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TELEPHONE CALL

Oman, Saudi Foreign Minister discuss regional developments

MUSCAT: His Excellency Sayyid Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, held a telephone call with Prince Faisal bin Farhan bin Abdullah Al Saud, Foreign Minister of the sisterly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

During the call, the two ministers exchanged views on regional developments, where Sayyid Badr expressed the Sultanate of Oman's solidarity with the Kingdom and its rejection of targeting civilian facilities or undermining its security and the safety of civilians.

The two ministers affirmed the importance of continued coordination and consultation, and strengthening efforts aimed at containing tensions and consolidating de-escalation, in a way that paves the way for political dialogue and pushes towards addressing all issues and crises through peaceful means, in order to preserve the security and stability of the region. — OMA

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN
HH Sayyid Theyazin chairs IFC Oman meeting

1 His Highness Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham Al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs and Chairman of the Board of Directors of the International Financial Centre of Oman (IFC Oman), chaired the Board's meeting in the presence of its members. >A2



OMAN
Oman first in Postal Development Index

2 Oman wins first place regionally for the second consecutive year in the Postal Development Index of Universal Postal Union. >A5

MARKET
Output of refineries tops 149mn barrels

3 The total output of refineries in the Sultanate of Oman until the end of August 2026 amounted to 149.95 million barrels. >B1

OMAN PLANS AVIATION MANUFACTURING HUB

The partnership aims to localise global expertise and develop national skills in line with Oman Vision 2040



MUSCAT: Oman could attract OMR25.4 million in investment through a partnership between GMF AeroAsia and MACH Aerospace Global to develop aircraft maintenance, engineering training and manufacturing facilities, supporting the Sultanate's

ambition to become a regional aviation hub.

The projects follow agreements signed during an investment forum organised by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and aim to localise global expertise, develop national skills and strengthen the aviation industry in line with Oman Vision 2040 and the National Aviation Strategy 2040.

Dr Abdullah bin Masoud Al-Harthi, Chairman of the Board of Directors of MACH Aerospace Global, said the partnership would expand Oman's aviation capabilities beyond transport and operations to include maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO), engineering training and aircraft component manufacturing. >A4

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Chaired by HH Sayyid Theyazin, Board of International Financial Centre of Oman holds meeting



It emphasised the importance of continuing efforts to enhance investment attractiveness and to create a stable business environment



MUSCAT: His Highness Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham Al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs and Chairman of the Board of Directors of the International Financial Centre of Oman (IFC Oman), chaired the Board's meeting on Thursday in the presence of its members. The Board reviewed the latest developments in the Centre's legislative, regulatory and operational framework. It emphasised the importance of continuing efforts to enhance investment attractiveness and to create a stable and

competitive business environment capable of attracting investments and international financial institutions. **Diversification** The establishment of the International Financial Centre of Oman, issued under Royal Decree No. (8/2026), comes within the strategic approaches of the Sultanate of Oman aimed at diversifying the national economy, enhancing its position as a global hub for financial services, attracting capital, and supporting innovation.

BILATERAL RELATIONS

Oman and Nepal hold political consultations



KATHMANDU: The second session of political consultations between the Sultanate of Oman and the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal was held in Kathmandu. The Omani delegation was headed by Sheikh Khalifa Alharthy Foreign Ministry Undersecretary for Political Affairs, while the Nepalese delegation was headed by Amrit Bahadur Rai, Foreign Secretary of Nepal. The meeting discussed relations between the two countries and prospects for cooperation in investment, education, cultural exchange, agricultural products and fertilisers, and air transport. The discussions aimed to boost trade and investment and expand opportunities for economic cooperation.

The meeting also discussed a number of consular matters and bilateral agreements, and included an exchange of views on regional developments. The meeting was attended by Ambassador Issa Alshibani, Oman's Ambassador to the Republic of India; Ambassador Sheikh Abdulaziz Alhosni, Head of the Foreign Ministry's Asia and Pacific Department; and officials from both countries. On the sidelines of the consultations, Sheikh Khalifa met Nepal's Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Environment and the Minister for Youth, Labour and Employment. The meetings discussed cooperation between the two countries.

SUSTAINABLE PARTNERSHIP

Invest Oman targets French investment through partnerships in priority sectors

MUSCAT: Invest Oman hosted a meeting bringing together representatives of the French business community as part of joint efforts to strengthen economic relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the French Republic. The meeting was organised in cooperation with the Embassy of the Sultanate of Oman in France and MEDEF International. The meeting was attended by Ibtisam bint Ahmed Al Farooji, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion for Investment Promotion, and Ahmed bin Mohammed Al Araiimi, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the French Republic. The meeting aimed to highlight the competitive advantages of Oman's investment environment and explore areas of cooperation across priority sectors. The meeting forms part of Invest Oman's approach to targeting companies and institutions with strong investment potential by gaining a deeper understanding of their areas of business and future growth strategies, and connecting them with projects and opportunities that align with their expertise and capabilities. This approach supports the development of economic relationships that can evolve into sustainable projects and partnerships. Al Farooji emphasised that the French market represents an important market in Oman's efforts to attract quality investments, noting that the current phase focuses on aligning investment opportunities available in the Sultanate with investors' needs and



international expansion plans. "Through these meetings, we seek to move the dialogue with the business community beyond introducing opportunities towards understanding investors' needs and identifying areas of alignment with priority sectors in Oman." "We view French companies as important partners, given their expertise, technologies and capabilities, which can contribute to advancing quality projects and strengthening value chains in Oman's economy," she further added. The meeting discussed various areas of cooperation aligned with Oman's economic diversification objectives, including energy, renewable energy and hydrogen, water and resource management, waste-to-energy, space and advanced technologies, transport and infrastructure, engineering, digital technologies, and healthcare. Ahmed bin Mohammed Al Araiimi, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman in France, highlighted the important role of such meetings in strengthening engagement between the business communi-

ties of the two countries, noting that Omani-French relations provide a solid foundation for advancing economic cooperation. "Engagement between the business communities of Oman and France represents an important opportunity to take economic relations into broader areas. We are keen to provide platforms that enable French companies to gain a direct understanding of the opportunities offered by Oman's market and explore areas of co-operation that align with their expertise and international aspirations," he said. The meeting brought together representatives from diverse sectors and fields in France, alongside business networks and institutions specialising in consulting, finance, legal services and healthcare, as well as representatives from French government entities. This broad participation supports multiple avenues for cooperation and creates opportunities for the exchange of expertise, knowledge and specialised services.

COMMENTARY

Legal Protections for Inmates and Detainees under Omani Law

Oman's Prisons Law, promulgated by Royal Decree 48/98, as consolidated up to Royal Decree 2/2019, establishes the legal framework governing inmates and detainees, including their admission, health and social care, and visits and correspondence, as well as the education and employment of inmates. Speaking to Times of Oman, Dr. Mohammed Ibrahim Al Zadjali, Chairman of Mohammed Ibrahim Law Firm, said "an inmate is every person imprisoned in execution of a judicial judgment issued by the competent court, while a detainee is every person provisionally detained in execution of an order issued by the competent authority. It is not



permitted to place any person in a prison or a place of provisional detention except by a written order issued by the competent authority and signed by the per-



son who has the legal authority to issue it. In all cases, inmates and detainees under the age of eighteen must be isolated from other inmates and detainees." He stated that "inmates and

detainees enjoy free health and social care and must be provided with clothing and covers appropriate for personal use. Inmates must also be provided with meals appropriate to their age and health conditions." He added that "inmates have the right to receive visitors, with the authorisation to visit vested in the Director General of Prisons or whoever he authorises in accordance with the regulation, while any visitor may be searched for reasons relating to public security or health, as provided by law. Education is compulsory for illiterate inmates, and the Directorate General of Prisons provides other inmates with education and vocational training, considering their age,

readiness, and sentence length." "Employment of inmates is compulsory unless prevented by health conditions. Detainees and inmates sentenced for a period not exceeding two months are prohibited from being employed in work other than that relating to cleaning their accommodation. An inmate who reaches the age of sixty years is exempt from work unless he wishes to work and the prison doctor's report confirms his ability. An inmate is granted a wage in exchange for his work, with its amount and the conditions for entitlement specified by the regulation," he said. "An inmate whose period of imprisonment exceeds four years must undergo a transitional period before release, aimed

at facilitating his integration into society after release, with that period counted as part of his sentence," 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, Maritime Law, Construction and Engineering Contracts, International Arbitration, Intellectual Property and more).*

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Healthcare management committee discusses means of unifying referral pathway for cancer patients in Oman

Within the framework of enhancing integration in the provision of specialised care, the committee explored the unified national pathway for referring cancer patients and unifying treatment protocols

MUSCAT: The Healthcare Management and Organisation Committee held its second meeting of 2026, chaired by Dr. Hilal Ali Al Sabti, Minister of Health, on Thursday. The meeting aimed to follow up on a number of topics related to developing the health system and enhancing integration among its various components. The committee reviewed the project of the Unified National Platform for the Professional Registration and Licensing of Health Practitioners. This project aims to unify the procedures and standards of professional registration and licensing among the relevant health sectors and to develop accreditation mecha-

nisms in a manner that contributes to raising the efficiency of procedures, enhancing readiness and improving professional practice. The committee discussed the healthcare model through a presentation that addressed its executive pillars and the tracks for developing the provision of health, preventive, and therapeutic services. This contributes to improving the quality of services and enhancing the beneficiary's experience, while supporting the Sultanate of Oman's directions toward developing an integrated and sustainable health system in accordance with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040.



Within the framework of enhancing integration in the provision of specialised care, the committee explored the unified national pathway for referring cancer patients and unifying treatment protocols. This aims to organise and unify referral procedures among health institutions

This supports the integration of the roles of health institutions and raises the efficiency

and reduce the timeframes required to access specialised diagnostic and therapeutic services. This is in addition to unifying the approved therapeutic practices and protocols, thereby enhancing the continuity and quality of care. The committee reviewed a number of administrative and or-

ganisational topics listed on its agenda and took the necessary decisions and recommendations regarding them. This supports the integration of the roles of health institutions and raises the efficiency of the healthcare management and organisation system in the Sultanate of Oman. -ONA

INCREASING PERFORMANCE

Muscat Governorate concludes continuous improvement programme to enhance work efficiency and improvement in workplace

MUSCAT: Muscat Governorate concluded the Continuous Improvement Programme, conducted by the Governorate over five days and delivered by trainer Rashid Al Hamadani. Numerous employees from various divisions of the Governorate attended the programme and it aimed to promote the concepts of continuous improvement and enhance employees' capabilities in applying methodologies and tools that contribute to improving processes and increasing performance efficiency. This programme introduced participants to the concept of continuous improvement, its importance, objectives and principles, besides its role in developing the work environment and addressing challenges systematically. It highlighted improvement methodologies and their applications in institutional work environments. This programme covered several methodologies, including Kaizen, which is based on gradual and continuous improvements, and Lean Management, which focuses on enhancing value, reducing waste and improving process flow. It also introduced Six Sigma, which provides systematic tools and approaches for analysing problems, reducing the causes of variation and improving outputs. The programme addressed a range of continuous improvement tools used to understand problems, analyse their root causes and identify opportunities for development. It highlighted the importance of linking improvement efforts to performance indicators and measuring results. Thereby boosting employees' ability to address challenges in a more organised and effective manner. The programme featured prac-



tical applications and group exercises, during which participants applied several the methodologies and tools covered to real-life situations and practical challenges, and to exchange ideas and experiences. Thus contributing to strengthening the practical aspect and reinforcing the concepts of continuous improvement. Fayza Al Hindasi, one of the programme participants, said that the programme provided an opportunity to understand much about continuous improvement concept and the methodologies associated with it. She noted that the diversity of its topics, combining theoretical knowledge with practi-

cal application, clarified how improvement tools can be utilised in the workplace. She added that the group exercises enabled participants to exchange viewpoints and experiences and address a number of challenges practically. She stressed that the methodologies and tools presented could be utilised to develop working methods, improve procedures and find more effective solutions to daily challenges. Khalid Al Rawahi noted that his involvement had been a valuable experience that reinforced his knowledge and skills in work advancement and enhancing performance efficiency. He indicated

that the programme provided an opportunity to learn about numerous concepts and practices related to continuous improvement. They included problem analysis and identifying root causes, reducing waste, improving work procedures, and the importance of teamwork. He explained that one of the key lessons he gained was that continuous improvement does not always require major changes; rather, it can begin with simple, well-considered steps whose results accumulate over time, which contribute to achieving a positive and sustainable impact on the work environment. He emphasised the importance of viewing challenges as opportunities for development and improvement. Al Rawahi thanked and appreciated the programme trainer for the knowledge and expertise he shared and for his ability to present topics and simplify concepts practically and clearly. He also thanked his colleagues at the Human Resources Department for selecting the programme and providing him with the opportunity to engage. He hoped that its outcomes would contribute to improving performance and fostering continuous improvement and development in the workplace. Conducting the Continuous Improvement Programme forms part of Muscat Governorate's efforts to develop institutional capabilities, foster quality and continuous improvement, and enable employees to utilise modern methodologies and tools to advance processes and procedures. These efforts contribute to enhancing performance efficiency, improving work quality and supporting sustainable institutional practices.

SOUTH AL SHARQIYAH GOVERNORATE

Agreement worth OMR2mn signed to build 46 residences for low-income families in Masirah



SUR: South Al Sharqiyah Governorate and the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning today signed an agreement with Al Yusr Charitable Foundation. The agreement deals with the funding of a project to construct 46 homes for low-income families in the Wilayat of Masirah, to the tune of about OMR2 million. The signing ceremony took place on the sidelines of Oman Home & Building Expo and Exhibition (5 to 8 October 2026). It was signed by Dr. Yahya bin Badr

Al Maawali, Governor of South Al Sharqiyah. The agreement aims to realise social stability by establishing a safe sustainable residential environment that meets the basic needs of the target families and improves their quality of life. The agreement embodies the importance of partnership and integration between government institutions and civil society organisations in adopting and implementing housing initiatives that have a social impact. -ONA

Oman and Kazakhstan seek to enhance trade, investment ties



The private sectors of both countries, supported by OCCI and its Kazakh counterpart, expect to translate bilateral economic relations into concrete investment projects

MUSCAT: Economic and investment cooperation between Oman and Kazakhstan is set to enter a new phase, with the visit of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq to Kazakhstan opening new opportunities for businesses in both countries to establish partnerships and develop joint projects.

