: Vaibhav Sooryavanshi will be required to use his own dressing room that is separate from the rest of his India team-mates during the upcoming five-match T20I series in England, in accordance with ICC and ECB safeguarding regulations for players who are under the age of 16.

Sooryavanshi, 15, will be allowed in the India dressing room during matches and for team talks but will have to use the separate dressing room while getting changed. Alternatively, he could change at a designated time in the main dressing room on his own, and leave when his senior team-mates change. The development was first reported by the Guardian on Wednesday.

It is understood that similar regulations will apply to India’s two T20Is against Ireland in Belfast this week. India have been given three separate rooms in the pavilion at the Civil Service Cricket Ground in Stormont, and have been



advised of the relevant laws.

In Premier League football, Arsenal players Ethan Nwaneri and Max Dowman were required to use separate changing rooms from team-mates when playing first-team matches before they turned 16 under similar regulations.

“This is an ICC event, with their safeguarding procedures active as they have jurisdiction,” an ECB spokesperson said. “A safeguarding concern occurring during the event may be managed by the ICC. In addition to this, the ECB

Safe Hands policy applies at all times. BCCI secretary Devajit Saikia had stated earlier that Sooryavanshi would be accompanied by his parents on the tour, and that the board would bear their expenses.

Sooryavanshi has already been part of various men’s dressing rooms in his fledgling career - for his state teams in domestic cricket, for Rajasthan Royals in the IPL, and for India A during the recent tri-series in Sri Lanka. If he plays a T20I against Ireland or England, Sooryavanshi will become the youngest Indian men’s debutant, breaking Sachin Tendulkar’s record of 16 years and 205 days.

India play two T20Is against Ireland in Belfast on June 26 and 28, before travelling to England to play five T20Is followed by three ODIs. The T20Is are in Chester-le-Street (July 1), Manchester (July 4), Nottingham (July 7), Bristol (July 9) and Southampton (July 11). - Agencies

England are under highest amount of pressure: Stokes

The hosts face Test series decider against New Zealand at Trent Bridge from Thursday



TRENT BRIDGE: Captain Ben Stokes admits England are under the “highest amount of pressure” since he and coach Brendon McCullum took charge four years ago. England face a series decider against New Zealand at Trent Bridge from Thursday in the aftermath of the controversy that led to Stokes being absent from the defeat in the second Test.

The all-rounder, 35, and pace bowler Gus Atkinson were made unavailable for the match at The Oval pending an investigation into an incident at a London nightclub. But the pair have since been cleared to return to the England team, with Stokes once again captain. Stokes, McCullum and director of cricket Rob Key were all backed to stay in their jobs following the dismal 4-1 Ashes defeat in Australia.

And defeat by the Kiwis this week would be England’s seventh in nine Tests and leave them with a first home loss in a series of at least three matches since 2012.

“Has the pressure on this team ramped up? Well, this is definitely the highest amount of pressure we’ve been under since me and Baz became coach and captain,” Stokes told BBC Sport.

“That’s fine. How you deal with it is what proves if you’re a good leader or not. What me and Baz have done has been able to accept that this is pretty high pressure, but we know what we need to do, is go out there and win games of cricket.”

Stokes was speaking publicly for the first time since he and Atkinson broke England’s curfew and were present when a member of the team’s security staff was struck by a Saracens rugby player.

The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) found the pair

breached “contractual obligations”, yet were blameless for “violent conduct”. Stokes and Atkinson were given a written warning, but no further action was taken after they missed the second Test, and the Cricket Regulator cleared them of wrongdoing.

Stokes admitted he did not know if he would be stripped of the captaincy and if he could have played under another captain.

Regarding suggestions of a rift between the skipper and coach, Stokes said he and McCullum are “mates”. However, he was not drawn on his thoughts about the ECB and confirmed the process had left him “frustrated”.

Details of the incident were first released by the ECB on the evening of 8 June.

In the aftermath, there was speculation Stokes could lose the captaincy, resign, or even retire.

Asked if he thought the situation would result in him no longer being England captain, Stokes replied: “To be honest, when the process was playing out, no-one really knew what was going on.”

In an earlier media conference, the Durham man said he was “back properly” as captain, a role he took in 2022. However, he declined the opportunity to confirm he would be in the job for the long-term, referring to “this week” and the third Test decider against New Zealand.

Later, Stokes - who has a central contract until the end of next

summer - was asked if he wanted to be captain for as long as he is an England player.

He added: “The England captaincy is one of those things where I’m 35 now and, even before this stuff all happened, I thought, ‘Could I ever see myself playing for England and not being captain?’

“It’s a question I’ve never really been able to answer, because it’s been such a big part of this part of my career.

“You look at others who have stepped away from captaincy and kept playing - I don’t really know. I love playing for England. I love being captain of this team and that’s where I’m at with everything.”

The return of Stokes is one of four changes to England’s XI for the third Test.

On Tuesday in Nottingham, McCullum revealed he and Stokes had spoken for more than an hour and that neither knew where reports of a rift had come from.

And on Wednesday, Stokes said: “Me and Baz are mates. When you’re worried about a friend and you’re not quite sure what’s going on, you’re going to want to look out for them, you’re going to be worried about them, are you not?”

“Last week, in terms of the words that Baz used in the press conference, don’t look into them too much. He cares about me, I care about him and Baz cares deeply about everyone who walks into this team.” - Agencies

NEW ZEALAND TEST PLAYER

Fifth-oldest living Test cricketer Bob Blair passes away at 94

LONDON: Bob Blair, the New Zealand fast bowler famous for having played one of cricket’s most heroic innings in great adversity, has died on his 94th birthday. He had been the fifth-oldest living Test cricketer.

Blair played 19 Tests for New Zealand from 1953 to 1964, taking 43 wickets at an average of 35.23. More than all his bowling efforts, however, he will be remembered for the ten minutes he spent at the crease at No. 11 under the most tragic circumstances during the Johannesburg Test of December 1953.

On Boxing Day, day two of that Test match following a rest day for Christmas, New Zealand’s players had woken up to the news of a horrific accident that had occurred on the night of December 24 in Tangiwai, where a railway bridge had collapsed beneath an express train from Wellington to Auckland. Among the 151 killed was Blair’s fiancée Nerissa Love.

Blair, then 21, had remained behind at the team hotel to grieve, but he walked to the crease at the fall of New Zealand’s ninth wicket, when



everyone at the ground assumed their innings had ended. At the crease was Bert Sutcliffe, who had himself come back out to the crease after having retired hurt earlier. He had taken a vicious bouncer to the head from the South Africa quick Neil Adcock, and the blow had left Sutcliffe bleeding from a split in his ear.

Along with Sutcliffe, who scored an unbeaten 80 that included seven sixes - most of them off his famous hook - Blair added 33 for the tenth wicket before he was stumped for 6.

The memory of that tragic and stirring day lives on in the form of

the Tangiwai Shield, which now goes to the winner of Test series between New Zealand and South Africa. New Zealand are the current holders of the shield, having won the inaugural edition of the series in 2023-24. That series win was New Zealand’s first over South Africa in Test cricket.

“The story of Bob Blair and the Tangiwai rail disaster has left an indelible mark on cricket in both New Zealand and South Africa,” interim New Zealand Cricket (NZC) chief executive Graham Parks said in a statement.

“The courage and camaraderie shown during the second Test in South Africa in 1953 and in the years that followed epitomises everything that is great about sport.

“To have been able to honour that inspirational story with the introduction of the Tangiwai Shield in 2024 was both poignant and will ensure the legacy of Bob Blair lives on. The cricket community extends its deepest condolences to Bob’s wife Barbara, his children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, and all who loved him.” - Agencies

MAKES HISTORY

Oman’s Sanad Al Rawahi becomes FIA’s first scholarship recipient

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Omani motorsport professional Sanad Al Rawahi has been selected as the first recipient of a prestigious scholarship launched by the Fédération Internationale de l’Automobile (FIA), earning a place in the Master’s in International Sports Management programme at the European Sport Business School (ESBS) in Spain.

The scholarship, awarded through the FIA University Scholarship Programme, aims to create new pathways into motorsport management by supporting talented professionals from emerging motorsport nations.

Sanad, who serves as Motorsport Manager at the Oman Automobile Association (OAA), brings

more than 10 years of experience in the sector, having overseen race facilities, coached drivers and organised national and international motorsport events.

