

Times

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51

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KING CHARLES III BIDS FAREWELL TO HIS MAJESTY AT WINDSOR CASTLE



His Majesty expressed his profound thanks to His Majesty the King for the warmth of the reception and the generosity of his hospitality

WINDSOR: His Majesty King Charles III of the United Kingdom, bade farewell to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik at Windsor Castle on Wednesday at the conclusion of the royal reception ceremony, within the state visit under-

taken by His Majesty the Sultan of the United Kingdom. His Majesty the Sultan expressed his profound thanks to His Majesty the King for the warmth of the reception and the generosity of his hospitality. His

In honour of His Majesty the Sultan, King Charles hosts state banquet at Windsor Castle >A2

Sayyid Shihab meets British Secretary of State for Defence >A8

Majesty the King expressed his thanks and appreciation to His Majesty the Sultan for this gracious visit, wishing that the good relations between the two friendly countries may prosper and flourish across all fields. -ONA



The British Omani Society hosts reception

A4

HM's visit to UK boosts momentum of strategic partnership: Foreign Minister



MUSCAT: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, affirmed that the state visit undertaken by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to the United Kingdom (UK) reflects the specificity of the historical relations and special ties between the two friendly countries. It gives the strategic partnership between them a renewed momentum that responds to the national priorities and the aspirations of future generations in both countries.

Sayyid Badr stated that the strength of Omani-British relations lies in their capacity for renewal, as they are based on a solid friendship spanning over three centuries and derive their vitality from partnerships that respond to the changes of the era. His Majesty's visit comes to affirm the keenness of both countries to make this legacy a foundation for joint action that develops capabilities, expands investment and innovation opportunities, and deepens the ties between the two peoples.

He said that the generous care these relations receive from His Majesty the Sultan and His Majesty King Charles III, consolidates the friendship and mutual respect that unite the two countries.

>A8

Muscat book fair to start from March 24, 2027

MUSCAT: The Main Committee of Muscat International Book Fair held a preparatory meeting to discuss the preparations for the 30th edition of the fair. The meeting was chaired by Dr. Abdullah Nasser Al Harrasi, Minister of Information and Chairman of the Committee. The meeting reviewed the most prominent aspects related to organising the upcoming edition, foremost among them the date of the fair, scheduled to be held from 24 March to 3 April 2027. This was alongside discussing the initial concepts for the programmes associated with the fair, in a manner that aligns with its standing as a cultural and knowledge platform that brings together writers, intel-



lectuals, publishers, and those interested in cultural affairs. The committee also discussed the details of the Al Wusta Governorate's participation as the Guest of Honour for the 30th edition of the fair. It addressed the proposed topics and themes to highlight the

governorate's historical, civilisational, cultural, and economic components, and to introduce its heritage, natural resources, and investment capabilities. The meeting addressed the theme of the upcoming edition, which is "Creative Industries," and

the cultural, knowledge, and economic dimensions it carries. It also discussed its role in shedding light on the fields of creativity and innovation, and enhancing the presence of cultural and creative industries as one of the tributaries of cultural and economic development. Furthermore, the meeting affirmed the importance of continuing the preparatory work and coordination among the relevant authorities. This contributes to the preparation for the upcoming edition and the achievement of its cultural and knowledge objectives, thereby enhancing the position of Muscat International Book Fair as one of the most prominent cultural events. -ONA

OMAN Times of Oman mourns former colleague

1 Times of Oman is mourning the passing of former colleague TK Mohandoss, a respected sports journalist, who played an important role in the newspaper's editorial and digital operations over more than two decades. He died on Tuesday, October 20, 2026, while on a pilgrimage to Sabarimala in Kerala, India. He was 63. >A3

OMAN Media Excellence Competition awards

2 The Ministry of Information will organise on Monday the 2026 Media Excellence Competition awards to honour the winners across the various fields. >A5

WORLD US envoy Witkoff meets Putin

3 United States special envoy Steve Witkoff engaged in high-stakes talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin on Wednesday in St. Petersburg. >B4

In honour of His Majesty the Sultan, King Charles III hosts state banquet



Before the state banquet, His Majesty, His Majesty the King and Her Majesty the Queen shook hands with the guests invited to the dinner

WINDSOR: In honour of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, His Majesty King Charles III of the United Kingdom, hosted a state banquet at Windsor Castle on Tuesday evening, attended by Her Majesty Queen Camilla, on the occasion of His Majesty's state visit to the United Kingdom.

Ahead of the state banquet, His Majesty the Sultan, His Majesty the King and Her Majesty the Queen shook hands with the guests invited to the dinner.

The evening's proceedings opened with an address delivered by His Majesty King Charles III, in which he said:

*"Your Majesty,
Your Highnesses,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

It is always a treasured moment to receive such dear and old friends on a special Visit such as this. And whilst I know just how familiar you are with these shores, Your Majesty, my wife and I take the utmost pleasure in welcoming you back to Windsor Castle this evening. And let me say,

[Welcome to a visitor of whom one never tires.]

Oman is one of Britain's oldest allies and, after all these years, I pray, one of your closest friends. And from this privileged position we recognize that a thousand years before our countrymen first met – a millennium before there was even a United Kingdom – Omani mariners were already trading across the Indian Ocean to extend Oman's great frankincense trails, which had already stretched across Mesopotamia and the Mediterranean for a thousand years before that – and, indeed, a thousand years before that! This does, I must say, put some of our own claims to seafaring prowess into true perspective!

So, from Britain's very first meetings with these renowned Omani merchants, our friendship grew from the sea: as maritime partners in the seventeenth century; treaty partners in the eighteenth; strategic partners in the nineteenth; brothers-in-arms in the twentieth; and today, in the twenty-first century, we are bonded by diplomacy, defence, trade and trust.

For my own part, I have been immensely fortunate – and blessed – to come to know Oman over many years and many visits, including spending precious moments, escorted from time to time by Your Majesty, I seem to remember, trying to paint the breathtaking landscape of Oman; a landscape which was well-described by the great fourteenth Century explorer Ibn Battuta as



being "most striking in beauty". As the great Omani poet Abu Muslim al-Bahlani described so wonderfully,

[May those gardens remain ever green, their breezes fragrant with peace.]

Over these decades, I was privileged to know your distinguished predecessor and my dear friend and brother, His late Majesty Sultan Qaboos, who so successfully transformed Oman whilst preserving your ancient culture, and who pursued, with remarkable wisdom, a foreign policy founded on openness and dialogue. We, in Britain, owe so much to his inspired leadership, and I hold in great affection the memories of the many meetings I had with him ever since my first visit to your country forty-six years ago.

Within Oman, Your Majesty has strengthened the institutions of the State and started the important journey of diversifying and decarbonizing Oman's economy through your Vision 2040. Thanks to your energetic and far-sighted leadership, this national renewal, pursued with quiet determination, has put the importance of skills and education at the very heart of your development. In doing so you have most thoughtfully placed Oman's young people as the central driving force of your nation's future innovation, growth and progress.

If I may, Your Majesty, I would especially like to recognize, at a time when conflict has returned so painfully to the region, Oman's enduring commitment as a trusted interlocutor to all parties. Oman's noble efforts in trying to keep open one of the world's most

important shipping routes have been of great service to the whole international community, and particularly to the most vulnerable of those affected.

Alongside others from the region, we stood with you in conflict over fifty years ago. This experience, and the years since, have helped us understand the depth of relationships in the region and the complexity of issues, and, through your eyes, an insight into where common ground might be found. Oman's role across the Gulf and her "constructive neutrality", as you put it, matters far beyond Hormuz, and is worthy of our utmost respect.

As the Prophet Muhammad said of the character of the people of Oman:

[Had you gone to the people of Oman, they would neither have insulted nor struck you.]

The unique and special relations we share helps to make the world and our peoples safe. We are all exceptionally proud of the Loan Service Officers who serve in both our Nations, and we are deeply grateful for the hospitality offered by Oman to our Armed Forces, including that which Your Majesty's Armed Forces Association extends to British veterans whose own contribution to Oman is so important to us all.

In your future, too, Britain is deeply invested – as you are so actively in ours.

Our connections matter deeply and, in this regard, I have been especially delighted to see our sons, The Prince of Wales and His Highness Sayyid Theyazin, become joint patrons of the Jewel of Arabia expedition. Your Majesty, there can be few happier symbols

of success than a living relationship being passed from one generation to the next.

Ladies and gentlemen, the rich variety of the cultural organizations which connect our countries, are evidence that our students and sons, scientists and soldiers, investors and sailors, merchants and authors, walk in the footsteps of Bertram Thomas and Salim bin Kalut in binding together Britain and Oman as we continue to explore together the vast Empty Quarters of our modern world.

Your Majesty, neither of us can know precisely what challenges our successors will face. Despite our constant efforts, climate change will regrettably alter the lands and seas they inherit. Artificial Intelligence holds both promise and peril – unless managed with great wisdom and foresight. Competition for resources will test the international order in ways we cannot yet foresee.

But this much we do know: our successors will rely on trusted friends. They will need allies prepared to work together across difference; to defend peace and international law; to marry innovation with stewardship; and to think not merely about the next year, but about generations to come.

For centuries, Oman and Britain have done precisely that. In the Treaty we signed in 1800, our predecessors hoped that the friendship between our two states would remain "unshook till the end of time".

It was an ambitious promise but, more than two hundred years later, it has proved to be a promise fulfilled by the living connections between Britain and Oman, embodied in the generations of rela-



tionships that have forged an unshakable friendship between us.

Your Majesty, I hope this State Visit shows the importance the United Kingdom attaches to Oman, to its Monarchy and institutions, and to our friendship with you personally.

May I convey upon you the blessing written by the great Omani poet Shaykh al-Baiyaan,

[May you live in fulfilment, sustained by blessings without end from your Lord, the Giver.]

His Majesty the Sultan then delivered an address on this occasion, in which he said:

*"Your Majesty King Charles,
Your Majesty the Queen,
Your Royal Highnesses,*

Excellencies, distinguished guests,

Allow me, first of all, to express my sincere appreciation for your gracious words and for the exceptionally warm welcome and generous hospitality extended to me and my delegation. Such gestures reflect not only your personal kindness but also the genuine spirit of friendship and generosity that we value so deeply. It is a great pleasure to be here at Windsor Castle, a place that reflects the rich history and enduring traditions of the United Kingdom.

Though separated by a great distance, Oman and Britain were brought closer centuries ago by the voyages of Omani seafarers and British ships, whose encounters across the seas helped weave the enduring bond of friendship between our two nations. Today, the ship of our friendship continues to sail on, whatever storms may come.

This longstanding relationship found formal expression in 1800, when Oman and Great Britain signed a treaty declaring that "the friendship of the two states may remain unshook till the end of time, and till the sun and the moon have finished their revolving career." More than two hundred and twenty years have passed. The sun and the moon still revolve. And that friendship still stands, unshaken.

Although our circumstances and responsibilities may sometimes differ, mutual respect has remained the defining feature of our relationship. This distinguished feature is reflected in the joint work being carried out by both countries.

Nowhere is this partnership stronger than in the military sphere. Omani and British forces have served side by side for generations: training together, standing guard together, and learning from one another. Our officers have studied in Britain's finest military academies, and British

officers have served in Oman. This exchange of knowledge and experience has built a bond of readiness and trust that no treaty alone could create. It is a living relationship, tested, proven, and enduring.

The same spirit lives in the classrooms and campuses. Every year, young Omanis join Britain's finest educational institutions to pursue studies across a wide range of disciplines. They learn from your scholars, they walk your historic streets, and they come to know the British people, not as a distant ally, but as a friend. They are building our nation, and they are building a bridge between the people of both countries that grows stronger with every generation.

I have personally had the benefit of this, and I remain grateful. As a young man, I became familiar with that punctual national habit well known as English time.

At the same time, The British Council, the growing number of English-language schools, and the prospect of establishing more British educational institutions in Oman will further strengthen these ties. Such cultural exchange is enriched also by British tourists who come to discover Oman's charm, its rich history and its vibrant culture. I am confident that future generations can experience this relationship as a living connection between our peoples.

That brings me to the welcome news that His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales has graciously agreed to join His Highness Sayyid Theyazin to serve as Patrons of the British Omani Society.

Beyond military and education cooperation, trade remains an important bridge between our two nations. Britain has long been among Oman's largest trading partners and indeed the single largest contributor to foreign direct investment.

Your Majesty, in a region that has known too much conflict, Oman has chosen a different path, an independent path; we take positions for dialogue, for understanding and for peace. A wise nation chooses to listen. Oman has chosen to listen. And in that listening, we have found a strength that armies cannot provide. We seek solutions. We believe in diplomacy, in dialogue, and in the patient work of bringing nations together. This is our heritage. Britain has been a friend on this path, and has stood beside us in this duty, not with armies, but with wisdom.

Your Majesty, Your commitment to young people, environmental protection, and interfaith dialogue reflects a profound sense of responsibility towards society and future generations. These are the values we in Oman have long held dear, and principles that continue to guide our approach to leadership and our engagement with the world.

Let me conclude with a prayer: may God bless Your Majesty with health and long life, and preserve the friendship between our two nations, a friendship that, like the shining sun and glowing moon, shall never finish its revolving career.

To the health and long life of His Majesty the King."

The dinner was attended by the official delegation accompanying His Majesty the Sultan, members of the British Royal Family and senior officials. -OMA

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HM the Sultan and UK Prime Minister hold bilateral meeting, expanded talks

During the meeting, the two sides reviewed the course of bilateral relations between Oman and the UK and the means of enhancing them in service of mutual interests



LONDON: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and Andy Burnham, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom (UK), held a bilateral meeting at 10 Downing Street in London.

During the meeting, the two sides reviewed the course of bilateral relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the United Kingdom and the means of enhancing them in service of mutual interests.

UK Prime Minister delivered

a speech of which text reads as follows: “Your Majesty, you are very welcome indeed to Downing Street for our first face-to-face meeting. I am extremely pleased to be with you on this historic occasion of the state visit of Oman.