The private sectors of both countries, supported by the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) and its Kazakh counterpart, are seeking to translate bilateral economic relations into



concrete investment projects, particularly in food security, agriculture, transport, logistics, energy, renewable energy, technology, industry and mining.

The establishment of the Oman-Kazakhstan Business Council and the signing of agreements and memoranda of understanding covering trade, investment, renewable energy, oil and gas, mineral exploration and artificial intelligence (AI) mark important steps towards strengthening cooperation.

The establishment of the Oman-Kazakhstan AI Centre for Mineral Exploration is also expected to support the use of advanced technologies and geological data

analysis to improve exploration efficiency and assess mining opportunities in both countries.

Faisal bin Abdullah Al Rawas, Chairman of OCCI, said the establishment of the Business Council was an important step towards strengthening ties between the two countries' business communities and expanding trade and investment cooperation.

He said the Oman-Kazakhstan Business Forum in Astana provided business leaders with an opportunity to exchange information on investment opportunities and the advantages offered by both markets. Discussions covered transport and logistics, food security

and supply chains, areas of mutual interest for the two countries.

Al Rawas said the two sides planned to meet in Oman next April to review progress, follow up on agreements and explore ways to turn them into projects and initiatives.

He added that the council would provide an institutional framework for sustained engagement between businesses, facilitate the exchange of information on market opportunities and organise meetings and trade delegations to strengthen commercial ties.

M.R. Karimsakov, Chairman of the Board of the International Chamber of Commerce in Kazakhstan, said the forum was particularly significant as it coincided with His Majesty the Sultan's visit to Kazakhstan. Its main objective, he said, was to translate high-level dialogue between the two countries into tangible trade and investment partnerships. He described the agreement establishing the Business Council between the two countries' chambers of commerce as a key step towards structured cooperation. Priorities include food security, agriculture and the use of Oman's ports as distribution and re-export hubs for regional markets. Karimsakov also proposed forming specialised working groups under the council to

accelerate the transition from discussions to agreements and project implementation. He said Oman's strategic location and logistics infrastructure could help facilitate the movement of Kazakh products to regional and international markets.

Dr Salim Abdullah Al Shanfari, head of the Omani side of the Oman-Kazakhstan Business Council, said its establishment during the Sultan's visit gave the initiative added significance and strengthened prospects for sustainable cooperation.

He said the council would identify trade and investment priorities, assess companies' needs and direct efforts towards projects that meet private-sector expectations. The forum marked the beginning of the council's work by bringing companies together and exploring potential areas of cooperation.

Ezzat Kapdarshitov, Vice-Chairman of the Board of Directors of Kazakh Invest, said the participation of leaders from both countries in the forum demonstrated their commitment to taking bilateral relations to a higher level. He described meetings between business leaders as essential for developing roadmaps for partnerships and joint projects.

Raed bin Mohammed Al-Shahi,

Chairman of Musandam International Investment Company, said the forum helped establish communication channels between Omani and Kazakh companies and identify opportunities in priority sectors. He stressed the importance of continued engagement to turn the opportunities discussed into projects, building on the economic and investment strengths of both countries.

Nikita Malchikov, head of the Kazakh delegation to the Oman-Kazakhstan Business Council, said bilateral relations were poised for further growth. He said contracts worth a total of \$3 billion were signed during the forum, highlighting the potential for expanded economic cooperation.

Malchikov also highlighted opportunities in modern technologies and AI, including an agreement between Solidcore and MTO to develop the use of artificial intelligence in mining operations.

Matar bin Salim Al Badi, Chief Executive Officer of Minerals Development Oman, said the collaboration represented a strategic step towards applying advanced digital technologies and AI to the mining sector. These technologies could improve exploration efficiency, accelerate the discovery of mineral resources and maximise their value. — OMA

INTEGRATED ECOSYSTEM

Oman to develop aviation maintenance and manufacturing hub

< FROM A1 In a statement to the Oman News Agency, Al-Harthi said preliminary studies estimated the investment at OMR25.4 million, including OMR12.6 million for aircraft structural component manufacturing. Investment could increase as the projects expand.

Preparatory, technical and regulatory work has begun on an Aircraft Wheels and Brakes Maintenance Centre, while plans for an Aviation Engineering Academy are progressing. Gradual implementation of the academy is expected to begin in 2027.

The aircraft structural component manufacturing project, the largest and most technically

advanced of the initiatives, is expected to take 12 to 18 months to implement after the final requirements are completed.

The maintenance centre will initially serve airlines in Oman, the wider Middle East and Africa. It is expected to reduce the need to send components abroad for servicing, shorten maintenance turnaround times and retain more aviation-related spending within the national economy.

The facility will comply with CAA requirements, with international accreditation, including EASA Part-145, targeted as services expand, subject to the necessary approvals.

Al-Harthi said Oman's strategic location between Asia, the Middle East and Africa, its infrastructure and logistics network, and its investment environment made it well suited to aviation-related industries.

Training and manufacturing The Aviation Engineering Academy will initially focus on aircraft engineering and maintenance, particularly B1 and B2 licensing pathways, alongside specialised programmes covering aircraft structures, systems and components.

MACH Aerospace Global is working with GMF AeroAsia to transfer technical expertise and develop training programmes in line with CAA requirements. The

partners also aim to secure relevant international accreditation, including EASA Part-147, subject to official approvals.

The manufacturing project will initially focus on CNC machining, sheet metal processing and selected aircraft structural parts and sub-assemblies. It will also incorporate surface treatment, non-destructive testing, metrology and engineering tooling.

Al-Harthi said certifications such as AS9100, NADCAP and ISO 9001, depending on the scope of operations, would help the facility enter international aviation supply chains and serve markets across the GCC, the Middle East, Africa and Asia.

The long-term objective is to move from importing aviation services and components to exporting technical expertise, services and manufactured products from Oman.

Opportunities for Omanis and SMEs The projects are expected to create specialised jobs for Omanis, attract private investment and generate demand for local suppliers in logistics, transport, warehousing, information technology, engineering, equipment, calibration, facility management and training.

Al-Harthi said small and medium enterprises would have opportunities to participate in the

supply chain, potentially expanding from general support services into specialised technical and industrial activities.

He described the partnership as the beginning of an integrated aviation ecosystem combining maintenance, training, manufacturing and technology transfer to strengthen national capabilities and position Oman as a competitive centre for aviation services and industries.

GMF AeroAsia is an Indonesian aircraft maintenance, repair and overhaul company affiliated with the Garuda Indonesia airline group. It became an independent company in 2002 and has extensive experience in aircraft maintenance and engineering.

FOR SECOND CONSECUTIVE YEAR

Oman tops regional ranking in Postal Development Index

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman has crowned its efforts to develop the postal sector by securing first place regionally for the second consecutive year and winning the “Regional Pioneer” award in the Postal Development Index 2026 issued by the Universal Postal Union (UPU).

This achievement reflects the development witnessed by the sector and the efforts made to enhance the efficiency of postal services and expand their scope. This result comes as the Sultanate

of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, celebrates World Post Day, which is being observed this year under the theme “One Postal Network, Countless Possibilities,” showcasing the developments and achievements made by the postal sector in Oman that have enhanced its regional and international standing.

The postal services network in Oman has seen growth in the number of post offices and access points, with the total rising from 610 points in 2024 to 704 points in 2025, enhancing the spread of

postal services and their reach to various segments of society across the governorates. Muscat Governorate recorded the highest number of access points with 107 points, followed by Dhofar Governorate with 50 points, then North Al Batinah Governorate with 39 points. The domestic express mail sector also achieved a 26 percent leap during 2025, reaching more than 4.38 million parcels, and handling more than 3 million inbound international parcels, amid growing demand for postal services and their role in supporting trade and logistics.



Online voting to select topics for ‘Together We Advance’ Forum begins

The forum seeks to ensure that discussions reflect citizens’ concerns and the needs of local communities, while strengthening public participation in shaping development priorities

MUSCAT: The Secretariat General of the Council of Ministers has invited people to vote on priority topics for the fifth edition of the “Together We Advance” Forum, scheduled to be held in Oman’s governorates in 2027.

Voting is open through the forum’s website, www.togetherfwd.om, until Sunday, October 18, 2026.

The initiative aims to involve citizens in identifying issues for discussion at the forum, which serves as a national platform for dialogue between the government

and society on development policies and priorities in the governorates. The forum seeks to ensure that discussions reflect citizens’ concerns and the needs of local communities, while strengthening public participation in shaping development priorities.

Voting is conducted based on the permanent address recorded in each citizen’s civil status record. The online platform also allows participants to suggest additional topics they consider important for discussion in their



respective governorates.

The fifth edition will continue the approach of involving the public in setting the forum’s agenda,

giving residents an opportunity to select priority issues and highlight the aspirations of their communities. The main forum will be held in

Muscat Governorate.

The “Together We Advance” Forum brings decision-makers and members of the public together

to discuss government initiatives and development programmes, exchange views and identify priorities for the next stage. - **ONA**

WILAYAT OF AL SEEB

Community libraries forum ends

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth on Thursday marked the conclusion of the “2026 Forum for Community Libraries and Cultural Centres”. The forum, which took the theme “Partners in consolidating public knowledge and building community identity”, was held from 5 to 8 October 2026.

A ceremony to this effect was held in the Wilayat of Al Seeb, Governorate of Muscat, under the auspices of Sheikh Rashid bin Ahmed Al Shamsi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Social Development for Family Affairs and Community Development

The forum brought together more than 50 participants, including specialists and supervisors of community libraries and cultural centres from different



governorates.

The forum aimed to foster integration between the Ministry and community libraries and cultural centres. It laid emphasis on the role of such institutions in enhancing the spread of cultural awareness and knowledge and the

devising of solutions to improve services and programmes offered to the community.

The ceremony saw the felicitation of winners of top places in the 5th edition of the 2026 Excellence Award for Community Libraries and Cultural Centres. - **ONA**

NORTH AL BATINAH

Symposium on preserving national identity organised

SOHAR: The Department of Endowments and Religious Affairs in North Al Batinah Governorate on Thursday organised a symposium titled “National identity in an era of challenges: A sustainable developmental vision.”

The symposium focused on the importance of fostering ‘intellectual awareness’ as a means to respond to the current rapid global developments and activate partnerships among government departments and civil society institutions. The participants also looked into the roles of social institutions in reinforcing the fundamentals of national identity, with the prime objective of instilling the values of belonging among young people and encouraging them to shoulder responsibilities and participate in the process of domestic development. The symposium was held under the auspices of Sheikh Saud bin Mohammed Al Hinai, Wali of Sohar. - **ONA**

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Mass International Official Schindler Distributor marks 52 Years Elevating Oman’s Skyline and Future in Oman, receives banking recognition



Muscat: Mass International Co. LLC, the official distributor of Schindler elevators and escalators in the Sultanate of Oman, has marked 52 years of continuous operations, reinforcing its legacy role in the nation’s infrastructure and urban development.

The milestone aligns with the global heritage of its Swiss partner Schindler, which celebrates over 152 years of vertical-transportation excellence. Together, the partnership represents one of the longest-standing technology alliances in Oman’s construction sector, supporting mobility across universities, hospitals, airports, malls, hotels and government complexes.

From Muscat’s earliest modern buildings to today’s smart developments, Schindler systems installed and maintained by Mass International move thousands daily. Several installations have remained operational for more than four decades, sustained through modernization and globally standardized maintenance regimes delivered by the company’s ISO-

“
For 52 years we have served Oman with integrity, safety and innovation”



certified service organization.

Key projects include Sultan Qaboos University, SQU Hospital, Royal Opera House Muscat, Nizwa University New Campus and major waterfront and mixed-use developments. The company also

provides vertical-mobility services to marine vessels and ships, reflecting a diversified service portfolio.

As Oman advances Vision 2040, Schindler’s digital and energy-efficient technologies & digital predictable maintenance continue to support smart-city and tourism infrastructure development, including the **Muttrah Teleferik Cable Car project**. Notably, Schindler is currently the only company at present in Oman to have executed outdoor, open-to-sky escalator installations engineered to withstand the Sultanate’s climatic conditions.

Mass International was recently recognised by **Oman Arab Bank** for its nearly 50-year banking relationship, with CEO Sulaiman Al Harthy presenting the honour to General Manager **Lateef Shahdad**.

“For 52 years we have served Oman with integrity, safety and innovation,” Shahdad said, reaffirming the company’s long-term partnership in the nation’s progress.

ICC rejects US sanctions, says move aims to intimidate staff

The ICC’s reaction came moments after the US administration announced sanctions against the court under an executive order

THE HAGUE: The International Criminal Court (ICC) on Friday strongly rejected the United States’ decision to impose sanctions against the institution, stating that the move was aimed at disrupting its operations and intimidating those who work for or cooperate with the court, while asserting that it would continue to discharge its mandate independently and impartially.

The ICC’s reaction came moments after the US administration announced sanctions against the court under an executive order, titled “Imposing Sanctions on the International Criminal Court”, citing concerns over American sovereignty and what Washington described as a threat posed by the judicial institution.

In a statement, the ICC described the US action as an unprecedented step targeting an independent judicial institution entrusted by 125 States Parties

with investigating and prosecuting genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and the crime of aggression.

“Today, the United States has imposed sanctions on the International Criminal Court as an institution. This unprecedented step follows a series of designations against thirteen independent Judges and prosecutors who serve the cause of justice,” the court said.

The ICC said the sanctions sought to obstruct the course of justice and prevent it from carrying out its responsibilities under international law.

