

Times

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51

YEARS OF LEGACY

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TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN
Oman bags 11 awards at smart investor event



1 Oman garnered 11 awards in the fourth season of the Gulf Smart Investor Award, organised by the securities market regulatory authorities of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member states, during the award ceremony held in Riyadh. **>A2**

SPORTS
Messi to retire from national team

2 Lionel Messi has announced his decision to retire from the Argentina national team, bringing an emotional chapter of his illustrious international career to a close. **>A8**

WORLD
Deadly flash flood hits Grand Canyon

3 One person died and 15 others are assumed to be missing after a flash flood hit Arizona's Grand Canyon National Park. The body of a 46-year-old man was recovered on Sunday evening. **>B4**

GCC COUNTRIES ATTRACT OVER 75 MILLION TOURISTS IN 2025

Tourism sector's contribution reached \$254.7 billion as Gulf countries strengthen their tourism position

Times News Service

MUSCAT: GCC countries attracted around 75.7 million tourists in 2025, with inbound visitor spending reaching \$131.9 billion, highlighting the growing economic importance of tourism across the region, the GCC Statistical Centre said. The figures were announced at the opening of the eighth Regional Workshop on Innovation in



Tourism Statistics, held in Muscat under the theme "Innovation in Tourism Statistics: Data Integration and Trend Analysis." The two-day workshop brings together officials and 30 specialists involved in producing tourism statistics from the statistical authorities of the GCC countries. The workshop is aimed at

strengthening cooperation in tourism statistics and improving the availability and quality of data to support tourism planning and development across the Gulf. According to Intisar Abdullah Al Wahaibi, Director General of the GCC Statistical Centre, the tourism sector in GCC countries has recorded sustained growth

and has become an increasingly important component of national development plans and strategies. She said tourism statistics are essential for measuring the sector's economic contribution, analysing its development and supporting government policies, investment decisions and development planning. **>A6**



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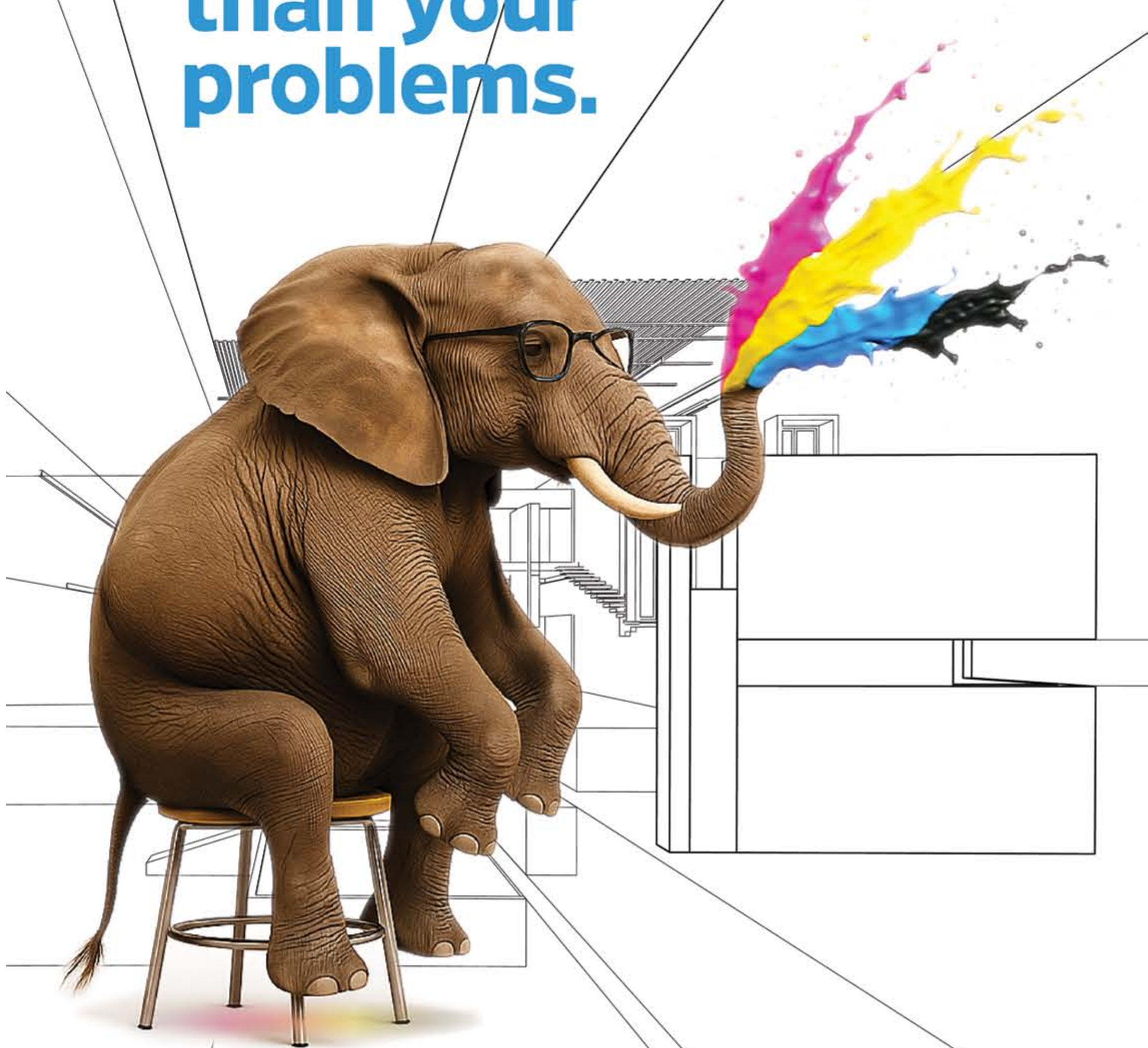








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COMMENTARY

Youth in Mind: From a Loving Heart to Oman’s Youth

From the very outset of building modern Oman, His Majesty Sultan Qaboos placed education at the heart of national progress. “We shall educate our children even under the shade of trees” remain immortal words that shed light on education as a powerful force for empowerment and leading strategic change.

As the wheel of our renewed renaissance moves forward under the leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, Oman Vision 2040 places education and youth at its heart, empowering them to drive sustainable development and shape the future of our nation.

Out of such continuous commitment towards education and youth, on the 6th of August 2026, the Governorate of Muscat organized an awarding ceremony to recognize the high-achieving graduates of the General Education Diploma. The ceremony was presided over by HH Sayyid Bilarab bin Haitham Al Said, Minister of State and Governor of Muscat. The recognition was more than a celebration of academic excellence; it instilled a deep sense of pride and self fulfillment among the students and their parents both Omanis and residents.

Addressing the high achievers, His Highness shared gems of wisdom, inspiring them to pursue their dreams, believe in their potential, and turn their aspirations into achievements. His Highness commended the students for their achievements, and congratulated them and their parents for such a moment of pride. His speech inspired the students. While delivering the message across to the intended audience the words were flowing naturally like water rolling in the aflaj across the nation. His tone was sincere and uplifting. Filled with pride and joy his words were so inspiring and heart elevating. He said: “Be like a beacon overflowing with the

light of knowledge, science and good morals. Remain rooted in your authentic Omani values, standing firm like the mountains of Oman in a rapidly changing world. Let your principles be a scale and your minds insightful. Never forsake the noble morals, love for the homeland and devotion to it upon which you were raised. Each one of you carries a dream and the gathering of these dreams is what shapes the nation’s future. Be the best representatives of Oman wherever the paths of life take you, make your knowledge beneficial, your contributions continuous, and your success an addition to this dear homeland.”

These were genuine pieces of advice, shared from a loving heart for Oman’s youth. But the question remains: How can these thought provoking, empowering, and life changing words be translated into tangible reality, and become a blueprint that distinguishes Omani youth through their character, contributions, and achievements, wherever they are and whatever their specialisations may be?

For such an agenda to flourish and for our youth to reap its intended benefits, it requires a collective effort, a partnership among parents, schools, universities, workplaces, civil society organisation and, above all, the youth themselves. Our youth should nurture a mindset of thinking globally while acting locally; embracing the opportunities of a changing world while remaining proudly anchored in their Omani identity, culture, and deep rooted heritage. They should draw inspiration from the achievements of their ancestors throughout history and carry that legacy forward, not merely as a source of pride, but as a responsibility to create, contribute, and achieve.

These six pieces of advice can become much more powerful when students translate them from inspiring words into daily



habits. In my view, each one can become a personal discipline that gradually shapes character, productivity, and ultimately a distinctive Omani personality.

Our youth are invited to turn these six pieces of advice into nurturing Positive Habits. I am sure their brilliant way of thinking will lead them to innovate and come up with so many approaches. The below ideas are shared to enable them to brainstorm and come up with the right blend that is appropriate for them to nurture these habits.

1- Being a beacon of knowledge, science and good morals. This requires our youth to ask themselves where are they in terms of inculcating reading as one of the habits that can shape their character and make them abreast with the ongoing development around them. They should make use of technology to advance in this sphere. After all they are the future leaders and leaders are readers. This will enable them to make learning a daily habit. They should allocate time to read, ask questions, learn new skills, and share what they learn with others. At the same time, let their knowledge be accompanied by good character. Knowledge enlightens the mind; morals elevate the person.

2. Remain rooted in your authentic Omani values, and make your identity your anchor. Embrace your Omani culture, heritage, language, traditions, and values, while remaining open

to the world and its possibilities. Like the majestic mountains of Oman, stay grounded in your roots while reaching ever higher. After all, these values will be your compass and your anchor, enabling you to endure the turbulent waters of life without losing your way.

3. Let your principles be your scale and your minds insightful. Make reflection and integrity a daily habit. Before making a decision, pause and ask yourself: Is it right? Is it beneficial? Does it reflect the values I was raised upon? Develop the habit of thinking before acting, and never compromise your principles for short term gain.

Our Omani seafarers and sailors once ventured across the seas, reaching India, East Africa, and even as far as China. They built bridges of trust with people from different countries, cultures, and languages. Despite these differences, it was their principles, integrity, and respect for others that earned them trust and admiration. These very principles strengthened trade, deepened relationships, and connected nations across the seas.

Likewise, the reputation and respect Oman enjoys today, across different spheres, did not come by chance. It has been built over generations by remaining committed to the very principles that define our integrity, respect, trust, wisdom, and good character. So, let your principles guide

your choices, just as they guided our forefathers across the seas. You may travel far, meet different people, and enter a rapidly changing world, but never lose sight of the values that anchor you.

4. Each of you carries a dream. a dream that can shape not only your own future, but the future of our nation. Do not leave your dream as a wish; turn it into a plan.

Write your dream down. Set clear and meaningful goals. Break those goals into achievable steps, and review your progress regularly. Remember, a dream gives you direction, a plan gives you a pathway, and disciplined action turns that dream into reality.

As Eleanor Roosevelt beautifully said, “The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams.”

So, dare to dream, but do more than dream. Plan for it, work for it, persevere through the challenges, and one day, you will look back and realize that the dream you once carried in your heart has become a reality and perhaps, a contribution to the future of Oman.

5. Be the best representative of Oman wherever life takes you. Think what does it mean to be Omani? How do you want to be perceived by others?

Whether in a classroom, university, workplace, or abroad, let your conduct speak for you and for your country. Be punctual, respectful, responsible, collaborative, and professional. Wherever you go, leave a positive impression behind.

6- Make your knowledge beneficial, your contributions continuous, and your success an addition to your homeland. Make contribution a lifelong habit. Do not measure your success only by what you achieve for yourself, but also by what you add to the lives of others and to the progress of your nation. Volunteer your time, mentor

others, innovate, solve problems, and generously share your knowledge and expertise. Remember, true success is not merely about reaching the top; it is about reaching back and lifting others with you.

Let every achievement you accomplish become a building block in the progress of Oman. Let your knowledge serve a purpose, let your talents create an impact, and let your success leave a lasting legacy.

For when you give back to your homeland, your success becomes bigger than you. It becomes part of Oman’s success.

In the language of talent development, these six pieces of advice provide a powerful framework for developing Oman’s future leaders. Together, they embrace the three pillars of the ASK model, Attitude, Skills, and Knowledge. The essential blend required to nurture capable, confident, and values driven individuals.

More than just a framework, they represent a philosophy, a strategy, and a purposeful goal for preparing our youth for the future. It is a vision that our educational institutions, corporate talent-development initiatives, and civil-society organizations programs should keep at heart always while looking to the future with the end in mind. After all, what we can conceive, we can achieve.

The future we envision for Oman begins with the people we develop today.

Thank you, Your Highness, for these memorable gems of wisdom, sent from a loving heart to the youth of Oman. Your words are not merely advice; they are seeds of wisdom planted in the hearts and minds of our young people, seeds that, with commitment and action, can grow into a brighter future for Oman.

An Omani writer focusing on youth development and cultural issues.

IN BARKA

Preliminary rounds of Holy Quran Competition begin

MUSCAT: The preliminary rounds of the Sultan Qaboos Holy Quran Competition’s 34th edition kicked off on Monday in the Wilayat of Barka, South Al Batinah Governorate.

The competition is organised by the Sultan Qaboos Higher Centre for Culture and Science at the Diwan of Royal Court.

Rashid bin Humaid Al Dughai-shi, Chairman of the committees supervising the preliminary and final rounds of, said that the preliminary round panel listened to the readings of 756 male and female contestants from the wilayats of A’Seeb, Bahla, Samayil, A’Suwaiaq, A’Rustaq, Salalah and Taqah.

The contestants take part in the competition’s 7 levels, which are:

Level 1: Memorising the entire



Holy Quran; Level 2: Memorising 24 consecutive parts of the Holy Quran; Level 3: Memorising 18 consecutive parts; Level 4: Memorising 12 consecutive parts (contested by those born in 2001 or later); Level 5: Memorising 6 con-

secutive parts (contested by those born in 2012 or later); Level 6: Memorising 4 consecutive parts (contested by those born in 2016 or later); and Level 7: Memorising 2 consecutive parts (contested by those born in 2019 or later). -ONA

Oman bags 11 awards at smart investor event

Oman’s participation in the fourth season and the results achieved by the winners reflect the level of creativity and excellence possessed by Omani talents



categories: school students, university students, and individuals.

Outstanding Omani entries secured 11 awards across the various tracks and categories. In the writing track, four positions were achieved. Rawd Al Farsi claimed first place in the school category, Duja Al Ma’ani secured third place in the university category, while Sarah Al Kalbani achieved first place and Saijiya Al Isma’ili secured second place in the individuals category.

In the photography track, Tasneem Al Sabahi won first place and Al Yaqeen Al Salmi secured third place in the school category, while Mawda Al Salmani achieved first place in the university category, and Alia Al Abri won first place in the individuals category.

In the drawing track, Mariya Al Sudairi secured first place in the

university category.

In the video track, Salim Al Ya’qoubi won first place and Zaha Al Mas’udi secured fourth place in the school category.

The Gulf Smart Investor Award falls within the framework of Gulf financial and investment awareness and literacy initiatives. It aims to encourage creative young talents to produce creative works and content that contribute to simplifying financial and investment concepts and enhancing awareness of sound investment practices.

