

Times

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OF OMAN

51

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LEGACY

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HM INAUGURATES NEW HEADQUARTERS OF INTERNAL SECURITY SERVICE IN DHOFAR



HM was briefed on modernisation efforts and measures to keep pace with emerging challenges in Oman

and a number of the Service's senior officers. His Majesty then graciously unveiled the commemorative plaque, marking the official inauguration of the Service's headquarters.

Thereafter, His Majesty toured the new headquarters, inspecting its facilities and capabilities, and was briefed on the most significant national duties and responsibilities entrusted to it in consolidating the foundations of security and stability.

His Majesty commended the ongoing efforts in modernisation, development and keeping pace with emerging challenges across all areas of security work.

At the conclusion of the visit, His Majesty graciously posed for commemorative photographs with a number of the Service's personnel, in lasting memory of this noble occasion. — OMA

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN
Jobs for persons with disabilities
1 Over 100 jobs for persons with disabilities were offered at a fair. >A2

OMAN
Oman-India Business Forum organised
2 The Oman-India Business Forum discussed CEPA opportunities. >A4

MARKET
Oman oil price soars over \$121 per barrel
3 Delivery of Oman oil in November settled at \$121.68 per barrel. >B1

NEW PLATFORM

Oman takes centre stage in Indian singer's latest music album

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman's spectacular landscapes and rich cultural appeal have found a new platform through the latest music album by Indian singer Madhubanti Bagchi, showcasing the Sultanate as a destination of natural beauty, heritage and diverse experiences.

The music video for "Banjaare (Following The Sun)", Bagchi's latest release, features a series of iconic locations and moments from her visit to Oman, bringing the country's natural and cultural attractions to audiences through music.

The video opens with Oman's famous orange-and-white taxis heading towards Muttrah, followed by footage of a ticket from Bagchi's performance at the Sheraton Oman last year, an event for which Times of Oman was a media partner. The video then takes viewers through Oman's landscapes and landmarks, including the mountains around Al Bustan, Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque, a cruise ship docked at Muttrah Port, Ruwi Street, Muttrah Gate and the traditional incense burner at Muttrah.



It also features footage of Bagchi's arrival at Muscat International Airport, where she received a grand welcome, as well as Oman's rugged mountains, the Big Bus Muscat tour, an Oman Air aircraft taking off from Muscat International Airport and views of Ruwi High Street from the

Sheraton Oman, where she stayed during her visit.

"Banjaare (Following The Sun)" is an Indian reimagining of the international hit "Following The Sun", pairing international electronic production with Hindi vocals and the spirit of the open road. "The open road is my home; mine



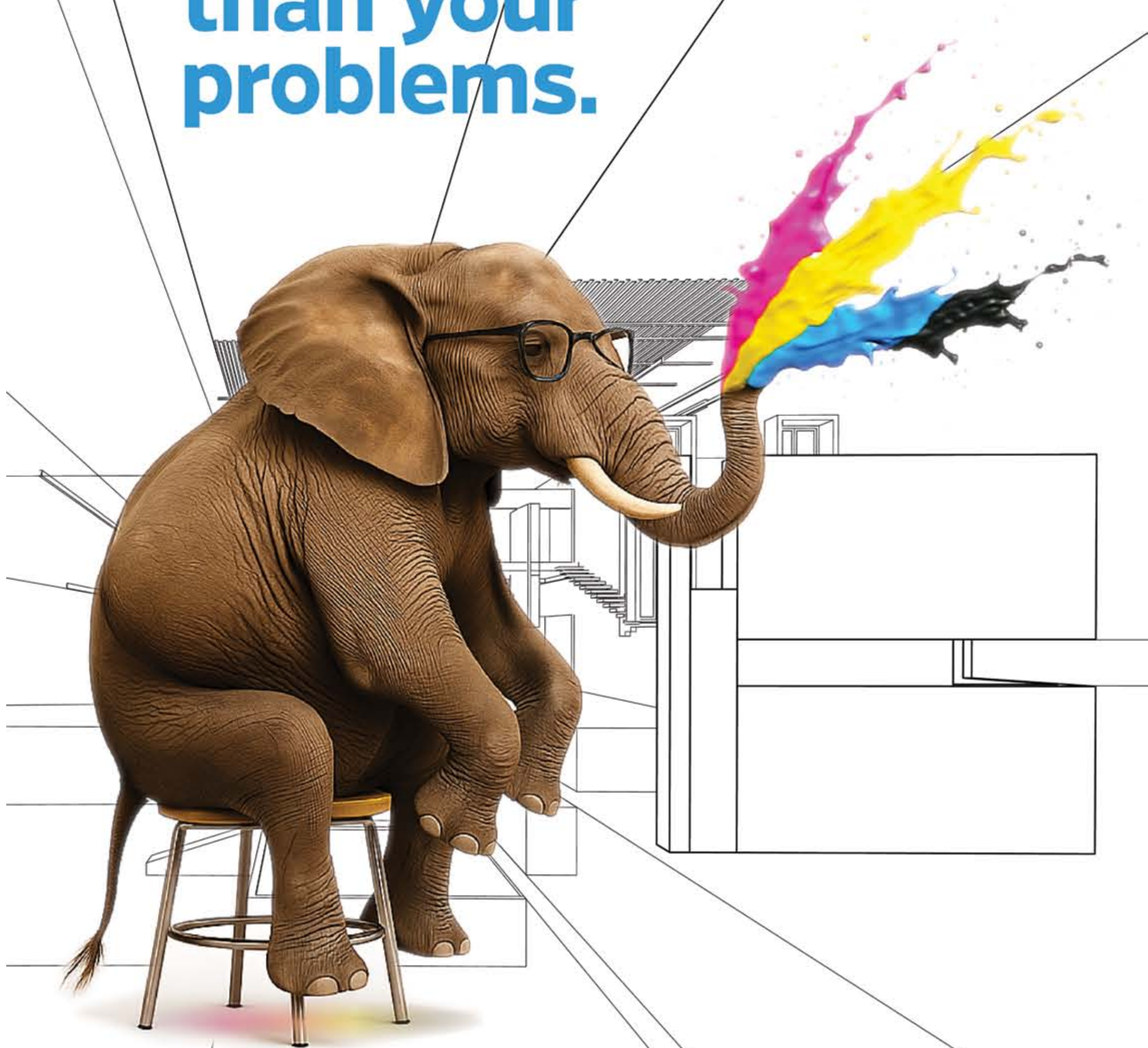
is a wanderer's tale," Bagchi said.

She opens the song in Hindi before moving into a Hindi verse that flows into the original chorus by SUPER-Hi and NEEKA.

Her vocals are complemented by electric slide guitar, adding an earthy, distinctly Indian dimension to the electronic production.

The track is accompanied by a raw, globe-trotting music video that captures its themes of movement and discovery. Shot in a vlog-style format, it documents Bagchi's travels through Mumbai, Oman and the US and Lagos, where she has performed over the past few months. >A6

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His Majesty commends efforts for modernisation of security forces



Job offers for persons with disabilities

The fair witnessed the offering of more than 100 job opportunities across a number of fields, with the participation of 50 private sector establishments and companies



SALALAH: The Ministry of Labour, represented by the Directorate General of Labour in Dhofar Governorate, organised on Wednesday a job opportunities fair designated for persons with disabilities among the governorate's citizens at the World of Continents Exhibition in the Ittin area in the Wilayat of Salalah.

The event was widely participated by private sector institutions and establishments.

The opening of the fair was held under the auspices of Dr. Abdullah bin Hamoud Al Harthy, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Social Development for Persons with Disabilities Affairs.

The fair witnessed the offering of more than 100 job opportunities across a number of fields, with the participation of 50 private sector establishments and companies, reflecting the growing partnership between the Ministry of Labour and the private sector in providing practical career pathways, enabling persons with disabilities to benefit from their abilities and qualifications, and integrating into

the labor market on the basis of competence and equal opportunity. Nasser Salim Al Hadhrami, Director General of the Directorate General of Labour in Dhofar Governorate, affirmed that the participation of 50 establishments in the fair represents an important indicator of the growing awareness within the private sector regarding the importance of employing persons with disabilities and capitalising on their potential.

He noted that the fair is not limited to displaying job opportunities, but aims to create direct engagement between job seekers and employers, thereby contributing to transitioning from the stage of searching for opportunities to

achieving actual employment.