“It is an attempt to obstruct the course of justice and to prevent the Court from doing what it was created to do. It is an assault on the rule of law and on the very foundations of the international legal order which strikes at the simple principle that no one stands above the law,” the statement added.

The court further stated that



the designation was intended to disrupt its functioning and intimidate individuals associated with its work. “The designation is aimed at disrupting the Court’s operations and at intimidating those who work for or cooperate with the Court,” it said.

ICC President Tomoko Akane asserted that the institution would not be deterred by the sanctions and would continue to carry out its responsibilities on the basis of law and evidence.

“The Court will continue to fully discharge its mandate, with independence and impartiality, acting only on the basis of the law and the evidence, for the sake of the countless victims of grave crimes,” Akane said.

The ICC also called on the

countries that established the institution to support its continued functioning, stressing that the responsibility to uphold international justice extended beyond the court itself.

“Yet the Court cannot stand alone. Its fate now rests also in the hands of the States that created it,” the statement said.

It described the Rome Statute as a collective commitment to ensuring that the most serious crimes of concern to the international community do not go unpunished. “The Rome Statute is a collective promise that the most serious crimes of concern to the international community as a whole must not go unpunished. That promise is only as strong as the resolve of those who made it,” the court said. -ANI



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US DEPARTMENT OF STATE REPORT

Oman’s efforts to combat human trafficking praised

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman’s approach to protecting people, upholding human dignity, promoting justice and safeguarding human rights continues to stand out, according to a new the US Department of State’s Trafficking Report.

The report highlighted Oman’s efforts to strengthen legislation, protect victims, improve law enforcement and intensify prevention and public awareness initiatives.

It noted that the Anti-Human

Trafficking Law of 2025 strengthened the legal framework by increasing penalties, expanding the scope of criminal offences related to exploitation and introducing provisions to protect victims and safeguard their rights. The report also highlighted measures to identify victims and refer them to care centres, where they can receive shelter, food, medical treatment, legal assistance, counselling and financial support. Foreign victims may also be provided with legal alternatives for residency and employment.

AIR QUALITY

Malaysia closes schools amid toxic haze from Indonesian fires



KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysian authorities closed schools in the capital, Kuala Lumpur, and other parts of the country on Friday due to haze caused by forest fires in nearby Indonesia.

“I have instructed all state education departments and district education offices to continue monitoring the haze situation and take immediate action if conditions require it,” Education Minister Fadhlina Sidek said in a statement.

The minister announced which

schools would be fully closed and which would continue operating partially in five states and two federal territories. “Going forward, we will ensure that any decision to close schools is communicated in advance so that parents have enough time to prepare,” Fadhlina added.

Air quality measurements in Kuala Lumpur remain at “unhealthy” levels, with Swiss air-quality monitor IQAir ranking the Malaysian capital among the most polluted cities in the world.

Malaysia’s King Sultan Ibrahim weighed in on the issue on Thursday, saying schools should be closed whenever air-quality readings reach 150 or higher on the Air Pollutant Index (API).

API readings above 200 are considered very unhealthy, while levels above 300 are deemed hazardous. Readings exceeding 500 constitute the threshold for declaring a local emergency.

Kuala Lumpur recorded an API reading of 170 on Friday.

The city lies about 1,200 kilometres (745 miles) from Indonesia, where a wave of forest fires has affected millions of people since August. According to IQAir, Kuala Lumpur is currently the world’s second most polluted city, behind only neighbouring Singapore. Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim said on Thursday that Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto had agreed to take measures to tackle the haze, but did not provide more details. -ANI

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Oman make a strong start with win over Canada



After being bowled out for 263 in 49.1 overs, Oman dismissed Canada for 222 in 48 overs

MUSCAT: Oman made a winning start to their home campaign in the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup League 2, defeating Canada by 41 runs in the opening match at Al Amerat Cricket Ground on Friday. After being bowled out for 263 in 49.1 overs, Oman produced a determined bowling performance to dismiss Canada for 222 in 48 overs, securing a crucial victory as the race for qualification for the 2027 ICC Men's Cricket World

Cup continues to intensify. The result rewarded Oman's preparations over recent days, with the team building momentum through a series of practice sessions and competitive matches against Indian sides ahead of the League 2 fixtures. Oman's batting effort was led by Hassnain Ul Wahab, who struck an impressive 93 off 77 balls, including five fours and five sixes. His innings provided the hosts with a strong platform,

while Jatinder Singh contributed 34 from 30 deliveries and Mujibur Ali added 39 from 73 balls. Zikria Islam also made a useful late contribution, scoring 24 off 18 deliveries, as Oman sought to post a competitive total. Captain Vinayak Shukla scored 20, while Shakeel Ahmed added 18. Canada's bowlers kept the pressure on, with Harsh Thaker claiming four wickets and Ajayveer Hundal taking three. However, Oman's total proved sufficient as its bowlers maintained their discipline with Hassnain Ali Shah claiming four wickets and Shakeel Ahmad claiming 3 wickets to secure the victory.

Preparation Pays Off Oman head coach Sulakshan Kulkarni said the team's recent

preparation had played an important role in helping the players approach the opening match with confidence and readiness. "The preparation has gone very well, and I believe the recent matches against Kerala and Mumbai helped us significantly ahead of the League 2 series," Kulkarni said. "We also had good training sessions over the last few days. Playing at home is a great advantage for us, as it helps the players settle into the team environment and prepare under familiar conditions." Kulkarni also highlighted the balance within the squad, pointing to the combination of spin and pace bowling, batting depth and the presence of several all-rounders. "We have a well-balanced side, with a good mix of spinners, fast bowlers

and batting options. We also have several all-rounders, which gives us an important advantage and provides flexibility in different match situations," he added. Oman's preparations included a triangular series involving Mumbai and Kerala, in which the team recorded two victories from four matches. The games offered valuable competitive exposure before the start of the League 2 home leg. **Shukla Praises Team's Progress** Oman captain Vinayak Shukla also expressed satisfaction with the squad's preparations, saying the players had shown encouraging form in the build-up to the competition. "I think our preparation has been very good. The matches

against the Indian teams provided us with valuable practice, and the boys have been shaping up well over the last few games," Shukla said. "Everyone is putting in their best effort as we approach the League 2 matches. That preparation has helped the team build confidence and get ready for the challenge ahead." The captain's comments reflected Oman's focus on carrying their recent form into the home series, where every result could prove important in the standings. Oman's League 2 campaign will continue with a second meeting against Canada on October 15, while their matches against Nepal are scheduled for October 13 and 19. Canada and Nepal will meet on October 11 and 17.

4-6, 3-6

Djokovic suffers shock Shanghai Masters exit after Hurkacz defeat, turns focus to Paris

SHANGHAI : Novak Djokovic's bid to close in on Roger Federer's career ATP title record suffered a setback as the Serbian great crashed out of the Shanghai Masters 2026 in the second round, losing 4-6, 3-6 to Poland's Hubert Hurkacz on Friday. The 24-time Grand Slam champion, who arrived in Shanghai on the back of his 102nd tour-level title at the China Open in Beijing,

struggled to counter Hurkacz's powerful serve and precise baseline game in an 87-minute contest, according to Olympics.com. The defeat ended Djokovic's hopes of building on his Beijing triumph at a tournament he has won four times. The 39-year-old had defeated Australia's Alex de Minaur in Tuesday's final in Beijing to move within one title of Federer's 103 career ATP titles.

Hurkacz, meanwhile, produced a commanding performance to register his first victory over Djokovic in nine meetings. The Pole won 82 per cent of points behind his first serve, according to Infosys ATP Stats, and maintained control for much of the encounter. Djokovic faced pressure early in the match, with Hurkacz saving two break points in the third game before settling into his rhythm.

SECOND T20I

They batted really well: Iyer after West Indies chase down 250

RANCHI : India captain Shreyas Iyer credited West Indies batters for their performance after the visitors chased down a target of 250 runs to beat India by six wickets in the second T20I at the JSCA International Stadium in Ranchi on Friday. After India posted 249/5 in 20 overs, powered by Sanju Samson's 82 off 41 balls and contributions from Ishan Kishan (43), Shreyas Iyer (40) and Tilak Varma (44), West Indies captain Shai Hope (102* off 45 balls) led the chase

alongside Sherfane Rutherford, who scored 84 off 37 balls, and Romario Shepherd, who remained unbeaten on 34 off 13 deliveries. The visitors reached 252/4 in 18.3 overs to level the five-match series 1-1. Speaking after the match, Shreyas Iyer said the dew factor made it difficult to determine a safe total and left little margin for error. However, he credited West Indies for their batting performance and also praised Samson, Abhishek and Mayank Yadav for their contributions.

"When the dew factor comes in, it plays a massive role. You cannot give a number. The margin of error on this wicket was very minor. Any minor error was going into the stands. Few missed chances, but that is part of the game. But credit where due, they batted very well. [On Mayank and Samson] Both were phenomenal. This is what we look for in Sanju and Abhishek. Exceptional from them and also Mayank. Those three crucial wickets stabilised things for us," he said.



MHD ACERE Wins Youth Engagement in Sports Award at Shabiba Jawa'iz Basma 2026



MHD ACERE was felicitated with the 'Youth Engagement in Sports Award' at Shabiba Jawa'iz Basma Social Impact Awards 2026. Organised by Muscat Media Group, publisher of Times of Oman and Al Shabiba, and managed by TEEvents, the awards recognised organisations, initiatives and individuals creating meaningful social, environmental and economic impact across Oman. The evening culminated in the presentation of 22 awards across diverse areas of community and social impact. MHD ACERE was recognised for its commitment to promoting sports, encouraging youth participation and supporting the development of

sporting talent across Oman. Through its involvement in a diverse range of sporting initiatives, the organisation has contributed to creating opportunities for young people to engage in physical activities, develop their abilities and embrace active and healthy lifestyles. Among its key initiatives are support for the Ministry of Education's Physical Education Day, the Tour of Oman and Tour of Salalah cycling events, the Oman Boxing Championship and various Padel tournaments. Its commitment also extends to preserving and promoting Oman's traditional sporting heritage through its support for the Jalan Camel Race and Bidiyah Horse Race. By supporting both contem-

porary and traditional sporting activities, MHD ACERE continues to encourage greater community participation, nurture emerging talent and strengthen the role of sports in bringing people together. Its initiatives reflect a sustained commitment to youth development, community engagement and the promotion of Oman's sporting culture. Shabiba Jawa'iz Basma 2026, organised by Muscat Media Group and managed by TEEvents, celebrates organisations and individuals whose initiatives contribute to community development, healthcare, education, youth empowerment, sustainability, inclusion and social progress across the Sultanate.

Worley Wins Leadership in Sustainable Business Practices Award at Shabiba Jawa'iz Basma 2026



Worley was felicitated with the 'Leadership in Sustainable Business Practices Award' at Shabiba Jawa'iz Basma Social Impact Awards 2026. Organised by Muscat Media Group, publisher of Times of Oman and Al Shabiba, and managed by TEEvents, the awards recognised organisations, initiatives and individuals creating meaningful social, environmental and economic impact across Oman. The evening culminated in the presentation of 22 awards across diverse areas of community and social impact. Worley was recognised for its commitment to advancing sustainable business practices through innovation, engineering excellence and technology-driven solutions. Its initiatives

focus on improving operational efficiency, optimising resources and supporting the development of large-scale renewable energy projects, demonstrating how engineering innovation can contribute to a more sustainable future. A key highlight of its efforts is the OptiPTX™ Techno Commercial Optimization Platform, an innovative solution designed to improve the efficiency of engineering assessments and project development. The platform has demonstrated the ability to reduce assessment timelines from approximately 10 weeks to just one week, while supporting the optimisation of major renewable energy projects involving approximately 40 GW of renewable energy

capacity. Through its focus on technological innovation, resource optimisation and sustainable project development, Worley continues to demonstrate how businesses can integrate efficiency and environmental responsibility into their operations, contributing to the advancement of sustainable industrial practices and the wider energy transition. Shabiba Jawa'iz Basma 2026, organised by Muscat Media Group and managed by TEEvents, celebrates organisations and individuals whose initiatives contribute to community development, healthcare, education, youth empowerment, sustainability, inclusion and social progress across the Sultanate.



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MORE RATE HIKES LIKELY

US Federal Reserve Governor Christopher Waller has indicated that further interest rate hikes are likely in the coming months as inflation remains stubbornly above the central bank's 2 per cent target, although the timing and pace of increases will depend on incoming economic data. > **B2**

MARKET
BUSINESS & FINANCE



MOBILE SUBSCRIPTIONS RISE

The total number of mobile phone subscriptions in Oman rose to 8.51 million by the end of August 2026, registering a growth of 2.5% compared to the same period in 2025, according to data released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information. > **B8**



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Refinery products output in Oman exceeds 149mn barrels

Preliminary

statistics issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information showed that total motor fuel production increased by 0.7 percent by the end of August 2026

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The total output of refineries in the Sultanate of Oman until the end of August 2026 amounted to 149.95 million barrels, a decrease of 2.4 percent compared to 153.70 million barrels dur-



ing the same period in 2025.

Preliminary statistics issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) showed that total motor fuel production increased by 0.7 percent by the end of August 2026. The statistics also showed an increase in the production of regular M91 motor fuel by 0.4 percent to reach 11.40 million barrels, compared to 11.36 million during the same period of 2025.

Conversely, its sales declined by 9.1 percent, reaching 10.86 million barrels by the end of August 2026 compared to 11.95 million barrels

during the same period in 2025. Its exports increased by 27.3 percent to 2.46 million barrels by the end of August 2026 compared to 1.93 million barrels during the same period in 2025.

Production of premium M95 motor fuel recorded an increase of 1.1 percent until the end of August 2026, reaching 9.56 million barrels, compared to 9.45 million barrels during the same period of 2025.

The sales of M95 motor fuel decreased by 8.5 percent, reaching 10,389,300 barrels by the end of August 2026, compared to 11,350,400

barrels during the same period in 2025. Exports also declined by 48.3 percent, reaching 362,900 barrels, compared to 701,400 barrels during the same period in 2025.