I so much enjoyed your speech and His Majesty the King’s speech at Windsor Castle last night at the state banquet. What comes over is the extent of the historic ties between us. We are two of the oldest friends collaborating for centuries, and that is such a deep tradition for us to draw on.

In the modern world as we look forward, we’re cooperating on technology, on defense and security, but also on cultural collaboration. There are so many ties on so many levels. On trade, I think we are looking at a 1.7 billion pound trade relationship. I’m sure we would both think that we can build that out.

Hopefully, that will be one of the outcomes of this state visit of yours to the United Kingdom. Before handing over to you, I just wanted to say one further thing. Obviously, everyone can see how



difficult the situation has been and is in the Middle East. And everyone can see the extent to which you, Your Majesty, your government, and the people of Oman are working to find solutions, build partnerships, and work to ensure the Strait of Hormuz is reopened to trade.

On this occasion of the state visit, I wanted to reiterate the UK’s appreciation of this country to all of the efforts that you’ve done in what has been a really difficult situation. I want you to know that you can rely on our continued support and collaboration.”

His Majesty the Sultan delivered a speech, expressing his utmost thanks to the UK Prime Minister. The text of the speech reads as follows: “Thank you very much Prime Minister. I’m really delighted to be with you again in Downing Street. And I’m really very happy also to be on this beau-

tiful state visit.

This visit we are undertaking in the context of relations with Britain. Our relations go back very deep. We have so many things that work perfectly between Oman and Britain. Today, my presence here is to continue that relation. We have so many things that we started from a long time back. Together, we will have great success in the coming years.

As you have mentioned, the situation unfortunately right now is a bit rough, as it has been in the past probably two years. Oman has played a great role in whatever we have been able to attain and whatever we can have. I think we always hope that the situation will go back to normal, and we are working on it.

We have great relations with Britain; we interact all the time coordinating our moves and also help each other out. So I am very thankful again to be in this

historical gathering.”

His Majesty the Sultan and the British Prime Minister then chaired an expanded session of talks. The two sides reviewed the fields of cooperation and the existing partnership between the two countries and the pathways for advancing and developing them across all sectors, in fulfilment of the two countries’ aspirations for greater progress and prosperity.

The two sides also addressed developments in the regional and international arenas in light of current events and their repercussions for the security of the region, affirming the importance of intensifying coordination and uniting international efforts to contain crises and support endeavours aimed at establishing peace and reinforcing security and stability.

The session of talks was attended on the Omani side by the official delegation accompanying His Majesty the Sultan, while senior officials attended on the British side.

Following the conclusion of the session, His Majesty the Sultan inscribed a message in the visitors’ book, in which he expressed his delight at this visit, wishing the relations between the two countries continued progress and growth in fulfilment of shared objectives. -OANA

SINCERE CONDOLENCES

Times of Oman mourns death of former colleague TK Mohandoss

He died on Tuesday, October 20, 2026, while on a pilgrimage to Sabarimala in Kerala, India



Times News Service

MUSCAT: Times of Oman is mourning the passing of former colleague TK Mohandoss, a respected sports journalist who played an important role in the newspaper’s editorial and digital operations over more than two decades.

He died on Tuesday, October 20, 2026, while on a pilgrimage to Sabarimala in Kerala, India. He was 63. Mohandoss is survived by his wife, Bindu, and daughter, Sanjana.

He joined Times of Oman in March 1997 as a member of the sports department and went on to build a career spanning more than 20 years with the newspaper. He later served as Sports Editor, contributing to the newsroom’s transition from print to digital and supporting the development of its editorial and technical operations.

Throughout his career, Mohandoss earned the admiration of colleagues for his technical expertise, quiet professionalism and unwavering commitment to excellence.

Mohamed Issa Al Zadjali, Chairman of Muscat Media Group, paid tribute to the former colleague, saying: “The management and staff at Muscat Media Group express our deepest condolences on the passing of our esteemed former colleague, Mohandoss. We honour his years of dedicated service and loyalty to Times of Oman.”

“The management and staff at Muscat Media Group express our deepest condolences on the passing of our esteemed former colleague, Mohandoss. We honour his years of dedicated service and loyalty to Times of Oman

Mohamed Issa Al Zadjali
Chairman, Muscat Media Group

“Our thoughts and prayers are with his family and friends during this difficult time. May his soul rest in peace.”

Colleagues remembered Mohandoss not only for his professional expertise but also for his humility, generosity and willingness to help others.

“Beyond his technical excellence in the newsroom, Mohandoss will be remembered for his humility, generosity, and unwavering willingness to help others. He earned the respect and affection of colleagues across generations, not only for his work but for the warmth and integrity he brought to the workplace every day,” a colleague said.

After leaving Times of Oman, Mohandoss returned to India, where he continued his career in journalism, writing for several publications.

At the time of his death, he was working with DT NEXT, published by Daily Thanthi, in Chennai, according to his cousin, Jayan Mohandoss. Speaking to Times of Oman, Jayan said Mohandoss suddenly collapsed as the group began its ascent from Pamba towards the Sabarimala Temple along the Neelimala route, a trek of approximately 5km.

“He suddenly collapsed and we couldn’t save him despite performing cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR),” Jayan said.

In a social media post, Mohandoss’s daughter, Sanjana, said his funeral was held on Wednesday at the Kottappadi public funeral ground in Guruvayur, Kerala.

Mohandoss will be remembered for his decades of service to Times of Oman, his contribution to sports journalism in the Sultanate and the lasting respect he earned among colleagues who worked alongside him.

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OMAN

FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Sayyid Theyazin lauds British Omani Society for its efforts to support the bilateral relations between two countries

LONDON: The British Omani Society hosted a reception on Wednesday to mark the fiftieth anniversary of its founding—its Golden Jubilee—at Lancaster House in London, in the presence of HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham Al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs and members of the official delegation accompanying His Majesty the Sultan.

The event held within the framework of the state visit undertaken by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to the friendly United Kingdom.

Upon his arrival at Lancaster House, HH Sayyid Theyazin was received by Stephen Doughty, Minister of State for the Middle East and North Africa; Major General (Retd) Richard Stanford, Chairman of the Society's Board of Directors and British officials.

A commemorative photograph was taken of the friends of the British Omani Society, after which HH Sayyid Theyazin shook hands with the members of the Society's Board of Directors.

HH Sayyid the Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs delivered an address during the ceremony, in which he expressed his delight at being present to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Society's founding, lauding the considerable efforts it undertakes in support of bilateral relations between the two friendly countries.

HH Sayyid Theyazin added that the British Omani Society supported last year the launch of the Smart Industries Initiative, a platform for the two-way transfer of technology founded on the venerable British-Omani partnership, which helps Omani industry benefit from British research-driven technologies.

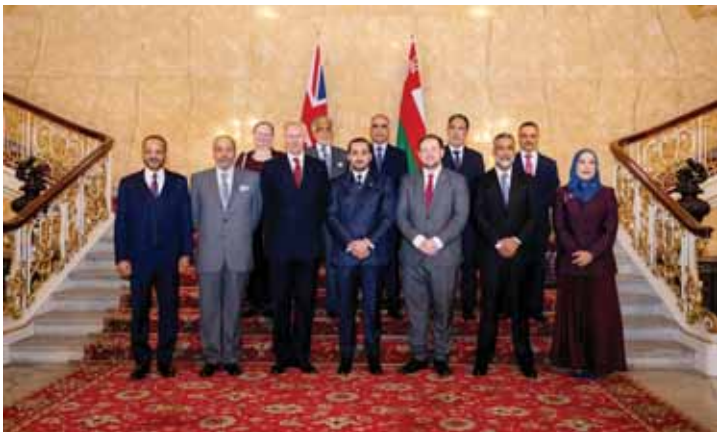
HH Sayyid Theyazin affirmed that youth great support from the New Generation Group and Outward Bound Oman, noting that the Society implements numerous programmes, among them the teaching of Arabic at the Sultan Qaboos Institute for Teaching Arabic to Non-Native Speakers in the Wilayat of Manah and the Student Volunteers



Oman Scheme. He added that support has been extended to Omani students in the United Kingdom, giving rise to initiatives and opportunities for practical training, all of which encourage coming generations to nurture the close bonds

between the two countries. On the sidelines of the reception, bilateral meetings were held between officials from the Omani and British sides. Present during the ceremony alongside HH Sayyid Theyazin were HH Sayyid Lu'ai bin

Ghalib Al Said, Secretary-General of the Diwan of the Royal Court; Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal Al Busaidi, Minister of Interior; Sayyid Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister; Dr. Madiha Ahmed Al Shaibani, Minister of Educa-



tion; Nasser bin Khamis Al Jashmi, Chairman of the Tax Authority; Hussain bin Ali bin Abdul Latif, Adviser at the Private Office; Anwar bin Hilal Al Jabri, Minister of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion; Badr bin Moham-

med Al Manthari, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the United Kingdom; Dr. Liane Saunders, Ambassador of the United Kingdom to the Sultanate of Oman and members of the Omani Embassy in London. -OMA

CONDOLENCES

The Board of Directors and the staff of **Muscat Media Group** offer their condolences on the sad demise of our former Sports Editor



Mohandoss T K

We pray to the God Almighty to have mercy and give strength to his family and loved ones with patience and solace



الشرقية

CONSOLIDATE COOPERATION

OHRC, General Federation of Oman Workers sign MoC

MUSCAT: Oman Human Rights Commission (OHRC) and the General Federation of Oman Workers signed a joint memorandum of co-operation (MoC) yesterday at the Commission's headquarters.

The MoC aims to establish an institutional framework for co-ordination and integration between the two sides, and to consolidate the bonds of cooperation in areas of mutual interest. This contributes to protecting and enhancing human rights, upgrading the work environment, and safeguarding workers' rights in the Sultanate of Oman.

The memorandum was signed on behalf of Oman Human Rights Commission by Dr. Rashid Hamad Al Balushi, Chairman of the Commission, and on behalf of the General Federation of Oman Workers by Nabhan Ahmed Al Battashi, Chairman of the Federation's Board of Directors.

This memorandum stems from



the national role undertaken by Oman Human Rights Commission in protecting the rights and freedoms guaranteed by the Basic Statute of the State and the international charters and conventions to which the Sultanate of

Oman has acceded, based on its system issued by Royal Decree No. (47/2026).

It also integrates with the goals and objectives of the General Federation of Oman Workers aimed at looking after workers' inter-

ests, improving working conditions and circumstances, defending their rights, and representing them in local, regional, and international forums.

The memorandum stipulated broad areas for bilateral coopera-

tion, including joint coordination in human rights awareness and education, and proposing plans, programs, and mechanisms capable of disseminating a culture of human rights in general and workers' rights in particular.

It also covers the exchange of publications, literature, studies, research, information, data, and statistics, as well as exchanging visits, holding dialogue sessions and meetings, providing advice, and organising and holding conferences, symposia, workshops, and joint training programs aimed at building capacities and developing competencies in areas of mutual interest.

The MoC also included cooperation in preparing specialized reports and studies, studying national legislation related to the labor sector, and providing proposals and recommendations to develop them in a manner that aligns with the Basic Statute of the State, in-

ternational human rights standards, and international labour standards.

This is in addition to enhancing field coordination and information exchange regarding the monitoring of observations and complaints related to workers' rights in the private sector work environment, and taking the necessary actions regarding them in accordance with the prescribed legal tasks and jurisdictions of each party.

The memorandum defined communication and implementation mechanisms to follow up on the activation of the cooperation clauses, and the scheduling of joint meetings to discuss areas of joint action.

This ensures the sustainability of institutional cooperation and the provision of a fair and motivating work environment that serves comprehensive development in the Sultanate of Oman. -OMA

MINISTRY OF INFORMATION

Media Excellence Competition awards to be held on Monday

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Information will organise next Monday the 2026 Media Excellence Competition awards ceremony at the Ministry's theatre to honour the winners across the various fields of the competition.

The competition aims to motivate national media cadres toward creativity and innovation, highlight their achievements, and consolidate positive competition among media institutions and individuals. This is alongside supporting digital media and electronic content creation, and documenting the winning works.

The competition is divided into four main fields: press, radio, television, and electronic media. It targets media institutions, individual practitioners and those interested in the media, as well as media students in academic institutions.

The press categories include the press article, press interview, investigative journalism, and photojournalism. The radio categories include talk shows, family programs, radio dramas, and cultural programs.

Meanwhile, the television cate-



gories encompass talk and sports shows, variety programmes, documentary programmes and films, children's programmes, and governorate reports.

As for the electronic media field, it comprises electronic broadcasting channel programs, podcasts, digital media campaigns, institutional electronic newspapers, news accounts and social media content creation for individuals, in addition to electronic content for media students in higher education institutions.

The prize is awarded to the

first-place winner in each category of the competition, with a value of OMR1,500.

The competition is held biennially to provide the opportunity to present distinguished works and expand the competitive options for participation, alongside providing the necessary time for preparation and readiness.

The awards ceremony will be preceded by a number of accompanying events. These include a lecture titled "Future Media: Creativity and Innovation in the Era of Artificial Intelligence," presented by Abdulwahed Al Qahtani from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on 25 October.

Additionally, a workshop on "Writing Television Drama Scripts" will be presented by writer and trainer Hassan Dahshan from the Arab Republic of Egypt on 25 and 26 October.

The Media Excellence Competition, which launched its first edition in 2004, is a national initiative aimed at supporting media creativity and consolidating the role of the media as an active partner in achieving the objectives of Oman Vision 2040. -OMA

MID-TERM MEETING

Research authority participates in Beijing Science Dialogue

BEIJING: The Research and Innovation Authority is participating in the mid-term meeting of International Science Council members and the "Beijing Science Dialogue 2026," held in the Chinese capital, Beijing, under the theme "Science in a Complex World - Science for a Better Future."

The Science Dialogue featured several workshops and panel sessions focusing on three main axes: science as a global public good, responsible artificial intelligence to address global challenges, and science, society, and trust.

The Authority contributed an intervention regarding building national capacities in the field of science diplomacy, highlighting the Sultanate of Oman's role in enhancing scientific and research relations to consolidate interna-



tional partnerships. The Dialogue concluded its proceedings with the issuance of the "Beijing Statement on Science."