He explained that offering more than 100 job opportunities underscores the Ministry of Labour's keenness to create diverse pathways for persons with disabilities that align with their qualifications, capabilities, and labor market needs, pointing out that partnership with the private sector represents a fundamental pillar in the success of these efforts and in transforming job opportunities into a tangible reality.

The fair provides job seekers with the opportunity to meet directly with representatives of participating companies and establishments and conduct job interviews on-site, thereby stream-

lining the application and search stages, enhancing prospects for direct employment, and introducing employers to the talents of persons with disabilities and the qualifications and skills they possess that can be utilized across various sectors.

The organisation of the fair comes within the framework of the Ministry of Labour's efforts to establish an integrated system for empowering persons with disabilities and integrating them into the labor market, based on the principle that disability does not impede productivity and contribution, and that providing the right opportunity can transform individual capabilities into added value for the economy and society.

The fair also aligns with the Ministry's strategy to enhance the effectiveness of employment policies and transition from merely presenting job opportunities to generating actual employment by building more effective partnerships with the private sector and directly connecting job seekers with suitable opportunities, while taking into account their capabilities, specializations, and the needs of the labor market. -OMA

INTEGRATED DIGITAL SYSTEM

GCC Youth Forum recommends database for content creators



SALALAH: The 4th GCC Youth Forum, held in the Governorate of Dhofar, recommended establishing a database for content creators and media professionals interested in professional development and training.

The initiative envisages holding workshops and training courses to give GCC nationals access to a diverse range of digital content development.

The recommendations were made at the conclusion of the 5-day forum organised by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth.

The event saw the participation of specialists from the Sultanate of Oman abroad. It was held under the auspices of Dr. Yousuf bin Salim Al Hinai, Head of the Gov-

ernment Communication and Performance Development Unit at the Secretariat General of the Council of Ministers.

The forum also recommended launching an initiative code-named "Gulf Content Ambassadors" to empower talented youth and content creators and to highlight youth-led initiatives, national achievements and cultural heritage.

In addition, the participants recommended the convening an annual gathering for GCC content creators, establishing a GCC association for media professionals interested in content designing and launching a digital media platform for GCC youth to showcase success stories and foster dialogue among young people. -OMA



Oman-India business forum focuses on unlocking CEPA potential

The Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement represents a fundamental base for elevating Omani-Indian relations to broader levels of cooperation, and enhancing trade and investment between the two countries

MUSCAT: The Oman-India Business Forum, organised on Wednesday in Muscat by Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), discussed opportunities to benefit from the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) between the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of India, in a manner that contributes to supporting economic diversification plans, enhancing trade exchange, elevating the competitiveness of Omani companies, and opening new horizons for the Omani private sector.

Faisal Abdullah Al Rowas, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, stated that the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement represents a fundamental base for elevating Omani-Indian relations to broader levels of cooperation and partnership, and enhancing trade and investment movement between the two countries.

He explained that the agreement provides the private sector in both countries with major opportunities to increase exports, access new markets, and build investment partnerships in a number of promising sectors, benefiting from the preferential advantages offered by the agreement, as well as from the Sultanate of Oman's strategic location, logistical infrastructure, and special economic and free zones.

He pointed out that this forum aimed to reflect the advantages of the agreement into practical opportunities through discussions and dialogues between business owners and investors from both countries regarding the mechanisms of activating the agreement and exploring partnership opportunities in promising economic sectors.

Al Rowas called on Omani business owners to learn about the agreement's benefits, study markets and products with export opportunities, communicate directly with their counterparts in the Republic of India, explore partnership and investment op-



portunities, and build joint projects, emphasising that the coming phase requires converting the advantages provided by the agreement into tangible deals, partnerships, and investments.

For his part, Eng. Said Ali Al Abri, Member of the Board of Directors of OCCI and Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Chamber's Branch in North Al Batinah Governorate, said that the institutional framework through which Omani-Indian economic relations are organized today is represented by the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement between the Sultanate of

Oman and the Republic of India, which was signed in Muscat in December 2025 and entered into force on 1 June 2026. He stressed that the agreement represents an important milestone for the Sultanate of Oman as its first bilateral trade agreement.

He added that the agreement provides significant trade advantages, including opening about 98 percent of Omani tariff lines to Indian goods, in exchange for India's commitment to reducing or eliminating customs duties on about 77 percent of its tariff lines, in addition to covering investment fields, facilitating customs procedures,

digital trade, intellectual property, and the movement of professionals, thereby enhancing an environment conducive to the growth of trade and investment between the two countries.

He affirmed that this forum serves as an important platform for translating the agreement into practical opportunities, bringing together business owners, investors, and concerned institutions from both countries to discuss implementation mechanisms, actual benefit from the agreement, services and joint project opportunities, and the Sultanate of Oman's role as an investment gateway to regional

and international markets.

From his side, Prashant Pise, Ambassador-designate of the Republic of India to the Sultanate of Oman, stated that the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement between the two countries represents a new phase in Omani-Indian economic and trade relations, providing a broad framework for enhancing trade and investment and opening new horizons for the private sector in both countries.

He pointed out that the agreement is not limited to increasing trade exchange volume, but also creates broader opportunities to build long-term investment and productive partnerships across multiple sectors, emphasising the importance of this forum in enhancing communication between business owners and investors from the two countries, introducing them to the opportunities provided by the agreement, and transforming them into tangible projects and partnerships.

The Ambassador-designate invited Omani and Indian companies to take advantage of the preferential benefits provided by the agreement and explore opportunities for cooperation in vital economic sectors, thereby enhancing integration between the economies of the two countries and supporting the growth of mutual trade and investments.

Dr. Yousuf Hamad Al Balushi, Founder of Smart Investment Gateway, delivered the keynote address at the forum on the Omani side, titled "The Sultanate of Oman as an Investment Destination for Indian Companies", during which he reviewed practical opportunities to maximize the Sultanate of Oman's benefit from the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement with India, emphasizing the importance of transforming it from a trade agreement into an integrated platform for investment, production, and export, contributing to attracting qualitative Indian investments, raising value addition, and strengthening Omani companies' connection to global value chains.

Meanwhile, Dr. James J. Nedumpara, Head of the Centre for Trade and Investment Law, delivered the keynote address at the forum from the Indian side, titled "Unlocking the Potential of the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement between the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of India", reviewing the Indian perspective on the agreement, explaining that it aims to establish a free trade area, with a tangible expansion in the scope of duty-free goods compared to treatment based on Most-Favored-Nation (MFN) status.

The forum featured two panel discussions: the first discussed the phases from agreement to implementation and achieving the opportunities of the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement, while the second panel discussion focused on key services, investment, and joint projects based on long-term partnerships.

An accompanying exhibition was held on the sidelines of the forum, displaying a number of products and services reflecting the diversity of economic cooperation fields between the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of India.

The forum included a number of bilateral meetings between business owners and representatives of companies and institutions from the two countries, aiming to discuss cooperation and partnership opportunities, explore fields for joint investment, as well as discuss the possibility of establishing new projects and expanding existing business operations.

These meetings focused on the investment opportunities and advantages available in the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of India, and discussed ways to benefit from the advantages provided by the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement between the two countries, contributing to enhancing trade and investment movement and opening new channels for the private sector, particularly in priority economic sectors.

At the conclusion of its proceedings, the forum called on Omani companies to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the agreement to strengthen their presence in Indian markets, expand their exports, and build new commercial and investment partnerships. -ONA

Notice and Invitation to Attend the Extra Ordinary General Meeting & Ordinary General Meeting



The Board of Directors of Oman Fixed Income Fund (the "Fund") has the pleasure to invite the unitholders to attend the Extra Ordinary General Meeting & Ordinary General Meeting, which will be held on Wednesday at 04:00 PM on 30/09/2026, via the electronic platform which can be accessed through the website of Muscat Clearing & Depository Company (www.mcd.om) and will be held in this location (Online). If the quorum requirement for holding the Annual General Meeting is not fulfilled, a second Extra Ordinary General Meeting & Ordinary General Meeting shall be held on Sunday at 04:00 PM on 04/10/2026, via the electronic platform which can be accessed through the website of Muscat Clearing & Depository Company (www.mcd.om) and will be held in this location (Online) to discuss the following agenda:

Extra Ordinary General Meeting Agendas:

- To Amend Article (4) of the Fund's Articles of Association to extend the term of the Fund for an additional period of 5 years ending on 03rd October 2032. As a result of such extension the term of the Fund shall be 22 years from the date of the establishment of the Fund and its registration in the fund's register maintained with the FSA.

