



# TOUCH THE FUTURE

The NEW ENERGY VEHICLE BRAND FROM CHANGAN GROUP.



## G318

Dual Motor Max Power **430 hp**,  
Combined Drive Range **Over 848 kms (WLTC)\***,  
**Dual Motor SUV AWD**



## S07

Rear Electric Motor Max Power **235 hp**,  
Combined Drive Range **Over 950 kms (WLTC)\***,  
**Rear-Wheel Drive**



## S05

Rear Electric Motor Max Power **214 hp**,  
Combined Drive Range **Over 1000 kms (WLTC)\***,  
**Rear-Wheel Drive** (Rear Electric Motor Only)



ضمان المصنع  
٦ سنوات أو ٢٥٠,٠٠٠ كلم\*  
(أيهما أسبق)\*

**MANUFACTURING WARRANTY**  
6 YEARS OR 250,000 KMS\*  
(WHICHEVER IS EARLIER)



ضمان بطارية الطاقة  
٨ سنوات أو ٢٥٠,٠٠٠ كلم\*  
(أيهما أسبق)\*

**POWER BATTERY WARRANTY**  
8 YEARS OR 250,000 KMS\*  
(WHICHEVER IS EARLIER)

\*Terms and conditions apply.

[f deepaloman](#) [@ deepaloman.official](#) [www.deepaloman.com](#)

C.R. No: 1232361

**Arabian Gulf Automobiles  
and Equipment LLC**

Showrooms: **Qurum 96620435, Sohar 96620475, Salalah 96629050**  
Sales Centres : **Mawaleh 97888180, Nizwa 96628940, Ibri 96628930,**  
**Barka 96629010, Sur 96628920**

**800 50800**



Times

GOLDEN JUBILEE

OF OMAN



51

YEARS OF LEGACY

Founded 1975 · Volume 51 No. 82 | 16 Pages · Baisas 200 · Subscription OMR63 | ISO 9001:2008 Certified Company | Chairman/Editor-in-Chief: Mohamed Issa Al Zadjali | Printed & Published by Muscat Media Group



Find Out More  
or Send "LOAN" to 90090



Summer escape starts  
with Travel Loan  
at 3.75%



Bank Muscat. Better Everyday.  
Offer valid until July 15, 2026. Terms and conditions apply.

WORLD CUP 2026  
UPCOMING MATCHES  
HYUNDAI

SOUTH AFRICA  
28 June 11pm  
CANADA

BRAZIL  
29 June 9pm  
JAPAN



For Hyundai Enquiries  
80050003

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN  
Oman's non-oil exports  
rise to OMR1.61 billion

1 Oman's non-oil exports maintained strong momentum during the first quarter of 2026, reaching OMR1.611 billion, according to data released by the NCSI. **>A2**

OMAN  
Oman to launch 5th  
phase of plastic bag ban

2 Environment Authority will begin implementing the fifth phase of its ban on plastic shopping bags on 1 July 2026, as part of a gradual national plan to reduce plastic pollution. **>A3**

WORLD  
Death toll in Venezuela  
quakes rises to 920

3 The death toll following the fatal earthquakes in Venezuela has now jumped to 920 while 3,360 people have been injured, said the head of Venezuela's national assembly on Saturday. **>B6**

# HIS MAJESTY'S VISIT TO GIVE NEW MOMENTUM TO OMAN-FRANCE TIES

Both countries support security, stability and freedom of maritime navigation

**MUSCAT:** The Sultanate of Oman, under the leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, places sustained importance on strengthening its foreign relations, built on balance, openness and the forging of effective partnerships. This reflects Oman's foreign policy approach of expanding cooperation with sisterly and friendly nations, supporting shared interests, and reinforcing efforts for security and stability at both regional and international levels.

His Majesty's forthcoming official visit to the French Republic, on Sunday affirms the strength of the bilateral relations between the two friendly countries, which have witnessed continuous development since the establishment of diplomatic ties over five decades ago.

Omani-French relations, spanning decades, are distinguished by a character rooted in mutual respect and constructive coop-

eration. This has contributed to consolidating a robust partnership encompassing political, economic, cultural and scientific fields, while enhancing mutual coordination on issues of common concern.

The origins of Omani-French relations date back to the eighteenth century, with the beginning of early contacts through maritime trade in the Indian Ocean and East Africa, reflecting Oman's maritime and commercial role and its engagement in international trade networks of that era.

This period was characterised by a commercial and maritime nature and gradual interaction with European powers.

In the late nineteenth century, this communication evolved to the level of French consular representation in the Sultanate of Oman, marking an important milestone in the path of bilateral relations. **>A4**

## HM the Sultan to leave for France today

**MUSCAT:** His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik will go on an official visit to the French Republic on Sunday.

This was stated in a statement issued on Friday by the Diwan of the Royal Court, the

text of which follows: "Building upon the bonds of friendship between the Sultanate of Oman and the friendly French Republic, and in response to the gracious invitation extended to His Majesty

Sultan Haitham bin Tarik by President Emmanuel Macron of the French Republic, His Majesty the Sultan will go on an official visit to the French Republic from 28 to 29 of June 2026. **>A4**

HEALTHCARE

## Brain-dead donor gives four patients a new lease of life

**MUSCAT:** In a landmark achievement for Oman's healthcare sector, the Sultanate successfully carried out a comprehensive organ donation and transplantation operation that saved the lives of four patients through the transplantation of a heart, liver, and two kidneys from a single donor who had been declared brain dead.

The operation was conducted through close cooperation between Royal Hospital, Khoula Hospital, and the Omani Centre for Organ and Tissue Donation and Transplantation, demonstrating the high level of coordination, expertise, and readiness achieved by Oman's national healthcare system.

The journey began at Khoula

Hospital, where a patient was diagnosed with brain death in accordance with internationally recognised medical protocols.

Following confirmation of the diagnosis, specialised medical teams, working in coordination with the Omani Centre for Organ and Tissue Donation and Transplantation, initiated comprehen-

sive assessments and completed all required medical, legal, ethical, and religious procedures.

A pivotal moment in the process came when the donor's family agreed to donate their loved one's organs, making a humanitarian decision that ultimately gave four critically ill patients a new chance at life.

Medical specialists then conducted extensive clinical, laboratory, and immunological evaluations to determine organ suitability and identify the most appropriate recipients from national transplant waiting lists.

Due to the specialised equipment and advanced capabilities required for heart transplantation, the donor was transferred to the Royal Hospital. **>A6**

Foreign Minister receives copy of credentials of India's new Ambassador

A3

CHANGAN

ALL NEW  
UNI-S 4WD ROYAL

REDEFINING THE RIDE  
OF TOMORROW

1.5L Turbo Engine, 185 hp | 7 Speed DCT  
SUPER WARRANTY - 6 YEARS UNLIMITED MILEAGE





EMI  
OMR143\*  
for 6 years

800 50800

9662 8909

Arabian Gulf Automobiles and Equipment LLC

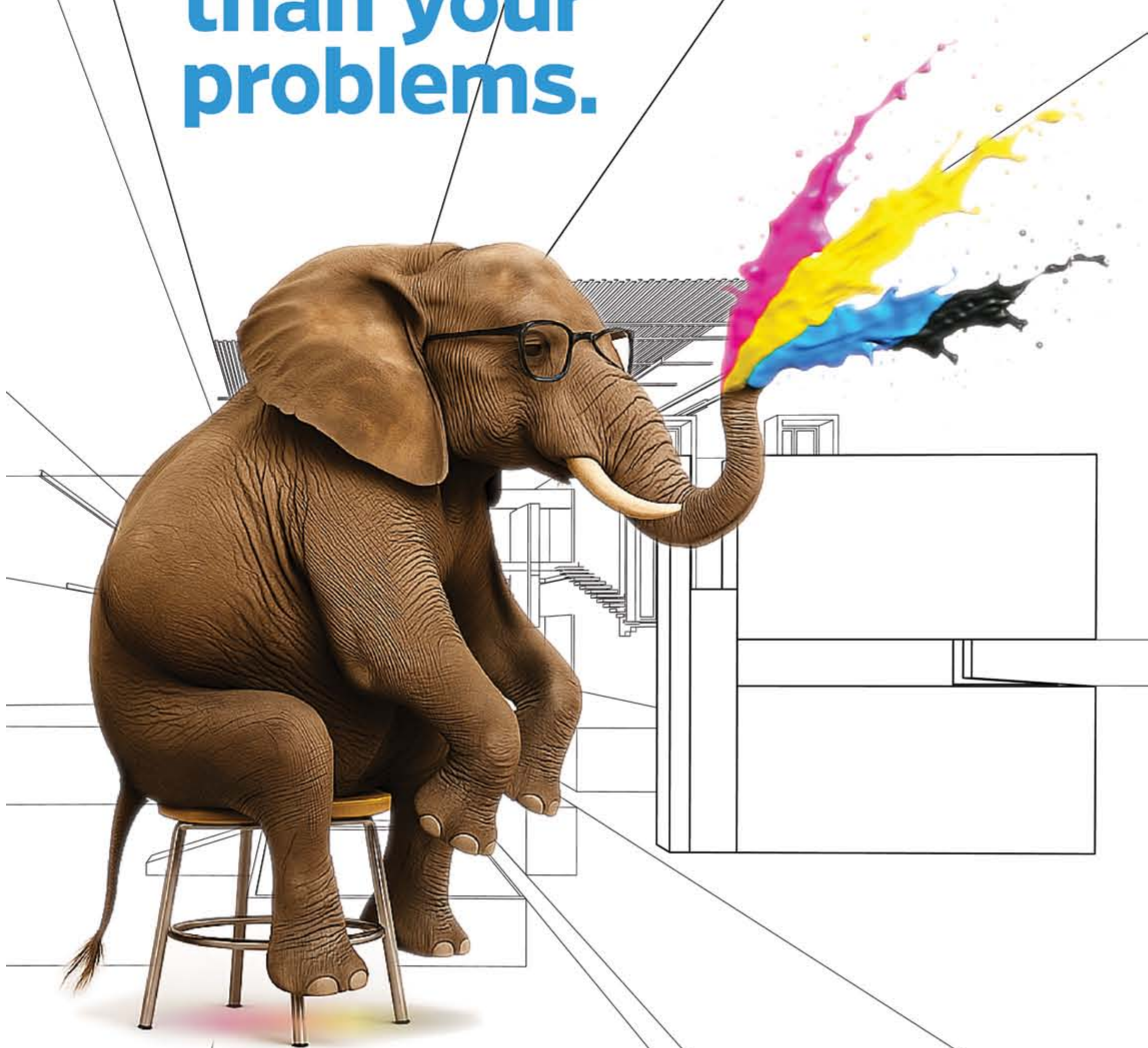
\*Terms and Conditions Apply

Images shown are for illustrative purpose only. Specification may vary as per the model variant. To know more, please visit the CHANGAN AUTO Showroom.

Showrooms : Qurum 94641010, Mawaleh 97888180, Nizwa 96628940, Sohar 95351200, Salalah 96629050, Ibri 96628930, Barka 96629010, Sur 96628920



# We make your Business bigger than your problems.



## We get you ahead on

- Booth production
- Event conceptualisation
- Event management



## Wait, there's more

- Large format digital printing
- Flex banners
- Vinyl stickers
- Back drops with metal frames
- Wooden standalones
- Backlit flex banners





# Oman capital market provides over OMR7bn funds during 2021-2025

The CEO pointed out that banks generally focus on short-term lending, whereas the capital market offers medium- and long-term financing solutions better suited to large investment and development projects

Times News Service

**MUSCAT:** Financing raised through Oman's capital market exceeded OMR7 billion during the period from 2021 to 2025, highlighting the market's growing role



in supporting private-sector investment and contributing to economic growth.

According to Abdullah bin Salem Al Salmi, Chief Executive Officer of the Financial Services Authority, the Omani capital market has established itself as a key source of financing for the national

economy.

Al Salmi noted that while bank financing remains the preferred option for many companies due to long-standing business practices, the capital market and banking sector should be viewed as complementary rather than competing sources of finance.

He explained that the Authority aims to develop a capital market capable of financing new projects and promising sectors, helping expand private-sector activity, diversify the economy, and enhance Oman's regional and international competitiveness. Such efforts also support the production of goods



and services while creating sustainable employment opportunities for Omani citizens.

The CEO pointed out that banks generally focus on short-term lending, whereas the capital market offers medium- and long-term financing solutions better suited to large investment and development projects.

### Financing options

Al Salmi emphasised the need to raise awareness of financing options available through the capital market and to correct the common misconception that the market is limited to trading on the Muscat Stock Exchange.

He stressed that the primary is-

suance market plays a crucial role in financing new projects and investments. He added that emerging companies and projects in sectors such as mining and logistics can utilize initial public offerings (IPOs) to secure funding before listing their securities on the Muscat Stock Exchange.

Al Salmi further highlighted that the 2019 Commercial Companies Law granted the Financial Services Authority comprehensive regulatory oversight of public joint-stock companies from establishment through governance and financial supervision. This framework enhances transparency, strengthens investor confidence, and improves market efficiency.

The Authority is also encouraging the development of innovative financial products, including sustainable finance instruments, conventional and Sharia-compliant financing solutions, and financial technology applications aimed at expanding financial inclusion and improving access to funding for small and medium-sized enterprises. These initiatives support long-term economic sustainability and future development goals in the Sultanate of Oman.

## STRENGTHENING LOCAL CONTENT

# Oman boosts transparency and accountability in public projects

Times News Service

**MUSCAT:** The Projects, Tenders and Local Content Authority, in cooperation with government entities, is implementing a comprehensive performance measurement system aimed at enhancing the planning, execution, monitoring and evaluation of government development and operational projects, while strengthening local content and supporting the goals of Oman Vision 2040.

The framework seeks to improve project management efficiency, enhance the quality of public spending, and establish a unified methodology for measuring the performance of government contracts, procurement activities and local content outcomes.

According to Dr. Ali bin Saud Al Harthy, Planning Consultant at the Projects, Tenders and Local Content Authority, the system relies on data generated through the government's digital platforms "Aadaa" and "Esnad," which enable the electronic management and tracking of projects and procurement procedures, improving coordination, accountability and transparency across government institutions.

### Three key performance pillars

The framework is built around three main performance criteria:

#### Planning and Organisation Efficiency

This pillar focuses on developing integrated development plans, identifying project priorities, involving stakeholders and communities in planning, and establish-



ing clear and measurable targets for every project.

It also emphasises local content requirements, including the use of national products and identifying opportunities for local manufacturing and employment.

A key indicator measures the availability of five-year project implementation schedules, helping authorities align resources, reduce implementation changes and improve long-term planning.

#### Execution efficiency

This criterion evaluates project performance from initiation to completion by measuring adherence to approved timelines, costs, quality standards and local content targets. It also tracks stakeholder accountability and coordination to minimize delays and improve implementation outcomes.

Financial management indica-

tors assess whether projects remain within their original budgets and limit change orders that often lead to delays and cost overruns.

Local content receives special emphasis through indicators measuring the extent to which completed projects achieve approved targets related to local business participation, national workforce employment and support for local suppliers.

#### Integration, evaluation and development efficiency

The third pillar measures how effectively development plans are translated into actual projects and evaluates the implementation of corrective actions arising from monitoring and assessment processes. It also incorporates contractor performance records into future tender evaluations, helping government entities select quali-

fied contractors, improve contract outcomes and reduce project risks. Authorities are currently developing a comprehensive digital database to assess contractor performance across completed projects.

#### Supporting innovation and transparency

The framework also encourages government agencies to adopt innovative solutions and modern technologies, measuring their impact on project quality, resource efficiency and service delivery.

Officials expect the new performance measurement system to strengthen governance, transparency and accountability in government contracting, create healthy competition among public entities, improve service quality and maximise the economic and social returns of public investments across the Sultanate of Oman.

# Non-oil exports rise to OMR1.61bn in Q1 of 2026



**MUSCAT:** Oman's non-oil exports maintained strong momentum during the first quarter of 2026, reaching OMR1.611 billion, according to data released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information.

The value of re-exports also grew by 4.6 percent to OMR367 million, up from OMR351 million in the corresponding period of 2025, reflecting increased trade activity and re-export operations through Omani ports.

Several export sectors posted notable gains, underscoring the growing competitiveness of Omani products in regional and global markets and supporting the goals of Oman Vision 2040 to diversify income sources and strengthen non-oil economic sectors.

The chemical industries sector recorded the highest growth rate at 17 percent, with exports valued at OMR216 million. The base metals sector followed with growth of 10.8 percent, reaching OMR376 million, while exports of live animals and animal products increased by 6 percent to OMR104 million.

The United Arab Emirates remained the leading destination for Omani non-oil exports, receiving goods worth OMR382 million, accounting for 23.7 percent of total exports. It was followed by Saudi Arabia with OMR 201 million, India with OMR156 million, South Korea with OMR 154 million, and the United States with OMR 133 million.

The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, through its "Oman Ex-

ports" initiative, continues to implement programmes aimed at enhancing the competitiveness of Omani products, supporting exporters, facilitating trade procedures, and expanding access to international markets.

Eng. Ghalib bin Said Al Maamari, Undersecretary for Trade and Industry, said the results demonstrate the success of national efforts to diversify the economy and boost non-oil exports.

He noted that the ministry is working to build an integrated export ecosystem that enables Omani companies to capitalise on global trade opportunities and strengthen the Sultanate's position in international markets.

The ministry's initiatives include specialised market studies, exporter training programmes, participation in international exhibitions, and business-to-business meetings with trade partners and importers worldwide.

Meanwhile, Lubna bint Mohammed Al Harthy, Director of the Export Development Department, said "Oman Exports" continues to enhance services and programmes designed to empower Omani exporters and help them tap opportunities in foreign markets.

The latest figures highlight the growing presence of Omani products internationally, supported by quality standards, competitiveness, and sustained government efforts to expand trade ties and open new markets, contributing to economic diversification and long-term sustainability.

## AL AWABI

# Grape Festival opens in South Al Batinah

Times News Service

**MUSCAT:** The second edition of the Al Awabi Grape Festival officially opened in Wadi Bani Kharous in Al Awabi, South Al Batinah Governorate, under the patronage of Sayyid Ibrahim bin Said Al Busaidi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism.

