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COMMENTARY

## Understanding Founders' Liability in Omani Joint Stock Companies

Oman's Commercial Companies Law, promulgated by Royal Decree 18/2019, sets out the legal framework governing the establishment of joint stock companies and the role of their founders.

Speaking to Times of Oman, Dr. Mohammed Ibrahim Al Zadjali, Chairman of Mohammed Ibrahim Law Firm, explained that "a founder is anyone who practically participates in the procedures of establishing a joint stock company with the intention of assuming responsibility for it. Anyone who signs the Constitutive Documents, or provides a share in cash or in kind upon the company's establishment, shall particularly be deemed to be a founder. Whoever, other than the shareholders, carries



out the preparation or review of the Constitutive Documents shall not be deemed to be a founder."

"A founder shall exert the care of a prudent person in deal-



ing with the company under establishment or for its account. Founders shall be jointly liable for any damage sustained by the company or third parties as a consequence of their default. A

founder who receives information or funds belonging to the company under establishment must inform the company of such information and refund such funds and any profits obtained as a result of what was received," he said.

He added that "any action performed by the founders with third parties in the name of the company under establishment is effective against the company if it was necessary for its establishment, and must be approved by the constitutive general meeting. Before approving any of these actions, the meeting must be informed of the facts relating to the action. Whoever violates this obligation is liable, to the extent of his/her property, for the damage the company sustains as a

result of the action that has been approved, and if the persons responsible are several, they are jointly liable for such damage. If any of the aforementioned actions are not approved, the founders are jointly liable for the effects and obligations arising from the action."

"The company shall not raise its invalidity as a defence because of a defect in the procedure of its establishment. The founders shall be jointly liable for the damage resulting from the dissolution of the company by reason of a default in the procedure of its establishment," he said.

"The Constitutive Documents shall not contain any condition absolving the founders, or some of them, from any responsibility

resulting from the establishment of the company, and any condition absolving them from such responsibility shall be null and void," 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).*

# Oman's FDI rises 6.4% to OMR32.2 billion by Q2 2026

Investment flows during the second quarter of 2026 amounted to approximately OMR1.932 billion



**MUSCAT:** Foreign direct investment (FDI) in Oman rose by 6.4 percent to OMR32.211 billion by the end of the second quarter of 2026, compared with the same period in 2025, according to preliminary statistics issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

Investment flows during the second quarter of 2026 amounted to approximately OMR1.932 billion. The oil and gas extraction sector continued to attract the

largest share of foreign investment, reaching OMR25.824 billion, an increase of 5.7 percent year-on-year. Investment flows into the sector totalled OMR1.397 billion during the quarter.

The manufacturing sector ranked second, with FDI reaching OMR2.830 billion, up 4.7 percent. Investment flows in the sector amounted to OMR128.3 million.

The financial intermediation sector ranked third, recording FDI of OMR1.601 billion, an increase of 18.4 percent. Investment flows in the sector reached OMR248.4 million.

Among investing countries, the United Kingdom maintained its position as Oman's largest source of foreign direct investment, with holdings totalling OMR16.766 billion by the end of Q2 2026, up 6.6 percent compared with the corresponding period of 2025.

FDI from the United States increased by 7.3 percent to OMR8.685 billion, while investments from Kuwait rose by 1.7 percent to OMR1.385 billion. Chinese investments in Oman also grew, increasing by 5.8 percent to reach OMR903.8 million by the end of the second quarter of 2026. -ONA

## SQCC celebrates Omani Women's Day in Washington

**WASHINGTON, D.C:** The Sultan Qaboos Cultural Center (SQCC), in collaboration with the Embassy of the Sultanate of Oman in Washington D.C. and in partnership with the AMENA Foundation and the Women's Foreign Policy Group (WFPG), hosted a special celebration of Omani Women's Day under the theme "Women Lead: Leadership, Work and Innovation."

The event welcomed distinguished Ambassadors and diplomats, representatives from the U.S. Department of State, think tank experts, university professors, journalists, women leaders, professionals, and members of the international community to celebrate the achievements of Omani women and explore their growing contributions to diplomacy, leadership, innovation, and economic development.



The event opened with welcoming remarks by Halima Al Balushi of the Sultan Qaboos Cultural Center, followed by remarks from Counselor Sabra Al Hooti, Deputy Chief of Mission at the Embassy of the Sultanate of Oman, highlighting the important role of Omani women in the Sultanate of Oman's development and their contributions across various sectors.

Merissa Khurma, Founder and President of the AMENA Foundation, and Emma Sanderson of the Women's Foreign Policy Group (WFPG), also delivered remarks emphasizing the importance of women's leadership, collaboration, and international partnerships in advancing opportunities for women.

The first panel discussion, "Women's Leadership in Diplomacy," was moderated by Merissa Khurma and featured Hunaina Al Mughairy, former Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the United States, and Greta C. Holtz, former U.S. Ambassador to Oman. Drawing on their extensive diplomatic experience, they reflected on women's leadership in international relations, the importance of mentorship, and the role of women in strengthening diplomatic relationships and fostering mutual understanding between nations.

The programme also featured a special tribute honoring the late

Nadhira Al Harthy, recognizing her remarkable legacy and contributions as an inspiring Omani woman.

The second panel discussion, "Women, Innovation and the Future of Work in the MENA Region," was also moderated by Merissa Khurma, Founder and President of the AMENA Foundation, and featured Counselor Farah Al Raisi, Political Advisor and Congressional and Think Tanks Liaison at the Embassy of the Sultanate of Oman; Hiba Abdulkhalig, Senior Program Officer at the Sultan Qaboos Cultural Center; Gihan Elhadidy of the Women's Foreign Policy Group (WFPG); and Faria Nasruddin of AMENA Foundation.

The discussion explored the opportunities and challenges facing women in an increasingly digital world, particularly the growing influence of artificial intelligence on education, employment, entrepreneurship, and leadership. Panelists emphasized the importance of digital skills, mentorship, access to opportunities, and inclusive policies that empower women to participate fully in the evolving global economy.

The discussion also highlighted the Sultanate of Oman's commitment to women's empowerment under Oman Vision 2040, emphasizing education, innovation,

and women's participation in the nation's continued social and economic development.

Throughout the evening, participants reflected on the progress achieved by Omani women, supported by the longstanding national commitment to education and equal opportunity established under the leadership of the late Sultan Qaboos bin Said and continued under His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik.

The celebration underscored the important role of cultural diplomacy and international partnerships in advancing dialogue, strengthening connections, and creating opportunities for women to lead and succeed.

Through initiatives such as this celebration, the Sultan Qaboos Cultural Center continues its mission to promote cultural understanding, foster meaningful dialogue, and strengthen the enduring friendship between the Sultanate of Oman and the United States.

The Sultan Qaboos Cultural Center, based in Washington, D.C., is dedicated to promoting mutual understanding between the peoples of the Sultanate of Oman and the United States through educational, cultural, and outreach programmes that highlight Oman's rich history, heritage, and contemporary achievements. -ONA

## Collective action sought to halt the loss of biodiversity

**YEREVAN:** Oman participated in the World Leaders Summit on Biodiversity, held in Yerevan, Republic of Armenia, which was attended by a number of heads of state, heads of government, officials and representatives of environmental bodies.

The delegation of the Sultanate of Oman was represented by Dr. Abdullah bin Ali Al-Amri, Chairman of the Environment Authority.

In his speech, the Chairman of the Environment Authority conveyed the greetings of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and His

Majesty's wishes for the government and people of the friendly Republic of Armenia for further progress and prosperity, and for this summit to be successful.

He stressed that the convening of the Leaders Summit within the framework of the seventeenth Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity comes at a very important stage that requires everyone to strengthen collective action and accelerate efforts aimed at halting the loss of biodiversity and restoring ecosystems, in order to achieve a more sustainable future for current and

future generations.

He said Oman recognised early the importance of preserving natural resources and biodiversity, which constitutes a national treasure and an important pillar for sustainable development.

Based on this recognition, it worked to implement the Sustainable Development Goals 2030, and in particular Goals 13, 14 and 15, by strengthening its national policies and programmes in the field of environmental protection, reducing the impact of climate change, protecting biodiversity, , protecting species and natural habitats. -ONA

SULTAN QABOOS UNIVERSITY

# Symposium to discuss unified social protection system

**MUSCAT:** The Social Protection Fund, in cooperation with Sultan Qaboos University, will organise a two-day symposium on "Social Protection System: Towards Implementing a Comprehensive and Unified Social Protection System" beginning Monday at the Mandarin Oriental Hotel in Muscat.

The opening ceremony will be held under the auspices of Dr. Abdullah Mohammed Al Saeedi, Minister of Justice and Legal Affairs, with the participation of specialists, academics, researchers and experts in social policy.

The symposium will feature working papers examining Oman's social protection system from legal, legislative, financial and institutional perspectives. Discussions will focus on integrating social benefits and insurance systems, ensuring financial sustainability, and strengthening coordination



between social protection legislation and labour and employment laws, alongside comparative international experiences.

Khalifa bin Salem Al Ghafeeli, Director of the Legal Affairs Department and Chairman of the Symposium's Main Commit-

tee, said the event would review Oman's experience in developing social protection and examine the legislative, institutional and

financial requirements for establishing a more integrated and unified system.

He noted that the symposium aims to harness knowledge and scientific research to support institutional development and inform social policymaking.

Al Ghafeeli said the event aligns with Oman Vision 2040, particularly its focus on human development, quality of life, social and economic sustainability, stronger governance and improved institutional performance. He added that social policies must remain responsive to changing societal needs.

He described the establishment of the Social Protection Fund and the consolidation of the former pension funds as a significant milestone in Oman's social protection system, bringing greater uniformity to pension obligations

and entitlements.

The unified system has brought pension rights and obligations under a common framework, while contributions, income and investment resources are pooled into a single financial structure. This enables more comprehensive actuarial and financial assessments and supports coordinated decision-making.

Al Ghafeeli added that the consolidated pool also strengthens the Fund's financial and investment capacity, enabling it to participate in various investment projects within established financial and legal frameworks.

He further highlighted Oman's pioneering experience in social protection, citing recognition from international organisations, including the International Labour Organization and the International Social Security Association. -ONA

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ROYAL HONOUR

# His Majesty confers Royal Orders on several figures

**MUSCAT:** His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik conferred on Thursday , at Al Barakah Palace, Royal orders upon a number of figures, in appreciation of their sincere efforts and dedication in performing their duties.

His Majesty has conferred the Order of Honour (First Class) on HH Dr. Ghalya Fahr Al Said and HH Sayyida Dr. Mona Fahd Al Said, Assistant Vice-Chancellor of Sultan Qaboos University for International Cooperation.

His Majesty has also conferred Al Rusookh Order (Second Class) on HH Sayyid Loai bin Ghalib Al Said, Secretary-General of the Diwan of Royal Court and HH Sayyid Nadir bin Shihab Al Said.

His Majesty has also conferred Oman Civil Order (First Class) on Anwar bin Hilal Al Jabri, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion and Sayyid Faisal bin Hamoud Al Busaidi, Governor of Musandam.

His Majesty conferred the Order of Commendation (Second Class) on Mulham bin Bashir Al Jarf, Deputy President of Oman Investment Authority for Investment and Munir bin Ali Al Muniri, Deputy President of Oman Investment Authority for Operations.

His Majesty has also conferred Al Nu'aman Order (First Class) on Badr bin Mohammed Al Manthri, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the United Kingdom, and the Order of Com-



mentation (Second Class) on Managing Director of Petroleum Dr. Aflah bin Said Al Hadhrami, Development Oman.-ONA

WOMEN'S DAY

# Women nurture families, shape country's future

**<FROM A1** This marks an important milestone in our nation's development, affirming the esteem in which Omani women are held, His Majesty's confidence in their capabilities, and their essential role in shaping our country's future. It reflects a vision of progress that honours our heritage while embracing the possibilities of a changing world. With this recognition comes a responsibility to translate opportunity into meaningful participation, and the trust placed in Omani women into dedicated service to our nation.

We live in an age of remarkable change. Knowledge is advancing at an extraordinary pace, ideas are increasingly interconnected, and the influences shaping our societies are more diverse than ever before. In this evolving world, the role of women in nurturing individuals, strengthening families and shaping the character of our communities has never been more important.

Their influence extends far beyond any single profession or responsibility. It is reflected in the minds they inspire, the values they instil, the confidence they nurture and the sense of identity and belonging they help preserve. I have every confidence that the women of Oman will continue to fulfil this profound responsibility with wisdom, foresight and an unwavering sense of purpose, guided



by the knowledge, sound judgement and dedication that have long distinguished their contributions to our nation.

To honour women is to recognise something far greater than a single day of celebration. It is to

acknowledge a lifelong commitment to giving, to nurturing potential and to building a society in which every individual is valued and has the opportunity to flourish. It is also to reaffirm our belief that knowledge empowers, dignity uplifts and creativity opens new horizons. These are among the enduring foundations upon which strong and prosperous nations are built, and the principles that must continue to guide us as we prepare future generations for the opportunities and challenges ahead.

To every Omani woman, I offer my deepest appreciation, my highest esteem and my heartfelt prayers. May you continue to inspire generations to come, to lead with wisdom and compassion, and to play your full part in shaping the achievements and aspirations of our beloved Oman. May our nation always draw strength from the determination of its daughters and sons, take pride in their accomplishments and look to the future with confidence in their devotion.

May the women of Oman continue to distinguish themselves through their achievements, remain steadfast in their values and unwavering in their commitment to our nation. May they always be a source of pride, a beacon of inspiration and an enduring partner in shaping the future of our cherished country." -ONA

# Women's employment increases 9% in 2025

The data showed that Oman had 2,115,212 females in 2025, including 1,510,248 Omani women, who accounted for approximately 71.4 percent of the total female population.

Times News Service

**MUSCAT:** The number of employed Omani women reached 270,696 in 2025, marking a 9 percent increase compared to the previous year, according to data released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The data showed that Oman had 2,115,212 females in 2025, including 1,510,248 Omani women, who accounted for approximately 71.4 percent of the total female population.

Young women aged 18-29 constituted 18 percent of Omani women. Projections indicate that the number of Omani women will reach approximately 1,998,744 by 2040.

Economic participation among Omani women aged 15 and above rose to 32.9 percent in 2025, up from 32.4 percent in 2024. Working women accounted for about 85 percent of economically active Omani women, while females represented



around 30 percent of employed Omanis aged 15 and above.