On the other hand, the mid-term meeting of International Science Council members discusses the new Council President's vision for the next four years, as well as reviewing various

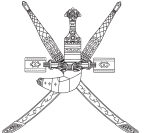
challenges facing Council members and ways to enhance joint cooperation to address them.

The Authority's participation in this international forum comes to enhance science diplomacy, build international partnerships, and expand research and scientific cooperation networks globally.

-OMA



وزارة التنمية الاجتماعية
Ministry of Social Development



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Tender No.	Tender Subject	Grade	Last date for obtainment of tender document	Last date for tender submission	Tender Document Price (non-retundable)	
					Small and Medium companies	Local companies
544/2026	Equipping the sensory rooms at the early intervention center at Al-Khoud	Companies specialized in the field of supplying office and educational tools, materials and supplies, registered with the Projects, Tenders and Local Content Authority, with the excellent, first, second, third or fourth degree	Tuesday 10-11-2026 02:00 PM	Monday 30-11-2026 10:00 AM	10 R.O	-
546/2026	Implementing the Denver Model Program for Early Intervention for Autism Spectrum Workers	Companies specialized in the field of Human resources training and development registered with the Projects, Tenders and Local Content Authority, with the excellent, first, second, third or fourth degree	Tuesday 10-11-2026 02:00 PM	Monday 30-11-2026 10:00 AM	10 R.O	-
547/2026	Supply of tools for leather crafts workshops to the Vocational Rehabilitation Center at Al-Khoud	Companies specialized in the field of supplying office and educational tools, materials and supplies, registered with the Projects, Tenders and Local Content Authority, with the excellent, first, second, third or fourth degree	Tuesday 10-11-2026 02:00 PM	Monday 30-11-2026 10:00 AM	10 R.O	-

❖ Specialized Companies, registered with the Tender Board may obtain the Tender documents at the Tender Board e-tendering digital portal link (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>), On Thursday 22 /10/2026

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

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Citizen referred to Public Prosecution

MUSCAT: The North Al Batinah Governorate Police Command has apprehended a citizen after he appeared in a video circulated on social media promoting marriage to an Arab national without obtaining the required permission.

The individual has been referred to the Public Prosecution to complete the legal procedures, the Royal Oman Police said.



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IN LONDON

Oman, UK sign two letters of intent in space, AI in education

LONDON: Oman and the United Kingdom (UK) signed two letters of intent yesterday in London, in the fields of space and artificial intelligence in education.

The signing of the two letters of intent took place within the framework of the state visit paid by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to the United Kingdom.

The two letters of intent were signed on the Omani side by Sayyid Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, and Dr. Madiha bint Ahmed Al Shaibani, Minister of Education. On the British side, they were signed by Dr. Alice Bunn, Co-Director of the UK Space Agency, and Scott McDonald, Chief Executive of the British Council.

The first letter of intent pertains to enhancing cooperation in the space sector and exchanging expertise in space policies, scientific research, and innovation between the UK Space Agency and the Government of the Sultanate of Oman. Meanwhile, the second letter relates to the responsible utilization of artificial intelligence in education, supporting English language learning, and assisting teachers in using artificial intelligence safely and effectively in classrooms.

Dr. Madiha bint Ahmed Al Shaibani, Minister of Education, affirmed that the signing of the



letter of intent between the Ministry of Education and the British Council marks an important step toward strengthening educational cooperation and exploring the opportunities offered by artificial intelligence technologies to develop teaching and learning methods and build students' skills, in line with technological transformation and future requirements, and consistent with the targets of Oman Vision 2040.

She explained that this cooperation focuses on the joint design and implementation of a pilot project in a selected group of secondary schools in the Sultanate of Oman to develop students' English communication skills, particularly speaking and writing skills, enhance their labor market readiness skills, and raise their level of preparedness to enroll in higher

education institutions whose programs are taught in English.

The Minister pointed out that the project includes building teachers' capacities to use learning tools supported by artificial intelligence and aligning educational activities with Omani curricula and the needs of participating schools, while adhering to the principles of safe and responsible use of modern technologies and the protection of students and data.

Dr. Madiha bint Ahmed Al Shaibani said that the pilot project will be evaluated according to indicators agreed upon by both parties, so that its results contribute to developing educational practices and identifying opportunities for potential future expansion, thereby supporting evidence-based decision-making. -ONA



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COMMENTARY

A Cat, a Novel and Several Cups of Tea

It began, as many memorable evenings do, without any intention of becoming memorable. I had settled into a small coffee shop near my house, with a cup of Karak tea in my right hand and Ravi Subramanian's novel Bankrupt resting in my left. The tea was hot, the pages inviting, and the world around me seemed determined to interrupt my reading. Perhaps that is why I remember the evening so clearly.

I looked to my left and noticed a beautiful white cat sitting beside a parked car. She appeared remarkably composed, almost philosophical, watching the street with an expression I could neither interpret nor ignore.

I was thinking about the characters in my novel, their ambitions and uncertainties. But what was she thinking? Did she wonder where her next meal would come from, or was she simply enjoying the evening without the burden of tomorrow? I envied her apparent freedom from appointments, obligations and unfinished plans.

The car beside her suddenly moved forward, slowly at first, before joining the passing traffic. The cat stepped aside, untroubled, and settled again. I watched the vehicle disappear and wondered how much of human life resembles that movement. We start, hesitate, accelerate and disappear around corners, rarely knowing what awaits us. Yet we behave as though every destination is certain. The cat, meanwhile, had mastered something we often forget: the art of remaining still.

Across the street, two men were cleaning a car. One sprayed water while the other rubbed the windows with patient, circular movements. Their attention to every mark fascinated me. Here were men removing yesterday's dust from a machine that would collect



tomorrow's dust. Was this not a small portrait of life itself? We spend our days polishing what time will inevitably cover again. Nevertheless, there is dignity in the effort, and perhaps happiness lies not in keeping everything spotless but in caring enough to try.

A young boy passed by carrying a notebook against his chest. He walked quickly, as though late for something important. I imagined the notebook filled with mathematics, spelling exercises and perhaps a few secret drawings. He might have been returning from school or heading towards a lesson. Whatever his destination, he carried more than paper. He carried possibilities. The men were cleaning the present; the boy, without knowing it, was carrying a piece of the future.

"Baba! You are reading," the waiter remarked, arriving with my second cup of tea. He sounded surprised, as though a book had become an unusual visitor to a coffee shop.

"Don't you read?" I asked. "No," he replied. "When there are no customers, I keep myself busy with my phone."

"Try reading sometimes," I suggested. "A book can take you somewhere your phone may never take you." Then I caught myself delivering a lecture when he had merely come to serve tea. He smiled politely, and I wondered whether I had

offered wisdom or simply interrupted his working day. After all, reading should teach us humility before it teaches us to advise others.

By the third cup, the novel had become only one of several stories before me. There was the cat, the moving car, the cleaners, the boy and the waiter. None knew they had entered my evening reflections. None had asked to become a character in my imagination. Yet together they had offered something no carefully arranged lecture could provide: a reminder that ordinary life is never entirely ordinary.

I now spend two or three hours at this little coffee shop whenever time permits, reading novels and drinking more Karak tea than I initially intend. Sometimes I turn many pages; sometimes I barely finish a chapter. But I have learned that reading is not always confined to printed words. Streets have paragraphs, strangers have untold chapters, and even a silent cat can raise questions worthy of a philosopher.

That evening, I closed my novel, finished the last sip and looked once more towards the street. Everything continued moving. Only my thoughts lingered, grateful for the privilege of watching life unfold without having to hurry after it. Perhaps the finest stories are those we encounter without searching for them.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE



Roles and responsibilities of relief and shelter sector in Bausher, Muscat discussed

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Social Development Committee in Baushar held its fourth meeting, chaired by Sheikh Ahmed bin Ali bin Saud Al Habsi, Wali of Bausher, to discuss several issues related to strengthening social work, supporting community initiatives, and ways to support the Omani Women's Association. The meeting also reviewed the roles and responsibilities of the Relief and Shelter Sector through a visual presentation delivered by Dr Faisal bin Ali Al Amri.

In the same context, Ali bin Said Al Saeedi, Wali of Muscat, met with the sheikhs, dignitaries and community leaders. During this meeting, Dr Faisal bin Ali Al Amri delivered a visual presentation on the Relief and Shelter Sector, outlining the decision to establish the sector's working team in Muscat Governorate in cooperation with the Walis, Social Development Committees and charitable teams. The presentation also addressed the tasks assigned to the team and mechanisms for coordination and integration among the relevant entities. Furthermore the challenges associated with the sector's national plan and matters related to shelter.



This presentation highlighted the responsibilities of the Relief and Shelter Sector in providing safe centres for people affected, or expected to be affected, by emergencies, and equipping them with the necessary relief supplies until conditions return to normal. It covered offering relief assistance to affected homes.

In addition, the sector is responsible for preparing, implementing and monitoring response plans at governorate level; identifying and managing shelter centres; establishing and updating databases; organising volunteer and community teams; receiving reports and registering requests for relief and shelter; providing and distributing relief supplies; training field teams, evaluating their performance and submitting periodic reports.

The presentation addressed the roles of Social Development

Committees in supporting the sector's efforts by raising awareness among local communities of mechanisms for dealing with emergencies and reducing associated risks, assisting in responding to the affected people's needs, identifying the relief supplies available in the wilayats, and coordinating with civil society organisations to provide and deliver them to those in need.

These roles involve organising the efforts of volunteers, associations and volunteer teams, coordinating their participation in awareness-raising activities and events, documenting their efforts, and submitting periodic reports to the Relief and Shelter Sector and the Office of the Governor of Muscat. This reinforces coordination and integration among the relevant entities and strengthening preparedness and response to emergencies.



Shabiba Jawa'iz Basma



Social Impact Awards 2026



جوائز بسمه Jaw'iz Basma

Jusoor Foundation Wins Youth Engagement Initiative in Talent Development Award at Shabiba Jawa'iz Basma 2026



Jusoor Foundation was felicitated with the 'Youth Engagement Initiative in Talent Development 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 TEvents, 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.

Jusoor Foundation was recognised for its commitment to youth empowerment, skills development and enhancing employment opportunities for Omani job seekers through

its innovative San'ah training programme. The initiative focuses on equipping young Omanis with future-ready digital capabilities, enabling them to explore new career pathways in emerging technology-driven industries.

Through the San'ah programme, 30 job seekers from North Al Batinah Governorate received intensive practical training in 3D design and animation using Blender, a widely used digital creation software. Participants also benefited from specialised workshops, access to software and laptops, providing them with the essential tools and knowledge to develop their technical skills and apply them in real-world projects.

The programme was

designed to bridge the gap between education and employment by preparing participants for opportunities in digital design, freelancing, entrepreneurship and creative industries. By introducing young people to practical applications of emerging technologies, the initiative encourages innovation, independent learning and greater participation in the evolving digital economy.

Shabiba Jawa'iz Basma 2026, organised by Muscat Media Group and managed by TEvents, celebrates organisations and individuals whose initiatives contribute to community development, healthcare, education, youth empowerment, sustainability, inclusion and social progress across the Sultanate.

Al Azher Supplies Wins Skill Development Initiative Award at Shabiba Jawa'iz Basma 2026



Al Azher Supplies was felicitated with the 'Skill Development Initiative 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 TEvents, 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.

Al Azher Supplies was recognised for its commitment to enhancing practical education, promoting innovation and developing future-ready skills among students across Oman. Through its interactive educa-

tional initiatives, the organisation is helping make hands-on learning more accessible to students, including those attending schools in areas farther from major educational centres.

The initiative introduces students to a wide range of subjects through engaging workshops, practical demonstrations and experiential learning activities. Covering fields such as technology, engineering, science, entrepreneurship, agriculture, astronomy and environmental sustainability, these programmes encourage students to explore new interests, develop their creativity and gain a deeper understanding of how academic concepts can be applied in real-world situations.

Through its focus on skill development, educational

accessibility and experiential learning, Al Azher Supplies demonstrates how innovative educational initiatives can contribute to nurturing young talent and preparing students for the opportunities and challenges of a rapidly evolving world. Its efforts support the development of a knowledgeable, creative and future-ready generation in line with the broader objectives of Oman Vision 2040.

Shabiba Jawa'iz Basma 2026, organised by Muscat Media Group and managed by TEvents, celebrates organisations and individuals whose initiatives contribute to community development, healthcare, education, youth empowerment, sustainability, inclusion and social progress across the Sultanate.

REVIEWED RELATIONS

Sayyid Shihab meets British Secretary of State for Defence



LONDON: His Highness Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik Al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, met on Wednesday in the British capital, London, with Wes Streeting, Secretary of State for Defence of the United Kingdom. This meeting took place within

the framework of the state visit undertaken by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to the United Kingdom.

During the meeting, the two sides reviewed bilateral relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the friendly United

Kingdom, as well as ways to enhance and develop them across various fields, particularly the existing military cooperation between the two countries' defence ministries. They also discussed a number of topics of mutual interest. -ONA

STATE VISIT

Sayyid Badr meets Ed Miliband, reviews ties

LONDON: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, met in the British capital, London, with Ed Miliband, Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs of the United Kingdom, within the framework of the state visit undertaken by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to the United Kingdom.

The two ministers reviewed the strategic dimension of Omani-British relations and the historical legacy and mutual interests on which they rest. They discussed ways to elevate the existing partnership and broaden its pathways in keeping with the aspirations of the two friendly countries.

The meeting also addressed the changes unfolding in the region, and the two sides affirmed the importance of continuing con-



structive dialogue and intensifying diplomatic endeavours in support of understanding, in creating the

conditions to address challenges, and in reinforcing the foundations of security and stability. -ONA

OMAN VISION 2040

FROM A1 Mutual trust allows for frank and constructive dialogue: Sayyid Badr

The Foreign Minister pointed out that the visit carries within it, alongside its historical significance, strategic importance for the future and toward enhancing long-term cooperation between various institutions in the public and private sectors.

It aims to develop mutual interests and benefits, and to continue consultation and the exchange of viewpoints regarding regional and international issues and global concerns, which helps in dealing effectively with all challenges.