The two-day festival aims to showcase Oman's locally grown grapes, one of the country's most important seasonal crops, while supporting farmers and encouraging the expansion of grape cultivation and the adoption of modern production techniques.

The event also serves as a platform for promoting local agricultural products, facilitating knowledge exchange among farmers and agricultural specialists, and strengthening the agricultural identity of the region.

An accompanying agricultural



market features broad participation from exhibitors representing various governorates across Oman. Grapes and grape-based products headline the exhibition alongside other seasonal summer crops.

Visitors can also explore a wide range of locally produced goods, including honey, sidr products, natural soaps, and traditional rural crafts created by Omani productive families.

The market provides farmers and small producers with direct access to consumers, helping expand marketing opportunities, support local products, and promote economic sustainability.

The festival's programme includes dedicated displays of different grape varieties and related products, as well as cultural and heritage activities, traditional performances, and educational seminars on modern

agricultural practices.

Productive families, including the Omani Women's Corner in Al Awabi and the Al Awabi Charity Team, are showcasing locally made food products and handicrafts that reflect Oman's rich cultural heritage. Children's activities and grape-tasting sessions further enhance the festival's family-friendly atmosphere.

Sheikh Ishaq bin Salem Al Rawahi, Wali of Al Awabi, said the festival reflects the growing importance of the agricultural sector and demonstrates the commitment of both the local community and government institutions to supporting farmers and improving agricultural production. He noted that the event contributes to strengthening Oman's food security by encouraging local farming, expanding agricultural output, and promoting the sustainable use of natural resources.



COMMENTARY

Legal Framework Governing Holding and Subsidiary Companies in Oman

The Commercial Companies Law of Oman, issued by Royal Decree 18/2019, establishes a structured framework for holding and subsidiary companies to facilitate investment and group business management.

In an exclusive interview with Times of Oman, Dr. Mohammed Ibrahim Al Zadjali, Chairman of Mohammed Ibrahim Law Firm, explained that “a holding company is a joint stock company exercising financial and administrative control over one or more joint stock or limited liability companies, which become its subsidiaries through the holding of at least fifty one percent (51%) of the shares of each of such companies. Importantly, a holding company is statutorily required to invest its

funds through its subsidiaries.”

“The law prohibits holding companies from acquiring shares in general partnerships or limited partnerships or own any shares in other holding companies. A minimum issued share capital of OMR 2,000,000 is required, and the commercial name must include the term “holding company”. The provisions of the joint stock company shall apply to the holding company to the extent that is not inconsistent with the provisions of Commercial Companies Law,” he said.

Dr. Al Zadjali further stated that “the law sets out six objects within which a holding company shall operate: managing subsidiaries or participating in the management of companies in which it is a shareholder; establishing joint stock or limited



liability companies; providing guarantees, loans and finance to subsidiaries; investing in shares, bonds and other securities; acquiring movable and immovable properties within the limits



permitted by law; and acquiring patents, trademarks, concessions and other intangible rights, utilizing and licensing them to subsidiaries and others.”

“A holding company may

be formed by establishing a new joint stock company with holding company objectives, by amending an existing joint stock company’s objective, or by converting a limited liability company,” he said.

He further stated that “a subsidiary company whether a joint stock company or limited liability company has its own independent legal personality, and the holding company bears no liability for its debts. A subsidiary shall not hold shares in any of its holding companies; if it held such shares before becoming a subsidiary, they shall be disposed of within one year from the date subsidiary status is established, with voting rights suspended during that period.”

The law establishes a clear framework for holding and sub-

sidary companies, facilitating investment and the management of corporate group structures, he concluded.

(Mohammed Ibrahim Law Firm (info@mohammedibrahim.net), (+968 244 87 600) was established on 14th December 2006 and is serving clients through its offices in Muscat and Sohar, as well as operating on a request basis in other areas. It offers legal representation across a wide range of practice areas that include Labour Law, Corporate, Commercial, Contracts, Banking and Finance, International Trade, Foreign Investment, Insurance, Maritime Law, Construction and Engineering Contracts, International Arbitration, Intellectual Property and more).

MEETING

Sayyid Badr receives copy of credentials of India’s envoy

Times News Service

**MUSCAT:** Sayyid Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi, Oman’s Foreign Minister, received a copy of the credentials of Prashant Pise, the newly appointed Ambassador of the Republic of India to the Sultanate of Oman, at the Ministry’s General Diwan on Friday.

During the meeting, the Foreign Minister welcomed the ambassador and conveyed his best wishes for success in his diplomatic mission. He also expressed hope that the longstanding friendly relations between Oman and India would continue to grow and prosper across various fields.

The meeting was attended by Ambassador Sheikh Ahmed bin Hashel Al Maskari, Head of the Department of Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf and Regional Neighborhood at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Najib bin Yahya Al Balushi, Head of the Department of Protocol, along with a number



of officials from both sides.

The presentation of credentials marks the formal commencement of Ambassador

Pise’s diplomatic assignment in Oman, reflecting the continued strength of ties between the two countries.

Oman to launch 5th phase of plastic shopping bag ban

The fifth phase seeks to encourage the adoption of sustainable alternatives, strengthen a culture of reuse, and reduce plastic waste generation in line with the goals of Oman Vision 2040



Times News Service

**MUSCAT:** Oman’s Environment Authority will begin implementing the fifth phase of its ban on plastic shopping bags on 1 July 2026, as part of a gradual national plan to reduce plastic pollution, encourage sustainable consumption, and protect the country’s natural resources and biodiversity.

The new phase, introduced under Decision No. 8/2024, will prohibit the use of plastic shopping bags in furniture stores, dagger shops, gold and silver outlets, car care centers, and vehicle dealerships.

According to Engineer Abeer bint Omar Al Qasimi, a chemistry specialist at the Environment Authority, the measure builds on earlier phases aimed at reducing reliance on single-use plastic bags

and promoting environmentally friendly alternatives.

She noted that the fourth phase, implemented during the second half of 2025, recorded encouraging results. The Authority conducted more than 3,000 inspection visits across Oman’s governorates and organised over 200 awareness campaigns.

During the first quarter of 2026 alone, 1,485 inspection visits were carried out, resulting in 106 environmental violations being recorded.

The Authority said these efforts have significantly improved compliance among businesses and increased public awareness of the environmental risks posed by plastic waste, particularly to terrestrial and marine ecosystems.

The fifth phase seeks to further expand the ban, encourage the adoption of sustainable alternatives, strengthen a culture of reuse, and reduce plastic waste generation in line with the goals of Oman Vision 2040 and the principles of the circular economy.

Approved alternatives to plastic shopping bags include paper, cloth, cardboard, cotton, and non-woven fabric bags.

The Environment Authority will continue awareness and monitoring programs in cooperation with relevant stakeholders as it prepares for subsequent phases of the nationwide initiative. It has urged businesses and consumers alike to comply with the regulations and support efforts to safeguard the environment for future generations.

Roane Xu of Jetour International Wins ‘CX Leader of the Year Award’ in Automotive



**Roane Xu**, Country Director of Jetour International, was felicitated with the Times of Oman ‘Customer Experience (CX) Leader of the Year Award’ in the Automotive Category at the Times of Oman CX Awards 2026. The awards presentation was co-located with Times of Oman CX Forum 2026, held at Hotel Kempinski, Muscat. The premier event was attended by over 325 CX leaders across sectors in Oman.

As Country Director for Oman, Roane Xu has played a pivotal role in strengthening Jetour’s presence and customer experience standards in the Sultanate. Working closely with MHD Group, the brand’s distributor in Oman, she has successfully led initiatives focused on enhancing customer satisfaction, strengthening dealer capabilities, and delivering a seamless ownership journey for customers across the country.

Under her leadership, Jetour has achieved significant progress in aligning its products with local market needs while elevating brand perception and customer engagement. Her commitment to service excel-

lence, network development, and after-sales support has contributed to building greater trust and loyalty among customers, helping position Jetour as one of the fastest-growing automotive brands in Oman.

Known for her customer-centric approach and strategic vision, Roane continues to drive initiatives that enhance every stage of the customer journey—from vehicle selection and purchase to ownership and after-sales care. Her efforts have played an important role in setting new benchmarks for customer experience within the automotive sector.

Instituted by Times of Oman in association with Muscat Media Group, Gulf Leaders Circle and TEvents, the Oman Customer Experience (CX) Awards celebrate exceptional professionals, organisations, and brands that have distinguished themselves through excellence in customer experience. The awards recognise those who continue to lead the way in understanding, meeting, and surpassing customer expectations while setting new standards of service excellence and customer-centric innovation.

Co-located with:



For more information, contact: 78471944/97221630

PRACTICAL EXERCISE

Rescue team shows rapid global response capability

Times News Service

**MUSCAT:** Oman’s National Search and Rescue Team, affiliated with the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority (CDAA), has successfully completed all response procedures for a simulated international deployment in less than five hours, surpassing the internationally recognized benchmark of 12 hours. The achievement reflects the team’s high level of operational readiness and efficiency.

The accomplishment came during a practical exercise conducted by the Authority to assess the team’s response speed as part of its ongoing efforts to strengthen preparedness, enhance operational capabilities, and ensure readiness to respond to emergencies at both the national and international levels.

The National Search and Rescue Team is among the world’s elite rescue units holding the INSARAG Heavy Classification, the highest classification awarded by the International Search and Res-



cue Advisory Group (INSARAG). The certification underscores the Authority’s commitment to implementing international best practices and standards in urban search and rescue operations.

The exercise began with the activation of the team’s emergency call-out system, followed by a series of field and administrative procedures.

These included preparing equipment and vehicles, conducting medical examinations, completing operational documentation and deployment requirements, and registering the mission through the IN-

SARAG online coordination system. The exercise concluded with the team’s deployment to the Royal Air Force of Oman air base in preparation for departure to the simulated disaster location.

The successful exercise demonstrates the National Search and Rescue Team’s ability to respond rapidly and effectively to international requests for assistance, highlighting the professionalism of its personnel and reflecting the advanced capabilities of Oman’s search and rescue system in accordance with the highest international standards.



# Oman and France: A deep-rooted strategic partnership and promising horizons for joint cooperation

**< FROM A1** With the launch of the modern renaissance in 1970, relations entered a new phase marked by stability and expansion following their formal establishment in 1972, and the exchange of ambassadors for the first time in 1974, extending to encompass the fields of economy, energy, defence, culture and political coordination.

In the current phase, Omani-French relations reflect an advanced level of coordination and consultation between the leaderships of the two countries.

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and French President Emmanuel Macron have held a series of telephone conversations, the most recent on 31 May 2026, during which they discussed developments in regional and international affairs, diplomatic efforts to support security, stability, freedom of maritime navigation and international trade, as well as avenues for cooperation and partnership between the two friendly nations.

The two countries are expanding cooperation across a range of promising economic and investment sectors, including renewable energy, clean energy solutions, industry, space, logistics, tourism, technology, food security, infrastructure and defence — strengthening mutual interests and opening broader horizons for future partnership.

In April 2026, the two sides held the first round of strategic dialogue in Paris, affirming the depth of their partnership and reviewing avenues for bilateral cooperation, particularly in economic and investment sectors, energy security, culture, education and training, contributing to expanded and elevated cooperation.

On the investment front, Oman signed 17 investment and development agreements worth over OMR762 million during its participation in the MIPIM 2026 international property market in Cannes, covering projects linked to future cities and integrated residential neighbourhoods.

Oman-France Business Council continues to strengthen economic ties and support companies seeking to invest in both markets, leveraging expertise and advanced technologies. During its October 2025 meeting in Muscat, the Council discussed investment opportunities and a work plan to enhance private sector cooperation.

Trade exchange between Oman and France rose to over OMR 100 million in 2025, according to the National Centre for Statistics and Information. French imports to Oman increased from OMR 63.1 million in 2024 to OMR70.8 million in 2025, while Omani exports to France exceeded OMR 29 million, including aluminium, iron, polyethylene, pharmaceuticals and other products.

Registered companies in Oman with French participation reached about 298 by end-2025, a 29.53 percent increase from 210 in 2024, according to the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion. French invested capital rose from over OMR16.9 million to over OMR 19.7 million, an increase of 16.84 percent, concentrated in wholesale and retail trade, professional, scientific and technical activities, and information and communications.

Both sides are working to set targets for increasing trade volumes and diversifying the commodity base, while boosting the share of non-oil products, including industrial, food, pharmaceutical and technology goods.

A number of leading French investors and companies are expected to take part in the second edition of the “Advantage Oman” forum, scheduled for October 2026 in Muscat. The forum will also be promoted in France through bodies such as Business France, chambers of commerce, business federations and investment funds, helping to showcase promising investment opportunities in the Sultanate of Oman.

Ahmed bin Mohammed Al Arai-mi, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to French Republic, said in a statement to Oman News Agency (ONA) that His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik’s official visit to France marks an important



milestone in Omani-French relations, reflecting their continued growth and deep-rooted strategic partnership.

The visit reaffirms the depth of bilateral ties and the commitment of both leaderships to strengthening cooperation across various fields, as well as coordinating positions on regional and international issues of common concern, particularly developments in the region, he said.

The ambassador added that the visit is expected to see the signing of several agreements and memoranda of understanding in the economic, investment and commercial fields, helping to boost trade and investment and open new avenues for cooperation between the two countries.

The ambassador said that the Omani-French economic relations are witnessing continued growth, with promising opportunities ahead for deeper partnership across vital sectors including renewable energy, modern technologies, innovation and logistics. Both sides are working to explore new investment opportunities that support economic diversification and sustainable development in both countries, he added.

French investments are of great interest in the Sultanate of Oman, with French companies implementing strategic projects in energy, logistics, modern technologies, recycling and space, the ambassador noted. These include the joint LNG project between OQ Group and TotalEnergies, the Manah 1 solar project, power and water projects in Barka and Sohar, and the OmanSat-1 satellite project, reflecting mutual trust and Oman’s position as an attractive destination for quality investment.

On culture and education, cooperation builds on a historical legacy and deep civilisational ties, providing a strong foundation for academic and cultural exchange, the ambassador said. Joint programmes for teaching Arabic and French, student exchange, scholarships and training are already in place.

A key example is the annual summer French language programme for Omani students in France, now in its third edition with the Institut de Touraine, alongside scholarships offered by the Sultan Qaboos Institute for Teaching Arabic to Non-Native Speakers to French students, with reciprocal French programmes for learning French.

Fifty-nine Omani students are currently enrolled in French higher education institutions, and 38 doctors from the Ministry of Health are undergoing specialised training in France, reflecting the vitality and promising prospects of academic and scientific cooperation between the two countries, the ambassador added.

Nabil Hajlaoui, Ambassador of the French Republic to the Sultanate of Oman said the official visit of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to France holds particular significance giv-

## INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

### HM the Sultan to leave for France today

**< FROM A1** “His Majesty’s visit to the French Republic comes within the framework of strengthening all that would elevate the existing domains of cooperation between the two countries across various fields and avenues for their development, in a manner that serves their mutual interests and aspirations, both present and future, and in continuation of consultation and coordination between the two leaderships to examine various developments on the re-

gional and international arenas.

“Accompanying His Majesty the Sultan during his visit will be a high-level official delegation comprising: His Highness Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik Al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs; Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal Al Busaidi, Minister of the Diwan of the Royal Court; Gen. Sultan bin Mohammed Al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office; Sayyid Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister; Dr. Hamad bin Said Al Aufi, Head of the Private Office; Abdulsalam

bin Mohammed Al Murshidi, Chairman of Oman Investment Authority; Anwar bin Hilal Al Jabri, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion; and Ahmed bin Mohammed Al Arai-mi, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the French Republic.

“May Allah the Almighty protect His Majesty the Sultan wherever he may be, grant him good health and well-being, and guide him to all that is good for the beloved nation and the entire world.”

en the current regional context, adding that it will leave a positive mark on the course of bilateral relations across all areas.

The visit crowns a series of meetings and contacts between the two sides over recent months, including ongoing telephone exchanges between the leaderships and ministers of both countries, he said.

His Majesty’s visit is set to give new momentum to Omani-French relations through the launch of major projects that will shape co-operation in the years ahead, the ambassador added.

He noted that the visit offers France an opportunity to reaffirm its solidarity with Oman’s steadfast position, grounded in respect for international law, dialogue and the pursuit of peace.

Several French companies are investing in Oman across tourism, transport, logistics, modern technologies, space, water and waste treatment, and renewable energy, the ambassador said, adding that French firms have invested more than \$1.7 billion in the energy sector over the past two years.

Economic partnerships between Omani and French parties have grown notably across various sectors in recent periods, he added.

During the visit, agreements are expected to be signed or projects worth approximately \$2.25 billion to be announced in areas includ-

ing water treatment, environment, transport, space, technology, energy transition and others, the ambassador said.

French companies are looking to expand their investments and demonstrate their expertise in port management, logistics, environmentally friendly transport solutions such as electric trains and metro systems, and advanced technologies including satellites, radar systems and air transport, the French Ambassador to Oman said. These sectors, he added, would contribute to achieving the targets of Oman Vision 2040.

On political coordination, he confirmed that Oman and France maintain continuous communication to exchange views and discuss shared positions, reflecting a significant alignment between the two countries and agreement on upholding peaceful solutions to crises, international law and UN resolutions.

President Emmanuel Macron of the French Republic has praised Oman’s calls for peaceful solutions and de-escalation, as well as its ongoing mediation efforts, the ambassador said, adding that President Macron has emphasised the importance of international law, a priority for both France and Oman.

On cultural and human ties, the ambassador said the two countries are strengthening bonds through jointly funded scholarships for Omani students in France, noting growing interest in French universities and institutes, while France also receives Omani physicians annually for specialisation and professional development.

He expressed hope for an increase in Omani students at the International French School of Muscat (LFiM), noting that the French Cultural and Learning Centre (Centre Franco Omanais) receives more than 600 French language learners each year.

The two sides are also working on an ambitious project for the Omani-French Museum “Bait Faransa,” to be inaugurated upon completion of the restoration of the historic building, the ambassador

said. A French academic cooperation project has also been launched with Oman Through Ages Museum, including training programmes and expertise exchange.