His journey in the sport began as a marshal and racing coach before progressing to a leadership role focused on developing motorsport in Oman.

He is also a graduate of the FIA Immersion Programme (2024) and the FIA Advanced Leadership Programme (2025).

FIA President Mohammed Ben Sulayem said the scholarship reflects the organisation’s commitment to developing future leaders in motorsport.

“This new scholarship opens doors to management careers in motorsport, ensuring that future



Sanad Al Rawahi

leaders are defined by their potential and ambition,” he said.

“As part of our FIA University Scholarship Programme, this ad-



Mohammed Ben Sulayem

dition reflects our commitment to supporting the next generation by expanding opportunities around the world.”

Sanad described the award as a significant milestone in his career and said he hopes to use the experience to support the growth of mot-

orsport in Oman.

“Winning the FIA Scholarship is a real honour and a milestone in my motorsport journey.

“It gives me the opportunity to learn from some of the best in the industry, and I hope to bring that knowledge back to Oman to help develop local talent and contribute to the growth of motorsport across the region,” he said.

The Master’s in International Sports Management programme is recognised as one of Europe’s leading sports management degrees and has consistently ranked among Spain’s top programmes in the field.

The FIA scholarship covers full tuition fees and provides support towards travel and living expenses in Spain.

OMAN OIL PRICE FALLS
The price of Oman crude oil has decreased, with prices for delivery by August 2026 reaching \$66.09. The price of Oman crude oil fell by \$3.82 from the price of Tuesday, which was \$69.91. -**ONA**

MARKET
BUSINESS & FINANCE



MSX INDEX ENDS HIGHER
The MSX index closed at 7,348.49 points, up by 0.62% from previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 0.53% at 584.95 points. Oman Chromite, up 5.66%, was the top gainer while, Financial Corporation, down 3.00%, was the top loser.

Three new initiatives strengthen Oman's statistics ecosystem

National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) launched three national initiatives that embodies the centre's commitment to continuing the development of the statistics and information ecosystem, enhancing statistical culture, and harnessing modern technologies to support the renewed renaissance and enable evidence-based decision-making

MUSCAT: The National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) launched the interactive "Artaj" application, the Coordinating Portal for the State's Administrative Apparatus, and the Central Data Warehouse project during a ceremony held in Muscat.

Dr. Khalifa Abdullah Al Barwani, Chief Executive Officer of the NCSI, stated that the launch of these three national initiatives embodies the centre's commitment to continuing the development of the statistics and information ecosystem, enhancing statistical culture, and harnessing modern technologies to support the renewed renaissance and enable evidence-based decision-making.

He added that data is one of the main enablers of economic and social development. He pointed out that the Centre is keen to develop an integrated national ecosystem for statistics and information that

contributes to raising the efficiency of institutional performance and enhancing integration among government entities, in alignment with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040.

Al Barwani explained that the interactive "Artaj" app stems from the importance of spreading statistical and knowledge culture among various segments of society, and establishing awareness of the importance of data from early ages. This is achieved through an innovative interactive educational experience that combines knowledge and entertainment, contributing to developing children's cognitive curiosity and introducing them to statistical concepts in a simplified manner that suits the aspirations of the digital generation.

He indicated that the Coordinating Portal for the State's Administrative Apparatus represents a central digital platform to enhance



institutional integration among government entities.

This is done by unifying communication and coordination

channels, and facilitating the exchange of reports, publications, studies, government projects, and the results of surveys and public opinion polls, all within a reliable and secure digital environment.

The CEO of the NCSI further added that the portal will contribute to enabling government entities to share data, indicators, information, and studies in an organized and systematic manner. This supports decision-making and the formulation of public policies based on accurate informational foundations. It also enhances the shared utilization of institutional knowledge, elevates the efficiency of government performance, and contributes to reducing the duplication of efforts and improving the efficiency of resource utilization.

He elaborated that the Central Data Warehouse project is con-

sidered one of the strategic national initiatives supporting digital transformation. It aims to build an integrated national platform for data management, integration, and provision to various beneficiaries. This contributes to unifying national data sources, enhancing their quality and reliability, and supporting planning, policy-making, and evidence-based decision-making. Additionally, it enables the exchange of data among different entities with higher efficiency and facilitates the preparation of developmental studies and indicators that support performance measurement and keep pace with national priorities.

He explained that these initiatives are consistent with the directions of the National Strategy for Statistics and Information 2026-2030, which represents the nation-

al framework for developing the statistical and informational ecosystem in the Sultanate of Oman. They also align with the objectives of the NCSI's Communication Strategy 2026-2030, which aims to enhance effective institutional communication, consolidate statistical culture, expand access to reliable information, and provide innovative knowledge products and services that meet the needs of various segments of society.

The inauguration of these three initiatives comes within the efforts of the National Centre for Statistics and Information to enhance the national data ecosystem, consolidate statistical culture, and develop the digital infrastructure that supports development and decision-making, keeping pace with the targets of Oman Vision 2040. -**ONA**

TRANSFORMS B2B TRAVEL PAYMENTS



Sohar International unveils 'Visa Commercial Choice Travel' corporate credit card

MUSCAT: Sohar International, has officially launched Visa Commercial Choice Travel (VCCT) during a high-profile corporate event held at the Mandarin Oriental, Muscat. This milestone establishes Sohar International as the first bank in Oman to introduce this specialised Corporate Credit Card solution, specifically engineered to transform business-to-business (B2B) supplier payments for Online Travel Agencies (OTAs) and travel agents.

The formal launch was attended by executive leadership from Sohar International and Visa, alongside senior officials from Oman's premier travel agencies. During the event, both institutions jointly showcased the live capabilities of the platform, demonstrating how the specialized corporate credit card directly solves complex transaction challenges faced by the local travel industry.

Khalil Salim Al Hedaifi, Acting Chief Wholesale Banking Officer of Sohar International, stated, "As pioneers in the Sultanate's banking sector, launching Visa Commercial Choice Travel reinforces our commitment to delivering world-class corporate innovation. By introducing this specialized corporate credit card to Oman, Sohar International provides OTAs and travel agents with the financial flexibility, robust controls, and global infrastructure needed to optimize operational costs and enhance profitability. We remain steadfast in our pursuit to build a comprehensive portfolio of innovative banking solutions that empower

companies to expand and prosper, supporting their journey toward broader horizons of growth and success."

From his side, Nasser Bdeir, Visa's General Manager in Oman, stated: "Sohar International's launch of Visa Commercial Choice Travel Card Program demonstrates a strong commitment to supporting the growth of Oman's travel industry, as this sector continues to grow and connect globally, this unique program addresses common operational challenges facing travel agencies, like payment delays to suppliers and financial control."

As travel intermediaries handle high-volume, cross-border payments to airlines, hotels, and global suppliers, this innovative corporate credit card serves as a critical operational catalyst; it enables the deployment of virtual card credentials that offer the specific benefits of single-use or multi-use cards depending on booking needs, ensures advanced risk mitigation with more than 45 custom payment controls to restrict where, when, and how funds are spent, and optimizes cash flow by reducing manual invoicing requirements through faster digital payments directly to international suppliers.

The launch stands as a testimony to Sohar International's ability to anticipate the diverse payment requirements of Omani corporates and to respond with an advanced suite of solutions, ranging from Corporate Purchasing Cards to Virtual and Preloaded Cards.

PARTICIPATION

Oman enhances presence at Algiers International Fair by signing pacts

ALGIERS: The Sultanate of Oman's participation in the activities of the 57th edition of the Algiers International Fair yesterday witnessed the signing of a number of agreements and memoranda of understanding between several Omani companies and their Algerian counterparts.

These agreements covered the fields of logistics services, food and fish industries, building materials, manufacturing industries, and industrial and commercial products. This comes within the framework of efforts aimed at enhancing the presence of Omani products in African and international markets and supporting the growth of non-oil exports, in alignment with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040 regarding the diversification of income sources and enhancing the competitiveness of the national economy.

Oman is currently participating in the fair with 20 Omani companies representing a number of vital economic sectors, reflecting the growing competitive presence



of Omani products in regional and international markets.

These sectors include food and beverages, fish and seafood, iron and building materials, the agricultural sector and fertilizers, plastics, buses and commercial vehicles, chemical and pharmaceutical industries, and logistics services, alongside the perfume, frankincense, water, confectionery, and handicraft industries.