Sayyid Badr added, "We view the strategic dimension of this relationship as a joint ability to connect expertise with opportunity, and knowledge with application, and to employ the capabilities possessed by both countries in building sustainable partnerships. What we look forward to is

that the development of our relations reflects in tangible opportunities for education, employment, and investment, and that the new generation finds within them a space to contribute, innovate, and shape the future."

On the economic front, he pointed to the importance of developing mutual investments and enhancing cooperation in the fields of clean energy, advanced technologies, research, and innovation. This includes encouraging partnerships between business institutions and academic and research entities, thereby supporting the exchange and development of knowledge, and the development of future skills, industries, and their applications. This aligns with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040 and the growth priorities in both countries.

The Foreign Minister affirmed

that educational, cultural, and human ties constitute one of the most important components of the sustainability of this relationship, given the mutual understanding and communication between generations they facilitate. He clarified that expanding cooperation between universities and cultural institutions, and developing opportunities for research, training, and knowledge exchange, grants youth, researchers, and innovators an increasing role in shaping the upcoming phase of the Omani-British partnership.

On the political front, Sayyid Badr clarified that mutual trust allows for a frank and constructive dialogue with the United Kingdom, and an exchange of visions regarding regional and international challenges.

He affirmed the Sultanate of

Oman's keenness to continue consultation and diplomatic action aimed at containing crises and tensions, and seeking the settlement of issues and disputes through constructive dialogue and the use of peaceful means, while respecting international law and the sovereignty of states, in order to consolidate and enhance security, stability, and peace.

The Foreign Minister concluded his statement by saying: "What gives our friendship its value is not merely its historical reach, but what we provide through it for the future. We look forward to the new generation being a partner in renewing this relationship and creating its opportunities, and for the cooperation between the Sultanate of Oman and the United Kingdom to remain a tributary for shared prosperity." -ONA

GERMAN BUNDESTAG

Shura Council receives German parliamentary group

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Shura Council received on Wednesday the Deputy Chairman of the parliamentary group of the Democratic Union in the German Bundestag, along with a number of members of the group, as part of efforts to strengthen legislative relations and exchange expertise between Oman and Germany.

During the meeting, the two sides discussed a number of issues of mutual interest, particularly the legislative role of the Shura Council and its mandate in reviewing draft laws and developing the legislative framework.

They also explored opportunities to enhance economic cooper-

ation between the two countries, including collaboration in the clean energy sector, particularly green hydrogen, which supports the transition towards a low-carbon economy.

Both sides emphasised the importance of maintaining communication and coordination between the two legislative institutions and strengthening the exchange of parliamentary visits and expertise, in a manner that serves mutual interests and opens up broader prospects for cooperation in legislative, economic and investment fields.

The meeting was attended by Abdullah Al Waleed Al Hinai, Nasser Sultan Al Habsi, and Nasser Abdullah Al Sunidi.



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OMAN OIL PRICE RISES

The price of Oman crude oil has increased, with prices for delivery by November 2026 reaching \$110.60. The price of Oman crude oil rose by \$0.42 from the price of Tuesday, which was \$110.18.

MARKET
BUSINESS & FINANCE



MSX INDEX ENDS LOWER

The MSX index closed at 7439.92 points, down by -1.51% from previous close. The Sharia Index ended down by -1.70% at 614.78 points. National Gas, up 9.35%, was the top gainer while, Aman REIT, down 7.35%, was the top loser.

Cybersecurity exhibition opens new markets for Omani startups

The Hadatha Cybersecurity Industry Exhibition hosts 6 national startups and 4 prototypes resulting from Hadatha centres, developed by Omani talents seeking to turn their innovative ideas into promising cyber solutions

MUSCAT: The Hadatha Cybersecurity Industry Exhibition, held as part of the activities of the 7th Cybersecurity Forum, showcased innovative products, services, and solutions from national startups, enhancing their competitive capabilities and enabling them to access local, regional, and international markets.

The opening of the exhibition was held under the auspices of Eng. Said Hamoud Al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology.

The exhibition hosts 6 national startups and 4 prototypes resulting from Hadatha centres, developed by Omani talents seeking to turn their innovative ideas into promising cyber solutions. This embodies the efforts of Omani youth in developing specialised national cybersecurity products and solutions, as well as leveraging the innovation and support environment provided by the program, thereby contributing to the development of national projects, elevating them to ad-



as a driver for economic growth, an engine for innovation, and a source for creating job opportunities and attracting investments.

He pointed out that cybersecurity is no longer confined to protecting systems, data, and digital infrastructure, but has become an integrated industry based on knowledge and innovation. It includes specialised companies, national products, technical services, and qualified competencies, opening wider horizons for investment and export, and boosting the sector's contribution to the national economy.

He added that the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology adopted the Hadatha Cybersecurity Industry Programme as one of the executive programmes of the National Digital Economy Programme, in line with the targets of Oman Vision 2040. He explained that the programme seeks to establish a new phase in the sector's trajectory, transforming the view of cybersecurity from being a necessity for protecting digital assets into a specialised national industry based on human capital, innovation, creativity, and excellence, offering broader opportunities for Omani companies, entrepreneurs, and investors.

The Director General of the National Computer Emergency Readiness Team at the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology stated that the programme is based on 6 integrated strategic pillars, including developing national skills and competencies, promoting innovation, empowering startups and small and medium enterprises, stimulating the market and attracting investments, and enhancing the export of Omani services and expertise, alongside awareness, marketing, and partnership building, supporting the growth of the cybersecurity industry in the Sultanate of Oman and consolidating its position as a promising national sector contributing to building a secure and sustainable digital economy. -ONA

vanced stages of development and maturity, and enhancing their presence in the cybersecurity market.

Eng. Badr Ali Al Salhi, Director General of the National Computer Emergency Readiness Team (OCERT), explained that the launch of the Hadatha Exhibition comes as an embodiment of the importance of partnership between the public and private sectors, integrating efforts to develop the cybersecurity sector, promote innovation, empower national companies, and open new horizons for cooperation and investment in this promising industry.

He explained that the exhibition represents an important milestone in the journey of developing the cybersecurity industry in the Sultanate of Oman, reflecting the orientation toward building a promising national sector whose role is not limited to protecting the digital space, but extends to serve

HOUSING AND CONSTRUCTION EXPO

BankDhofar signs strategic deals to boost residential property investment



MUSCAT: BankDhofar has signed three strategic agreements with prominent real estate developers during the Urban Development, Home and Construction Exhibition and Conference 2026, reaffirming its commitment to supporting residential development, facilitating investment and advancing sustainable urban growth across the Sultanate of Oman.

BankDhofar has signed 3 agreements which enable their retail customers to avail housing loans to purchase under development properties in these projects. The agreements underscore the Bank's growing role as a trusted financial partner to the real estate sector, supporting the development of modern residential communities while helping expand access to housing and property investment opportunities.

The first agreement, valued at OMR 10 million, was signed with Al Ahly Sabbour Developments, a prominent real estate developer, to provide financing for its property development activities and financing for retail customers on housing loans. The arrangement is expected to support the company's investment plans, facilitate project implementation and create new



opportunities for growth in Oman's expanding real estate market.

BankDhofar also signed an agreement with Adanté Realty, the specialised real estate development arm of Al Adrak Group. The partnership is linked to the developer's Yenaier Residences project in Sultan Haitham City, one of Oman's flagship urban developments. The project forms part of the wider vision to create integrated residential neighbourhoods that combine contemporary housing, community amenities and sustainable infrastructure.

The third agreement was concluded with Sarooj Development

Company to support Sarooj Oasis, an integrated residential development within Sultan Haitham City. Envisioned as a distinctive destination for modern urban living, the project aims to create an attractive residential environment that combines contemporary design, sustainability and quality of life, contributing to the emergence of Sultan Haitham City as a vibrant and inclusive urban community.

Representing BankDhofar at the signing ceremonies was Ahmed bin Said Al Ibrahim, Chief Retail Banking & Government Business Officer, who highlighted the importance of strategic partnerships in advancing

the Bank's commitment to supporting high-quality real estate developments and contributing to Oman's broader economic and urban development objectives.

He emphasised that collaboration with established property developers enables BankDhofar to play a meaningful role in bringing promising residential projects to fruition, while strengthening the financing ecosystem underpinning the sector's long-term growth.

Ahmed Al Ibrahim further reaffirmed the Bank's commitment to delivering innovative, flexible and competitive banking and financing solutions tailored to the evolving requirements of developers, investors and homebuyers. Such solutions, he noted, are instrumental in accelerating project development, expanding housing choices and reinforcing Oman's attractiveness as a destination for real estate investment.

The three agreements also reflect BankDhofar's wider commitment to supporting the objectives of Oman Vision 2040 through strategic partnerships that stimulate private-sector investment, encourage sustainable urban development and enhance the availability of quality housing for citizens and residents alike.

DATA

India's core sector growth accelerates to 7.9% in September from 5.9% in August



NEW DELHI: India's core sector growth accelerated to 7.9 per cent in September, compared with 5.9 per cent in August, according to data released by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry on Wednesday.

The data also highlighted that the growth in the Index of Eight Core Industries (ICI) was driven by strong performance in iron ore, electricity, coal, refinery products, cement and steel, while fertilisers, natural gas and crude oil recorded negative growth during the month.

Iron ore production recorded the highest growth at 18.4 per cent year-on-year in September, followed by electricity at 11.4 per cent and coal at 10.7 per cent. Refinery products grew 10.3 per cent, cement output increased 9.8 per cent, and steel production rose 4.9 per cent during the month.

In contrast, fertiliser production declined 11.7 per cent in September, while natural gas output contracted 4.6 per cent and crude oil production fell 1.4 per cent year-on-year.

The eight core industries comprise coal, crude oil, natural gas, refinery products, fertilisers, steel, cement and electricity. These industries are key components of the country's industrial production index.

The ministry said coal, refinery products, steel and iron ore have been the major drivers of overall core sector growth in recent months.

The cumulative growth rate of the core industries index stood at 5.1 per cent during April-September 2026, compared with 2.5 per cent in the corresponding period of the previous year, according to provisional data.

The ministry also shared that the final index for August 2026 was revised upwards to 120.4 from the provisional level of 119.2. Consequently, the year-on-year growth rate for August was revised to 5.9 per cent from the earlier estimate of 4.8 per cent.

The September 2026 figures are provisional. The Ministry of Commerce and Industry said the index for October 2026 is scheduled to be released on November 20. -ANI

MARKET

MSX index ends lower

National Gas, up 9.35%, was the top gainer while, Aman REIT, down 7.35%, was the top loser

MUSCAT: The MSX index closed at 7,439.92 points, down by -1.51% from previous close. The Sharia Index ended down by -1.70% at 614.78 points. National Gas, up 9.35%, was the top gainer while, Aman REIT, down 7.35%, was the top loser. Shares of OQBI were the most active in terms of number of shares traded as well as in terms of turnover.

A total number of 14736 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating turnover of RO 29.93 million, with more than 108.4 million shares changing hands. Out of 67 traded securities, 8 advanced, 37 declined, and 22 remained unchanged. At the session close, foreign investors were net sellers for RO 641K while domestic investors were net buyers for RO 573K, followed by GCC & Arab investors for RO 68K worth of shares.

Financial Index closed at 13,535.25 points, down -0.55%. Prices of Oman United Insurance, Ahli Bank were up by 1.91%, 0.50% respectively. Prices of DIDIC, Al Madina Takaful, United Finance, Sohar International Bank, Global Financial Investments were down by 3.11%, 2.75%, 2.30%, 2.19%, 1.83% respectively.



Industrial Index closed at 9,867.23 points, down -1.25%. Prices of Gulf Mushroom Products were up by 1.77% respectively. Prices of Al Anwar Ceramics, Galfar Engineering, Gulf International Chemicals, Voltamp Energy, A'Saffa Foods were down by 3.43%, 3.19%, 2.86%, 2.14%, 1.43% respectively.

Services Index was down by -1.80% before closing at 2,965.87 points. Prices of National Gas, Oman Oil Marketing, SMN Power Holding, SMN Power Holding were up by 9.35%, 1.70%, 1.11%, 1.11% respectively.

Prices of Phoenix Power, Abraj Energy, Muscat Desalination, Sembcorp Salalah, OQ Gas Networks were down by 2.39%, 2.28%, 2.15%, 2.12%, 1.80% respectively.