Oman’s participation in the fourth season and the results achieved by the winners reflect the level of creativity and excellence possessed by Omani talents, as well as their presence in Gulf initiatives aimed at promoting financial and investment literacy across all segments of society. -ONA



Tender Announcement

The Internal Tender Committee at the Ministry of Labour announces the following tender:

Tender No.	Tender Name	Last date for tender purchase online	Date of submission of tender bids
33/2026	Provision of maintenance services for the building of A’Seeb Vocational College	Sunday 13/09/2026	Sunday 04/10/2026

- Specialised companies can obtain the tender documents online through the link below from 8am, Tuesday 25-8-2026 /https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om

- The opening of tender envelopes shall be at 11am, Sunday 4/10/2026.
(The lowest or any other tender shall not be binding to the ministry)

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New rehabilitation year welcomes 361 children

A number of the Association's centres accommodate students at the pre-vocational stage, contributing to their preparation and skill development in accordance with their capabilities



MUSCAT: Oman Association for Children with Disabilities on Monday welcomed 361 children as the 2026/2027 rehabilitation year commenced, marking the start of a new cycle of rehabilitation, education, and empowerment programmes.

The children's return encompassed the Association's eight rehabilitation centres located in

Al Athaiba, A'Seeb, Barka, Al Musannah, Saham, Yanqul, Dhank and Ja'alan Bani Bu Hassan. At these centres, the Association provides specialised rehabilitation and educational services and programmes aimed at developing the children's abilities and skills, while enhancing their independence and self-confidence.

A number of the Association's centres accommodate students at the pre-vocational stage, contributing to their preparation and skill development in accordance with their capabilities, and equipping them for more advanced phases of independence and social integration.

With the launch of the new rehabilitation year, the Association renews its commitment to continuing its efforts in empowering children with disabilities and supporting their families, while providing broader opportunities for a brighter future and greater integration into society. -ONA

HM sends greetings

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik sent a cable of greetings to President Peter Pellegrini of the Slovak Republic on his country's National Day.

In the cable, His Majesty expressed his best wishes to President Peter Pellegrini and the Slovak people for continued stability, growth and prosperity.

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik sent a cable of greetings to President Dr. Shavkat Mirziyoyev of the Republic of Uzbekistan on

his country's Independence Anniversary.

In the cable, His Majesty expressed his heartfelt sentiments and sincere wishes of abundant health and happiness to President Dr. Shavkat. His Majesty also wished further progress and prosperity to the Uzbek people, wishing President Dr. Shavkat success in achieving further achievements and aspirations across various fields.

-ONA

Shura Council takes part in Arab IPU meeting

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Shura Council took part in the meeting of the Interim Parliamentary Diplomacy Committee of the Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union, via videoconference on Monday.

Represented by Dr Hamoud Al Yahyai, Member of the Council, the meeting addressed a number of organisational and parliamentary matters on its agenda.

Discussions covered the proposed amendment to the voting mechanism for emergency items during the General Assembly meetings of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), alongside an

initiative to strengthen joint parliamentary cooperation within the framework of the Parliamentary Union of the OIC Member States.

The meeting considered the request submitted by the Council of the Interparliamentary Assembly of the CIS Member Nations regarding the granting of observer status to the Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union.

The meeting discussed candidacy for the position of President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

Participants underlined the importance of engagement of the Interim Parliamentary Diplomacy Committee's members in the meeting.

Shura Council receives Indian defence delegation

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Shura Council received on Monday a delegation from the National Defence College of India, currently on an official visit to the Sultanate of Oman.

The visit aims to familiarise the delegation with Oman's parliamentary experience and to introduce the Council's roles and mandates as defined under the Law of the Council of Oman.

The delegation was received by Saeed Al Saadi, Deputy Chairman of the Shura Council.

The meeting opened with an affirmation of the deep-rooted historical relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the friendly Republic of India, and the growth and development these relations continue to witness across various fields.

During the meeting, the Deputy



Chairman of the Shura Council reviewed the course of parliamentary work in the Sultanate of Oman and its stages of development, outlining the Shura Council's mandates and roles as set out in the Basic Statute of the State and the Law of the Council of Oman.

He also addressed the Council's role in supporting the development process and participating in

the discussion of national issues, in addition to reviewing legislative work mechanisms, the role of the Secretariat General in supporting the work of the Council and its Members, the system governing ordinary sittings, and the mandates and working mechanisms of the standing committees.

The visit programme also included a familiarisation tour of the



Council building, encompassing the Shura Council's plenary hall, where the delegation received a briefing on its facilities and the modern technologies used in managing sittings and the electronic voting mechanism on draft laws.

The delegation also visited the Library of the Council of Oman, where it was introduced to the knowledge resources, books and

recent studies available to support parliamentary work.

NDC Commandant meets Indian delegation

Rear Admiral Ali Abdullah Al Shidi, Commandant of the National Defence College (NDC) at the Academy for Strategic and Defence Studies, received on Monday at Bait Al Falaj Camp a delegation from the National Defence College of the Republic of India, led by Air Vice Marshal Manish Vasan Kumar Patel, Senior Directing Staff at the National Defence College of the Republic of India.

During the meeting, both sides discussed a number of topics, particularly in academic fields.

The visiting delegation also listened to a briefing on the National Defence College and its facilities and equipment, and toured the college's various departments.

Asian national arrested for theft from shop

BAHLA: An Asian national was arrested for allegedly stealing cash, mobile phones and electronic devices from a commercial shop in the Wilayat of Bahla. The Arrest was carried out by Al Dakhiliyah Governorate Police Command.

Legal procedures are being completed against the suspect.

Two robbers held

Two individuals of African nationality were arrested for forcibly breaking into an apartment in the Wilayat of Yanqul and robbing expatriates of the same nationality of their cash and mobile phones.

The arrest was carried out by Al Dhahirah Governorate Police Command.

Oman, Uzbekistan discuss documentary, scientific ties

TASHKENT: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the National Records and Archives Authority (NRAA), discussed prospects of documentary and scientific cooperation, as well as opportunities for conducting joint studies and research on aspects of historical communication with Central Asian regions, and utilising documents, manuscripts, and historical sources to document these ties and highlight their extension across ages.

This came during a visit by a delegation led by Dr. Hamad Mohammed Al Dhoyani, Chairman of the National Records and Archives Authority, and in the presence of Wafa Jabr Al Busaidi, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Republic of Uzbekistan, to a number of archival, scientific, intellectual, and cultural institutions in the cities of Samarkand, Bukhara, and Tashkent.

The visit included the Imam Al Bukhari Center, the Document



Archive Branch in Samarkand, Bukhara State University, the Abu Rayhan Biruni Institute of Oriental Studies, the Islamic Civilization Center, and the National Archives of Uzbekistan.

The Authority discussed with

the concerned institutions ways to develop cooperation in the fields of document and manuscript preservation, maintenance, restoration, digitisation, microfilming, scientific research, publishing, and capacity building, alongside



exchanging sources of mutual interest and activating scientific cooperation frameworks between the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Uzbekistan.

The Authority's delegation learned about Uzbek experiences in document and archive management, mechanisms for preserving, maintaining, and providing access to archival collections and manuscripts, and technologies used in digitisation and electronic archiving, alongside a number of scientific and research initiatives and projects concerned with preserving

historical and cultural heritage.

Manuscript restoration

The Authority and the Abu Rayhan Biruni Institute of Oriental Studies agreed to activate the signed memorandum of cooperation between them and work on several practical tracks in the fields of microfilming, manuscript restoration and maintenance, studying catalogs, and making copies of manuscripts of mutual interest available, alongside scientific research and publishing.

Dr. Hamad Mohammed Al Dhoyani emphasised the importance of expanding documentary and scientific cooperation fields between the two countries and building upon their shared historical and cultural ties, noting the importance of activating existing cooperation according to clear work programmes that contribute to exchanging knowledge and expertise, supporting scientific research, and preserving documents

and manuscript heritage.

For her part, Ambassador Wafa Jabr Al Busaidi affirmed the importance of the distinguished relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Uzbekistan, pointing out that the visit of the Authority's delegation reflects mutual interest in enhancing cooperation in scientific, cultural, and historical fields, and providing copies of available manuscripts to supply the Authority to support scientific research and publishing.

The visit comes within the framework of the National Records and Archives Authority's keenness to enhance its cooperation with counterpart institutions and exchange expertise and knowledge in documentary, archival, and scientific fields, contributing to preserving and providing access to documentary and manuscript heritage, and strengthening cultural and historical ties between the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Uzbekistan. -ONA



Celebrating the Women Redefining the Future



H.E. Lujaina Mohsin Darwish, Chairperson, ITICS – Mohsin Haider Darwish LLC, Honorary Consul for South Africa in the Sultanate of Oman



Marvam Issa Al Zadjali, Founder and Chairperson, Dar Al Atta'a



Fadi Kattar, Chief Operating Officer, Muscat Media Group



Chenling Zhang, Group Chief Operating Officer, One Road Group, UAE



Dr. Adhari Al Zaabi, Associate Professor, College of Medicine and Health Sciences



Shatha Salim Al Maskiry, Country Managing Director, Protiviti Oman



Gopalakrishnan G., General Manager, Asian Paints

MUSCAT: The third edition of The Origin – Women Forum & Awards 2026, organised by Muscat Media Group, publisher of Times of Oman and Al Shabha, in collaboration with Gulf Leaders Circle and managed by TEvents, was held on 26 August 2026 at JW Marriott Hotel Muscat. The event brought together more than 170 delegates, including accomplished women leaders, entrepreneurs, business executives, policymakers, professionals and emerging leaders from Oman, the GCC and beyond. Aligned with Oman Vision 2040, the half-day forum celebrated women's leadership, innovation, empowerment and impact through keynote addresses, thought-leadership sessions, a

panel discussion and the presentation of The Origin 2026 Awards. The event commenced with a welcome address by Fadi Kattar, Chief Operating Officer, Muscat Media Group, who highlighted the importance of recognising women's achievements and creating platforms that inspire the next generation to lead with purpose. The event was honoured by the presence of H.E. Lujaina Mohsin Darwish, Chairperson of MHD-ITICS, who served as Guest of Honour and Keynote Speaker. Her keynote reflected on leadership, progress and the importance of empowering women to create meaningful and lasting impact. The forum featured distinguished speakers including Mar-

yam Issa Al Zadjali, Founder and Chairperson, Dar Al Atta'a; Chenling Zhang, Group Chief Operating Officer, One Road Group, UAE; Dr. Adhari Al Zaabi, Associate Professor, College of Medicine and Health Sciences; Shatha Salim Al Maskiry, Country Managing Director, Protiviti Oman and Gopalakrishnan G., General Manager, Asian Paints. Their sessions explored leadership, innovation, transformation, AI literacy, purpose and legacy. A key highlight was the panel discussion, "Beyond Expectations: Women at the Forefront of Progress." The panel explored the evolving role of women in leadership, overcoming barriers, building inclusive organisations, de-

veloping future-ready capabilities and creating greater opportunities for women to contribute to business and society. The Origin 2026 was presented by Lincoln, with Talabat, Asian Paints, Bella, MHD-ITICS, Muscat Eye Laser Center and AmCham Oman as Support Partners. Europcar supported the event as Mobility Partner, Thawani Pay as Fintech Partner, Floward as Floral Partner and Capital Store as Gift Partner. The Origin continues to provide a platform to recognise women who lead, celebrate meaningful achievements and create conversations that inspire greater participation, opportunity and leadership for women across Oman and beyond.



Panelists: Mahira Al Raisi, Chief People Officer, Sohar International; Wafa Ibrahim Al Ajmi, Assistant General Manager – Transaction & Government Banking, Bank Muscat; Eman Al Zakwani, Head of Corporate Performance – SOCP, Petroleum Development Oman; Dr. Nooreen Al Balushi, Director of Organ Transplantation, Ministry of Health; Hawraa Fida Hussain Al Lawati, Vice President – Customer Experience, Al Mouj Muscat. Moderated by Samah Al Rawahi, Communications Specialist



THE ORIGIN AWARDS 2026



The Origin 2026 Awards recognised exceptional women and organisations for leadership, innovation, professional excellence, social contribution and commitment to women's empowerment.

THE ORIGIN 2026 AWARD WINNERS

- Excellence in CSR Initiative for Women
The Diplomatic Club
- Excellence in Women Empowerment at the Workplace – Ecommerce
Talabat
- Excellence in Women Empowerment at the Workplace – Banking
Bank Muscat
- Excellence in Developing Women Talent & Job Creation
Arabian Car Marketing
- Excellence for Women in Leadership – Banking
Sohar International
- Medical Aesthetics Influencer of the Year
Hanan Khalid
- Dermatologist and Aesthetic Specialist of the Year
Dr. Samar Hassan
- Young Global Omani Professional of the Year
Samah Al Rawahi
- Social Change Champion
Wujood Nasser Al Zadjali, Founder, Al Wujood Oman
- Entrepreneur of the Year – Community Impact
Hanna Arif, Founder, She Unites GCC
- Entrepreneur of the Year – Fashion Designing
Laila Fadhl, Founder, Luvashk
- Entrepreneur of the Year – Tourism and Hospitality
Sara Chortani, CEO & Founder, Funun Hospitality & Tourism
- Industry Leader of the Year – Air Mobility
Imissar Nasser Ali Al Hosni
- Industry Leader of the Year – Eye Care
Dr. Maria Alejandra Cancino, Muscat Eye Laser Center
- Industry Leader of the Year – Legal Services
Sadeh Buchanan, Dentons
- Industry Leader of the Year – Digital Transformation
Nadine Zureikat, Elevatus
- Industry Leader of the Year – Transformational Excellence
Eman Al Zakwani, Petroleum Development Oman
- Industry Leader of the Year – Real Estate
Hawraa Fida Hussain Al Lawati, Al Mouj Muscat
- Industry Leader of the Year – Banking
Mahira Al Raisi, Sohar International
- HR Leader of the Year – Fintech
Mahra Al Juma, Thawani Pay
- Public Service Leader of the Year – Sports
Hiba Said Al Naabi, Co-Founder, Shooting Stars Oman
- Public Service Leader of the Year – Community Support
Maryam Issa Al Zadjali, Founder, Dar Al Atta'a
- Lifetime Achievement Award
Eng. Naashiah Saud Al Kharusi
- Lifetime Achievement Award
Sharifa Al Harthy



Excellence in CSR Initiative for Women
The Diplomatic Club



Excellence in Women Empowerment at the Workplace – Ecommerce
Talabat



Excellence in Women Empowerment at the Workplace – Banking
Bank Muscat



Excellence in Developing Women Talent & Job Creation
Arabian Car Marketing



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Samah Al Rawahi



Social Change Champion
Wujood Nasser Al Zadjali, Founder, Al Wujood Oman



Entrepreneur of the Year – Community Impact
Hanna Arif, Founder, She Unites GCC



Entrepreneur of the Year – Fashion Designing
Laila Fadhl, Founder, Luvashk



Entrepreneur of the Year – Tourism and Hospitality
Sara Chortani, CEO & Founder, Funun Hospitality & Tourism



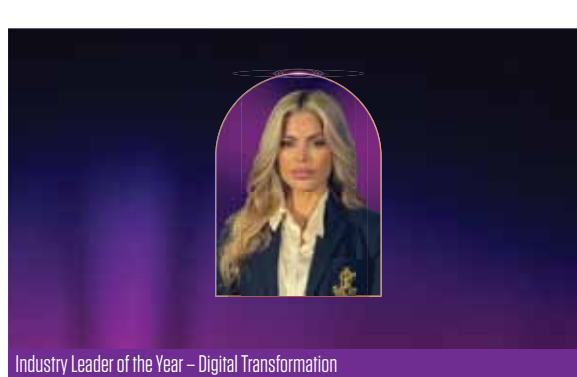
Industry Leader of the Year – Air Mobility
Imissar Nasser Ali Al Hosni



Industry Leader of the Year – Eye Care
Dr. Maria Alejandra Cancino, Muscat Eye Laser Center



Industry Leader of the Year – Legal Services
Sadeh Buchanan, Dentons



Industry Leader of the Year – Digital Transformation
Nadine Zureikat, Elevatus



Industry Leader of the Year – Transformational Excellence
Eman Al Zakwani, Petroleum Development Oman



Industry Leader of the Year – Real Estate
Hawraa Fida Hussain Al Lawati, Al Mouj Muscat



Industry Leader of the Year – Banking
Mahira Al Raisi, Sohar International



HR Leader of the Year – Fintech
Mahra Al Juma, Thawani Pay



Public Service Leader of the Year – Sports
Hiba Said Al Naabi, Co-Founder, Shooting Stars Oman



Public Service Leader of the Year – Community Support
Maryam Issa Al Zadjali, Founder, Dar Al Atta'a



Lifetime Achievement Award
Eng. Naashiah Saud Al Kharusi



Lifetime Achievement Award
Sharifa Al Harthy

Al Ansab–Al Jafnayn dualisation project work 90% complete

The project forms part of the Muscat Municipality’s efforts to develop the road network and enhance infrastructure efficiency, contributing to smoother traffic flow, improved road safety

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Muscat Municipality continues to implement the Al Ansab–Cement Factory–Al Jafnayn Road Dual Carriageway Project, which has achieved an actual completion rate of 90.17%.