These agreements comes within

the framework of efforts aimed at enhancing economic and commercial relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the Algerian Republic, and opening new horizons for investment partnerships, thereby contributing to expanding the presence of Omani companies in African markets.

The fair constitutes an important platform for concluding commercial deals and holding bilateral meetings between Omani

businesspeople and their counterparts from various countries around the world, which contributes to enhancing commercial and investment exchange.

Through this participation, the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion also seeks to explore the growth and expansion opportunities available to national companies. It aims to learn about the latest updates, developments, and innovations across various economic sectors, which enhances the efficiency of their presence in foreign markets, supports the paths of economic diversification, and boosts the competitiveness of Omani products in regional and international markets.

The signing ceremony was attended by Saif Nasser Al Badaai, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, in the presence of a number of officials from Oman Exports and representatives of the Omani companies participating in the fair. -**ONA**

MEETING

Oman, Sudan explore ways to enhance cooperation in fields of transport, ports

MUSCAT: Eng. Said bin Hamoud Al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, yesterday received Saif Al Nasr Al Tijani, Minister of Infrastructure and Transport in the Republic of Sudan, who is currently visiting Oman.

The meeting dealt with cooperation between Oman and Sudan in the fields of transport, ports and logistics services. It also explored ways to upgrade cooperation in a manner that better serves the common interests of the two countries.

The Sultanate of Oman, represented by Asyad Ports and Free Zones company (a subsidiary of



the Asyad Group) and the Republic of Sudan, represented by the Sea Ports Authority, signed a memo-

randum of understanding (MoU) aimed at consolidating cooperation in the fields of ports, maritime

transport and logistics services. The MoU seeks to support economic development, boost supply chains and enhance maritime integration between the two countries.

The MoU provides for the exchange of expertise in planning and developing ports and related infrastructure, in addition to organizing training programmes and visits between technical and administrative staff.

The MoU was signed by Omar bin Mahmood Al Mahrizi, CEO of Asyad Ports and Free Zones, and Eng. Jailani Mohammed Jailani, Director General of Sea Ports Corporation, Republic of Sudan. -**ONA**

MARKET

MSX index ends higher

Oman Chromite, up 5.66%, was the top gainer while, Financial Corporation, down 3.00%, was the top loser

MUSCAT: The MSX index closed at 7,348.49 points, up by 0.62% from previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 0.53% at 584.95 points. Oman Chromite, up 5.66%, was the top gainer while, Financial Corporation, down 3.00%, was the top loser. Shares of Sohar International Bank were the most active in terms of number of shares traded as well as in terms of turnover.

A total number of 7417 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating turnover of RO 44.53 million, with more than 163.1 million shares changing hands. Out of 66 traded securities, 19 advanced, 21 declined, and 26 remained unchanged. At the session close, domestic investors were net buyers for RO 1323K while GCC & Arab investors were net sellers for RO 722K, followed by foreign investors for RO 601K worth of shares. Financial Index closed at 12,835.37 points, up 0.67%. Prices of Bank Dhofar, Al Anwar Investment, DIDIC, Sohar International Bank, National Bank Oman were up by 3.14%, 3.13%, 1.74%, 1.57%, 1.42% respectively. Prices of Financial Corporation, Muscat Insurance, Oman United Insurance, Takaful Oman, National Finance were down by 3.00%, 2.34%, 1.54%, 1.52%, 0.94% respectively.



Industrial Index closed at 9,527.86 points, up 0.42%. Prices of Oman Chromite, Voltamp Energy, Gulf Mushroom Products, Muscat Thread Mill were up by 5.66%, 2.30%, 0.48%, 0.48% respectively. Prices of Oman Chlorine, Gulf International Chemicals, Oman Cement were down by 2.37%, 1.35%, 0.93% respectively. Services Index was up by 0.11% before closing at 2,970.24 points. Prices of Oman Oil Marketing, OQ Gas Networks, Al Suwadi Power, Phoenix Power, OQ Exploration & Production were up by 2.37%, 1.44%, 0.52%, 0.43%, 0.23% respectively. Prices of Al Batinah Power, Renaissance Services, National Gas, Sembcorp Salalah, Oman Telecom were down by 1.04%, 0.96%, 0.94%, 0.77%, 0.38% respectively.

United Securities

OMAN STOCKS

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE

INDICES

Index	High	Low	Value	Prev. Value	Diff.	Diff%
MSX 30 INDEX	7,357.84	7,296.12	7,348.49	7,303.30	45.19	0.62%
FINANCIAL INDEX	12,835.37	12,729.96	12,835.37	12,749.82	85.55	0.67%
Industry Index	9,527.86	9,473.23	9,527.86	9,487.95	39.90	0.42%
Services Index	2,975.63	2,963.54	2,970.24	2,966.88	3.36	0.11%
MSX Shariah Index	585.49	580.77	584.95	581.83	3.11	0.53%
MSX TR INDEX	11,361.18	11,265.71	11,566.73	11,296.83	69.90	0.62%
FINANCIAL TR IDX	15,748.81	15,619.47	15,748.81	15,643.84	104.97	0.67%
INDUSTRIAL TR IDX	12,132.81	12,132.81	12,202.77	12,151.66	51.11	0.42%
SERVICES TR IDX	3,986.79	3,970.58	3,979.56	3,975.05	4.50	0.11%
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
163,100,561	44,525,934	7,417	36,235,595,424	19	21	26	66

SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR WEDNESDAY, JUNE 24

	SECURITY NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR.	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF (RD)	DIFF %	LAST PR	LAST RD	LAST OFFER	PUR VALUE	MARKET CAP
REGULAR MARKET																
OM00000002549	BANK DHOFAR	388,672	75,957	6	0.194	0.200	0.194	0.197	0.191	0.006	3.141	0.197	0.195	0.198	0.100	598,840,311
OM0000001772	ALANWAR INVESTMENT	194,032	31,322	11	0.162	0.165	0.160	0.165	0.160	0.005	3.125	0.165	0.160	0.165	0.100	49,261,234
OM0000002572	OMAN OIL MARKETING	100	108	1	0.080	0.080	0.080	0.080	0.085	0.005	2.370	0.080	0.080	1.160	0.100	86,177,000
OM0000003661	VOLTAMP ENERGY	222,000	39,051	57	0.174	0.178	0.174	0.178	0.174	0.004	2.299	0.178	0.175	0.178	0.010	178,000,000
OM0000001509	DHOFAR INTL DEVELOPMENT & INVEST	26,500	7715	10	0.286	0.293	0.286	0.293	0.288	0.005	1.736	0.293	0.270	0.293	0.100	145,344,449
OM0000000908	OQ BASE INDUSTRIES (SF2)	32,730,472	7,751,160	1,559	0.234	0.243	0.234	0.240	0.236	0.004	1.695	0.240	0.240	0.240	0.040	830,277,804
OM0000000398	SOHAR INTERNATIONAL BANK	47,328,374	9,063,718	1,349	0.191	0.195	0.190	0.194	0.191	0.003	1.571	0.194	0.172	0.194	0.100	1,283,745,776
OM0000000972	OQ GAS NETWORKS	30,101,511	6,337,396	1,839	0.208	0.214	0.207	0.212	0.209	0.003	1.435	0.212	0.212	0.212	0.100	918,062,271
OM0000001483	NATIONAL BANK OMAN	10,637,593	5,290,495	25	0.483	0.500	0.483	0.500	0.483	0.007	1.420	0.500	0.500	0.500	0.100	812,973,178
OM0000001010	ASYAD SHIPPING	2,347,929	672,183	363	0.287	0.287	0.284	0.287	0.283	0.004	1.413	0.287	0.288	0.287	0.000	1,494,909,608
OM0000004420	BANK NIZWA	378,611	51,131	41	0.135	0.136	0.134	0.136	0.135	0.001	0.741	0.136	0.135	0.136	0.100	394,225,612
OM0000000493	AL SUWADI POWER	7,670	1,473	2	0.192	0.192	0.192	0.192	0.191	0.001	0.524	0.192	0.185	0.192	0.100	137,166,017
OM0000000267	GULF MUSHROOM PRODUCTS	1,655	689	2	0.416	0.417	0.416	0.417	0.415	0.002	0.482	0.417	0.416	0.417	0.100	20,992,771
OM000000563	PHOENIX POWER	106,165	24,381	18	0.231	0.232	0.229	0.232	0.231	0.001	0.433	0.232	0.231	0.232	0.100	339,323,539
OM0000000959	OQ EXPLORATION AND PRODUCTION	7,658,224	3,267,134	317	0.427	0.430	0.426	0.428	0.427	0.001	0.234	0.428	0.428	0.428	0.010	3,424,000,000
OM0000001707	OMAN CABLES INDUSTRY	15,350	49,173	22	3.200	3.210	3.200	3.210	3.210	0.000	0.000	3.210	3.210	3.210	0.100	287,937,000
OM0000000216	JAZEERA STEEL PRODUCTS	122,141	98,600	83	0.815	0.815	0.800	0.815	0.815	0.000	0.000	0.815	0.800	0.815	0.100	101,791,837
OM0000000374	UNITED FINANCE	952,733	88,770	8	0.093	0.094	0.093	0.094	0.094	0.000	0.000	0.094	0.093	0.094	0.100	33,475,966
OM0000000440	AL SHARQYA INVESTMENT HO	84,929	6,604	12	0.340	0.340	0.340	0.340	0.340	0.000	0.000	0.340	0.340	0.340	0.100	39,550,396
OM0000000000	ALMAHA PETROLEUM PRODS MRKTNG	7,820	8,915	9	1.140	1.140	1.140	1.140	1.140	0.000	0.000	1.140	1.110	1.140	0.100	76,690,000
OM0000000368	OOREDOO	13,420	4,362	6	0.325	0.325	0.325	0.325	0.325	0.000	0.000	0.325	0.320	0.325	0.100	211,556,875
OM0000000478	MADINA TAKAFUL	114,896	13,659	12	0.120	0.120	0.118	0.118	0.118	0.000	0.000	0.118	0.118	0.125	0.100	20,650,000
OM0000000870	BARKA DESALINATION	7,000	1,106	1	0.158	0.158	0.158	0.158	0.158	0.000	0.000	0.158	0.158	0.000	0.100	11,932,476
OM0000000894	ABRAJ ENERGY SERVICES	856,880	323,089	129	0.377	0.378	0.376	0.377	0.377	0.000	0.000	0.377	0.377	0.377	0.100	290,365,400
OM0000000296	BANK MUSCAT	19,551,768	7,778,239	1,165	0.398	0.400	0.395	0.398	0.399	-0.001	-0.251	0.398	0.360	0.398	0.100	2,987,546,031
OM0000000133	OMINVEST	302,963	112,988	7	0.387	0.373	0.387	0.372	0.373	-0.001	-0.268	0.372	0.361	0.372	0.100	417,701,656
OM0000000325	GLOBAL FINANCIAL INVESTMENT HO	1,177,240	343,431	19	0.292	0.292	0.290	0.292	0.293	-0.001	-0.341	0.292	0.290	0.292	0.100	58,400,000
OM0000000026	OMAN TELECOM	1,552,108	2,023,872	68	1.304	1.305	1.300	1.300	1.305	0.005	-0.383	1.300	1.300	1.300	0.100	975,000,000
OM00000004735	SEMBCORP SALALAH	103,100	26,664	18	0.258	0.259	0.257	0.257	0.259	-0.002	-0.772	0.257	0.256	0.257	0.100	245,324,991
OM00000001749	OMAN CEMENT	4,000	2,140	4	0.535	0.535	0.535	0.535	0.540	0.005	-0.928	0.535	0.538	0.535	0.100	177,016,900
OM00000003224	RENAISSANCE SERVICES	60,096	18,726	8	0.313	0.313	0.311	0.311	0.314	-0.003	-0.955	0.311	0.312	0.311	0.100	73,523,510
OM00000004825	ALBATINAH POWER	27,080	5,167	10	0.192	0.192	0.190	0.190	0.192	-0.002	-1.042	0.190	0.188	0.192	0.100	128,228,612
OM0000001087	OMAN UNITED INSURANCE	18,850	6,047	12	0.325	0.325	0.320	0.320	0.325	-0.005	-1.538	0.320	0.320	0.350	0.100	33,600,000
Total	33	157,102,952	43,557,465	7,193												
Parallel Market																
OM00000001020	OMAN CHROMITE	121	339	1	2.800	2.800	2.800	2.800	2.650	0.150	5.660	2.800	2.800	0.000	1.000	10,164,000
OM0000000868	THE PEARL REIF	384,861	67,353	9	0.175	0.177	0.175	0.177	0.176	0.001	0.568	0.177	0.175	0.177	0.100	104,684,328
OM0000002306	MUSCAT THREAD MILLS	4,830	1,009	1	0.209	0.209	0.209	0.209	0.208	0.001	0.481	0.209	0.205	0.212	0.100	3,867,513
OM00000001065	DIPLOP	1,278	468	1	0.340	0.340	0.340	0.340	0.340	0.000	0.000	0.340	0.340	0.340	0.100	39,550,396
OM00000001426	OMAN REFRESHMENT	1,140	1,368	1	1.200	1.200	1.200	1.200	1.200	0.000	0.000	1.200	1.150	1.200	0.100	60,000,000
OM00000001590	MUSCAT FINANCE	78,918	5,154	6	0.067	0.067	0.067	0.067	0.067	0.000	0.000	0.067	0.066	0.067	0.100	20,578,804
OM00000001962	AL MADINA INVESTMENT HOLDING	340	11	1	0.033	0.033	0.033	0.033	0.033	0.000	0.000	0.033	0.031	0.035	0.100	2,805,000
OM00000002168	AL ANWAR CERAMIC	3,615,193	540,417	48	0.149	0.150	0.149	0.150	0.150	0.000	0.000	0.150	0.150	0.150	0.100	33,000,000
OM00000002200	AHLI BANK	208,055	40,571	9	0.195	0.195	0.195	0.195	0.195	0.000	0.000	0.195	0.195	0.195	0.100	541,768,728
OM00000002580	OMAN EDUC & TRAINING INVESTMENTS	1,550	2,840	2	1.850	1.850	1.800	1.800	1.800	0.000	0.000	1.800	1.800	0.000	0.100	126,000,000
OM00000008447	OMAN REIT FUND	10,660	1,141	2	0.107	0.107	0.107	0.107	0.107	0.000	0.000	0.107	0.105	0.107	0.100	69,800,623
OM00000009569	JABAL REIF	25,012	2,601	2	0.104	0.104	0.104	0.104	0.104	0.000	0.000	0.104	0.104	0.105	0.100	18,096,000
OM00000005260	OMAN ARAB BANK	360,000	85,320	39	0.237	0.237	0.237	0.237	0.238	-0.001	-0.420	0.237	0.230	0.240	0.100	474,650,170
OM00000001169	NATIONAL GAS	218,979	23,290	21	0.106	0.106	0.106	0.106	0.107	-0.001	-0.935	0.106	0.103	0.110	0.100	9,010,000
OM00000002648	NATIONAL FINANCE	16,220	3,422	6	0.311	0.311	0.311	0.311	0.311	0.000	0.000	0.311	0.311	0.311	0.100	137,298,728
OM00000007407	DHOFAR GENERATING	8,626	704	4	0.082	0.082	0.081	0.081	0.082	-0.001	-1.220	0.081	0.081	0.081	0.100	15,001,440
OM00000002028	GULF INTERNATIONAL CHEMICALS	13,320	953	4	0.072	0.073	0.071	0.073	0.074	-0.001	-1.351	0.073	0.071	0.080	0.100	1,533,000
OM00000004776	TAKAFUL OMAN	23,830	1,549	5	0.065	0.065	0.065	0.065	0.066	-0.001	-1.515	0.065	0.065	0.072	0.100	16,250,000
OM0000001806	MUSCAT INSURANCE	4,500	2,825	5	0.630	0.630	0.625	0.625	0.644	-0.015	-2.344	0.625	0.576	0.620	0.100	6,890,654
OM0000000391	OMAN CHLORINE	5,827	973	3	0.169	0.169	0.165	0.165	0.169	-0.004	-2.367	0.165	0.165	0.168	0.100	11,798,599
OM0000000210	AMAN REAL ESTATE	1,000	66	2	0.066	0.066	0.066	0.066	0.068	-0.002	-2.941	0.066	0.066	0.060	0.100	13,200,000
OM00000002911	FINANCIAL CORPORATION	100	10	1	0.097	0.097	0.097	0.097	0.100	-0.003	-3.000	0.097	0.098	0.103	0.100	6,792,906
Total	22	4,982,458	782,484	173												