Around 25 percent of employed Omani women worked in specialist professions in scientific, technical and human fields. The number of newly appointed Omani women reached 31,808 during 2025.

In healthcare, the total fertility rate among Omani women aged 15-49 remained at 2.8 births in 2025. Births under specialised medical supervision accounted for 99.9 percent of the total. Meanwhile, maternal mortality declined from 14.5 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2024 to 11.3 in 2025. Live births to mothers aged 40-44 increased by approximately 11 percent.

In education, 248,855 Omani females aged 10 and above were

enrolled in school during the 2025/2026 academic year. Enrolment in adult education and literacy centres stood at 3,987, down 12 percent from the previous academic year.

The number of Omani women enrolled in higher education reached 79,250 in the 2024/2025 academic year, an increase of 5 percent year-on-year. The number holding postgraduate qualifications rose by approximately 11 percent, while 4.8 percent of Omani women aged 10 and above had no educational qualifications in 2025.

Regarding marital status, the overall marriage rate rose to 5.7 in 2025, compared with 4.5 in 2024, while the divorce rate remained stable at 1.

Ownership indicators also re-

corded growth, with the number of Omani women owning one or more plots of land increasing by 2 percent, residential property ownership rising by 3 percent, and vehicle ownership growing by 4 percent compared with the previous year.

In social protection, 743,023 Omani women benefited from various social protection benefits in 2025, accounting for approximately half of all beneficiaries.

The benefits included 616,446 recipients of child benefits, 5,076 of orphan benefits, 5,686 of widow benefits, 95,576 of elderly benefits and 20,239 of disability benefits. Women accounted for 9 percent of beneficiaries of widow benefits, while they represented 36 percent of maternity benefit recipients.

NCSI

# Oman's inflation increases 3.2% during September



**MUSCAT:** Oman's inflation rate reached 3.2 percent in September 2026 compared with the same month in 2025, driven primarily by rising food prices, according to the Consumer Price Index issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The average inflation rate during the January-September 2026 period stood at approximately 3 percent.

Food and non-alcoholic beverages recorded the highest annual price increase at 8 percent, followed by transport at 4.8 percent and miscellaneous personal goods and services at 4.7 percent.

Prices also increased in restaurants and hotels by 3.6 percent, furniture, household equipment and routine maintenance by 3.3 percent, education by 2.2 percent, health by 1.7 percent, and culture and entertainment by 0.4 percent.

Clothing and footwear, as well as housing, water, electricity, gas and other fuels, recorded marginal increases of 0.1 percent each. Prices in the communications and tobacco groups remained unchanged compared with September 2025.

At the governorate level, Al Dha-

hirah recorded the highest inflation rate at 4.4 percent, followed by Al Wusta at 3.9 percent, Al Dakhiliyah at 3.6 percent and South Al Sharqiyah at 3.4 percent.

Muscat recorded an inflation rate of 3.3 percent, while Musandam stood at 3 percent and North Al Batinah at 2.9 percent. North Al Sharqiyah and Al Buraimi each recorded 2.8 percent, followed by South Al Batinah at 2.6 percent. Dhofar registered the lowest rate at 2.1 percent.

Within the food and non-alcoholic beverages group, vegetable prices surged by 20.1 percent year-on-year, the highest increase among the subgroups. Fruit prices rose by 16.3 percent, meat by 10.3 percent and fish by 5 percent.

Other increases included food products not classified elsewhere at 3.8 percent, non-alcoholic beverages at 3.7 percent, milk, cheese and eggs at 3.4 percent, and sugar, jam, honey and sweets at 2.9 percent.

Bread and cereals prices increased by 1.4 percent, while oils and fats recorded a marginal rise of 0.1 percent compared with September 2025. -ONA



# Oman, UK relations witness steady growth

**< FROM A1** In pursuit of elevating strategic partnerships, enhancing interests and opening broader horizons for cooperation, His Majesty has been keen to meet British Prime Ministers.

The past years have likewise witnessed intensive meetings between senior officials of the two countries, aimed at expanding and creating new partnerships for bilateral cooperation, strengthening historical ties and broadening the partnership in the political, economic and cultural fields in a manner that realises the common interests of the two countries and their friendly peoples.

Among these meetings was that of HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham Al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs, with His Royal Highness Prince William of Wales, at Windsor Castle.

Since the two friendly countries signed the Unshook Treaty more than 200 years ago, relations have witnessed steady growth across various fields, crowned by the signing of the Joint Defence Agreement in February 2019 and the Comprehensive Agreement on Enduring Friendship and Bilateral Cooperation in May of the same year.

These reflected the keenness of the two countries to deepen and unify shared visions in service of their security, stability and the prosperity of their peoples, as well as to enhance military cooperation embodied in numerous aspects of close cooperation and joint bilateral exercises, the most recent of which was Exercise Swift Sword / 3 “Al Saif Al Sareea 3” held in October 2018. In turn, the Comprehensive Agreement on Enduring Friendship and Bilateral Cooperation affirms the shared commitment of the two friendly countries to work together across several sectors, including the political, military, cultural, economic, investment, tourism and other fields.

In January 2022, the Sultanate of Oman, represented by Oman Investment Authority (OIA), and the United Kingdom, represented by the UK Office for Investment (OFI), signed an investment partnership agreement in the capital, London, aimed at strengthening the bonds of ties and increasing the volume of high-value investments in both countries. The signing of the agreement came within the framework of a memorandum of understanding between the UK Office for Investment and Oman Investment Authority, in reinforcement of bilateral economic relations. The agreement targets investment in specific fields such as the clean energy sector and information technology.

Statistics issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) indicate that the trade balance between the Sultanate of Oman and the United Kingdom recorded in 2025 a surplus in favour of the Sultanate of Oman amounting to OMR100.6 million, with the total trade exchange between the two countries reaching OMR384.7 million.

The statistics showed that the total Omani exports to the United Kingdom in 2025 reached approximately OMR242.7 million, while the value of Omani imports from the United Kingdom reached approximately OMR142 million.

Preliminary statistics indicated that the total trade exchange during the first seven months of 2026 reached OMR387.9 million, with the volume of Omani exports to the United Kingdom reaching approximately OMR139 million, while the volume of Omani imports from the United Kingdom reached approximately OMR248.9 million.

From the statistics, it may be observed that the volume of UK direct investment in the Sultanate of Oman is in continuous growth, rising from OMR14.9 billion in 2024 to OMR16.1 billion in 2025. The volume of UK direct investment in the Sultanate of Oman reached, by the end of the second quarter of 2026, OMR16.8 billion.

The total number of institutions in which there is investment from the United Kingdom in 2026 reached approximately 32 institutions. The statistics showed that the volume of Omani direct investments in the United Kingdom in 2025 reached approximately OMR84.6 million.

Regarding the movement of the number of visitors arriving in the Sultanate of Oman from the United Kingdom through legal outlets, their number rose from 93,700 visitors to 103,500 visitors in 2025, and their number reached, by the end of September 2026, 61,886 visitors.

On another front, the Oman-UK Joint Working Group, since its formation in 2010, has been working to enhance bilateral cooperation



and partnership, addressing numerous topics and thorny issues and working to find appropriate solutions for them.

The Group also addresses topics related to commercial and investment aspects, with the 18th round of the Group's meetings held in early September 2026 in Muscat. It discussed the broadening of the horizons of relations and benefiting from British expertise and experiences in the fields of developing education, vocational training and sports, and revitalising tourism movement and enhancing cultural exchange and participations between the two countries.

Numerous associations have arisen between the Sultanate of Oman and the United Kingdom, foremost among them the British Omani Society, which was founded in 1976 and enjoys the Royal patronage of His Majesty the Sultan.

This Society weaves ties from the standpoint of the firmly established roots of friendship and shared values, to enhance mutual understanding between cultures and to enable the next generation to shape a shared prosperous future between the Sultanate of Oman and the United Kingdom.

It also works to enhance education and cultural exchange by maximising understanding between the British and Omani publics of one another, through holding lectures, seminars and social events, as well as providing scholarships and educational assistance.

The Omani-British Friendship Association, meanwhile, seeks to promote trade, partnership and the exchange of commercial and industrial investments between businesspeople in the Sultanate of Oman and Britain, and to develop relations between the two countries in the fields of education, culture, tourism and sports.

The Strategic Consultation Team between the Sultanate of Oman and the United Kingdom was also established to support economic diversification between the two friendly countries, through coordination in the fields of investment, financial reform and diversification strategies.

Badr bin Mohammed Al Manthari, the Sultanate of Oman's Ambassador to the United Kingdom, affirmed that the forthcoming Royal Visit of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to the United Kingdom represents an important milestone in the march of Omani-British relations, which are firmly established historical relations founded upon friendship, trust and mutual respect, and which have, over long decades, been able to evolve and keep pace with changes.

The ambassador said in a statement to Oman News Agency (ONA) that this visit reflects the keenness of the leaderships of the two countries to build upon this legacy and to elevate relations to broader horizons of cooperation and partnership in service of the common interests of the two countries and their friendly peoples. It will also constitute an important opportunity to enhance the various tracks of cooperation, foremost among them economy, investment, trade, renewable energy, technology and innovation, alongside education, culture, and defence and security cooperation, opening a new chapter in the march of Omani-British relations.

It affords the opportunity to exchange views on regional and international issues of mutual interest, and to explore new oppor-

tunities for partnership consistent with the priorities of the Oman Vision 2040 Vision and the aspirations of the two countries for the coming phase.

He added that the political and diplomatic relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the United Kingdom are distinguished by a high level of trust, understanding and continuous dialogue. The two countries have, across various stages, maintained regular channels of communication and consultation on bilateral, regional and international issues. He noted that the current phase represents an extension of this history, while at the same time opening the way to build a more comprehensive partnership that transcends traditional domains and responds to the economic, technological and political transformations the world is witnessing.

The ambassador explained that the economic and investment dimension represents a fundamental pillar in the Sultanate of Oman's relations with the United Kingdom, and that there are substantial opportunities to elevate this cooperation to more diverse and deeper levels. He added: “We look forward to the Royal visit granting additional momentum to mutual investments and opening the way for qualitative partnerships, particularly in clean energy, green hydrogen, technology and innovation, industry, financial services and tourism. Our ambition is for the available opportunities to be transformed into practical and sustainable projects and partnerships that achieve added value for both countries.”

Regarding coordination and dialogue between the Sultanate of Oman and the United Kingdom on regional and international issues of mutual interest, the ambassador said: “The Sultanate of Oman proceeds in its foreign policy from a firm belief in the importance of dialogue, diplomacy and de-escalation, and the necessity of finding peaceful and sustainable solutions to crises. In this context, we value the level of consultation and coordination existing with the United Kingdom on numerous regional and international issues.

Amid the circumstances the region is passing through, the importance of continuing this dialogue grows, in a manner that contributes to supporting security and stability, encouraging political solutions, preserving the security of navigation and international trade, and enhancing the prospects of peace and understanding among the various parties.”

He noted that education and culture are among the most firmly established fields of cooperation between the Sultanate of Oman and the United Kingdom. British universities and educational institutions have, over decades, contributed to qualifying large numbers of Omani students and cadres, an aspect we greatly cherish in our bilateral relations. He expressed his aspiration to expand this partnership through further direct cooperation between universities and scientific research institutions, and to enhance academic, research, training and innovation exchange, while giving greater space to young people, for they represent the true guarantee of the continuity and evolution of this relationship in the future.

At the conclusion of his remarks, Badr bin Mohammed Al Manthari, the Sultanate of Oman's Amba-



sador to the United Kingdom, affirmed that Omani-British relations today carry a clear message: “We have a venerable history of friendship and trust, and we have at the same time a shared ambition for the future. We do not view history as merely a legacy we take pride in, but as a foundation upon which we build a more diverse and modern partnership.”

For her part, Dr. Liane Saunders, the United Kingdom's Ambassador to the Sultanate of Oman, affirmed that the state visit to be paid by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to the United Kingdom constitutes a landmark moment in the enduring relationship between the two countries, stretching back nearly four centuries.

The ambassador added in a statement to Oman News Agency (ONA) that this is the first state visit to the United Kingdom since 1982, noting that last year marked the celebration of the 225th anniversary of the bilateral agreement of 1800, often referred to as the “Unshook Treaty,” which declared that the friendship between Britain and the Sultanate of Oman should remain “Unshook.”

She explained that the significance of this visit lies not only in celebrating the enduring friendship, but in helping to shape a more prosperous future for relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the United Kingdom and enhancing cooperation on shared priorities for coming generations.

She indicated that the visit seeks to achieve concrete outcomes across the full breadth of the bilateral relationship, which is underpinned by the Comprehensive Agreement on Enduring Friendship and Bilateral Cooperation signed in 2019.

The ambassador noted that His Majesty's visit will focus on deepening the economic and investment partnership, modernising the defence relationship, expanding cooperation in the fields of culture, heritage, education and skills, and enhancing coordination in foreign policies.

She explained that the Sultanate of Oman and the United Kingdom enjoy a close and wide-ranging partnership, as the United Kingdom owns more than half of the total cumulative foreign direct investment in the Sultanate of Oman, and continues to support the diversification of the Omani economy through the Oman-UK Strategic Advisory Group, while remaining deeply rooted through defence, education, culture, advisory support and institutional ties. The Sultanate of Oman is likewise a trusted regional partner with a long-standing reputation for supporting dialogue and de-escalation.

The UK ambassador to the Sultanate of Oman said: “At a time of global uncertainty, Oman's strategic location, its role in regional diplomacy and its ambitious Vision 2040 programme make it an important partner for the United Kingdom across security, economic and diplomatic spheres.”

She explained that the United Kingdom values the Sultanate of Oman's distinctive role as a trusted regional interlocutor capable of maintaining open diplomatic channels in the context of regional issues, welcoming the Sultanate of Oman's support for a sustainable political settlement in Yemen, and its broader contribution to easing tensions.

The ambassador affirmed that the United Kingdom will continue to work closely with the Sultan-



ate of Oman to advance regional stability and support freedom of navigation, in reinforcement of the shared interest in security and the uninterrupted flow of international trade.

She noted that the Oman Vision 2040 places economic diversification at the centre of the country's future development, contributing to the creation of diverse opportunities in the fields of renewable energy, green hydrogen, advanced manufacturing, financial services, technology, logistics, tourism, agricultural technologies and education. She explained that the United Kingdom is already the largest investment partner of the Sultanate of Oman, owning more than 52 percent of foreign direct investment, and is well placed to support these ambitions.