The project forms part of the Municipality’s efforts to develop the road network and enhance infrastructure efficiency, contributing to smoother traffic flow, improved road safety, and meeting the needs of urban and economic growth in Muscat Governorate.

The project extends for approximately 15 kilometres, starting from the Falaj Al Sham area in Bausher and extending to the Al Rusayl–Bidbid Road intersection in the Al Jafnayn area in Seeb. It involves the construction of a dual carriageway with three lanes in each direction, increasing the road’s capacity and improving traffic efficiency between Bausher and Seeb.

This project comprises developing three roundabouts along Al Ansab Street, on the section between Muscat Expressway and the Falaj Al Sham area, transforming them into multi-level interchanges incorporating bridges and tunnels.



Additionally, constructing four new intersections in the regions of Al Awabi, the Cement Factory, the entrance to Misfah Industrial Area, and Al Jafnayn.

Thereby boosting traffic flow and reducing traffic congestion. The works consist of improvements to numerous service roads running parallel to the main road, constructing surface water drain-

age channels, and implementing necessary protection works.

Thereby enhancing the road’s resilience to various climatic conditions while advancing safety and sustainability across the infrastructure.

The project’s design and implementation were based on diverse specialised technical studies, including traffic, geological and hy-

drological studies, and topographical surveying.

These studies ensure that the project’s components are aligned with the characteristics of the area, traffic requirements, and urban expansion.

Upon completion, this project is expected to enhance connectivity between Bausher and Seeb wilayats, reduce commuting times, advance the efficiency of transport and logistics services, and facilitate access to residential, industrial and service regions.

It will support urban, economic and investment activities along this project route.

Thereby strengthening infrastructure efficiency and meeting the requirements of Muscat Governorate’s continuous growth.



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IN JEDDAH

Preparations on track for a strong show at the Gulf Cup, says Oman coach Sektioui

MUSCAT: Tarik Sektioui, head coach of the Oman national football team, affirmed that preparations for the 27th Gulf Cup, scheduled to be held in Jeddah from September 23 to October 6, come within a work programme that extends beyond the limits of the tournament.

He pointed out that the goal is to build a national team capable of competing with and matching strong teams in the continent.

Sektioui explained during a press conference on Monday that the technical staff attaches great importance to physical and mental aspects alongside working to develop technical aspects, noting that the current stage requires dealing with upcoming commitments in a balanced manner while maintaining focus on age-group categories, which represent a foundation for the development of Omani football.

He indicated that the period he spent with the national team confirmed a great desire among players to develop, with work proceeding according to a vision extending over the short and long terms, and that he seeks to lay down clear foundations that lead the team to the required level.

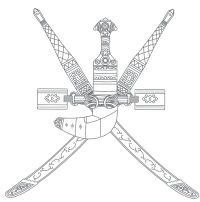
He clarified that the beginning of his mission included holding a short training camp aimed at getting to know the players closely, assessing their capabilities, and understanding their mindsets and how they handle the requirements of the current stage.

The national team head coach affirmed that the ambition in the Gulf Cup is to deliver a distinguished performance and present the team in a competitive manner, explaining that thinking does not stop at the limits of the tournament, but rather extends to upcoming commitments. — **ONA**

Full story @ timesofoman.com/sports



وزارة التراث والسياحة
Ministry of Heritage and Tourism



Internal Tender Announcement

Tender No.	119/2026/MHT/HQ-22	Tender Name	Providing cleaning services for the Heritage and Tourism Administration building in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate and its sites for the years 2027 -2028
Fees of Tender Documents (Non-refundable)		25 	
Tender Document Sales End Date		7/9/2026	
Last Date for Bid Submission		29/9/2026	
Grade		First , Second , Third , Forth	
E-Tendering Portal		https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om	
International specialized firms registered with the Authority for Projects, Tenders and Local Content (Secretariat General of the Tender Board) under the grade mentioned above, and wishing to participate in the above-mentioned tender, may obtain the tender documents through the Tender Board's e-Tendering portal via the following link: https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om			
Bids that comply with the technical conditions and specifications must be submitted accompanied by an electronic tender bond issued through the e-Tendering system by a bank licensed and operating in the Sultanate of Oman, whether a local bank or an international bank having a registered branch in the Sultanate. The value of the tender bond shall not be less than one percent (1%) of the bid value and shall remain valid for a period of ninety (90) days from the date of bid submission. Scanned copies or manually uploaded bank guarantees will not be accepted.			
The Ministry shall not be obligated to accept the lowest or any other bids			
The bid submission period starts after the end of the inquiry period shown in the e-tendering system, until the last date for submitting bids before (10:00 am, Oman time).			
Support and inquiries		For more information, related to the tender, kindly communicate through the website of the e-tendering system: https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om	
		For inquiries related to the technical support for the e-tendering system, kindly communicate through etenderhd@ptlc.gov.om or 24402244	
For further information		Email : sotic@mht.gov.om Phones : 22088348 - 22088085	

GULF TOURISM STRATEGY

GCC strengthens its position on international tourism map

< FROM A1 The economic contribution of tourism in the GCC grew at an average annual rate of 7.3% between 2019 and 2025, exceeding the global growth rate of 6.7%, she said. The total economic contribution of the tourism sector in the GCC reached approximately \$254.7 billion in 2025, reflecting the sector’s expanding role in the regional economy. The GCC has also strengthened its position on the global tourism map. The region accounted for around 5% of international tourist movements and 6.9% of global tourism receipts, indicating that its share of tourism revenues is higher than its share of international tourist arrivals.

The growth in tourism has coincided with progress in implementing the Gulf Tourism Strategy, which recorded an average implementation rate of approximately 73.8% of its objectives through 2025. The workshop



is focusing on the integration of tourism data from multiple sources and the use of advanced statistical methods to improve tourism-related information.

Participants are discussing the challenges of relying on a single data source, the tourism data ecosystem, and the legal, institutional and technical requirements for exchanging data between different authorities.

The sessions also cover methodologies for linking, matching, calibrating and reconciling data, as well as approaches to assessing the quality, consistency and comparability of tourism statistics among GCC countries. Another

key focus is the use of integrated data to identify tourism trends and improve tourism demand forecasting. The workshop also provides a platform for participating authorities to exchange technical expertise and practical experiences, identify statistical gaps and data deficiencies, and strengthen coordination between data-producing authorities and institutions that own tourism-related data. The GCC Statistical Centre said the discussions are expected to result in practical recommendations to improve the quality and methodological consistency of tourism statistics across the region.

Ministry of Defence

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

1. The Ministry of Defense (MOD) invites registered suppliers to participate in the following tender:

NO	SUBJECT	TENDER NUMBER	LAST DATE FOR INQUIRIES	LAST DATE TO SUBMIT BIDS	TENDER DOCUMENT FEES+ VAT
1	SUPLY OF ROPE HOSE CLAMP PAPER ABRASIVE AND LUMBER FOR THREE YEARS	23/2026	28/09/2026	12/10/2026	236 RO

- Tenders documents and terms may be obtained on payment from the office of the Secretary of the Tender Committee, gate No. 14 of MAM Camp between 0900 to 1300 hrs on the working days.
- Omanisation compliance certificate (Issued by Ministry of Labor) with a validity period not exceeding one month from the date of issuance must be submitted when purchasing tender’s document.
- Payment of Tender documents to be made by using of any Visa Electron Cards or "Visa credit" Cards or through Smart Card issued from all the banks are operated in Oman.

US forces strike two key Iranian missile platforms on Larak Island

Iranian state media reported that Tehran responded by launching an attack on two US military bases in the region



WASHINGTON: A US official confirmed that American forces struck two Iranian missile launch platforms on Larak Island on Sunday, marking the first known US military strikes against Iran since late July of the previous year. The small Iranian island, situ-

ated near the port of Bandar Abbas, overlooks key maritime navigation routes at the mouth of the Gulf, endowing it with a strategically significant role in the ongoing tensions surrounding Iran, regional maritime security, and global energy supply chains. Iranian state media reported

that Tehran responded by launching an attack on two US military bases in the region.

Iran says retaliatory strikes on US bases 'legitimate defence'
Iran's Foreign Ministry on Monday condemned US attacks on

Larak Island, and said strikes on US bases in response were "in accordance with the inherent right of legitimate defence." Iran on Monday said its forces struck US military bases in Jordan and the United Arab Emirates. The US bases in Jordan were used in the attacks on the island,

which killed and injured Iranian armed forces members and civilians, the Foreign Ministry said in a statement. In a separate statement on Iranian state media, Iran's Revolutionary Guards said two US air bases in Jordan were damaged by ballistic missiles. Citing Iran's army, Iranian state television reported US forces and helicopters were targeted with drones at the Al Minhad Air Base in the United Arab Emirates. The US military has not yet commented on the reports of Iranian retaliatory attacks. The resurgence of hostilities follows weeks during which the administration of President Donald Trump intensified its campaign to pressure Tehran and its commercial partners through the imposition of high-impact economic sanctions, deliberately opting for

financial pressure over military escalation. **US military says strikes were 'limited, precise action'** The US military's Central Command has rejected Iranian claims that its Sunday strikes were an act of aggression. "US forces took limited, precise action against IRGC minelaying forces posing an imminent threat in the Strait of Hormuz," it said on social media. "In essence, Iran created the threat and the US military eliminated it to protect civilian mariners, commercial shipping, and the free flow of global commerce." Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps had earlier called the US strikes an "act of aggression" aimed at resolving "domestic problems" and its "diminished credibility." — Agencies

ON SIDELINES OF SCO SUMMIT



President Putin meets Xi Jinping

BISHKEK: Russian President Vladimir Putin met with his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping on Monday on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. In a post on X, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that the two leaders held a bilateral meeting. "On August 31, President of Russia Vladimir Putin & President of China Xi Jinping held a meeting in Bishkek," the Ministry said. President Putin said at the meeting that his country is ready to work with China to make the bilateral visa-free regime permanent if Beijing considers this possible and useful, according to Russian News Agency TASS. "We are ready to work together to make the visa-free regime permanent if the Chinese side considers this possible and useful," Putin said, the report stated. President Putin noted that visa-free travel had helped increase tourist flows between the countries by 43% in the first half of the year. The Chinese President also met with Uzbek President

Shavkat Mirziyoyev. President Mirziyoyev said in a post on X that they discussed strengthening of cooperation between the two countries. "On the sidelines of the #SCO summit, President Shavkat #Mirziyoyev held talks with Chinese President Xi Jinping in #Bishkek. The leaders discussed further strengthening multifaceted cooperation between #Uzbekistan and #China across key areas," he said. Earlier, President Jinping also met with Kyrgyz President Sadyr Zhaparov. "President of Kyrgyzstan Sadyr Zhaparov @sadyrzhaparovkg held talks with President Xi Jinping. President Xi noted that in recent years, China-Kyrgyzstan relations have developed by leaps and bounds," Mao Ning, Spokesperson of the China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said in a post on X. "The signing of the treaty between China and Kyrgyzstan on permanent good-neighbourliness, friendship and cooperation will provide an important foundation for the two countries to enjoy lasting friendship and unwavering mutual support," the post added. — ANI

KENYA

Passengers stranded amid airport staff strike

NAIROBI: Thousands of passengers were stranded or greatly delayed overnight and on Monday at Kenya's biggest international airport as workers' slow-down strike continued into its second day. The strike at Nairobi's Jomo Kenyatta Airport by Kenya Aviation Workers' Union (KAWU) is the latest in a series over poor working conditions and the lack of a collective bargaining agreement with the country's Civil Aviation Authority. KAWU has also accused the Kenya Airports Authority (KAA) of a lack of support for workers, and voiced its disapproval of a plan to use youth volunteers as airport staff. Union leader Moss Ndiema said that KAWU had met with government officials on Sunday to try and resolve the dispute, but were unsuccessful in coming to an agreement.



"Nothing is happening, updates are reaching us late. It's ruining our itinerary," 22-year-old traveller William Obino told French news agency AFP. Kenya Airways said that flights were departing about two hours late on average. Rwanda's RwandaAir said on Sunday it had to cancel two flights due to concerns over air traffic control issues in Nairobi. The KAA issued a statement saying it was "working closely with the relevant aviation agencies, airlines and other stakeholders to manage the situation, minimise disruption and facilitate the smooth flow of airport operations." — DW

Honouring Excellence in Social Impact

Jawa'iz Basma 2026 is a distinguished awards evening that honours individuals, organisations and initiatives making a meaningful difference to communities across Oman through their contributions to social progress, environmental responsibility and economic well-being.

30th September, 2026
JW Marriott Hotel Muscat

AWARD CATEGORIES

- Biodiversity Conservation Initiative
- Environment Protection Initiative
- Environmental Advocacy and Action Initiative
- Clean Energy Initiative
- Community Healthcare Initiative
- Community Education Initiative
- Specially-abled Support Initiative
- Youth Engagement Initiative
- Women Empowerment Initiative
- Financial Inclusion Initiative
- SMEs Development Initiative
- Community Development and Empowerment Initiative
- Public-Private Partnership for Community Development
- Public Engagement Initiative
- Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Initiative
- In Country Value (ICV) Initiative
- Outstanding Omanisation Achievement
- Skills Development Initiative
- Social Entrepreneurship Initiative
- Leadership in Sustainable Business Practice
- Leadership in ESG
- Leadership in ICV
- Leadership in CSR
- Social Impact Leader of the Year and many more

The event will showcase inspiring efforts that create lasting community impact and support Oman's broader sustainability and development goals.