Ordinary General Meeting Agendas:

- To elect seven (7) new members for Fund Management. Any person who wishes to nominate himself/herself for the position should complete the nomination form. The completed forms should be sent to the Fund secretary email salimkh@bankmuscat.com at least five days prior to the OGM date by the end of the business day, on Thursday, 24th September 2026. The candidate should observe the conditions required for the membership of the Fund's Management.

According to the Fund's Articles of Association and the controls for holding General Meetings using modern technology issued by the Financial Services Authority, we would like to draw your attention to the following:

- Legal person, exclusively, has the right to delegate a natural person to attend the General Meeting and vote on its behalf through technical means, provided that this natural person has an investor number in MDCD.
- Voting on any of the agenda items begins no more than three days before the date of the General Meeting until the voting process ends on the day of the General Meeting. If the unitholder's shares are increased or decreased, the voting process will be canceled, and the unitholder will have to vote again on the day of the General Meeting.

For further information please contact on **telephone No 91191102** or **email: salimkh@bankmuscat.com**

FOOTBALL

First women's football festival begins in Dhofar

SALALAH: The first women's football festival launched today in Dhofar Governorate, organised by the Women's Football Committee of Oman Football Association, with the participation of 80 female students aged between 12 and 14 years old.

The festival aims to raise awareness of women's football among girls and introduce the benefits and positive aspects associated with playing football, including promoting physical activity, fostering teamwork spirit, and building self-confidence, in addition to providing a stimulating sports environment that encourages girls to experience and enjoy football.

The festival includes a range of interactive football activities and drills tailored to the target age group, focusing on introducing participants to the basic skills of the game, strengthening girls' connection to football, and encouraging them to continue practicing it in the future. -ONA



Oman seeks world heritage status for Salut Iron Age Settlement

The strategic step reflects Oman's commitment to protecting and preserving its cultural heritage and enhancing its presence on the international stage



BAHLA: Ministry of Heritage and Tourism has floated an international tender for consultancy services to prepare the nomination dossier and management plan for inscribing the “Salut: Iron Age Settlement” site, in preparation

for submitting it to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) for consideration for inscription on the World Heritage List. The strategic step reflects the

Sultanate of Oman's continuous commitment to protecting and preserving its cultural heritage and enhancing its presence on the international stage. Ibtisam Abdullah Al Maamari,

Director of the World Heritage Department at the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, told Oman News Agency (ONA) that this step comes as part of national efforts aimed at fulfilling nomination re-

quirements in accordance with approved international standards, enhancing the presence of Omani cultural sites on the world heritage map, strengthening the site's sustainability, and maximising the benefit from its cultural and tourism assets.

She added that the Bisya and Salut Archaeological Site in the Wilayat of Bahla is considered one of the most prominent archaeological sites in the Sultanate of Oman due to its rich civilisational evidence spanning from the Bronze Age through the Iron Age up to the Islamic periods, reflecting the continuity of human settlement and its development over thousands of years.

She explained that the results of archaeological studies and excavations indicate that the site possesses Outstanding Universal Value qualifying it for nomination on the World Heritage List under the name “Salut: Iron Age Settlement”.

The Ministry had previously floated a competition for the man-

agement and utilisation of the visitor center and the Bisya and Salut Archaeological Site, contributing to raising the quality of services provided to visitors, developing the tourism and cultural experience at the site, and expanding the scope of private sector participation in operating and managing associated facilities and services.

Ibtisam Abdullah Al Maamari affirmed that these initiatives reflect the integration of efforts between the twin paths of heritage preservation and sustainable development, as the tender for preparing the nomination dossier and management plan focuses on documenting the site's Outstanding Universal Value and fulfilling requirements for inscription on the World Heritage List, while the site management and operation competition focuses on enhancing its tourism readiness and operational efficiency to achieve economic and cultural sustainability, reinforcing its role as a leading heritage and tourism destination at the national and international levels. -ONA

POST-HARVEST ACTIVITIES

Agriculture Ministry takes initiatives to improve production of dates

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources is implementing a number of programmes and initiatives aimed at improving the quality of production of dates and maximise the economic value of date palms crop.

The Ministry is boosting this drive by supporting applied research in post-harvest activities, assessing technologies of the drying of dates and imparting modern practices to farmers.

The Ministry is laying emphasis on the adoption of technologies that minimise post-harvest losses, improve product quality and enhance competitiveness. This supports the Sultanate of Oman's strategic approach to food security and industries linked to



agricultural products.

In pursuance of this approach, researchers at the Ministry recently conducted experiments on the drying of dates through the

use of the “polycarbonate-covered chamber” technique.

This modern technique proved its high efficiency, compared to traditional open-air

drying methods.

The new technique maintains fruit cleanliness and protects the dates from insects—thus ensuring the market value of the crop. -ONA

SUSTAINABLE LOGISTICS

Wind-assisted Valemax makes first port of call to Oman

MUSCAT: Marking a pivotal advancement in sustainable logistics, Asyad Shipping and Vale received Sohar Max, the first wind-assisted Valemax, on its first call to the Sultanate of Oman, delivering iron ore to Vale's operations in Sohar.

This milestone builds on a long-standing partnership between the industry giants focused on advancing vessel efficiency and lower-emission maritime transportation across the iron ore value chain.

Owned by Asyad Shipping and leased to Vale, Sohar Max is a 400,000 DWT ore carrier designed for high-capacity, deep-sea voyages across key trade corridors between Brazil, China, and the Middle East, and is fitted with five towering rotor sails, or Flettner rotors, developed by Anemoi Marine Technologies. Standing 35 meters tall and 5 meters in diameter, the cylindrical sails harness the Magnus effect to capture wind energy, generating additional thrust and reducing fuel consumption.

The rotor sails on Sohar Max are integrated with Anemoi's proprietary folding deployment system, enabling each sail to transition to a horizontal position during port maneuvers or when passing under height-restricted structures. This adaptive design reduces air draught limitations, optimizing vessel clearance and cargo-handling efficiency.

As the maritime sector works to reduce its emissions, the International Maritime Organization is targeting at least a 20% to 30% reduction in greenhouse-gas emissions from shipping by 2030, with net-zero emissions targeted by or around 2050. Improving vessel efficiency remains a critical part of this transition, particularly in long-haul, high-capacity



maritime transport. The integration of Rotor Sail technology on Sohar Max advances this effort at Valemax scale, where Asyad Shipping's investment in advanced technology and strategic partnerships is supporting emissions mitigation while strengthening Oman's position as a global logistics hub.

“We are taking an important step today towards building a more sustainable future for the shipping sector,” said Dr. Ibrahim Al Nadhairy, CEO of Asyad Shipping. “The Sohar Max represents a practical model of how innovative technologies can support Oman's efforts to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050, while reducing carbon emissions and enhancing maritime operational efficiency. We see wind-assisted propulsion technology as an opportunity to drive meaningful changes in the shipping sector. By harnessing wind energy, it can help reduce emissions while improving the operational performance of large vessels. This project is a clear example of our commitment to sustainable innovation and marks a milestone in our journey towards a maritime future that balances economic development with environmental responsibility.”

Commenting on the vessel's arrival, Nasser Al Azri, CEO of Vale

in Oman said, “Vale's approach to decarbonization extends beyond production to the logistics network that connects our operations with global markets. For more than a decade, we have continued to advance the efficiency of maritime transportation through vessel design, technology and innovation, recognizing the role that shipping plays within our wider value chain. Working with our partners to introduce lower-carbon technologies and build knowledge through their application is an important part of that effort. Sohar Max brings that work to one of the most demanding areas of our logistics network, combining the scale of Valemax transportation with the long-term role Oman plays in connecting our operations with key steel markets across the region.”

Since the Rotor Sail system was installed in October 2024, independent analysis by vessel performance specialist Enerva Marine has recorded reductions in main-engine fuel consumption ranging from 14% to 31% against pre-installation voyage performance, with annual fuel-cost savings exceeding US\$1 million. The two-year operating record establishes a credible performance benchmark for wind-assisted propulsion within Vale and Asyad Shipping's broader work on vessel efficiency.