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Indian male, 17 yrs experience including 8 yrs in Oman and 4 at Deloitte (Big 4). Expert in finance, accounting, and compliance. Ready to join immediately. Contact no: 72206535 Email: robin.percy.ryan@gmail.com

ADMINISTRATION

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Civil Engineer with 10 yrs GCC experience having valid visa and D/L seeks placement contact : +968 79585378 , Email ID : vineesh.v35@gmail.com

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Sr. Project engineer MEP/ Mech 19 yrs experience in construction Contact/WA: 97135658

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Mechanical engineer 11+ yrs experience in Oman HVAC /MEP, projects, facility management. Ready to join immediately. Contact: 91690765

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Team Standings									
GROUP A	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	Pts	
	Mexico	2	2	0	0	3	0	3	6
	South Korea	2	1	0	1	2	2	0	3
	Czech Republic	2	0	1	1	2	3	-1	1
	South Africa	2	0	1	1	1	3	-2	1
GROUP B	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	Pts	
	Canada	2	1	1	0	7	1	6	4
	Switzerland	2	1	1	0	5	2	3	4
	Bosnia and Herzegovina	2	0	1	1	2	5	-3	1
	Qatar	2	0	1	1	1	7	-6	1
GROUP C	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	Pts	
	Brazil	2	1	1	0	4	1	3	4
	Morocco	2	1	1	0	2	1	1	4
	Scotland	2	1	0	1	1	1	0	3
	Haiti	2	0	0	2	0	4	-4	0
GROUP D	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	Pts	
	USA	2	2	0	0	6	1	5	6
	Australia	2	1	0	1	2	2	0	3
	Paraguay	2	1	0	1	2	4	-2	3
	Türkiye	2	0	0	2	0	3	-3	0
GROUP E	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	Pts	
	Germany	2	2	0	0	9	2	7	6
	Ivory Coast	2	1	0	1	2	2	-3	3
	Ecuador	2	0	1	1	0	1	-1	1
	Curaçao	2	0	1	1	1	7	-6	1
GROUP F	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	Pts	
	Netherlands	2	1	1	0	7	3	4	4
	Japan	2	1	1	0	6	2	4	4
	Sweden	2	1	0	1	6	6	0	3
	Tunisia	2	0	0	2	1	9	-8	0
GROUP G	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	Pts	
	Egypt	2	1	1	0	4	2	2	4
	Iran	2	0	2	0	2	2	0	2
	Belgium	2	0	2	0	1	1	0	2
	New Zealand	2	0	1	1	3	5	-2	1
GROUP H	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	Pts	
	Spain	2	1	1	0	4	0	4	4
	Uruguay	2	0	2	0	3	3	0	2
	Cape Verde	2	0	2	0	2	2	0	2
	Saudi Arabia	2	0	1	1	1	5	-4	1
GROUP I	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	Pts	
	France	2	2	0	0	6	1	5	6
	Norway	2	2	0	0	7	3	4	6
	Senegal	2	0	0	2	3	6	-3	0
	Iraq	2	0	0	2	1	7	-6	0
GROUP J	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	Pts	
	Argentina	2	2	0	0	5	0	5	6
	Austria	2	1	0	1	3	3	0	3
	Algeria	2	1	0	1	2	4	-2	3
	Jordan	2	0	0	2	2	5	-3	0
GROUP K	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	Pts	
	Colombia	2	2	0	0	4	1	3	6
	Portugal	2	1	1	0	6	1	5	4
	Congo DR	2	0	1	1	1	2	-1	1
	Uzbekistan	2	0	0	2	1	8	-7	0
GROUP L	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	Pts	
	England	2	1	1	0	4	2	2	4
	Ghana	2	1	1	0	1	0	1	4
	Croatia	2	1	0	1	3	4	-1	3
	Panama	2	0	0	2	0	2	-2	0

GROUP K: BEAT CONGO DR 1-0

Munoz powers Colombia into knockout phase



ZAPOPAN: Daniel Munoz's second-half goal helped Colombia make it two wins from two in Group K to progress with a 1-0 win over Congo DR on Tuesday. With the win, Colombia clinched their place in the Round of 32.

Congo DR's Edo Kayembe tested the waters with a long-range effort that sailed wide, but the rest of an electric first half largely belonged to Colombia.

Congo DR's goalie Lionel Mpsi denied Jhon Arias, with Munoz sending the follow-up into the side netting. Munoz then saw a header saved before bundling in the re-

bound, only for the goal to be ruled out for offside. Colombia continued to press as Mpsi saved from James Rodriguez, Luis Diaz and Gustavo Puerta.

Congo DR finally threatened late in the half, but Arthur Masuku's raking cross narrowly evaded the head of Yoane Wissa, who was inches away from adding to his equalising goal against Portugal.

Mpsi was at it again after the restart, making himself big to thwart Diaz at close quarters. The rebound fell to Arias, but his shot through a crowded penalty area went wide. Colombia's frustra-

tations were beginning to show when Munoz broke Mpsi's stubborn resistance, scoring with a deflected strike after intelligent hold-up play from substitute Jhon Cordoba.

Diaz had two goals chalked off for offside as Colombia withstood a late wave of Congo DR pressure to seal a top-two spot in Group K ahead of their meeting with Cristiano Ronaldo's Portugal. Congo DR, meanwhile, could still advance if they beat Uzbekistan and results elsewhere go their way.

Nestor Lorenzo, Colombia coach, said: "I want to thank the

teams like this, you have to find the spaces between the lines; if you stick too rigidly to a set play, they'll counter-attack by exploiting those spaces. We're very happy - we're a team that takes the initiative, and we never give up on that approach."

Sebastian Desabre, Congo DR coach said: "It was a difficult match for us. We played against a very good team. They were superior. The next match will be here quickly. We'll need to take risks. A draw will not be enough. We need to analyse ourselves now and move forward against Uzbekistan."



GROUP L: 1-0

Croatia oust Panama in Modric's 200th game

TORONTO: Panama put up an impressive showing and went close on several occasions, but it was ultimately a day of celebration for Croatia as Luka Modric made his 200th appearance.

Croatia got their World Cup campaign back with a hard-fought 1-0 victory over Panama, a result that also confirmed Los Canaleiros' elimination from the competition with one game remaining.

Panama were the better side in the first half at Toronto Stadium, and nearly opened the scoring in the 23rd minute when Croatia goalkeeper Dominik Livakovic superbly saved Jose Luis Rodri-

guez's header on to the crossbar.

Croatia established more of a foothold after the interval though, and took the lead in the 54th minute when substitute Ante Budimir tucked in at the back post after Josip Stanisic's delicious low cross from the right.

Marco Pasalic had a glorious chance to double his side's lead three minutes later, but was denied by Panama goalkeeper Orlando Mosquera.

Inspirational Modric

It was all smiles for Croatia and their inspirational captain Luka Modric, who celebrated his 200th

back to their second group-stage game against Japan in 2006.

Panama coach Thomas Christiansen, said after the match: "We played well. We fought until the end, staying true to our identity and the only thing I can say is that I am proud of my players."

Christiansen's counterpart, Zlatko Dalic of Croatia said: "I want to congratulate the opponent, who was very good today and gave us a lot of difficulties. I'm glad we were able to win Luka [Modric]'s 200th game. He played excellently today, at 40 years of age. We're so happy to have him in the national team."



international cap with yet another win on football's greatest stage.

Modric has featured in each of Croatia's last 21 matches at the World Cup, a sequence stretching

GROUP L: 0-0

Resolute Ghana frustrate England in a stalemate



BOSTON: An inspired defensive display ensured Ghana earned a goalless draw with England at the FIFA World Cup 2026 on Tuesday. It was a first half punctuated by perspiration rather than inspiration. Ghana stood tall against wave after wave of England pressure, with the Three Lions' only half-chance coming through a looping Declan Rice header which cleared the crossbar.

After the break, Elliot Anderson saw a close-range header blocked shortly before Anthony Gordon fired an effort into the midriff of goalkeeper Benjamin Asare. Harry Kane was next to try his luck with a low drive, but Asare was again equal to it.