The ambassador added that since the signing of the UK-Oman Sovereign Investment Partnership agreement between the two countries in 2022, British investment in the Sultanate of Oman has continued to grow, while the free trade agreement between the GCC states and the United Kingdom — whose joint statement concluding the relevant negotiations was recently signed — contributes to creating further opportunities to deepen trade and investment ties. She expressed her hope for enhanced cooperation particularly in fields such as clean energy, digital innovation, advanced industries, research and skills development.

She noted that education and skills constitute a key pillar in the relationship between the Sultanate of Oman and her country. The United Kingdom remains a leading higher education destination for Omani students, with around 3,000 Omanis studying in the United Kingdom each year. She noted that His Majesty's forthcoming visit will contribute to exploring opportunities for deepening cooperation in research and innovation, education and technical and vocational training, skills development, and artificial intelligence-enhanced education, and to enhancing cooperation in the fields of culture, heritage, tourism and youth engagement, in pursuit of strengthening people-to-people ties.

The ambassador said that this relationship is both enduring and forward-looking, for the state visit is an opportunity afforded once in a generation to renew the historical relationship, deepen cooperation in ways that respond to the challenges and opportunities the two countries face, and set a course of action for future generations.

Dr. Liane Saunders, the United Kingdom's Ambassador to the Sultanate of Oman concluded her remarks by affirming the shared desire of both countries to strengthen defence and security ties, support economic transformation, deepen investment and trade links, expand educational and cultural cooperation, and enhance coordination on regional and international issues, ensuring the continuation of the enduring partnership to deliver prosperity for future generations in both countries.

On another front, Faisal bin Abdullah Al Rowas, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), affirmed that the Royal visit of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to the United Kingdom opens important horizons for elevating Omani-British relations to a broader economic partnership, resting upon the firm-

ly established relations and mutual interests uniting the two countries.

He explained that the United Kingdom is the largest foreign direct investor in the Sultanate of Oman, alongside being an important trade partner, noting that the developments witnessed in trade relations, including the conclusion of negotiations for the free trade agreement between the GCC states and the United Kingdom, enhance the prospects of growth in trade and investment exchange between the two sides.

He indicated that cooperation opportunities extend to a number of key sectors, among them renewable energy, the digital economy, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, manufacturing and advanced industries, agricultural technologies and food security. These fields represent a promising space for expanding investments and exchanging expertise, and for benefiting from the potential the two countries possess, in support of diversifying the domains of economic cooperation and achieving added value for the private sector.

Al Rowas noted that Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry is working to enhance direct links between Omani and British companies, and to provide broader opportunities to become acquainted with markets, projects and investment domains in the two countries. He stressed the importance of continuing trade meetings, exchanging delegations and developing communication between private sector institutions, in a manner that contributes to building practical long-term partnerships and enhances the presence of companies in the markets of both countries.

Dr. Khalid bin Said Al Amri, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Oman Economic Association, affirmed that the visit of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to the United Kingdom represents a defining milestone in the trajectory of economic relations between the two countries. He stressed that Omani-British relations are no transient affair governed by immediate interests, but rather a legacy and a mutual trust that has withstood momentous transformations.

He explained that the visit unfolds at an exceptional economic juncture: the United Kingdom stands as the largest foreign investor in the Sultanate of Oman, the free trade agreement between the United Kingdom and the Gulf Cooperation Council concluded its negotiations in May 2026, and Oman Vision 2040 is pressing forward toward a diversified economy.

He pointed to promising sectors ripe for attracting joint investments, including renewable energy, green hydrogen, mining, logistics services, ports, tourism, food security, aquaculture, education, and health, noting the importance of directing a portion of Oman Investment Authority's portfolio toward British sectors that transfer technology and knowledge.

He indicated that Omani exports to Britain have grown increasingly diversified, with opportunities to expand them in petrochemicals, aluminium, halal foods, frankincense, perfumes, green ammonia, and tourism and logistics services.

For her part, Areej Mohsen Darwish, an Omani entrepreneur and investor in the United Kingdom, explained that the visit of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to the United Kingdom constitutes a significant milestone in the course of Omani-British relations spanning decades, and an opportunity to reinforce the economic and investment dimension.

She stated that commercial and investment ties have existed since ancient times, and that the significance of such visits lies in imparting political and economic momentum to relations and opening wider horizons for companies to forge strategic partnerships.

SECOND ROUND

Admission for 2,894 higher education seats opens today

Times News Service

**MUSCAT:** The Unified Admission Centre at the Ministry of Education will open registration on Sunday, October 18, for the second admission round for the 2026/2027 academic year, offering 2,894 newly created and vacant study seats at higher education institutions in Oman and abroad.

Registration will remain open until Saturday, October 24, giving eligible students another opportunity to compete for places that remained vacant after the first selection.

The centre said the vacancies arose because some programmes did not receive enough eligible applicants or because students offered places did not complete the registration procedures.

The available seats cover programmes at Sultan Qaboos University, Oman College of Health Sciences, the University of Technology and Applied Sciences, vocational colleges, and internal and external scholarship and grant programmes.

The centre has published a supplement to the Student Guide for the 2026/2027 academic year on its website and social media platforms, detailing available programmes and their admission requirements.

Among the key developments in this round is the introduction of engineering scholarships for students enrolled in vocational and technical programmes at vocational colleges, expanding opportunities for them to pursue higher education in engineering.

The second selection is open to Omani students who obtained



a General Education Diploma or equivalent qualification in the 2025/2026 academic year and who have not previously registered in the Unified Admission System, did not secure a place in the first selection, received an offer but failed to complete registration, or withdrew from an educational institution after registering. Students studying at their own expense may also apply, subject to the approved conditions.

Students who have secured a study place and completed registration procedures are not eligible to compete in this round.

Applicants holding equivalent or international qualifications must upload copies of their academic transcripts, personal cards and qualification equivalency certificates issued by the Ministry of Education through their registration pages, in accordance with the prescribed procedures.

Students can check the programmes for which they qualify through the "Enter and View Programs" screen on the Unified Admission System.

The centre stressed that ap-

plicants must re-enter all programmes they wish to compete for, as choices submitted during previous registration stages will not automatically carry over to the second round.

For programmes at Sultan Qaboos University, external scholarships and grants, health specialisations and specified educational specialisations, applicants must have a competitive average equal to or higher than the lowest competitive average accepted for the programme in the first selection, in addition to meeting all other admission requirements.

Admission tests and personal interviews for programmes that require them will take place from October 28 to November 1, 2026. The results of the second admission round are scheduled to be announced on the evening of November 3.

The centre urged eligible students to review the Student Guide supplement, check programme requirements and adhere to the registration deadlines and admission procedures to ensure their applications are completed correctly.

MENA SASI

Omani elected president of aviation safety committee

Times News Service

**MUSCAT:** The International Society of Air Safety Investigators (ISASI) has announced the selection of Her Highness Sayyida Zayana bint Ali Al Said as President of the Board of Directors of the Middle East and North Africa Society of Air Safety Investigators (MENA SASI), in an achievement that reflects high international appreciation for the distinguished professional presence of the Sultanate of Oman and its active contributions in the field of aviation safety and air accident investigation, as well as demonstrating the presence of Omani competencies in regional and international professional organisations.

The assumption of this position by an Omani leading figure will further contribute to enhancing Oman's presence in international forums, developing frameworks for regional cooperation, exchanging expertise, and building capacities in the field of aviation accident investigation among countries of



the region, supporting Oman's advanced standing in the field of civil aviation safety.

This achievement comes as an extension of Oman's efforts to enhance its presence within professional organizations concerned with aviation safety, after the approval of the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers on November 17, 2020, for Oman to join the International Society of Air

Safety Investigators, in support of international cooperation and development of national expertise in this sector.

Investigating aviation accidents

The MENA Society of Air Safety Investigators is a regional branch of the International Society of Air Safety Investigators, which was founded in the United States of America in 1964, and is concerned with enhancing cooperation among specialists in investigating aviation accidents and incidents, and exchanging information and expertise that contributes to developing air safety practices.

The MENA Society of Air Safety Investigators was founded in 2013, and aims to enhance professional communication among investigators in the region, exchange technical knowledge and expertise, organize specialized programs and seminars, and keep pace with developments in the field of investigating and preventing aviation accidents.



Ministry of Defence

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

1. The medical city of military and security invites specialized companies to participate in the following Tenders:

| No | Subject                                                                                                                 | Tender Number | Grade            | Last date for Purchasing Tender document | Last date to submit bids | Tender document Fees + Vat |
|----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|------------------|------------------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. | Residential Building Project                                                                                            | 01/2026       | First, Excellent | 26 October 2026                          | 22 November 2026         | 700 OMR                    |
| 2. | Purchase Of Microbiology Total Lab Automation                                                                           | 23/2026       | --               | 26 October 2026                          | 22 November 2026         | 840 OMR                    |
| 3. | Purchase Of Complete Machine Ultrasound                                                                                 | 24/2026       | --               | 26 October 2026                          | 22 November 2026         | 335 OMR                    |
| 4. | Providing Cleaning Services For The Headquarters And The Hospital Of The Medical City Of Military And Security Services | 25/2026       | --               | 26 October 2026                          | 22 November 2026         | 1109 OMR                   |

2. Tenders documents and terms may be obtained on payment from the office of the secretary of the the Tender Committee in Medical City of Military and Security Services between 0900 to 1300 on the working days.

3. Omanisation compliance certificate (issued by ministry of labor) with a validity period not exceeding one month from the date of issuance must be submitted when tenders document collection.

4. payment of the tenders document to be made by transferring the amount to the bank account of Medical City of Military and Security Services details are provided on the official website ([www.mcmss.gov.om/tenders](http://www.mcmss.gov.om/tenders)).

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from 19.10.2026 to 21.10.2026, from the Value Plus office, Ghala.

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Tender Notice

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Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources

The Ministry of Agricultural, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources Announces the following Tender: -

| Tender no.            | Tender Title                                                                                                                                         | Tender Document Sales Start Date | Tender Document Sales End Date | Bid Submission Closing | Companies that are eligible to participate                        | Tender Document fee (R.O)                                               |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 685/2026/MAF-WR/HQ-50 | Rehabilitation and Maintenance of The Administrative Building Offices and Facilities Belonging to The Food Security Department in Muscat Governorate | Wednesday 07/10/2026             | Tuesday 27/10/2026             | Monday 16/11/2026      | Specialized companies registered with Excellent and First Grades. | (25/-) Omani riyals for local companies<br>(10/-) Omani riyals for SMEs |

- Above mentioned Grade) may obtain Tender documents from the E-Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>.
- The value of the document will be paid & submitted on line on given website.
- The Tenderer should attach Bid Commitment Declaration for local companies.
- All correspondence pertaining to the tender inquiry must be online at e-tendering System.
- All corresponding pertaining to the e-tendering System technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number: +968 24402244 or [etenderhd@ptlc.gov.om](mailto:etenderhd@ptlc.gov.om).

TENDERS COMMITTEE

Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources

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EVENTS

SOUTH AL BATINAH

Two die in house fire

Times News Service

**MUSCAT:** The Civil Defence and Ambulance teams in South Al Batinah Governorate responded to a house fire in the Wilayat of Al Awabi, which resulted in the death of two people and injury to six others. The injured were shifted to health institutions.



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FORECAST

El Nino likely to intensify during the coming months

Times News Service

**MUSCAT:** Forecasts indicate changes in rainfall and temperatures in Oman during the coming months, with continued chances of tropical system formation in the Arabian Sea, according to a report issued by the National Multi-Hazard Early Warning Centre at the Civil Aviation Authority, titled "Seasonal Forecasts of the El Nino Phenomenon and Potential Impacts on the Weather of the Sultanate of Oman," for the period from September 2026 to May 2027.

The report explained that global climate indicators suggest an intensification of the El Nino phenomenon during the coming months, with it expected to reach its peak strength during November and December 2026, noting that the intensification of the phenomenon may be linked to changes in temperature and rainfall patterns, in addition to an increased risk of some extreme weather phenomena globally.

The Centre's seasonal forecasts showed that rainfall rates are likely to be above the climatic average in northern Oman during October and November 2026, while it is expected to be around average in most areas during December, with continued chances of above-average rates in north-

ern regions. In contrast, rainfall is likely to be below average in coastal areas overlooking the Arabian Sea during October.

Regarding temperatures, forecasts indicate above-normal levels across Oman during October, November and December 2026, with warmer-than-usual weather continuing during some autumn months. The report clarified that these changes are not attributed to El Nino alone, but are affected by the interaction of a set of regional and global climate factors and patterns.

The report reviewed the results of a statistical analysis conducted by the Centre for the period from 1980 to 2025, which showed El Nino is associated with an increase in rainfall in Oman by 20 percent compared to the climatic average during the period from September to November, by 31 percent during the period from December to February, and the increase reached 54 percent during the period from March to May.

The results showed that this correlation was more pronounced in northern Oman, with rainfall associated with western winter troughs affected by moisture flow.

The report stressed that these percentages reflect the results of statistical analysis of past years, and do not represent confirmed rainfall amounts for the coming

season, but they may contribute to supporting seasonal forecasts when used alongside other climate indicators.

The report warned of the possibility of wadi flows and water accumulation in some locations as a result of rainfall, in addition to wind activity, high sea waves and hail, and stressed the need to take precautions, especially in affected areas.

The report indicated, based on statistical analysis, that chances of tropical systems forming in the Arabian Sea continue during the period from October to December, with varying activity rates depending on prevailing climate patterns.

The report cited two historical cases of El Nino during 1997-1998 and 2015-2016, during which Oman witnessed rainy weather conditions. In March 1997, heavy rains and thunderstorms followed one after another, and the climate record in the report showed total rainfall reaching about 86.0 mm, compared to the long-term average of 14.8 mm.

The report indicated that from March 7 to 11, 2016, Oman was affected by Al Hamayil low associated with a deep trough, and the northern governorates witnessed moderate to heavy thunderstorms, leading to wadi flows and floods in a number of locations.

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EVENTS

MEETING

Security of the Gulf region, freedom of navigation discussed in Brussels

Times News Service

**BRUSSELS:** The Shura Council participated in the second meeting of honourable speakers of the Shura, Representatives, National and Ummah Councils of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) States with the European Parliament, in Brussels, Belgium.