The Sohar Max installation is part of a series of six technology pilot agreements between Vale and Asyad Shipping across four vessels leased by Vale. Undertaken as part of Vale's EcoShipping program, the projects have tested a range of technologies in commercial service, from coatings and hydrodynamic devices to energy-management systems and wind-assisted propulsion.

-ONA

TRADE AND INVESTMENT

Omani Afro-Chinese forum seeks investment opportunities

SALALAH: The second edition of the Omani Afro-Chinese Business Forum was launched on Wednesday in the Wilayat of Salalah, organised by the “Business Forum” in a strategic partnership with Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI).

The event features the participation of a number of investors and business owners from the Sultanate of Oman, the People's Republic of China, and a number of Horn of Africa countries, running for two days.

The opening of the forum was held under the auspices of Eng. Ahmed Hassan Al Dheeb, Deputy Chairman of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ).

Mustafa Abdul Qadir Al Ghasani, representative of the Omani-Chinese Friendship Association, delivered a speech in which he pointed out that light of the economic and developmental renaissance experienced by the Sultanate of Oman, and its strategic location connecting Asia and Africa, it possesses significant assets to serve as a platform for enhancing tripartite cooperation among Oman, China, and Africa, in line with the targets of Oman Vision 2040, while simultaneously keeping pace with the growing opportunities offered by African markets and the continuous development in the Omani-Chinese partnership.

He added that the future of Omani-African-Chinese cooperation holds vast opportunities, particularly for new generations who possess the capacity to innovate and forge partnerships that transcend traditional boundaries, noting that investing in people, knowledge, and cultural connection is no less important than investing in the economy and infrastructure. For his part, Majid Said Akaak,



Chairman of the Forum's Organizing Committee, explained that this forum represents a strategic meeting point that unites the interests of the three parties and their economic integration, combining Chinese technological industries, the Sultanate of Oman's distinguished geographical and logistical location, and African markets with high population densities, while affirming the deeply rooted historical trade and diplomatic relations between the Sultanate of Oman, China, and Horn of Africa countries.

He indicated that among the main goals of the forum is attracting investment and localising African capital, as a group of investors was attracted to transfer their commercial and investment operations to the Sultanate of Oman, with the presence rate of investors from Horn of Africa countries rising by more than 400 percent compared to the past two years prior to the launch of this forum, according to recent official figures and statistics.

In the same context, Abdul Wali Bashir, representative of the African delegation and member of the forum, highlighted the importance of trade and investment partnerships among business owners and the continuous pursuit toward exploring promising opportunities in the markets of

and the United States. They discussed ways to enhance cooperation and coordination between the two countries on various issues of common interest. The meeting also touched on current regional developments. The meeting was attended by the U.S. Ambassador to Oman and officials from the two countries. -ONA



REGIONAL DEVELOPMENTS DISCUSSED

Foreign Minister receives phone call from UN Secretary-General

MUSCAT: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, received a telephone call yesterday from António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations.

During the call, the two sides discussed regional developments and their humanitarian repercussions.

They also highlighted the efforts being made to de-escalate tensions and create conducive conditions for the return of dialogue and diplomatic endeavours, contributing to addressing outstanding issues through political means.

The UN Secretary-General praised the constructive role undertaken by the Sultanate of Oman in supporting diplomatic endeavors and bridging views, emphasising the importance of continued coordination and consultation between the two sides to enhance



de-escalation efforts and support the humanitarian response.

The Foreign Minister affirmed the importance of continuing to

intensify diplomatic efforts, exercising wisdom and restraint, and giving scope to political and diplomatic endeavors to contain ten-

sion and address issues of concern, thereby consolidating security, stability, and peace in the region.

— ONA

'ITQAN' PLATFORM

Pact inked to build digital system for training lawyers and legal advisors

MUSCAT: An agreement was signed yesterday between the Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs and Oman Telecommunications Company (Omantel) to build an integrated digital system for training and qualifying lawyers and legal advisors, named "Itqan", aimed at elevating professional practice efficiency and the quality of legal services in the Sultanate of Oman.

The contract was signed on behalf of the Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs by Dr. Yahya Nasser Al Khusaibi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs, while it was signed on behalf of Omantel by Eng. Sami Ahmed Al Ghassani, Chief Commercial and Operational Officer at the company.

The "Itqan" platform aims to transfer the legal training system



into a modern digital environment that enables offering training programs and pathways efficiently and flexibly, helps unify training and evaluation standards, makes programs accessible to beneficiaries across various governorates of the Sultanate of Oman, and monitors trainees' performance to measure their progress and achievement of targeted educational and professional outcomes.

"Itqan" is scheduled to provide specialised digital legal and training content combining legal knowledge, professional skills, and practical applications, covering national legislation, professional ethics, research, drafting, pleading, and legal consultation skills, as well as other areas related to legal practice.

The preparation of the content will take into account the diversity of target group needs and their professional levels, while subjecting materials and programmes to stages of review and accreditation to ensure their legal soundness and scientific and technical quality, utilising national and specialised expertise in preparing and delivering content, thereby contributing to establishing a digital legal library adaptable to updates and development in line with

legislative and professional developments. Dr. Yahya Nasser Al Khusaibi affirmed that the "Itqan" platform represents an important step in implementing training and qualification requirements, reflecting the Ministry's keenness to prepare legal practitioners possessing the necessary knowledge, competence, and professional skills in accordance with clear and sustainable standards.

He explained that through the platform, the Ministry seeks to establish a sustainable approach to professional development in the legal sector that keeps pace with legislative and professional developments and contributes to enhancing the readiness of legal practitioners and raising their performance level, reflecting on the quality of legal practice in the Sultanate of Oman. — ONA



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

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

MADHUBANTI BAGCHI

Indian singer's album adds international cultural dimension to the music industry

< FROM A1 Rather than following a traditionally produced narrative, the video captures the reality of life on the move — travel, performances, new cities and spontaneous moments along the way.

For Bagchi, the collaboration brings a long-standing connection with the original song full circle. "My love for 'Following The Sun' dates back to 2021 and it's been a forever jam for me. Looking at how the growth started happening in India this year, I was honoured to be a part of creating a version that finds its home in India as well as for all the Indians around the world," she said. "What SUPER-Hi and NEEKA have done to the track is already so beautiful, and my version of 'Banjaare' gives depth to those who love getting lost and for the ones who find the joy in being out there," she added.

Bagchi's association with Oman adds an international cultural dimension to the project, strengthening the connection between India's vibrant music industry and Oman's growing tourism profile.

With Indian visitors forming an important segment of Oman's



international tourism market, creative collaborations such as this can help introduce the Sultanate to a wider Indian audience while highlighting its distinctive landscapes, culture and hospitality. "Banjaare" connects a global dance-pop hit that has amassed 550 million streams with Bagchi's substantial audience. She is currently among the Top 75 artists on YouTube's weekly Top Artists chart in India, recording around 28 million weekly YouTube views, while her Spotify audience stands at 14 million monthly listeners.

ESCWA STATISTICAL COMMITTEE

Modern technologies and innovation in developing statistical work discussed

JABAL AKHDAR: At the conclusion of its 17th session on Wednesday in the Wilayat of Jabal Akhdar, Al Dhakhiliyah Governorate, the Statistical Committee of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) adopted a set of recommendations, most notably recommending the establishment of the Muscat Team.

This is concerned with using artificial intelligence (AI) technologies in household income and expenditure surveys and benefiting from the Sultanate of Oman's experience in utilising modern technologies and innovation in developing statistical work.

The outcomes of the session included a number of recommendations aimed at supporting the development of national statistical systems, enhancing their resilience and capacity to respond to crises, and expanding the utilisation of modern technology, artificial intelligence, and non-traditional data sources in producing official statistics.

The session, hosted by the Sultanate of Oman represented by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI), witnessed the participation of heads of national statistical agencies and offices in Arab countries, alongside representatives from the United Nations, partner Arab and regional organisations, and a number of experts and specialists in the statistical field.

Participants in the session affirmed the importance of enhancing data governance, improving its quality, developing administrative records, enhancing data comparability, and supporting the production of modern and reliable statistics that meet the needs of decision-makers and contribute to formulating evidence-based policies.