Regarding gas oil (diesel), its production registered a decrease of 6.4 percent until the end of August 2026, reaching 50.34 million barrels, compared to 53.76 million during the same period of 2025.

Conversely, its sales increased by 1.1 percent, reaching 13.80 million barrels, compared to 13.65 million barrels during the same period in 2025. Its exports also

declined by 10.4 percent, reaching 38.67 million barrels until the end of August 2026, compared to 43.16 million barrels during the same period in 2025.

Jet fuel production also increased by 15.5 percent by the end of August 2026, reaching 19.75 million barrels, compared to 17.10 million barrels during the same period in 2025.

While its sales declined by 5.0 percent, reaching 3,037,500 barrels by the end of August 2026, compared to 3,197,000 barrels during the same period in 2025, its exports increased by 27.8 percent, reaching 16,609,800 barrels by the end of August 2026, compared to 12,991,800 barrels during the same period in 2025.

LPG production

Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) production decreased by 2.7 percent by the end of August 2026 reaching 7.44 million barrels, compared to 7.65 million barrels during the same period of 2025.

Its sales also decreased by 20.7 percent by the end of August 2026,

reaching 2,017,600 barrels, compared to 2,545,000 barrels during the same period in 2025.

In contrast, its exports increased by 5.4 percent, reaching 2,396,600 barrels by the end of August 2026, compared to 2,272,900 barrels during the same period in 2025.

Naphtha production recorded an increase of 5.1 percent by the end of August 2026, reaching 26.19 million barrels, compared to 24.92 million barrels during the same period of 2025.

Its sales also increased by 4.7 percent, reaching 9,607,700 barrels by the end of August 2026, compared to 9,175,500 barrels during the same period in 2025. Its exports rose by 3.3 percent, reaching 16,953,000 barrels by the end of August 2026, compared to 16,406,400 barrels during the same period in 2025.

The production of other refinery products recorded a decrease of 14.2 percent by the end of August 2026, reaching 25.25 million barrels, compared to 29.43 million barrels during the same period of 2025.

RESERVE BANK OF INDIA

India's forex reserves fall by \$12.95bn to \$734.61bn

MUMBAI: India's foreign exchange reserves fell sharply by \$12.95 billion to \$734.61 billion in the week ended October 2, primarily due to a decline in foreign currency assets and gold reserves, according to data released by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Friday.

The RBI's Weekly Statistical Supplement showed that the country's total foreign exchange reserves declined by \$12.952 billion during the week.

Foreign currency assets, the largest component of the reserves, fell by \$10.664 billion to \$604.747 billion, accounting for the bulk of the weekly decline.

Gold reserves

Gold reserves also decreased by \$2.288 billion to \$106.413 billion during the reporting week.

The decline in both components contributed to the sharp reduction in the country's overall foreign exchange reserves.

Meanwhile, Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) increased marginally by \$15 million to \$18.656 billion.

India's reserve position with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) declined by \$15 million to \$4.789 billion.

Despite the latest weekly decline, India's foreign exchange reserves remained \$43.498 billion higher than their level at the end of March 2026, according to the RBI data.

On a year-on-year basis, the country's total reserves were higher by \$34.645 billion.

An important buffer

Foreign exchange reserves are an important buffer against external economic shocks and help the RBI manage volatility in the foreign exchange market.

The latest weekly decline comes amid continued attention to movements in the rupee and global financial markets, with changes in foreign currency assets and gold reserves weighing on the overall reserve position. — **ANI**

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE

MSX records best performance among Gulf bourses in the first nine months of this year

MUSCAT: The Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) recorded the best performance among Gulf stock exchanges in the first nine months of this year, with the main index of the exchange rising by about 29 percent to conclude September trading at 7,566 points, recording an increase of 1,700 points from its level at the end of last year.

The Exchange also witnessed many gains during the current year, with increased investor confidence, improved liquidity levels, and increased investments by local investment funds and institutions. Trading was characterised by increased activity from market makers and liquidity providers, which positively impacted MSX and encouraged individual investors to buy and strengthened their confidence in the sector. Positive financial results, dividend distributions, and improved performance of most listed companies also positively impacted investor confidence and encouraged them to increase their investments.

The main stock exchange index managed to achieve a number of historic record levels during the current year after it rose in January to 6,000 points, and recorded a new record level in February exceeding 7,000 points, then jumped to 8,000 points by March 29, recording its best levels since 2008, and in May the index managed to record its best levels during the current year after it rose to 8,397 points.

The sectoral indices recorded a positive performance in the first nine months of this year, with the financial sector index rising to 13,600 points, recording an increase of about 3,700 points. The industrial sector index recorded gains of 1,965 points and rose to 9,812 points. The services sector index rose by more than 600 points and closed at the end of September at 3,009 points. The Sharia index rose to 618 points, 92 points from its level at the end of last year.

The value of trading in the first nine months of this year rose to OMR9.73 billion, recording



growth of more than 300 percent compared to its level in the same period last year, which amounted to OMR2.42 billion. The number of securities traded recorded an increase of 153 percent rising to 33.4 billion compared to 13.2 bil-

lion securities traded in the same period last year. The number of transactions executed rose to 1.31 million compared to 327,000 transactions executed in the same period last year.

The Muscat Stock Exchange

recorded its best monthly trading value in April at OMR1.5413 billion, while it recorded its lowest trading value in June at OMR776.1 million. On a quarterly basis, the Muscat Stock Exchange managed to achieve the best gains in the first quarter of this year, exceeding OMR3.5 billion. The second quarter witnessed trading valued at OMR3.3 billion, while trading declined in the third quarter to OMR2.8 billion.

MSX also witnessed a number of shifts in the total market capitalisation, which recorded gains of more than OMR7 billion in the first nine months of this year,

concluding September trading at OMR39.2 billion. These gains were supported by the market capitalisation of public shareholding companies, which rose to OMR22.36 billion, recording gains of more than OMR6.3 billion, benefiting from the rise in share prices, the listing of the Oman India Fertilizer Company (Omifco), and the increase in capital by a number of leading companies. The market capitalisation of public shareholding companies at the end of last September constituted about 57 percent of the total market capitalisation of securities listed on the stock exchange.

Oman's stock market extends gains on robust fundamentals

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Omani stock market extended gains during the week, with the MSX 30 index advancing by 3.08% to 7,832.25 points. The number of shares traded soared by 46.60%, while the value of shares traded surged by 58.48%. The total market cap rose by 1.26%.

"The market benefited from solid local fundamentals, while changing geopolitical expectations in the region continue to affect sentiment," according to an industry watcher.

On the domestic front, a 1.9% increase in oil exports to 209 million barrels in the first eight months signalled resilient shipment efforts. "Credit growth of 12.2% year-on-year for the first seven months of the year and re-export gains of 13.6% in the first half of 2026 additionally helped underpin the MSX 30's steady performance," said Abdullah Mahfoodh Al Wahaibi, Coach and analyst in global financial markets.

Attention also focused on



geopolitical developments and diplomacy. While US-Iran talks continued through mediators, reports of a potential resumption of attacks heightened caution. Risks remained in place as maritime disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz continued. "At the same time, data indicating higher GCC oil exports through key maritime chokepoints, despite ongoing energy-flow threats, still offered some buffer for sentiment," he said.

Oil prices traded back and forth during the week as investors weighed regional tensions, security risks, and maritime

threats. Although concerns eased after Donald Trump stated that no new military operations could occur in the region before the midterm elections, the market could remain vulnerable to volatility.

Meanwhile, investors also monitored the monetary policy's outlook. The FOMC meeting minutes indicated that while officials did not consider higher interest rate hikes urgent for October's meeting, they continued to believe an increase was warranted before year-end. "This maintained elevated expectations for further tightening in December, potentially pressuring global stock markets and Oman's MSX 30 index," said Abdullah Mahfoodh.

At the sector level, the services index climbed by 2.86%, closing the week at 3,118.70 points. Asyad Shipping rallied by 11.48%, followed by OQ Gas Networks, Abraj Energy Services, and AlBatinah Power, all advancing by 5.53%, 5.11%, and 1.52%, respectively. At the same time, Phoenix Power

declined by 7.42%.

The financial index jumped by 2.32%, finishing the week at 14,017.48 points. Most heavyweight stocks posted solid gains, led by Bank Muscat, Oman Emirates Holding, Bank Dhofar, and Madina Takaful, up by 5.23%, 4.17%, 3.72%, and 3.64%, respectively.

Meanwhile, the industry index increased by 1.51%, closing at 10,218.41 points. OQ Base Industries rose by 3.07%, Voltamp Energy was slightly higher by 2.17%, while Oman Cables Industry finished the week with a limited increase of 0.29%.

Looking ahead, Oman's stock market may continue to find support in local fundamentals amid geopolitical uncertainty. "Higher exports through key maritime chokepoints could underpin the index, while further tensions could weaken sentiment. Traders will also continue to watch Q3 earnings results in the coming weeks for further pointers on performance," said Abdullah Mahfoodh.

MARKET

Oman gears up work to launch new international financial centre

IFC Oman has been stepping up its international outreach to engage prospective businesses, investors and professional services firms globally

MUSCAT: The International Financial Centre of Oman is moving closer to opening its doors as work accelerates on its legal framework,



rulebook and registry system. The Centre is focused on completing the legal framework which will underpin IFC Oman and provide businesses and investors with the clarity, certainty and confidence to establish a base in Sultanate of Oman

A package of laws which create the foundations for business registration and licensing, financial services regulation, and an independent dispute resolution framework are due to be issued shortly. They will provide the legal basis

for IFC Oman's relevant authorities to adopt an initial package of regulations and rules that will govern activities conducted in and through the Centre. In parallel, a registry system will shortly move into testing phase. Once live, this system will enable businesses interested in establishing a base in IFC Oman to submit their applications online. His Excellency Mahmood Al Aweini, the Chair of the IFC Oman Authority Board, said: "IFC Oman is accelerating towards opening its doors, with its legal, regulatory and digital infrastructure moving into place. The Centre will offer global businesses and investors a stable and competitive place to do business, harnessing Oman's enduring connections with countries around the world and its strategic loca-

tion at the crossroads of continents, to unlock new opportunities for growth and create lasting value for Oman." IFC Oman has been stepping up its international outreach to engage prospective businesses, investors and professional services firms globally. In September it was approved as a member of the World Alliance of International Financial Centres at the organisation's annual meeting in Busan. Following on from successful attendance at the Hong Kong Belt and Road Summit and Astana Finance Days, a delegation from IFC Oman will travel to Bangkok next week for meetings with global financial services firms in the margins of the IMF and World Bank meetings and the annual meeting of members of the Institute of International

Finance. This will be followed by further meetings with prospective businesses in London later in October. IFC Oman will provide a dedicated business environment in which financial institutions, investors and professional services firms can operate under a clear, common-law framework, supported by efficient registration, licensing and dispute resolution. It will connect international capital and expertise with opportunities in Oman and the wider region, supporting Oman Vision 2040 by increasing private investment, enabling economic diversification and creating employment opportunities. IFC Oman will start registering companies later this year ahead of launching full licensing operations in 2027.

FEDERAL RESERVE GOVERNOR

US Fed's Waller expects more interest rate hikes

NEW DELHI: US Federal Reserve Governor Christopher Waller has indicated that further interest rate hikes are likely in the coming months as inflation remains stubbornly above the central bank's 2 per cent target, although the timing and pace of increases will depend on incoming economic data. Speaking at the Istanbul Economic Forum in Türkiye on Thursday, Waller said the US economy remains resilient enough to withstand tighter monetary policy, while persistent price pressures continue to pose risks to inflation control. "If the economic data continue to come in as expected, I anticipate additional hikes to support a timelier return of inflation to our 2 percent goal," Waller said. However, he clarified that the central bank does not necessarily need to raise rates at every policy meeting. "The hikes do not need to come at consecutive meetings, but they should be in place in an acceptable period of time," he added. His remarks come after the Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) raised its benchmark interest rate by 25 basis points in September to a range of 3.75-4 per cent, ending a nine-month period of unchanged rates. Waller said the decision to resume tightening was driven by several months of economic evidence rather than a single inflation reading.

He pointed to a stable labour market and persistent inflationary pressures, including elevated energy prices, the expansion of artificial intelligence infrastructure and uncertainty surrounding global trade. "Instead, it was a preponderance of evidence over several months that the risks for monetary policy had shifted, reflecting a strengthened labor market and a range of persistent inflationary forces," he said. Waller noted that the ongoing Middle East conflict had contributed to high energy prices, while damaged infrastructure and low inventories could keep oil prices elevated through 2027. He also highlighted the inflationary impact of expanding artificial intelligence infrastructure, saying evidence had mounted that the AI buildout was significantly driving up high-tech consumer prices. Continuing trade conflicts and the possibility of additional tariffs could also put renewed upward pressure on inflation, he indicated. On the latest economic data, Waller said US core personal consumption expenditures inflation stood at 3 per cent annually in August, remaining above the Fed's target. "Overall, the new data reinforce my view that the labor market is stable and inflation is too high. For at least the near term, policy will be focused on the inflation side of our mandate," he said. — **ANI**

SHARIAH-COMPLIANT FINANCING

NBO Muzn Islamic Banking launches Islamic Commercial Finance solution to support Omani entrepreneurs and businesses

MUSCAT: The National Bank of Oman's Muzn Islamic Banking has launched its new Islamic Commercial Finance solution, providing salaried Omani individuals with Shariah-compliant financing to support business ventures, commercial investments and SME activities. The solution uses salary assignments as the primary source of repayment, while additional eligible income may also be considered when calculating the Debt Burden Ratio (DBR), subject to the Bank's criteria. Commenting on the launch, Salima Obaid Issa Al Marzouqi, Assistant General Manager & Chief Islamic Banking Officer at NBO, said: "At Muzn Islamic Banking, we realise the important role that Omani entrepreneurs and business owners play in contributing to the growth and diversification of the national economy. Our new Islamic Commercial Finance solution has been developed to provide eligible customers with greater flexibility in addressing their business financing needs, whether they are looking to strengthen working capital, invest in essential assets or acquire commercial property. By combining Sharia-compliant financing structures with flexible terms, we



aim to help our customers pursue their business ambitions with confidence." Developed to offer greater flex-

ibility in meeting different business needs, the Islamic Commercial Finance solution covers both working capital and fixed asset

financing. Through Murabaha Working Capital Financing, customers can finance the purchase of stocks, inventory, raw materials, finished goods, machinery, equipment, commercial vehicles and boats, as well as computer systems, with financing tenors of up to seven years. For longer-term business investments, the solution also provides Fixed Asset Financing for commercial vehicles, plants and machinery, as well as the purchase, construction or renovation of commercial properties, including office spaces, warehouses, buildings and other real estate. Financing is offered through Diminishing Musharakah and Forward Diminishing Musharakah, with tenors of up to 15 years. The launch reflects Muzn Islamic Banking's continued focus on developing Shariah-compliant financial solutions that respond to the evolving needs of customers and businesses across the Sultanate. By providing salaried Omani citizens who own or invest in businesses with access to financing backed by salary and eligible business income, the Bank aims to make commercial financing more accessible while supporting sustainable business growth.