OMAN STOCKS

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE

INDICES

Index	High	Low	Value	Prev. Value	Diff	Diff%
MSX 30 INDEX	7,561.90	7,428.36	7,439.92	7,554.29	-114.37	-1.51%
FINANCIAL INDEX	13,651.11	13,504.73	13,535.25	13,609.58	-74.33	-0.55%
Industry Index	9,998.30	9,836.29	9,867.23	9,991.80	-124.57	-1.25%
Services Index	3,020.10	2,954.94	2,965.87	3,020.10	-54.23	-1.80%
MSX Shariah Index	625.70	613.62	614.78	625.41	-10.63	-1.70%
MSX TR INDEX	11,818.87	11,610.15	11,628.23	11,806.99	-178.76	-1.51%
FINANCIAL TR IDX	16,783.33	16,603.36	16,640.88	16,732.26	-91.38	-0.55%
INDUSTRIAL TR IDX	12,843.78	12,635.67	12,675.41	12,835.44	-160.03	-1.25%
SERVICES TR IDX	4,169.60	4,079.63	4,094.73	4,169.60	-74.87	-1.80%
FIXED INCOME INDEX	1,291.54	1,291.54	1,291.54	1,291.54	0.00	0.00%

Trading Summary

Volume	Turnover	Trades	Market Cap	Up	Down	Equal	Sec. Traded
108,402,829	29,928,046	14,736	38,647,269,968	8	37	22	67

MSX DAILY BULLETIN AS ON 21/10/2026

SN	SECURITY NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF (RD)	DIFF %	LAST PR	LAST RD	LAST OFFER	PUR VALUE	MARKET CAP
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REGULAR MARKET

OM0000001087	OMAN UNITED INSURANCE	13,100	4,077	3	0.315	0.321	0.310	0.321	0.315	0.006	1.905	0.321	0.305	0.321	0.100	33,705,000
OM0000002287	GULF MUSHROOM PRODUCTS	64,641	35,970	26	0.551	0.575	0.550	0.575	0.565	0.010	1.770	0.575	0.575	0.575	0.100	28,946,867
OM0000002672	OMAN OIL MARKETING	200	300	1	1.500	1.500	1.500	1.500	1.475	0.025	1.865	1.500	0.000	1.500	0.100	91,912,500
OM0000004248	SMN POWER HOLDING	1,000	183	1	0.183	0.183	0.183	0.183	0.181	0.002	1.105	0.183	0.180	0.195	0.100	36,533,315
OM0000001483	NATIONAL BANK OMAN	75,040	37,520	8	0.500	0.500	0.500	0.500	0.500	0.000	0.000	0.500	0.488	0.502	0.100	812,973,178
OM0000001533	OMINVEST	3,001	1,231	2	0.411	0.411	0.410	0.410	0.410	0.000	0.000	0.410	0.410	0.413	0.100	460,370,105
OM0000001749	OMAN CEMENT	150	97	1	0.645	0.645	0.645	0.645	0.645	0.000	0.000	0.645	0.645	0.645	0.100	213,412,898
OM0000001772	ALANWAR INVESTMENT	150,000	31,200	22	0.208	0.208	0.208	0.208	0.208	0.000	0.000	0.208	0.206	0.208	0.100	63,961,980
OM0000002226	ALJAZEERA SERVICES	7,779	1,945	4	0.250	0.250	0.250	0.250	0.250	0.000	0.000	0.250	0.248	0.250	0.100	10,170,748
OM0000002549	BANK DHOFAR	171,000	38,334	884	0.225	0.225	0.222	0.224	0.224	0.000	0.000	0.224	0.218	0.224	0.100	680,914,871
OM0000003000	AI MAHA PETROLEUM PRODT'S MKRTNG	1,804	2,471	4	1.370	1.370	1.370	1.370	1.370	0.000	0.000	1.370	1.370	1.380	0.100	94,530,000
OM0000002176	JAZEERA STEEL PRODUCTS	2,000	1,846	1	0.923	0.923	0.923	0.923	0.925	-0.002	-0.216	0.923	0.913	0.931	0.100	115,280,817
OM0000002026	OMAN TELECOM	3,088,739	4,191,248	59	1.357	1.358	1.354	1.355	1.358	-0.003	-0.221	1.355	1.483	1.355	0.100	1,016,250,000
OM0000002796	BANK MUSCAT	2,747,901	1,110,884	1,140	0.403	0.408	0.401	0.403	0.404	-0.001	-0.248	0.403	0.403	0.403	0.100	3,025,078,016
OM0000002224	RENAISSANCE SERVICES	33,805	8,196	9	0.273	0.273	0.272	0.272	0.272	-0.001	-0.366	0.272	0.272	0.273	0.100	64,303,530
OM0000008710	BARKA DESALINATION	5,440	888	2	0.167	0.167	0.162	0.162	0.163	-0.001	-0.613	0.162	0.148	0.165	0.100	12,234,564
OM0000004420	BANK NIZWA	379,498	55,893	20	0.149	0.149	0.147	0.148	0.149	-0.001	-0.871	0.148	0.147	0.148	0.100	331,069,049
OM0000002440	AL SHARQIYA INVESTMENT HO.	242,900	25,356	20	0.105	0.105	0.102	0.104	0.105	-0.001	-0.952	0.104	0.103	0.105	0.100	9,360,000
OM0000003968	COREDOO	332,445	109,104	54	0.311	0.311	0.308	0.310	0.313	-0.003	-0.958	0.311	0.308	0.311	0.100	201,792,711
OM0000001152	OMAN NATIONAL ENGG & INVESTMENT	29,048	4,286	7	0.148	0.148	0.146	0.146	0.148	-0.002	-1.351	0.146	0.146	0.146	0.100	21,900,000
OM0000000434	ASAFFA FOODS	740	511	2	0.690	0.690	0.690	0.700	-0.010	-1.429	0.690	0.681	0.695	0.695	0.100	82,800,000
OM0000004933	AL SUWADI POWER	165,920	32,428	21	0.197	0.197	0.194	0.195	0.198	-0.003	-1.515	0.195	0.195	0.196	0.100	139,309,236
OM0000004925	ALBATAHA POWER	108,160	21,282	25	0.197	0.197	0.194	0.194	0.197	-0.003	-1.523	0.194	0.194	0.195	0.100	130,026,161
OM0000001681	OMAN EMIRATES HO.	150	18	1	0.117	0.117	0.117	0.117	0.119	-0.002	-1.681	0.117	0.109	0.116	0.100	14,972,344
OM0000000872	OQ GAS NETWORKS	14,684,896	3,195,815	2,476	0.223	0.223	0.216	0.218	0.222	-0.004	-1.802	0.217	0.217	0.218	0.100	944,076,015
OM00000003125	GLOBAL FINANCIAL INVESTMENT HO.	123,815	46,445	25	0.382	0.388	0.370	0.375	0.382	-0.007	-1.832	0.375	0.375	0.375	0.100	75,000,000
OM0000004735	SEMBCORP SALALAH	613,543	171,636	64	0.283	0.283	0.277	0.277	0.283	-0.006	-2.130	0.277	0.277	0.277	0.100	264,416,430
OM0000000367	VOLTAMP ENERGY	207,457	38,319	89	0.187	0.187	0.187	0.187	0.187	-0.004	-2.139	0.183	0.183	0.185	0.100	183,000,000
OM0000000398	SOHAR INTERNATIONAL BANK	23,418,361	4,191,448	2,516	0.183	0.183	0.177	0.179	0.183	-0.004	-2.186	0.179	0.180	0.179	0.100	1,374,005,015
OM0000008934	ABRAJ ENERGY SERVICES	5,693,330	2,444,703	962	0.438	0.438	0.428	0.428	0.438	-0.010	-2.283	0.428	0.425	0.428	0.100	329,645,600
OM0000002374	UNITED FINANCE	6,000	810	1	0.085	0.085	0.085	0.085	0.087	-0.002	-2.289	0.085	0.085	0.085	0.100	30,270,850
OM0000001560	PHOENIX POWER	1748,571	345,685	194	0.207	0.207	0.195	0.204	0.209	-0.005	-2.382	0.204	0.204	0.204	0.100	298,370,898
OM0000004768	MADINA TAKAFUL	234,396	24,960	35	0.109	0.109	0.106	0.106	0.109	-0.003	-2.752	0.106	0.106	0.108	0.100	18,550,000
OM0000001509	DHOFAR INT'L DEVELOPMENT & INVEST	33,493	9,428	5	0.285	0.285	0.280	0.280	0.289	-0.009	-3.114	0.280	0.279	0.280	0.100	138,885,719
OM0000000758	OQ EXPLORATION AND PRODUCTION	5,489,078	2,656,466	291	0.481	0.481	0.474	0.474	0.481	-0.017	-3.482	0.474	0.463	0.474	0.010	3,792,000,000
OM0000000906	QIBASE INDUSTRIES (SFC)	35,583,407	8,631,585	3,071	0.248	0.248	0.238	0.239	0.248	-0.009	-3.629	0.239	0.238	0.239	0.000	826,816,313
OM00000010120	ASYAD SHIPPING	1,164,638	253,711	1,797	0.224	0.224	0.213	0.216	0.225	-0.009	-4.000	0.216	0.213	0.216	0.000	1,125,088,764
Total		37	96,656,446	27,729,959	13,793											

Parallel Market

OM0000001160	NATIONAL GAS	1,218,187	177,885	137	0.142	0.152	0.138	0.152	0.139	0.013	0.353	0.152	0.142	0.152	0.100	12,620,000
OM0000000740	DHOFAR GENERATING	49,949	3,912	11	0.076	0.077	0.073	0.077	0.076	0.001	1.316	0.077	0.075	0.079	0.100	77,192,480
OM0000002200	AHLI BANK	36,000	7,180	3	0.199	0.200	0.199	0.200	0.199	0.001	0.503	0.200	0.180	0.204	0.100	555,658,183
OM0000001178	MUSCAT GASES	830	109	1	0.131	0.131	0.131	0.130	0.130	0.000	0.000	0.131	0.131	0.131	0.100	3,900,000
OM0000001400	OMAN FLOUR MILLS	1,000	590	1	0.590	0.590	0.590	0.590	0.590	0.000	0.000	0.590	0.000	0.585	0.100	102,448,813
OM0000002036	MUSCAT THREAD MILLS	1,000	245	1	0.245	0.245	0.245	0.245	0.245	0.000	0.000	0.245	0.245	0.000	0.100	4,533,687
OM0000003711	SOHAR POWER	842	206	2	0.245	0.245	0.245	0.245	0.245	0.000	0.000	0.245	0.242	0.263	0.100	4,900,000
OM0000005260	OMAN ARAB BANK	421,805	119,356	17	0.282	0.283	0.281	0.283	0.284	-0.001	-0.352	0.283	0.263	0.283	0.100	589,453,629
OM0000002275	SHELL OMAN MARKETING	2,704	2,114	6	0.783	0.783	0.780	0.780	0.790	-0.010	-1.266	0.780	0.771	0.782	0.100	74,100,000
OM0000002648	NATIONAL FINANCE	17,380	3,685	2	0.212	0.212	0.212	0.212	0.215	-0.003	-1.395	0.212	0.212	0.000	0.100	137,947,424
OM0000001151	OMIFCO	7,249,046	1,507,666	503	0.209	0.210	0.205	0.206	0.209	-0.003	-1.435	0.206	0.206	0.215	0.000	1,378,011,290
OM0000001596	MUSCAT FINANCE	84,109	5,467	5	0.065	0.065	0.065	0.065	0.066	-0.001	-1.515	0.065	0.065	0.065	0.100	19,964,511
OM0000007084	MUSCAT CITY DESALINATION	50,000	4,550	3	0.091	0.091	0.091	0.091	0.093	-0.002	-2.151	0.091	0.089	0.091	0.100	14,155,086
OM0000002028	GULF INTERNATIONAL CHEMICALS	50,900	3,516	11	0.070	0.070	0.068	0.068	0.070	-0.002	-2.857	0.068	0.067	0.069	0.100	14,121,000
OM0000003521	VALPARA ENGINEERING & CONTRACTING	59,997	43,415	26	0.156	0.156	0.152	0.152	0.157	-0.005	-3.185	0.152	0.151	0.152	0.100	30,865,000
OM0000002168	AL ANWAR CERAMIC	1,811,872	233,619	167	0.147	0.147	0.138	0.141	0.146	-0.005	-3.425	0.141	0.141	0.141	0.100	31,026,000
Total	16	11,279,712	2,133,423	896												



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Indian male, account executive, B.Com with 5 yrs experience, ready to join immediately. Contact: 96267090

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Finance professional, Chartered accountant (finalist/MBA), with 15 yrs of experience in accounts, audit, tax and VAT compliance, risk management and financial reporting, seeking a suitable opportunity in Oman. Available for immediate joining. Contact: 77179238, chanthusureshbabu92@gmail.com

Senior Accountant (MBA- Finance), an experienced finance professional with over 10 yrs of experience in accounting, financial reporting and management, seeking a suitable Senior Accountant position in Oman. Available for immediate joining. Contact: 79643031, Email: acc.anwar.om@gmail.com

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Indian female accountant with 3yrs of experience seeks suitable position. Available in Oman. Contact: +968-76430270

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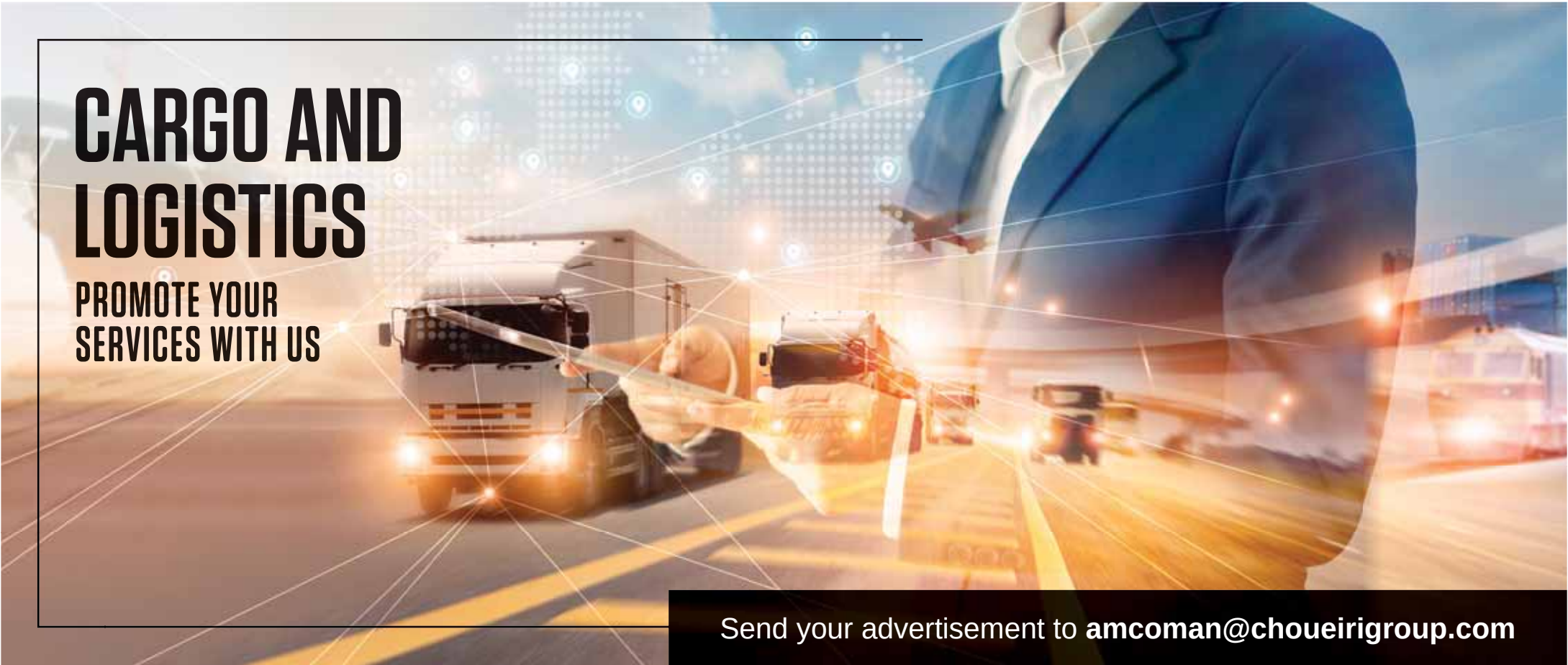
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US envoy Witkoff meets Putin, discusses end of Ukraine war

During the gathering, Witkoff further urged Putin to consider resuming trilateral Russia-US-Ukraine talks to address outstanding technical issues

ST PETERSBURG: United States special envoy Steve Witkoff engaged in high-stakes talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin on Wednesday in St. Petersburg. The aim of the meeting was to advance proposals to end the war in Ukraine and establish a pathway towards broader negotiations.