Faisal bin Abdullah Al Rowas, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) said the official visit of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to French Republic reflects Oman’s standing on the international stage and growing confidence in it as a reliable partner capable of building sustainable strategic partnerships with countries worldwide.

The visit confirms the depth of Omani-French historical relations and establishes a new phase of cooperation based on expanding economic, investment and technological partnership, in line with the development priorities of both countries and their mutual interests, he said.

France is one of Oman’s important economic partners, Al Rowas said, noting that the coming period holds promising opportunities in value-added sectors including renewable energy and green hydrogen, advanced industries, transport and logistics, digital transformation and artificial intelligence, tourism, and the blue economy.

The rapid economic transformations under Oman Vision 2040 have enhanced Oman’s investment appeal and cemented its position as a promising regional business and investment hub, providing a conducive environment for long-term partnerships with leading French companies, he added.

The Omani private sector views the visit as a strategic opportunity to expand cooperation with French counterparts, benefit from expertise and advanced technologies, and open new horizons for joint investment and trade, strengthening the private sector’s role as a key partner in sustainable economic development, Al Rowas said.

The Chamber has worked over recent years to strengthen communication between the business communities of both countries through meetings, trade delegations and joint economic events,

helping to showcase investment opportunities and expand cooperation, he added.

The visit represents a significant boost to Omani-French relations, opening broader horizons for economic, investment and technological cooperation and attracting more quality projects, supporting economic diversification and reinforcing Oman’s position as an attractive investment destination and economic partner regionally and internationally, Al Rowas concluded.

He concluded by noting that the Oman-France Business Council continues to serve as a cornerstone in supporting economic partnerships and advancing trade and investment relations between the two friendly countries.

Jamil bin Ali Sultan, Chairman of the Omani side of the Oman-France Joint Business Council, said the official visit of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to France represents a key opportunity to strengthen the private sector’s role in both countries and to translate growing bilateral ties into more effective and sustainable economic and investment partnerships.

The Council has worked over recent years to build direct communication channels between business communities through joint meetings, trade delegations and bilateral gatherings, helping to showcase investment opportunities, exchange expertise and explore new areas for cooperation, he said.

The coming period will see the Council play a greater role in following up on the visit’s outcomes through joint work programmes, specialised sectoral meetings and closer investor dialogue, turning opportunities into practical partnerships that add value to both economies, he added.

The Council will continue encouraging trade delegations, strengthening private sector links, attracting French investment to Oman, and supporting Omani firms in building sustainable trade and investment relationships with French counterparts, benefiting from France’s advanced expertise across various sectors, he said.

The success of the visit will be reflected in the private sector’s ability to seize opportunities and build quality partnerships that boost trade exchange and joint investments, strengthening the presence of Omani and French companies in promising markets, he added.

He affirmed that the Council would continue enhancing communication between business communities and supporting initiatives that expand economic cooperation, in line with the aspirations of both leaderships and serving mutual interests.

The Royal visit is expected to give new momentum to Omani-French relations, building on a shared vision of expanding cooperation and deepening partnership, while promoting dialogue, cooperation, security, stability and sustainable development. -ONA



COMMENTARY

What She Carried

My mother had a PhD she kept in a drawer, and a family she kept alive. No one counted the second

Dr. Kalpna My mother had a PhD in economics. Most nights, she spent it packing two lunchboxes and grading home-work that wasn't hers.

She was a gold medalist. University of Allahabad. Dr. Kalpna. And the best years of that mind went to long division, dinner, and tomorrow's breakfast.

She had wanted to be a doctor. She sat the pre-medical test, one of the most dreaded exams in the country, and missed it by two marks. She took the next thing, economics, a field that wasn't even hers, and topped it. Hand my mother the wrong life, and she would still come first in it.

Then she married and moved to Muscat, a city she had never seen. There was no economics post waiting for her, so she taught herself computer science. Then I came along, and she made her last pivot. School-teacher. For the hours. Seven to two. Home for me.

She didn't end up at that kitchen table because she had nothing else to be. She ended up there because she chose me.

Here is what no one saw. She came home at two, and the second shift began. My homework beside her, subject by subject. Dinner. Then tomorrow, built before she slept. A doctorate in the next room. A school by day. A household by night. Every night.

She never once presented the bill

A whole generation of women ran this shift. Almost none of them were ever thanked for



by PRATEEK MATHUR



it. I am thanking mine now, eight thousand miles and a few months too late.

During my board exams she called from a paid phone in the school corridor, between her classes, every two hours, to ask one thing. "Beta, kitna hua?" How much have you done. She called me her whole life. Every day. Until this year.

People tell me I'm resilient. That I do well in rooms I don't belong in. That isn't mine. It belongs to a woman who missed by two marks and topped the next field, who beat cancer and passed a foreign exam at fifty-five to win back a classroom they tried to take from her. I didn't inherit her gold medal. I inherited the engine that won it.

If your mother is still a phone call away, do this. There is a whole person behind the

woman who packs your lunch. Count her evenings. Ask her what she gave up. Thank her, out loud, while she can still hear it.

I'm bringing her thesis home. Five hundred pages on demography, the study of how people are born, and move, and disappear. I will never read it. I'll keep it where I can see it, to remember that before she was the woman at the kitchen table, she was Dr. Kalpna. The topper. The one who missed by two marks and never missed again.

She told me she was not going anywhere. For thirty-seven years, she never did. Now I'm the one asking. Maa, kitna hua? How much did you carry. I am finally ready to listen.

(The author is a former Indian School Muscat student and a Houston-based professional)

TELEPHONE CALLS

Sayyid Badr holds talks with Saudi, Egyptian counterparts

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman's Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi held a telephone call on Friday evening with Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud, Foreign Minister of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The Ministers exchanged views on developments in the region, particularly those related to navigation through the Strait of Hormuz.

They reaffirmed their countries' support for all efforts aimed at ensuring the successful implementation of the understandings reached, including safeguarding freedom, safety and security of navigation across the region, in accordance with international law and respect for the sovereignty of states.

Sayyid Badr also held a telephone call with Badr Abdelatty, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Emigration and Egyptian Expatriates of Egypt.

The Ministers discussed the latest regional developments and diplomatic efforts aimed at containing tensions, advancing de-escalation and creating the conditions for the resumption of dialogue and broader political understandings.

They exchanged views on issues of mutual interest, foremost among them safeguarding the security and safety of maritime



routes and ensuring the uninterrupted flow of trade and energy through the Strait of Hormuz and other international waterways.

The Ministers affirmed the importance of continuing coordination and consultation between the two countries and of supporting peaceful political solutions that contribute to strengthening security and stability across the region.

Sayyid Badr receives phone call from Mauritanian counterpart

Sayyid Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi received a telephone call from Mohamed Salem Ould Merzoug, Minister of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation and Mauritanians Abroad of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania.

The call reviewed the brotherly relations between Oman and

Mauritania. The Mauritanian Minister conveyed his country's appreciation for Oman's policy and its wise leadership in promoting security and stability across the region.

He commended Oman's longstanding role and its values in advancing peace, harmony and constructive cooperation with all countries.

The Minister expressed his country's pride in the brotherly ties with Oman and its commitment to further strengthening cooperation across all vital sectors.

Sayyid Badr expressed the same sentiments towards the leadership and people of Mauritania, reaffirming a commitment to expanding cooperation between the two brotherly countries in ways that serve their shared interests and bring greater mutual benefit.

PHONE CALL

Oman, Niger foreign ministers discuss bilateral cooperation

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman's Foreign Minister, Sayyid Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi, received a phone call on Saturday from Niger's minister of Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and Nigeriens Abroad, Bakary

Yaou Sangaré.

During the conversation, the two ministers reviewed opportunities to enhance cooperation and partnership between Oman and Niger and explored ways to further develop bilateral relations.

They also agreed to organise reciprocal visits involving both public- and private-sector representatives to continue consultations and joint efforts aimed at strengthening ties and advancing shared interests in the coming period.



MUSCAT GOVERNORATE  
MUSCAT MUNICIPALITY

Advertisement No.(19/2026)

Muscat Municipality invites Companies specialized in the field and registered with General Secretariat of Tender Board, to participate and obtain tender documents from the website via the following link: (https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om starting from the date of this announcement and until the end of deadline stipulated below.

| Tender Number          | Description of Tender                                                                                      | Last date to collect the tender | Tender return date |
|------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------|
| PRE-24-129 (Re-Call 3) | Design & Construction of a Site for Itinerant Vendors in Al Maabilah South (Al Maabilah Masar) (Re Call 3) | 16/07/2026                      | 06/08/2026         |
| PRE-26-084 (Re-Call)   | Maintenance Of Arches Fountain at Ourm (Re-Call)                                                           | 05/07/2026                      | 13/07/2026         |
| PRE-26-092             | Landscaping Maintenance & Cleaning Works at Bousher (A)                                                    | 16/07/2026                      | 06/08/2026         |
| PRE-26-093             | Landscaping Maintenance & Cleaning Works in Bousher (B)                                                    | 16/07/2026                      | 06/08/2026         |
| PRE-26-094             | Landscaping Maintenance & Cleaning Works at Airport Area                                                   | 16/07/2026                      | 06/08/2026         |
| PRE-26-095             | Landscaping Maintenance & Cleaning Works in Al Amarat                                                      | 16/07/2026                      | 06/08/2026         |
| PRE-26-096             | Landscaping Maintenance & Cleaning Works in Qurayyat                                                       | 16/07/2026                      | 06/08/2026         |
| PRE-26-099             | RFP for Application Support for Oracle EBS CRM                                                             | 16/07/2026                      | 06/08/2026         |
| PRE-26-100             | Construction of Greenhouses                                                                                | 16/07/2026                      | 06/08/2026         |
| PRE-26-101             | Beautification & Development Works of Muscat Gate & Al Jifina                                              | 16/07/2026                      | 06/08/2026         |
| PRE-26-102             | Rental of Equipment & Vehicles for MM (Unit Rate)                                                          | 16/07/2026                      | 06/08/2026         |
| PRE-26-103             | Provision of Cleaners for MM                                                                               | 16/07/2026                      | 06/08/2026         |
| PRS-26-030             | Purchase of ink, spare parts, and maintenance of mainframe printers                                        | 16/07/2026                      | 06/08/2026         |

- Bidders shall submit their offers electronically.
- Clarification and Support:
  - For any inquiries regarding tenders, please visit e-tendering website: (https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om) .
  - For technical support of e-tendering system please send an email to (etenderhd@PTLC.gov.om) or call (+96824402200).

Website: [www.mm.gov.om](http://www.mm.gov.om)

TENDER  
ANNOUNCEMENT

The TENDERS Committee announces the following tenders:

| Tender No.           | Subject                                                                                                                                                                         | Document Fees | Tender Bond     | Closing Date     |
|----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|-----------------|------------------|
| MJN-KWM-PM-TED-00032 | Invitation for submission of bids for Facilities management, food, laundry, waste management, cleaning & pest control services at the Karwa Motors factory Porta cabin facility | OMR 100/-     | 1% of Bid Value | 08th August 2026 |

Conditions:

- The tender documents package can be obtained from the Procurement Department of the company from the 28th of June 2026 from 8:00 AM – 3:00 PM, upon payment of a non-refundable document fees to the following bank account and providing proof of deposit and signed authorization letter to collect tender document with company stamp.
- Payment should be processed by bank transfer or deposit to the following bank coordinates or by cash:
  - Account Name: **KARWA MOTORS LLC**
  - Bank Name: **Qatar National Bank (QNB) – Oman**
  - Bank Branch: **Ruwi Branch, Sultanate of Oman**
  - Account Number: **2351-000250-121**
  - Swift Code: **QNBOMRXXXX**
  - IBAN: **OM05 0320 0023 5100 0250 121**
- KEY DATES:**
  - Issue Tender Package:** 28th of June 2026 to 02nd July 2026 (Weekdays)
  - Compulsory Tender Briefing:** 07th of July 2026 (Karwa Motors factory, Duqm), at 11:00 am
  - Last Date for Queries:** 13th of July 2026
  - Last Date for Submission:** 08 Of August 2026 by 12 Noon.
- Tender should be submitted not later than 12.00 noon on the closing date and must be deposited. Karwa Motors Tendering Office, located Office No 5-25,02nd Floor, Finaa Al Fardan Building No.254, Way 4204, Plot No 836, North Al Ghubra, Postal Code: 1115, Muscat, and should be in sealed envelopes addressed to: Tender Committee, Karwa Motors quoting the Tender No. and subject.
- Offers arriving after the closing date & time shall not be accepted

Together, every mile

KARWAMOTORS





# HM’s France visit draws global media attention

The visit has attracted extensive media coverage in France, across the Arab world, and among international news outlets, with many highlighting its political, economic, and strategic significance

Times News Service

**MUSCAT:** French authorities have completed preparations to welcome His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik ahead of his official visit to the French Republic, which begins on Sunday at the invitation of French President Emmanuel Macron.

The visit comes as part of ongoing efforts to elevate the strategic partnership between Oman and France by strengthening cooperation in the economic, investment, scientific, and cultural fields, while opening new avenues of collabora-



tion that serve the mutual interests of the two friendly nations.

The visit has attracted extensive media coverage in France, across the Arab world, and among international news outlets, with many highlighting its political, economic, and strategic significance. Commentators have described the visit as an important milestone in Oman-France relations and a reflection of Oman's growing international standing and its balanced role in promoting regional security and stability.

The Élysée Palace has included Sultan Haitham's visit in President Macron's official agenda, listing it among the French president's key diplomatic engagements, underscoring the importance France attaches to the visit and to bilateral relations with Oman.

French media have focused on the visit's agenda, which includes talks between His Majesty Sultan Haitham and President Macron,

the signing of several bilateral agreements, and the organisation of a business forum bringing together senior officials and private sector representatives from both countries to promote investment opportunities and deepen economic partnerships.

Major French newspapers, including Le Monde, Le Figaro, Libération, and Les Echos, reported on the visit, largely citing announcements from Agence France-Presse (AFP) and the Élysée Palace while featuring the visit prominently in their diplomatic coverage.

Regional security issues are also expected to feature prominently during the discussions, particularly international maritime security in the Strait of Hormuz, efforts to reduce regional tensions, and Oman's longstanding role in facilitating dialogue and promoting peace and stability.

French broadcaster France 24 published an analysis titled "The

Sultan of Oman to Visit Paris: What Is at Stake?", examining the political and strategic dimensions of the visit and its significance amid current regional developments.

Other regional media outlets, including Shams News, highlighted that the visit marks His Majesty Sultan Haitham's first official visit to France and reported that discussions will cover maritime security alongside bilateral cooperation in the economic, scientific, and cultural sectors, as well as the signing of several agreements.

Meanwhile, Al-Araby Al-Jadeed focused on regional security issues, particularly maritime navigation in the Strait of Hormuz, while Egypt's Al-Ahram Gate described the visit as an important step in strengthening bilateral ties.

Italy's Nova News Agency also published a report emphasising the visit's objectives, Oman-France cooperation, and its importance in light of regional developments, with particular attention to economic partnerships, investment, and maritime security.

The breadth of regional and international media coverage reflects the high level of interest surrounding the visit and its significance as an opportunity to further strengthen Oman-France relations, expand strategic cooperation, enhance political coordination on issues of mutual concern, and contribute to regional and international peace, stability, and sustainable development.



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

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

**EDITORIAL:** Telephone: 24726666, Fax: 24813153, E-mail: editor@timesofoman.com  
**ADVERTISING:** Telephone: 22009004, E-mail: amcoman@choueirgroup.com  
**CIRCULATION:** Telephone: 24726666, Fax: 24818270, E-mail: circulation@timesofoman.com

## EIGHTH CONFERENCE

# Oman calls for stronger Arab cooperation



**CAIRO:** The Sultanate of Oman participated in the eighth conference of the Arab Parliament and Speakers of Arab Councils and Parliaments, held in partnership with the Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union at the headquarters of the League of Arab States in Cairo.

The conference aimed to coordinate positions and unify visions on key Arab issues. Discussions focused on strengthening the role of Arab parliamentarians in safeguarding Arab national security, enhancing parliamentary efforts to confront attempts to undermine the Palestinian cause, addressing ongoing Israeli violations against the Palestinian people, and supporting the establishment of an independent Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital. Participants also discussed strategic issues related to the future of development across Arab countries.

This year's conference placed particular emphasis on promoting Arab digital sovereignty through the development of legislative frameworks that support the creation of a secure digital environment capable of advancing sustainable development and protecting the strategic interests of Arab nations.

Oman's delegation was headed by Khalid bin Hilal Al Maawali, Chairman of the Shura Council. In his address, Al Maawali called for the development of joint Arab action mechanisms and the establishment of more effective partnerships in the fields of security, development, technology and economics.

He stressed the importance of investing in people, knowledge and innovation, noting that nations capable of understanding change and anticipating future trends are best positioned to protect their interests and create opportunities. In contrast, countries that rely solely on reacting to events often become preoccupied with managing crises rather than shaping the future.

Al Maawali said recent developments and rapid changes in the region require a moment of reflection and an objective review based on a realistic assessment of current challenges.

He emphasised the need to draw lessons that strengthen resilience and improve the region's ability to confront future challenges.

He also underlined the importance of continuing international and regional efforts to address the root causes of conflicts and crises, while promoting dialogue and mutual understanding. Such efforts, he said, are essential to achieving a permanent cessation of hostilities, enhancing security, stability and development, and fulfilling the aspirations of the region's peoples for a more secure and prosperous future.

Reaffirming Oman's longstanding position on the Palestinian issue, Al Maawali described the Palestinian cause as the central issue of the Arab nation and a matter of justice, rights and human dignity. He said the continued suffering of the Palestinian people and the deteriorating humanitarian situation in the Palestinian territories require more effective international action to protect civilians in accordance with international humanitarian law and ensure that Palestinians obtain their legitimate rights.

Addressing technological developments, Al Maawali noted that rapid advances in technology have created new dimensions of national security, making greater preparedness, cooperation and coordination essential.