SCAN TO NOMINATE

For partnerships, table bookings or award nominations, contact:

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MEDIA PARTNERS: **Times of Oman** | **Jawab**
MANAGED BY: **Jawa'iz Basma**

OMAN OIL PRICE RISES
The price of Oman crude oil has increased, with prices for delivery by October 2026 reaching \$94.31. The price of Oman crude oil rose by \$2.64 from the price of Friday, which was \$91.67.

MARKET

BUSINESS & FINANCE



MSX INDEX ENDS HIGHER
The MSX index closed at 7,604.01 points, up by 0.35% from previous close. The Shariah Index ended up by 0.04% at 610.88 points. Oman Education & Training, up 10.00%, was the top gainer while, Aman REIT, down 4.11%, was the top loser.



Made in Oman, for Oman.

Maal

The National Payment Card

Find Out More

Bank Muscat. Better Everyday.

Treasury bills worth OMR26.9mn issued

Treasury bills are short-term highly secured financial instruments issued by the Ministry of Finance, and they provide licensed commercial banks the opportunity to invest their surplus funds



MUSCAT: Oman's central bank raised OMR26.9 million by way of allotting treasury bills on Monday. The value of the allotted treasury bills include OMR20.4 million, for a maturity period of 91 days. The average accepted price reached OMR99.051 for every OMR100, and the minimum accepted price arrived at OMR99.050 per OMR100. The average discount rate and the average yield reached 3.80651% and 3.84298%, respectively. Additionally, treasury bills

amounting to OMR5.5 million for a maturity period of 182 days was also issued. The average accepted price reached OMR98.065 for every OMR100, and the minimum accepted price arrived at OMR98.065 per OMR100. The average discount rate and the average yield reached 3.88063% and 3.95720%, respectively. Moreover, another lot of treasury bills amounting to OMR1 million for a maturity period of 364 days was also issued on Monday. The average accepted price reached

OMR96.210 for every OMR100, and the minimum accepted price arrived at OMR96.210 per OMR100. The average discount rate and the average yield reached 3.80041% and 3.95012%, respectively. Treasury bills are short-term highly secured financial instruments issued by the Ministry of Finance, and they provide licensed commercial banks the opportunity to invest their surplus funds. The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) acts as the Issue Manager and provides the added advantage of ready li-

quidity through discounting and repurchase facilities (Repo). It may be noted that the interest rate on the Repo operations with CBO is 4.25% while the discount rate on the treasury bills Discounting Facility with CBO is 4.75%. Furthermore, treasury bills promote the local money market by creating a benchmark yield curve for short-term interest rates. Additionally, the Government may also resort to this instrument whenever felt necessary for financing its recurrent expenditures. -ONA

AIMS TO EMPOWER SMES



Cooperation agreement signed to implement Riyadh Plus programme

MUSCAT: The Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development (Riyada) has signed a cooperation agreement with Namaa Electricity Supply Company to implement the Riyadh Plus programme, which aims to provide supportive solutions and benefits for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) holding the Riyadh Card, thereby enabling them to settle their electricity service dues and enhancing business continuity. The cooperation agreement aims to empower SMEs to apply optimal electricity consumption mechanisms, contributing to the reduction of electricity bill amounts, while also providing flexible payment solutions to help them address their financial obligations and strengthen their capacity for recovery and business continuity. The agreement further seeks

to reduce instances of delayed payment of electricity consumption bills, minimise service disconnections resulting from accumulated arrears, and improve collection efficiency to limit the build-up of outstanding debts. It also aims to enhance the customer experience and raise satisfaction levels, while developing institutional partnerships that serve the SME sector. Additionally, the agreement provides for the updating of subscriber data for this segment, thereby contributing to improved quality of services provided to them. The cooperation agreement was signed by Sayyid Mazin Saif Al Busaidi, Deputy Chairman for SME Development (Riyada), and Eng. Ahmed Abdullah Al Fazari, Acting Chief Executive Officer of Namaa Electricity Supply Company. -ONA

COMPREHENSIVE NATIONAL FRAMEWORK



Social investment forum calls for stronger cross-sector cooperation

SALALAH: The outcomes of the "Social Investment and Sustainable Development 2026" forum have underscored the critical importance of sustained dialogue, cross-sectoral integration among all relevant stakeholders, and the continued exchange of knowledge and expertise. In its concluding session, the forum issued a set of recommendations calling for the development of a comprehensive national framework for social investment, the strengthening of multi-sectoral partnerships, the adoption of clear indicators for impact measurement and governance, and the advancement of financing instruments and incentive structures for social enterprises. Additionally, the forum emphasised the necessity of building the capacities of entrepreneurs and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), thereby contributing to the creation of a more cohesive ecosystem capable of effectively responding to social and developmental challenges. The "Social Investment and Sustainable Development 2026" Forum was organised by Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), represented by its Social Investment Centre,

over the course of two days. The event centered on transitioning from dialogue to actionable solutions, transforming challenges and opportunities into implementable initiatives, and forging partnerships that enhance the impact and sustainability of social investment. This was achieved through an interactive programme that addressed human and idea empowerment, capacity building, integration and partnership enhancement, and innovative financing mechanisms. The second day of the forum featured an interactive agenda covering human and idea empowerment, capacity development, strengthening integration and partnerships, alongside an exploration of innovative financing mechanisms and their role in supporting social initiatives and converting them into sustainable, measurable projects. The programme commenced with a session titled "What Have We Learned and Where Are We Heading?" which reviewed the principal findings from the first day's deliberations and connected discussions and interventions with practical steps and actionable outcomes to be built upon in the subsequent phase. -ONA

PIVOTAL ROLE

Bank Muscat's capital market leadership reaffirmed with overwhelming success of Omifco IPO

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, has successfully advised on the landmark IPO of Oman India Fertiliser Company (Omifco), one of Oman's largest industrial enterprises and a leading regional producer of urea and ammonium. Bank Muscat played a pivotal role in the transaction, acting as the sole Issue Manager and Joint Global Coordinator alongside another international bank as well as a collecting bank alongside Meethaq Islamic Banking. The offering comprised the sale of 1.672 billion shares representing 25% of OMIFCO's total share capital, raising approximately RO 260.9 million (US\$678 million). That made the transaction one of the largest public offerings on the Muscat Stock Exchange in recent years and the region's largest IPO of the year 2026 so far amidst heightened geopolitical volatility. OMIFCO's IPO is the only IPO of scale in GCC year-to-date and notably it received strong participation from marquee institutional investors from across the regional and international markets which is a further testament to the ongoing resurgence of the Sultanate's capital market. The subscription period, which ran from 16th-25th of June 2026, generated overwhelming demand from both institutional and retail investors across Oman and internationally. Total subscription c. reached 18 times of the shares on offer, with aggregate subscription of approximately RO 4.7 billion (US\$12.2 billion), the highest subscription ever recorded for an IPO on the Muscat Stock Exchange. The institutional tranche alone was covered 274 times. Shares were priced at the top of the marketed range and surged more than



20% on first day of its trading debut, reflecting the strength of investor conviction in the offering. The robust performance of the IPO reinstated the confidence of investors in Oman's capital markets, paving the way for future divestment transactions from OIA which are in the pipeline. Bank Muscat's Investment Banking team, as the sole Issue Manager and Joint Global Coordinator, played a pivotal role across every stage of the transaction lifecycle, from transaction structuring, stakeholder management, regulatory coordination, close investor engagement, issuance pricing and managing subscriptions and settlements. The Bank worked closely with OMIFCO's shareholders, including OQ SAOC, IFFCO and KRIBHCO, to craft a compelling equity story anchored in OMIFCO's position as the largest fertiliser complex in Oman and among the top five in the GCC, its long-standing offtake relationships, and its strategic relevance to global food security amid shifting trade flows. The Bank also took lead in developing an attractive dividend policy which reflects the robust business profile and provides a compelling investment proposition for the investors. The Bank's transaction structuring expertise, combined with its

deep engagement with institutional investors, was instrumental in creating a strong interest amongst institutional investors, consequently achieving a Shari'a-compliant offering that met the highest professional and regulatory standards, maximizing value for selling shareholders while simultaneously provide investors with a high-quality investment option in the industrial sector in the Sultanate. Beyond its role as Issue Manager, Bank Muscat also committed its collective institutional strength across spectrum maximizing subscriptions from institutions and retail investors which is reflected in Bank Muscat together with Meethaq Islamic Banking accounting for a majority of collections for the IPO. With the successful listing of OMIFCO, in which OQ SAOC held a 50% stake alongside IFFCO and KRIBHCO, Bank Muscat has led three consecutive successful public offerings connected to Oman's OQ Group, having previously served as Issue Manager and Joint Global Coordinator on the landmark OQ Gas Networks (OQGN) IPO in 2023, the largest in the Sultanate's history at the time, and as Issue Manager and Joint Global Coordinator on the OQ Base Industries (OQBI) offering in 2024. Across each of these transactions,

Bank Muscat has taken a leading structuring and execution role, consistently translating complex privatization mandates into world-class listings that command deep institutional and retail confidence. This track record cements the Bank's position as the partner of choice for advancement of the Sultanate's privatization programme and capital markets development agenda under Oman Vision 2040. Each successive mandate has allowed Bank Muscat's Investment Banking team to deepen its sector knowledge, refine its distribution reach across investor pools, and build repeatable, best-in-class execution playbooks, capabilities that were on full display in the record-breaking demand generated for OMIFCO. Commenting on the success of the IPO and Bank Muscat's contribution, Khalifa Abdullah Al Hatmi, Deputy General Manager of Investment Banking and Capital Markets at Bank Muscat said: "We are proud to have played a central role in what stands as one of the most successful IPOs in the history of the Muscat Stock Exchange. The OMIFCO IPO stands as a testament to the depth of investor confidence in the Sultanate of Oman's capital markets and industrial champions. This marks the third time Bank Muscat has led a successful public offering for the OQ Group in recent times, and each mandate has reinforced our position as the execution 'partner of choice'. The overwhelming subscription levels we witnessed - 18 times, with institutional demand covered 27 times followed by a 'blockbuster' listing - are a clear endorsement of the equity story we built around OMIFCO's strategic positioning, and of the rigor and discipline our team brought to every stage of this transaction."

MARKET

MSX index ends higher

Oman Education & Training, up 10.00%, was the top gainer while, Aman REIT, down 4.11%, was the top loser



MUSCAT: The MSX index closed at 7,604.01 points, up by 0.35% from previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 0.04% at 610.88 points. Oman Education & Training, up 10.00%, was the top gainer while, Aman REIT, down 4.11%, was the top loser. Shares of Sohar International Bank were the most active in terms of number of shares traded while OQBI were the most active in terms of turnover.

A total number of 9,637 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating turnover of RO 53.63 million, with more than 205.09 million shares changing hands. Out of 77 traded securities, 25 advanced, 24 declined, and 28 remained unchanged. At the session close, domestic investors were net buyers for RO 2700K while GCC & Arab investors were net sellers for RO 1658K, followed by foreign investors for RO 1041K worth of shares.

Financial Index closed at 13,385.26 points, up 0.65%. Prices of Ominvest, Al Madina Investments, Ahli Bank, Bank Nizwa, Bank Muscat were up by 5.49%, 4.23%, 1.52%, 0.69%, 0.49% re-

spectively. Prices of Takaful Oman, Sohar International Bank, Al Sharqia Investment, Oman & Emirates Investment, DID-IC were down by 1.61%, 1.07%, 0.99%, 0.77%, 0.71% respectively.

Industrial Index closed at 9,613.77 points, up 0.31%. Prices of Al Maha Ceramics, Oman Fisheries, Salalah Mills, Dhofar Cattle Feed, Muscat Thread Mill were up by 5.93%, 4.55%, 4.35%, 3.77%, 3.11% respectively. Prices of Oman Cement, Al Anwar Ceramics, Voltamp Energy, Gulf Mushroom Products, Oman Cables Industry were down by 0.84%, 0.72%, 0.58%, 0.23%, 0.15% respectively.

Services Index was up by 0.60% before closing at 3,060.38 points. Prices of Oman Education & Training, Oman Oil Marketing, Al Suwadi Power, Al Suwadi Power, OQ Exploration & Production were up by 10.00%, 9.92%, 2.15%, 2.15%, 1.71% respectively. Prices of Sharqiyah Desalination, National Gas, Al Jazeera Services, Oman Telecom, Barka Water & Power Company were down by 2.94%, 1.75%, 1.58%, 1.21%, 0.63% respectively.— **United Securities**

OMAN STOCKS

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE

INDICES

Index	High	Low	Value	Prev. Value	Diff.	Diff%
MSX 30 INDEX	7,604.01	7,568.34	7,604.01	7,577.85	26.17	0.35%
FINANCIAL INDEX	13,389.76	13,253.59	13,385.26	13,298.16	87.10	0.65%
Industry Index	9,646.59	9,584.25	9,613.77	9,584.25	29.52	0.31%
Services Index	3,060.38	3,039.21	3,060.38	3,042.17	18.21	0.60%
MSX Shariah Index	611.28	608.66	610.88	610.61	0.24	0.35%
MSX TR INDEX	11,764.29	11,709.10	11,764.29	11,723.81	40.48	0.35%
FINANCIAL TRIDX	16,462.01	16,294.59	16,456.47	16,349.40	107.08	0.65%
INDUSTRIAL TRIDX	12,354.83	12,275.00	12,312.80	12,275.00	37.81	0.31%
SERVICES TRIDX	4,100.34	4,071.97	4,100.34	4,075.93	24.40	0.60%
FIXED INCOME INDEX	1,291.27	1,291.27	1,291.27	1,253.83	37.44	2.99%

Trading Summary

Volume	Turnover	Trades	Market Cap	Up	Down	Equal	Sec. Traded
205,098,899	53,634,079	9,637	38,640,783,483	25	24	28	77

SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR MONDAY, AUGUST 31

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
REGULAR MARKET																
OM0000002572	OMAN OIL MARKETING	400	528	1	1.319	1.319	1.319	1.319	1.200	0.119	9.917	1.319	1.200	1.319	0.100	80,821,725
OM0000001533	OMINVEST	21,398	8,914	5	0.415	0.423	0.414	0.423	0.401	0.022	5.486	0.423	0.403	0.423	0.100	474,967,206
OM0000004925	ALBARTINAH POWER	198,677	37,653	23	0.185	0.192	0.185	0.192	0.185	0.007	3.784	0.192	0.189	0.192	0.100	128,575,387
OM0000004933	AL SUWADI POWER	167,917	31,611	30	0.186	0.190	0.186	0.190	0.186	0.004	2.151	0.190	0.188	0.190	0.100	135,737,205
OM0000009759	OQ EXPLORATION AND PRODUCTION	10,385,273	4,876,581	542	0.469	0.477	0.464	0.477	0.469	0.008	1.706	0.477	0.478	0.477	0.010	3,816,000,000
OM0000001020	ASTAD SHIPPING	7,237,342	1,772,535	1,247	0.242	0.247	0.241	0.246	0.242	0.004	1.653	0.246	0.248	0.246	0.000	1,281,351,093
OM0000004735	SEMBOOR SALALAH	304,920	78,752	38	0.256	0.261	0.256	0.258	0.256	0.002	0.781	0.258	0.258	0.258	0.100	246,270,563
OM0000005963	PHOENIX POWER	668,565	188,656	22	0.282	0.283	0.277	0.282	0.280	0.002	0.714	0.282	0.278	0.282	0.100	412,453,612
OM0000004420	BANK NIZWA	785,523	114,657	47	0.146	0.147	0.145	0.147	0.146	0.001	0.685	0.147	0.146	0.147	0.100	328,832,066
OM0000002796	BANK MUSCAT	11,287,692	4,615,383	611	0.410	0.412	0.408	0.412	0.410	0.002	0.488	0.412	0.451	0.412	0.100	3,092,535,590
OM0000003968	QOREPOO	20,100	6,453	5	0.321	0.322	0.321	0.322	0.321	0.001	0.312	0.322	0.318	0.322	0.100	209,604,042
OM0000002176	JAZEERA STEEL PRODUCTS	100,000	89,970	5	0.899	0.900	0.899	0.900	0.899	0.001	0.111	0.900	0.899	0.900	0.100	112,408,164
OM0000001087	OMAN UNITED INSURANCE	15,476	4,875	6	0.315	0.315	0.315	0.315	0.315	0.000	0.000	0.315	0.314	0.315	0.100	33,075,000
OM0000001483	NATIONAL BANK OMAN	9,450	4,631	3	0.490	0.490	0.490	0.490	0.490	0.000	0.000	0.490	0.485	0.490	0.100	796,713,714
OM0000002077	AL OMANIYA FINANCIAL SERVICES	1,440	210	1	0.146	0.146	0.146	0.146	0.146	0.000	0.000	0.146	0.146	0.146	0.000	46,050,882
OM0000002374	UNITED FINANCE	222,500	19,580	13	0.088	0.088	0.088	0.088	0.088	0.000	0.000	0.088	0.087	0.088	0.100	31,339,202
OM0000002549	BANK DHOFAR	31,170	6,754	25	0.217	0.217	0.215	0.217	0.217	0.000	0.000	0.217	0.212	0.223	0.100	659,636,281
OM0000003224	RENAISSANCE SERVICES	261,536	72,488	26	0.277	0.278	0.276	0.277	0.277	0.000	0.000	0.277	0.277	0.277	0.100	65,485,570
OM0000004248	SMN POWER HOLDING	5,000	945	1	0.189	0.189	0.189	0.189	0.189	0.000	0.000	0.189	0.171	0.189	0.100	37,731,128
OM0000004768	MADINA TAKAFUL	54,555	6,000	16	0.110	0.110	0.109	0.110	0.110	0.000	0.000	0.110	0.109	0.110	0.100	19,250,000
OM0000009098	OQ BASE INDUSTRIES (SF2)	57,925,188	14,893,662	1739	0.256	0.259	0.255	0.256	0.256	0.000	0.000	0.256	0.256	0.256	0.040	885,629,658
OM0000001707	OMAN CABLES INDUSTRY	22,825	77,604	2	3.400	3.400	3.395	3.395	3.400	-0.005	-0.147	3.395	3.395	3.430	0.100	304,531,500
OM0000002287	GULF MUSHROOM PRODUCTS	91,733	35,068	18	0.430	0.430	0.426	0.427	0.428	-0.001	-0.234	0.427	0.427	0.450	0.100	21,496,195
OM0000008934	ABRAJ ENERGY SERVICES	1,591,813	654,769	116	0.411	0.415	0.409	0.410	0.411	0.001	-0.243	0.410	0.410	0.411	0.100	315,782,000
OM0000003125	GLOBAL FINANCIAL INVESTMENT HO	142,941	47,441	8	0.330	0.339	0.330	0.339	0.340	-0.001	-0.294	0.339	0.330	0.339	0.100	67,800,000
OM0000009072	OQ GAS NETWORKS	31,429,336	7,082,794	1,554	0.226	0.227	0.224	0.226	0.227	-0.001	-0.441	0.226	0.226	0.226	0.100	978,721,006
OM0000003661	VOLTAMP ENERGY	200,198	34,408	60	0.174	0.174	0.171	0.173	0.174	-0.001	-0.575	0.173	0.172	0.173	0.010	173,000,000
OM0000003141	BARKA WATER AND POWER	313	49	0	0.157	0.157	0.157	0.157	0.158	-0.001	-0.633	0.157	0.150	0.157	0.100	25,120,000
OM0000001509	DHOFAR INTL DEVELOPMENT & INVEST	24,300	6,806	10	0.281	0.281	0.280	0.280	0.282	-0.002	-0.709	0.280	0.278	0.280	0.100	138,895,719
OM0000001681	OMAN EMIRATES HO	300	39	1	0.129	0.129	0.129	0.129	0.130	-0.001	-0.769	0.129	0.125	0.129	0.100	16,507,969
OM0000001749	OMAN CEMENT	840	495	1	0.589	0.589	0.589	0.589	0.594	-0.005	-0.842	0.589	0.565	0.589	0.100	194,884,056
OM0000003440	AL SHARQIYA INVESTMENT HO	83,117	8,292	8	0.101	0.102	0.099	0.100	0.101	-0.001	-0.981	0.100	0.096	0.100	0.100	9,000,000
OM0000003398	SOHAR INTERNATIONAL BANK	66,371,125	12,385,586	1,618	0.186	0.188	0.185	0.185	0.187	-0.002	-1.070	0.185	0.185	0.186	0.100	1,420,061,050
OM0000003026	OMAN TELECOM	2,935,127	4,068,382	149	1.400	1.400	1.380	1.383	1.400	-0.017	-1.214	1.383	1.383	1.383	0.100	1,037,250,000
OM0000002226	ALJAZEERA SERVICES	18,570	4,669	7	0.254	0.254	0.250	0.250	0.254	-0.004	-1.575	0.250	0.247	0.250	0.100	10,710,748
OM0000001152	OMAN NATIONAL ENG & INVESTMENT	4,000	584	0	0.146	0.146	0.146	0.146	0.151	-0.005	-3.311	0.146	0.147	0.151	0.100	21,900,000
Total		36			192,601,660	51,237,820	7,964									

Parallel Market

OM0000002580	OMAN EDUCATION & TRAINING INVESTMENTS	2,500	4,790	3	1.900	1.980	1.900	1.980	1.800	0.180	10.000	1.980	1.750	1.980	0.100	138,600,000
OM0000005005	ALMAHA CERAMICS	16,000	4,518	9	0.277	0.286	0.277	0.286	0.270	0.016	5.926	0.286	0.286	0.286	0.100	15,730,000
OM0000001889	SALALAH MILLS	6,672	4,003	6	0.600	0.600	0.600	0.600	0.575	0.025	4.348	0.600	0.600	0.600	0.100	37,477,838
OM0000001962	AL MADINA INVESTMENT HOLDING	775,432	56,533	63	0.071	0.074	0.071	0.074	0.071	0.003	4.225	0.074	0.071	0.073	0.100	3,189,400
OM0000001301	DHOFAR FOODS AND INVESTMENT	11,000	2,421	7	0.217	0.225	0.217	0.220	0.212	0.008	3.774	0.220	0.220	0.220	0.100	43,488,923
OM0000002036	MUSCAT THREAD MILLS	17,000	3,924	5	0.230	0.232	0.230	0.232	0.225	0.007	3.111	0.232	0.232	0.235	0.100	4,293,124
OM0000002200	AHLI BANK	100	20	1	0.200	0.200	0.200	0.200	0.197	0.003	1.523	0.200	0.200	0.214	0.100	555,658,183
OM0000001400	OMAN FLOUR MILLS	500	295	1	0.590	0.590	0.590	0.590	0.585	0.005	0.855	0.590	0.570	0.585	0.100	102,449,813
OM00000019823	OMAN GATEWAY FUND	412	428	3	1.037	1.040	1.037	1.040	1.032	0.008	0.775	1.040	1.040	1.065	0.000	28,521,836
OM0000001897	MALJAN COLLEGE	35,851	5,005	5	0.139	0.140	0.139	0.140	0.139	0.001	0.718	0.140	0.134	0.140	0.100	13,860,000
OM0000001020	OMAN CHROMITE	300	1,089	2	3.630	3.630	3.630	3.630	3.630	0.000	0.000	3.630	3.630	3.630	1.000	131,765,900
OM0000001178	MUSCAT GASES	2,408	330	4	0.136	0.139	0.136	0.139	0.139	0.000	0.000	0.139	0.138	0.139	0.100	4,170,000
OM0000001368	CONSTRUCTION MATERIAL INDUSTRIES	200	14	1	0.070	0.070	0.070	0.070	0.070	0.000	0.000	0.070	0.000	0.070	0.100	4,375,000
OM0000001426	OMAN REFRESHMENT	318	350	2	1.100	1.100	1.100	1.100	1.000	0.000	1.100	1.050	1.100	1.100	0.100	55,000,000
OM0000002028	GULF INTERNATIONAL CHEMICALS	500	35	1	0.070	0.070	0.070	0.070	0.070	0.000	0.000	0.070	0.069	0.077	0.100	1,470,000

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Nepal floods death toll tops 900, over 4,200 still remain missing

The missing persons include 25 Nepal Police personnel, 45 Nepal Army personnel, 13 Armed Police Force personnel, 15 Customs Office personnel and three Immigration Office

KATHMANDU: The death toll in the devastating flash floods in Nepal has risen to 903, up from 788, according to the latest data released by Nepal's National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority (NDRRMA) on Monday. The disaster has also left around



4,247 people missing, while 10,451 people have been rescued so far, the data showed. According to NDRRMA, the highest number of bodies have been recovered in Chitwan, where 272 casualties, including various human remains, have been reported. Nawalparasi (East) has recorded 207 deaths, followed by Nawalparasi (West) with 151, Nuwakot with 95, Gorkha with 62, Dhading with 55, Tanahun with 37 and Rasuwa with 24. The missing persons include 25 Nepal Police personnel, 45 Nepal

Army personnel, 13 Armed Police Force personnel, 15 Customs Office personnel and three Immigration Office personnel. Rasuwa has reported 865 missing persons and Nuwakot 1,548, according to District Emergency Operations Centre (DEOC) data. Another 933 people are reported missing from hydropower projects, while 65 are missing from Makwanpur. The number of missing foreign nationals has been put at 592. Rescue operations have continued across the flood-affected areas, with 10,451 people rescued to date.

The Nepal Army has carried out aerial rescues of 252 foreigners and 3,344 Nepali nationals. On August 30, 15 people from a hydropower site, including five Chinese and seven Indian nationals, were rescued, according to the authorities. A total of 411 flights have been conducted so far as part of rescue and relief operations, including seven flights on Monday. Relief operations have also been intensified, with food and non-food supplies transported to affected areas through 37 trucks and

35 Bolero vehicles. Relief materials were also dispatched through eight helicopter flights. Nearly 20,000 security personnel have been deployed, leading to 8,730 total rescues by ground forces. Aircrews have conducted 363 helicopter flights, airlifting 3,081 people (including 236 foreigners) and rescuing 279 individuals directly from a flooded hydropower tunnel in recent days.

NGOs step up to provide relief material to survivors amid flash floods

As devastating flash floods continue to affect parts of Nepal, local organisations and NGOs have also stepped up efforts to provide relief material and essential supplies to survivors in Nuwakot district. Small trucks were seen transporting relief material to flood-affected areas, with volunteers engaged in distributing supplies among people in need. The Rastriya Sarokar Mancha Nepal, Kathmandu, under its 'Karmansishtha Abhiyaan' (Mission of Duty) campaign, has sent its third batch of relief material, focusing on food supplies, basic amenities and essential items for affected families. Speaking to ANI, Rastriya Sa-

rokar Manch national spokesperson Pratik Joshi said, "This is part of our 'Karmansishtha Abhiyaan' (Mission of Duty) campaign. This is our third batch--the third vehicle. Our friends had also taken supplies from here previously; so, this is the third time we are bringing aid here. We have focused primarily on daily essentials--specifically food--and the most critical arrangements regarding food and accommodation." On the requirements of flood-affected people, Joshi said the government's attention was currently focused on rescue operations, and citizens needed to come forward to support those affected. "The primary issue is that the government's attention is currently divided due to the ongoing rescue operations. We believe that as Nepalis, we should step up to help fellow human beings. Since the government is unable to fully focus its attention there right now, we decided to make our own efforts to provide assistance," he said. "Based on what our friends shared with us--specifically regarding the need for food supplies, decent sleeping arrangements, and addressing gaps in basic amenities--we decided to focus on these areas," he added. —ANI

FORMALLY CHANGED

Lake Ontario is now called Lake America on Google Maps in US

WASHINGTON DC: Google Maps has changed the name of Lake Ontario to 'Lake America' for users in the United States, following US President Donald Trump's executive order mandating the change, according to media report. According to CNN, the change came after the US Geographic Names Information System (GNIS) formally changed the lake's name in the United States. "The US Geographic Names Information System (GNIS) has formally changed the name for 'Lake Ontario' to 'Lake America' in the United States," Google said in a statement on Saturday (local time), according to CNN. "Since we update Google Maps to reflect name changes in official government sources, which is GNIS for the US, people using Maps in the US will see 'Lake America'; those in Canada will continue to see 'Lake Ontario,'" the company added. CNN reported that Google said users outside the US and Canada will see both names, with "Lake America" appearing in parentheses after "Lake Ontario." Google said the change follows its "long-standing policy for bodies of water with names that vary from country to country." Lake Ontario is shared by Canada and the United States and is governed by the Boundary Waters Treaty, which was enacted in the early 20th century to prevent and settle disputes over shared waters. While Trump has broad authority over how the US govern-



menA map showing the name Lake America in place of Lake Ontario, after US President Donald Trump announced that he was changing the name of the smallest of the five Great Lakes, appears on a Google Maps page viewable only to US-based users t refers to geographic landmarks, he cannot compel other countries to adopt the same terminology. Meanwhile, alternatives to Google Maps, including Waze and Apple Maps, continued to identify the body of water as "Lake Ontario" as of Sunday afternoon, according to CNN. MapQuest also said in a social media post, "We're not changing it." Earlier on Saturday, the diplomatic rift between Washington and Ottawa reached new heights of symbolic defiance. Ontario Premier Doug Ford unveiled a massive billboard-style sign along the Canadian shore of Lake Ontario, delivering a firm rejection of US President Donald Trump's unilateral decree renaming the shared body of water "Lake America," reported CBC News. —ANI

US NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Over 20 may be missing after flash flood in US Grand Canyon: Authorities

LOS ANGELES: More than 20 people may be missing or unaccounted for following a flash flood in Grand Canyon National Park in the US state of Arizona, authorities said on Sunday. The "significant flash-flood event" occurred in Bright Angel Canyon and the Phantom Ranch area on Saturday, the US National Park Service said in a news release. It urged "anyone who knows of hikers or backpackers who were in the inner canyon along the Bright Angel Creek corridor on August 29, as well as anyone who had a campground reservation in the affected corridor, to provide information to the National Park Service Investigative Services Branch."