They also stressed the impor-



tance of continuing to coordinate statistical capacity-building programmes, exchanging experiences and expertise among member states, and strengthening cooperation with regional and international organisations, thereby contributing to building modern and sustainable national statistical systems.

Dr. Khalifa Abdullah Al Barwani, CEO of the National Centre for Statistics and Information, stated that the recommendation to establish the Muscat Team represents an extension of the success of the Sultanate of Oman's experience in utilising artificial intelligence technologies in conducting the household income and expenditure survey, reflecting the advanced results achieved by this experience in developing statistical work methods, raising the efficiency of indicator production, and accelerating access to data.

Al Barwani added that the Muscat Team will constitute an important framework for enhancing Arab statistical cooperation, exchanging expertise and knowledge in using artificial intelligence in official statistics, and benefiting from pioneering experiences and practices, thereby supporting the development of national statistical agencies' capabilities and contributing to building statistical

systems that are more efficient, innovative, and responsive to decision-makers' needs.

The session discussed a number of topics related to developing statistical work in the Arab region, including governance issues, the use of modern technology and non-traditional data sources, information and communication technology (ICT) and digital development statistics, as well as price statistics in the digital age.

It also addressed the role of data and innovative analytics in supporting policymaking during times of crisis, enhancing statistics on refugees, internally displaced persons, and disasters, updating national accounts, as well as coordinating statistical capacity-building activities for national statistical offices.

During the session, the Sultanate of Oman's experience in implementing the household income and expenditure survey using artificial intelligence was reviewed, alongside the potential these technologies offer to develop data collection, processing, and analysis operations, improve the quality of statistical outputs, and accelerate indicator production.

— ONA

Full story @ timesofoman.com/oman

Dr. Maria Alejandra Cancino Wins Industry Leader of the Year – Eye Care Award



Dr. Maria Alejandra Cancino of Muscat Eye Laser Center, was felicitated with the 'The Origin Industry Leader of the Year – Eye Care' award at The Origin – Women Forum & Awards 2026. The awards presentation was held at JW Marriott Hotel Muscat, bringing together women leaders, professionals, entrepreneurs and changemakers from across Oman and the region.

With a distinguished career in eye care, she has built a reputation for excellence, clinical expertise and a strong commitment to patient care. Her work reflects the evolving standards of modern ophthalmology and the importance of combining advanced medical expertise with a patient-centred approach.

Through her leadership at Muscat Eye Laser Center, she continues to contribute to the development of specialised eye care in Oman, helping patients access advanced



treatments and comprehensive vision care. Her dedication to clinical excellence and continuous advancement has made her a respected figure in the healthcare sector. Her recognition as Industry Leader of the Year – Eye Care celebrates not only her professional achievements but also her contribution to advancing quality healthcare and inspiring excellence within the field. Her journey stands as an example of how expertise, leadership and compassion can create a lasting impact on patients and the wider community.

The Origin Awards 2026 are instituted by Times of Oman, in collaboration with Muscat Media Group, Gulf Leaders Circle and TEvents. The awards recognise exceptional women, organisations and initiatives making a meaningful impact across industries and communities, while advancing leadership, empowerment, inclusion and progress.

Iran launches missiles at targets in Jordan used by American forces

Iran's Revolutionary Guards announced that they "struck the American Al-Azraq base in Jordan with heavy missile strikes"



TEHRAN: Iran launched retaliatory missile strikes targeting Jordan on Wednesday, September 9, hitting the Muwaffaq Salti Air Base used by American forces, following an earlier US military attack on Iranian vessels.

In an official statement reported by the state-backed IRNA

news agency, Iran's Revolutionary Guards announced that they "struck the American Al-Azraq base in Jordan with heavy missile strikes" as part of a designated "punitive operation".

Shortly after the barrage, the Jordanian military announced that its air defence network intercepted and neutralised the incoming projectiles. According to an

official army statement, Jordan's defence systems detected 20 incoming ballistic missiles, successfully destroying 18 of them, while two impacted unpopulated terrain.

The escalation follows actions by the United States Central Command (CENTCOM), which confirmed that American forces targeted five Iranian tankers connected to the Islamic Revolutionary

Guard Corps on Tuesday, September 8. The action came in retaliation against repeated missile assaults directed at a US Navy warship over the preceding 48 hours.

CENTCOM specified that US assets struck four crude oil carriers situated in the Gulf of Oman alongside a fifth vessel near Kharg Island inside the Persian Gulf. Officials

added that the targeted US warship successfully bypassed the incoming attacks, maintained its regional patrol route, and reported zero American casualties, while crews aboard the tankers were instructed to evacuate prior to the strikes.

Weighing in on the developments during an official visit to Colombia, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio issued a direct warning to Tehran, asserting that Washington will retaliate continuously if Iranian forces target American naval assets.

Addressing reporters in Barranquilla, Rubio stated, "Iran continues to try to hit US naval ships and for every time they do that, or try to do that, they're going to lose tankers."

Amid the escalating exchange of strikes, international energy markets reacted swiftly, pushing oil prices upward for the fourth consecutive session. Brent crude futures climbed by USD 1.57, translating to a 1.6 per cent increase, reaching USD 94.49 per barrel during early Wednesday trading.

In a parallel development, the Iranian Revolutionary Guards claimed responsibility for seizing an uncrewed American submarine near the gateway of the Strait of Hormuz. Iranian state media outlets identified the captured hardware as a Dive-LD, representing a large autonomous underwater vehicle manufactured by the California-based defence contractor Anduril.

The 19-foot submersible is engineered to perform diverse operations, including mine countermeasures, seabed mapping, intelligence gathering, and the examination of submerged critical infrastructure such as cables and pipelines, according to manufacturer specifications. — **ANI**

HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE



India steps up relief efforts in flood-hit Nepal

NEW DELHI: India stepped up its humanitarian assistance to flood-hit Nepal, with the eighth Indian Air Force aircraft carrying 35 tonnes of relief and rescue supplies departing for Kathmandu on Wednesday.

According to a post on X by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), the latest consignment includes National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) equipment, rescue gear, forensic supplies and replenishment supplies for Indian Army teams involved in the ongoing relief and rescue efforts.

"The 8th IAF aircraft carrying 35 tonnes of relief and rescue supplies, including NDRF equipment, rescue gear, forensic supplies and Army team replenishment supplies, has departed for Kathmandu," the post read.

India's assistance comes as rescue operations continue in areas affected by flash floods in Nepal, including at the Chilime tunnel in Rasuwa, where an Indian team is working alongside the Nepal Army in search and rescue operations.

According to Nepal's National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority (NDRMA), 13,646 people have been rescued so far in the flood-hit areas, while around 5,132 people remain missing.

1,367 human casualties

As of September 9, the authorities reported 1,367 human casualties, with bodies recovered from Rasuwa, Nuwakot, Dhading, Gorkha, Tanahun, Chitwan, Nawalparasi East and Nawalparasi West.

The authorities said 102 bodies have been handed over, while samples for DNA testing can be submitted at the concerned District Police Office along with two photographs and proof of kinship.

Among those reported missing are around 2,860 people from Rasuwa and 1,787 from Nuwakot. The missing include Nepali Army personnel, Nepal Police and Armed Police Force personnel, government employees, bank and financial institution employees, as well as foreign tourists.

Rescue operations continue

Relief and rescue operations have also continued through air missions. The Nepali Army conducted 21 helicopter flights on September 9, bringing its total

number of flights to 1,264 as of September 8. The Armed Police Force has conducted 258 flights.

A total of 329 injured people are currently receiving medical treatment at 10 different hospitals, with 252 having been discharged. The Nepali Army and Armed Police Force have provided medical treatment to 3,535 and 3,287 people, respectively.

India's relief response began shortly after the devastating flash floods in the last week of August. The first Indian relief aircraft arrived in Nepal on August 26 carrying 10 tonnes of supplies, including temporary shelters, blankets, hygiene kits, solar lamps and medicines.

The second flight arrived on August 27 with 37.5 tonnes of relief material, including tents, blankets, hygiene kits, solar lamps, dewatering pumps, kitchen sets, generators, medicines and food items. A third consignment subsequently carried another 10 tonnes of assistance.

On August 30, the fourth flight carrying 11 tonnes of relief assistance landed in Nepal. The consignment included a technical contingent equipped for search and rescue operations and a team of forensic experts for DNA analysis, along with blankets, sleeping bags, tarpaulin, plastic sheets and hygiene kits.