The Omani delegation was headed by Sheikh Khalid Hilal Al Maawali, Chairman of the Shura Council, and included Hussein Mohammed Al Lawati, Member of the Council.

The meeting, chaired by Roberta Metsola, President of the European Parliament, and attended by Jassem Mohamed Albudaiwi,

Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council, discussed ways to develop the parliamentary partnership between the legislative councils of the GCC States and the European Parliament.

Discussions focused on strengthening frameworks for joint cooperation, establishing regular and sustainable dialogue mechanisms, and exchanging views on key regional and international issues of mutual interest.

The meeting also witnessed an exchange of views on several issues of common interest, particularly ways to transform shared interests into a sustainable strategic partnership by promoting open trade, enhancing interregional connectivity, and fostering people-to-people exchanges.

The two sides also discussed regional security issues, including security in the Gulf region and freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz and the Red Sea, as well as developments in European security and the broader implications of the Russia-Ukraine war.

The meeting further explored prospects for developing future parliamentary cooperation and strengthening the role of parliamentary diplomacy in promoting dialogue and mutual understanding between the two sides.

Participants also discussed avenues for coordination and consultation to support security and stability at both regional and international levels.



They exchanged parliamentary expertise and experiences in legislation and joint parliamentary work, in addition to preparing and adopting the meeting's final joint statement for submission to the Second GCC-European Union Summit, scheduled to take place later in 2026.

This step aims to align parliamentary efforts with the political and economic orientations of the leaders of the GCC States and the European Union.

The meeting builds on the first meeting, held in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, in June 2025.

It aims to strengthen Gulf-European parliamentary relations and develop dialogue and cooperation mechanisms between the two sides, thereby supporting the strategic partnership between the GCC States and the European Union, expanding areas of cooperation and the exchange of parliamentary expertise and practices, and coordinating positions on regional and international issues of mutual interest.

The joint statement issued following the meeting affirmed that

the partnership between Europe and the Arab Gulf region constitutes a solid pillar amid the global uncertainties and disruptions facing the world.

In this context, participants called on the upcoming summit between the GCC and the European Union to strengthen and advance this partnership towards a deeper strategic relationship with a parliamentary dimension, reflecting enhanced connectivity and interconnection between Europe and the Arab Gulf region and serving the shared strategic interests of both sides.

The statement also underscored the importance of establishing open, secure and sustainable maritime, land, air and digital connectivity networks to support trade, energy, investment and security, enhance resilience, and serve the interests of the peoples of both regions.

Participants stressed that existing partnerships are founded on mutual understanding between societies, encouraging stronger parliamentary engagement and people-to-people exchanges, as well as increased mobility and cultural and educational exchanges, alongside tourism.

The participants also reaffirmed

the role of parliamentary diplomacy as a permanent pillar of the partnership between the two sides.

Parliaments convey the voices of citizens, lend legitimacy to agreements, and maintain open channels of communication.

By supporting regional and international efforts in security, energy, sustainable economic development, digital transformation, human rights and collective action, parliaments play an important role in promoting peace, stability and sustainable development. To advance these objectives, participants agreed to hold regular meetings on a rotational basis between Europe and the GCC Member States, deepen dialogue through official visits, meetings of parliamentary speakers and joint parliamentary forums, and exchange expertise between the administrative bodies of parliamentary councils.

Participants will also seek to provide broader opportunities for the involvement of young people, academics, civil society organisations and cultural communities from both regions, ensuring that the benefits of this partnership are reflected in the daily lives of citizens, while keeping the door open for cooperation in other areas of mutual interest.

SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE AT DUQM

Duqm Now session to be held on November 4

Times News Service

**DUQM:** The Special Economic Zone at Duqm (Sezad) has attracted billions in investment. Companies considering a move there need to understand what opening will cost and how they will reach customers. Local businesses have a stake in those decisions too, as new large-scale operations create opportunities to supply goods and services.

"Duqm Opens", the next Duqm Now session will explore those decisions 7.30pm, Wednesday 4 November at Crowne Plaza Hotel Duqm. Abdullah Al Ajmi (pictured) CEO of OQ8 and Ulla Ali, Head of Business Development & International Markets at INVEST Oman will join moderator Talal Al Shahri, Director of Specialised Radio Stations at the Ministry of Information.

The discussion comes against a favourable assessment of Oman's economy. The IMF's October outlook forecasts growth of 4.1% in 2026 giving Oman a strong outlook at a time when neighbouring economies, including the UAE and Saudi Arabia, are projected to contract. S&P's September review also affirmed the country's investment-grade BBB- rating with a stable outlook. Duqm's direct access to the Arabian Sea contributes to Oman's resilience, reducing dependence on passage through the Strait of Hormuz.

A company choosing a production base still has to work through the costs of using it. A shipment waiting for a sailing leaves cash tied up in stock. A customer facing a missed deadline can take the next order elsewhere. Geography becomes valuable to a producer when the shipping service fits the business.

OQ8 brings experience of serving overseas customers from Duqm. Kuwait Petroleum International reported earlier in the year the \$9 billion refinery had completed its 500th export shipment with more than 19 million tonnes of refined products



shipped worldwide since exports began in 2023. Keeping an operation of that scale running also creates demand for services. Local SMEs need to understand which contracts they can compete for and what they must invest in before they qualify.

The scale of Duqm's development makes those opportunities worth a closer look. Committed investment on Sezad reached OMR8.8 billion (\$22.9bn) by June 2026, compared with OMR3.6 billion (\$9.49bn) in 2021 - an increase of 144%. For a supplier deciding whether to buy equipment or recruit staff, understanding when projects will open and which contracts will recur helps shape those decisions.

International customer relationships are developing alongside this investment. Volkswagen's memorandum with Jindal Steel Duqm covers potential supplies of up to 300,000 tonnes of lower-emission steel annually for its European plants. The arrangement connects Duqm's planned steel production with a major international manufacturer seeking cleaner materials for its vehicles. Green ammonia provides another example. Yara's binding agreement to purchase 100,000 tonnes annually from the first phase of ACME's development connects production in Duqm with an established international distributor. The session will explore how producers build these relationships and meet buyer requirements on price, delivery and emissions performance.

Full story at [timesofoman.com/business](https://timesofoman.com/business)



Oman Cables Industry Wins Leadership in ESG - Manufacturing Award at Shabiba Jawa'iz Basma 2026



Oman Cables Industry SAOG was felicitated with the 'Leadership in ESG - Manufacturing 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.

Oman Cables Industry was recognised for its contribution to responsible manufacturing, industrial excellence and sustainable business development. Established in 1984, the company has grown into one of

the region's leading manufacturers of electrical cables and conductors, delivering reliable solutions that support critical energy, infrastructure and connectivity projects across Oman and international markets.

As the regional operating platform for Prysmian, a global leader in cable systems, Oman Cables Industry combines local manufacturing expertise with international capabilities and standards. Its extensive product portfolio includes medium-voltage power cables, low-voltage power and control cables, instrumentation cables, overhead transmission line conductors and building wires, supporting industries where safety, efficiency and reliability are essential.

Through its manufacturing operations and subsidiaries,

including Oman Aluminium Processing Industries SPC (OAPIL) and Associated Cables Private Limited (ACPL), the company has established a strong industrial ecosystem with a presence across the GCC and beyond. Its operations contribute to strengthening local industrial capabilities, supporting regional infrastructure development and reinforcing Oman's position within the global manufacturing landscape.

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.

SOHAR Port and Freezone Wins Leadership in Social Impact Award at Shabiba Jawa'iz Basma 2026



SOHAR Port and Freezone was felicitated with the 'Leadership in Social Impact 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.

SOHAR Port and Freezone was recognised for its commitment to community development, education, youth empowerment and sustainable social impact.

As one of Oman's leading

integrated port and freezone developments, the organisation has placed social responsibility and community engagement at the heart of its operations, supporting initiatives that contribute to the wellbeing and long-term development of communities.

Through its corporate social responsibility programmes, SOHAR Port and Freezone has supported education, scholarships, vocational training, entrepreneurship, healthcare and environmental awareness. Its initiatives aim to create meaningful opportunities for young Omanis, strengthen employability and encourage greater participation in economic and community development.

By aligning its community initiatives with broader sustainability objectives,

SOHAR Port and Freezone continues to demonstrate how major industrial and logistics developments can create value beyond their core business operations.

Its focus on education, human capital development, community wellbeing and environmental responsibility contributes to building resilient communities while supporting the long-term goals of Oman Vision 2040.

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.

SPORTS



# Mourinho backs suspended Vinicius

Vinicius was banned for pulling the hair of Villarreal midfielder Nathan Saliba during Real Madrid's 1-0 win, receiving a two-match suspension for the incident

**MADRID:** Real Madrid coach Jose Mourinho defended Vinicius Jr. on Saturday as the Brazilian forward prepares to serve a four-match suspension following his dismissal against Villarreal last weekend. Vinicius was banned for pulling the hair of Villarreal midfielder Nathan Saliba during Real Ma-

drid's 1-0 win, receiving a two-match suspension for the incident and a further two matches for protesting the referee's decision. "He's a spectacular guy, and it's easy to have a good relationship with him," Mourinho said ahead of Sunday's La Liga home match against Sevilla. The Portuguese coach also

played down suggestions that Vinicius' substitution had been decisive in Real Madrid's dramatic 4-3 Champions League victory over Roma on Wednesday. Madrid scored three late goals to complete the comeback after Vinicius was replaced by Endrick, who played a key role in the turnaround. Mourinho pointed out that he had made five changes during the match, insisting that "substitutions are simply part of football." The Real Madrid coach offered few clues about his starting lineup against Sevilla, emphasizing the competition for places in his squad. "There are so many players who deserve to play: not just 11, but 15 or 16," he said. Vinicius, 26, has been regularly

targeted by opposition fans and racially abused on many occasions since joining Madrid in 2018. "He's a spectacular kid who it's easy to have a good relationship with," Mourinho told reporters. "He's a fantastic boy, tremendous credit to him for the fact that he keeps living and surviving and still having a smile... If it were me in his place, probably I wouldn't be here. In this last summer I would have forced an exit to a league, a country, to somewhere there are rival clubs and stadiums that respect him." Vinicius signed a new contract with Madrid until 2032 in the summer. "Because he loves Real Madrid, for loving the club and the city, for believing that things can always improve, he renewed and he keeps on smiling," Mourinho said. -Agencies

SCATHING RESPONSES

## Not fit to be president: Infantino faces heat at FIFA Council meeting

**ZURICH:** In a stormy meeting at the FIFA headquarters, the president of the world's football-governing body was met with sharp and scathing responses regarding "not being fit" to lead the organisation as he offered his apologies to the council for his now-scrapped FIFA Forward Enterprise (FFE) plan, seeking private investment and participation in FIFA competitions, including the World Cup. The FIFA council met on Thursday in Zurich for the first time since the scandalous revelation of the FFE plan by the media. Ahead of the FIFA presidential elections next year, Infantino is fighting a massive battle to retain his job. He faced criticism after plans to sell stakes in FIFA competitions to private investment firms triggered opposition from several quarters. The proposal led to strong reactions, with UEFA threatening to boycott FIFA competitions, including the FIFA World Cup. Infantino ditched the plan after such backlash. During the meeting, which lasted over three hours, as per Goal.com, the file related to the plan was not the only thing discussed, and Infantino was held accountable for, Infantino faced questions on other controversies too, such as the suspension given to US striker Pollarin Balogun and its revocation, with President Donald Trump being one of the leading voices calling to scrap it, and the FIFA Peace Prize given to Trump. Infantino was also questioned on funding of national associations. Debbie Hewitt, chair of the English Football Association (FA) and FIFA vice-president, expressed her disappointment over the FFE episode, saying, as quoted by Goal.com, "What is frustrating is that we have not received answers to any of our specific requests, such as



obtaining the documents from the (FFE) enterprise, for example." "I asked: why? And we were asked to submit those questions in writing. I believe the man must answer those questions, and if he does not answer them now, then he is not fit to be FIFA president, and that is what was discussed in the meeting," added Debbie. While Infantino's apology had "some regret, it was nowhere enough, with Debbie adding, "Then there were no reservations as regards our feelings about what happened. What he really apologised for was not putting the matter to the council. If you are that regretful, then tell us." UEFA, one of the sharpest Infantino critics who have called on him to step down from his job, is preparing criminal legal proceedings against Infantino and has filed a lawsuit in three American courts demanding release of documents related to the FFE plan. On if anything had shifted on UEFA's stance regarding the controversy, Debbie said, "From my point of view, nothing has changed. I have no new information that makes me feel other-

wise, except that we have a president who apologises." Despite the massive frustration of UEFA, one of the world's most powerful football confederations, they are still hunting for a challenger to Infantino's chair as he prepares to fight the presidential elections for the third time. UEFA and other bodies need to find Infantino's opponent by 18 November, with Debbie stressing that "associations should be given a chance to vote as per their own vision" "I think it is important for Gianni to have someone putting forward a different programme, and it is good for FIFA to have that option. We live in a democratic system. We must remember that there are 211 associations, and it is very important that all of these associations are given the chance to vote according to their own vision," said Debbie. Former Tottenham and Swiss defender Ramon Vega has announced his intentions to fight the elections, though it does not look likely he will get the five required letters of support from member associations. -ANI

MEN IN BLUE

## Can't believe Kuldeep is not their first choice spinner: Clarke

**MELBOURNE:** Former Australian cricketer Michael Clarke lashed out at Indian team management for omitting spinner Kuldeep Yadav from the last two T20Is against West Indies, saying that he cannot believe that he is not a "first-choice spinner" for the Men in Blue. Shai Hope and his men rained fours and sixes against Indian pace during the fourth T20I, scoring a massive 247/3, which proved to be a massive chase for India, who spent most of the time playing the catch-up game instead of dominating. Kuldeep, who took 2/33 in the first T20I but had an off-colour outing with 1/53 against the Men in Maroon at Ranchi, where they chased down a record 250 runs, found himself omitted from the playing XI. Instead, it was all-rounder Naman