Park officials said they are continuing evacuation and response efforts in coordination with the Arizona Department of Public Safety, while working to account for individuals who may have been in the affected area. Park officials said in an earlier news release that a total of 62 individuals had been evacuated from the area as of Sunday morning, with additional evacuations scheduled for later Sunday. The flash flood caused significant damage to infrastructure throughout Bright Angel Canyon. Nearly all footbridges spanning Bright Angel Creek were destroyed, preventing hikers from crossing the creek, according to park officials. Officials said parts of Grand Canyon National Park had been closed and the Colorado River was closed to river traffic until further notice due to metal structures and debris entering the river. They also warned that addi-



tional thunderstorms and heavy rainfall were possible Sunday and Monday, potentially causing further flash flooding, debris flows and rockfall as well as changing trail and river conditions. Rainfall on the Kaibab Plateau caused the flash flood at about 2:30 pm on Saturday in Bright Angel Canyon and the Phantom Ranch area, according to park services.

People rescued by helicopter Parth Desai was hiking in Bright

Angel Canyon with a group when the rain started. "We saw the creek flood, waterfalls coming up out of nowhere, boulders, mud, landslides happening everywhere," he told the Associated Press. Making their way toward Phantom Ranch, the group saw a 4-foot (1-meter) debris wall headed toward them, forcing them to run up into a patch of cacti, he said. They were finally rescued by helicopter.

What caused the flash flood? The National Weather Service said up to 1 inch (2.5 cm) of rain fell in about 20 minutes in the area, with much of it running down the steep terrain. The natural phenomenon destroyed nearly all footbridges over Bright Angel Creek, and swept boulders and debris into the Colorado River. Water restrictions were prompted after the flooding damaged the park's sole water pipeline. More thunderstorms and heavy rain are expected into Monday. The park will remain open for day use. The Bright Angel Campground, Phantom Ranch and parts of the North Kaibab Trail were closed on Sunday. Overnight stays at lodges and hotels inside the park will be suspended from Monday. Colorado River rafting trips have also been halted.

— Agencies

EUROPEAN UNION

EU wants drones to spray pesticides, but it could backfire

BRUSSELS: In theory, the idea doesn't sound bad: Instead of using tractors to spray large quantities of pesticides over fields, drones could precisely spray herbicides, fungicides and insecticides only where they are actually needed. The plan would be to scan a field, identify affected areas and treat them selectively — significantly reducing pesticide use, according to the European Union's Omnibus X legislative package, which aims to simplify EU food and feed safety rules. After all, the bloc aims to halve the use of chemicals for plant protection by 2030. Until now, however, the EU had a decades-old ban on spraying pesticides from the air over agricultural land. Exceptions applied only to difficult-to-work terrain, such as steep vineyard slopes. Omnibus



X is now set to change that. In May, the European Council gave the legislative package the green light. **Drone use doesn't automatically mean less pesticides** "I think it makes sense in principle

to distinguish spray drones from conventional aerial application from a regulatory perspective," said Thomas Daum, an agricultural economist and human ecologist at the School of Global Studies at the University of Gothenburg. Daum

studies new technologies and their impact on agriculture. Compared with an airplane or helicopter, he said drones can generally spray more precisely. However, Daum also cautioned that "the drone itself does not save

any pesticide." He sees potential for using drones to respond more selectively to pest infestations — and thus reduce overall pesticide use. Another advantage for farmers could be the ability to respond quickly to an infestation "even when soils are wet or in difficult-to-access terrain." "At the same time, this flexibility lowers the barriers to treatment and could therefore also lead to spraying being carried out more frequently overall," Daum said. This could result in a technological lock-in — meaning that more efficient application could reinforce dependence on chemical crop protection. **Omnibus X aims to save administrative costs, cash** Chemical pesticides have been

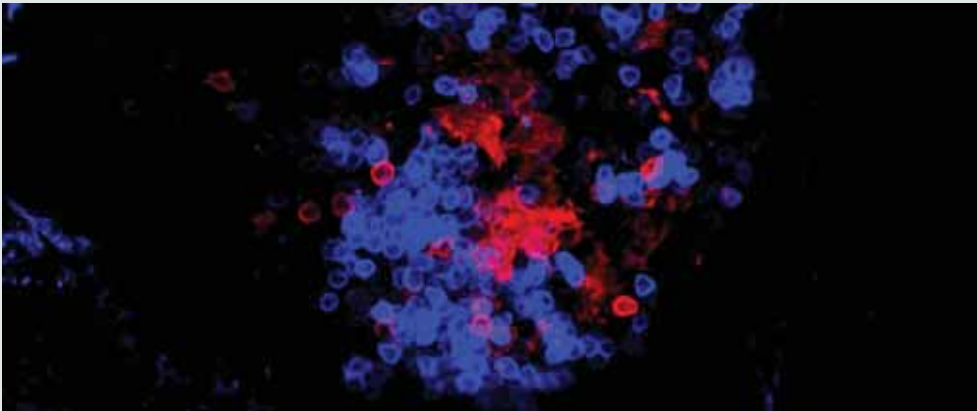
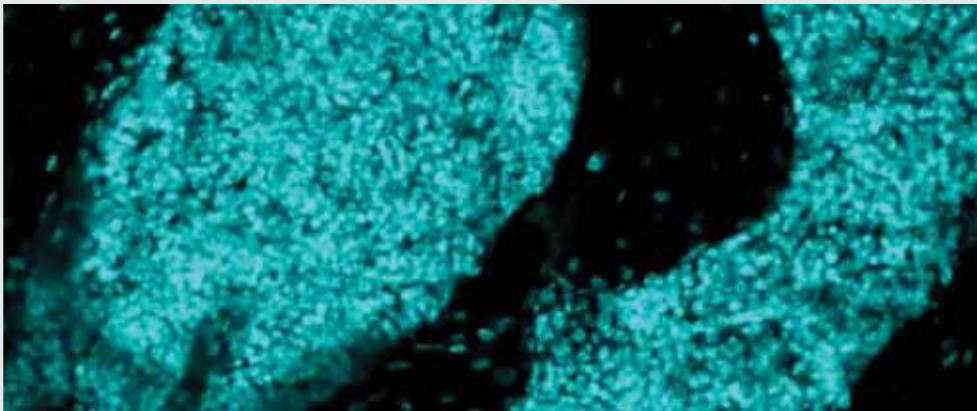
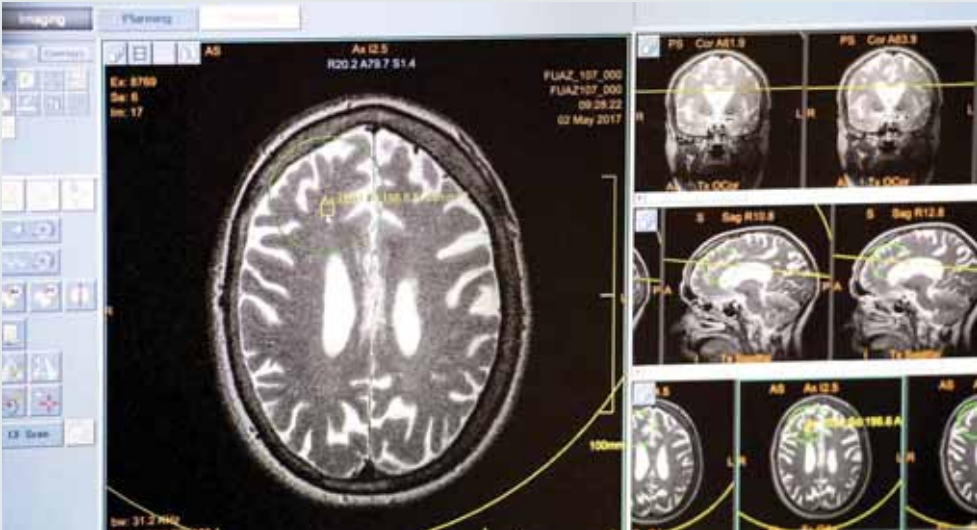
cause for concern for many researchers. Omnibus X is intended not only to make it easier to use spray drones, but also to change the way pesticides are approved. **Omnibus X** When the European Council approved Omnibus X in May, a group of researchers from 27 European research institutions voiced strong criticism. Among them was Carsten Brühl, a biologist at the Institute for Environmental Sciences at the Rheinland-Pfalz Technical University of Kaiserslautern-Landau. Brühl, who studies the effects of pesticides on the environment, called Omnibus X a "deregulation package" and is deeply alarmed by it.

— DW



SCIENTISTS DISCOVER NEW ‘IMMUNE HUBS’ IN SKULL BONE MARROW

“Immune hubs” that actively defend the brain have been discovered in mouse skull marrow. Similar cells exist in human skulls, but their role remains unclear.



The skull has traditionally been regarded largely as armour for the brain. New research from the United States suggests it may have another role: proactively helping to defend what lies beneath it. Researchers at Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis identified previously unknown immune “security stations” in the bone marrow of mouse skulls.

What the mouse experiments revealed
The lymph node-like structures responded to brain tumors before more distant lymph nodes in the neck did. When researchers disrupted the structures in mice with glioblastoma, an aggressive brain cancer, the tumours grew faster and the animals died sooner.
“The skull should no longer be viewed simply as a protective shell around the brain,” senior study author Jonathan Kipnis told DW.
“It contains specialised immune environments that appear capable of responding locally to changes within the brain.”
The discovery, published in the journal “Nature,” comes with an important caveat: The researchers have so far only demonstrated how the structures function in mice, not humans.
Kipnis cautioned that the human evidence remains preliminary: “We found similar immune cells in human skull marrow, suggesting that related structures may exist, but we have not yet demonstrated that they are organized or function in the same way as those in mice,” he said.
How scientists’ view of brain immunity changed
For much of the 20th century, the brain was described as “immune privileged” — unusually protected from immune activity because inflammation that is useful elsewhere can damage delicate brain tissue.
The blood-brain barrier, which tightly controls what can pass from the bloodstream into brain tissue, reinforced the idea that the brain was largely isolated from the body’s conventional immune system.

That picture has changed dramatically.
Researchers now know that the brain communicates continuously with the immune system, particularly through tissues surrounding the brain.
Kipnis’ lab helped drive that rethink in previous work, first by identifying lymphatic vessels in the membranes surrounding the brain and later by showing tiny channels connecting those membranes to the skull’s bone marrow.
“The traditional concept of immune privilege has already changed substantially,” Kipnis said. “Our findings add another layer by showing that specialized immune structures exist within the skull bone marrow, immediately adjacent to the brain.”
How the skull’s immune hubs are organised
The researchers tracked proteins moving from mouse brains through microscopic skull channels and into the bone marrow. There they found organised clusters of so-called B cells and T-cells. T cells help B cells in “creating large amounts of powerful antibodies that help fight disease and infection.”
Finding immune cells in bone marrow was not unusual. The surprise was their organisation into structures resembling lymph nodes elsewhere in the body. These immune hubs are where immune cells work together to respond to threats.
Being so close to the brain could allow the immune hubs a faster, more specialised immune response.
The lymph nodes in the neck are ‘shared’ with tissues such as the mouth, throat and skin,” Kipnis said.
“The skull structures may provide the brain with something resembling its own dedicated lymph nodes, allowing immune responses to be coordinated locally.”
Why the skull immune hubs are significant
“We have never seen such structures in healthy bone marrow before,” study co-author Jang Hyun Park said. “It is an exciting discovery that points out that a complex brain requires its own specialized immune structures to defend it.”
Marco Prinz, a neuroimmunologist at the University of Freiburg who was not involved in the study, described the discovery as a “milestone finding.”

Prinz said what made the finding significant was the unexpected organisation of the immune cells.
“I think nobody expected to find these lymph node-like structures in the skull,” he told DW.
But Prinz stressed that researchers have yet to demonstrate that the hubs themselves exist and function in humans.
“The major challenge, however, will be to see them in the human skull as well and to show that they are functional there. This would then indeed change how we view the central nervous system’s immune response in humans,” Prinz said.
How the immune hubs affected brain tumours
After finding that disrupting the skull immune hubs made brain tumors grow faster, the researchers tested whether strengthening the response could help. They stimulated the skull marrow with immune-boosting proteins. The treated animals rejected tumours more effectively and survived longer.
The experiment raises the possibility of one day targeting the skull’s bone marrow to influence the brain’s immune defenses, without delivering treatment directly into the brain.
Any such treatment in humans remains a distant prospect.
“We first need to confirm their organisation and function in humans, understand how they change across different diseases, and determine how to manipulate them without causing harmful inflammation,” Kipnis said.

What this could mean for other brain diseases
The potential implications extend beyond cancer.
Prinz said the structures may be especially important in brain tumours and infections, where the protective blood-brain barrier can become leaky. Their importance in Alzheimer’s and Parkinson’s, where changes to that barrier are generally less pronounced, “has to be shown,” he said.
Kipnis expects that, if similar functioning structures are found in humans, their role could be much broader.
“If I had to bet, I would bet that these structures play a role in any brain disease that has an immune component to it,” he said. - DW

SPORTS

Djokovic suffers shock first round defeat at US Open



It was the first time the Serb had been beaten in the opening round at Flushing Meadows and the first time he had lost in the opening round of a Grand Slam tournament since 2006

NEW YORK: Novak Djokovic broke down in tears during a US Open first-round defeat by Argentina's Mariano Navone which provided further evidence age is fast catching up with the 39-year-old great. The 24-time Grand Slam champion was overcome by emotion in the deciding set of a dramatic match where he struggled physically throughout and had to vomit into a towel bin. Djokovic, seeded fourth, showed

the fight for which he has always been renowned before succumbing to a 7-6 (7-5), 5-7, 4-6, 6-2 6-1 loss in a humid New York. It was the first time the Serb had been beaten in the opening round at Flushing Meadows and the first time he had lost in the opening round of a Grand Slam tournament since 2006. "I think it was obvious that it was an awful feeling on the court for me," Djokovic said. "I don't want to take too much

out of Mariano's win. Congrats to him, he's a nice guy and a fighter - but I didn't enjoy myself." Navone, who idolised Djokovic growing up, said: "(It) was very tough for me because you are playing with the 'GOAT' on this court." "For sure it's the best thing I've had on court. This is an amazing court and the biggest stage. It's amazing, the way we play. I mean, five sets. ... I'm very happy. I don't know. What can I say?" Djokovic managed to raise a smile as he congratulated 25-year-old Navone on what will rank as one of the biggest victories of the world NO.49's career. But, after showing grace and class while congratulating his opponent, a disconsolate Djokovic was unable to keep a brave face for long and appeared close to tears again as he trudged back to the locker room. The defeat ended Djokovic's latest bid for a standalone record