On September 2, India sent its fifth aircraft carrying an 11-member rescue team, specialised equipment and 5.5 tonnes of essential medicines.

The sixth and seventh relief flights, both C-130J aircraft, arrived in Kathmandu on September 4 carrying a combined 21.5 tonnes of humanitarian assistance, including forensic kits and medical supplies. The material was handed over to Nepal's Minister for Science, Technology and Innovation Mahabir Pun to support ongoing relief and rescue operations.

Indian Ambassador to Nepal Naveen Srivastava had said the consignments formed part of India's continuing support for Nepal's response to the Rasuwa flash floods.

With the eighth flight carrying another 35 tonnes of relief and rescue supplies, India's assistance to Nepal continues as search, rescue and recovery operations remain underway in the flood-affected areas. — **ANI**

Honouring Excellence in Social Impact

Shabiba 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:

Syed Amir Saleem: syed.amir@tevents.om | +968 78471944
Sanjeev Rana: sanjeev@tevents.om | +968 97221630
Shamik Rao: shamik.rao@tevents.om | +968 79333149

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Pellaud crowned champion

The Swiss rider's consistency and tactical masterclass ensured him the overall title at the 2026 Tour of Salalah on Wednesday

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Swiss rider Simon Pellaud delivered a masterclass in tactical racing over four intense days to secure the overall title at the sixth edition of the Tour of Salalah on Wednesday.

The UCI 2.2 international event concluded with a high-stakes 108-kilometre final stage, leaving Pellaud to pull on the final golden jersey denoting general classification supremacy.

Pellaud's victory by a 15-second margin crowned a week of unmatched dominance for his team, Li Ning Star, which also saw Argentine climbing specialist and Pellaud's team-mate, Eduardo



Sepúlveda, finish second overall following his recent success at the Dhofar Classic one-day race and a stage win. Mongolian powerhouse Tegshbayar Batsaikhan (Roojai Insurance Winspace) rounded out the overall podium in third place.

The final stage of the tour took the peloton on a fast, undulating route starting at the lush springs of Ain Razat and finishing at the Sultan Qaboos Youth Complex.

Australian rider Cameron Scott triggered a perfectly timed launch out of the final corner, overpower-



ing his rivals to claim the Stage 4 victory in two hours 22 minutes and 34 seconds.

Jakarta Pro Cycling Team cyclists Yosandy Darmawan Oetomo and Terry Yudha took the second and third spots respectively in the sprint finish, which saw 65 riders clock the same time as the winner among the total 79 that completed the stage.

Having successfully survived the brutal mountain climbs of the previous days, Pellaud entered the final stage holding a narrow

15-second lead over team-mate Sepúlveda. The primary objective for Li Ning Star team was simple: monitor the dangerous breakaway attempts and ensure a safe bunch finish to protect the golden jersey.

A flurry of early attacks from regional teams tried to disrupt the peloton, but the continental squads kept the speed exceptionally high. As the race entered its final stretch, the sprinters' teams took control of the field.

Pellaud, well-protected by his team-mates, crossed safely in the

heart of the main group to solidify his championship status.

The 2026 edition of the tour drew 95 international riders from 28 countries. Dutchman Jeroen Meijers (Victoria Sports Pro Cycling) won a selective seven-man breakaway sprint from Mughsail Beach to Mirbat Castle to wear the first leader's jersey after stage 1.

Pellaud laid his foundation here by taking third place and on stage 2 he made his definitive move. He conquered the grueling uphill finish at Wadi Darbat, out-dueling

Colombia's Edison Alejandro Callejas in a punishing uphill sprint to take over the general classification lead.

The queen stage threw a 156km mountain trek toward Jabal Samhan at the riders on the penultimate stage. Sepúlveda put on an authorised climbing clinic to win the stage at Gravity Hill. Pellaud dug deep to finish fifth, losing only a small handful of seconds and keeping his lead intact ahead of the final day.

Li Ning Star comfortably took the team championship with an overall time of 33:49:26. Thailand's Roojai Insurance Winspace was second (+0:49), while Rwanda's Team Amani finished third (+9:40). Philippines Victoria Sports Pro Cycling (+12:18) and Guam-based EuroCyclingTrips – CCN (+16:59) completed the top five.

Organised by the Dhofar Municipality in cooperation with the Oman Cycling Association, the tour successfully concluded its mission to push the Sultanate further onto the global cycling map while showcasing the unique tourism landscape of the Dhofar region during the Khareef season.

The final ceremony was held under the auspices of Dr Ahmed Al Ghassani, Chairman of Dhofar Municipality, and Saif Al Rashidi, Chairman of the Oman Cycling Association.

FORMER AUSTRALIA SKIPPER

Ponting: ODI cricket will be played 'less' amid T20 boom

MUMBAI: Former Australian skipper Ricky Ponting believes ODIs could become an increasingly marginal part of the international calendar in the coming years as more T20 leagues emerge.

He, however, remains convinced that Test cricket will continue to thrive as long as major cricketing nations remain invested in it.

"As the months go by and the years go by and more and more T20 cricket is being played and more franchises and franchise tournaments are starting around the world, it's more and more likely that 50-over cricket is probably going to be played less," Ponting was quoted by Indian news agency PTI.

"It's inevitable, which I'm not a huge fan of, to be honest.

"I love playing that format of the game, but something's got to give somewhere. Test cricket will remain strong as long as India, Australia, England and probably South Africa want it to remain strong. It will. So something's got to give. And the obvious one is 50-over cricket," he said.

Asked about the proliferation of T20 leagues and whether there could eventually be too much cricket for players, Ponting acknowledged the calendar will inevitably have to make room for the growing number of franchise competitions. Ponting, who now



co-owns the Australia Champions team in the World Championship of Legends, also credited such leagues for helping extend players' careers. "The players are the ones that are benefiting most from these tournaments all over the world at the moment," he said.

"A tournament like WCL also gives a lot of players at the back-end of their careers a chance to earn a living. "... it's great for the guys that are either still playing like Davey (David Warner), still playing at the highest level, but sort of coming towards the back end of their careers to have something like the Legends, that they can go back and play at the end."

Last month, ICC CEO Sanjog Gupta had said that the era of "randomly scheduled" bilateral series "has to come to an end," but the much-debated ODI format can continue to survive and thrive with its place "inextricably" linked to the World Cup. - Agencies

THIRD TEST

England quicks dismantle hapless Pakistan

EDGBASTON: England's pace attack tore through a hapless Pakistan on the opening day of the third and final Test at Edgbaston as the visitors were bowled out for 133 soon after lunch.

Josh Tongue had figures of 4 for 42 while opening duo Ollie Robinson and Jofra Archer took three wickets apiece. Robinson bowled with the frugality that has been a feature of his summer, taking 2 for 9 in eight overs, as Pakistan dined on 100 for 7. Pakistan were off to the most abject start imaginable, even bearing in mind the off-field turmoil which had resulted in sweeping on-field changes with three players on debut.

Before the first of them walked to the crease, they were five wickets down with just 48 runs on the board in the 15th over with captain Babar Azam making his way back to the changing room already.

Saim Ayub, playing his ninth Test after returning as one of four changes to the Pakistan side which lost by 194 runs at Lord's, survived an early lbw decision against him on just the fifth ball of the match. He had left a nip-backer from Robinson and was struck on this back thigh but reviewed immediately and was vindicated when the ball was projected to be going over off stump. But Ayub was unable to overturn another, correct, lbw call from Chris Gaffaney as Robinson collected his



100th Test wicket in his next over. Archer saw Azan Awaits put down by Ben Duckett at first slip, but Tongue held on just three balls

later as Awaits chipped straight to him at midwicket. Dan Lawrence took a low catch off Abdullah Shafique to give Rob-

inson his second for the match and, in the next over, Shan Masood fell tamely via a top-edged pull to sub fielder Theo Wylie at mid-wicket off Archer.

Floundering at 26 for 4, Pakistan needed stability from Babar but he fell for just 7 to an excellent delivery from Tongue which seamed in off a good length and knocked back his off stump.