## INFORMATION DISSEMINATION

# Nepal embassy organises export and tourism promotion event

Times News Service

**MUSCAT:** The Embassy of Nepal in Muscat organised an Export, Investment, Tourism and Employment promotion programme titled "Economic Partnerships for Mutual Prosperity" at Crown Plaza Muscat Hotel on 24 June 2026.

The event focused on information dissemination related to the opportunities of export from Nepal and investment avenues in Nepal, labour regulations of Oman, tourism promotion and establishing connection between the Nepali and Omani businesspersons.

More than 100 participants, including CEOs, Directors, Managers and representatives of different supermarkets and companies, Media persons, Nepali entrepreneurs and Nepali community members attended the event.

Ambassador Dornath Aryal lit the Panas to formally commence the event.

In his welcome remarks, Ambassador Aryal highlighted Nepal's broad potential in trade, investment and tourism.

He outlined the country's priority sectors for foreign investment



and invited Omani investors and businesspersons to explore opportunities in Nepal.

He said, "Nepal is strategically located between India and China, two of the world's largest and fastest-growing economies, with a combined population of about 2.8 billion. This unique geographic position gives Nepal significant potential as a bridge for trade, investment and tourism."

Bishesh Kumar Sah, First Secretary, presented the potential of

exports from Nepal enlisting a few products with comparative advantages.

He also briefed the gathering about the vast investment opportunities in Nepal for the Omani investors.

Sah further explained the process one could take up to commence their business or investment in Nepal.

He also informed that the Embassy is always ready to facilitate anyone willing to do business in Nepal.

ness in Nepal.

Ms. Khawla Mohammed Al Sadooni, a corporate and litigation lawyer, delivered a presentation on the practical aspects of labour rules and regulations that must be followed by both workers and employers in Oman.

She explained how workplace issues can be resolved through legal means and how a healthy employee-employer relationship can be maintained.

The Ambassador presented tokens of appreciation to Ms. Khawla Mohammed Al Sadooni and Sulaiman Al Naabi, Everest climber.

A tourism promotional video was screened during the program, showcasing Nepal's natural beauty, cultural richness and diverse tourism offerings.

Participants were encouraged to engage with one another and explore possible collaborations in trade, investment and tourism between Nepal and Oman.

The programme concluded with a dinner for the guests, which included the popular Nepali dishes including Mo:Mo. The event was coordinated and emceed by Bishesh Kumar Sah, First Secretary.

## SURGERY

# Operation brought together a wide range of Omani specialists

**<FROM A1** There, multidisciplinary teams performed organ retrieval and transplantation procedures under a tightly coordinated system designed to preserve organ viability and minimise the time between retrieval and transplantation.

The operation brought together a wide range of Omani specialists, including transplant surgeons, cardiac surgeons, liver and urological surgeons, anesthesiologists, intensive care physicians, hepatologists, emergency medicine specialists, laboratory and blood bank physicians, immunologists, histopathologists, radiologists, nursing teams, operating room technicians, transplant coordinators, ambulance personnel, and supporting administrative and technical staff.

The heart, liver, and kidneys were successfully transplanted into four patients suffering from advanced organ failure. All recipients responded well to treatment, completed rehabilitation programs, and were subsequently discharged from the hospital to continue follow-up care under



specialised medical supervision.

According to Dr Noreen Yousef al Balushi, Director of the Omani Centre for Organ and Tissue Donation and Transplantation, the operation represents a model of effective integration among Oman's healthcare institutions. She said the center oversaw all stages of the process according to approved regulatory frameworks and international best practices, ensuring compliance with medical, legal, ethical, and logistical requirements.

She emphasised that the success reflects the maturity of Oman's organ donation and transplantation system and demonstrates the importance of teamwork and institutional cooperation.

Dr. Al-Balushi noted that organ donation after brain death carries a profound humanitarian message, enabling individuals to continue making a positive impact even after death by saving the lives of others.

She added that such successes strengthen public confidence in

organ donation programs and encourage more people to register as donors. Looking ahead, she said the center aims to build a comprehensive and sustainable national transplantation system by expanding transplant programs to include additional organs and tissues, developing specialised national expertise, upgrading infrastructure, and strengthening local, regional, and international partnerships.

"Our vision is for Oman to become a leading regional model in organ and tissue transplantation, not only in terms of medical excellence but also in promoting a culture of humanitarian giving and social responsibility," she said.

Dr. Al-Warith bin Ahmed Al-Hashimi, Consultant of Liver and Pancreas Surgery and Transplantation and Head of the Organ Transplantation Department at the Royal Hospital, described the operation as a major milestone in the development of Oman's organ donation and transplantation program. He said the successful use of one donor's organs to save four lives highlights the immense human

itarian and medical value of organ donation.

He explained that once brain death was confirmed, multiple specialized teams worked simultaneously to coordinate every stage of the process, from organ assessment and recipient selection to transplantation and post-operative care. One of the greatest challenges, he noted, is time, as each organ must be removed, transported, and transplanted within a limited period to ensure viability and maximize success rates.

Despite these challenges, Oman's medical teams successfully completed the operation through experience, continuous training, teamwork, and adherence to established protocols.

Dr. Al-Hashimi also expressed gratitude to the donor's family for their compassionate decision, emphasizing that one donor can save several lives and transform the futures of entire families. He called on the public to learn more about organ donation after death, describing it as one of the highest forms of humanitarian giving and

a powerful expression of solidarity and compassion.

The Royal Hospital, Khoula Hospital, and the Omani Center for Organ and Tissue Donation and Transplantation jointly praised the donor's family for their generosity, noting that their decision not only saved four lives but also strengthened the culture of organ donation as a lasting legacy of hope and life.

The achievement further underscores Oman's progress in advanced transplant medicine. Notably, the operation included the third successful heart transplant performed in the Sultanate, highlighting the growing capabilities of national medical teams and the country's commitment to expanding life-saving organ transplantation services.

Health authorities reaffirmed their commitment to enhancing public awareness of organ donation and further developing transplantation programs to provide hope and improved quality of life for patients awaiting critical organ transplants across Oman.



# Iran seeks ‘insurance mechanism’ to reduce risks for ships transiting through Hormuz

Responding to a question on how the Iranian leadership views the future of the Strait of Hormuz as negotiations progress with the US, Major General Mohsen Rezaei said there were ongoing discussions over fees and service costs related to the passage



**TEHRAN:** Senior Iranian leader and former commander in Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) Major General Mohsen Rezaei has called for the establishment of an “insurance mechanism” for ships transiting

the Strait of Hormuz, saying vessels involved in incidents should be covered to reduce risks while arguing that the associated costs should be borne by oil transporters rather than the Iranian people. Speaking in an interview with US-based NewsNation on Thursday, Rezaei, who also serves as a senior adviser to Iran's Supreme Leader, Mojtaba Khamenei, out-

lined Tehran's position on the future of the strategic waterway amid ongoing discussions over regional security. Responding to a question on how the Iranian leadership views the future of the Strait of Hormuz as negotiations progress with the US, Rezaei said there were ongoing discussions over fees and service costs related to the passage.

“Regarding fees, there is a cost to mention in this matter. There is a tolls discussion and a fees discussion. There is a discussion about service costs in the Strait of Hormuz,” he said. Rezaei said Iran wants to ensure security and environmental protection in the strategic maritime corridor while proposing an insurance framework for

commercial vessels. “Yes, we want to maintain the security of the Strait of Hormuz. We want to protect the environment of the Strait of Hormuz. We must establish an insurance mechanism so that ships involved in incidents or encountering problems are covered to reduce their risk,” he added. He further stated that the financial burden of such measures should not fall on Iran. “When we provide all of this, these costs cannot come out of the pockets of the Iranian people. These costs must be collected from those who are transporting oil through the Strait of Hormuz,” Rezaei said. The issue of levying fees on vessels transiting the Strait of Hormuz has emerged as a key point of contention between Tehran and Washington as part of their talks. Iran has argued that ships using the strategic waterway should contribute towards security and related services, while the United States has repeatedly rejected any proposal for tolls or maritime transit fees, maintaining freedom of navigation through the international shipping lane. US President Donald Trump has reportedly slammed the idea by Tehran, saying that it would be “unacceptable” to him if the Iran deal included any kind of fees on

shipping or maritime activities in the Strait of Hormuz. Trump, while talking to reporters during his meeting with the NATO Secretary General, Mark Rutte, on Wednesday, said, “It would be unacceptable to me because we have numerous straits that, if you did that for them, you'd have to do for other people. You have other straits; well, I wouldn't allow it there either. Yeah, it would be a game changer.” Trump earlier also claimed that Tehran has given formal assurances to Washington on not imposing transit charges on vessels navigating the vital Strait. The Strait of Hormuz, a global maritime chokepoint that facilitates nearly 20 per cent of the world's seaborne oil trade, has been a source of volatility following reports of potential Iranian regulation of traffic. Seeking to calm industry fears, Trump took to Truth Social to relay the commitment from Tehran. “Iran has informed us that there will be ‘NO TOLLS, NO INSURANCE COSTS, & NO OTHER CHARGES OF ANY KIND’ on commercial shipping,” the post read. He underscored the gravity of the pledge with a clear diplomatic ultimatum: “If this is false information, negotiations would end, immediately!” – ANI

ISRAELI AIRSTRIKE

## 2 Palestinians killed in Gaza

**GAZA:** Two Palestinians, including a child, were killed on Saturday in an Israeli airstrike that targeted two tents sheltering displaced people in the al-Mawasi area, west of Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip, according to Palestinian medical sources. Medical sources at Nasser Medical Complex in Khan Younis told Xinhua that the hospital received two bodies, one of which was a 15-year-old girl. The sources added that the hospital also received seven wounded as a result of the Israeli airstrike. The total number of deaths since Oct. 7, 2023, has risen to 73,051, with 173,437 injured. – Xinhua

BRITISH MARITIME AGENCY

## Tanker hit by ‘unidentified projectile’ in Strait of Hormuz

**LONDON:** A tanker transiting through the strategic Strait of Hormuz has been targeted and hit in the latest maritime incident, according to the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO). The captain of the tanker confirmed that the vessel was struck by “an unidentified projectile”, the British maritime agency disclosed. The UKMTO added that the vessel sustained damage to the bridge. Crucially, all crew members are reported safe, and no environmental damage has been reported at present following the impact. Relevant maritime authorities are currently investigating the incident, the UKMTO said.



Earlier, the United States launched military strikes targeting Iranian missile and drone

storage facilities, alongside coastal radar installations, following allegations from Washington that

Tehran targeted a cargo ship navigating the same waterway. US Central Command (CENTCOM) stated that the counter-strikes served as a “powerful response” to the recent maritime assault. In an official statement detailing the incident, the Central Command noted, “US aircraft struck Iranian missile and drone storage locations and coastal radar sites after Iran hit M/V Ever Lovely on June 25 with a one-way attack drone. The Singapore-flagged cargo ship was exiting the Strait of Hormuz along the Omani coast at the time of Iran's attack.” “The unwarranted aggression against commercial shipping by Iranian forces clearly violated the ceasefire. Furthermore, Iran's

dangerous behaviour undermined freedom of navigation as commerce increasingly flows through the vital international trade corridor,” the statement read further. To counter these threats, American forces continue to extend “safe passage coordination and support” to commercial vessels transiting through the area, where approximately one-fifth of global oil and liquefied natural gas shipments routinely pass. “The US military remains present and vigilant to ensure all aspects of the agreement with Iran are adhered to, obeyed, and in full force and effect,” the Central Command added, whilst also publishing a 37-second video documenting the aerial strikes. – ANI

BILATERAL ENGAGEMENTS

## Indian PM Modi touches down in Seychelles on three-day visit

**VICTORIA:** Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has arrived at the Seychelles International Airport, marking the commencement of his high-profile three-day official visit to the island nation. Upon his landing in the capital city of Victoria, the Prime Minister was accorded a warm reception, setting the stage for his comprehensive bilateral engagements and interactions with the enthusiastic Indian diaspora awaiting him. The Prime Minister had departed for the country on Saturday, primarily aiming to attend the landmark Golden Jubilee National Day events. Prior to his departure, he highlighted the special timing of his trip, posting on X, “This year, it is even more special because it is the Golden Jubilee celebrations.” He also characterised the island state as a “valued maritime neighbour” while emphasising its crucial role in New Delhi's Vision MAHASAGAR and ongoing initiatives to champion the cause of the Global South. Following the reception, a key focus of the itinerary is a high-level dialogue with Seychelles President Patrick Herminie. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) noted that the two leaders are set to comprehensively evaluate the entire range of India-Seychelles engagement, encompassing maritime security, developmental cooperation, capacity enhancement, and strategic defence partnerships. They will also deliberate on regional and international matters of shared concern. Underscoring his personal equations ahead of these critical talks, “I look forward to discussions with my friend, Dr. Patrick

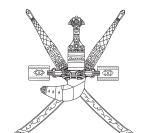


Herminie, President of the Republic of Seychelles,” the Prime Minister stated in a social media update on X. Beyond these leadership talks, Prime Minister Modi is slated to deliver a speech to the National Assembly, highlighting deep-seated bonds, and will interact with members of the local Indian community. Reiterating his enthusiasm for these upcoming engagements, “I am honoured to be addressing the National Assembly of Seychelles during the visit. I also look forward to meeting the Indian community there,” he remarked. According to the MEA, the Indian Ocean area holds a pivotal position in bilateral relations. Both democracies share enduring historical, cultural, and financial connections, and this visit is projected to reinforce the robust alliance while opening new avenues for collaboration, marking the Prime Minister's first official visit to the archipelago since 2015. Expressing his optimism immediately after landing, Prime Minister Modi noted that he anticipates a highly productive visit geared towards deepening bilateral cooperation.

Taking to social media platform X, the Prime Minister “deeply appreciated” the warm welcome extended at the airport by Seychelles President Patrick Herminie. In his post, PM Modi described Seychelles as a “valued maritime partner” and a close friend in the Indian Ocean. “Deeply appreciate the warm welcome extended at the airport by Dr. Patrick Herminie. Seychelles is a valued maritime partner and a close friend in the Indian Ocean. Looking forward to a productive visit aimed at further strengthening our longstanding ties and enhancing cooperation for the benefit of the people of our nations,” he said. Prime Minister Modi also shared “glimpses from the warm welcome at the airport” on X, expressing deep gratitude to the members of the Indian diaspora who gathered to greet him. “Thankful to the Indian diaspora for the affection,” he said in the post. This spirited greeting highlighted the robust people-to-people connections bridging the two democracies as the Prime Minister began his three-day State Visit to the island territory. – ANI



وزارة التنمية الاجتماعية  
Ministry of Social Development



Tender Announcement

The Internal Tender committee of Ministry of Social Development hereby announces the following tender :-

| Tender No. | Tender Subject                                                                                                                                  | Grade                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Last date for obtainment of tender document | Last date for tender submission | Tender Document Price (non-retundable) |                 |
|------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------------|-----------------|
|            |                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                             |                                 | Small and Medium companies             | Local companies |
| 296/2026   | Providing care services to residents of the Social Welfare House at Rustaq and general services for the Social Welfare House building at Rustaq | Companies specialized in the field of cleaning, washing and pest control service lAfforestation, gardening and garden care services and registered with the Projects, Tenders and Local Content Authority with the excellent, first, second, third or fourth degree | Sunday 12-07-2027 02:00 PM                  | Monday 27-07-2026 10:00 AM      | 10 R.O                                 | 25 R.O          |
| 297/2026   | Providing cleaning services for the National Autism Center building at Al-Khod                                                                  | Companies specialized in the field of cleaning, laundry and pest control services and registered with the Projects, Tenders and Local Content Authority with the excellent, first, second, third or fourth degree                                                   | Sunday 12-07-2026 02:00 PM                  | Monday 27-07-2026 10:00 AM      | 10 R.O                                 | 25 R.O          |

❖ Specialized Companies, registered with the Tender Board may obtain the Tender documents at theTender Board e-tendering digital portal link (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) , On Sunday 28/06/2026

❖ For Inquiry, please contact though the e-tendering website ([reg@tenderboard.gov.om](mailto:reg@tenderboard.gov.om)) Tel. ( 24402200)

**“The lowest or any other tender shall not be binding to the Ministry”**

[www.mosd.gov.om](http://www.mosd.gov.om)



SPORTS

FIRST T20I

India-born Moondra realises dream in famous Ireland win

**STORMONT:** The build-up to Ireland and India's opening T20 was dominated by the possibility of the world champions handing a record-breaking debut to Vaibhav Sooryavanshi.

At 15 years and 91 days old, he appeared set to become India's youngest international after an impossible-to-miss ascension to the national squad following his stunning exploits in the Indian Premier League.

But the batting sensation's surprise absence from the line-up ultimately proved a footnote on a day that belonged to Ireland as the hosts sealed a memorable 34-run win.

Despite missing six players through injury, Ireland produced a gutsy bowling display to claim a first senior international win over the tourists in all competitions -

and add to a list of famous scalps that includes Pakistan and England at the 2007 and 2011 World Cups.

One of the key actors in Ireland's stirring display was India-born pacer Jai Moondra, who took 2-26 on an eye-catching international debut that included removing Sanju Samson with his first delivery.

"It was a big stage for me, for my family and my team members, they were all rooting for me so all I can do is keep calm and keep doing what I have been doing because it's kept me levelling up," said Moondra, who added he will "cherish" his debut for the "rest of my life".

"I was feeling excitement at the same time. Testing myself against India and getting a first-ball wicket, I was trying not to be overwhelmed because we still had nine wickets to go.



"It is a dream come true to get on to an international platform and play against India. It's something special, a class feeling."

Born in Tonk, a small town near Jaipur, the 29-year-old took a step back from cricket and moved to Ireland in 2021 to pursue a mas-

ter's degree in electronics and communication. But having settled in Ireland, he began playing for Leinster Cricket Club in Dublin and was part of the 2023 Irish Senior Cup-winning side.

Moondra has also featured regularly for Leinster Lightning, but his first international call-up came as a result of an injury to Josh Little.

"Cricket Ireland gave me the opportunity," he added.

"I'm really fortunate for that. It's nothing more than doing the duty. I'm just doing what I have been doing. "It is still sinking in but it is a small step in a big ladder and hopefully there's more to come."

Moondra was not the only Ireland debutant to shine in Belfast as Matthew Hollard finished with 3-28 to take the player of the match award.