25th Grand Slam singles title, which would move him clear of Australia's Margaret Court. Chances are clearly running out for Djokovic. Many sensed this was another decent opportunity given world No.1 Jannik Sinner is missing through injury and defending champion Carlos Alcaraz is making his comeback from a long-term wrist injury. Djokovic had reached at least the semi-finals at six of the previous seven Grand Slams going into the US Open, but the manner in which he struggled in the humid conditions was a worrying sight for his supporters. Djokovic looked nauseous throughout a tense encounter and appeared to be dealing with an issue similar to the one that affected him at the Cincinnati Open two weeks ago. In his only appearance on the North American hard courts before heading to New York, Djokovic wilted in similarly humid

conditions in a shock early exit to Argentina's Thiago Tirante. Afterwards Djokovic revealed he had been hampered by a "health condition" which has been "bothering" him in oppressive conditions over a number of years and, discussing the issue with reporters shortly after losing to Navone, called it a "serious issue". "It's something that I have been carrying pretty much every match this year - vomiting, throwing up," Djokovic said. "And then my whole body starts to collapse basically, cramping and pain - the back just gave up in the end and shoulder, and I couldn't close it out." Daniil Medvedev, the 2021 US Open champion, shook off his miserable preparation for the tournament by beating Hugo Gaston 6-4, 6-2, 6-4. The No.7 seed was just 1-3 in the North American hard-court swing, usually a time he thrives. "Last couple of weeks was not



easy," Medvedev said. "But I'm happy that today I managed to produce high-level tennis." American Tommy Paul, the No.20 seed, bounced back from losing a first-set tie-break to Coleman Wong to win 6-7 (3), 6-1, 6-3, 6-3. Wong a year ago became the first man from Hong Kong to win an Open-era Grand Slam men's singles match on the way to reaching the round of 32. Seven matches couldn't be completed because of rain — and one was delayed even though it was being played in the other stadium with a retractable roof. There was a mechanical issue with one of the sensors at Louis Armstrong Stadium, and even after the roof finally closed, the court had to be dried before No.15 seed Alexander Bublik beat J.J. Wolf. Maric Cilic, the 2014 U.S. Open champion, and 2022 runner-up Casper Ruud both withdrew with injuries. - Agencies

US OPEN WOMEN

Pegula shakes off nerves to win; Venus bows out

NEW YORK: Third seed Jessica Pegula recovered from a slow start against Elena-Gabriela Ruse to win her opening-round match at the US Open 2026 on Sunday in straight sets. The 32-year-old American couldn't convert her first nine opportunities to break Ruse before eventually finding the rhythm that helped her dominate. Pegula, who finished runner-up to Coco Gauff in the Cincinnati Open, won 92 per cent of her first-serve points in a 6-3, 6-2 victory in 83 minutes. "I was so nervous," Pegula said. "I was like sending GIFs of what I felt like. It was GIFs of people freaking out and stuff. ... The first round of a slam, there's always a ton of nerves." "It is a little bit weird, but I did kind of enjoy that I could breathe for the next couple of days and everyone else is still freaking out about whether they're going to win their first round," she said. Nineteenth-seeded Jasmine Paolini also advanced in women's singles, defeating Veronika Erjavec 6-3, 3-6, 6-4. Kamilla Rakhimova beat No. 27 seed Barbora Krejickova 7-6 (4), 6-2. **Venus Williams loses** Venus Williams' 26th appearance at the US Open ended in an opening round defeat to compatriot Sofia Kenin. The 46-year-old lost 6-2, 7-6 (6) to the American wild-



card, her 14th consecutive singles defeat dating to her last victory in Washington in July 2025. Concluding at 2:01 am, it became the latest finish for a first-round match in US Open history. Venus won back-to-back championships in New York in 2000 and 2001, but has now lost six in a row at the US Open since winning in the first round in 2019. **Kostyuk cruises ahead** Ukraine's Marta Kostyuk breezed



past Australian qualifier Storm Hunter 6-4 6-1 in the first-round clash. Kostyuk made the semi-finals in the French Open and Wimbledon and enters Flushing Meadows as a genuine contender. "I'm very happy to be back to this amazing place," Kostyuk said on court. "It's not easy to play a qualifier; they've played a whole tournament (already). I'm very happy with my performance today. I try to keep myself grounded. There's still a long way to go, I'm enjoying my tennis." Other winners on Sunday included No.9 Elina Svitolina, No.19 Jasmine Paolini and No.31 Leylah Fernandez, the 2021 US Open runner-up. No. 27 seed Barbora Krejickova, a two-time Grand Slam singles champion, lost 7-6 (4), 6-2 to Kamilla Rakhimova. - Agencies

TOUR CHAMPIONSHIP

Scheffler claims title, passes Woods on career money list

ATLANTA: World No.1 Scottie Scheffler created history after coming from behind to win the Tour Championship in the finale of the FedEx Cup playoffs at East Lake Golf Club in Atlanta on Sunday. Scheffler became just the third individual behind Tiger Woods and Rory McIlroy to win multiple PGA Tour Championships. The American had won the title first in 2024. The 30-year-old pipped Norway's Viktor Hovland, who was also looking to join the multi-championship list, to the title after shooting a 4-under-par 66 to finish 16-under 264, three shots ahead of the runner-up. Hovland, the 2023 winner, had a one-stroke lead heading into the final round but could only manage a 2-over to finish second at 13 under. Scheffler's second FedEx Cup title, and his 22nd victory on the PGA Tour during this astonishing five-year run, was different from all the others, even if it looked all too familiar. Scheffler made up a three-shot deficit in four holes and pulled away to win the Tour Championship, claim a second FedEx Cup title and move past Tiger Woods for most PGA Tour earnings. Scheffler won for the third time this year — twice in the last three weeks during the PGA Tour's post-season — to match Chris Gotterup, Matt Fitzpatrick and US Open



champion Wyndham Clark for most titles in 2026. Taking over the top spot in career earnings was inevitable. The \$40 million purse at the Tour Championship now counts as official money. Scheffler won \$10 million, pushing his career total to

\$130,390,661. Woods, who never played for more than a \$10 million purse during his peak years from 1997 through 2009, had been at the top of the career money list for nearly 26 years. Ryan Gerard, one shot behind Hovland staring out, made double bogey on the opening hole, followed with 13 straight pars and shot 72 to finish alone in third. McIlroy won the Championship thrice (2016, 2019, 2022), while Woods managed two wins (2007, 2009). "Today was a day in which I was fortunate to get off to a good start and then was able to make some birdies to kind of seal the deal," Scheffler said afterwards. McIlroy, who had a seven-under-par 63 on Saturday, finished five shots behind alongside seven players on 11 under. - Agencies

FINAL IN WAVRE

Germany edge past Spain to retain men's Hockey World Cup crown

WAVRE: A solitary strike from Michel Struthoff in the third quarter proved enough for Germany to edge past Spain 1-0 in the men's Hockey World Cup final in Wavre, Belgium, on Sunday. Winning once was good, Germany had to do it one more time. An efficient German side edged Spain in a cagey final to claim a second successive men's World Cup title. It was by no means a classic here at the Belfius Arena. The finalists, Germany and Spain, had derailed co-host Belgium's journey to a home world championship decider and they both boasted the meanest tournament defence. It was reflected in a tightly-fought encounter, making it a hard watch for the supporters, dominated by neutrals. Not that Germany would have minded one bit.



As when it mattered, late in the third quarter, Michel Struthoff kept his calm, rounding off the Spain 'keeper Luis Calzado to pass the ball into the net for the decisive goal following an assist by Paul-Philipp Kaufmann. It was a

massive achievement for head coach Andre Henning, who oversaw a significant transition with only nine returnees from the 2023 group. Germany looked dangerous on the counter, breaking forward from deeper areas, using the wings.



Thies Prinz, Christopher Ruhr and Kaufmann combined their fleet-footed running and nifty stickwork to put Spain under pressure early on, earning Germany a penalty corner in the opening 90 seconds. Benedikt Schwarzhaupt's drag-

flick was kicked out by Calzado, but it wasn't any indication of things to come. Spain's defence, led by Jordi Bonastre, defended its circle, not allowing Germany to get into shot-taking positions. Spain, meanwhile, chasing their first world title, struggled to find its rhythm early on the ball, and needed until the second quarter for its midfielders to find the link with its forwards, through the middle. Spain didn't test German goalkeeper Jean-Paul Danneberg as much as it would have liked. In the second quarter, Borja Lacalle fired a tomahawk from the edge of the circle, which Danneberg punched away. Spain had three short corners in the third quarter but Pepe Cunill and skipper Marc Miralles fired wide of the post. Defender Teo Hinrichs was immense with

his first rush, foiling the duo, even taking a hard strike on his shin. In the third quarter, even though Spain had the best of the exchanges, Germany remained dangerous on the counter. But a rare defensive lapse proved costly for the Iberian nation. Germany again worked the ball through the wings to penetrate the Spanish circle. Struthoff, who had ghosted to the byline, did the rest with a little over a quarter left on the clock to give Germany the crucial advantage. Chasing the equaliser, Spain took off Calzado with less than four minutes to go, but couldn't break down a resolute German defense. For the crestfallen Spanish players, the wait continued, the latest setback adding to the nation's heartbreaks from 1971 and 1998.

Fernandes hat-trick inspires United’s comeback victory

The Portugal playmaker was the hero as Michael Carrick’s side rallied to down Ipswich

LONDON: Trailing—again—to a promoted team, Manchester United were facing further embarrassment early in this season’s Premier League on Sunday. Then Bruno Fernandes intervened.

With a clinically taken hat-trick, the Portugal playmaker inspired United’s comeback in a 5-2 win over Ipswich at Old Trafford on Sunday.

It was a relieving win for United, who opened their league campaign last weekend with a stunning 2-0 loss at Hull—a team that was promoted via the Championship play-offs and was widely tipped to be the favourite for relegation.

After that setback, United manager Michael Carrick appealed for calm—but saw his team fall behind on Sunday to Ipswich, another big candidate for relegation, in the 29th minute.

Fernandes, the player of the year in the Premier League last season, equalised with a thunderous left-foot shot at the end of a counter-attack in the 40th, converted from the penalty spot for his second goal in the 61st to make it 3-1, and completed his hat-trick seven minutes later by calmly slotting home a finish.

Five years ago, Fernandes also



scored a hat-trick for United in his first home appearance of the season, against Leeds on that occasion.

“Scoring goals is the best feeling in football,” he said. “Doing a hat-trick at home with our fans is something I’m proud of. I hope I can do much more.”

Between Fernandes’ goals, there was time for an own-goal following a shot by Harry Maguire, who handled the ball in the build-up. A foul wasn’t awarded because it wasn’t

adjudged a deliberate handball by Maguire and he didn’t score directly from his shot; the ball instead deflected in off Ipswich defender Jacob Greaves. Bryan Mbeumo completed the scoring for United, running onto a pass from Fernandes and lobbing the goalkeeper from the edge of the area.

Ipswich grabbed a stoppage-time consolation after Argentina defender Lisandro Martinez was dispossessed near his own goal.

“It’s just a week in football, isn’t it? The ups-and-downs,” Carrick said. “If you want to be a big team and a successful team, every team gets beaten and you’ve got to deal with setbacks... we showed stubbornness, belief, and togetherness after going a goal behind, and that was pleasing for me.”

Revitalised Palmer stars for Chelsea
Cole Palmer showed more signs



of a return to his top form by completing the scoring for Chelsea in their wild 4-3 win over Brighton.

The playmaker was a revelation in the 2023-24 season—his first at Chelsea—when scoring 22 league goals but he has struggled with injuries and a loss of form since, culminating in Palmer missing out on a place in England’s World Cup squad this summer.

In front of England coach Thomas Tuchel, Palmer ran 30 metres before curling home a shot from the edge of the area for Chelsea’s fourth goal at Stamford Bridge, ending Brighton’s realistic hopes of a comeback in an end-to-end thriller.

Romeo Lavia and Pedro Neto put Chelsea 2-0 ahead by the 14th minute before Joao Pedro added a third in the 32nd for Xabi Alonso’s team.

Malick Yalcouyé pulled a goal back for Brighton just before half-time, and the visitors further reduced the deficit when Pedro de-

flected a cross from Pascal Gross into his own net in the 63rd.

Palmer’s goal clinched a second straight victory for Chelsea, who opened their league campaign by beating Fulham 3-2. Palmer scored in that game, too. Brighton netted their third, through Gross, with the last kick of the game.

A negative for Chelsea was an injury to key midfielder Moises Caicedo, who lasted just 14 minutes after his return to the team as a second-half substitute.

Emi Martinez played as goal-keeper for Chelsea hours after completing his move from Aston Villa. Enzo Fernandez, linked to a move to Manchester City, was missing once again.

Sunderland grab first win

In other matches, Sunderland earned a first win of the season by beating Fulham 1-0 thanks to substitute Wilson Isidor’s goal.

Dominic Calvert-Lewin scored Leeds’ equaliser in a 1-1 draw with Brentford, which went ahead through Kevin Schade. - Agencies

EUROPEAN LEAGUES

Bellingham stars as Madrid clinch third win in a row

MADRID: England midfielder Jude Bellingham scored a stylish goal to help Real Madrid rout Malaga 4-0 in a Spanish La Liga game as returning boss Jose Mourinho racked up a third win in a row.

Bellingham, who scored seven goals in the summer’s World Cup as the Three Lions finished third, got the first of Sunday’s match and his second of the season in the 19th minute.

It came in superb fashion: he collected the ball 35 yards out, quickly dribbled past three players, and then shot past Malaga goalkeeper Alfonso Herrero.

Bellingham was heavily involved in Real’s second goal seven minutes later as he headed at goal after Herrero parried a strike. The ball then bounced off the Malaga goalkeeper and over the line, with it credited as a Herrero own goal. Real made it 3-0 after only half an hour to kill the game as a contest.

Trent Alexander-Arnold, left out of England’s World Cup squad, recorded the assist, with his cross from the right superbly volleyed in by Kylian Mbappe.

Real added a classy fourth goal in stoppage time at the end of the match when a quick break led to Vinicius Jr pulling the ball back from the byeline, with Arda Guler tapping in from close range.

Also, Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang scored again as Deportivo La Coruña defeated Valencia 3-1 for their first win

since its return to the top division. Athletic Bilbao won 2-0 against Celta Vigo, who had their second straight loss at home. Celta are yet to win a game in La Liga this season after opening with a 0-0 draw at Valencia.

Schalke’s return

After three seasons away, Schalke endured a rude welcome on their German top-flight return as they slumped to a 3-0 loss at Augsburg.

Schalke’s defence looked shaky and defender Ron Schallenberg was sent off for bringing down Michael Gregoritsch with half an hour remaining. Gregoritsch had opened the scoring and was on course to add another. The impressive Anton Kade and Rodrigo Ribeiro completed the scoring.

Freiburg routed Werder Bremen 4-1 in the early match.

Como win duel with Napoli

Como got the better of Napoli in a Serie A duel between Champions League participants with a 2-1 victory in Naples.

The visitors capitalised on defensive mistakes with Tassos Douvikas and Martin Baturina scoring either side of Rasmus Hojlund’s brief response from Napoli in the first half.

Defending champions Inter Milan needed another strike from distance from Hakan Calhanoglu to beat Cagliari 1-0 away, Calhanoglu scored a similar goal in the opening 4-1 win over Monsa. - Agencies



TRANSFERS

England’s Watkins joins Saudi Arabia’s Al Hilal

BIRMINGHAM: England striker Ollie Watkins joined the list of high-profile departures from Aston Villa on Sunday when he completed a move to Saudi Arabian team Al Hilal for a reported 51 million pounds (\$69 million).

The 30-year-old Watkins has been at Villa since joining from Brentford in 2020 and reached double figures in goals every season he was at the club.

In a post on Instagram published on Sunday, Watkins wrote: “6 amazing years has come to an end.

“Thank you for the amazing memories and always supporting me through highs and lows. Saying goodbye is never easy to this club as it’s been a massive part of my life on and off the pitch.”

Villa have also sold Morgan Rogers, Youri Tielemans, Ezri Konsa and Emiliano Martinez, who joined Chelsea on Sunday, in this transfer window.