Dhir who acted as the second spin option alongside an experienced Axar Patel, with India opting for more pace in their weaponry. Speaking on his Beyond23 Cricket Podcast, Clarke said that Kuldeep is a "wicket-taker" and questioned why teams do not focus on bowling out their opposition. "I have made my point clear about Kuldeep Yadav several times. I cannot believe he's not their first-choice spinner. He's a wicket-taker, and it doesn't matter the format; you are looking to bowl the opposition out. Too many captains play by the rules of the game in T20s and ODIs. They just say Let the opposition get whatever they do, and we will chase, rather than looking to bowl the opposition out," he said. Former India U19 cricketer Shreevats Goswami, who made

an appearance on the podcast, also said that Kuldeep cannot be dropped for an extra batter and without him, India is "losing the art of taking wickets in the middle overs". He urged the team management to play him in the series decider in Bengaluru on Saturday. "Kuldeep Yadav must play for India in the decider, come on guys. He played the first T20I and picked up two wickets and was impactful. In the second game, he gave away a lot of runs, but you cannot drop him for an extra batter or for Naman Dhir, who bowls off-spin and bats. If you don't play him, you are losing the art of taking wickets in the middle overs. He has to play," said Goswami. Naman has done a fine job as the spinner in the series, taking five wickets in four matches at an average of 22.80. -ANI

CONSIDERABLE PRESSURE

## Wickets have been extremely flat: India bowling coach Morkel

**BENGALURU :** India bowling coach Morne Morkel highlighted the difficulties bowlers face on flat pitches at Bengaluru's M. Chinnaswamy Stadium, stating that the conditions become even more challenging when dew comes into play. He noted that the last two matches were played on much drier surfaces, giving bowlers a "small chance" to execute their plans. Morkel acknowledged that bowling second on flat pitches with a wet ball puts considerable pressure on the bowling unit, making it difficult to contain aggressive batters and defend totals. Morkel was speaking to the reporters on the eve of India's fifth T20I against West Indies in Bengaluru on Friday. "The first thing we would say is that the wickets have been extremely flat, making it difficult for bowlers to operate. That's the reality of the conditions, and we've spoken about it quite a bit. It becomes particularly tricky when there's a lot of dew around. The last two games we've played were much drier, which gave the bowlers at least a small chance," he said. "However, when you're bowling second on these good surfaces, and the ball is wet, the pressure on the bowling unit increases significantly," he added. Morkel's remarks come amid a high-scoring T20I series between India and the West Indies, where totals in excess of 200 have proved



increasingly difficult to defend. Reflecting on the second T20I in Ranchi, where the West Indies chased down a 250-run target by reaching 252/4 in just 18.3 overs, Morkel admitted that defending such a total was challenging against an aggressive batting line-up. He highlighted the difficulties of bowling in the powerplay with fielding restrictions and stressed that India must focus on improving their skills and execution to cope with the high-scoring conditions. "I was quite nervous even when we had 250 to defend. I knew that we might struggle to execute our plans, especially against an aggressive West Indies batting lineup. Their approach is almost like a clearance sale, everything must

go. They play an attacking brand of cricket, and while you might expect that approach to create wicket-taking opportunities, more often than not, the shots still end up going for six," he added. "It's particularly difficult to defend a total in the powerplay when only two fielders are allowed outside the circle. Those are the realities we have to deal with. The conditions aren't going to change, so all we can do is keep working on our skills and find ways to improve our execution," he concluded. West Indies defeated India by 24 runs in the fourth match of the five-match series, at Hyderabad, to level the series 2-2. The fifth and final T20I of the series will be played at the M. Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bengaluru on October 17 (Saturday). -ANI

APOLOGY ON SOCIAL MEDIA

## Lisandro Martinez issues apology for post-match remarks on Manchester United's hierarchy

**MADRID:** Manchester United defender Lisandro Martinez has issued an apology on social media after criticising the club's board following the team's 2-0 defeat to Atletico Madrid on Tuesday (local time). Martinez had criticised the club's hierarchy and said he expects more from the team's technical director following their defeat, calling for greater investment in the squad to compete with rival teams. In a post-match interview, Martinez said he had expected the club's management to bring in more players during the summer transfer window, specifically expressing disappointment with technical director Jason Wilcox. Now in an Instagram story, Martinez has apologised for his post-match comments and said he met Manchester United's leadership and manager Michael Carrick, describing the discussion as positive. He said his frustration after the defeat led him to express his views at the wrong time and place, acknowledged that his remarks did not help unite the club, and stressed that everyone was working towards Manchester United's shared goal of success. "Today I met with the club's leadership and the manager. It was a very positive conversation, where we were able to exchange views and speak openly about what happened after Tuesday's



game. Everyone knows that I am a passionate person and that I live football with great intensity. The frustration of the defeat led me to express how I felt at a time and place that perhaps were not the right ones, and for that I want to apologise," he said. "Our club is at its best when we are all united, and I recognise that

my words in that moment did not help with that. I know that every single person at Manchester United is doing everything possible to achieve our shared ambition: bringing the success that this club and its supporters deserve. With this situation now behind us, we are fully focused on winning together," he added. -Xinhua

**NBO RECOGNISED**  
The National Bank of Oman (NBO) has received the Oman Building Code Alignment Recognition Certificate for its head office in Azaiba. The recognition highlights the building's alignment with Oman's approved building codes and regulations.

MARKET  
BUSINESS & FINANCE



**EXCEPTIONAL GROWTH**  
The Muscat Stock Exchange witnessed an exceptional performance during the first nine months of this year, with its index rising by about 31 percent since the beginning of the year.

# Omani ports record strong growth in operational activity

This reflects the growth in handling activity of ports in Oman and increasing logistical activity, which enhances the position of the Sultanate of Oman in the trade and maritime transport movement regionally as well as internationally

Times News Service

**MUSCAT:** Omani ports recorded remarkable growth in operational activity indicators during the first eight months of 2026 compared to the same period in 2025. This reflects the growth in handling activity of ports in Oman and increasing logistical activity, which enhances the position of the Sultanate of Oman in the trade and maritime transport movement regionally as well as internationally. Laila bint Ali Al-Batashi, Director of the Department of Ports and Marine Piers at the Ministry



of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, said that the number of ships received by Omani ports and marine piers outside ports increased by 27.9 percent to reach more than 11,000 ships by the end of August 2026, compared to 8,793 ships during the same period in 2025. She added in a statement to the Oman News Agency that container handling activity witnessed a growth of 20.5 percent, with the number of containers handled



exceeding 4 million standard containers, compared to 3.36 million standard containers during the same period last year. This clearly reflects the growth of commercial activity and the efficiency of operational processes in Omani ports. She further noted that the volume of goods handled at the ports recorded a remarkable increase of 62.3 percent, reaching about 146 million tonnes by the end of August 2026, compared to about 90.5 million tonnes during the same

period in 2025. This also reflects the expansion of the movement of goods and the growing role of ports in supporting supply chains and logistics services. Vehicle traffic recorded the highest growth among the monitored operational indicators, with an increase of 182.6 percent, as the number of vehicles handled in the ports rose to 188,368, compared to 66,661 during the same period last year. The Director of the Ports and Maritime Docks Department con-

firmed that these indicators reflect the growing operational activity in Omani ports during the current year, in light of the increase in the number of ships, containers, and quantities of goods and vehicles handled. She pointed out that this growth enhances the role of ports as a fundamental pillar in the transport and logistics system, and an important hub for facilitating trade and strengthening connectivity between Oman and regional and international markets.

BEST GLOBAL PRACTICES

## Regulatory framework to boost competitiveness in Oman's mining sector continues

Times News Service

**MUSCAT:** The Ministry of Energy and Minerals continues its efforts to develop legislative and regulatory system for the minerals sector in line with best global practices. It also aims to further enhance the Sultanate of Oman's position as an attractive destination for mining investments. In this context, the amendments to the Mineral Wealth Law issued by Royal Decree No. (69/2026) came to launch a new phase of legislative and regulatory development, based on raising the efficiency of managing and investing mineral resources as well as enhancing competitiveness and transparency. It further aims in accelerating the development of mining projects, in a way that contributes to maximising the economic value of mineral wealth and supporting the objectives of economic diversification. The amendments represent a qualitative step towards providing a clearer and more efficient investment environment, through developing mechanisms for offering mining sites and granting licenses and concessions. It further aims in enhancing the technical competence and financial solvency requirements of investors, and regulating the rights and obligations associated with mining activities, in a way that contributes to attracting quality investments and stimulating the growth of the sector. In this context, Engineer Saud bin Khamis Al Mahrouqi, Director General of Minerals at the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, affirmed that developing the legislative system is one of the fundamental pillars for enhancing the competitiveness of the minerals sector and increasing its contribution to the national economy. He pointed out that the new amendments reflect the Ministry's direction towards providing a more efficient and transparent investment environment, establishing clarity in the procedures



regulating investment, enhancing investor confidence, and enabling mining projects to move at a faster pace from the exploration and prospecting stages to the development, exploitation, and production stages. He added in a statement to the Oman News Agency that these amendments contribute to attracting investors capable of developing mineral resources according to the highest technical and economic standards. They also support the protection of mineral wealth and consolidate the principles of governance and sustainability, thus achieving a balance between maximising the benefit from natural resources and preserving them for future generations, and contributing to achieving the goals of Oman Vision 2040. He explained that competition and transparency promote the principle of competition in allocating mining sites by adopting mechanisms for offering based on openness, equal opportunities, equality and freedom of competition, which raises the quality of investments attracted and enhances the efficiency of exploiting mineral resources. He pointed out that the amendments support raising the level of investment seriousness by linking financial guarantees to the size of the proposed projects and investments, which enhances the commitment of investors to implement the approved technical and investment programmes. It also further seeks to consolidate the principles

of governance and financial responsibility in the sector. The amendments also strengthened the governance of mining rights by regulating the procedures related to changing the legal form of the investor, transferring ownership, waiving rights, or introducing new partners, in order to ensure the continuity of obligations related to licenses and maintain the stability of mining projects. He said that one of the most prominent aspects addressed by the amendments is regulating the transition from the exploration phase to the exploitation phase more clearly, by granting the exploration licensee priority in obtaining an exploitation license when proving the existence of mineral ores in commercial quantities according to the specified controls. This in turn contributes to accelerating the development of projects and converting the results of exploration and prospecting work into actual productive investments. The Director General of Minerals at the Ministry of Energy and Minerals added that the amendments strengthened the legal protection of mineral resources by increasing penalties for violations, including extracting raw materials without a license, exploiting sites outside authorised boundaries, or continuing extraction after the license expires, thus enhancing deterrence and preserving the state's rights and natural resources.

PRELIMINARY UNAUDITED RESULTS

## Bank Muscat posts 9.2% growth in nine-month profit

**MUSCAT:** Bank Muscat, the flagship financial institution in the Sultanate, announced its preliminary unaudited results for the nine months period ended 30 September 2026. The Bank posted a net profit of OMR 209.18 million for the period compared to OMR 191.57 million reported during the same period in 2025, an increase of 9.2 per cent. The key highlights of the results for the period are as follows: 1) Net Interest Income from Conventional Banking and Net Income from Islamic Financing stood at OMR 321.4 million for the nine months period ended 30 September 2026 compared to OMR 310.9 million for the same period in 2025, an increase of 3.4 per cent. 2) Non-interest income was OMR 131.63 million for the nine months period ended 30 September 2026 as compared to OMR 123.57 million for the same period in 2025, an increase of 6.5 per cent, mainly due to growth in business volumes. 3) Operating expenses for the nine months period ended 30 September 2026 was OMR 172.27 million as compared to OMR 162.82 million for the same period in 2025, an increase of 5.8 per cent. 4) Net impairment losses on financial assets for the nine months period ended 30 September 2026 was OMR 32.76 million as against OMR 43.63 million for the same period in 2025. 5) Net Loans and advances including Islamic financing receivables increased by 7.9 per cent to OMR 10,919 million as against OMR 10,099 million as at 30 September 2025. 6) Customer deposits including Islamic customer deposits increased by 8.1 per cent to OMR 10,919 million as against OMR 10,099 million as at 30 September 2025. The full results for the nine months period ended 30 September 2026 along with the complete set of unaudited financial statements will be released following the approval of the Board of Directors of the Bank at its meeting scheduled later during October.



Key highlights of preliminary unaudited results

| Particulars (RO million)<br>For the period ended | 30 Sep<br>2026 | 30 Sep<br>2025 | Change (%) |
|--------------------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|------------|
| Net interest income & Islamic financing income   | 321.40         | 310.90         | 3.4%       |
| Other operating income                           | 131.63         | 123.57         | 6.5%       |
| Operating expenses                               | 172.27         | 162.82         | 5.8%       |
| Operating profit                                 | 280.76         | 271.65         | 3.4%       |
| Net profit                                       | 209.18         | 191.57         | 9.2%       |
| Particulars (RO million)<br>As at period ended   | 30 Sep<br>2026 | 30 Sep<br>2025 | Change (%) |
| Total Assets                                     | 15,998         | 14,558         | 9.9%       |
| Net loans and Islamic financing                  | 11,552         | 10,704         | 7.9%       |
| Conventional loans and advances                  | 9,751          | 9,043          | 7.8%       |
| Islamic financing receivables                    | 1,801          | 1,661          | 8.4%       |
| Customer deposits and Islamic deposits           | 10,919         | 10,099         | 8.1%       |
| Conventional customer deposits                   | 9,164          | 8,524          | 7.5%       |
| Islamic customer deposits                        | 1,755          | 1,575          | 11.4%      |
| Total Equity*                                    | 2,682          | 2,527          | 6.1%       |

\*Total Equity includes Perpetual Tier I capital of RO 505 million (2025: RO 505 million).

MARKET

MSX achieves exceptional growth during the third quarter of 2026

Meanwhile, trading volumes recorded remarkable growth, reaching about OMR10.3 billion in the third quarter of 2026, compared to about OMR2.4 billion during the corresponding period last year

Times News Service

**MUSCAT:** The Muscat Stock Exchange witnessed an exceptional performance during the first nine months of this year, with its index rising by about 31 percent since the beginning of the year.

Meanwhile, trading volumes recorded remarkable growth, reaching about OMR10.3 billion in the third quarter of 2026, compared to about OMR2.4 billion during the corresponding period last year.

Mustafa bin Ahmed Salman, Chairman and CEO of United Securities, explained that this performance reflects a positive growth phase witnessed by the Muscat Stock Exchange, supported by improved results for a number of listed companies, especially those operating in sectors related to oil and petroleum products, and the growing confidence of investors and increased trading liquidity.

He told the Oman News Agency that the inclusion of the stock exchange in the FTSE Russell index watch list is expected to enhance its investment appeal in the coming period and open up wider horizons for local and foreign capital flows.