Ghana, meanwhile, looked threatening in their forays forward, and sliced England open with just shy of ten minutes to go. Abdul Fatawu was sent through on Jordan Pickford, and while Ezri Konsa got back to foil his initial attempt, the winger's second effort was blocked just in front of the goal line by team-mate Antoine Semenyo.

England saved their best chances for the 87th minute. A flowing move ended with Reece James crossing for Nico O'Reilly, whose back-post header came back off the crossbar. The loose ball fell to Kane, but he blazed his effort high into the Boston sky.

The result ensures England and Ghana will enter the final matchday of Group L in the top two. A point from their final matches against Panama and Croatia respectively will secure both of a spot in the Round of 32.

Bellingham: No drama, no stress

Real Madrid superstar Jude Bellingham stressed the importance of England staying positive following stalemate. He stressed this was no time for panic, though, with England still top of Group L and well-placed to reach the knockout stage.

"It's one of those things that can happen," said the 22-year-old. "Credit to Ghana. They got out of the game what they played for. We couldn't quite break them down, even with all the corners, all the possession, all the shots on goal."

"I'm young, but I'm still one of the experienced players [in the dressing room]. There's no worries, no stress, no drama at all in there. My message has just been to make sure we stay positive and keep the good atmosphere we've got going. We've got four points, it puts us in a good position. It's not the end of the world."

"We're not only going to play teams from Europe or what we're used to," he told FIFA. "It's amazing to be able to play so early against a strong opponent from Africa who pose completely different threats."

"You saw that today. It was tough to break them down. They were exceptional on the counter-attack. They always kept that little bit of fear in us when we're going forward. Part of the beautiful thing of the World Cup is that you get to play against teams, players, styles of play that you don't normally get to play against. It will stand us in good stead going into the rest of the tournament, for sure."

England coach Thomas Tuchel, too, was also quick to pay tribute to Ghana and dismissed any notion that the result was a 'wake-up call' for England.

"Everyone is alert and everyone is fully committed," said the German coach. "There can be no doubt, I can assure that to everyone. We don't need a wake-up call. There was no over-confidence in our game, not at all. If anything, maybe in some moments were a bit over-cautious."



The Portuguese legend became the first player to score in six World Cups and also became the second-oldest scorer in tournament history behind Cameroon's Roger Milla

HOUSTON: Cristiano Ronaldo scored a brilliant brace to set a number of FIFA World Cup records and get Portugal's campaign up and running on Tuesday as they thrashed Uzbekistan 5-0.

After seeing the likes of Lionel Messi, Kylian Mbappe and Erling Haaland hit the headlines at the FIFA World Cup 2026 Ronaldo reached lift-off in Houston in fine fashion.

Playing in his sixth World Cup finals, the 41-year-old got the ball up and running against Uzbekistan with a brilliant close-range effort following Joao Cancelo's cross.

It was a history-making goal — Ronaldo became the first player to score in six World Cups and he also became the second-oldest scorer at the age of 41 years and 138 days in tournament history behind Cameroon's Roger Milla, who was 42 years and 39 days when he scored for Cameroon against Russia in 1994.

The relief on Ronaldo's face after he struggled in the opener against Congo DR was palpable.

Inspired, the veteran netted his second with a well-taken strike into the corner just before half-time for his 10th World Cup goal to become the nation's leading scorer in the global finals, ahead of the legendary Eusebio with nine.

In between, Ronaldo played a role in Portugal's second, acting as a clever decoy for Nuno Mendes's brilliant first-half free-kick.

A fourth goal came via an Uzbekistan own goal midway through the second half, with Rafa Leao putting the icing on the



'Personally, records are nice, but team comes first'

HOUSTON: Cristiano Ronaldo answered Portugal's critics with a historic display and two goals against Uzbekistan.

Wherever the legend goes at the FIFA World Cup 2026, there is noise. A lot of noise. Before, during and after every match, fans follow his every move, building towards the familiar roar of "SIUUUU!" It's a ritual repeated endlessly until the moment Portugal's talisman scores again.

But when he opened the scoring in the 5-0 win against Uzbekistan, the thousands packed into Houston Stadium had to wait a little longer.

Instead of sprinting away to perform his trademark celebration, he headed straight for the bench. The captain embraced his team-mates and the manager, Roberto Martinez, both of whom had come under heavy criticism following Portugal's draw with Congo DR in their opening match.

Without saying a word, he said everything. "It has been a difficult week. The criticism was intense, especially towards me," Ronaldo admitted, "but after 23 or 24 years in football, I know how to deal with it."

"The most important thing is the team, and to stick together and with our families as well, because those are the things we can control," he said. "I just keep doing my work. I believe deeply in what I do, and that God helps those who work hard. My career has always been like that. It's not going to change now."

After embracing the group,

Ebola cases in DR Congo hit first-month record, WHO official says

Officials have confirmed as of Monday more than 1,000 cases and 267 deaths from the current outbreak of the comparatively rare Bundibugyo ebolavirus

GENEVA: A senior World Health Organization (WHO) official told a briefing in Geneva on Tuesday that the Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) had the highest number of confirmed cases in its first month of any Ebola outbreak in Africa.

Officials have confirmed as of Monday more than 1,000 cases and 267 deaths from the current outbreak of the comparatively rare Bundibugyo ebolavirus.

"This is the largest number of confirmed cases in the first month of an Ebola disease outbreak in Africa," said the WHO's director of health emergency alert and response operations, Abdirahman Mahamud, in a press release.

The WHO formally confirmed the outbreak on May 15, but experts believe it had been likely circulating for weeks or months prior to that.

"The response needs to expand to keep pace with the expanding outbreak — this is beginning to happen," the WHO's Mahamud said after returning from a visit last week to the Bunia treatment center in the outbreak's epicenter.



The International Organisation for Migration's Abdoulaye Wone said at the same Geneva briefing on Tuesday that 25 cases had been confirmed at the camps,

including 14 deaths.

There have been more than 20 Ebola outbreaks across Africa since the 1970s, according to the US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention.

The most deadly pair were in West Africa, in Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia, killing 11,000 people between 2014 and 2016 and

another in Congo starting in 2018 with 2,229 recorded deaths.

Meanwhile, Kenya's Health Minister Aden Duale assured a Kenyan court on Tuesday that he had ordered an immediate halt to the construction of a US-backed Ebola quarantine facility at an air base.

Duale had been found in contempt of court on Monday for failing to observe previous orders to suspend the construction pending an evaluation by the judiciary.

The tented facility in the central town of Nanyuki was supposed to serve as a treatment center for US nationals should any contract Ebola amid the outbreak in the DR Congo.

The plans to build it, first announced in May, had led to sometimes violent protests, with a total of three people being killed in the vicinity.

Justice Patricia Nyaundi Mande discharged Duale with no further

punishment after receiving the assurance from the minister, but warned him against further disobedience.

"I have directed the immediate and complete cessation of any intended construction, site preparation, or related activities concerning the Laikipia Air Base facility pending the hearing and determination of the substantive petition or until further orders of this court," Duale said during Tuesday's sentencing hearing.

The facility was being constructed at the Laikipia Air Base, about 200 kilometres (125 miles) from the capital, Nairobi, with some 50 isolation beds. US medical staff were expected to manage it.

The plans prompted considerable domestic backlash and protests. Kenya has never recorded a case of Ebola and there was public concern about bringing patients onto its territory — even directly airlifting them to a secure medical facility.

Rights groups also successfully petitioned the court, saying the facility was being constructed secretly and without consultations. The government initially disregarded orders to pause the construction pending checks.

Flight tracking data, satellite imagery and US officials speaking on condition of anonymity had pointed to continued preparations at the site despite the initial court order.

The sole US citizen to have contracted Ebola so far in the current outbreak — a doctor working as a medical missionary in the heart of the outbreak in eastern DRC — was flown into Germany for treatment at a specialist facility in Berlin.

Kenya does not border Congo but it is situated directly to the east of Uganda, which is on the border to the epicentre in Ituri province in eastern DRC.

— DW

14TH PASSPORT SEVA DIVAS



Passport network expands six-fold in last decade in India

NEW DELHI: As India marks the 14th Passport Seva Divas, the government continues to expand the ease of services with over 500 Passport Kendras and a delivery of 1.5 crore passports and related services in 2025 alone, a Ministry of External Affairs official said on Wednesday.