As reported by CNN, the diplomatic outreach came on the heels of Witkoff's Tuesday summit with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky in Norway, following which video footage captured the US envoy confirming that reviewing the outcomes of that "productive" Oslo summit remained central to the agenda.

"I think there's some degree of momentum, and I hope that this today can be another step forward in the peace process and discussing how we resolve the Ukrainian conflict," the Trump administration envoy stated.

During the gathering, Witkoff



further urged Putin to consider resuming trilateral Russia-US-Ukraine talks to address outstanding technical issues. In response, Putin conveyed enthusiasm regarding restoring economic cooperation with the United States alongside the prospect of engaging China in discussions concerning Ukraine. A breakthrough emerging from the diplomatic engagement involved Witkoff announcing that Moscow had agreed to release 74-year-old American prisoner Stephen Hubbard, who had endured over four years of detention in the country.

Seated around a large round table alongside translators, Pu-

tin and Witkoff addressed an expansive agenda encompassing Russia's potential assistance in resolving the war in Iran, prospective Russian fertiliser exports to the United States, and the release of Hubbard. Proceedings subsequently transitioned behind closed doors, with Jared Kushner, President Donald Trump's son-in-law involved in peace mediation, participating remotely due to suffering from the flu.

According to a US official cited by CNN, Washington and Kyiv achieved "meaningful progress" during the Norway talks on Tuesday. Ukrainian delegations reportedly introduced fresh proposals

that underwent rigorous evaluation, leaving both administrations in "strong alignment" regarding subsequent operational phases.

"Discussions covered key elements of a comprehensive peace framework, including long-term security guarantees for Ukraine, a post-war economic and prosperity plan, and a broader European security architecture designed to create lasting stability," the US official detailed.

Kyiv and its Western allies reaffirmed non-negotiable red lines governing any future peace negotiations, emphasising mandatory security safeguards to deter renewed Russian incursions



alongside a total refusal to cede sovereign territory.

Conversely, Moscow has persisted in demanding that Ukraine surrender the entirety of the eastern Ukrainian Donbas region, currently under predominant Russian occupation, drastically downsize its armed forces, and formally renounce future NATO membership.

"We have some clear ideas on how to get to peace, and we are united with our European partners in this effort. And we want the Americans to take these ideas to the Russians," Zelensky remarked on Tuesday. "Let's see what Putin has to say."

"Much depends on whether the American side will hear something new from Russia today, about peace, rather than the continuation of the war," Zelensky reiterated on Wednesday following consultations with Norwegian Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Store.

Reflecting on the preceding

dialogue with Ukrainian counterparts, the US official emphasised a shared dedication among negotiating teams to securing pragmatic solutions to end the war, despite documented friction between Zelensky and US President Donald Trump.

"The goal is to build on the progress made with Ukraine and Europe, discuss the proposals with Russia, and create a pathway towards direct trilateral and broader multilateral negotiations," the official added.

Meanwhile, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov adopted a cautious posture on Tuesday, cautioning that Moscow would evaluate Witkoff's proposals while explicitly refusing to offer "political concessions". According to Russian state media TASS, Lavrov noted that Moscow did "not expect a miracle" and anticipated that Washington would remain a rival to Russia "at best". — Agencies

HEALTH FACILITY IN ABUJA



Nigeria records first Ebola case

ABUJA: Nigeria has confirmed an imported case of Ebola Bundibugyo virus disease in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), with 44 contacts identified and being monitored.

The case makes Nigeria the fifth country to detect the virus since an outbreak of the disease was declared in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) on May 15, 2026, the World Health Organization (WHO) said in a press release.

According to Nigeria's Federal Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, the patient is a woman who recently travelled to Nigeria from Uganda. Her symptoms began on October 7, four days after her arrival in the country, and she sought medical care at a private health facility in Abuja on October 11.

Laboratory testing confirmed the Bundibugyo virus infection on October 20. The patient is currently in isolation and receiving medical care, while investigations are underway to determine the likely source of infection and establish her complete travel and exposure history.

The ministry has identified 44 contacts who are being monitored as health authorities intensify efforts to trace other people who may have been exposed to the virus. Infection prevention and control measures are also being strengthened at the private health facility where the patient sought treatment.

The Nigeria Centre for Disease Control and Prevention has activated its incident management system to coordinate the response, according to the press release.

The WHO and its partners are working with Nigerian health



authorities to strengthen case investigations, contact tracing and infection prevention measures. Support also includes providing essential supplies, including personal protective equipment for healthcare workers.

The WHO has urged countries across the region to maintain a high level of preparedness as the outbreak in the DRC continues to evolve.

The press release noted that Kenya had reported nine cases linked to an imported case in recent weeks.

Countries have been advised to strengthen disease surveillance, ensure laboratories can safely test suspected cases, maintain rapid response and clinical teams, reinforce infection prevention measures in public and private healthcare facilities, and stock essential supplies.

The WHO also called for heightened monitoring at points of entry and continued engagement with communities to facilitate early detection and prevent further transmission.

The organisation advised against imposing travel or trade restrictions on affected countries and said it was continuing to monitor and verify such measures where necessary. — ANI

FOUR-DAY MEETING

Representatives from Southern African countries step up El Nino preparedness

JOHANNESBURG: Representatives from Southern African countries and regional and international disaster-management organisations began a four-day meeting in Johannesburg on Tuesday to strengthen preparedness and coordinate a regional response to the expected impacts of El Nino during the 2026/27 summer season.

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) Disaster Preparedness and Response Planning Workshop, running from Tuesday to Friday, is focusing on strengthening regional disaster preparedness, enhancing anticipatory action and improving coordination in responding to emerging humanitarian risks across the region. The meeting comes as SADC's latest regional climate outlook forecasts below-normal rainfall across much of central and southern parts of the region during the 2026/27 rainy season, accompanied by above-average temperatures in most of the region. The outlook identifies a developing El Nino as a key climate driver.

The forecast also pointed to increased drought risks in large parts of the region, while wetter conditions are expected in some northern and northeastern areas.

Pumeza Tyali, director for Dis-



aster Risk Assessment and Early Warning at South Africa's National Disaster Management Centre, said the meeting was aimed at strengthening the region's disaster-risk reduction mechanisms and ensuring that countries can respond more quickly to emerging hazards.

"We want to build a safer and resilient SADC. We want to review contingency planning arrangements and evaluate our preparedness measures to ensure we respond in a timely, actionable way," Tyali told Xinhua, adding that particular attention should be paid

to vulnerable groups, including women, children and persons with disabilities.

Manuel Lutango, head of Disaster Risk Reduction at the SADC Secretariat, said the region needed to prepare before disasters occur rather than rely primarily on emergency response after they strike. He cited the World Bank's assessment that investing in preparedness is less costly than responding after disasters have occurred, saying the region needs to mobilize resources in advance so that assistance can be deployed rapidly when emergencies arise.

The workshop is expected to conclude Friday with recommendations on regional preparedness and response measures, resource requirements and mechanisms for mobilising funding.

The meeting forms part of wider efforts by SADC to translate seasonal climate forecasts into early action.

At its 46th Ordinary Summit in August, SADC leaders urged member states to strengthen early warning systems, drought preparedness and climate-smart agriculture in anticipation of El Nino-related climate shocks. — Xinhua

AMID COST PRESSURES

BBC to close three TV, radio channels

LONDON: The BBC reported Tuesday it will close its BBC Three and BBC Scotland television channels in the spring, as the corporation continues to make 500 million pounds (\$669 million) of savings over two years.

Both services will become on-line-only, which means that they will continue to produce and host some content on iPlayer, without the need to fill a terrestrial TV schedule, according to the report.

The BBC also announced that it will close Radio 4 Extra, which largely airs speech programmes from the BBC's archive, including comedy, drama and documentaries.

The decision was made in response to "immediate cost pressures," said BBC Director-General Matt Brittin, adding that "we all



know that means tough choices."

"Against the backdrop of significant financial challenges, we must focus our resources where they will have the greatest impact for audiences," said Director of BBC Scotland Hayley Valentine. — Xinhua





From delivery driver to global fame: *A Korean writer’s journey*

You Yeong-Gwang’s *The Rainfall Market* tells the story of a mysterious, hidden shop that only opens when it rains. For a debut novel by an unknown author, it was a massive success

For ten years, publishers rejected You Yeong-Gwang’s book. Yet before it was even printed in South Korea, the once-abandoned manuscript had international publishers flocking to secure translation rights.

“I’m so grateful that the book has now been published in more than 20 countries. Even more astonishingly, it also appeared on the *Der Spiegel* bestseller list in Germany,” he told DW while attending the 2026 Frankfurt Book Fair.

For a debut novel by an unknown author, it was a massive success, securing publication in 15 languages, including English, German, Spanish and traditional Chinese.

The *Rainfall Market* tells the story of a mysterious, hidden shop that only opens when it rains. In the shop, visitors can exchange their deepest unhappiness for a ticket to a brand-new destiny. The plot revolves around Serin, a disheartened young girl who stumbles into the marketplace run by whimsical spirits, finding a warm, comforting space.

“In fact, Serin’s story is my story,” author You said. “For a long time, I even wondered how wonderful it would be if I could sell my unhappiness and use the money to buy happiness.”

While writing the book, he was going through a difficult time himself.

“I had to care for my mother, who had been ill for a long time, and I had also been responsible for supporting my family financially for many years. Life felt incredibly heavy,” he reflected.

“But when I was writing, I could immerse myself in the world of the story and, even if only for a short while, forget about those circumstances. That’s why writing made me so happy. I truly enjoyed it.”

On the creation of *The Rainfall Market*

The idea of rain is inspired by his own life. “At that time, my circumstances felt as though it were raining constantly,” You said.

The story draws heavily on traditional Korean folklore, serving as a quintessential “healing fiction” tale in which its young protagonist must weigh the true cost of seemingly perfect lives.

“When I was writing, I wasn’t consciously trying to write healing fiction. At the time, I didn’t even really know that such a label existed.”

He initially planned to publish a book independently and started crowdfunding. But as the funding failed, he used all his savings and printed 200 copies, which bookstores refused to take. In a month, he only sold five copies. “I thought that’s it. I really have to give up now.”

“At the time, I had undergone eye surgery and due to complications, I couldn’t see, so I started working at a call center, where I could work using my voice.” You said. “During the week, I worked at a call center, and on weekends I went to a computer academy. I learned how to make books on my own for a few years.”

He then taught himself how to use the software needed to create books on his own.

While running one of the



crowdfunding campaigns, he started working as a food delivery rider. “The round trip between my home and the area where I delivered food took about four hours each day. So I wrote on my phone’s memo app while traveling on the subway.”

“Even when I was going through very difficult circumstances, I was able to keep writing because the moments when I was writing were so joyful. For a little while, I could forget about the difficult situation I was in,” You explained.

Finally a breakthrough

“I gathered those pieces of writing together and launched what I intended to be my final crowdfunding campaign,” he said.

The campaign was intended to fund the publication of *The Rainfall Market*.

“To my amazement, the campaign succeeded, and I was able to

publish the book commercially for the first time,” he said.

Following the crowdfunding success, the novel was acquired by Clayhouse, a prominent South Korean publishing company.

Before it was even published, he had received offers from publishers in five countries and signed international publishing contracts.

And in the first month after publication, the book sold 30,000 copies across all formats, ranking as the bestselling e-book and third-bestselling physical book.

“I still find it hard to believe that all of this has happened and that I’m here at the Frankfurt Book Fair. I’m incredibly grateful and happy,” said You.

A new horizon for Hallyu, or the ‘Korean Wave’: K-Comfort Fiction

Korea’s newest soft power is K-literature, which sold about 1.2 million translated copies abroad in 2025 for the second consecutive year.

And You’s book belongs to a trending genre called Korean comfort fiction.

“When readers closed the book, I wanted them to feel a little warmth in their hearts,” he said.

Although Korean literature was first known for darker, more pragmatic books about societal realities, K-comfort fiction is the child of South Korea’s pressure-cooker modern society. It offers an answer to the human need for escapism and a transient antidote to the reality of a hyper-competitive education system, brutal job market, and intense corporate pressure.

“When I was writing, I was going through a very difficult time myself, and I wished someone would comfort me. So, I thought, why don’t I try reading something like that myself? Why don’t I write something that can comfort me?” You wondered.

With burnout on the rise globally, more readers are seeking soul-soothing literature with exhausted protagonists they can relate to. Usually without a need to defeat a villain, the stories follow protagonists with a deep desire for rest, community and emotional repair.

The whimsical fiction aspect is the missing element allowing them to step away from reality. The genre originally gained traction through indie productions, online crowdfunding and endorsements from high-profile K-pop artists.

Despite the Korean context, this style of storytelling quickly went global, capturing different international audiences, including those already familiar with cozy K-dramas or those simply looking

for a gentle refuge from the anxieties of the modern world.

Last year, the bestselling Korean novel abroad was *Welcome to the Hyunam-dong Bookshop*, according to the Literature Translation Institute of Korea. This book also belongs to the same genre as *The Rainfall Market*.