SIGNIFICANT NEW MILESTONE

Hai Al Naseem welcomes GEMS: A new chapter for family living in Oman

BARKA: Hai Al Naseem is reaching a significant new milestone with the announcement of a landmark international school by GEMS School Management (GSM), marking the education group's first project in Oman. The school will form part of Hai Al Naseem Phase 3, a 100% freehold community offering lifetime residency, and will be located within the development itself. Scheduled to open in September 2027, the school will be within walking distance of homes in Phase 3, with a mosque located immediately next door. The combination of freehold ownership, lifetime residency and access to an internationally recognised school within the community marks an important step in Hai Al Naseem's evolution into a destination designed around the long-term needs of families.



group adds an important community anchor and further elevates the development's proposition for families seeking quality education alongside their home. The school will be developed by Adrak Developers LLC in partnership with GEMS School Management, with GSM providing pre-operational and operational services through its turnkey ASPIRE model. **Phase 3: ownership with a community around it** Phase 3 is designed to bring together residential living with key community facilities. Its 100% freehold ownership and lifetime residency provide a long-term ownership proposition, while the location of GEMS within the development adds an important lifestyle advantage for families. Having the school within walk-

ing distance of surrounding homes, alongside the mosque, means that education and an important community amenity are integrated directly into the neighbourhood rather than requiring residents to travel outside the development. This reflects the wider direction of Hai Al Naseem: creating a place where residential development is supported by the facilities and infrastructure that make a community genuinely liveable. **Building a destination in Barka** Hai Al Naseem forms part of the wider growth of Barka and South Al Batinah, an area benefiting from expanding infrastructure, economic activity and major residential development. The community is being shaped with a long-term perspective, bringing together homes and sup-

porting amenities to create an environment suited to families, professionals and investors. The addition of GEMS strengthens this proposition considerably. A school of this calibre not only provides an important service for future residents, but also contributes to the identity and long-term appeal of the wider development. For Adante Realty, the milestone reflects the growing strength of the Hai Al Naseem proposition and its ambition to establish the development as a recognised destination within Oman's evolving real estate landscape. **A significant achievement for Oman and Hai Al Naseem** GEMS School Management's entry into Oman is significant in its own right, but its decision to establish its first school within Hai Al Naseem makes the announce-

ment particularly important for the development. GEMS Education currently serves more than 200,000 students globally, with a legacy spanning more than six decades. Bringing that expertise to Hai Al Naseem introduces a globally recognised education brand to a rapidly growing part of Oman. The project also supports the ambitions of Oman Vision 2040, particularly in the areas of education, sustainable community development and creating attractive environments for future generations. Robert Tarn CBE, CEO of GEMS School Management, said: "Education is one of the most powerful investments a country can make in its future, and Oman has placed it at the heart of its long-term ambitions. As Barka grows, so does the opportunity to create a school that gives local families access to an outstanding education close to home." "By combining GSM's global educational expertise with Adrak Developers' vision for Hai Al Naseem and understanding of the local community, we are laying the foundations for a place where young people can thrive and where families and the wider community will benefit for generations to come." Dr. Thomas Alexander, Chairman of Al Adrak Group of Companies, said: "At Al Adrak, our vision for Hai Al Naseem has always extended far beyond a residential development - we are building a vibrant, sustainable community where families can live, learn, and thrive.

A world-class school has been at the heart of that vision from the very beginning." "We are proud to partner with GEMS School Management to bring internationally recognised schooling to Hai Al Naseem, creating opportunities for future generations, supporting the ambitions of Oman Vision 2040, and further strengthening one of Oman's most promising communities." Dr. Aadil Thomas Alexander, CEO of Al Adrak Group of Companies, said: "The school will form part of Hai Al Naseem Phase 3, a 100% freehold community offering lifetime residency, and will be located within the development itself. Scheduled to open in September 2027, the school will be within walking distance of homes in Phase 3." **A new chapter for Hai Al Naseem** The arrival of GEMS marks more than the opening of a new school. It represents the continued transformation of Hai Al Naseem into a destination where high-quality homes, long-term ownership and essential community infrastructure come together. With Phase 3 offering 100% freehold ownership and lifetime residency, and the first GEMS school in Oman set to become part of the community, Hai Al Naseem is taking another significant step towards its ambition of becoming one of Oman's leading destinations for family living. The school is scheduled to open in September 2027.

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ACCOUNTS/FINANCE

Indian male with 2yrs of experience as accountant looking for suitable job opportunities. Contact: +968966530788. Email: Rameezm.s1234@gmail.com

Accountant having 10 yrs gulf experience in accounts, D/L and NOC Available Contact: 79192017

Senior accountant, CBA (CA SL), BBA (accounting), finance professional with 10 yrs experience, specializing in IFRS financial reporting, VAT and tax compliance, audit, treasury, financial controls, ERP systems. Contact: +968 79161550. Email: ashmalaroos@gmail.com

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South African jurist Navi Pillay wins 2026 Nobel Peace Prize

The Nobel Committee highlighted Pillay's long career in advancing universal legal principles, from her early work defending Nelson Mandela and others who opposed apartheid in South Africa



OSLO: Indian-origin South African jurist and human rights pioneer Navanethem “Navi” Pillay, former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, was awarded the 2026 Nobel Peace Prize on Friday for her efforts to promote peace and international law, the Norwegian Nobel Committee announced.

In its official announcement on Friday, the committee said Pillay had demonstrated exceptional courage and integrity in advancing a more comprehensive global legal order and had played a significant

role in ensuring that war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide are prosecuted.

“The Nobel Peace Prize for 2026 goes to a person who with exceptional courage and integrity has led the way towards a more comprehensive global legal order. This year's laureate has been instrumental in ensuring that war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide are prosecuted,” the press release stated.

In a post on X announcing the award, the Nobel Prize account said, “Today Navi Pillay has been awarded the 2026 Nobel Peace Prize for her efforts to promote

peace and international law.”

The Nobel Committee highlighted Pillay's long career in advancing universal legal principles, from her early work defending Nelson Mandela and others who opposed apartheid in South Africa to her service as a judge in major international legal cases.

“Born into a family of Indian Tamil origin under apartheid in Durban, South Africa, Pillay became a lawyer and legal pioneer, confronting deep structural discrimination, segregation and exclusion,” the committee said.

Pillay has served as a judge on South Africa's High Court, the

International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and the International Criminal Court. She also served as the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and, until recently, chaired the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

She is currently a judge at the International Court of Justice in the case in which Myanmar stands accused of genocide, according to the Nobel Committee.

The committee noted that Pillay had helped demonstrate how legal measures could prevent acts of war and violence while

strengthening international legal institutions.

In a post on X, the Nobel Prize account emphasised the importance of international law in addressing conflicts peacefully.

“More and more conflicts are being addressed through diplomacy, treaties and legal mechanisms, rather than threats, violence and warfare. International law is a foundation for a more peaceful world,” the post said.

It added, “At a time of existential challenges - including more wars and conflicts than the world has seen in a long time - international law is no longer just a supplement to peace and security. It is an absolute necessity.”

The Nobel Committee also highlighted Pillay's contribution to landmark legal developments in the prosecution of sexual violence and genocide.

“When the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda established that rape and sexual violence could constitute a crime against humanity - as well as genocide - her influence was a significant factor,” the committee said.

It added that Pillay was instrumental in a separate legal breakthrough in the same case, in which a defendant faced charges of incitement to commit genocide purely based on “spreading propaganda”.

The committee said Pillay had held states and national leaders accountable while bringing hope to victims of violence and conflict.

Throughout her career, she has emphasised the responsibility of individuals and states to comply with the rule of law.

The award also comes amid what the committee described as growing pressure on the international legal system and its institutions.

“We see a shift towards power politics at the expense of legal frameworks and global respect for law and justice. Whenever might overtakes right, it undermines stability, trust and peaceful co-existence,” the press release stated.

Explaining the significance of the award, the committee said, “In awarding this year's Nobel Peace Prize, the Norwegian Nobel Committee wants to remind the world that the rule of law - national and international - underpins the system we have set up to ensure peace and resolve conflicts non-violently. Peace requires justice.”

The committee further said that Pillay's career demonstrated the importance of protecting and expanding international legal principles.

“Navi Pillay's commitment to justice and human dignity is a source of hope and inspiration to all who seek to bring about a more peaceful world,” it said.

The Nobel Committee said the 2026 Peace Prize was rooted in Alfred Nobel's will, highlighting Pillay's contribution to strengthening fraternity between nations and advancing the use of tribunals to promote peace and justice. **-ANI**

FROM A MUSEUM

French police recover 2 stolen Renoir paintings

PARIS: Two paintings by by Pierre-Auguste Renoir that were stolen from a museum in France last month have been found, authorities said on Friday.

Police have arrested six people in connection with the crime.

The two stolen paintings were the Portrait of Madame Colonna Romano (1910) and Jeune fille au puits (1886). Both belong to Paris' Orsay Museum and were on loan.

“These two paintings are not simply works of art. They are part of our city's history, our heritage,” said Bryan Masson, the mayor of Cagnes-sur-Mer, where the Renoir Museum is located. “Knowing they have been recovered is an immense relief.”

According to AFP news agency, police have arrested five peo-



ple so far as part of the investigation. Authorities said at the time of the robbery that it was clear that the thieves were not first-time offenders

The heist followed a string of high-profile robberies from European museums, including the theft of crown jewels from the Louvre in Paris last year.

No details on paintings' discovery

Authorities did not immediately respond to questions about how the paintings had been recovered.

INSPECTION

Two die in routine firearms check

BERLIN: Two local government employees have been shot dead during a routine firearms inspection at a home in southern Germany, police said.

A 60-year-old suspect was arrested early Friday following a standoff lasting more than 12 hours in the Bavarian village of Bergau. The victims, a 45-year-old man and a 54-year-old woman, worked for the district administration in Neumarkt in der Oberpfalz.

They had visited the suspect's home on Thursday to conduct a routine inspection of legally owned firearms, including whether the weapons were being stored correctly. Police believe the suspect opened fire on the two officials during the inspection.

Witnesses reported hearing gunshots at around 2 p.m. prompting a major police operation. **-DW**

MULTIPLE ROADBLOCKS

Finland: The world's happiest nation faces a glum winter

HELSINKI: There's an uneasy mood in Finland, the country that's ranked the world's happiest for nine consecutive years. A colder-than-usual winter is on the way and so is the toughest austerity budget in years.

With an election due in April, the argument is no longer how much to cut, but which services, benefits and pensions will face the biggest cuts.

Finland's debt and deficit levels are in their worst state since the 1990s, when a banking crash and the collapse of the Soviet Union — a key export partner — pushed the Nordic nation into its own Great Depression.

Last month, Finland's national statistical institution confirmed that the national debt had reached 90.3% of gross domestic product (GDP) in the second quarter. Before the pandemic, that figure was around 65%.

Trouble to the east is, again, part of the reason. Finland ramped up defense spending after joining NATO a year after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Helsinki, which used to rely on Moscow for about a third of its energy, also faced much higher costs as it transitioned to other suppliers.

The Finnish government has spent more than it earns since the 2008/9 global financial crisis, partly due to an aging population and sluggish economic growth. Last month, the State Treasury projected the fiscal deficit would reach 4.2% of GDP in 2026.

Brussels has piled pressure on Helsinki to bring down the bor-



rowing gap, as European Union rules require member states to stay below 3% of GDP. In January, the European Council opened an excessive deficit procedure and gave Finland until the end of 2028 to reach the desired target.

Prime Minister Petteri Orpo's government, which took office in June 2023, said it would aim to save about €9 billion (\$10.1 billion) during this parliamentary term. But whoever wins the next election will have to cut much deeper, economists warn.

“The amounts currently estimated range from €8 to €11 billion,” Jarkko Kivisto, an advisor to the Bank of Finland's monetary policy and research department, told DW.

Earlier this year, all but one political party agreed to support a debt brake, where the next govern-

ment commits to tightening the country's deficit to about 2% of GDP by 2031.

National Coalition rules out tax hikes

To date, Orpo's centre-right National Coalition is the only party to promise a further €9 billion in cuts if he wins a second term. As well as further savings from health, social care and welfare, Orpo also plans to target workplace pensions, without reducing current payouts.

While the Social Democrats plan to split the reforms between spending cuts and tax hikes, Orpo plans to achieve his target without raising taxes — meaning public services will bear the brunt.

Kivisto, however, cautioned: “The deficit is so large that it would need a package that includes tax increases and expenditure cuts.”

While Finland's at-risk-of-poverty rate is lower than the EU average, unemployment is higher than anywhere else in the bloc. In August, Finland's jobless total stood at 10.3%, just above Spain's 10%, according to Eurostat, the bloc's statistics agency. Youth unemployment reached 23.3%, against an EU average of 15.4%.