He added that despite the challenges posed by regional developments, current indicators reflect the market's resilience and its ability to continue growing, with expectations that the next phase will witness broader investment opportunities, especially with the stabilisation of



conditions and the strengthening of investor confidence.

Regarding new listings, he explained that 2026 saw the initial public offering (IPO) of one company, the Oman India Fertiliser Company (Omifco), which contributed to attracting liquidity to the market and achieving remarkable performance for the company's stock after its listing. It is expected that 2027 will witness the IPO of at least three companies, which will enhance market depth and broaden the base of listed companies.

He pointed out that efforts are directed towards diversifying investment products by introducing investment funds that comply with

the provisions of Islamic Sharia, and other financial products, which provides wider options for investors of all categories, and enhances the stock exchange's ability to attract new segments of investors.

He said that daily trading volumes exceeded expectations, rising from averages estimated at around OMR40 million to levels ranging between OMR70 and OMR90 million on some days, reflecting growing investment activity and the flow of more local and foreign liquidity towards the market.

Mustafa bin Ahmed Salman stressed that all these efforts are combined with the ease of procedures for opening investment

accounts and the smoothness of dealing in the market, in addition to the joint efforts made by the concerned authorities.

Foremost among them the Financial Services Authority (FSA), the Oman Investment Authority (OIA), the Muscat Stock Exchange and brokerage companies, with the support of the National Programme for Financial Sustainability.

They have helped to develop new financial products and enhance the investment environment, which supports the sustainability of growth and consolidates the position of the stock exchange as one of the main channels for mobilising savings and directing them towards productive investment.

Oman's stock market retreats amid geopolitical uncertainty

Times News Service

**MUSCAT:** The Omani stock market closed lower during the week, with the MSX 30 index declining by 1.97% to 7,678.05 points. The number of shares traded decreased by 33.05%, while the value of shares traded pulled back by 34.42%. The total market cap slipped by 1.01%. The market came under pressure from intensifying tanker incidents in the Strait of Hormuz and geopolitical uncertainty.

Regional tensions capped risk appetite this week, as negotiations dragged on and fears of renewed escalation grew, according to an industry watcher. "Oil prices rose as caution towards supply disruptions lingered, and could continue to climb if the situation remains unchanged. However, the country's economy is still expected to grow by 4.1% this year, which could support sentiment and help offset external pressure," said Joseph Dahrieh, Managing Director at Tickmill.

Attention during the week also centred on new US inflation readings ahead of the Federal Reserve's October meeting. Consumer prices advanced by 3.7% from a year earlier, topping the 3.6% forecast, and producer prices surged 6.3% annually, the fastest pace since December 2022. The figures supported the case for future interest rate increases, although an October move is not priced in. Such tightening could pressure stock markets globally, including Oman's.

At the sector level, the services index fell by 3.21%, closing the week at 3,018.72 points. Phoenix Power dipped by 21.37%. Asyad Shipping and AlBatinah Port followed, declining by 5.15% and 2%, respectively. OQ Gas Net-



works inched lower by 3.49% following an 8.73% decrease in Q3 net profits compared to the previous year. At the same time, Abraj Energy Services inched higher by 1.39% while Renaissance Services finished the week with a limited increase of 0.73%.

The industry index slipped by 2%, closing at 10,013 points, with Voltamp Energy, OQ Base Industries, and Oman Cement retreating by 3.72%, 2.97% and 1.40% respectively. Jazeera Steel Products finished the week with a 0.96% decrease amid a loss of 10.75% in Q3 net profit.

Meanwhile, the financial index pulled back by 1.57%, finishing the week at 13,797.87 points. Madina Takaful weakened by 7.89%, while its net profit declined by 81.98%. Bank Muscat, Sohar International Bank, and Bank Nizwa all followed, down 2.93%, 3.13%, and 2.58%, respectively. Omnivest closed the week with a small decrease of 0.49%.

Looking ahead, Joseph Dahrieh said, "Oman's stock market may still find support from local fundamentals despite persistent geopolitical uncertainty. Better shipping conditions could help underpin the index, while continued tanker incidents could continue to weigh on sentiment," he further added.

COMMITMENT TO MAINTAINING HIGH STANDARDS

NBO head office receives Oman Building Code Alignment recognition certificate



**MUSCAT:** The National Bank of Oman (NBO) has received the Oman Building Code Alignment Recognition Certificate for its Head Office in Azaiba. Presented during the Urban, Home & Building Expo 2026, held as part of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning's Urban October 2026 Exhibition, the recognition highlights the building's alignment with Oman's approved building codes and regulations.

Opened in 2017, NBO's Head Office brings together modern design and traditional Omani architecture, reflecting the Sul-

tanate's natural landscapes and rich architectural heritage. From its stepped terraces inspired by Oman's mountains to the vertical panels that echo the design of historic Omani forts, the building incorporates elements that reflect the country's identity.

The building also makes extensive use of locally sourced materials, including natural Omani stone quarried in Sohar. Natural materials account for approximately 90% of those used in its construction, reflecting NBO's focus on supporting local industries and incorporating locally available resources

into its facilities.

Beyond its architectural design, the Head Office was developed to provide a safe, accessible and efficient environment for employees, customers and visitors, with flexible spaces that support the Bank's day-to-day operations and activities.

The recognition reflects NBO's continued commitment to maintaining high standards of quality and safety across its facilities, while investing in modern working environments that respect Oman's architectural heritage and support the country's long-term development ambitions.

AI-POWERED ROBOTIC SYSTEM

How excavators from China's inland city reach global markets smarter and faster

**NANNING:** Two clicks ring out as a robot precisely positions a tightening tool over a bolt on an electric excavator and secures it in place. Every 12.5 minutes, another bright-green excavator rolls off the assembly line, ready to be shipped to markets around the world.

The scene unfolds at the Liugong Excavator Intelligent Factory in south China's Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region. Guangxi Liugong Machinery Co., Ltd., a leading Chinese machinery manufacturer, now offers over 100 electric product models, which are sold in more than 60 countries and regions.

Liugong is headquartered in Liuzhou City, an inland industrial city in Guangxi. Built on a strong foundation in automobile manufacturing, steel and machinery, the city has been accelerating the digital and intelligent transformation of its traditional industries.

Liugong's Excavator Intelligent Factory began operation in November 2023. Inside the bustling workshop, automated guided vehicles (AGVs) carrying components of various sizes glide through the aisles, delivering them to workstations where workers have placed orders.

For Zhao Qifeng, production manager at the factory's assembly line, one of the toughest challenges addressed by intelligent transformation is product inspection.

"Previously, workers used steel rulers, tape measures and stop watches to carry out tests. Nowadays, we can obtain key parameters through an AI-powered robotic system in about 10 minutes," Zhao said. The resulting "health report"

for each excavator is then uploaded to the company's digital system.

With an annual production capacity of more than 20,000 excavators, the factory has achieved an automation rate of 65 percent through its smart upgrade. Overall production capacity has increased by 45 percent, order response time has been cut by 45 percent, and production efficiency has improved by 25 percent.

In the first half of this year, Liugong's overseas revenue exceeded 10 billion yuan (about 1.49 billion U.S. dollars) for the first time, up more than 20 percent year-on-year, according to Liu Shuangfeng, director of business operations at the company's international business division. Liugong's footprint now extends to 180 countries and regions worldwide.

Liu said that the company's connection with global markets is expected to improve further thanks to the Pinglu Canal, which just opened to navigation in September.

The 134.2-kilometre canal links Guangxi's capital Nanning with the Beibu Gulf, opening to sea at Guangxi's Qinzhou Port. The closest maritime outlet for much of southwest China is also offering companies in Liuzhou a more efficient export route.

Liugong plans to increase exports through Qinzhou Port, where more ocean-going vessels are expected to call following the opening of the new canal, according to Liu.

"Compared with shipping through ports in Guangdong, the route via Qinzhou can reduce the company's inland transportation costs by around 15 to 18 percent and shorten transit times by sev-

en to 10 days," he said.

With an established railway network, Liuzhou now features two access routes to the sea: goods can either travel by rail directly to Qinzhou Port, or by rail to Nanning, where they can then reach the port at Beibu Gulf via the Pinglu Canal.

The routes complement each other, giving businesses more options and helping strengthen supply chain resilience, said Qi Jianfeng, director of the development and reform bureau of Liunan District, where Liuzhou Railway Port lies.

To speed up export procedures, a customs-supervised facility at the railway port conducted its first rail-sea intermodal transport customs clearance in May, allowing exporters to complete customs procedures in Liuzhou, said Luo Qiaofeng, chief of Liuzhou Customs.

By streamlining declaration, inspection and release procedures, Liuzhou's new one-stop clearance process has cut customs clearance time by about 48 hours per shipment. A digital system also enables automated checks of container and seal numbers, speeding up cargo release, Luo added.

Liuzhou's official data shows that the city's railway port handled 17,000 TEUs from January to September this year, 22 times the total for all of 2025.

Both the Pinglu Canal and Liuzhou Railway Port are part of China's efforts to develop the New International Land-Sea Trade Corridor, a trade route connecting China's inland regions with ASEAN and other global markets. **Xinhua**



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# French protesters clash with police during nationwide demonstrations

The protests come on the heels of an initial wave of demonstrations that began last month over the situation at schools in the country, with pupils complaining about teacher absences and run-down facilities

**PARIS:** Mass rallies are taking place across France on Saturday, with protesters airing grievances ranging from high prices and social inequalities to a dilapidated education system.

The protests come on the heels of an initial wave of demonstrations that began last month over the situation at schools in the country, with pupils complaining about teacher absences and run-down facilities.

President Emmanuel Macron has called “for calm and respect” ahead of the protests, saying that the right to protest went hand in hand with “respect for people and property.”

In Paris and Marseille, police have fired tear gas at protesters during clashes.

More than 600 demonstrations are planned across France, according to protest organisers.

Interior Minister Laurent Nunez told France 2 television that “a pretty big turnout” was expected, while a police source told the French AFP news agency that au-



thorities estimate nearly 200,000 people will attend.

However, the Paris demonstrators will face restrictions, with police banning rallies around the Elysee presidential palace, the prime minister's office and the Champs-Elysee avenue, along with other key locations.

A march through the center of the city has also been banned.

The main Paris demonstration is due to begin at 2pm (1200 GMT) at the Place de la Republique and head to the north of the city.

Reports began emerging late on

Saturday morning of riot police clashing with protesters in the Saint-Denis area on the outskirts of the capital, as well as near the Gare du Nord train station, among other areas.

## Fears of violence at the French protests

Prime Minister Sebastien Lecornu said on Thursday that authorities fear there could be violence during the protests.

“This is a moment of fatigue in the country,” Lecornu said. “We are in an atmosphere of perma-

crisis: wars, inflation, and issues surrounding purchasing power.”

Jordan Bardella, the head of the far-right National Rally, which is leading the polls ahead of next year's presidential election, said he expected clashes.

“I'm extremely concerned,” he said during a visit to the Paris car show. “It will be a day of chaos for France.”

The school protests that have rocked France in recent weeks have already seen considerable violence, with several protesters and more than 900 police injured.

In one notable incident, an adolescent school pupil had one hand blown off and several fingers on the other hand injured by a stun grenade. The internal police watchdog is investigating at least two dozen cases of alleged police violence.

## Who is taking part in the protests?

Students are to be joined by trade unionists and remnants of the Yellow Vests (“Gilets jaunes”) movement, which staged mass weekly protests from November 2018 to

June 2020, initially against rising fuel prices. They later morphed into protests against the high cost of living and economic inequality in general.

The student protests over the past weeks have been backed by Jean-Luc Melanchon, the leader of the hard-left France Unbowed (“La France insoumise”, or LFI), who marched in one demonstration on Tuesday. The government has blamed the LFI for pouring fuel on the fire of widespread public discontent, an allegation the party has denied. — **nw**

## US NEWS OUTLETS



## White House press secretary exiting role

**WASHINGTON DC:** New White House press secretary Katie Zacharia is on the way out from her position. The New York Times and other US news outlets reported on Friday.

Zacharia's departure leaves Trump without a key spokesperson with a little over two weeks before November's midterm elections.

### Zacharia's week on the job

Zacharia started her new role just five days ago, taking over for Karoline Leavitt. She had a nervy first White House briefing with journalists on Tuesday, fielding just three questions and leaving the podium after fewer than 14 minutes.

The White House website said later that day that “Katie Zacharia delivered a commanding inaugural press briefing as the 37th White House Press Secretary.”

Earlier on Friday, President Donald Trump suggested that Zacharia might be leaving. “I told her: ‘I think you're better off being happy, and I'm not sure you can ever be happy in this stuff.’ There's nothing easy about this stuff,” Trump told reporters.

He added: “I said to her honestly, ‘If I were you, I'd reconsider... think about it. But I would reconsider.’”

Last Friday, Trump announced Zacharia's appointment as the

new press secretary. However, she became embroiled in controversy when it was revealed that her earlier claims of being a lawyer were false.

Until last week, Zacharia was a commentator for conservative outlets Fox News and Newsmax. She also advised Trump Media and Technology, the company behind Trump's Truth Social platform.

Zacharia has also long described herself as a lawyer, but her credentials remain unverified. While she graduated from law school, neither she nor the White House has provided evidence that she passed the bar exam in any state or in China, where she worked for a large law firm years ago.

According to her LinkedIn profile, Zacharia was an associate at Zhong Lun Law Firm in Beijing from 2011 to 2013. She was also a general counsel at Fix California, an advocacy group founded by Trump ally Richard Grenell, from 2024 to 2025. Grenell served as acting director of national intelligence in 2020.

Zacharia earned her law degree from Pepperdine University in 2011. While nearly all licensed US lawyers first obtain a law degree, law school graduates cannot legally practice law in the US without first being admitted to a state bar. — **nw**

## DIPLOMATIC MISSION

# All 9 Indian seafarers on board chemical tanker YARA J safe in Romania: Embassy

**BUCHAREST:** All nine Indian seafarers aboard chemical tanker YARA J are safe, and the vessel has reached Romania's Port of Constanta, the Indian Embassy in Bucharest stated on Saturday.

The confirmation came after India's Ambassador to Romania, Manoj Mohapatra, spoke with Romanian authorities and the tanker's Company Security Officer (CSO).