Chelsea on Enzo’s future

Elsewhere, Chelsea manager Xabi Alonso said the club is preparing for “all scenarios” regarding Enzo Fernandez’s future after the Argentina midfielder was left out again for the 4-3 win over Brighton at Stamford Bridge in the Premier League on Sunday.

Manchester City reportedly have an interest in signing Fernandez, with the summer transfer window closing late on Tuesday.

Fernandez wasn’t in the squad for the English League Cup win over third-tier Luton on Thursday, either.

Asked whether the midfielder had played his last game for Chelsea,

Alonso said: “We’ll see. We want the best for the team, and that’s why we took the decision against Luton and today.

“We have to be aware (until) Tuesday evening of what is going to develop. We’re not sure. We are preparing for all scenarios. I’m sure that, whatever happens, from Wednesday we will have a good enough squad to compete in the Premier League.”

Fernandez has played for Chelsea since moving from Benfica in 2023 for 106.7 million pounds (then \$131.4 million), a British-record fee at the time. - Agencies

SPANISH LA LIGA

Barcelona close to deal for Arsenal striker Gabriel Jesus

LONDON: Barcelona are closing in on a move for Arsenal striker Gabriel Jesus worth £8.6m (10m euros).

A deal for the Brazil international is believed to be at an advanced stage and, while the finer details still require finalising, the transfer is expected to be completed before Tuesday’s deadline.

Napoli had shown an interest in Jesus, but the 29-year-old is set to join last season’s Spanish league champions and will travel for a

medical on Monday. Jesus joined Arsenal from Manchester City in 2022, scoring 32 goals and adding 22 assists in 123 appearances for the Gunners.

Speaking to the media, Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta confirmed that Jesus was not training with the squad before Monday’s Premier League game against Aston Villa.

When asked whether that meant Jesus was leaving, Arteta said: “Personal situations, whatever

they are, I think it’s clear.”

Jesus would be Barcelona’s third signing from a Premier League club this summer, following the arrivals of Anthony Gordon from Newcastle and Rodri from Manchester City. Earlier this week, Barcelona’s pursuit of Atletico Madrid striker Julian Alvarez - also an Arsenal target - appeared to end as sources told *BBC Sport* that Atletico would not negotiate with their Spanish rivals.

Meanwhile, Arsenal winger



Gabriel Martinelli is set to travel to Saudi Arabia on Tuesday for a medical with Al Hilal. It is believed a deal of at least £50m has been agreed for the 25-year-old Brazil international, after Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta made clear he is not in his plans.

It is understood Martinelli will sign a four-year contract, with Al Hilal offering wages thought to be significantly more than his reported £180,000 per week deal at Arsenal. - Agencies

ROUND-UP

DEEPAL introduces new energy driving experience in Oman

With range extended electric vehicle (REEV) technology, intelligent design and advanced comfort features, the DEEPAL line-up is built for modern motorists seeking efficiency, performance and everyday practicality

MUSCAT: For drivers who want the quiet confidence of electric mobility without the worry of range, DEEPAL, Changan Automobile's dedicated new energy vehicle brand, brings a new driving experience to Oman.

With range extended electric vehicle (REEV) technology, intelligent design and advanced comfort



features, the DEEPAL line-up is built for modern motorists seeking efficiency, performance and everyday practicality. Available through Arabian Gulf Automobiles and Equipment (AGAE), the DEEPAL range in Oman includes the S05,

S07 and G318 — three intelligent new energy vehicles, each designed around a distinct driving lifestyle.

S05: Stylish and intelligent crossover
Powered by a 1.5-litre naturally

aspirated range extender and 27.28 kWh LFP battery, the S05 offers a pure electric range of 160 km (WLTC) and combined REEV range over 1,000 km, with 214 hp and 320 Nm torque. Highlights include 20-inch al-

loy wheels, 540-degree panoramic imaging with transparent chassis, a panoramic glass roof, AR head-up display, 15.4-inch infotainment screen, wireless charging, and Apple CarPlay/Android Auto.

S07 brings refined comfort
The larger, more premium S07 pairs a 1.5-litre range extender with a 31.74 kWh battery for a 160 km WLTP electric range and 950 km combined range. It features a 15.6-inch rotating touchscreen, AR head-up display, 14-speaker audio, heated/ventilated front seats, adaptive cruise control and 360-degree surround view.

G318 is about bold adventure
This all-wheel-drive SUV combines a 1.5-litre turbo range extender, dual motors and a 35.07 kWh battery, delivering 430 hp, 575 Nm torque, a 138 km WLTC electric range and 848 km combined range. With 210 mm ground clearance, a rear axle differential lock, off-road crawling and 540-degree panoramic imaging, it's built for capability with comfort. An AGAE spokesperson said, "The DEEPAL range gives Omani customers confidence to embrace new energy mobility without compromising performance, comfort or practicality — whether through the intelligent S05, premium S07 or adventure-ready G318." Customers can experience DEEPAL at showrooms in Al Qurum, Sohar and Salalah, backed by sales centres nationwide and 13 service centres, including the main hub in Azaiba, Muscat.

CELEBRATION OF YOUNG LEADERSHIP



ISM MUN 2026: Young diplomats take centre stage

MUSCAT: Indian School Muscat successfully hosted the tenth edition of ISM Model United Nations (ISM MUN) 2026 on 20 and 22 August, bringing together around 700 student delegates from Indian School Muscat and seven other Indian schools across Oman for an enriching experience in diplomacy, debate and international affairs.

ISM MUN operates as an intensive intellectual simulation of the United Nations, where student delegates represent diplomatic envoys of sovereign states and deliberate on complex, real-world geopolitical and socio-economic challenges. The conference provided young delegates with a platform to represent different countries, discuss pressing global issues, exchange perspectives, and seek solutions through negotiation. The event encouraged students to develop essential skills in public speaking, critical thinking, research, teamwork, diplomacy and leadership.

The Opening Ceremony was attended by G V Ramakrishna, Finance Director, Board of Directors, Indian Schools Oman, as the Chief Guest and was presided over by Dr. Kiran G. R., President, School Management Committee, Indian School Muscat. G V Ramakrishna delivered an impactful address emphasising the vital importance of unity and mutual respect in addressing the complex and interconnected challenges of the contemporary global order. The MUN Secretary-General, Lakshana Gopal, formally declared the conference open and explored the multifaceted dimensions of contemporary geopolitics, emphasising the urgent need to foster deliberative diplomacy.

The ISM MUN 2026 concluded with a dignified and inspiring Closing Ceremony, in the gracious presence of Dr. Alya Talib Al Farsi, Assistant Dean for Academic Affairs at Middle East College, as the Chief Guest, and was presided over by Dr. Kiran G. R. In her address, Alya appreciated the enthusiasm and commitment demonstrated by the young delegates throughout

the conference.

She underlined the importance of cultivating dynamic leadership grounded in ethical responsibility, strategic thinking, and inclusive multilateral cooperation.

Presiding over the ceremony, Dr. Kiran G. R. congratulated the delegates and organisers for successfully conducting ISM MUN 2026. In his address, Dr. Kiran underscored the enduring and harmonious diplomatic relations between India and Oman, highlighting how they mirror United Nations tenets such as dialogue, mutual respect, cooperation, and peaceful coexistence. He emphasised that this shared spirit gives a meaningful purpose to conducting a Model United Nations conference within the Indian schooling system in Oman.

The closing ceremony celebrated the commitment, preparation and accomplishments of the participating delegates by honouring them with various awards such as best position paper, best delegate, best conventional and non-conventional committee. These accolades reflected the participants' active involvement, insightful contributions, and the dynamic exchange of ideas that characterised the conference.

The seamless execution of the conference stood as a testament to the meticulous planning, dedication, and concerted efforts of the Secretariat, comprising Secretary General Lakshana Gopal, Director General Shlok Joshi, USG Finance & Marketing, Diya Mehnaz Jasmine, and USG Delegate Affairs, Aravind Sangith Menon, complemented by the unwavering efforts of the DAIS members.

The continued encouragement and direction from Principal Rakesh Joshi and department of social science have played a pivotal role in bringing the conference's broader vision to fruition.

The two-day conference extended far beyond the realms of formal debate, evolving into a transformative journey defined by critical thinking, collective engagement, collaboration, and personal development.

28 UNIQUE SHOWS

Royal Opera House Muscat unveils landmark 2026-2027 15th anniversary season

MUSCAT: Royal Opera House Muscat (ROHM) announced its 2026-2027 15th Anniversary Season, celebrating a landmark chapter in its journey as Oman's flagship performing arts institution and the first opera house in the GCC. With 28 unique shows across 43 performance nights from October 2026 to May 2027, the new season opens with Verdi's Rigoletto, and spans opera, Arab music, concerts, ballet, jazz, world music and family shows, as well as an anniversary exhibition, and an extensive Education and Community Outreach programme.

Since opening its doors, the Royal Opera House Muscat has remained guided by a visionary mission to bridge cultures, foster international dialogue and contribute to the development of the performing arts in Oman and beyond.

Over fifteen years, the Royal Opera House Muscat has evolved from a landmark cultural institution into an internationally respected producing house, combining artistic stewardship with cultural diplomacy and creative exchange. Its journey has extended beyond presenting acclaimed international artists and companies to commissioning and producing original work, championing Omani heritage, nurturing local talent and creating meaningful opportunities for audiences and communities to engage with the performing arts.

The anniversary season reflects this evolution, featuring acclaimed ROHM productions, international artists and companies, original commissions, Arab and Omani music, exhibitions, education and community initiatives. Together, these programmes celebrate 15 years of artistic achievement while reaffirming the institution's commitment to cultural exchange, artistic excellence and inspiring future generations.

Opera

As part of its anniversary celebrations, the Royal Opera House Muscat will present a selection of its own opera productions this season. This reaffirms its mission not only as a leading venue for international artistic companies, but also as a contributor to the global creative landscape through the development and presentation of distinctive, signature productions.

The operatic season opens with Giuseppe Verdi's Rigoletto, presented in ROHM's acclaimed co-production with the Lithuanian Opera and Ballet Theatre. The production marks the final operatic vision of legendary director Franco Zeffirelli, with costumes by Maurizio Millenotti. Conducted by Evelino Pidò, it features Franco Vassallo, Enea Scala and rising soprano Maria Kokareva.



A defining expression of the ROHM's growing creative stewardship is its original opera Sindbad: The Omani Sailor, with music by Hisham Gabr, libretto by Nader Salah El Din and direction by Csaba Káel. Produced in collaboration with Müpa Budapest, the opera brings together artists from across the Arab world and the Hungarian Radio Symphony Orchestra in a contemporary work inspired by Oman's rich maritime heritage.

As one of the ROHM's flagship original productions, Sindbad: the Omani Sailor represents a significant milestone in the institution's evolution as a producing house. By transforming an important element of Oman's maritime heritage into an international operatic work, the production carries Omani cultural identity and storytelling onto the global stage, demonstrating how local cultural equity can become part of the international creative landscape.

Returning as a hallmark of the institution's innovative theatrical vision, The Opera! presents celebrated works by Verdi, Mozart, Bellini, Mendelssohn and Puccini in a distinctive theatrical experience. Directed by Davide Livermore and conducted by Francesco Lanzillotta, the production is inspired by the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice and has become one of the Royal Opera House Muscat's signature productions.

Young audiences are invited to experience The Magic Flute: Defeating the Monsters, the Royal Opera House Muscat's adaptation of Mozart's masterpiece. Directed by Stefano Simone Pintor and conducted by Pietro Mianiti, the production features the Muscat Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Orchestra dell'Accademia della Scala and the Royal Opera House Muscat Children's Choir, introducing a new generation to opera through an imaginative family production.

Arab music

Arab music remains central to the anniversary season, celebrating renowned artists and the musical

traditions of Oman and the Arab world. The programme reflects the Royal Opera House Muscat's role as a platform for artistic dialogue across generations, cultures and musical traditions.

The programme opens with the annual Omani Women's Day Concert, featuring the Royal Oman Symphony Orchestra and the Muscat Royal Philharmonic Orchestra Ladies' Ensemble in celebration of the achievements of women in music and society, with the participation of Egyptian singer Marwa Nagy. The programme continues with a Kulthumiyat evening featuring Marwa Nagy and Yosra Mahnouch, celebrating the enduring repertoire and legacy of Umm Kulthum.

Gulf icon Nawal returns with a programme spanning defining moments from her distinguished career, while legendary Kuwaiti artist Nabeel Shuail presents an evening dedicated to the enduring traditions of Khaleeji music.

During Ramadan, Evenings of Sufi and Inshaad bring together ensembles from Oman and Syria for a series of reflective performances inspired by sacred musical traditions. This creates a space for musical dialogue and shared cultural expression.

One of Arabic music's greatest voices is honoured in A Tribute to the Nightingale, where Medhat Saleh and Mohammed Assaf celebrate the enduring legacy of Abdel Halim Hafez over two distinctive evenings. The Arab Music programme concludes with acclaimed artist Aseel Abu Bakr, whose career has contributed to the evolution and continued appreciation of Khaleeji and Arab musical heritage.

Concerts

The concert programme showcases internationally acclaimed artists, distinguished orchestras and collaborations that place Omani musicians at the heart of international artistic exchange.

Mezzo-soprano Elina Garanča makes her Oman debut with the anniversary season, celebrating renowned artists and the musical

while accordion virtuoso Ksenija Sidorova performs with the European Philharmonia Orchestra conducted by Walter Proost.

The season also presents a Grand Opera Gala, featuring acclaimed soloists and the Bolshoi Theatre of Belarus Symphony Orchestra under the baton of Artem Makarov. The programme brings together celebrated arias, duets and orchestral favourites from European, Russian and Belarusian repertoire, offering audiences a rich synthesis of operatic traditions.

The annual Pipe Organ Concert once again celebrates one of the world's most remarkable concert organs, reinforcing the Royal Opera House Muscat's commitment to expanding appreciation of the instrument through performance and education. This year's programme features a Pipe Organ recital by Cameron Carpenter, one of today's most distinctive organists, whose virtuosity and imaginative programming have broadened audiences' perceptions of the pipe organ. His performance offers fresh perspectives on the instrument's expressive possibilities while contributing to the ROHM's focus on organ performance and learning.

The programme also includes Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets™ in Concert, with the Armenian State Symphony Orchestra performing John Williams' iconic score live alongside a screening of the film.

A major expression of artistic collaboration is Homage to the Qanun bringing together Omani qanun virtuoso Wahab Al Dhanki, the Royal Oman Symphony Orchestra, the Armenian State Symphony Orchestra and conductor Sergey Smbatyan. Featuring Khachatur Avetisyan's Concerto No. 2 for Qanun and Orchestra alongside traditional Omani and Armenian music, the concert creates a synthesis of musical traditions while placing Omani musicianship within an international artistic dialogue.

Ballet

The anniversary season welcomes Rudolf Nureyev's celebrated Don Quixote, performed by the world-renowned Teatro alla Scala Ballet and accompanied by the Hankyung Arte Philharmonic under Simon Hewett.

Renowned for its virtuoso choreography and theatrical brilliance, the production remains one of Nureyev's defining interpretations and one of classical ballet's enduring masterworks.

Jazz

The anniversary season celebrates The Golden Age of Jazz, honouring one of the world's most influential musical traditions.



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