With Pakistan dipping into the debutants, the experienced Saud Shakeel chose to lead with a defiant 43 off 47 balls, including seven fours. Wicketkeeper Ghazi Ghori was leg before to Tongue, the decision was upheld on review. Shakeel peeled off two fours in three deliveries from Gus Atkinson, through the covers and backward point, but his efforts looked in vain as Tongue nailed his yorker to rattle the stumps of another debutant, Mohammad Imran Randhawa.

The third Pakistan player on debut, Razaullah, showed willing and muscle if not aesthetics as he found the boundary twice off Tongue's fifth over but was sent back soon after lunch by Robinson for 11. Mohammad Abbas scored 21 off 36 balls before becoming the last man out, caught at slips to end Pakistan's innings at 133 in 33.5 overs.

Brief scores: Pakistan 1st innings (Saud Shakeel 43, Mohammad Abbas 21; Josh Tongue 4/42, Ollie Robinson 3/15, Jofra Archer 3/35) vs England.

VS AUSTRALIA A

Hardik Pandya included in India A squad for ODIs

MUMBAI: Hardik Pandya has been included in the India A squad that is set to play three one-day games against Australia A in Puducherry from October 6 to 11, subject to fitness clearance. The all-rounder was last in action during IPL 2026, and has spent much of the intervening time undergoing rehab at the BCCI's Centre of Excellence (CoE) in Bengaluru.

Hardik had missed part of Mumbai Indians' IPL campaign with back spasms, and suffered a leg strain while training at the CoE in the lead-up to the ODI series

against Afghanistan in June, forcing him to miss it. Hardik hasn't played ODIs since the Champions Trophy final in March 2025, having rested from the format in the lead-up to the T20 World Cup in February-March 2026.

He has been back in India's 50-overs plans since the end of that tournament, with an ODI World Cup coming up in October-November 2027, but fitness issues have kept him out of action.

India will hope Hardik clears his fitness assessment ahead of the Australia A series, and be-

gins the process of slotting back into 50-overs rhythm. He is seen as a key player in India's World Cup plans, as their most accomplished seam-bowling all-rounder, particularly in Southern African conditions. The series against Australia A, which will be played entirely in Puducherry, will begin with two four-day unofficial Tests, from September 22 to 25 and from September 29 to October 2. This will be followed by three one-day games on October 6, 9 and 11.

Devdutt Padikkal will captain India A in the four-day games with

B Sai Sudharsan, from whom he recently took over the No. 3 slot in Test cricket, as his deputy. With the four-day games clashing with the Irani Cup, which is scheduled to be played from October 1 to 5, and the Asian Games T20 tournament, which runs from September 24 to October 3, the squad is missing a number of prominent names. Seam bowler Anshul Kamboj, off-spinner Tanush Kotian and wicketkeeper N Jagadeesan are the only other members of the 15 to have been part of recent India squads.

India A squads for series against Australia A

Four-day squad: Aman Mokhade, Ayush Pandey, Devdutt Padikkal (capt), Sai Sudharsan (vice-capt), Yash Rathod, Shaik Rasheed, Kumar Kushagra (wk), Shams Mulani, Tanush Kotian, Tushar Deshpande, Anshul Kamboj, Praful Hinge, N Jagadeesan (wk), Nachiket Bhute, V Vyshak (subject to fitness clearance).

One-day squad: Priyansh Arya, Sai Sudharsan, Devdutt Padikkal (vice-capt), Ruturaj Gaikwad (capt), Rajat Patidar, Kumar Kushagra (wk), Nishant Sindhu, Vipraj Nigam, Arshin Kulkarni, Arshad Khan, Naman Dhir, Hardik Pandya (subject to fitness clearance), Prabhsimran Singh (wk), Gurjapneet Singh, Yash Thakur. - Agencies



AI BOOSTS ASIA GROWTH

Artificial intelligence (AI) and related technologies could boost Asia's annual economic growth by 0.2 to 1 percentage point, helping offset the impact of a shrinking population and allowing the region to maintain or even exceed its recent growth rates.

MARKET
BUSINESS & FINANCE



MSX INDEX ENDS HIGHER

The MSX index closed at 7,625.85 points, up by 0.16% from previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 0.21% at 620.63 points. Construction Materials, up 5.13%, was the top gainer while, Muscat Gases, down 6.52%, was the top loser.

Oman oil price soars to \$121.68 as Middle East conflict escalates

This is Oman oil's highest level since April on the back of rising tensions between the US and Iran leading to serious concerns over oil supply from the Middle East

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The official price of Oman oil for delivery in next November again rose by \$5.15 to settle \$121.68 per barrel on Wednesday as Middle East conflict escalates. On Tuesday he official selling price of Oman crude had surged by 11.5 percent per barrel.

This is Oman oil's highest level since April on rising tensions between the US and Iran leading to serious concerns over oil supply from the Middle East.

Meanwhile, in Asia trading oil prices climbed more than \$1 in early trading as the Middle East conflict widened, heightening concerns over supply disruptions on Wednesday.

In Singapore, Brent crude futures rose \$1.57, or 1.6 percent, to \$99.49 a barrel, while US West



Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude gained \$1.60, or 1.72 percent, to \$94.63 a barrel.

Brent has surged about 25 percent since early August, as hopes for a lasting resolution to the six-month-old war have faded and hostilities have reignited.

"The ongoing clashes in the Middle East have lifted oil prices beyond \$95 per barrel and supply fears are at odds with the market's surprisingly stable workings," said Norbert Rücker, Head Economics

and Next Generation Research, Julius Baer.

"Exports out of the Middle East and global oil storage are holding up well. The perception gap suggests that there is an exceptionally bloated risk premium embedded in prices," he further added.

The images of attacked and capsized oil tankers have had an impact and the ongoing hostilities in the Middle East have helped in spiking oil prices. The key question is whether the latest tensions

will evolve into a more serious escalation and threat to global energy supplies, Norbert Rücker said, adding that, "So far, developments seem to be following the pattern of previous clashes, which proved temporary and left no lasting consequences."

"The US attacks were aimed at constraining Iran's ability to interfere in Hormuz shipping and are part of a strategy to lift the economic costs for its regime. Iran's counter-strikes targeted mainly military

infrastructure and were largely intercepted," he further added.

Gold gains as dollar eases

Gold prices rose on Wednesday as the dollar edged lower, while renewed US-Iran hostilities and upcoming inflation data kept attention firmly fixed on the interest rate outlook. Spot gold gained 0.4 percent to \$4,372.19 per ounce, while US gold futures for December delivery slipped 0.5 percent to

\$4,416.00 per ounce.

A softer dollar made bullion more affordable for holders of other currencies. Markets are awaiting US producer price index data due on Thursday, followed by consumer price index figures on Friday. Spot silver rose 0.4 percent to \$66.00 per ounce, platinum gained 1.0 percent to \$1,831.76 per ounce, while palladium eased 0.3 percent to \$1,344.69 per ounce.

Yen steadies

Meanwhile the yen steadied near its highest level since February, as the dollar fluctuated and traders grappled with oil prices approaching \$100 a barrel amid the widening Middle East conflict. Currency markets were also affected, with the dollar edging lower, though some analysts attributed the decline to the yen's sharp appreciation over the past week.

The euro held steady at \$1.1631, while sterling last traded at \$1.3546. The dollar index, which tracks the US currency against six major peers, eased to 98.15, close to its lowest in nearly two weeks. The yen rose to 153.65 per dollar, approaching a seven-month high of 152.89 hit in the previous session.

The gains were broad-based, with the Japanese currency rising against the euro, sterling, the Mexican peso and the Turkish lira. The Australian dollar rose 0.12 percent to \$0.7225, edging closer to a four-month high hit in the previous session, while the New Zealand dollar rose 0.16 percent to \$0.5862.

- With inputs from ONA

NAMA ELECTRICITY



South Al Batinah sees implementation of new electricity projects worth over OMR16mn

AL RUSTAQ: Nama Electricity Distribution Company is implementing a number of electricity development projects in South Al Batinah Governorate to the tune of more than OMR16.777 million.

The projects aim to enhance the stability of the electricity grid, increase energy reserve capacity and operational flexibility,

minimise losses and ensure compliance with grid safety standards across the governorate's wilayats.