In a statement shared on X, the diplomatic mission noted, “Amb. Manoj Mohapatra spoke with Romanian authorities, including SAR Romania and MRCC Constanta, as well as the CSO of the chemical tanker YARA J (IMO: 9221803). It was confirmed that all nine Indian seafarers on board are safe and the vessel has arrived at the Port of Constanta. The Ambassador assured them of the Government of India's full support and assistance.”

Previously, the Embassy indicated that three Indian citizens who had been rescued from the commercial vessel MV Royad Mammadov following an attack in the Black Sea had left Romania to return home.

According to posts published by the Embassy on X, “Three Indian nationals, Shri Sahil Sandhu, Shri Ashwini Kumar and Shri Harman Singh, departed for India today.



The Embassy provided all necessary support and assistance to facilitate their return.”

The Embassy further conveyed its appreciation, adding, “We express our sincere gratitude to the Romanian authorities, Constanta County Hospital, and the Romanian rescue teams for their invaluable assistance, cooperation and support.”

Those three individuals had been rescued from the vessel on October 6.

On October 7, New Delhi strongly condemned assaults directed at

commercial vessels throughout the Black Sea corridor, renewing appeals for dialogue and diplomatic engagement to reduce regional friction and restore peace.

Addressing a bi-weekly media briefing in New Delhi, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal emphasised that strikes targeting commercial shipping imperil maritime trade and place seafarers in grave danger.

Jaiswal stated, “We have seen a string of attacks targeting commercial vessels in the Black Sea

region in the last one or two days. We condemn such attacks that threaten commercial shipping and endanger the lives of our seafaring community. First, the commercial vessel MV Royad Mammadov came under attack while it was sailing in the Black Sea. There were three Indian nationals on board. All of them are safe, but one of them got injured, and he is receiving treatment. We thank the Romanian authorities, who lent us a helping hand and have been very helpful in this particular incident.” — **ANI**

## BRAZIL

# Amazon deforestation lowest in nearly 40 years

**BRASÍLIA:** Brazil has recorded the lowest level of deforestation in the Amazon rainforest in nearly 40 years. According to data released by the Brazilian space research agency Inpe on Friday, between August 2025 and July 2026, 3,335 square kilometres (1,288 square miles) of forest were cleared, the lowest level witnessed since records began in 1988.

The numbers showed a nearly 42% decrease from last year's figure of 5,731 square kilometres.

The Amazon is the world's largest tropical rainforest and one of its most biodiverse ecosystems, most of which lies in Brazil.

It also extends into parts of Peru, Colombia and other South American countries. Deforestation and the illegal exploitation of resources have been pushing it closer to a climate tipping point.

“It's an absolutely stratospheric drop...it's like a dream,” said Environment Minister Joao Paulo Capobianco at a press conference in

the capital, Brasilia. “Our goal is to achieve zero illegal deforestation by 2030,” said President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva in a post on X.

“The figures released today are a historic achievement,” said Marcio Astrini, executive secretary at climate advocacy group Observatorio do Clima.

“They put Brazil at the forefront of the forest protection agenda and show the world that, with political will, it is possible to stop the chainsaws and curb greenhouse

gas emissions,” Astrini said on his organisation's website.

Observatorio do Clima said the figures were the result of a “sustained commitment” to protecting the environment by the government, which introduced greater monitoring and stiffer penalties for illegal logging. The news comes ahead of the October 25 runoff election between Lula and conservative senator Flavio Bolsonaro with the two running neck and neck according to polls. — **nw**



LIFESTYLE



WHAT 'THE ODYSSEY' CAN TEACH US ABOUT  
CLIMATE CHAOS

The Bronze Age collapse may have started with a water crisis. Today's droughts raise the unsettling question of whether it could happen again

Christopher Nolan's latest blockbuster has drawn tens of millions of viewers into a world of stormy seas and cities on fire.

Minus the monsters, that world is based in reality. "The Odyssey" — a post-Trojan War survival story — is set during the Bronze Age collapse of civilization.

A new study links that collapse to a severe climate shift. And the authors warn of "implications for the future."

Scientists have long known about a mysterious and severe drought that struck more than 3,000 years ago, overlapping with the disintegration of kingdoms and states across the Mediterranean.

Research published last month sheds light on the potential cause of that drought: A slow drying trend and a quicker natural cycle of dry weather stacked on top of each other.

By the late Bronze Age, the West African monsoon system had been shrinking for thousands of years, turning a green Sahara into desert. Less rain over Africa meant less over the Mediterranean. That trend amplified when the region hit a dry spell caused by natural climate cycles from the Atlantic, which saw the region swing between decades-long wet and dry periods.

Katherine Power, the Stockholm University scientist who led the study, said the environment at the time could explain the mass migration and conflicts of the Odyssey's era.

For decades, scholars have speculated on the reason for the large-scale movement during this time — which is also referred to as the period of the so-called Sea Peoples.

Archaeologists argue that climate shifts could help explain the migration and political collapse at the end of the Bronze Age. The new findings add puzzle pieces.

"We don't know necessarily why those people moved," Power said. "But if we can say, 'hey, the climate was getting worse and worse to survive,' that could be a potential reason."

**'A perfect storm of calamities'**

And that, she says, is relevant to today. Europe's major rivers are at record lows, and drought is creating conditions for devastating wildfires as well as fueling historic crop-loss. That includes France's lowest maize harvest in 50 years.



The same cycles of wetting and drying from the Atlantic are still at play, but they're now happening in the context of a world that's heating as a result of humans burning oil, gas and coal.

"I think it is even more alarming and even more of a threat," Power said.

But does what happened then give insights into what might happen now?

Eric H. Cline, archeologist at George Washington University, who wrote a book on the roots of the Bronze Age crisis, said drought and disease were part of the "perfect storm of calamities" that led to societal downfall.

He sees parallels to today. In an email to DW, he said "we should be very concerned" about climate change as a stressor for the collapse of civilization. "That fear is not too dramatic at all."

He added that on his most optimistic days, he believes "we will come to our senses and sidestep that possibility at some point."

**Was there a trigger moment for the collapse?**

Power's research sought to explore what patterns might lie behind isolated Bronze Age drought events.

They started by examining plant spores, ice cores, cave stones, and other natural records that pointed to drought. Then, she and co-author Stockholm paleoclimate scientist Qiong Zhang turned to modeling to get a broader picture.

Their model looked at the whole planet, overlaid with a grid, each cell covering a roughly 125-kilometre (78-mile) area. A supercomputer then calculated the conditions in each of these cells, for every month, across thousands of years. That let the scientists look at the entire Mediterranean.

"We're not now stuck with just one core or one cave," Power said. "We can see farther afield and build a whole picture."

What they found was not a single event that dramatically and suddenly changed the climate. Instead, shorter cycles of wetting and drying lined up with a longer warming trend.

"When we are looking for connections between climate changes and civilization changes, we often are looking for that big, huge, abrupt, catastrophic event," Power said, adding that it is "slow, gradual changes that push a society over a threshold."

She said it could have been a steady fall in water supply that led to a slow decline in crops, which prompted people to migrate, triggering conflict.

"It doesn't take very much to push a society over the threshold that they're comfortable with," Power said. "What if you add something more to the mix? Maybe then that pushes you a bit farther, and you can't quite recover from that." - **DW**

SPORTS

# Younes Ebnoutalib strikes late as Frankfurt end home win drought

Frankfurt coach Adi Hutter made three changes following last week's 6-0 defeat at RB Leipzig, fielding Ebnoutalib, Mario Gotze and Fares Chaibi to the starting lineup

**BERLIN:** Younes Ebnoutalib struck in the 77th minute as Eintracht Frankfurt edged Cologne 1-0 on Friday to claim its first Bundesliga home victory since March. Frankfurt coach Adi Hutter made three changes following last week's 6-0 defeat at RB Leipzig, fielding Ebnoutalib, Mario Gotze and Fares Chaibi to the starting lineup.



Cologne nearly stunned Frankfurt inside the opening minute. Marius Bulter raced onto Borna Sosa's pass and found himself through on goal, only for goalkeeper Noah Atubolu, making his 100th Bundesliga appearance, to pro-

duce a sharp save. Atubolu denied Bulter again following a free kick in the 32nd minute before Sebastian Sebulonsen sent a volley narrowly over. Frankfurt took control after the restart, forcing Cologne deeper

into its own half and creating a succession of chances. The breakthrough came with 13 minutes remaining. After winning possession high up the pitch, Ebnoutalib combined with substitute Noel Aseko, whose pass set up the

striker to finish low into the near corner. The victory lifted Frankfurt to eighth place with eight points from six matches. Cologne dropped to 11th with seven points and remains without an away victory for 16 consecutive league matches. Frankfurt next travels to Borussia Dortmund, while Cologne hosts Schalke.

### Freiburg win Conference League debut

Freiburg opened its UEFA Conference League campaign with a 3-2 home victory over Czech side Jablonec on Thursday. Playing its first match in the competition, the Bundesliga leader made a bright start. Cyriaque Irie and Lukas Kubler both struck the crossbar before Vincenzo Grifo curled an 18-meter free kick into the top-left corner in the 15th minute. Freiburg continued to create chances, but Grifo was denied by goalkeeper Jan Hanus and Kubler headed wide. Jablonec then equalized with its only shot of the first half when Antonin Rusek met Jiri Slama's cross and saw his effort deflect off Matthias Ginter and past Mio Backhaus in the 28th minute.

The hosts resumed their pressure after halftime. Maximilian Eggestein tested Hanus from distance in the 53rd minute, and Freiburg regained the lead from the resulting corner. The ball crossed the line before Slama cleared it, and after a lengthy VAR review, Dusan Pavlovic was credited with an own goal. Eggestein extended the lead nine minutes later, firing from outside the area into the left corner. Hanus denied Jordy Makengo in the 80th minute before substitute Garang Kuol pulled one back for Jablonec three minutes into stoppage time. "We are winning the close games," Ginter said. "Today was about finding our feet a little because we didn't know exactly what to expect." The victory left Freiburg seventh in the league-phase standings with three points after the opening round, while Jablonec sat joint 23rd without a point. Elsewhere, Brighton beat Kauno Zalgiris 4-0, Atalanta defeated Pafos 3-1 and Copenhagen overcame Braga 3-0. Trabzonspor won 4-2 at KuPS Kuopio, Monaco edged CSKA Sofia 2-1 and Hajduk Split beat Ajax by the same score. -xinhua

BCCI

## Gill to lead India in first 3 ODIs against New Zealand, Iyer to captain in final two

**MUMBAI:** The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) on Friday announced India's ODI squad for the upcoming tour of New Zealand, with Shubman Gill set to lead the side in the first three ODIs and Shreyas Iyer taking over the captaincy for the final two matches.

Gill will lead India in the opening three ODIs before leaving to prepare for the subsequent Test series. Iyer, who has been named vice-captain for the first three matches, will captain the side in the fourth and fifth ODIs.

Notably, pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah misses out from the ODI squads but has been named in India's Test squad for the New Zealand tour. Veteran all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja, who was part of India's recent home ODI series against the West Indies, has also been left out of the squad.

The five-match ODI series will begin in Auckland on November 4, with the second and third matches scheduled in Wellington and Hamilton, respectively. The final two ODIs will be played in Mount Maunganui on November 13 and 15. Fast bowler Anshul Kamboj has earned a call-up for the first three matches, while wicketkeeper-batter Kumar Kushagra has been included in the squad for the final two ODIs.

Prasidh Krishna's selection for the first three ODIs is subject to fitness clearance.



India's batting line-up boasts experienced campaigners Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli, alongside Shubman Gill, Shreyas Iyer, KL Rahul, Ishan Kishan and Ruturaj Gaikwad, offering a blend of experience and depth to the squad.

Meanwhile, India's bowling attack will be spearheaded by Mohammed Siraj, with spin options Axar Patel and Kuldeep Yadav providing support. Young pacers Anshul Kamboj and Gurnoor Brar also feature in the squad.

BCCI has also announced the Test squad for the tour, led by Gill, with KL Rahul named vice-captain for the upcoming assignment.

The batting line-up features Yashasvi Jaiswal, Devdutt Padikkal and Sai Sudharsan, while Rishabh Pant and Dhruv Jurel provide wicketkeeping options. Pant's

availability is subject to fitness clearance. In the bowling department, India have included Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed Siraj, Prasidh Krishna, Akash Deep and Anshul Kamboj to strengthen the pace attack.

The squad also features all-rounders Ravindra Jadeja, Nitish Kumar Reddy and Washington Sundar, alongside spinner Kuldeep Yadav, providing a mix of pace, spin and all-round options.

### India's ODI squads for New Zealand tour:

First three ODIs: Shubman Gill (C), Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli, Shreyas Iyer (VC), KL Rahul (WK), Nitish Kumar Reddy, Axar Patel, Naman Dhir, Anshul Kamboj, Gurnoor Brar, Ruturaj Gaikwad, Arshdeep Singh, Ishan Kishan (WK), Mohammed Siraj, Prasidh Krishna\* and Kuldeep Yadav.

Fourth and fifth ODIs: Shreyas Iyer (C), Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli, Tilak Varma, Ishan Kishan (WK, VC), Nitish Kumar Reddy, Axar Patel, Naman Dhir, Auqib Nabi, Gurnoor Brar, Ruturaj Gaikwad, Arshdeep Singh, Kumar Kushagra (WK), Mohammed Siraj, Yash Thakur and Kuldeep Yadav.

India's Test squad: Shubman Gill [C], Yashasvi Jaiswal, KL Rahul [VC], Devdutt Padikkal, Rishabh Pant [WK]\*, Dhruv Jurel [WK], Ravindra Jadeja, Anshul Kamboj, Jasprit Bumrah, Prasidh Krishna, Akash Deep, Sai Sudharsan, Nitish Kumar Reddy, Washington Sundar, Kuldeep Yadav, Mohammed Siraj. -ANI

29-YEAR-OLD

## Didn't really expect it: Mason Crane on England recall for Pakistan tri-series

**LONDON :** England leg-spinner Mason Crane admitted he did not expect an international recall after being named in the squad for the upcoming ODI tri-series in Pakistan, marking his return to the national side after nearly nine years, according to the ICC website.

The 29-year-old, who made three international appearances as a 20-year-old in 2017 and early 2018, admitted he had begun to lose hope of another opportunity before rediscovering his ambition in recent years.