There were standout perfor-

mances from more seasoned campaigners, too, with Lorcan Tucker marking his first game as permanent captain with a half-century off 36 balls. Hosts claimed a 34-run victory to snap their winless streak against India in the shorter format at the ninth time of asking and 12th in all formats.

New Ireland captain Tucker led Ireland's batting charge, with his half-century helping the hosts post 182-9.

The tourists made a quick start in response as Abhishek Sharma hit 50 off 20 balls, but Ireland refused to panic at sun-splashed Stormont as India were dismissed for 148 with seven balls left. Briefscores: Ireland 182-9 (Tucker 50, Delany 49; Rana 3-24) beat India 148 all out in 18.5 overs (Sharma 50; Hollard 3-28, Humphreys 3-38). - Agencies

TRENT BRIDGE THIRD TEST

NZ secure 84-run first innings lead against England



**LONDON:** New Zealand took eight wickets for 131 runs to seize back control of the Crowe-Thorpe Trophy decider, taking an 84-run first-innings lead on a dry Trent Bridge pitch showing signs of variable bounce on Saturday morning.

Nathan Smith, Will O'Rourke, and concussion replacement Zak Foulkes shared the wickets between them, running through England's middle order before mopping up the tail.

England fought back on the second day to reach the close 223 for 2 but neither Jacob Bethell (74) nor Joe Root (21) added to their overnight scores, while Jamie Smith and Ben Stokes both fell cheaply. Harry Brook's 58 was the only substantial contribution on the third day, and several dismissals suggested that batting last on this pitch will be a stern challenge.

Root was pinned on the front pad by a ball that nipped in sharply when Nathan Smith went wide on the crease, with Rod Tucker's lbw decision upheld via an umpire's call on review.

It was the fourth time he has been dismissed by Smith in 105 balls in Tests and his wicket gave New Zealand an early lift after a brutal second day in the field.

Five balls later, Bethell was caught in two minds as to whether he should play at O'Rourke's tempter in the channel or leave it. Ultimately, he did neither, only withdrawing his bat from the line of the ball after it had struck his outside edge and skewed to second slip, where Tom Latham tumbled backward to hold onto a sharp chance.

Smith's bustling wicket-to-wicket bowling has been hugely effective this month and he surpassed Matt Henry as the series' leading wicket-taker when his namesake Jamie flashed him to slip.

When Daryl Mitchell's excellent low catch was cleared by third umpire Adrian Holdstock, England had lost three wickets in the first 31 minutes of play.

Stokes was given a rousing reception when he walked out to

bat after missing the second Test on disciplinary grounds, but the crowd went silent soon after when he was cleaned up by Foulkes' nip-backer.

He failed to make Devon Conway pay for dropping a difficult chance in the gully, and now averages 16.23 across his 13 Test innings since the start of the Ashes.

Foulkes came into the match as a concussion replacement on the second evening, after Blair Tuckner was hit on the helmet while batting, and bowled a tight spell of 1 for 16 in six overs before lunch; Tom Blundell's presence up to the stumps - replicated throughout Smith's two spells - ensured England's batters remained firmly in their crease.

Brook played with characteristic attacking intent, whipping and slicing consecutive boundaries off Smith and pulling O'Rourke away in front of square on his way to a 66-ball half-century. But he lost his off stump to a Foulkes leg-cutter after lunch, which beat him comprehensively on the outside edge; he has reached 50 three times in the series, but never 60.

Gus Atkinson and Jofra Archer hung around valiantly as Latham burned through New Zealand's reviews, and were both reprieved off O'Rourke's bowling. Archer punched back a return catch which O'Rourke fumbled, cutting his hand in the process, while Ben Sears - who struggled with his run-up and was down on pace - put down a sitter at mid-on.

But after taking the second new ball, Smith found some extra bounce from just short of a length to have Archer caught by Mitchell at slip via the glove for 15, and Atkinson steered to the same man in the same spot for 23 off O'Rourke.

When Josh Tongue miscued Foulkes to midwicket, England had lost their last three wickets for four runs in four overs.

**Brief scores:** England 354 (Duckett 113, Bethell 74, Brook 58, Smith 4-91, Foulkes 3-35, O'Rourke 3-53) trail New Zealand 438 (Conway 157, Latham 151, Stokes 4-70) by 84 runs. - Agencies

Russell claims pole, Verstappen crashes

The Mercedes driver beat Leclerc and Hamilton to Austrian GP pole on Saturday

**SPIELBERG:** Pole position qualifier George Russell of Great Britain and Mercedes driver George Russell claimed pole position on Saturday for the Austrian Grand Prix with a last-gasp qualifying effort that usurped Ferrari pair Charles Leclerc and Lewis Hamilton, moments after Red Bull's Max Verstappen dramatically crashed out of Q3.

Russell who will start Sunday's race on pole said: "I feel incredible, it was such an amazing lap. I saw the yellow flag, I had a big lift into the corner, I was five tenths up and I came up the last corner, two and a half tenths up so."

"It was a single yellow as well, not a double so should be OK. It was a tough day but it was so special to get that lap and everything felt so sweet so proud of the job we all did."

Drivers were attacking their second and final runs of the pole shootout when Verstappen lost control of his car through Turn 9 and slammed into the barriers, bringing out double yellow flags and threatening to derail plenty of laps.

While Kimi Antonelli - who had held provisional pole after the first Q3 runs - backed off and failed to improve, team-mate Russell navigated the yellows (insisting afterwards that he had lifted) to go two-tenths quicker than Leclerc and Hamilton, who were ahead of Verstappen on track and also found time.



It leaves Russell, Leclerc, Hamilton and Antonelli as the provisional top four on the grid for Sunday's race, ahead of Verstappen, McLaren drivers Lando Norris and Oscar Piastri, the second Red Bull of Isack Hadjar, and the Racing Bulls of Liam Lawson and Arvid Lindblad.

Pierre Gasly threatened to push Verstappen into the drop zone at the very end of Q2, but he ultimately missed out by four hundredths of a second in 11th, followed by the Audi and Haas drivers, and Alpine team mate Colapinto, who was seen running wide at Turn 1.

Williams' challenging season continued via a double Q1 elimination, with Carlos Sainz and Alex Albon taking P17 and P18 respectively - the Spaniard missing out on a Q2 spot by mere hundredths himself after sliding through the final corner on his last lap.

Just behind them, Sergio Perez and Valtteri Bottas had to make do with P19 and P20 for Cadillac, whose major update package could not propel them further towards F1's midfield group, admittedly not helped by an incident-filled Friday for the American outfit.

Finally, as expected given their 2026 struggles so far, Aston Martin brought up the rear of the field, with Fernando Alonso beating Lance Stroll to 21st position - both drivers no doubt eager for the team's promised major developments to be rolled out as soon as possible. - Agencies

UKRAINIAN BOXER

Heavyweight world champion Usyk vacates belts but is not retiring

**LONDON:** Heavyweight world champion Oleksandr Usyk said on Friday that he will vacate all his belts - but is not retiring.

The 39-year-old, who has an undefeated professional record of 25 wins, held the WBA 'super', WBC and IBF belts.

"This is a well-considered decision that I am confident will open new opportunities for me. This is not the end of the story. The continuation lies ahead," he said on X.

The Ukrainian said in the build-up to his last fight in May - a gritty win over Rico Verhoeven in Egypt - that he still wanted to fight on two more occasions before considering whether to hang up the gloves. In a video message posted on Friday he added: "I want to vacate all the belts that I currently hold to make them available for the guys next in line to fight for them.

"Friends, I'm leaving the belts but not the sport because I still have my last dance."

Two-time undisputed world champion Usyk was pushed to his limits by Verhoeven, who had competed only once in boxing



but had a formidable record from kickboxing, eventually finishing the fight late in the 11th round.

Mandatory challengers are enforced on a rotating basis between sanctioning bodies, and the WBC had ordered Usyk to fight Agit Kabayel next.

The undefeated German is widely viewed as the most deserving contender yet to receive his opportunity. And with the sanc-

tioning bodies now having a decision to make, he could be elevated to champion.

A rematch with Verhoeven may now make sense for Usyk.

Having dominated the cruiserweight division, Usyk made his heavyweight debut in 2019 and went on to defeat both Anthony Joshua and Tyson Fury twice.

Briton Daniel Dubois, who lost to twice to Usyk, holds the WBO

belt after defeating Fabio Wardley earlier this year. Usyk vacating his belts blows the heavyweight division wide open.

For so long, everything at the top of the sport has revolved around the Kyiv fighter. He has held the belts and contenders have been waiting for their turn. Now, suddenly and unexpectedly, there are openings everywhere.

WBC 'interim' champion Kabayel has been waiting for his shot and is the most deserving of a crack at a world title. Frank Sanchez is ranked number one with the IBF. Murat Gassiev holds the WBA 'regular' title. Closer to home, Moses Itauma can see a world-title route beginning to open up in front of him.

For generational great Usyk, the decision shows that he may be nearing the end.

By giving up the belts, he is stepping away from mandatorys, the politics and the pressure to keep defending against whoever is next in line. He says this is not the last dance, but it does give him the freedom to decide what that final act looks like. - Agencies



**BIOGAS-POWERED VEHICLES**  
Japan and India are set to establish a new framework to promote vehicles powered by biogas, an environmentally friendly fuel derived from organic waste such as cow dung.

MARKET  
BUSINESS & FINANCE



**MSX FALLS 265 POINTS**  
Local investment funds and institutions increased their purchases on the Muscat Stock Exchange during the week. Share prices declined as many investors sold to provide additional liquidity for subscribing to the shares offered by Omifco for public subscription.

# Registered securities value reaches OMR34bn by 2025 end

Muscat Clearing and Depository Company's systems also recorded more than 1.32 million settlement transactions with an efficiency of 99.99 percent, which reflects the robustness of the operational structure and its ability to accommodate the various operations related to securities trading.

**MUSCAT:** Statistical indicators issued by Muscat Clearing and Depository Company (MCDC) for the year 2025 showed growth in the base of registered investors to reach 566,773 by the end of the year, an increase of 3,792 new accounts.

The number of active accounts



reached 43,816 accounts, the MCDC said in a statement. MCDC's systems also recorded more than 1.32 million settlement transactions with an efficiency of 99.99 percent, which reflects the robustness of the operational structure and its ability to accommodate the various operations related to securities trading.

The market value of securities registered with the company

reached OMR34 billion by the end of 2025. Nearly 509 securities were registered and distributed among public shareholding companies, closed shareholding companies, investment funds, bonds and sukuk.

Omani ownership of listed securities reached 80.60 percent by the end of 2025, while non-Omanis owned 19.31 percent during the same period. Cash dividends

exceeding OMR1.7 billion and \$640,500 were distributed to a total of 196,664 investors across 151 securities.

Female investors accounted for 31.89 percent, while male investors owned 68.11 percent.

Local institutions accounted for 83 percent of total investments, with a market value exceeding OMR28 billion.

Meanwhile, 1.6 billion securi-

ties, with a market value exceeding OMR343 million, were transferred through 6,356 transactions.

These transactions included inheritance and family transfers, transfers between accounts belonging to the same person, and dual listing transfers.

Muscat Clearing and Depository Company managed mortgage transactions with a market value exceeding OMR722 million.

In terms of managing the operations of companies issuing securities, the company managed up to 330 corporate actions during 2025, including cash dividend distributions, share issuances, interest payments, final maturity transactions for bonds and sukuk, preferential rights, stock splits, mergers, and changes of names and identification symbols.

MCDC also oversaw the management of 304 general assemblies, including ordinary and extraordinary general assemblies and meetings of bond and sukuk holders.

The year 2025 witnessed the implementation of a number of strategic projects and initiatives that support the objectives of developing the Omani capital market. The company issued the rules regulating clearing and deposit operations in accordance with the principles of regional and international financial markets. It also issued a mechanism for custodians as clearing members and agents to ensure the settlement of transactions executed by their clients according to the delivery versus payment model, in addition to adopting the operational procedures for joining the Messages standard for securities custody.

As part of the digital transforma-

tion, the company has begun implementing the project to develop the new central depository system, which is expected to be launched during the third quarter of this year. This step is in line with the Muscat Stock Exchange's strategy and aspirations to upgrade to an emerging market, in addition to meeting the requirements for developing the Omani capital market sector.

The company is also continuing to develop the Oman Stocks app by adding a suite of digital services, including deposit and market news, IPOs, and electronic reports. Furthermore, electronic integration with licensed brokerage firms has been activated as part of the Investor Journey initiative, which provides a service for opening and updating investor accounts through licensed brokerage firms to facilitate and enhance the investor experience in the market.

The technical achievements also included the implementation of the electronic payment project via the company's website and the Oman Stocks application, in addition to developing an electronic records and documents management system that enhances digital governance and raises the efficiency of information management and corporate archiving.

These indicators and achievements confirm that Muscat Clearing and Depository Company continues its pivotal role in developing the infrastructure of the Omani capital market, raising the efficiency of services provided to investors, and enhancing levels of transparency and reliability in a way that supports the market's competitiveness and attractiveness for investment. -**OWA**

FINANCIAL SERVICES AUTHORITY

## Insurance firms in Oman invest OMR876 million in first quarter



Times News Service

**MUSCAT:** Preliminary data issued by the Financial Services Authority (FSA) show that total investments of insurance firms operating in the Sultanate of Oman reached OMR876.3 million by the first quarter (Q1) of 2026, marking a growth of 10.3% compared to the same period in 2025.

This reflects the growing role of the insurance sector in supporting the country's economy through the deployment of its assets and savings across various investment channels, thereby contributing to the enhancement of economic activity and the stimulation of growth.

Insurance companies manage their investment portfolios in accordance with the Regulation of Investment of Assets of Insurance and Takaful Insurance Companies issued under Decision No. (76/2020), which serves as the regulatory framework adopted by the FSA to govern the investment of insurance policy funds and equity of shareholders, enhancing financial sustainability and mitigating investment risks.

The regulation also requires companies to allocate at least 70% of their total investments within the Sultanate of Oman, while setting specific controls and investment limits across different asset

classes, including bank deposits, equities, bonds, and real estate.

The data indicate that Oman's insurance firms accounted for approximately OMR588.8 million of the sector's total investments, compared to around OMR287.5 million for foreign firms, reflecting the significant role played by insurance firms as active institutional investors contributing to financial stability. The data also show that Oman's firms allocated around 80% of their investments within the Sultanate of Oman, while foreign firms directed about 85% of their investments locally, reflecting growing confidence in Oman's investment environment and its ability to attract institutional capital.

Investments of Oman's insurance firms were distributed across several asset classes that directly support the national economy. Cash and bank deposits accounted for the largest share, at approximately OMR263.9 million, representing around 45% of total investments of the firms. This was followed by investments in corporate bonds worth around OMR87.2 million, government bonds at approximately OMR79.4 million, and listed equities at around OMR73.6 million, contributing to market liquidity and supporting local financing and investment instruments.

The data also showed notable

growth in several investment channels within the Sultanate of Oman compared to Q1 2025, with listed equities rising by 90.6%, investment funds by 78.4%, corporate bonds by 37.4%, and unlisted equities by 32%. This reflects greater diversification in investment portfolios of insurance firm and a shift towards enhancing investment returns within a regulated and stable investment environment.

In terms of firm-level investments, the top four insurance companies accounted for 44% of total sector investments. Gulf Insurance Group ranked first with total investments of approximately OMR106.8 million, followed by Dhofar Insurance with around OMR106.4 million, Liva Insurance with about OMR97.7 million, and Oman Qatar Insurance with total investments of OMR75 million.

These indicators underscore the growing economic role of the insurance sector in the Sultanate of Oman, not only as a provider of protection for individuals and institutions, but also as an active institutional investor that channels capital into investment avenues supporting economic growth, strengthening financial market stability, and providing liquidity to stimulate economic activity and achieve sustainable development.

## QNB Oman Partners with AmwalPay to Advance *Digital Payment Solutions* and Support Oman's Cashless Economy



**MUSCAT, 28 June 2026** – QNB Oman, a branch of QNB Group, a leading financial institution in the Middle East and Africa, announced a strategic partnership with AmwalPay aimed at accelerating digital commerce and enhancing payment solutions for businesses across the Sultanate. Through the collaboration, QNB Oman will expand its merchant acquiring capabilities and introduce advanced payment technologies that support the growing demand for seamless, secure, and digitally enabled financial services, reinforcing the Group's commitment to innovation, digital transformation, and customer-centric banking.

The partnership marks a significant milestone in strengthening QNB Oman's digital payments ecosystem. As businesses increasingly embrace digital channels and consumers adopt new payment behaviours, the partnership positions QNB Oman to better support merchants in navigating an increasingly digital economy.

It also reflects the Group's broader strategy of leveraging innovation and technology to create long-term value for clients while strengthening its position as a leading provider of digital financial services across the region. As businesses increasingly rely on digital payments to support growth and enhance customer experiences, the partnership will provide merchants with access to advanced payment solutions designed to meet evolving market needs.

By combining QNB Oman's bank-

ing expertise with AmwalPay's fintech capabilities, the partnership aims to help businesses improve operational efficiency, unlock new revenue opportunities, and meet evolving customer expectations through modern payment experiences.

Through this collaboration, QNB Oman clients will gain access to a comprehensive suite of advanced payment solutions, including modern POS solutions, online payment gateways, QR payment capabilities, e-commerce enablement services, and integrated digital payment technologies designed to support businesses of all sizes and across a wide range of sectors.

Businesses and merchants will benefit from enhanced transaction security, faster payment processing, advanced reporting capabilities, scalable acquiring infrastructure, and dedicated support services aimed at meeting the dynamic needs of the market. These capabilities will help businesses streamline payment operations, improve customer experiences, and participate more effectively in Oman's rapidly evolving digital economy.

This partnership aligns with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040 by supporting digital transformation, strengthening financial inclusion, and contributing to the development of a more innovative and diversified economy. By expanding access to modern payment infrastructure, QNB Oman and AmwalPay are helping accelerate the Sultanate's transition towards a

digitally enabled and cashless future.