As per the MEA official, in 2025, 1.5 crore passports and related services were delivered, of which passports alone accounted for 1.39 crore. With six working days for passports, excluding police verification, the time spent at PSKs and POPSKs spans less than 45 minutes.

The MEA official underlined how there are now 545 Passport Kendras across the country in comparison to 77 Passport Kendras present 10 years ago—thus recording a six-fold increase in the number of Kendras.

"We opened 10 POPSKs last year, and this year another 10 will be opened," the official said.

The MEA official further informed that now for Indians, countries with visa-free entry stand at 27, seeing an increase from 16 in 2019.

"47 countries have a visa on arrival for Indians and 66 countries offer electronic visa for Indians," the official added.

The official highlighted that mobility agreements are mostly with Europe.

"They facilitate easier mobility

of academics, students, apprentices, regular tourists, and businesses. Also, creating a mechanism for easier return of illegal migrants."

Notably, a passport is primarily a travel document, not a proof of citizenship.

On the occasion of the 14th Passport Seva Divas, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Wednesday hailed the efficient, transparent, and citizen-centric passport services, highlighting the commitment of the Ministry of External Affairs to provide services to the people.

In a message shared on X, Jaishankar noted that the event marks the anniversary of the Passports Act of 1967 and serves as a reflection on the modernisation of India's passport infrastructure.

Jaishankar credited Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of "Minimum Government, Maximum Governance" as the driving force behind the success of the Passport Seva Programme.

He further affirmed that the MEA has achieved significant digital milestones, including the successful operationalisation of the upgraded Passport Seva Programme (PSP V2.0) domestically and the deployment of the Global Passport Seva Programme (GPSP V2.0) at diplomatic missions worldwide to better serve the Indian diaspora. — ANI

POLAND, UKRAINE

Dispute between close allies deepens

KYIV: For a long time, Poland and Ukraine were the staunchest of allies.

The political and military support Ukraine received from Poland made a major contribution to Ukraine's ability to successfully defend itself in the early days of Russia's full-scale invasion, which began in February 2022.

Now, however, a dispute about the past, which has been rumbling on for weeks, is plunging the two neighbours into an ever-deepening crisis.

On Friday evening, Polish President Karol Nawrocki announced on X that he was revoking the Order of the White Eagle, Poland's highest state honour, from Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

In doing so, Nawrocki made good on a threat he made several weeks previously during the dispute about the name given to a Ukrainian special forces unit, "Heroes of the UPA."

The announcement triggered strong responses in the Ukrainian capital.

"We believed that the Order of the White Eagle, awarded in 2023, was meant for the Ukrainian People and our army. That is what was said at the time. Today, I sent the Order back to the President of Poland," Zelenskyy wrote on his social media accounts on Saturday.

He thanked Poland for its support and solidarity thus far and said that since the honor had also been bestowed on Russian Empress Catherine II, Italian dictator Benito Mussolini and former German chancellor Gerhard Schröder, "we in Ukraine will not argue with this." He also posted photos without comments showing him sending the order back to Nawrocki via the private Ukrainian postal and courier service Nova Post.

Nawrocki motivated by domestic politics?

Speaking in an interview with the Ukrainian television channel 1+1, Zelenskyy later accused his Polish counterpart of having taken the step because of next year's parliamentary election in Poland.

"President Karol Nawrocki is fighting for the position of his party against the prime minister



[Donald Tusk]. It is the same thing that [former Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor] Orban did. It is the wrong way. I think it will end badly," said Zelenskyy.

Ukrainian politicians return honours

Over the weekend, there was an almost united response from politicians in Ukraine.

Three of the country's four living former presidents — Leonid Kuchma, Viktor Yushchenko and Petro Poroshenko — returned their Polish orders. The fourth, the pro-Russian Viktor Yanukovich, fled to Russia in 2014.

Presidential Chief of Staff Kyrylo Budanov and Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha also returned their honors.

"Nawrocki has become the destroyer of the positive progress we have made in recent times. It's not for nothing that he receives applause from Moscow," said Sybiha, adding, "No president of another country will dictate our history to us."

Without going into the specifics, the foreign minister said that Ukraine would mirror Nawrocki's move.

The UPA: the root of the present dispute

This is the most serious dispute between Warsaw and Kyiv since

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine over four years ago.

It began at the end of May, when Zelenskyy issued a decree approving the request from a special forces unit within the Ukrainian army to use the honorary name "Heroes of the UPA."

In doing so, Zelenskyy expressly honored the memory of the fighters of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA), which continued to put up armed resistance to the Soviet regime in Ukraine well into the 1950s.

This resistance is very much to the fore in Ukraine's current public culture of remembrance and is one of its central elements.

The view of the UPA in Poland is, however, very different indeed.

During World War II and starting in 1943, the UPA carried out several massacres, targeting the Polish population in the western Ukrainian region of Volhynia, while fighting for an independent Ukraine. In total, UPA units killed around 100,000 civilians.

Up to 20,000 Ukrainians were killed during later acts of retaliation by Polish partisans.

The Polish parliament declared the UPA crimes a genocide in 2016.

Setback after cautious progress

The issue of the way this past is judged has for decades been a

source of political and diplomatic disputes between Poland and Ukraine.

For a time, as a result of Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, there was a break in these disputes.

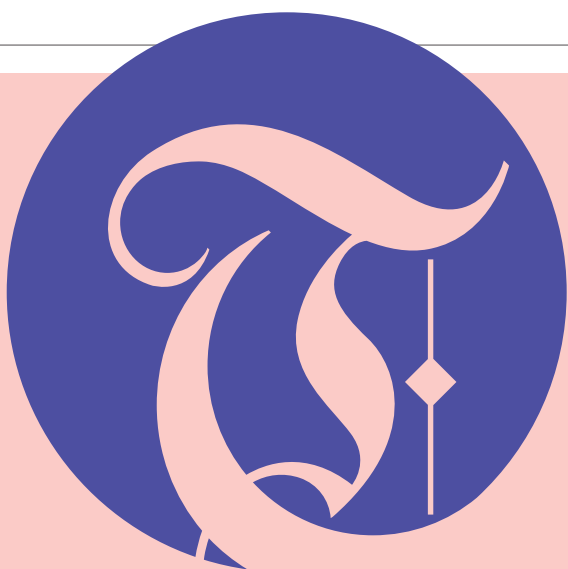
Last year, however, Volodymyr Zelenskyy agreed to the Polish request to have mass graves in Volhynia containing Polish victims opened for exhumations. The authorization for the opening of the first mass graves was issued by the Ukrainian Culture Ministry in early June.

Nawrocki's decision to strip Zelenskyy of the Order of the White Eagle has likely dealt a severe blow to this cautious process of addressing the past.

"There are limits that must not be crossed in Polish-Ukrainian relations," the Polish president said in the video statement he posted on X last Friday.

He also threatened to block Ukraine's accession to the EU.

"A united Europe was built on the rejection of totalitarianism and the cult of violence. These principles must apply to everyone. For those who do not understand this, there can be no place in the European Union, and Poland will certainly not allow it," said the Polish president. — DW



LIFESTYLE

THE FEEL-GOOD
GERMAN SONG



TAKING OVER
SOCIAL MEDIA

Being encouraging and building confidence is what the German song “Gut genug” (“Good Enough”) is all about. A meme is now bringing the track and its message to millions of people around the world

German is not the first language you'd expect to find behind a global TikTok hit, which is why the success of “Gut genug” is so surprising.

The track was a collaboration between Berlin-based producers KitschKrieg, indie duo Blumen-garten and rapper Shirin David.

Now, millions of social media users worldwide have featured the song in their videos — although many of them don't understand a word of German.

Despite that fact — or perhaps because of it — the song has become a hit. The hook sticks in your head and is easy to sing along to.

Blumengarten singer Rayan croons in a high, expressive voice, and the melody carries a message that transcends language. It offers comfort, reassurance and the desire to simply be accepted; things that are felt all over the world.

'Doobie Scoot Canoe'

Like many viral hits, the song has drifted far from its original con-

text. On social media, users have had both serious and humorous takes on its lyrics.

In the English-speaking world, many listeners mishear “Du bist gut genug” as “Doobie Scoot Canoe.” The phrase might not mean much, but it does sound funny — especially given that “doobie” is slang for a cannabis joint.