"I didn't really expect it, to be honest. It was a bit out of the blue. But it's really cool and I'm buzzing. I think there was a period a few years ago where I was sort of resigned to the fact it may not come again, where I maybe put a bit too much pressure on myself and wasn't particularly enjoying it," he said while speaking to the Sky Sports Cricket Podcast, according to the ICC website.

"But the last couple of years I feel like I've sort of got that spark back and the ambition that comes with it," he added.

Crane's last international appearance came in the final Test of England's 2017-18 Ashes tour in Sydney, where he dismissed Usman Khawaja, who had scored 171 runs, as Australia went on to win the series 4-0.

Crane also featured in two T20 Internationals against South Africa, where his only wicket was that of former Proteas great AB de Villiers.

Crane has impressed in England's domestic circuit in 2026, taking 34 wickets in 14 County



Championship matches and another 15 in 10 Vitality Blast appearances, strengthening his case for an international recall.

Crane said he has worked on improving his consistency and variations as a leg-spinner, focusing on adapting to match situations and finding ways to dismiss specific batters rather than relying on occasional standout deliveries.

"I don't want to just be a high-lights reel bowler, every now and then bowl a really good ball and just live off that. I pride myself on trying to play to the situations really, trying to work out how I'm going to get the most out of a wicket and get a particular guy out. I've also given myself a bit more freedom, I guess, with the ball now. I try and bowl more variations, but I'm also better at bowling them now. It's about sort of adding as many strings to your bow. It's really important," he said.

England will open their tri-series campaign against Pakistan in

Rawalpindi on October 20, with the tournament serving as part of the teams' preparations for the 2027 ICC Men's Cricket World Cup.

### England's squad for the tri-series:

Harry Brook (c), Gus Atkinson, Sonny Baker, Tom Banton, James Coles, Jordan Cox, Mason Crane, Henry Crocombe, Sam Curran, Liam Dawson, Ben Duckett, Will Jacks, Jamie Overton, Adil Rashid, Joe Root, Josh Tongue.

### Tri-series schedule:

October 18 - Pakistan vs Sri Lanka, Rawalpindi  
October 20 - Pakistan vs England, Rawalpindi  
October 22 - Sri Lanka vs England, Rawalpindi  
October 25 - Pakistan vs England, Lahore  
October 27 - Pakistan vs Sri Lanka, Lahore  
October 29 - Sri Lanka vs England, Lahore  
October 31 - Final, Lahore. -ANI

KRUGER VAN WYK

## South Africa fielding coach backs Rickelton ahead of Gqeberha Test

**DURBAN:** Following a heavy 214-run defeat to Australia in the opening Test of the ICC World Test Championship series in Durban, South Africa are looking to make key adjustments as they prepare for the second match in Gqeberha.

One of the major changes is Ryan Rickelton's return to wicket-keeping duties, a move the team's coaching staff believes could increase his involvement in the game, as per the ICC website.

South Africa fielding coach Kruger van Wyk expressed confidence in Rickelton's transition behind the stumps, stating that the batter has continued to hone his wicket-keeping skills despite not regularly taking on the role.

"When we take the early bus, Ricks always comes along. Even when he doesn't keep in matches, he still comes and does his work," Kruger van Wyk, the former New Zealand wicketkeeper, who is now South Africa's fielding coach, was quoted by Cricinfo in Gqeberha ahead of the second Test against Australia. "He is diligent with his work.

Even when he just plays as a batter, in the white-ball stuff as well, he does his keeping work as well. So it's not like he's had to dust them [his keeping pads and gloves] off and start over again," he said.

Van Wyk expressed complete confidence in Rickelton's technical abilities and readiness for the red-ball international arena, drawing comparisons to his exploits in franchise leagues.

"I think he's a first-choice keeper," van Wyk said. He has kept unbelievably well. And if you follow white-ball cricket, and his performances in IPL, you know it's still a ball coming down at you. It's still cricket. The movements are the same. The way you glove it is exactly the same. Technically, he is very good."

While conditions in South Africa present different challenges compared to turning tracks abroad, van Wyk pointed out that Rickelton's prior experience keeping to elite global talent prepares him well for the assignment.

"He's not going to get tested as much in South Africa with spin,



where the real test will come in the subcontinent - Sri Lanka, going forward," van Wyk said.

"In South African conditions, the ball bounces more than it spins. We saw a bit of spin in Durban, but it's not excessive. So, when we get to the fifth day, we've done a

lot of work with that as well. And Ricks has kept to really good spinners before as well (like to) Rashid Khan. He's kept to everyone. So the bowlers he will keep to are familiar to him. I'm confident he will do a good job," he added.

Van Wyk added that the extra re-

sponsibility of wearing the gloves should prove beneficial for Rickelton's overall focus and leadership on the field. The batter had scored 0 and 2 in South Africa's defeat in Durban.

"With regard to managing energies, resources and concentra-

tion, I think it's going to be really good for Ricks to have the gloves," he said.

"It engages him in the game even more. He's someone who thrives with extra responsibility. Having the gloves is going to be good for his game overall. He's a natural leader as well. So I've got no worries about his tank being too small and him not being able to switch from keeping to batting. He's been doing it for years anyway. He'll be fine," he added.

Addressing the external pressure on the team after the series opener, van Wyk maintained that the players are simply focused on executing their roles under the spotlight. "Everyone wants to do well. It's not a case of when you have to do well, it becomes a problem," van Wyk said.

"It's nothing different from what you normally face in an international sport."

The second Test gets underway in Gqeberha, where South Africa will look to level the series and gain ground in the World Test Championship standings. -ANI

IN PICTURES



**MOROCCAN EQUESTRIAN PERFORMANCE STAGED AT 17TH HORSE SHOW OF EL JADIDA:** This photo shows a scene during Thourida, a Moroccan equestrian performance, at the 17th Horse Show of El Jadida, in El Jadida, Morocco. Thourida is a Moroccan equestrian performance dating back to the 16th century. It was inscribed on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2021. — Xinhua



**HIGHLIGHTS OF 2026 VOLVO FASHION WEEK MEXICO:** Models present creations during the 2026 Volvo Fashion Week Mexico in Mexico City, Mexico. — Xinhua



**FANS PERFORM AARTI IN FRONT OF RAJINIKANTH'S POSTER:** Fans of actor Rajinikanth perform aarti in front of his poster as they gather at the Rohini Theatre to celebrate his new release 'Jailer 2', in Chennai. — ANI News



**VIEW OF MODRA, SLOVAKIA:** This photo shows a vineyard in Modra, Slovakia. Modra is a historic town in western Slovakia, located at the foothills of the Little Carpathians, about 30 kilometres from Bratislava. The town is renowned for its traditional culture and distinctive folk pottery. — Xinhua



**CHINA SECURES TWO FINAL BERTHS AT WORLD JUNIOR BADMINTON CHAMPIONSHIPS:** Feng Yilang (R)/Li Menghan of China react in the mixed doubles semifinal against Raihan Daffa Edsel Pramono/Atresia Naufa Candani of Indonesia at the BWF World Junior Championships 2026 in Cairo, Egypt. — Xinhua



**ANNUAL HALLOWEEN-THEMED EVENT HELD IN VANCOUVER:** A costumed actor (R) interacts with visitors outside a haunted house during the Fright Nights 2026 at the Pacific National Exhibition's Playland in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. — Xinhua



# ROUND-UP

## Omani women contribute across Bank Muscat's operations

Bank Muscat reaffirms its commitment to supporting and empowering Omani women, in the belief that an institution's success is built on the strength of its people and the diversity of their contributions. Women work across the bank's departments, divisions, branches and centres, in roles ranging from retail and corporate banking to technical, administrative and leadership positions



**MUSCAT:** Every year on 17 October, the Sultanate of Oman celebrates Omani Women's Day, a national occasion to take pride in the achievements of Omani women and their active presence across all sectors. Women are key partners in the national development journey under Oman Vision 2040, which places their empowerment at the heart of building a thriving society.

On this occasion, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate, reaffirms its commitment to supporting and empowering Omani women, in the belief that an institution's success is built on the strength of its people and the diversity of their contributions. Women work across the bank's departments, divisions, branches and centres, in roles ranging from retail and corporate

banking to technical, administrative and leadership positions.

**Strong and growing presence**

Omani women have contributed to the bank's progress over more than four decades, driving innovation across its business and playing an active role in its community initiatives. Today, the Bank's female employees number over 2,000, representing more than 46% of its total workforce. Women hold over 20% of senior management positions, reflecting the Bank's confidence in their capabilities and its commitment to equal opportunities for career progression.

This year alone, 80 Omani women have joined the Bank out of more than 200 new hires, strengthening the presence of young national talent in the banking sector. Across

the Bank, women are playing a pivotal role in leading projects, driving digital transformation and enhancing the customer experience.

**Supportive workplace and continuous development**

Bank Muscat is committed to providing a model work environment, with the facilities and services that help employees perform at their best across its head office, branches and centers in all governorates. The Bank continues to upgrade its branches and centers, and it annually recognises outstanding performers across its business.

To support career growth, the Bank offers a wide range of training courses and workshops every year, covering management, professional, soft and technical skills, among others. It also hosts speakers

and subject-matter experts for inspiring sessions that broaden employees' horizons and build confidence.

Each year, the Bank also sponsors selected employees to complete their university or postgraduate studies or obtain professional certifications, in Oman and abroad. This year, 39 female employees benefited from these opportunities.

The Bank's support extends beyond its own workforce to women entrepreneurs and customers across sectors, through tailored banking and financing solutions, workshops, and financial awareness and empowerment programmes that open new opportunities for growth. Initiatives such as al Wathbah Academy, which equips entrepreneurs with

practical business and financial management skills, and the Bank's financial literacy sessions for women and newlywed couples, drew strong participation and reflected the growing appetite for financial knowledge. Bank Muscat sees women as key partners in diversifying the national economy, promoting entrepreneurship and creating new opportunities for society.

**Recognised for excellence**

In recognition of its role in developing and empowering its people, Bank Muscat was recently named "Company of the Year for Excellence in Women Empowerment in the Workplace" at The Origin Awards 2026, organised by Muscat Media Group. The Bank also received the Women Empower-

ment Excellence Award at the 15th Al Maraa's Conference & Awards 2026, in addition to other prestigious awards in inclusion, financial literacy and workplace development. These honours reflect the Bank's leading position in supporting women and encourage it to keep strengthening its initiatives.

**Continued commitment**

Empowering Omani women remains a firm institutional approach at Bank Muscat, one that is renewed every year.

The bank will continue to develop its programmes and initiatives to widen opportunities for growth and leadership for women across all specialisations, and to enhance their contribution to the national economy and to a sustainable future for society.

### SAFETY CHECK-UP



## Mitsubishi launches Back-to-School service campaign

**MUSCAT:** General Automotive Company (GAC), a part of The Zubair Corporation and the authorised distributor of Mitsubishi Motors vehicles in Oman, has announced the launch of its Back-to-School Service Campaign. Running from 10 September to 31 October, the campaign is designed to help Mitsubishi customers prepare their vehicles for the new school year while ensuring safety, reliability, and peace of mind.

As part of the campaign, customers can benefit from a complimentary 24-point safety check-up and tyre inspection, along with a 45% discount on parts and a 20% discount on labour for additional repairs identified during the safety check-up.

Speaking on the campaign, Manoj Ranade, General Manager, General Automotive Company, said: "As families drive into the new school year, vehicle safety and reliability become especially

important. Through this campaign, we want to help Mitsubishi customers ensure their vehicles are ready for the school run with expert inspections, genuine parts and attractive service benefits, while reducing the risk of unexpected downtime."

The campaign reflects Mitsubishi Oman's commitment to supporting customers with trusted aftersales service and preventive maintenance solutions.

### TEMPTING TREATS

## Taste of Britain comes to Oman! Lulu British Food Week serves up feast of flavours

**MUSCAT:** Fancy a taste of Britain without leaving Oman? Lulu Hypermarket is bringing the flavours of Great Britain and Northern Ireland closer to home with Lulu British Food Week 2026, inviting shoppers to discover much-loved British food, tempting treats and exciting culinary experiences.

Officially inaugurated by Thomas Phipps, UK Chargé d'Affaires / Deputy Head of Mission at the British Embassy in Muscat, at Lulu Hypermarket, Bausher, the event runs until 20 October across selected Lulu stores in Oman. The launch featured a special performance by the British School Muscat student band, setting a lively tone for a celebration of food, culture and discovery.

From the distinctive taste of Scottish salmon to classic British biscuits, specialty teas, delicious confectionery and premium cheeses, there's plenty to excite food lovers. Shoppers can explore a wide selection of British products, including breakfast cereals, preserves, baking ingredients, frozen foods and fresh produce, alongside organic, gluten-free and diabetic-friendly options.

And the experience goes beyond the supermarket shelves! Shoppers can savor traditional British-inspired favourites at the hot food counters, with dishes such as roast beef with potatoes, chicken tikka masala, and the much-loved British classic fish and chips. For those with a sweet tooth, the simple pleasure of strawberries and cream adds a delicious finishing touch to this culinary journey. Whether you're planning a family meal, looking



ing for inspiration for your next baking adventure or simply craving a familiar British favourite, British Food Week offers plenty of reasons to try something different.

The products are sourced through Lulu's Sourcing and Logistics Centre in Birmingham, UK, connecting shoppers in Oman with a diverse selection of British food products. Specially themed displays across participating stores add to the experience, inviting customers to explore the tastes and traditions of Britain as they shop.

Speaking at the inauguration, Thomas Phipps, UK Chargé d'Affaires / Deputy Head of Mission

at the British Embassy in Muscat, said: "The UK and Oman share a longstanding relationship that dates back nearly 400 years, built not only through official engagements but also through business, communities and shared experiences. Lulu British Food Week is a wonderful example of how food brings people together, giving customers in Oman the opportunity to discover and enjoy a little taste of Britain. I would like to thank the Lulu team for bringing such a fantastic range of British products to Oman and for helping celebrate the enduring friendship between our two countries."

Shabeer K.A., Director - Oman,

Lulu Hypermarket, said: "At Lulu, we are committed to bringing the best of the world closer to our customers. British Food Week celebrates the rich flavours of the United Kingdom while introducing our shoppers to exciting new products. From special product discoveries to much-loved dishes, we are delighted to offer customers in Oman an opportunity to experience the taste of Britain through a distinctive shopping experience."

With rare finds, familiar favourites and delicious dishes to discover, Lulu British Food Week is an invitation to explore Britain one bite at a time.



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