The initiative further reinforces QNB Group's commitment to supporting digital transformation across its international network through strategic investments in technology and innovation-led partnerships, while delivering solutions that create long-term value for customers, businesses and the wider economy.

### About QNB Group

QNB Group is a leading financial institution in the Middle East and Africa, operating a diversified international banking platform across more than 28 countries and serving millions of customers worldwide. With a strong foundation in Qatar and the GCC, the Group supports corporates, institutions, and individuals through an extensive global network.

### About AmwalPay

AmwalPay is a leading Omani fintech company and licensed payment solutions provider specialising in digital acquiring, payment gateway services, and merchant payment technologies. The company offers a comprehensive range of payment solutions including POS and acquiring services, e-commerce integrations, payment links, API integrations, mobile payment capabilities, and multi-channel payment acceptance solutions supporting both local and international payment methods.



# MARKET

## Despite rise in institutional buying, MSX falls 265 points in weekly trading

Purchases by local investment funds and institutions during the week amounted to OMR132.1 million, compared to purchases of OMR114 million in the previous week

**MUSCAT:** Local investment funds and institutions increased their purchases on the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) during the week. Share prices declined as many investors sold to provide additional liquidity for subscribing to the shares offered by the Oman India Fertilizer Company (Omifco) for public subscription. Purchases by local investment funds and institutions during the week amounted to OMR132.1 million, compared to purchases of



OMR114 million in the previous week. The week also witnessed an increase in the value of trading by 16.7 percent, rising to OMR162.6 million, compared to OMR139.3 million in the week before. The number of transactions executed increased by 21.5 percent, from 31,000 to more than 38,000.

The week also saw a decline in the prices of 54 securities, compared to 24 securities whose prices rose and 16 securities that remained unchanged at their previous levels. Trading data issued by the Muscat Stock Exchange showed a decline in sales by local investment

funds and institutions, constituting 75 percent of the total trading value, equivalent to OMR122 million, compared to purchases of 81.2 percent of the total trading value. Local investment funds and institutions sought to absorb excess liquidity, increase their purchases, and diversify their investment

portfolios, targeting many stocks that witnessed clear declines during the past weeks. Trading activity was concentrated on shares of Bank Sohar International, Bank Muscat, OQ Basic Industries, OQ Gas Networks and the National Bank of Oman, which topped the list of most traded companies in terms of trading value. During the week, many leading stocks such as Bank Muscat, Bank Sohar International, OQ Exploration and Production, OQ Gas Networks, Abraj Energy Services, Omantel, OQ Basic Industries and many other stocks declined, pushing the main index of the Muscat Stock Exchange and sector indices to record a collective decline. The main index of the Muscat Stock Exchange recorded a decline of 265 points last week and closed at 7,316 points. The financial sector index declined by 287 points, the services sector index declined by 74 points, the industrial sector index fell by 43 points, and the Sharia index recorded a decline of 16 points and closed at 584 points. The Muscat Stock Exchange has been facing numerous pressures since mid-May, which have pushed the main index below the 8,000-point level. However, it is expected that stocks will resume their upward trend in the coming

period with the decline in selling pressures, the return of surplus funds from the IPO, and the announcement of the preliminary financial results for the first half of this year. The declines in stocks were reflected in the overall market capitalisation of the Muscat Stock Exchange, which fell at the end of last week's trading to 36 billion and 166 million Omani rials, recording weekly losses of 537.6 million Omani rials. Al Batinah Development and Investment shares recorded the highest losses, declining by 17.6 percent and closing at 70 baisa. Oman Chlorine shares fell by 10.8 percent and closed at 165 baisa. Muscat Insurance shares declined by 9.9 percent and closed at 600 baisa. Al Sharqiyah Desalination shares recorded a decline of 8.5 percent and closed at 160 baisa. In contrast, Oman Packaging shares rose by 9.9 percent and closed at 199 baisa, Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing shares climbed to 1.140 rials, recording an 8 percent increase, Salalah Port Services shares rose by 6.5 percent and closed at 485 baisa, and Oman Educational and Training Investments shares climbed to 1.800 rials, recording a 5.8 percent increase. -ONA

### SUMMER CAMPAIGN

## AI, new-energy demand drive China's industrial profit growth

**BEIJING:** China's major industrial firms posted accelerated profit growth in the first five months of 2026, driven by surging demand for AI-related electronics and new-energy materials, official data showed Saturday. Industrial firms with an annual main business revenue of at least 20 million yuan (about 2.93 million US dollars) saw their combined profits reach 3.14 trillion yuan in the January-May period, up 18.8 percent year on year, according to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS). The growth surpassed the 18.2 percent rise in the first four months. In May alone, industrial profits rose 21.1 percent, the NBS data showed. Industrial revenue grew 5.5 percent year on year in the first five months, up 0.3 percentage points from the January-April period, as industrial production remained robust and producer prices continued to rise, said NBS statistician Yu Weining. Equipment manufacturing remained a key driver. Profits in the sector climbed 14.1 percent during the period, contributing 5.2 percentage points to overall industrial profit growth. Within this sector, the electronics industry posted a 103.9 percent profit surge, contributing 43.1 percent to overall industrial profit growth, as



the global AI boom fueled an explosion in demand for high-end computing and memory products. Raw materials manufacturing also posted robust gains, with profits surging 83.1 percent and contributing 10.2 percentage points to overall industrial profit growth. Driven by rising demand from the new-energy and AI industries, copper and aluminum prices remained elevated, pushing profits in the non-ferrous metals sector up 117.1 percent. The petroleum processing industry returned to profitability, while the chemical sector saw profits rise 71.6 percent.

High-tech manufacturing maintained double-digit profit growth, rising 44.7 percent and contributing 8.0 percentage points to overall industrial profit growth, the data showed. Within this sector, optoelectronic device manufacturing and discrete device manufacturing saw profits rise 53.8 percent and 40.6 percent, respectively, while electronic specialty materials manufacturing surged 665.4 percent. Corporate cost burdens continued to ease. For every 100 yuan of operating revenue, industrial firms incurred 84.95 yuan in costs in the

January-May period, down 0.59 yuan year on year, marking the fifth consecutive month of decline. The operating profit margin stood at 5.56 percent, up 0.63 percentage points from a year earlier and the highest level among all cumulative periods since 2024, Yu noted. "Looking ahead, the authorities will make full use of macro policies, strengthen both counter-cyclical and cross-cyclical adjustments, continue to expand domestic demand, optimize supply, and foster new drivers of growth to promote high-quality industrial development," the statistician said. -Xinhua

### NEW FRAMEWORK

## Japanese and Indian governments to promote vehicles that run on biogas

**NEW DELHI:** Japan and India are set to establish a new framework to promote vehicles powered by biogas, an environmentally friendly fuel derived from organic waste such as cow dung. The initiative aims to significantly expand India's biogas production capacity by increasing the number of methane-generation plants for compressed natural gas (CNG) vehicles to 1,000. The agreement will be formalized through a memorandum of understanding (MoU) during Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi's three-day visit to India beginning Wednesday. Takaichi is scheduled to hold talks with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi on Thursday. The summit was originally planned for Guwahati in Assam but was later moved to the Indian capital at New Delhi's request. A key participant in the initiative is Suzuki Motor, which domi-



nates India's passenger vehicle market. The company has already begun producing biogas in India with support from Japanese government subsidies aimed at developing economies. Suzuki is also promoting CNG vehicles, which

now account for more than one-fifth of new vehicle sales in India. For India, the initiative supports efforts to strengthen energy security. Despite being the world's third-largest energy consumer after China and the United States,

India remains heavily dependent on imported crude oil. Expanding domestic biogas production could help reduce that reliance while supporting cleaner transportation. The visit marks Takaichi's first trip to India since taking office in October 2025 and reflects the growing strategic partnership between the two countries. Beyond energy cooperation, both sides are expected to discuss economic security and regional stability amid concerns over China's increasing influence and uncertainty surrounding international cooperation under the administration of US President Donald Trump. According to Japanese Chief Cabinet Secretary Minoru Kihara, Tokyo seeks to deepen ties with India through enhanced cooperation in economic growth and economic security, reinforcing a strategic relationship that has become increasingly important in the Indo-Pacific region. -Agencies

### COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC AND TRADE AGREEMENT



## Piyush Goyal asserts India-UK CETA will protect domestic interests

**LONDON:** Union Minister of Commerce & Industry Piyush Goyal has dismissed concerns regarding potential economic drawbacks from the India-UK Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA), describing the pact as a carefully crafted framework that will benefit both nations. Speaking at a business reception in London on Thursday, Minister Goyal emphasised that the agreement is designed to enhance economic growth and job creation without harming any domestic sectors. The Minister stated that the agreement will provide "enablers" that assist both economies in improving their functional capabilities. "What they will be adding to our economy will be enablers, which will actually help us do our job better for life. This agreement cannot hurt any sector in India. And likewise, I suspect this agreement will not hurt any sector in the UK also because it's been carefully crafted," the minister said. He noted that the pact is expected to bolster new employment opportunities and drive business growth in India. "They have a lot to offer us and we have a lot to offer them. What we will be offering them will add to our economy and particularly to jobs, particularly to new employment, to businesses," Goyal added. The commerce minister noted that India changed its traditional approach to international trade negotiations. He stated that the country aims for comprehensive partnerships rather than limited, transactional trade concessions. "Delighted to address a Business Reception with wide participation from business leaders & investors from both India & the UK. Spoke about how the India-UK Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA)

will unlock immense opportunities for growth & prosperity on both sides. Urged them to leverage the full potential of this landmark agreement to deepen collaboration, boost trade & investment flows, and drive innovation across sectors," Goyal said on X. Addressing the Annual UK-India Awards 2026 in London on Thursday, Goyal said, "India today does not wish to negotiate weak agreements, substandard small transactional relationships. In fact, the UK agreement is a very comprehensive template." Goyal highlighted that the CETA goes beyond traditional trade negotiations focused solely on tariffs and rules of origin. Instead, the agreement encompasses a broad range of sectors. The pact fosters deep collaboration in technology, education, culture, and the arts. "It's not only about tariffs and rules of origin. It's not only about traded goods and services. It's about collaborations in technology, in education, culture, and the arts," Goyal said. Negotiators from both countries engaged in rigorous, line-by-line discussions to balance the interests and concerns of both nations. The Minister characterised the final text as "fair, equitable, and very balanced". "It is focused on bringing the best of both countries to each other. It's a fair, equitable, very balanced agreement," the minister said. Goyal noted that the agreement is intended to "unlock immense opportunities for growth & prosperity on both sides" and urged business leaders to leverage the pact to boost investment and innovation across sectors. "We may have fought over every single line, over every single para. But in a spirit of fairness, a spirit of accommodation, very sensitive to each other's interests and concerns," Goyal added. -ANI





ADVERTISE WITH US,  
FIND THE RIGHT **CANDIDATES**  
FOR YOUR COMPANY

# CONNECT

PRINT EDITION

WWW.TIMESOFOMAN.COM  
SUNDAY, JUNE 28, 2026

PLACE YOUR  
ADVT HERE

Email to : amcoman@choueirigroup.com



**RENT**

**CARGO**

**VACANCY**



**RENT OR SALE?**  
PLACE YOUR  
ADVT HERE

Email: amcoman@choueirigroup.com



**CARGO MADE SIMPLE**  
Advertise with us

Send your advertisement to:  
amcoman@choueirigroup.com

PLACE  
YOUR  
ADVT HERE

Send your ad to: amcoman@choueirigroup.com



WJ Towell Group Company



**Quality car rentals at competitive prices.**

Muscat 9679 0594 9679 0684    Sohar 9731 6218 9429 9325    [www.orbit-oman.com](http://www.orbit-oman.com)

 أوريث  
ORBIT  
Car Rental & Lease

- Fleet of 2,000 vehicles
- Choose from a wide range of brands & models
- PDO, OXY and BP spec vehicles available
- Attractive rates for short-term & long-term lease

**SALE**

A well-established and fully operational **SUPERMARKETS** are available for sale in a **PRIME LOCATION IN MUSCAT**, offering an excellent opportunity for investors or entrepreneurs looking to start or expand their retail business.



For more info Contact No: 97365922, 94306216

**JOB WANTED**

**FINANCE**

Senior finance professional CA(Inter) MBA expertise dynamic and results-driven finance professional with over 20 yrs of progressive experience in financial leadership roles across multinational corporations in Oman. Holds a strong track record in strategic financial planning, etc.

Contact/WA: +968-95877725

**FINANCE**

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

**CONTACT : 75156709**

**FINANCE**

Chartered Accountant, presently Finance Controller, with 22 plus years' experience as Finance Head in leading companies of Oman as well in Auditing firm. Well versed with Banking, IFRS and taxation seeks suitable position.

Contact: 94274470  
Email: azamca7@gmail.com

**SUPPLY CHAIN**

Indian, male, MBA with 17 yrs Oman experience in supply chain (procurement, warehousing & logistics) SAP knowledge, looking for suitable placement. Ready to join immediately.

**Contact : 92813310**

**ENGINEER**

Diploma holder, experienced MEP engineer with 12yrs of expertise in electrical, mechanical and plumbing works, possesses a valid D/L. Looking for a suitable opportunity in Oman.

Contact, WA +968 79880602, +91 7200747471

**GENERAL MANAGER & SR MANAGEMENT**

Dynamic professional with 17+ yrs of progressive experience in financial strategy, business consulting/management, operational excellence, and growth leadership across trading, construction, RMC production, and management opportunities.

Phone : 97403883  
Email : shabeer\_shaik2000@yahoo.com

**REACH EMPLOYERS THROUGH ADVERTISING**



**Publish your ad with us today**

Send your advertisement to  
amcoman@choueirigroup.com

**JOB VACANCY**

**ENGINEER**

Looking for an experienced HSE professional. Nebosh certificate is mandatory. Send us your CV to cv.hrmgmt@gmail.com or via WhatsApp at 91729644.

**SALES/MARKETING**

Urgently required for a Shipping freight forwarding co. in Oman - Sales & operations coordinator-M/F send cv-ops01@mfloman.com

**ACCOUNTS/FINANCE**

Accountant with B.com & MBA Finance, 7 yrs of experience in Oman, UAE and India. Capable of handling all accounting and finance related works. Contact no: 95655830

Finance & commercial professional with over 20 yrs of experience in Oman (DACPA Certified) Seeking suitable placement. Contact : 96791053, Email: jibinpetern@gmail.com

**ADMINISTRATION**

Indian male graduate with 20 yrs experience seeks job for executive secretary, admin or any other suitable post. Presently available in Muscat. Contact 91410074.

B.Tech grad (F), experienced in admin, business development, operations, contracts, logistics & budgeting. Seeking a suitable placement. Contact: 97732903

**ENGINEER**

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

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

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

**IT**

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

**MANAGER**

Construction manager, Sr. mechanical engineer (MEP & HVAC), Indian male 20+yrs of experience seek placement. Contact: 97639094, Email: srinivasan 20031@gmail.com

**MISCELLANEOUS**

Bangladeshi with 1 yr experience as building caretaker seeks job. Contact: 79106930

**SALES/MARKETING**

Looking for Sales executives or merchandiser job of 10 yrs in Oman. Contact : 75137846, 79510980

**ADVERTISE WITH US**

Send your advt. to: amcoman@choueirigroup.com

**JOB WANTED**

# CARGO AND LOGISTICS

PROMOTE YOUR SERVICES WITH US



Send your advertisement to amcoman@choueirigroup.com





| Team Standings |                        |   |   |   |    |    |    |     |   |
|----------------|------------------------|---|---|---|----|----|----|-----|---|
|                | P                      | W | D | L | GF | GA | GD | Pts |   |
| GROUP A        | Mexico                 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 0  | 6  | 0  | 6   | 9 |
|                | South Africa           | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1  | 2  | 3  | -1  | 4 |
|                | South Korea            | 3 | 1 | 0 | 2  | 2  | 3  | -1  | 3 |
|                | Czech Republic         | 3 | 0 | 1 | 2  | 2  | 6  | -4  | 1 |
|                | P                      | W | D | L | GF | GA | GD | Pts |   |
| GROUP B        | Switzerland            | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0  | 7  | 3  | 4   | 7 |
|                | Canada                 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1  | 8  | 3  | 5   | 4 |
|                | Bosnia and Herzegovina | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1  | 5  | 6  | -1  | 4 |
|                | Qatar                  | 3 | 0 | 1 | 2  | 2  | 10 | -8  | 1 |
|                | P                      | W | D | L | GF | GA | GD | Pts |   |
| GROUP C        | Brazil                 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0  | 7  | 1  | 6   | 7 |
|                | Morocco                | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0  | 6  | 3  | 3   | 7 |
|                | Scotland               | 3 | 1 | 0 | 2  | 1  | 4  | -3  | 3 |
|                | Haiti                  | 3 | 0 | 0 | 3  | 2  | 8  | -6  | 0 |
|                | P                      | W | D | L | GF | GA | GD | Pts |   |
| GROUP D        | USA                    | 3 | 2 | 0 | 1  | 8  | 4  | 4   | 6 |
|                | Australia              | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1  | 2  | 2  | 0   | 4 |
|                | Paraguay               | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1  | 2  | 4  | -2  | 4 |
|                | Türkiye                | 3 | 1 | 0 | 2  | 3  | 5  | -2  | 3 |
|                | P                      | W | D | L | GF | GA | GD | Pts |   |
| GROUP E        | Germany                | 3 | 2 | 0 | 1  | 10 | 4  | 6   | 6 |
|                | Ivory Coast            | 3 | 2 | 0 | 1  | 4  | 2  | 2   | 6 |
|                | Ecuador                | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1  | 2  | 2  | 0   | 4 |
|                | Curaçao                | 3 | 0 | 1 | 2  | 1  | 9  | -8  | 1 |
|                | P                      | W | D | L | GF | GA | GD | Pts |   |
| GROUP F        | Netherlands            | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0  | 10 | 4  | 6   | 7 |
|                | Japan                  | 3 | 1 | 2 | 0  | 7  | 3  | 4   | 5 |
|                | Sweden                 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1  | 7  | 7  | 0   | 4 |
|                | Tunisia                | 3 | 0 | 0 | 3  | 2  | 12 | -10 | 0 |
|                | P                      | W | D | L | GF | GA | GD | Pts |   |
| GROUP G        | Belgium                | 3 | 1 | 2 | 0  | 6  | 2  | 4   | 5 |
|                | Egypt                  | 3 | 1 | 2 | 0  | 5  | 3  | 2   | 5 |
|                | Iran                   | 3 | 0 | 3 | 0  | 3  | 3  | 0   | 3 |
|                | New Zealand            | 3 | 0 | 1 | 2  | 4  | 10 | -6  | 1 |
|                | P                      | W | D | L | GF | GA | GD | Pts |   |
| GROUP H        | Spain                  | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0  | 5  | 0  | 5   | 7 |
|                | Cabo Verde             | 3 | 0 | 3 | 0  | 2  | 2  | 0   | 3 |
|                | Uruguay                | 3 | 0 | 2 | 1  | 3  | 4  | -1  | 2 |
|                | Saudi Arabia           | 3 | 0 | 2 | 1  | 1  | 5  | -4  | 2 |
|                | P                      | W | D | L | GF | GA | GD | Pts |   |
| GROUP I        | France                 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 0  | 10 | 2  | 8   | 9 |
|                | Norway                 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 1  | 8  | 7  | 1   | 6 |
|                | Senegal                | 3 | 1 | 0 | 2  | 8  | 6  | 2   | 3 |
|                | Iraq                   | 3 | 0 | 0 | 3  | 1  | 12 | -11 | 0 |
|                | P                      | W | D | L | GF | GA | GD | Pts |   |
| GROUP J        | 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 |
|                | P                      | W | D | L | GF | GA | GD | Pts |   |
| GROUP K        | 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 |
|                | P                      | W | D | L | GF | GA | GD | Pts |   |
| GROUP L        | 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 N: 1-0

## Spain knock Uruguay out, seal top spot

**ZAPOPAN:** Spain's possession game proved too much for Uruguay as La Roja overcame La Celeste 1-0 to secure top spot in Group H on Friday.