The song works on multiple levels. People looking for comfort can relate to it. People looking for a meme to share and laugh at can enjoy it too.

Algorithms drive the hits

A German-language song gaining global traction also reflects how social media algorithms work. In the past, songs in local languages rarely broke out on a global scale. Artists who wanted global success usually recorded in English and relied on radio and television to spread their music.

Social media platforms like Instagram and YouTube have changed that. They don't pay attention to the language a song uses. They pay attention to how



users respond.

If people watch a video to the end, like it, comment on it, share it or reuse the sound in new videos, the algorithm spots the engagement. It then spreads across feeds regardless of language or geography. A track no longer needs to be understood to succeed. The global success of Italian pop, K-pop and Spanish stars like Rosalia have all shown that. “Gut genug” is now joining that list.

Which part is better?

The song continues to trend even though it's only slowly climbed the charts.

German model and TV personality Heidi Klum also commented on it in a Tweet, saying, “I love only his part.” Her remark immediately created confusion and online debate. Some saw it as a dig at Shirin David. Others called it a matter of taste, claiming that she meant the

Blumengarten singer's vocal part moved her more.

Online reactions often amplify even the most passing of comments and Klum, who hosts the reality show “Germany's Next Top Model,” may have touched a nerve. The show centers on beauty and talent, so naturally, participants feel pressure to appear more successful or attractive. Shirin David's rap verse directly addresses that pressure, mentioning constant judgment and the struggle to remain confident.

The combination of the self-doubt in the verses and reassurance of the chorus — that repeated “Du bist gut genug” — likely drives much of the song's appeal. The message crosses language barriers easily. Four simple German words are now traveling the globe, reminding listeners of something many already know but often forget: You are good enough. -dw

ROUND-UP

Chery Oman announces exclusive 3-day flash sale on Tiggo 9 ICE

Under this limited-time cash offer, the Tiggo 9 Luxury FWD is available starting from OMR 8,699, while the versatile Tiggo 9 Luxury AWD is offered from OMR9,849

MUSCAT: Chery Oman announced an exclusive 3-Day Flash Sale, offering customers across the Sultanate a limited-time opportunity to own the brand's flagship premium SUV, the Chery Tiggo 9 ICE, at an exceptional value. The special promotion will run for a strict 72 hours only, from June 23 to June 25.

During this exclusive event, Chery Oman is extending significant direct savings across the entire Tiggo 9 ICE range. Under this limited-time cash offer, the Tiggo 9 Luxury FWD is available starting from OMR 8,699, while the versatile Tiggo 9 Luxury AWD is offered from OMR 9,849. For drivers seeking the ultimate expression of premium mobility, the top-tier Tiggo 9 Flagship AWD is available at an exclusive price of OMR 10,599.

The Tiggo 9 features a bold and powerful exterior inspired by the majestic posture of a roaring tiger. Inside, the ultra-wide cabin serves as a sanctuary of serenity, featuring premium suedette upholstery, premium interior trim and an extra-large space designed for personalized comfort. The vehicle delivers an incredibly quiet ride thanks to double-layer silent glass and active noise reduction, while a premium 14-speaker sound system, a 12-way electrically adjustable driver's seat



and Front seats with massage, ventilation and heating functions.

Beneath its luxurious exterior, the Tiggo 9 is powered by a highly efficient 2.0T GDI engine paired with a fluid 8-speed automatic transmission. This powertrain delivers an impressive 187 Kw of power and 390 N.M of torque,

achieving a 0-100 km/h acceleration in just 8 seconds. To ensure seamless control across Oman's diverse landscapes, the flagship SUV features a Full Scene Intelligent 4WD system with selectable driving modes tailored for everyday roads as well as challenging sand, mud and snow conditions.

Safety and intelligent technology remain at the heart of Chery's engineering philosophy. The Tiggo 9 is built on a rock-solid foundation of high-strength steel and comes heavily equipped with 10 safety airbags and Bosch drive-by-wire braking technology. The advanced digital cockpit features a 15.6-inch

HD screen powered by a high-performance smart chip, supporting wireless charging, remote vehicle control, and online navigation. Furthermore, driver confidence is maximized through 19 Advanced Driver Assistance Systems functions, including automatic parking and a comprehensive 540-degree

panoramic camera system.

Chery Oman encourages all prospective buyers to visit their nearest showroom early to secure these premium variants at special flash sale prices before the promotion concludes on June 25.

In Oman, Chery vehicles are distributed by New World Autos.

BEST PRACTICES

BankDhofar highlights customer-centric innovation at Customer Experience Forum 2026



MUSCAT: BankDhofar participated in the Customer Experience Forum 2026, a leading regional platform that convened senior customer experience leaders and industry experts to explore emerging trends, digital innovation, and best practices shaping customer engagement across sectors.

Representing the bank, Sulaiman bin Abdullah Al Oufi, Head of Customer Experience and Sustainability, spoke on a panel discussion focused on designing customer journeys in a digital-first, multi-channel environment. During the forum, he was also honoured with the "Customer Experience Leader of the Year - Banking Sector" award, recognising his leadership in advancing customer experience transformation and embedding customer-centric strategies across the organisation.

BankDhofar continues to strengthen its customer experi-

ence agenda through a range of initiatives aimed at improving accessibility and financial inclusion. These include the "Mobile Branch" service, which extends banking services to remote and underserved communities, as well as the bank's active participation in public events to broaden outreach and engagement.

In parallel, the bank's mobile banking application enables customers to complete transactions seamlessly from home or office, supporting greater convenience for segments such as senior citizens and business owners who may have limited time to visit branches.

BankDhofar's customer-first approach has earned it multiple industry recognitions. Most recently, the bank was named "Best Customer Experience in Oman 2025" by Global Business & Finance Magazine, underscoring its continued

focus on innovation, service quality, and customer satisfaction.

The bank has also received international recognition for its voice-of-customer and analytics capabilities. At the Khorus Re-invention Awards Middle East & Africa 2024, it won the "Corporate Voice of the Customer Programme" award, selected from nearly 700 participating banks and insurance companies globally, reflecting its ability to translate customer insights into measurable service improvements.

Additionally, at the Verint EMEA Inspire Awards 2024, BankDhofar secured the Silver Award for its innovative use of advanced technologies and AI-driven customer analytics, further reinforcing its commitment to enhancing engagement, improving service delivery, and maintaining a leading position in a competitive banking landscape.

CELEBRATION



Lulu Exchange brings Argentina fans together for football match watch party

MUSCAT: LuLu Exchange Oman hosted an Argentina Fans Meet Up, bringing together customers, community members, media, influencers and staff to watch the match between Argentina and Austria.

The event turned an ordinary day into a celebration of community and football spirit. Fans came dressed in the iconic blue and white, taking part in interactive activities, friendly competitions and football-themed fun that captured the spirit of the world champions. It was literally an event for the like-minded crowd that gathered, bound by the same love for the sport and for a team that has come to represent so much more than football.

The gathering reflects how LuLu Exchange continues to bring its global partnership with the Argentine Football Association to life among communities, creating real moments of connection for the people it serves.

LuLu Exchange proudly became the Regional Fintech Partner of the Argentine Football Association in 2025 and today the journey continues with the same passion and pride. Argentina is one of football's most iconic nations, a country celebrated for its flair, determination and footballing greatness and the reigning world champions. To stand alongside such a legendary team is both an honour and a responsibility.

What makes this collaboration so meaningful is how naturally both our values align. The team's excellence on the pitch mirrors excellence in our services. Dedication in training reflects dedication to our customers. Teamwork, resilience and a commitment to connecting people across the globe are among the many principles AFA lives by and these same principles have guided LuLu Exchange from day one.

Lathish Vichitran, General Manager of LuLu Exchange

Oman, said: "Football has a unique ability to unite people from different cultures and backgrounds. Through our partnership with the Argentine Football Association, we are proud to create experiences that bring communities together beyond financial services. This fan meet-up celebrates the passion that football inspires while strengthening the connections we share with our customers, partners and the wider community in Oman. At LuLu Exchange, we believe that meaningful relationships are built not only through the services we provide but also through the moments we create together."

LuLu Exchange continues to serve customers across Oman through its extensive branch network and the LuLu Money App, providing fast, secure and reliable money transfers and foreign exchange services while staying connected with the communities it serves.



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