While readers embrace the genre, critics view it with literary skepticism. They point out that it relies heavily on a predictable, repetitive formula, often built around a single magical space, with simplistic prose and low-stakes conflicts that prioritize cozy vibes over deep character development.

Reviewing *The Rainfall Market* for the Korea Times, Peter Juhl, a literary critic, described healing fiction as light, feel-good stories and argued the boom reflects a deliberate effort to write global novels for international markets.

On his future aspirations and message to readers

“Of course, I’m happy that my book is receiving so much love and that I’m able to write. But more than anything, I hope my mother gets better and regains her health,” he said after mentioning that his mother underwent surgery a week before his arrival at the book fair.

Beyond the book itself, people seem to relate to and appreciate the story of his own life.

“If I have the opportunity, I’d like to share more stories about hope and dreams with people who are going through circumstances similar to mine,” said You. “If my story can help one person even a little, in any way, I don’t think anything could make me happier.” - dw

PSG beat Barcelona 4-2 to extend unbeaten run, maintain top spot in Champions League



Desire Doue, Lucas Hernandez, Vitinha and Fabian Ruiz scored for PSG, who retained their position at the top of the Champions League standings with a perfect record

PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain continued their impressive run in the UEFA Champions League with a 4-2 victory over Barcelona at the Parc des Princes, extending their unbeaten streak in the competition to 13 matches and handing the Spanish side their first defeat of the 2026-27 season.

Desire Doue, Lucas Hernandez, Vitinha and Fabian Ruiz scored for PSG, who retained their position at the top of the Champions League standings with a perfect record. Barcelona found the net through Xavi Espart and Lamine Yamal but were unable to prevent their opponents from claiming all three points.

PSG began on the front foot, putting Barcelona under pressure from the opening whistle. Khvicha Kvaratskhelia struck the woodwork within the first five minutes, while Ousmane Dem-

bele and Doue also tested goalkeeper Joan Garcia.

Barcelona struggled to maintain possession in the early exchanges, and their problems were compounded when Dembele appeared to suffer a hamstring injury before the midway point of the first half, forcing him off the field. Ferran Torres came on as his replacement.

The visitors gradually settled into the contest, with Matvey Safonov denying Raphinha from close range. At the other end, Garcia produced a string of saves to keep out Torres and Fabian Ruiz as PSG continued to threaten, as per the UCL website.

However, the Barcelona goalkeeper was unable to stop Doue from breaking the deadlock shortly before half-time. The French forward fired a powerful, low effort into the bottom corner to give the



hosts a deserved lead.

Barcelona had an opportunity to equalise soon afterwards when Pedri sent Fermin Lopez through on goal, but the midfielder failed

to beat Safonov in a one-on-one situation.

The visitors emerged with greater purpose after the break, although Garcia was again called

into action to deny PSG on a swift counter-attack.

Barcelona eventually drew level through Espart, who marked his Champions League debut by rac-

ing through the PSG defence and finishing past Safonov to silence the home crowd.

With injuries to Kvaratskhelia and Marquinhos disrupting PSG's rhythm, Barcelona began to gain control of the contest. Torres came close to putting the visitors ahead but struck the post from close range with 20 minutes remaining.

PSG capitalised on the resulting corner, with Lucas Hernandez rising to head home and restore the hosts' advantage against the run of play. Barcelona responded once more as Yamal outpaced Warren Zaire-Emery and squeezed the ball past Safonov from a tight angle to make it 2-2 with 12 minutes left.

The parity, however, lasted only two minutes. Vitinha restored PSG's lead with a powerful strike from the edge of the penalty area before Fabian Ruiz added a fourth goal late in the match to seal the victory.

The result strengthened PSG's position at the top of the Champions League table, while Barca were left to reflect on another defensive setback. The Catalans have now gone 18 consecutive Champions League matches without keeping a clean sheet, an issue head coach Hansi Flick will need to address as they seek to establish themselves among the leading contenders for the European title. **-ANI**

ODI TRI-SERIES



Arafat Minhas' all-round show helps Pakistan thrash England by 87 runs

RAWALPINDI: Arafat Minhas delivered a sensational all-round performance, scoring 59 runs and taking six wickets as Pakistan defeated England by 87 runs in the second match of the Pakistan ODI Tri-Series 2026 at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium on Tuesday.

Batting first, Pakistan posted a massive total of 302/9 in their 50 overs before bowling England out for 215 in 38.4 overs to register a convincing victory.

Pakistan suffered an early setback when Fakhar Zaman was dismissed for a duck off the first ball. Saim Ayub fell for eight, while Babar Azam contributed 34 runs before being dismissed. Saad Baig scored 35, but Pakistan found themselves under

pressure after losing five wickets for 133 runs.

Hasan Nawaz steadied the innings with a crucial 79 off 74 balls, striking five fours and four sixes. He found valuable support from Minhas, who scored 59 off 58 deliveries, including nine boundaries, to help Pakistan rebuild and accelerate in the middle overs.

Faheem Ashraf helped the finishing touch with a quickfire 39 off 26 balls as Pakistan reached 302/9, setting England a challenging target of 303 runs.

In response, England made a promising start, with Tom Banton scoring 57 off 53 balls and Ben Duckett contributing 45 off 46 deliveries. The pair helped England build momentum before Duck-

ett's dismissal triggered a shift in the contest.

Banton also departed after reaching his half-century, while Harry Brook managed just five runs, leaving England under increasing pressure. Joe Root attempted to stabilise the innings, but Pakistan's bowlers continued to make inroads.

Minhas proved to be the decisive factor with the ball, claiming six wickets for 40 runs and dismantling England's middle and lower order. England eventually folded for 215 in 38.4 overs, falling 87 runs short of the target.

Minhas was named Player of the Match for his outstanding contribution with both bat and ball. **-ANI**

THIRD CONSECUTIVE VICTORY

Liverpool fight back from two goals down to beat Villarreal 4-3 in Champions League thriller

LIVERPOOL: Liverpool produced a stirring comeback to defeat Villarreal 4-3 at Anfield in the UEFA Champions League, recovering from a two-goal deficit to maintain their perfect start to the league phase with a third consecutive victory.

Alexis Mac Allister scored twice, while Ronald Araujo and Florian Wirtz also found the net as Liverpool overturned an early deficit in a thrilling encounter. Georges Mikautadze, Sergi Cardona and substitute Tanitoluwa Oluwaseyi scored for Villarreal, who were left empty-handed despite a spirited performance.

Villarreal stunned the home crowd by taking the lead inside the opening four minutes. Virgil van Dijk's misplaced header allowed Mikautadze to seize possession and calmly slot the ball past Alisson into the bottom corner.

The visitors continued to trouble Liverpool and doubled their advantage before the half-hour mark. Nathan Saliba released Cardona through on goal, and the left-back kept his composure to beat Alisson with a low finish.

Liverpool responded quickly, reducing the deficit through Mac Allister, who headed home from Kostas Tsimikas' corner to bring the hosts back into the contest.

The match developed into an end-to-end affair, with Mac Allister firing narrowly wide from distance before Alisson denied Santiago Mourino with an impressive save.

Liverpool found their equaliser in first-half stoppage time when Araujo headed in at the far post following an excellent delivery from Rio Nguemoh, whose attacking contribution helped revive the hosts' hopes.



Villarreal began the second half positively, but Liverpool goalkeeper Peter Gulacsi was called upon to deny Cody Gakpo and Wirtz in quick succession as the home side increased the pressure.

Liverpool eventually completed the turnaround when Nguemoh raced towards the byline and delivered the ball for Mac Allister to finish from close range, putting the Reds ahead for the first time in the match.

Three minutes later, Wirtz extended Liverpool's advantage with a clinical finish into the bottom corner after receiving a pass from Gakpo.

Villarreal refused to surrender

and set up a tense finish when Oluwaseyi volleyed home from Ayoze Perez's cross, cutting the deficit to one goal.

The visitors pushed for another equaliser in the closing stages, but Liverpool held on to secure all three points and extend their winning run in the Champions League league phase.

The victory gave Liverpool three wins from three matches in the competition, while Villarreal's difficult record against English opposition continued. The Spanish side have now gone 17 Champions League matches without a win against English clubs, recording six draws and 11 defeats. **-ANI**

UNBEATEN HOME RECORD

Phil Foden hat-trick powers Manchester City to 5-1 win over AEK Athens

MANCHESTER: Phil Foden scored his first-ever UEFA Champions League hat-trick as Manchester City cruised to a 5-1 victory over AEK Athens at the Etihad Stadium, extending their unbeaten home record against teams from outside Europe's top five leagues in the competition.

Elliot Anderson and Rayan Cherki also found the net for City, who dominated large parts of the contest despite conceding a second-half goal to the Greek visitors, according to the website of UCL.

City made an aggressive start and took the lead in the 12th minute when Anderson reacted quickest to a rebound after Enzo Fernandez's free-kick struck the crossbar. The goal marked Anderson's first for the club and re-

warded the hosts for their early pressure.

The home side continued to dictate proceedings, with Allan also hitting the woodwork as AEK struggled to contain City's attacking movement.

City doubled their advantage 10 minutes before half-time through Foden. The England international exchanged passes with Rico Lewis near the byline before poking the ball high into the roof of the net.

City had an opportunity to extend their lead further before the break, but AEK goalkeeper Alberto Brignoli produced an important save to deny Rayan Cherki from close range.

AEK returned from the interval with greater intent and reduced the deficit when Stavros Pilios



made an unmarked run into the penalty area to meet Zini's pass before finishing at the near post.

However, City's attacking quality soon restored their two-goal cushion. Cherki collected the ball outside the penalty area and guided a left-footed effort into the corner to make it 3-1.

The Frenchman then played a key role in City's fourth goal, delivering an incisive pass behind the AEK defence. Lewis set up Foden, who finished emphatically on the half-volley to complete his hat-trick.

Foden added his third goal of the night and City's fourth of the second half when he converted Ryan McAidoo's cross from close range with 15 minutes remaining, putting the result beyond doubt.

City eased off in the closing stages after an emphatic attacking display, securing a convincing victory and ending a four-match winless run in Tuesday home fixtures in European competition.

For AEK, the defeat extended their disappointing record away from home in the Champions League, where they have now gone 20 matches without a victory. The Greek side face another difficult challenge in their next outing against Real Madrid.

Foden's clinical finishing and Cherki's creative contribution highlighted City's attacking strength, as the English side strengthened their European campaign with a commanding performance at the Etihad Stadium. **-ANI**



IN SENEGAL

Three Omani teams to take part in Dakar Youth Olympic Games

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman is preparing to participate in the fourth edition of the Youth Olympic Games, Dakar 2026, which will be hosted by Senegal from 31 October to 13 November, with three national teams competing in fencing, aquatics and taekwondo.

As part of the preparations for the Games, Oman Olympic Committee (OOC) held a meeting on Wednesday morning to discuss the technical, administrative and organisational aspects of the participation. The meeting was attended by members of the official delegation, representatives of the national teams and technical staff. Discussions covered competition schedules, timings and venues, as

well as logistical arrangements related to travel, accommodation and transportation, medical services for athletes, anti-doping procedures and regulations governing the Games, in addition to media responsibilities accompanying the participation.

In aquatics, swimmer Hamad Al Hasani will compete in the men's 400m and 800m freestyle events, scheduled for 1 and 3 November, respectively, in the capital, Dakar. Taekwondo athlete Ziad Al Balushi will compete in the men's under-48kg category on 8 November in Dakar.

In fencing, Janna Al Sharji will take part in the women's individual épée event, scheduled for 10



November in Diamniadio. Official Delegation The Omani delegation will be headed by Eng. Khalfan bin Saleh Al Naabi, Member of OOC Board of Directors.

The delegation also includes Saheem bin Khalaf Al Subhi as administrator, Nada bint Mohammed Al Zadjali as physiotherapist, Adil bin Ibrahim Al Balushi as journalist, and Marwan bin Nabil Al Yaqoubi as photographer.

The national teams will also be accompanied by Hicham Kar-choud as fencing coach, Mohammed Bouguerra as swimming coach, and Adil Al Wahibi as taekwondo coach. Dakar 2026: A Historic Olympic Milestone The Dakar 2026 Youth Olympic Games

hold exceptional significance as the first-ever Olympic event to be held on the African continent.

The Games are expected to bring together approximately 2,700 athletes representing 206 National Olympic Committees, competing in 25 sports across 151 events, with the support of around 6,000 volunteers.

Competitions will take place across eight sports venues in three host cities, making Dakar 2026 a global sporting event that aims to showcase emerging young talent, promote the values of the Olympic Movement, and strengthen bonds of friendship and communication among young people from around the world.

STANDOUT PERFORMANCES

Premier League stars shine among Ballon d'Or nominees



LONDON: Premier League players have made their mark among the nominees for the 2026 Ballon d'Or, with Opta statistics highlighting standout performances across the 2025/26 season.

Manchester United captain Bruno Fernandes recorded 22 assists in the Premier League during the 2025/26 campaign, setting a new competition record. He also created 142 chances in the league, the most of any player across Europe's big-five leagues, according to Opta 2025/26 season.

Manchester City striker Erling Haaland reached 100 Premier League goals in December 2025, achieving the milestone in just 111 appearances. He scored 38 goals in 52 appearances for City across all competitions during the 2025/26 season.

Arsenal defender Gabriel Magalhães kept 17 clean sheets in the Premier League during the campaign, more than any other defender in the competition. He recorded 24 clean sheets across all competitions for the Gunners.

His Arsenal teammate William Saliba completed 67 passes per 90

minutes in the Premier League, the highest rate among Arsenal players during the season. Arsenal also won 71% of the matches in which he featured, compared with 57% of games without him.

Arsenal midfielder Declan Rice contributed five goals and nine assists across all competitions in the 2025/26 season. He created 96 chances, the most by any English player across Europe's big-five leagues in all competitions.

The nominees also include Rodri, whose 2025/26 season statistics reflect his time at Manchester City, and Marc Cucurella, whose campaign included performances for Chelsea. Their inclusion highlights the contributions of players with Premier League connections among this year's nominees.