The defeat knocked out Uruguay of the FIFA World Cup 2026 at the first half wound down, Spain's possession finally led to a clear goal-scoring opportunity.

Coming across the penalty area from the left wing, Baena controlled a low cross from Marcos Llorente and fired a shot toward the Uruguayan goal.

Muslera couldn't hold the strike and the ball dribbled into the far corner, giving Spain the lead. In order to claw their way back into the

game, Muslera was brought off at half-time for substitute goalkeeper Sergio Rochet.

La Celeste fought hard to find a way back into the match, pushing Spain to the very end, but La Roja's passing game proved too efficient. Ferran Torres could have added a second in the dying minutes, but the Barcelona forward slammed his shot off the crossbar.

A poor tournament for Uruguay ended on a disappointing note when Canobbio was sent off deep into injury time for a tackle on Pau Cubarsi.

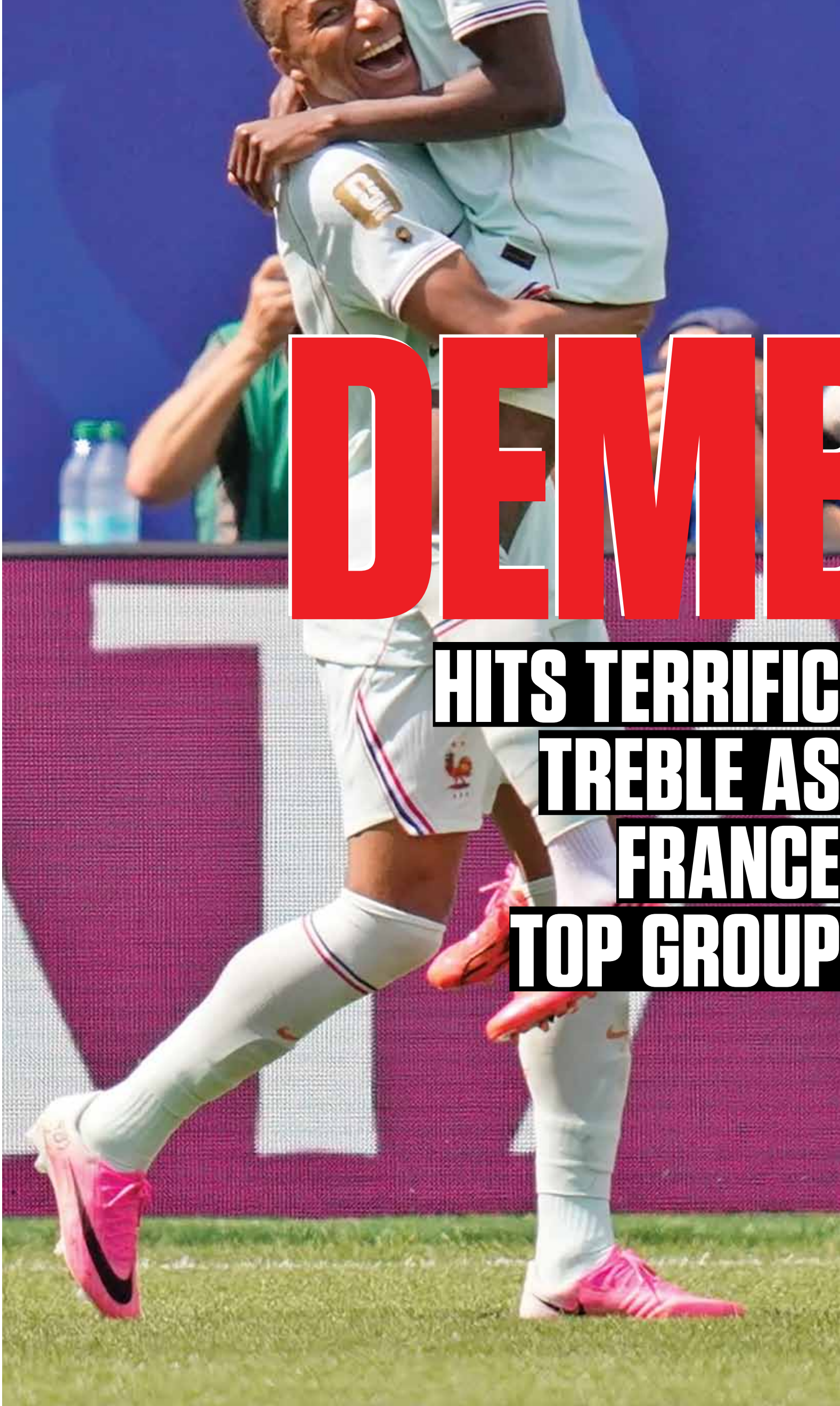
This is Spain's first victory against Uruguay at the FIFA World

Cup. The prior two games ended in a draw.

Spain's goalscorer Baena said: "The truth is we knew it would be tough, that we were playing for first place and they were playing for their lives."

"Maybe it wasn't the same game as last time, but it was necessary to play like that. It's probably one of the most important goals of my career."

A dejected Uruguay coach Marcelo Bielsa said: "I wasn't able to maximise the potential of Uruguay's players. With Valverde's substitution, I sought to have a stronger presence in attack". - Agencies



## DEMBELE

The forward struck a first-half hat-trick as former champions made it three wins out of three against Norway team

**BOSTON:** France made it three out of three wins in the group stage at the FIFA World Cup for the first time on Friday since first winning the trophy on home soil in 1998 – and they did so thanks to a historic hat-trick by Ousmane Dembele in their 4-1 win over Norway in Group I.

With both sides already qualified, the prize at stake in Boston was first place in the group, albeit the main talk beforehand was of a much-billed duel between Erling Haaland and Kylian Mbappe.

As it was, Haaland started and stayed on the bench as Norway made ten changes to their starting XI. It was also a different France forward in Dembele, who stamped his mark on the match with the second-fastest World Cup hat-trick of all time.

Dembele has won UEFA Champions League titles with Paris Saint-Germain and collected the The Best FIFA Men's Player prize but he had not scored a major tournament goal until this week.

Yet after breaking his World Cup duck against Iraq, he now has four on the world stage after this stunning treble.

With assistant coach Guy Stephan holding the reins in the absence of Didier Deschamps, France flew out of blocks with

Mbappe hitting the crossbar inside a minute.

Mbappe's crossfield ball then gave Dembele the opportunity to cut in from the right and, in trademark fashion, flash a shot into the far corner with his left foot for the opening goal.

His second was even more eye-catching as he found the same corner from outside the box. By the 32nd minute he had his hat-trick – the third of this tournament – by placing the ball yet again between goalkeeper Egil Selvik and his right-hand post.

It was not all one-way traffic. Norway's Jorgen Strand Larsen flashed a close-range shot over the crossbar. Then, straight from the kick-off after France's second goal, Theo Aasgaard beat Dayot Upamecano with a dummy and drilled past a wrongfooted Mike Maignan.

Norway's hopes of a second-half comeback flickered briefly when Theo Hernandez fouled Oscar Bobb three minutes after the restart but Strand Larsen's tame spot-kick was saved comfortably by Maignan. Desire Doue put the icing on the cake for Les Bleus with a stoppage-time strike, his first of the global finals.

France will next face the third-placed team from Group C, D, F, G or H in the Round of 32, while Norway will take on Ivory Coast.

Dembele's hat-trick was the first in the first half of a World Cup match since Oleg Salenko's 1994 treble for Russia against Cameroon. It is also the second-fastest World Cup treble of all time – the fastest was by Austria's Erich Probst inside 24 minutes against Czechoslovakia at the 1954 finals.

Egypt made the perfect start as Mahmoud Saber converted from close range after Alireza Beiranvand could only parry Mohamed Salah's deflected strike.

Iran were handed a golden opportunity to level in the ninth minute when Mehdi Taremi

## Senegal rout Iraq to stay in last 32 fray

**TORONTO:** Senegal gave themselves hope of extending their stay at the FIFA World Cup with an emphatic 5-0 win over Iraq as the two nations met for the first time on football's biggest stage in the final Group I clash in Toronto on Friday.

The Lions Of Teranga could seal a last 32 spot if they finish as one of the best eight third-place teams after this victory, however, Pape Thiaw's side will have to wait to see if other results go their way.

Senegal took the lead within four minutes of kick-off after Abdoulaye Seck nodded the ball in the direction of the net from a corner kick, with Habid Diarra getting the final touch.

Iraq were reduced to ten men shortly after falling behind when Rebin Sulaka was deemed to have denied Sadio Mane a clear goal-scoring opportunity.

Senegal did find the back of the net for a second time ten minutes into the restart, and it was a gift from their opponents. A mistake from Zidane Iqbal deep in his own half laid it on a plate for Lamine Camara, who squared it for Sarr to fire home his third goal of the tournament.

It was a quickfire double for



Senegal when substitute Pape Gueye added to his side's lead just 89 seconds after entering the pitch.

He capitalised on an Iraq mis-

take and lashed the ball into the top corner. Super sub Gueye was on hand to score his second and Senegal's fourth with 20 minutes remaining. The ball fell nicely for

him and he hammered the ball into the top corner again. Iliman Ndiaye was next on the scoresheet as he smashed the ball home from 20 yards. - Agencies



## Egypt script history with first knockout berth after Iran draw

**SEATTLE:** Egypt secured their place in the FIFA World Cup knockout phase for the first time in their history after a frantic draw with Iran in Group G on Friday, who must now wait to discover whether the point is enough to send them through as one of the tournament's eight best third-placed teams.

The Pharaohs will now face Australia in the Round of 32 as Group G runners-up, while Iran's World Cup fate hinges on the outcome of the remaining games in Groups J, K and L.

Egypt made the perfect start as Mahmoud Saber converted from close range after Alireza Beiranvand could only parry Mohamed Salah's deflected strike.

Iran were handed a golden opportunity to level in the ninth minute when Mehdi Taremi

won a penalty after being fouled by Mohamed Abdelmonem, but Mostafa Shobeir saved his spot-kick.

Shobeir pulled off an even better save to stop Milad Mohammadi finding the bottom corner, only to see Ramin Rezaeian react fastest to the loose ball and equalise from the tightest of angles.

Shobeir's fine first-half display was almost undone on the stroke of half-time when he completely misjudged a cross.

Luckily for him, Shoja Khalilzadeh headed wide. Iran came close to a dramatic late winner that would have moved them above Hossam Hassan's team into second, but Shojae Khalilzadeh's stoppage-time strike was ruled out for offside after a VAR review, before Shobeir saved from Saied Ezatollahi. - Agencies

## Belgium finish toppers, eliminate New Zealand



**VANCOUVER:** Goals from Leandro Trossard, Kevin De Bruyne, Romelu Lukaku, and Alexis Saalemaekers sent the Red Devils into the Round of 32 and New Zealand home early after a 5-1 win.

A last-gasp header from substitute Romelu Lukaku secured Belgium top spot on a rollercoaster day of action in Group G.

Belgium dominated proceedings from the first whistle at BC Place Vancouver, and Leandro Trossard opened the scoring in the 28th minute when he nudged home from inside the six-yard box after New Zealand had failed to deal with an in-swinging corner from the left.

The Red Devils remained in control in the second half and Trossard doubled their lead five minutes after the

restart, lashing in a rebound after his first effort had been blocked.

Kevin De Bruyne then swept in a sweet low strike from outside the area in the 66th minute, making him the oldest player to score for Belgium at the FIFA World Cup aged 34 years and 363 days.

New Zealand pulled one back courtesy of a fine strike from Elijah Just with six minutes remaining, but two minutes after that Lukaku pounced to lift his side to the top of Group G on goal difference before Alexis Saalemaekers added a fifth in the fourth minute of time added on.

Belgium will now meet the third-placed team from Group A, E, H, I or J in the Round of 32 in Seattle on 1 July. - Agencies



# Venezuela quake death toll rises to 920 as rescue operations continue

The update comes as rescue operations are underway to bring out people trapped under the rubble during the critical “golden window” of up to 72 hours following the earthquake. Media report says that the death toll is expected to rise significantly as search teams find more victims

**CARACAS:** The death toll following the fatal earthquakes in Venezuela has now jumped to 920 while 3,360 people have been injured, Jorge Rodriguez, the head of Venezuela’s national assembly, said on Saturday.

The update comes as rescue operations are underway to bring out people trapped under the rubble during the critical “golden window” of up to 72 hours following the earthquake.

CNN reported that the death toll is expected to rise significantly as search teams find more victims.

“We haven’t slept a wink in our efforts to save lives,” Rodriguez told VTV, as she also praised the arrival of international assistance and emergency crews. “We have saved dozens of lives.”

As per VTV, search and rescue teams are concentrating efforts on the state of La Guaira, which appears to be the most affected area following the deadly back-to-back earthquakes.

It was reported that the government said it has also established a stockpile centre of food, water and medicines for those in need at the



foreign ministry in Caracas.

Humanitarian efforts are underway in Venezuela as hundreds of citizens have volunteered to deliver water, food, medicines, and supplies to the affected communities in Caraballeda and Vargas.

India has launched ‘Operation Amistad’ to support earthquake-hit Venezuela, with two Indian Air Force C-17 aircraft carrying a field hospital unit and more than 35 tonnes of relief supplies, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar announced on Friday.

In a post on X, announcing the operation, Jaishankar said, “Operation Amistad underway! Two @IAF\_MCC C17S took off today for Venezuela with urgent assistance to support their post-earthquake relief efforts.”

The relief mission includes an Indian Army Field Hospital Unit and over 35 tonnes of humanitarian assistance, including medicines, medical equipment and two BHISHM Cubes, designed to pro-

vide rapid emergency medical support in disaster situations.

**UN deploys 1,600 rescuers as over 50,000 people remain missing**

United Nations aid chief Tom Fletcher said more than 50,000 people were still missing after Wednesday’s powerful earthquakes in Venezuela.

He said the UN has deployed 35 search and rescue teams, including 1,600 fully trained rescuers and over 100 dogs to help Venezuelan teams in the rescue effort.

“The priority is pulling as many people from the rubble, saving as many lives as we can,” he told Multimedios TV.

Aid agencies consider the first 48 to 72 hours a crucial window to retrieve people alive, though this can be extended if they have access to food and water.

Fletcher said the “scale of the devastation and working in an active earthquake zone,” posed chal-

lenges to the rescue teams.

**Venezuela government restricts access to La Guaira**

The Venezuelan government has said it will limit access to La Guaira state, one of the regions hit hardest by a pair of deadly earthquakes.

“Access to La Guaira state is restricted as of 8 p.m. (0000 GMT),” Interior Minister Diosdado Cabello said in an address on the state-run channel Venezolana de Televisión.

Cabello said anyone wishing to travel to La Guaira would have to complete a registration form set up by the government in Caracas to “prevent people who do not have any assigned tasks” from traveling to the state.

Interim leader Delcy Rodriguez earlier asked people not to travel to the area north of Caracas.

The AFP news agency reported that residents and relatives of people trapped in the rubble of a collapsed building in Caracas booed



Rodriguez when she traveled to the site.

“Enough already with the political campaigning amid a tragedy like the one we’re experiencing,” they shouted while also accusing the government of “not doing anything for the people.”

**Will the Trump administration exploit crisis to seek more concessions from the Venezuelan government?**

US President Donald Trump has touted his relationship with the Venezuelan government under Delcy Rodriguez. Rodriguez came to power after the US military ousted President Nicolas Maduro and took him to the US to face trial.

Since taking office, Rodriguez has agreed to open up Venezuela’s state-run oil sector to foreign companies and has announced the release of political prisoners — both demands of the US.

DW asked Dr. Annette Idler, an associate professor at Oxford University’s Blavatnik School of Government, if the Trump administration will use the disaster situation after the earthquakes in Venezuela to bolster US influence there and get more concessions from the Rodriguez government.

“I think it is too early to say whether the Trump administration will seek additional concessions from the Rodriguez government,” Idler told DW. “What we can say is that major humanitarian crises often create moments in which international influence expands because countries providing significant assistance naturally become more important partners in recovery and reconstruction.”

“The key question is therefore

not simply how much support the United States provides, but how that support is structured. If reconstruction is carried out in a way that strengthens Venezuelan institutions and remains locally led, it can reinforce the country’s political transition,” Idler said.