With household spending already falling, Lauri Holappa, director of the Finnish Centre for New Economic Analysis, warned that a new round of austerity would be a hard blow for the domestic economy.

“More than a quarter of the population works in the public sector, so if those workers face the threat of being sacked, the savings rate will rise and private spending will drop again,” Holappa told DW.

Successive pressures ranging

from the COVID-19 pandemic, higher interest rates and the global financial impact of two current wars have hurt efforts to cut the growing gap between income and borrowing. The 2027 budget proposal still counts on a spending gap of €12.4 billion.

Finland rearms after Russia's full-scale invasion

Before the Ukraine war, Finland had already committed to buying 64 F-35A fighter jets from the United States, in a deal worth about €8.4 billion.

During more than four years of Russia's war in Ukraine, the Nordic nation raised military spending from \$4.5 billion to over \$8 billion per year, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI).

In April, the government said it would further increase defense spending to 3.2% of GDP, close to NATO's 3.5% target.

With oil prices remaining close to \$100 a barrel due to the Iran war, the government has so far resisted pressure to increase fuel subsidies. That's despite the Bank of Finland recording a 50% rise in the cost of imported energy in the early months of the Iran war.

While Finland's shift to renewables, along with the opening of the Olkiluoto 3 nuclear power plant in 2023, has helped avoid a worse energy crisis, the central bank warned this summer that sustained high oil and gas prices would mean “lower economic growth and higher inflation” next year.

On another positive note, parts of Finland's export sector are booming, thanks to strong metal and shipbuilding orders, which Holappa described as strong as “the boom years of Nokia,” when the once market-leading phone maker carried Finnish economic growth.

“There is a possibility that the export sector can steer us out of this recession,” he told DW, as long as demand from the rest of Europe remains strong.

Markets give Helsinki time to reform

Despite the multiple roadblocks to bringing down the deficit, market reaction to Finland's debt woes has, so far, been muted. Rating agencies have kept the country's outlook stable, apart from S&P, which turned negative in April without cutting the rating.

On October 6, the premium the Finnish government pays over Germany to borrow for 10 years was 38 basis points. That compares to 128 for France and 107 for Italy. In other words, investors still treat Finnish debt as among the safest in Europe.

That is, as long as the next shock is not another extended oil-price spike, a fresh escalation from Russia, or a Europe-wide debt crisis centered on France.

Next March, Finland could still be named the planet's happiest nation for the 10th year in a row. How long the smiles last, once the bill for decades of borrowing arrives a month later, is anyone's guess. **-DW**



LIFESTYLE

HOW CELINE DION BECAME A POP CULTURE ICON ACROSS GENERATIONS

As the global star kicks off her anticipated Paris residency, here’s how Celine Dion managed to gain younger followers while keeping her loyal older fans

On September 12, Celine Dion kicks off a series of 26 sold-out concerts, part of a Paris residency held through May 2027. Some 500,000 people are expected to attend the performances, marking the global star’s highly anticipated return to the stage following a prolonged break.

In 2022, she announced that she was battling a rare and incurable neurological disorder, stiff-person syndrome. The health issues led her to cancel her world tour.

In the summer of 2024, she returned to the spotlight atop the Eiffel Tower during the opening ceremony of the Paris Olympics, her resilience giving hope to fans worldwide.

Now, in the days ahead of her Paris concerts, Dion has been thrilling hundreds of fans gathered in front of her hotel, taking the time to chat with them for a few minutes every day, sometimes even joining them in spontaneous sing-alongs and dances.

The best-selling Canadian artist of all time, Dion has released a total of 27 studio albums, sold more than 200 million records worldwide and earned multiple Grammy Awards.

Even though her most defining hits date back to the 1990s, she is more than a nostalgia act, as her appeal is now skyrocketing with Gen Z and millennial listeners.

How did that happen?

A modern fashion darling

In her daily exchanges with her fans on her way to rehearsal, she’s always wearing fresh couture pieces: an asymmetrical Loewe gown, a bold blue Givenchy leather dress by Sarah Burton or a striking jacket by Tom Ford.

“Celine Dion is turning the streets of Paris into her runway,” wrote Vogue magazine in reaction to her stylish outfits.

“She’s always really been into fashion, already in the 1990s, even though we long didn’t know this,” says Quebec cultural reporter Stephane Leclair, author and host of a podcast series on the star’s “D’eux” album. “You know, Celine Dion was never considered ‘cool.’ She’s always had that slightly corny, slightly goofy side. But through her genuine interest for fashion, she’s managed to revamp her image quite a bit.”

A notable move came in 2016: Dion admired Zendaya’s edgy red carpet looks so much that she tracked down her stylist, Law Roach, and asked him to team up with her. She credits Roach with transforming her into a modern fashion darling.

But that’s just one aspect that explains her ongoing — and renewed — popularity.

A rags to riches story

Born on March 30, 1968, Celine Dion was the youngest of 14 children of a poor family in French-speaking Quebec, Canada. As she proudly notes on her official website, the house was so full that, as a baby, she had to sleep in a drawer instead of a crib.

She grew up surrounded by music, and recorded her first song at the age of 12. It impressed music manager Rene Angelil so much that he mortgaged his house to pay for her first record. She quickly emerged as a child star in Quebec.

Inspired by Michael Jackson, she decided that she wanted to become a megastar. She won the Eurovision Song Contest for Switzerland in 1988 and launched her first English-language album, “Unison,” in 1990.

This, however, sparked cultural tension among French-speaking fans in Quebec, who felt she was neglecting her roots to pursue American and international superstardom.

“We were between two referendums on Quebec’s independence at the time,” points out Leclair.

But even after she became a global star, Dion proudly kept identifying as the “little girl from Charlemagne,” the small town near Montreal where she grew up.

“People in Quebec quickly understood that it didn’t change anything, that she would always remain one of them, and that it only added another layer to her career,” notes Leclair.

Indeed, she also kept working in French all while building her career as a global pop artist. Teaming up with popular French song-writer Jean-Jacques Goldman, they released “D’eux” in 1995. It became the best-selling French-language album of all time.

The theme song for “Beauty and the Beast” (1991) won her both a Grammy and an Academy Award, while her best-selling “My Heart Will Go On” (1997) for the blockbuster film “Titanic” cemented her status alongside music’s greatest vocalists.

Adding groundbreaking edge to Las Vegas

While other aging stars would head to the Las Vegas Strip to finish their careers, Dion revolutionized the music industry with “A New Day...,” her high-profile residency at The Colosseum at Caesars Palace: With a total of 714 performances from 2003 to 2007, she demonstrated how such residencies could be modern, cutting-edge — and extremely lucrative.

It served as a blueprint for Las Vegas residencies by younger stars, such as Britney Spears and Adele.

Viral authenticity

“The world’s biggest stars are often dead set on protecting a perfect, untouchable image. Celine, on the other hand, is incredibly accessible. She isn’t afraid to let her true, authentic personality shine through,” points out Leclair.

“And Celine’s die-hard fans just love her humorous side,” he adds. “They love the fact that she’s a bit wacky. It makes her really relatable.”

Famous for spontaneously breaking into song during interviews, those moments, as well as various over-the-top scenes from her 1990s music videos, have been picked up in Internet memes and TikTok trends.

Encouraged by her teenage sons, she launched her own official TikTok account in January 2026. She went viral with a “What’s in My Bag?” video where she pulls out a mix of everyday essentials and completely unhinged items.

Writing a new chapter

But beyond the humour, she’s also ready to share her most vulnerable moments.

In 2016, she lost her husband — her manager, Rene Angelil — and a brother to cancer within the same week. Her 2019 album “Courage” focused on loss and recovery.

Her 2024 documentary “I am: Celine Dion,” in which she looks back on her life and career all while addressing how she deals with her stiff-person syndrome diagnosis, has been praised by critics as intensely sincere and visceral.

One scene of the film follows her as she suffers from a painful spasm.

“I don’t think many stars of that caliber would have agreed to be filmed — and have the footage included in the final cut — in such an unflattering state,” notes Leclair. “It was partly out of a desire for transparency, to explain to her fans why she had to step back.”

And her fans highly value this authenticity, as well as her resilience.

She is now undergoing physical and therapies to manage her symptoms and be able to perform again for this series of more than 2-hour-long concerts. They will feature 18 musicians and four backing singers; a live choir will also join them on stage for several songs.

Additionally, Paris will mark the start of the concert series with two giant karaoke sessions on September 11. A total of 10,000 people are expected to take part in the participatory event celebrating her four decades of songs. -nw



SPORTS

Verstappen takes F1 Singapore pole edging Russell and Leclerc

However, the Red Bull driver faces an investigation for overtaking Lewis Hamilton under yellow flags during the opening qualifying session, potentially putting his pole position at risk

SINGAPORE: Max Verstappen claimed pole position for Saturday's Sprint race at the Formula 1 Singapore Grand Prix, edging George Russell and Charles Leclerc in a closely contested qualifying session on Friday.

Fresh from his first victory of the season at last weekend's Bahrain Grand Prix in Malaysia, Verstappen continued his resurgence with a fastest lap of 1 minute, 31.156 seconds, beating Russell by 0.120 seconds, with Leclerc a further 0.123 seconds adrift.

However, the Red Bull driver faces an investigation for overtaking Lewis Hamilton under yellow



flags during the opening qualifying session, potentially putting his pole position at risk.

"It's always close here in Singapore," Verstappen said. "You're pushing as hard as you think is possible, close to the walls in places."

"Once we bolted on the soft tyres, it felt like the car was coming alive a little bit more, but I did not expect this. Of course, I'm very happy to be first."

Verstappen acknowledged that Singapore's tight, twisting Marina Bay circuit continued to expose weaknesses in his Red Bull despite the team's improved form.

"I think the last few races we have been a lot stronger, but this track still highlights a few little weaknesses in the car, but we manage to drive with them as well as possible," he said.

Russell's second place offered encouragement for Mercedes, which has struggled to extract the expected performance from an aerodynamic upgrade introduced in Malaysia.

The Briton reverted to an older specification of the car for Singapore, while teammate and championship leader Kimi Antonelli continued with the newer package,

allowing Mercedes to compare their performance directly.

Russell qualified five places ahead of Antonelli, who was seventh, raising further questions about the effectiveness of the upgrade, though the difference in specification alone does not establish whether the new parts are responsible.

Russell will start Sunday's main Grand Prix from the back of the grid after exceeding his permitted allocation of power unit components following an engine failure while running third in Malaysia.

Behind the leading trio, Os-

car Piastri qualified fourth for McLaren, ahead of teammate Lando Norris, with Hamilton sixth for Ferrari. Liam Lawson, Isack Hadjar and Pierre Gasly completed the top 10.

Hadjar had a faster lap deleted for exceeding track limits, leaving him ninth.

The session was disrupted twice, first when Sergio Perez struck the barriers in the opening segment and damaged his front wing. Although the Mexican managed to continue, debris from his car subsequently prompted a red flag with just over six minutes remaining.

Perez was among six drivers eliminated in SQ1, along with Arvid Lindblad, Lance Stroll, Alex Albon, Valtteri Bottas and Carlos Sainz.

The second segment was delayed by approximately 10 minutes because of a timing system malfunction that initially prevented some lap times, including Gabriel Bortoleto's, from being registered.

"The start of SQ2 will be delayed due to an issue with timing systems, some lap times had not been registered," the FIA said in a statement, before confirming that the results had been corrected and the session could resume.

The disruption followed a separate software problem at last weekend's race in Malaysia, where a glitch in F1's wet-weather power unit software caused several cars to lose power during the formation laps, forcing the race start to be aborted while the FIA issued a software fix.

Leclerc topped SQ2 with a time of 1:32.246, ahead of Hamilton, while Russell survived a heavy lockup to progress to the final segment.

Franco Colapinto, Nico Hulkenberg, Oliver Bearman, Bortoleto, Fernando Alonso and Esteban Ocon were eliminated.

Singapore is hosting a Sprint weekend for the first time, with the shorter race offering a maximum of eight championship points before qualifying for Sunday's Grand Prix later on Saturday.

Overtaking opportunities are expected to be limited on the narrow street circuit, placing particular importance on grid position. With no mandatory pit stops in the Sprint, drivers will have fewer strategic opportunities to gain places.

For Antonelli, who leads the championship, the reduced points available and the proximity of Grand Prix qualifying may encourage a conservative approach rather than risking an incident in pursuit of minor gains.

Singapore has also historically proved an unpredictable venue for Formula 1's dominant teams. In 2023, it was the only race Red Bull failed to win, while Mercedes struggled at Marina Bay in 2015 despite dominating much of that season.

Friday's result suggests the circuit could once again upset the established competitive order, with Verstappen's recent resurgence and Mercedes' contrasting car specifications adding intrigue ahead of Saturday's Sprint. -Xinhua

19-YEAR-OLD YOUTH

New contract for young Barcelona defender Xavi

MADRID: Barcelona announced on Friday that young defender Xavi Espot has agreed to extend his contract with the club until the end of June 2030.

The 19-year-old youth team product was previously tied to the club until June 2028, but his impressive performances this season have prompted Barcelona to move quickly to secure his long-term future.

"Contract extension agreement reached between FC Barcelona and the player Xavi Espot, who is now set to stay with the club through to June 30, 2030. The club and player will formally sign the contract at the club offices in the presence of FC Barcelona president Joan Laporta in the coming days," Barcelona said on its official website.

Espot joined Barcelona in 2015 and made his first-team debut in March 2026 in a Champions League away match against Newcastle United. He went on to make five more La Liga appearances that season.

He was officially promoted to the first-team squad in the summer



and has since made five appearances, scoring his first goal against Levante. He has also demonstrated

his versatility by playing on either side of the defence and in a more advanced midfield role. -Xinhua

CLUB FOOTBALL

Players should have a say in revamped break: Simeone



REVISED SCHEDULE: Club football returns this weekend after a break of almost three weeks since the last league matches under FIFA's new international calendar. - Xinhua

MADRID: Atletico Madrid coach Diego Simeone believes that players should be consulted on the impact of the new-style international break, which he says 'disrupts' teams' momentum at the start of the new season.