The statistics showcase the range of performances recognised among the nominees, from Fernandes' record-breaking creativity and Haaland's goalscoring milestones to the defensive consistency of Arsenal's back line and Rice's influence in midfield.

ANI

Shai Hope enters top 10 among T20I batters following bumper series against India



Hope finished the T20I series as the leading run-scorer during a 2-2 draw against India, accumulating 261 runs in four innings at a strike rate of over 190



DUBAI: Following a bumper T20I series against India, West Indies skipper Shai Hope entered the top 10 in the ICC T20I Rankings among batters, while Afghanistan stars Rashid Khan and Sediqullah Atal made major advances in the ODI Rankings.

Hope finished the T20I series as the leading run-scorer during a 2-2 draw against India, accumulating 261 runs in four innings at a strike rate of over 190, including two centuries and a half-century. He was also named 'Player of the Series' for his contributions with the bat.

Hope is in the top 10, moving up from 11th to ninth after a match-winning 102 not out in the fourth match of the series against India, which ended in a 2-2 draw. Sherfane Rutherford's 49 not out off 26 balls in the fourth T20I lifted him six places to 18th, while spinner

Gudakesh Motie is up 10 places to 26th among bowlers, as per ICC.

Atal and Rashid made major gains in the ICC Men's ODI Player Rankings after helping their team secure an impressive 158-run victory over Zimbabwe in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Tri-Series in Abu Dhabi on Monday.

Left-handed opener Sediqullah struck 102 as Afghanistan posted a total of 294 after electing to bat. His 'Player of the Match' effort helped him gain 12 slots and reach 20th position even as Rashid's haul of four for 17 that included the prize scalp of Sikandar Raza, has helped him consolidate his position at the top of the bowling rankings, taking him a good 80 rating points ahead of Abrar Ahmed.

Bangladesh batter Tanzid Hasan's knock of 46 in the opening match of the UAE Tri-Series, which they lost to Zimbabwe, sees him move up three places to 21st, while fast bowler Taskin Ahmed is up nine places to a career-best 12th place after a haul of three for 44 in the loss. There is a jostling of places on the table there, with the slots from 11 to 20 covered by just 28 points.

Others to gain after matches of this tri-series include Afghanistan's left-arm fast bowler Fazal-haq Farooqi (up 12 places to 46th) after grabbing two for 15 against Zimbabwe and Zimbabwe's Brad Evans, who took seven wickets in two matches, progressing 19 places to joint-65th.

The latest rankings update, that also takes into account performances in the Pakistan Tri-Series, England opener Tom Banton's knock of 57 off 53 deliveries has helped him move up 16 places to 66th position, Pakistan's Salman Ali Agha's score of 107 in a 37-run win over Sri Lanka has helped him inch up one place to 12th position while Sri Lanka's Pavan Rathnayake (up 34 places to 75th) is another one to move up the batting table.

Pakistan fast bowlers Haris Rauf (up two places to 20th and Naseem Shah (up four places to 45th) and upcoming Afghanistan spinner AM Ghazanfar (up seven places to 31st) have moved up the ODI bowling rankings. **-ANI**

TEST CRICKET

Steve Smith joins Ricky Ponting and Allan Border in Australia's 11,000-run Test club

GQEBERHA: Australian batter Steve Smith on Wednesday became the third player from his country to reach 11,000 runs in Test cricket, joining Ricky Ponting and Allan Border in the elite list, during the ongoing second Test against South Africa at St George's Park in Gqeberha.

The veteran batter achieved the milestone during Australia's first innings, scoring 28 runs off 88 deliveries, including two fours. Smith is the 12th player overall to reach the 11,000-run mark in the longest format of the game. Ponting leads Australian batters list with 13,378 Test runs, followed by Border with 11,174.

Smith has also joined an elite group of batters to reach 11,000 Test runs in fewer than 230 innings. Sri Lanka's Kumar Sangakkara holds the record for the fewest innings to reach the milestone, achieving it in 208 innings, followed by West Indies great Brian Lara, who took 213 innings.

Ponting reached the mark in 222 innings, while India's Sachin

Tendulkar took 223 innings. Smith achieved the feat in 226 innings, while Rahul Dravid and South Africa's Jacques Kallis took 234 innings each.

Coming to the match, South Africa bowled Australia out for just 99 runs in their first innings and enforced the follow-on in the ongoing second Test, putting the visitors under immense pressure.

Left-arm pacer Marco Jansen led South Africa's bowling attack, claiming five wickets to dismantle Australia's batting order. Wiaan Mulder also contributed with two wickets, as Australia struggled to cope with the hosts' bowling attack. Veteran batter Steve Smith top-scored among Australia's recognised batters with 28 runs off 88 deliveries, including two fours, before being bowled by Mulder.

South Africa's first-innings total was built around a remarkable knock by captain Temba Bavuma, who scored 179 runs, while Marco Jansen contributed 85. The pair helped the hosts recover from an early collapse and take control of



the contest. With South Africa enforcing follow-on, the hosts will look to capitalise on their commanding position and push for victory in the remaining play against Australia and level the three-match series 1-1.

Anrich Nortje sustains suspected groin injury

South Africa fast bowler Anrich Nortje sustained a suspected right groin injury during the fourth day of the ongoing second Test against Australia at St

George's Park on Wednesday, raising concerns over his availability for the remainder of the match, according to Cricinfo.

Nortje limped off the field three balls into his fourth over during the opening session. Cricket South Africa confirmed at the start of the second session that the pacer would not take the field again for at least the remainder of Australia's first innings.

The injury comes after Nortje returned to Test cricket in Durban, where he bowled 40 overs in his first Test and first-class appearance in more than three and a half years, according to cricinfo.

Questions had been raised over his ability to recover in time for the second Test, given the short turnaround between the matches. However, Nortje had bowled at impressive pace during training two days before the start of the match.

Before leaving the field on Wednesday, Nortje played a key role in South Africa's pace attack as the hosts put Australia's top order under sustained pressure. **-ANI**

A blockbuster battle between openers

CHRISTCHURCH: The T20I series between New Zealand and India will witness a battle between two of the most exciting T20I batters in the world, openers Finn Allen and Abhishek Sharma, who have been sensational for their respective sides this year.

The first T20I will take place at Christchurch on Thursday. Abhishek owns the fastest T20I century by a player from a Test-playing nation, having scored it against Afghanistan earlier this year. Finn Allen's 33-ball ton against South Africa was the fastest century across ICC T20 and 50-over World Cups.

1,663 runs

The 27-year-old Allen has played 62 T20Is for NZ, scoring 1,663 runs in 61 innings at an average of 28.67 and a strike rate of over 170, with three centuries and seven fifties. In 26 T20Is in New Zealand, Allen has made 737 runs in 26 matches and innings at an average of 29.48 and a strike rate of 175.89, with a century and four fifties. **-ANI**

ROUND-UP

Lexus IS 350 redefines luxury sports sedan with precision, performance

With its combination of precise engineering, advanced safety technology and a driver-first cabin, the IS 350 offers an engaging drive for customers who value performance as much as comfort

MUSCAT: The Lexus IS 350 redefines the luxury sports sedan experience in Oman pairing a front-engine, rear-wheel-drive layout and sharp handling with the refinement expected from Lexus. Designed around the driver, the sedan delivers precise, responsive performance in both city and highway driving.

Connected feel of the drive
Precision is central to the IS 350's character. Its Electric Power Steering system with a variable gear rack provides accurate, confident control through corners and intersections, while keeping the car stable on the highway. The Adaptive Variable Suspension system complements the steering by smoothing out road imperfections without losing the connected feel of the drive.

For added confidence, the IS 350 is equipped with Lexus Safety System+ for everyday and long-distance driving, while Lexus Teammate Advanced Drive provides enhanced assistance on highway journeys.

The sedan's low, wide stance gives it an unmistakably sporty look. The F SPORT variant adds a rear spoiler for improved aerodynamics and 19-inch lightweight alloy wheels and customers can choose from eight exterior col-



ours including Neutrino Gray, a metallic-infused light grey with a dynamic finish.

The cockpit is built around the driver. A 12.3-inch centre display and a matching 12.3-inch TFT LCD instrument cluster keep key information clear and easy to read

at a glance. "Forged Bamboo" trim on the console and start switch bezel adds a distinctive shading effect, while the Prominence interior colour option adds a bold, energetic accent to the cabin.

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nology and a driver-first cabin, the IS 350 offers an engaging drive for customers who value performance as much as comfort.

WOMEN'S BANKING PROPOSITION

Sohar Islamic introduces 'Be Zahiya', advancing women-centric Islamic banking in Oman

MUSCAT: Sohar Islamic, the Islamic banking window of Sohar International, has introduced 'Be Zahiya', a dedicated women's banking proposition designed to bring together Sharia-compliant financial solutions, lifestyle privileges and a more personalised banking experience. Building on the evolving needs and aspirations of women in Oman, the proposition introduces tailored debit and credit card offerings under the Be Zahiya and Zahiya Plus categories, enabling female customers to access convenient payment solutions, exclusive rewards and lifestyle benefits while managing their finances in accordance with Islamic banking principles.

Commenting on the launch, Fahaad Al Zadjali, Chief Islamic Banking Officer at Sohar Islamic, said: "At Sohar Islamic, we believe that empowering women financially means creating an environment where they can make informed decisions, pursue their aspirations and build lasting financial confidence. Be Zahiya reflects our commitment to making Islamic banking more responsive to women's evolving needs, combining Sharia-compliant financial solutions with relevant privileges and a customer experience built around convenience, trust and individual choice. By expanding access to tailored banking services, we aim to support women in strengthening their financial independence and contributing more actively to the economic and social progress of Oman."

The Be Zahiya proposition features two credit card options, Be Zahiya Visa Platinum and Be Zahiya Plus Visa Signature, each designed to serve distinct lifestyle preferences and customer needs. The Platinum card offers complimentary welcome reward



points, rewards on eligible local and international spending, access to selected airport lounges, global emergency assistance and flexible instalment plans, alongside enhanced security for online transactions through Visa 3D Secure. The Signature card extends these privileges with unlimited access to a network of more than 1,000 airport lounges, complimentary welcome reward points, complimentary self-parking at Mall of Oman and a dedicated concierge service offering assistance with travel arrangements, dining reservations and other lifestyle requirements. Both cards also feature lifetime-free annual membership, subject to the applicable terms and conditions.

Through Be Zahiya, Sohar Islamic aims to make everyday financial interactions more rewarding while strengthening its engagement with women across different stages of their financial journeys. The proposition brings together practical payment capabilities and lifestyle-oriented ben-

efits within a Shariah-compliant framework, reflecting the Bank's approach to developing customer propositions that balance financial needs with personal preferences. It also supports the broader objective of encouraging greater financial participation by making relevant banking services more accessible and aligned with the priorities of female customers.

The introduction of Be Zahiya reflects Sohar Islamic's commitment to advancing Shariah-compliant banking through customer-centric innovation and inclusive financial solutions that respond to women's evolving needs and aspirations. The bank continues to deliver contemporary Islamic banking experiences that combine service excellence with long-term customer value, supporting women's contributions to households, businesses and communities while fostering a more inclusive financial ecosystem and contributing to Oman's socioeconomic development in line with Oman Vision 2040.

AWARENESS MONTH

Over 60 women benefit from free breast cancer screenings

MUSCAT: More than 60 women benefited from free mammogram screenings during a three-day community health initiative held from 11-13 October at The Diplomatic Club, Muscat, as part of Breast Cancer Awareness Month.

The campaign was jointly supported by Asha Enterprises and Europcar Oman, in association with the Oman Cancer Association (OCA), and brought together strategic partners The Diplomatic Club Oman, American Chamber of Commerce in Oman (AmCham Oman), British Business Forum Oman (BBF), and Indo Gulf and Middle East Chamber of Commerce (INMECC), alongside Crowe as Auditing Partner and Muntaz Mahal as Hospitality Partner.

Through this collective effort, the participating organisations sought to encourage women to prioritise their health, promote the importance of early detection and make essential breast cancer screening services more accessible to the community.

Building on the success of previous campaigns, the initiative reflects a sustained commitment to women's health and demonstrates how collaboration between healthcare organisations, businesses and community groups can translate awareness into meaningful action.

Dr. Wahid Ali Said Al Kharusi, President and Chairperson of the Oman Cancer Association (OCA), stated: "Early detection through repeated regular examination plays a vital role in improving breast cancer outcomes. By making mammogram screenings accessible and encouraging women to take that important first step, initiatives such as this help strengthen awareness and preventive healthcare within the community. We value the continued collaboration of our corporate



and community partners."

Charm Majolica, Director of The Diplomatic Club, said: "Giving back to our community is at the heart of what we stand for at The Diplomatic Club. Together with our valued strategic partner, we are proud to support breast cancer awareness and accessible screening, helping empower women through early detection. We believe meaningful partnerships should go beyond connections and create a lasting, positive impact on the lives of others."

Rebecca Olson, CEO of AmCham Oman, commented: "Strong business communities are built not only through commerce, but also through a shared commitment to the well-being of society. This initiative demonstrates how organisations can come together to deliver practical, measurable benefits to the community. We are pleased to continue supporting efforts that place women's health at the forefront."

Maggie Jeans, Director of British Business Forum Oman (BBF), added: "Awareness can make a difference, but access to screening turns awareness into action. We are proud to support this initiative alongside our partners and encourage women to recognise

the importance of regular health checks. Community well-being is a responsibility we all share."

Davis Kallukaran, Founder Director of INMECC and Crowe Oman, stated: "Corporate responsibility goes beyond financial and business commitments. It is equally about investing in the health and welfare of the communities in which we operate. We are pleased to be associated with an initiative that promotes preventive healthcare and brings together organisations working towards a common purpose."

Nitin Sapre, Group CEO of Asha Enterprises, commented: "At Asha Enterprises and Europcar, we believe that business success carries a responsibility to contribute meaningfully to society. Healthcare awareness is an important part of that commitment. Through initiatives like these, we hope to encourage more women to prioritise their health and take proactive steps towards early detection. We are grateful to our partners for making this shared commitment possible."

The annual mammogram screening campaign is part of a broader commitment by the participating organisations to community welfare and social responsibility.



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