“If, on the other hand, recovery becomes overly dependent on decisions taken in Washington, perceptions of US influence are likely to grow. That balance between international support and local ownership will be one of the defining political challenges in the months ahead.”

**Oxford University professor: Venezuela quake ‘geopolitical stress test’ for interim government**

Dr. Annette Idler, an associate professor at Oxford University’s Blavatnik School of Government, gave her analysis of what the catastrophe means for Venezuela and the interim government under Delcy Rodriguez.

“The earthquake is not only a humanitarian catastrophe; it is also a geopolitical stress test that will shape Venezuela’s political future and its relationship with the United States,” Idler said.

“US support has been quickly announced but what is at stake is whether Venezuela is perceived as being dependent on decisions taken in Washington or whether Washington can support a locally-owned process of both short-term recovery and long-term reconstruction.”

“The question is whether Venezuela’s interim government will gain or lose legitimacy and confidence.” — Agencies

## US DISTRICT COURT

### Trump foe Bolton pleads guilty in classified docs case

**WASHINGTON DC:** John Bolton, who served as national security adviser during US President Donald Trump’s first term in office, pleaded guilty in federal court on Friday to one charge of illegally keeping classified information.

Theodore D. Chuang, a US district judge of the US District Court for the District of Maryland, is presiding over the case.

“I’m sorry for it,” Bolton told Judge Chuang in Greenbelt, Maryland when pleading guilty to the charge. Bolton’s attorney Abbe Lowell said Bolton “did what real leaders do” by pleading guilty.

Bolton, who is 77 years old, struck a plea deal with prosecutors which entails either no prison time or a shorter sentence than was originally expected.

When Bolton was indicted, prosecutors sought a possible 10-year prison sentence for Bolton and 18 charges. Under the plea deal, Bolton could face up to five years in prison or maybe none at all, depending on what the judge decides on the October 28 sentencing date.

Bolton must also pay a fine of \$2.25 million (€1.98 million) under the plea deal.

In addition, Bolton will give up his government pension, do up to 100 hours of community service and debrief with officials in the intelligence community and US Department of Justice.

Bolton is accused of sharing classified information with two “unauthorized individuals” — reportedly his wife and daughter. This information is believed to have been used in his tell-all book



on his time in the first Trump administration: “The Room Where It Happened.”

Kelly O. Hayes, the US attorney for the district of Maryland, said Bolton “put our national security at grave risk.” Bolton’s email was reportedly targeted by an Iranian hacker.

**How Trump views Bolton: From ‘tough cookie’ to ‘sleazebag’**

Bolton was Trump’s national security adviser from April 2018 until his resignation in September 2019. That resignation reportedly stemmed from Bolton’s disagreement with the president on issues such as talks with the Afghan Taliban and negotiations with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.

Bolton had also served as the US ambassador to the UN during former President George W. Bush’s time in office. He was an ardent supporter of the US invasion of Iraq in 2003.

## IMMIGRATION POLICIES

### Japan needs more foreign workers, but many of them feel unwelcome

**TOKYO:** “I was shocked. It is too much to pay 100,000 yen to extend my visa every three years,” said Srijana Sunar, a 29-year-old Nepali woman who has been working at factories in Japan since 2018. She earns 145,000 yen (\$900/€790) per month.

In late May, the Japanese government enacted a bill raising the maximum fee for changing residency status or extending a period of stay tenfold from the current 10,000 yen to 100,000 yen by the end of March 2027.

Srijana’s husband, Spandan Sunar, who has worked in Japan since 2016 at a transportation company and a Japanese language school, told DW his long-term efforts have “not been rewarded” by Japanese society.

“We are not newcomers. We have proper visa status, we follow the rules and we pay taxes, but our freedom to choose jobs and working conditions is very limited,” he said in fluent Japanese.

The young couple, who were married in Japan in 2022, hope to apply for permanent residency — but only if they can afford it.

Under the same bill, the upper limit for permanent residency permit fees would be raised from 10,000 yen to 300,000 yen. This poses another big hurdle for the couple, as an annual individual income of more than 3 million yen has been generally regarded by most applicants as a requirement for permanent residency.

**Demographic decline in Japan**

As of April 2025, Japanese nationals numbered some 119.7 million, down 941,000 from a year earlier, according to the Statistics



Bureau of Japan.

Meanwhile, the number of foreign nationals in Japan has been rising at a pace that offsets roughly 40% of that decline. According to the Immigration Services Agency, there were around 4.125 million foreign nationals in the country at the end of 2025, an increase of over 356,000 from the previous year.

“Foreign workers are indispensable. Without them, society would not function,” Toshihiro Menju, an expert on Japanese immigration policy, told DW.

“It is impossible to fully make up for labor shortages through women’s participation or the use of robots alone,” said Menju, who is also a visiting professor at the Kansai University of International Studies.

“The reality is that the number of foreign workers has been increasing across sectors, from highly skilled professions to front-line caregiving fields. The people who support the fundamental infrastructure of society are declining,” he added.

**Japan moves to tighten immigration policies**

In January, the administration of Prime Minister Sanae Takai-

chi agreed on a package of stricter measures regarding foreign nationals.

The name of the package translates to “comprehensive measures for acceptance and coexistence of foreign nationals.” It comes after the government established a “Headquarters for Foreign Nationals Policy” in November 2025.

The tightened measures include doubling the residency requirement for naturalization to 10 consecutive years and introducing Japanese language proficiency requirements for permanent residency.

“Many of our systems were not designed with such a large number of foreign visitors and residents in mind,” Takashi Yamashita, a lawmaker from the Liberal Democratic Party who serves as a chair of one of the project teams under the Headquarters for Foreign Nationals Policy, told DW.

“We draw a clear line; we will firmly support those who use the system correctly, while taking a firm stance against misuse, overuse and abuse. We work to eliminate the public sense of unfairness,” said Yamashita.

“It is also important to create an environment where legal for-

eign residents who seek to contribute to Japanese society can live with peace of mind and thrive as members of local communities,” he added.

However, some prospective workers in Japan say the new rules have adversely affected their plans.

Yanika Roongpairaj, a 35-year-old Thai researcher working at Chiba University Hospital near Tokyo, said things have gone smoothly so far in building her career in clinical pharmacy, including visa applications and job hunting.

But despite receiving a Ph.D. degree in Japan in 2024, she told DW that “these policy changes have affected my thoughts about my long-term plans in Japan to some extent.”

**Rising negative sentiment toward foreigners**

The push to tighten policies toward foreign nationals comes amid growing public concerns about foreigners across Japan.

According to a Nikkei mail-in opinion poll conducted between October and December 2025, 37% of respondents said they “think it is not good” that the number of foreigners is increasing in Japanese workplaces and communities, a 10-point increase from the previous survey conducted in 2024.

A 26-year-old Japanese consultant in Tokyo, who spoke anonymously with DW, said he is concerned that “coexistence with foreigners has been promoted uncontrolled, without sufficient understanding and compromise when it comes to public safety and social norms.” — DW





**LIFESTYLE**

**PANCREATIC CANCER:**

# New drug extends lives but isn't a cure

The newly developed treatment daraxonrasib can double the years left to live for patients with pancreatic cancer — but it doesn't cure the disease and only works if the cancer is treated early

**P**ancreatic cancer is notoriously difficult to treat — and in many cases leads to death just months after diagnosis. So it is no surprise that this headline created a stir: In a recent study, a new drug, daraxonrasib, was able to double the survival time of patients with pancreatic cancer. Compared with patients who underwent chemotherapy, those treated with daraxonrasib not only lived longer, but also reported a better quality of life. The treatment also appeared to cause fewer severe side effects.

cancer carry a mutation in this gene. As a result, it remains permanently active, promoting tumor formation and growth.

Study participants who received daraxonrasib lived a median of 13.2 months from the start of treatment, compared with 6.6 months for patients in the chemotherapy control group.

Despite the excitement surrounding the study results, one important fact remains: Daraxonrasib does not cure pancreatic cancer. In most cases, the diagnosis still amounts to a death sentence.

"Promising" is actually too strong a word," said Susanne Weg-Remers, a physician and head of the Cancer Information Service at the German Cancer Research Centre in Heidelberg.

**Pancreatic cancer: Few warning signs, poor survival prospects**

Pancreatic cancer develops largely unnoticed. Patients often experience no symptoms at first, or only vague, nonspecific ones. These may include upper abdominal pain, back pain, nausea, digestive problems, loss of appetite and weight loss.

According to the Robert Koch Institute, about 20,000 people in Germany were diagnosed with pancreatic cancer in 2023. Nearly as many died from the disease.

"In an ideal situation — although unfortunately this is very rare — pancreatic cancer is detected early enough that it can still be surgically removed," Weg-Remers said. In such cases, surgeons remove a large portion of the pancreas and, depending on the location of the tumor, may also remove parts of the duodenum and stomach.

Patients then receive chemotherapy and, in some cases, additional radiation therapy, Weg-Remers said. Researchers are also investigating using an mRNA vaccine designed to prevent the cancer from returning.

Even with surgery and chemotherapy, however, the outlook remains poor: Only 11% of patients are still alive five years after diagnosis.

Special screening measures for pancreatic cancer are not generally recommended. According to Weg-Remers, this is largely due to the pancreas's difficult location deep within the body, between the abdominal cavity and the spine.

"With the diagnostic methods currently available that would be suitable for population-wide screening, it is very difficult to examine the pancreas effectively," she explained.

Exceptions are made for people with a hereditary predisposition and families in which pancreatic cancer occurs more frequently than expected.

**No effective treatment despite years of research**

If the tumour can no longer be surgically removed — because it has metastasized and spread to other parts of the body — patients typically die within a matter of months. Chemotherapy may extend survival somewhat, but often at the cost of severe side effects.

For patients with advanced disease, treatment decisions are therefore highly individual, Weg-Remers said. Purely palliative care — involving medications to manage pain and digestive symptoms — is also an option.

Targeted drugs that attack specific features of a tumor and inhibit its growth are only available to a very limited extent, Weg-Remers said.

"Despite a great deal of research in recent years, we are still relatively close to the beginning."

Part of the excitement surrounding daraxonrasib stems from this reality: At present, doctors have very few viable options for patients beyond giving them a little more time and making that time as comfortable as possible. -nw

The study should be regarded as "a revolutionary breakthrough for patients with pancreatic cancer," said Dietrich Ruess, Deputy Medical Director and Head of the certified Pancreatic Cancer Centre at the Department of General and Visceral Surgery at Freiburg University Medical Centre.

"In my view, this is one of the most important clinical developments in metastatic pancreatic cancer in many years," said Dieter Saur, Professor of Translational Cancer Research at the Technical University of Munich and the German Cancer Research Centre in Heidelberg.

**Daraxonrasib targets the RAS gene**

Experts expressed enthusiasm that daraxonrasib could specifically target the so-called RAS gene. This gene encodes a protein that drives cell growth and division. About 90% of people with pancreatic





ROUND-UP

1.99% interest rate on sophisticated SUV Kia Sportage L this summer



FINANCE

Customers can benefit from special interest rates starting from just 1.99% for finance tenures of up to four years, and 2.99% for five-year tenures, subject to credit approval by select finance partners

**MUSCAT:** As part of Kia's Onward, Together summer campaign, the Kia Sportage L takes centre stage as a sophisticated SUV designed to elevate every journey for families across Oman. Combining bold styling, advanced technol-

ogy, dynamic performance, and premium comfort, the Sportage L continues to redefine the modern SUV experience while offering exceptional value through exclusive seasonal benefits.

To make ownership even more

accessible, Kia Oman is introducing attractive finance solutions for individual retail customers. Customers can benefit from special interest rates starting from just 1.99% for finance tenures of up to four years, and 2.99% for five-year tenures, subject to credit approval by select finance partners.

These rates are applicable on selected variants including the Sportage L 1.5T ALPHA 26 MY and Sportage L 2.0T MID 25 MY, providing customers with an ideal opportunity to join the Kia family this summer.

In addition, customers can enjoy savings of up to OMR 1,700, offered as a direct vehicle price reduction in place of the standard cash gift. The offer package also includes one year registration along with a

comprehensive service package of 30,000 kms or 3 years. Existing Kia customers purchasing a new Kia vehicle will receive an enhanced service package of 50,000 kms or 5 years, further reinforcing Kia's commitment to long-term customer satisfaction. These limited-time offers are valid until 5 July.

Designed with practicality and comfort in mind, the Kia Sportage L features a spacious 2,755 mm wheelbase and a generous 543-litre cargo capacity, making it ideally suited for family travel and everyday versatility. The SUV is powered by a choice of two advanced turbocharged engines — a 2.0T engine producing 233 HP and a 1.5T engine delivering 197 HP — both paired with an advanced 8-speed Shift-by-Wire transmis-

sion for a refined and responsive driving experience.

Further enhancing confidence on the road, the Sportage L comes equipped with features such as an Electronic Parking Brake and an available All-Wheel Drive (AWD) system, which intelligently distributes power to optimize traction and stability across varying road and weather conditions.

Inside, the Sportage L offers a premium cabin experience tailored for modern lifestyles. The interior is highlighted by a seamless dual 12.3-inch integrated cluster and infotainment display, complemented by a wireless smartphone charger, panoramic sunroof, and front ventilated seats designed to enhance comfort during Oman's summer season. Additional con-

venience features such as a smart power tailgate and a sporty D-shaped steering wheel further elevate the driving experience.

Safety remains a key priority, with the Sportage L equipped with a comprehensive suite of Advanced Driver Assistance Systems (ADAS), ensuring greater confidence and peace of mind for drivers and passengers alike.

Kia Oman invites customers to visit their nearest Kia showroom to experience the Sportage L firsthand and take advantage of these exclusive summer offers.

Reliable International Automotive (RIA), the official distributor of Kia in Oman, continues to deliver an exceptional ownership journey for customers across the Sultanate.

INFLATION TRENDS

Gold prices may remain under pressure over next month amid global cues: Analysts

**NEW DELHI:** Gold prices are likely to remain under pressure over the next month amid global macroeconomic factors, while volatility is expected to persist as investors closely monitor the US Federal Reserve's policy trajectory, inflation trends, the US dollar and geopolitical developments, according to market analysts.

"Spot gold has managed to recover from its recent seven-month low after a sharp fall earlier this week, but the overall trend remains weak. Recent US inflation data largely matched expectations and provided some temporary support as US bond yields eased," Riteshkumar Sahu, Senior Manager-Commodities Research at Kotak Neo, told ANI on Friday. He further added that renewed strength in the US dollar, strong US jobs data and expectations that the Federal Reserve could still raise interest rates later this year continue to keep pressure on gold.

Spot gold (XAU/USD) was trading around USD 4,022 per ounce. Sahu said immediate support is placed at USD 3,950 per ounce, while resistance is seen at USD 4,200 per ounce. A break below support could drag prices towards the USD 3,800-3,400 range, whereas a sustained move above resistance could push prices towards the USD 4,600-4,800 range. On the domestic front, MCX Gold was trading around Rs 1,43,127 per 10 grams, with immediate support at Rs 1,37,500 and resistance at Rs 1,45,500. According to Sahu, a break below support could take prices towards



Rs 1,34,000-1,25,500, while a move above resistance could lift prices towards Rs 1,52,000-1,60,500. Sahu said continued outflows from gold-backed exchange-traded funds (ETFs), although at a slower pace than in previous weeks, indicate investor interest has improved marginally but remains below last year's levels.

He noted that spot gold has declined by more than 3.5 per cent this week and nearly 12 per cent this month, putting prices on track for a fourth consecutive weekly and monthly decline. From a technical perspective, Sahu

said spot gold has held above the key chart support near USD 3,960 per ounce and formed an inside-candle pattern, indicating the market is awaiting fresh directional triggers.

A move above USD 4,045 per ounce could trigger a short-term recovery towards the 20-day moving average near USD 4,200, while USD 3,960 remains the key technical support level. He added that comments from Federal Reserve officials and US consumer sentiment data will be closely watched for the next directional move in gold prices. Ravindra Kumar, Senior Research

Analyst at SMC Global Securities, said easing geopolitical tensions following progress in the US-Iran peace process have reduced safe-haven demand for gold, while the sharp decline in crude oil prices could help cool inflationary pressures and eventually allow the Federal Reserve to adopt a relatively softer policy stance if inflation continues to moderate.

However, he said bullion remains under near-term pressure from a stronger US dollar, expectations of tighter global monetary conditions and renewed risk-off sentiment following the

Bank of Japan's interest rate hike. Kumar also cited concerns over the increasing adoption of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and its potential impact on global employment and economic growth as factors contributing to broader market volatility and intermittent selling pressure in precious metals.

On the technical front, Kumar said the broader trend remains weak, although he expects a technical bounce before fresh selling emerges. He identified strong support for MCX Gold near Rs 1,30,000 and COMEX Gold around USD 3,600 per ounce, while key re-

sistance is seen near Rs 1,45,000 on MCX Gold and around USD 4,400 per ounce on COMEX Gold. On the near-term outlook, Amit Gupta, Senior Research Analyst (Commodity) at Kedia Advisory, told ANI that gold prices could witness some downside over the next month in line with key support levels. "We can see some drop as per support levels."

However, given a window of three months, a jump could be seen, Gupta said, adding that persistent central bank gold purchases, safe-haven demand and gradual rupee depreciation are likely to keep the broader trend supportive over the medium term despite near-term volatility. However, over the three-month horizon, he expects MCX Gold to find support near Rs 1,35,000 with potential upside towards Rs 1,60,000, while MCX Silver could find support around Rs 1,90,000 with upside extending towards Rs 2,60,000. Anantha Padmanaban Former Chairman of All India Gem & Jewellery Domestic Council (GJC) also expected gold prices to remain under pressure for a month but recovery in prices afterwards.

He said this year's India International Jewellery Show (IIJS) is expected to witness strong business activity if gold prices remain under pressure or continue to fluctuate. "This year, IIJS is going to be a very big hit if prices remain under pressure or move either way. Over the last few months, many jewellers have reduced their inventories for one reason or another and are expected to refill their stocks ahead of the long festive season," he told ANI.





TO CONTINUE  
READING THE  
FULL EDITION,  
PLEASE  
**FOLLOW**  
OUR OFFICIAL  
**WHATSAPP**  
**CHANNEL**