Club football returns this weekend after a break of almost three weeks since the last league matches under FIFA's new international calendar. The revised schedule eliminates the October

international window but extends the September break across two weekends, allowing national teams to play up to four matches.

"It really needs to be evaluated, especially for the sake of the players," said Simeone when asked his opinion in Friday's press conference.

"Between the travel and the physical demands, most have played four matches and some three, we need to consider how

players can put on a show."

"Ultimately, this is entertainment, and people need to see the players at their best, but we are reaching a point where that happens less and less; the players' ability to perform at their peak is starting to decline," he said, insisting that "the situation needs to be assessed in consultation with the players—they are the ones playing and the ones entertaining the fans." - Xinhua

AT ANFIELD

Liverpool-Manchester City clash takes center stage

LONDON: The Premier League returns from the international break this weekend, with Sunday's clash between Liverpool and Manchester City at Anfield taking center stage amid continuing uncertainty over City's financial rules case.

City won its opening five league matches to lead the standings before the break but faces an unresolved appeal against an independent commission's findings concerning breaches of the Premier League's financial regulations.

Potential sanctions

The club has denied wrongdoing, with potential sanctions adding to uncertainty over its future.

City could also face a hostile reception at Anfield, where the two clubs have contested several fiercely fought encounters during their recent title battles.

Erling Haaland faces a fitness assessment after being substituted early while on international duty, while Antoine Semenyo and



Nico O'Reilly are also doubts. Phil Foden is suspended.

Arsenal opens Saturday's action at home to Leeds United, seeking to bounce back from a 3-0 defeat to Brighton before the break.

Manager Mikel Arteta, who signed a new contract during the international window, faces defensive concerns, with William Saliba sidelined and Cristhian Mosquera's availability uncertain. Forward Kai Havertz is also a doubt.



Aston Villa hosts unbeaten Brentford, while winless Fulham visits Ipswich Town looking to improve its defensive record.

Chelsea, coached by Xabi

Bournemouth is expected to be without midfielder Alex Scott, who was injured on international duty.

Brighton visits Sunderland on a high after a 3-0 win over Arsenal before the break. Sunderland will be without striker Brian Brobbey and defender Dan Ballard.

Manchester United hosts Tottenham Hotspur on Saturday, with both clubs looking to improve on disappointing starts to the season. United has five points from five matches, while Tottenham sits bottom of the standings with two.

Crystal Palace hosts Nottingham Forest on Sunday, with Forest manager Oliver Glasner returning to face his former club.

Hull City also hosts Everton on Sunday, with both sides posing a threat from set pieces.

The round of matches concludes Monday when Coventry City hosts Newcastle United. Coventry is seeking its first home points of the season after recording its first victory of the campaign before the break. -Xinhua

The new Ferrari Amalfi, a front-mid-engine V8 2+ coupé

Designed for those who want to enjoy sporty driving without sacrificing comfort and style, the Ferrari Amalfi stands out for its unprecedented balance between adrenaline and everyday usability

MUSCAT: The new Ferrari Amalfi, a front-mid-engine V8 2+ coupé that replaces the Ferrari Roma in the Prancing Horse lineup, was unveiled recently. The Ferrari Amalfi redefines the concept of contemporary sportiness, combining high performance, versatility, and refined aesthetics. Designed for those who want to enjoy sporty driving without sacrificing comfort and style, the Ferrari Amalfi stands out for its unprecedented balance between adrenaline and everyday usability.

The car's design stems from a fluid and minimalist approach, with sculpted volumes and clean surfaces that express modernity and dynamism. The front is dominated by a large air intake and a long, sculpted bonnet housing the 640 cv turbo V8 engine. At the rear, the integrated active spoiler contributes to high-speed stability, while forged wheels and carbon fibre details complete a sporty and sophisticated aesthetic.

Inside, the cabin adopts a dual-cockpit layout, with a new steering wheel featuring physical buttons and the return of the iconic start button. The integrated central display and ergonomic controls ensure intuitive interaction with the car, even during dynamic driving. Extensive use of carbon fibre and contrasting stitching adds a touch of exclusivity, while the 2+ configuration allows the rear seats to be used to significantly increase the car's practicality, enhancing cargo capacity and allowing trips with children.

At the heart of the Ferrari Amalfi is an evolved twin-turbo V8 derived from the award-winning F154 family, capable of delivering 640 cv thanks to new turbocharging calibrations. The highly acclaimed eight-speed dual-clutch transmission ensures fast and smooth gear changes. Performance is outstanding: 0-100 km/h in 3.3 seconds, 0-200 km/h in 9.0 seconds, with a power-to-weight ratio of 2.29 kg/hp, the best in its class.

Driving dynamics have been refined with the introduction of the brake-by-wire system, the 'ABS Evo' controller designed for all surfaces and conditions, and a recalibrated steering box for even more precise and progressive response. Active aerodynamics, with the new integrated rear mobile wing, ensure stability in all driving conditions and Manettino positions, helping to maximise dynamic performance.

The Ferrari Amalfi incorporates the latest technological solutions from the Ferrari range: the infotainment system is fully connected, with Apple CarPlay® and Android Auto® as standard, paired with wireless smartphone charging. The new steering wheel, digital instrument cluster, and 10.25" horizontal central display offers an advanced human-machine interface designed to engage both driver and passenger. Among the features available on request is the addition of the front lifter system usable up to 35 km/h, allowing the car to easily overcome urban obstacles by raising it by up to 40 mm.

Completing the onboard experience, the optional Burmester® premium audio system offers an immersive sound environment, designed to accompany every journey with quality and detail.

The Ferrari Amalfi is aimed at those seeking a car that combines elegance and performance, emotion and functionality. A model that interprets the Ferrari sporting spirit in a modern key, offering a



driving experience without compromise, in any context.

Powertrain

The engine of the Ferrari Amalfi represents the latest evolution of the 3855-cc twin-turbo V8 from the F154 family, the one that has received the most international awards in recent automotive history. In this configuration, the power unit has been optimised to deliver a maximum output of 640 cv at 7,500 rpm, with a specific power of 166 cv/l and a redline raised to 7,600 rpm, allowing full exploitation of its continuously increasing power curve.

The performance increase was achieved through an advanced turbocharging management system, enabling independent control of the rotational speed of the two turbochargers with dedicated calibration and an increase in the maximum turbo speed up to 171,000 rpm. This approach improves throttle response and boosts pressure control precision, also thanks to the introduction of dedicated pressure sensors for each cylinder bank. The new engine control unit, already used in models such as the 296 GTB, Ferrari Purosangue, and Ferrari 12Cilindri, has allowed the engine's full potential to be harnessed.

In parallel, efforts were made to reduce mass: new lightweight camshafts (-1.3 kg) and a redesigned engine block with precision machining eliminated non-structural material, saving about one kilogram.

For the first time in a Ferrari engine, a low-viscosity oil has been introduced, reducing cold resistance by 30% compared to the previous version, improving warm-up efficiency.

Throttle response is now even quicker thanks to a series of advanced technical solutions: a flat-plane crankshaft, compact low-inertia turbines, twin-scroll technology for separate exhaust gas management, and a single-scroll manifold with equal-length runners. These elements contribute to a sensation of continuous and progressive power delivery, with a torque curve shaped to provide stronger pull at mid and high revs in all gears.

The eight-speed dual-clutch oil-bath transmission, first introduced with the SF90 Stradale to widespread acclaim, has been further optimised with a more powerful control unit and deeper integration with the engine software, improving shift smoothness and speed.

Overall powertrain efficiency benefits from solutions such as the dry-sump gearbox configuration, low-friction bevel gear, and clutch torque management strategies that ensure extremely smooth urban driving, especially during Start&Stop phases.

Sound design also received special attention: a new silencer layout was developed to meet the strictest noise emission regulations without compromising Ferrari's signature tone. The flat-plane crankshaft and equal-length exhaust headers contribute to a distinctive firing sequence. The exhaust system features a ceramic matrix catalyst with a trimetallic coating (rhodium, platinum, palladium), with reduced activation times thanks to lower thermal inertia. Sound control is managed by a new proportionally controlled bypass valve with dedicated maps to adapt the exhaust note to different driving conditions.

Styling exterior

The Ferrari Amalfi represents a new interpretation of the archetype of the 2+ coupé berlinetta with a front-mid-mounted V8 engine, blending tradition and innovation in a design language that

evolves the aesthetic standards of the Maranello marque. The Ferrari Styling Centre team, led by Flavio Manzoni, drew inspiration from the elegant proportions of the Ferrari Roma, pushing further to define a more sculpted and modern form without betraying the essence of Ferrari's 2+ sports cars.

The exterior design develops from a sleek, monolithic speed-form that gives the car a strong and dynamic identity. The surfaces are treated with a minimalist approach, where sharp lines and geometric volumes define a sculpted and coherent body. The wedge-shaped theme running along the side, together with the lighting units integrated into technical cuts, contributes to a refined and contemporary aesthetic. The front, devoid of a traditional grille, is distinguished by a floating body coloured wing above a dark recessed band, discreetly integrating sensors and headlights. The lower splitter completes the composition, emphasising the visual width and sportiness of the whole.

The rear is defined by a strong character line that wraps around the entire volume, culminating in a compact and clean tail. The tail lights are hidden within essential graphic cuts, evoking classic Ferraris while using a modern visual language. The wide and functional diffuser openly declares its aerodynamic purpose, while the rear screen merges with the spoiler profile, creating a distinctive stylistic signature. Highlighting the car's personality, the launch colour, Verde Costiera — a brilliant teal green inspired by the reflections of the sea along the Amalfi coast — enhances the sculpted surfaces and brings a fresh, vibrant look to the whole.

Interior

Inside, the Ferrari Amalfi adopts a dual-cockpit layout that envelops both driver and passenger in two visually connected cells, linked by the dashboard, door panels, and central tunnel. The cocoon effect is enhanced by a faceted surface that breaks the symmetry and highlights the central touchscreen display, creating a formal interaction between the two occupants. The interior design has been simplified to achieve a clean and contemporary language, with extensive use of premium materials and integrated technological solutions.

The dashboard features, for the first time, a monolithic layout in which the instrument cluster and air vents are fused into a single block. The central tunnel, milled from a block of anodised aluminium, is suspended and sculpted, housing functional elements such as the gear selector gate, key slot, wireless charging pad, and secondary controls. The door panel grips are integrated into sail-like shapes that define the two front cells, while the woofers are hidden behind perforated aluminium surfaces, contributing to a technical and refined aesthetic.

The interior colour palette reflects the car's bold character, with material and colour combinations that emphasise the concept of sportiness. Verde Bellagio, the vibrant green featured in the launch configuration, focuses attention on the front area of the cabin. Optional comfort seats are available in three sizes and are equipped with 10 air chambers for the massage function - with five programmes and three intensity levels - together with ventilation for both seat and backrest.

Completing the onboard experience, the optional Burmester® Premium Audio System delivers benchmark sound quality thanks to 14 speakers and 1,200 watts of power. Ring radiator tweeters ensure crystal-clear high frequencies, while three listening presets



allow users to personalise the acoustic experience to their preferences. The materials and finish of the speakers, selected for their elegance and tactile quality, help make the cabin an immersive and sophisticated environment.

HMI

The Ferrari Amalfi's onboard experience has been designed to offer intuitive, engaging, and technologically advanced interaction, thanks to a completely renewed HMI (Human-Machine Interface) system and a series of solutions aimed at enhancing comfort and quality of life on board.

The new steering wheel, equipped with physical buttons, marks a return to tactile controls, with a layout designed to ensure maximum ergonomics and ease of recognition in all driving conditions. On the left side, the return of the iconic aluminium start button establishes an immediate connection between driver and car from the moment of ignition. The controls are functionally distributed: on the

left spoke are the ADAS controls, adaptive cruise control, phone, and voice commands, while on the right are the selectors for display views, windscreen wipers, and indicators. On the back, two rotary dials manage volume and station selection.

The HMI system is structured around three main displays. The 15.6" digital instrument cluster provides all driving and vehicle dynamics information. At the centre of the dashboard, a 10.25" capacitive touchscreen allows both driver and passenger to access key functions: multimedia, radio, phone, screen mirroring, climate control, seat adjustments, and vehicle settings. Finally, the 8.8" passenger display offers a true co-driver experience, showing parameters such as G-forces and engine revs. Connectivity is ensured through compatibility with Apple CarPlay® and Android Auto®, while wireless smartphone charging is integrated into the central tunnel. The car is also equipped with the MyFerrari Connect system, which allows remote monitoring of the vehicle's status via a dedicated app.

Aerodynamics

The aerodynamic development of the Ferrari Amalfi is the result of a complex and meticulous project created by close collaboration between the thermo-fluid dynamics department and the Ferrari Styling Centre. The process integrated CFD simulation, wind tunnel testing, and design refinement in a shared path that led to the creation of a car that is both captivating and functional.

The result is a body sculpted in every detail, where each element serves a precise function. Among these are aerodynamic fairings positioned on the underbody in front of the front and rear wheels, which reduce drag and improve efficiency. A bypass duct above the front headlights connects the front end to the engine bay, helping to reduce pressure build-up and optimise cooling. Downforce generation at the front is managed by a pair of vortex generators, optimised in the wind tunnel, and two diffusers integrated into the splitter, which also enhance front brake ventilation.

The underbody has been designed to maximise efficiency, with dedicated devices to reduce drag and carefully manage airflow. At the rear, the diffuser has been com-



pletely redesigned to find the best compromise between downforce and drag, with controlled expansion of the flow in the central channel that energises the wake and improves stability.

A distinctive element of the rear is the active mobile wing, harmoniously integrated into the tail of the car. This component can assume three configurations — Low Drag (LD), Medium Downforce (MD), and High Downforce (HD) — depending on speed, longitudinal, and lateral acceleration. On straights, the wing remains in LD or MD position to minimise drag, while during more dynamic driving phases, such as high-speed cornering or hard braking, it switches to HD configuration, generating an increase in downforce of 110 kg at 250 km/h with less than a 4% increase in drag. The intermediate MD position allows for a quicker transition to full deployment, offering a balance between stability and performance. The wing's operation is fully automatic, preserving the purity of the car's lines even at low speeds and enhancing the driving experience. The rear is completed by a 20 mm high integrated nolder which helps recompress the airflow in low-drag configuration.

The front of the car has also been optimised to ensure effective cooling in all conditions: the central area houses the engine water radiator and the air conditioning condenser, while the side intakes feed the turbocharging system's intercoolers.

Vehicle dynamics

The vehicle dynamics of the Ferrari Amalfi represent a significant evolution in the landscape of front engined 2+ coupés, thanks to the integration of the most advanced technologies developed by Ferrari in recent years. At the heart of this system is the introduction of brake-by-wire, a solution that significantly improves braking efficiency, reduces pedal travel, and enhances modulation — even in situations where ABS is engaged.

The ABS Evo system, first introduced on the 296 GTB and further developed for the Ferrari Purosangue and Ferrari 12Cilindri, has been adapted to ensure optimal performance on all surfaces and in all Manettino modes. This controller uses data from the 6D sensor to precisely estimate the vehicle's speed and determine the optimal slip for each wheel, thereby optimizing brake force distribution. The result is greater effectiveness in straight-line braking and in mixed conditions, where lateral stability and longitudinal deceleration must be balanced.

The precision of these estimates also allows for greater repeatability of manoeuvres, reducing variations caused by mechanical tolerances or environmental conditions, such as tarmac temperature. This approach is part of the Side Slip Control (SSC) 6.1 framework, which serves as the common language among all dynamic controllers — from steering to torque management and vertical body motion control — to maximise performance in every situation.

A further advancement is the grip estimation system based on EPS (Electric Power Steering), an evolution of the version introduced on the 296 GTB. In this new iteration, grip estimation is 10% faster and more accurate, even on surfaces with very low traction. The recognition logic uses the dynamics of the electric steering box

and the yaw angle estimated by SSC 6.1 to assess tyre-to-tarmac grip levels, even when not driving on the limit, improving the responsiveness and effectiveness of the controllers.

To support vehicle dynamics, the Ferrari Amalfi also employs a rear active spoiler, which is activated depending on longitudinal and lateral acceleration. In dynamic driving conditions — such as hard braking or high-speed cornering — the spoiler automatically shifts to the High Downforce configuration, generating additional rear aerodynamic downforce and contributing to the car's overall stability.

In terms of safety and driver assistance, the Ferrari Amalfi is equipped with a comprehensive suite of next-generation ADAS systems. Available features include: Adaptive Cruise Control, Automatic Emergency Braking, Blind Spot Detection, Lane Departure Warning, Lane Keeping Assist, automatic high beam, traffic sign recognition and assistance and driver drowsiness and distraction detection, as well as optional Surround View and Rear Cross Traffic Alert. All systems are configurable via the instrument cluster menus and integrate seamlessly with the car's electronic architecture, which includes front and rear radar, cameras, and dedicated control units.

Together, these technologies enable the Ferrari Amalfi to deliver a precise, responsive, and engaging driving experience, where every system works in harmony to ensure maximum control and driving pleasure — regardless of road conditions or driving style.

Tyres

The choice of tyres for the Ferrari Amalfi was guided by a careful balance between aesthetics, performance, and comfort. The 20" wheels were selected to maintain the harmonious proportions consistent with the car's design language, without compromising ride quality. To ensure maximum comfort, the sidewall aspect ratio chosen for the Ferrari Roma was retained, ensuring progressive response and good absorption of road imperfections.

The tyre dimensions are 245/35 R20 at the front and 285/35 R20 at the rear, a configuration that balances agility and traction, contributing to the car's precise and responsive dynamics. The Ferrari Amalfi comes standard with tyres co-developed with two technical partners: Bridgestone Potenza Sport and Pirelli P ZERO.

7-year genuine maintenance

Ferrari's unparalleled quality standards and increasing focus on client service underpin the extended seven-year maintenance programme offered with the Ferrari 12Cilindri Spider. Available across the entire Ferrari range, the programme covers all regular maintenance for the first seven years of the car's life. This scheduled maintenance programme for Ferraris is an exclusive service that allows clients the certainty that their car is being kept at peak performance and safety over the years. This very special service is also available to owners of pre-owned Ferraris.

Regular maintenance (at intervals of either 20,000 km or once a year with no mileage restrictions), original spares and meticulous checks by staff trained directly at the Ferrari Training Centre in Maranello using the most modern diagnostic tools are just some of the advantages of the Genuine Maintenance Programme. The service is available on all markets worldwide and from all Dealerships on the Official Dealership Network.

The Genuine Maintenance programme further extends the wide range of after-sales services offered by Ferrari to meet the needs of clients wishing to preserve the performance and excellence that are the signatures of all cars built in Maranello.

ROUND-UP

Bank Muscat’s Contact Centre Awarded Best Initiative for Top-Tier Banking Service Delivery

The Contact Centre is the largest centre in the banking sector in the Sultanate of Oman, providing various services around the clock and all days of the week to ensure various banking services and facilities are delivered to customers more quickly and efficiently

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat’s Contact Centre has been recently awarded the prestigious “The Call Center Initiative of the Year – Oman” title at The Asian Banking & Finance Retail Banking Awards 2026. The Contact Centre is the largest



center in the banking sector in the Sultanate of Oman, providing various services around the clock and all days of the week to ensure various banking services and facilities are delivered to customers more quickly and efficiently. The Asian Banking & Finance Retail Banking Awards 2026 are renowned for their rigorous evaluation process, which includes comprehensive assessments and benchmarks across a variety of customer service metrics. Recognized globally, the Awards are dedicated to acknowledging the best in customer service, celebrating establishments that exemplify quality, efficiency, and innovation in their customer support functions. The award recognizes

organizations that demonstrate excellence in key areas, including customer satisfaction, operational efficiency, innovation in customer service processes, and employee engagement. Bank Muscat stood out for its commitment to personalized customer interactions, use of advanced technology, and consistent efforts to improve response times and resolution accuracy, all of which contribute to a seamless and rewarding experience for customers. On this occasion, Talal Abdul Hameed al Zadjali, Deputy General Manager of Operations at Bank Muscat, said: “This prestigious award is a testament to the hard work, dedication, and customer-

first approach that define our contact center team. We continuously strive to innovate and enhance our service delivery, making sure that our customers receive the highest level of support and satisfaction. This recognition reinforces our commitment to excellence and motivates us to push the boundaries of what exceptional customer service can be. Bank Muscat will uphold its commitment to enhancing the banking experience of customers with the best services and solutions.” As part of its continuous commitment to enriching the experience of customers and providing exceptional support, the Bank has recently launched new 24/7 Toll-Free Numbers for Bank Muscat &

Meethaq to provide our customers with direct and immediate access in case of emergencies such as lost cards, fraud incidents, and complaints. Additionally, the Bank offers customers multiple convenient channels for support, including WhatsApp, email, and social media platforms. These channels enable customers to submit inquiries and feedback, and receive assistance, reflecting the Bank’s commitment to delivering a seamless, accessible, and customer-centric banking experience across every touchpoint. Bank Muscat is proud of this achievement and remains dedicated to advancing its customer service standards. Looking forward to the future, the Bank is committed to building on this success and continuing its journey of excellence in customer experience, leveraging new technologies and empowering its team to deliver unparalleled service for years to come. The Bank strives to attract qualified and talented Omani cadres to the centers and upgrade its technologies. It operates the center with over 199 team members who demonstrate competency in running the center to provide the best service to customers. Bank Muscat’s contact center offers a wide range of services, including money transfers, information about the bank’s products and services, inquiries about account opening procedures, credit card balance details and statements, loan information, fixed deposit

interest rates, and currency exchange rates. Additionally, Bank Muscat customers can request card cancellations, account statements, cheque requests, credit card statements, utility bill payments (such as electricity and water bills), and many other services designed to complete customer transactions accurately and promptly. The Contact Center has implemented advanced cybersecurity measures and introduced the Bot-Based Outcalls Technology (BOT) which the Fraud Monitoring Team at the Center apply to detect fraudulent transactions and respond to fraudulent calls and suspicious communications. The implementation of this innovation has revolutionized and enhanced the communication methodology with the Bank’s customers. It has also helped the Bank’s services reach a wider customer base. The fraud monitoring team at the Centre also address reports of lost cards or other urgent matters, enabling customers to block their cards if lost or stolen, either through the Center or via the Bank’s digital channels. Reaffirming its excellence in customer service, Bank Muscat has won the Customer Experience Innovation Award at the CX Live Awards Show Middle East 2026 and it has been named Oman’s Domestic AI initiative of the year Award by the Asian Banking & Finance Awards.

DISTRIBUTION AGREEMENT

Linglong Tire partners with World Auto Business to bring global tyre solutions to Oman

MUSCAT: World Auto Business LLC has signed a distribution agreement with Linglong Tire, one of the world’s leading tyre manufacturers and sellers, to represent the internationally recognised brand in the Sultanate of Oman. The distribution agreement was signed by Mr. Wang Feng, Chairman of Linglong Tire and Mr. Abdullah Mohamed Bahwan, Chief Executive Officer of Saud Bahwan Group in the presence of senior officials. The signing marks a significant step in strengthening Linglong’s presence in the Omani market. The partnership brings together two organisations committed to quality, reliability and customer value, and aims to give motorists and fleet operators in Oman access to a wider choice of dependable tyre solutions. Founded in 1975 in Zhaoyuan,

China, Linglong Tire has grown into one of the world’s major tyre manufacturers, with products available in more than 173 countries. The company operates seven research institutions, seven production bases (five in China, one in Taiwan and one in Serbia) and over 19,000 employees worldwide with an annual output of 90 million tyres. **Linglong’s portfolio** Linglong’s portfolio covers high-performance passenger car radial (PCR) tyres, light truck radial (LTR) tyres, and all-steel truck and bus radial (TBR) tyre specifications, as well as off-the-road tyres for engineering machinery. Linglong also supplies original equipment (OE) tyres to more than 70 global automobile manufacturers, a reflection of its engineering standards and consistent product

quality. Guided by the enterprise spirit of “Unity and diligence in pursuing excellence,” Linglong has evolved over more than four decades into a green and low-carbon tyre enterprise, integrating tyre design, development, manufacturing, sales and services. Under the new partnership, World Auto Business LLC will leverage its established presence, nationwide network and automotive expertise to bring Linglong’s competitively positioned range to customers across the Sultanate, covering passenger vehicles, commercial vehicles and other applications. The partnership reflects the continued commitment of both organisations to expanding their business presence and supporting the evolving requirements of Oman’s automotive and transportation sectors.



FOR THE NEW SCHOOL YEAR

FUSO Oman launches Back-to-School Service Campaign for ROSA buses

MUSCAT: General Automotive Company (GAC), a part of The Zubair Corporation and the authorised distributor of Mitsubishi FUSO trucks and buses in Oman, has announced the launch of its Back-to-School Service Campaign for FUSO ROSA bus owners and operators. Running from 1 September to 15 October 2026, the campaign is designed to help customers prepare their buses for the new school year while ensuring safety, reliability, and operational readiness. As part of the campaign, customers can benefit from a complimentary 15-point health check, along with a 50% discount on non-fixed-price parts and a 20% discount on labour for repairs identified during the vehicle health check. For ROSA buses over four years old, customers can also avail of a lube service starting from OMR 18. Speaking on the campaign, Mr. Manoj Ranade, General Manager, General Automotive Company, said: “School buses play an important role in ensuring the safe and reliable movement of students every day. Through this campaign,



we want to help ROSA bus owners prepare their vehicles for the new school year with expert inspections, genuine parts and attractive service benefits, while minimising the risk of unexpected downtime.” The Back-to-School Service Campaign reflects Mitsubishi FUSO Oman’s commitment to supporting customers with dependable aftersales service and preventive maintenance solu-

tions. By ensuring that buses are inspected and maintained for the new school year, the campaign aims to help operators keep their vehicles in reliable operating condition and minimise disruptions. Customers are encouraged to book their service appointments early and take advantage of these limited-time offers. For more information, call or WhatsApp 24 500 500.

NCSI

Mobile service subscriptions in Oman rise by 9.6% to 8.51 million

MUSCAT: The total number of mobile phone subscriptions in the Sultanate of Oman rose to 8.51 million by the end of August 2026, registering a growth of 2.5 percent compared to the same period in 2025. Data released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) showed that active postpaid mobile phone subscriptions grew by 6.9 percent to reach 1.33 million subscriptions, while prepaid subscriptions decreased by 0.4 percent to reach 5.46 million subscriptions. Subscriptions to Internet of Things (machine-to-machine) services also continued to grow, recording an increase of 9.4 percent to reach 1.71 million subscriptions by the end of August 2026. In the internet services sector, the total number of active mobile broadband internet subscriptions rose to 5.68 million while the total number of active fixed broadband internet subscriptions reached 595,604. Regarding fixed internet technologies, subscriptions to fibre optic technology for homes and



facilities (FTTH/B) continued to grow, recording an increase of 6.5 percent to reach 369,766 subscriptions by the end of August 2026, while the number of fixed fifth-generation subscriptions reached 209,519 subscriptions. In contrast, satellite subscriptions recorded the highest growth rate among fixed internet technologies, rising by 152.6 percent to reach 2,084 subscriptions. As for other technologies, they

continued to record a decline in fixed 4G subscriptions by 67.9 percent to record 5,107 subscriptions, and ADSL subscriptions also decreased by 23.1 percent to reach 8,411 subscriptions. Other subscriptions (which include internet via power lines, Ethernet, and leased internet lines) decreased by 4.5 percent to 717 subscriptions by the end of August 2026 compared to the same period last year. – OMA



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