The company said that the new projects constitute part of its plans to bolster grid reliability and keep pace with the ongoing urban and economic growth in South Al Batinah. -ONA

OMAN PARTICIPATION

GCC audit chiefs discuss transparency, accountability and public funds

MANAMA: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the State Financial and Administrative Audit Authority, participated in the 23rd meeting of the Heads of Financial and Accounting Audit Institutions and Bureaus in the GCC, held in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

The delegation of the Sultanate of Oman at the meeting was led by Sheikh Ghuson Hilal Al Alawi, Chairman of the State Financial and Administrative Audit Authority.

The meeting addressed a number of items on its agenda, most notably discussing the topics for the seventh edition of the GCC Research and Studies Competition in Audit and Accounting, and reviewing a report on the results of studying the recommendations contained in the winning research papers of the sixth edition of the competition.

The meeting also touched upon informational items, including the report of the Secretariat General on the training programmes implemented in 2025 and 2026, as



well as events to be held by financial and accounting audit institutions in the GCC states during the Gulf Financial and Accounting Audit Week.

This meeting comes within the framework of enhancing joint Gulf cooperation to consolidate the principles of transparency, accountability, and protection of

public funds, develop audit mechanisms, and exchange expertise and experiences among financial and accounting audit institutions in the GCC states. -ONA

GLOBAL FINTECH FEST

India PM Modi seeks to expand global reach of UPI retail payment platform

MUMBAI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday called on India's fintech industry to strengthen cybersecurity, adopt ethical data-protection standards, deepen regulator-industry innovation and develop a Fintech Consumer Protection Index for transparent company ratings.

Addressing the Global Fintech Fest 2026 in Mumbai, Modi said fintech companies should jointly set clear priorities as technologies such as Agentic AI, tokenisation and quantum open new possibilities in the financial sector.

"First, we have to make cybersecurity in India top-notch. Second, our industry should have its own ethical data-protection standards. Third, we have to build a strong fintech regulator-industry innovation ecosystem. And fourth, we should have a Fintech Consumer Protection Index, on the basis of



which every company can be rated transparently," Modi said.

He added that if the sector measured itself against these parameters, India's fintech industry could

become "a gateway to countless possibilities".

The Prime Minister also said the next phase of India's fintech growth should move beyond payments and expand into credit, insurance, savings, investments and pensions.

"Now, in the fintech market, along with payments, the share of credit transactions should also increase, the share of insurance should increase, and the share of savings, investments and pensions should increase," he said.

become "a gateway to countless possibilities".

The Prime Minister also said the next phase of India's fintech growth should move beyond payments and expand into credit, insurance, savings, investments and pensions.

"Now, in the fintech market, along with payments, the share of credit transactions should also increase, the share of insurance should increase, and the share of savings, investments and pensions should increase," he said.

Modi said fintech could help serve small businesses and workers who are still not efficiently covered by traditional financial models. "We have demonstrated speed and scale in payments. Now, we will have to help increase the share of non-payment transactions," he said.

On UPI's global expansion, Modi said the platform is now live in 11 countries and India should work towards linking it with payment systems of more countries.

"Today, our UPI has reached

several countries. But this is the first step. Now our next target should be to connect with the payment systems of those countries," he said.

He cited the India-Singapore payment linkage as an example and said similar connections should be built with other countries and markets, particularly where Indians live in large numbers or India has significant trade ties.

The Prime Minister said UPI recorded more than 2,400 crore transactions in August alone and described it as one of the biggest drivers of India's fintech transformation. "UPI is no longer limited only to India," Modi said.

On the broader economy, Modi said India's 7.8 per cent growth in the April-June quarter came despite a difficult global environment marked by conflicts, uncertainty, pressure on energy and commod-

ity supply chains and trade tensions. "When India grows at 7.8 per cent even in such a situation, it gives the world renewed confidence," he said.

He also referred to India's recent sovereign rating upgrade by a Japanese credit rating agency to the A category, saying it reflected confidence in the country's growth momentum, macroeconomic stability and structural reforms.

"India's reform express will move forward at an even faster pace," Modi said.

Modi also highlighted PM SVA-Nidhi as an example of fintech-led financial inclusion, saying studies showed the average annual income of beneficiaries had increased by more than 20 per cent. He said UPI had played a major role in the scheme's success and noted that the government has decided to extend PM SVANidhi till 2030. -ANI

MARKET

MSX index ends higher

Construction Materials, up 5.13%, was the top gainer while, Muscat Gases, down 6.52%, was the top loser



MUSCAT: The MSX index closed at 7,625.85 points, up by 0.16% from previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 0.21% at 620.63 points. Construction Materials, up 5.13%, was the top gainer while, Muscat Gases, down 6.52%, was the top loser. Shares of OQBI were the most active in terms of number of shares traded as well as in terms of turnover.

A total number of 9042 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating turnover of RO 38.02 million, with more than 132.29 million shares changing hands. Out of 68 traded securities, 26 advanced, 16 declined, and 26 remained unchanged. At the session close, GCC & Arab investors were net buyers for RO 761K while domestic investors were net sellers for RO 431K, followed by foreign investors for RO 330K worth of shares.

Financial Index closed at 13,522.57 points, up 0.57%. Prices of Oman Arab Bank, Al Anwar Investment, Global Financial Investments, Oman United Insur-

ance, Bank Muscat were up by 3.76%, 3.05%, 2.64%, 2.39%, 1.45% respectively. Prices of Takaful Oman, Sohar International Bank, Financial Corporation, National Bank Oman were down by 3.23%, 1.55%, 1.00%, 0.61% respectively.

Industrial Index closed at 9,915.24 points, up 0.35%. Prices of Construction Materials, Oman Fisheries, Oman Flour Mills, Galfar Engineering, Gulf Mushroom Products were up by 5.13%, 4.55%, 2.04%, 1.31%, 0.46% respectively. Prices of Voltamp Energy, Oman Cables Industry were down by 0.53%, 0.15% respectively.

Services Index was up by 0.36% before closing at 3,075.09 points. Prices of Salalah Port Services, Phoenix Power, National Gas, National Gas, Sembcorp Salalah were up by 2.94%, 1.05%, 0.88%, 0.88%, 0.78% respectively. Prices of Barka Water & Power Company, Sohar Power, Musandam Power, Majan College, Muscat Desalination were down by 2.47%, 1.80%, 1.45%, 1.41%, 1.12% respectively.— **United Securities**

OMAN STOCKS

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE

INDICES

Index	High	Low	Value	Prev. Value	Diff.
MSX 30 INDEX	7,637.18	7,597.40	7,625.85	7,613.47	12.37
FINANCIAL INDEX	13,522.57	13,371.65	13,522.57	13,445.34	77.23
Industry Index	9,933.44	9,880.65	9,915.24	9,880.65	34.59
Services Index	3,076.62	3,064.16	3,075.09	3,064.16	10.93
MSX Shariah Index	621.49	619.17	620.63	619.31	1.32
MSX TR INDEX	11,840.59	11,778.92	11,823.02	11,803.84	19.18
FINANCIAL TR IDX	16,625.30	16,439.75	16,625.30	16,530.34	94.95
INDUSTRIAL TR IDX	12,722.21	12,654.61	12,698.90	12,654.61	44.30
SERVICES TR IDX	4,130.96	4,114.22	4,128.90	4,114.22	14.68
FIXED INCOME INDEX	1,291.27	1,291.27	1,291.27	1,291.27	0.00

Trading Summary

Volume	Turnover	Trades	Market Cap	Up	Down	Equal	Sec. Traded
132,299,339	38,015,528	9,042	39,364,406,750	26	16	26	68

SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 9

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

OM0000001772	ALANWAR INVESTMENT	912,041	183,510	58	0.198	0.204	0.195	0.203	0.197	0.006	3.046	0.203	0.197	0.205	0.100	62,424,432
OM00000003125	GLOBAL FINANCIAL INVESTMENT HO	2,979,741	1,014,942	54	0.336	0.350	0.335	0.350	0.341	0.009	2.639	0.350	0.345	0.350	0.100	70,000,000
OM00000001087	OMAN UNITED INSURANCE	56,332	19,093	12	0.335	0.345	0.320	0.343	0.335	0.008	2.288	0.343	0.343	0.330	0.100	36,010,000
OM0000000796	BANK MUSCAT	16,417,714	6,850,461	1,327	0.415	0.421	0.414	0.421	0.415	0.006	1.446	0.421	0.422	0.421	0.100	3,160,193,163
OM00000001509	BHOFAR INT'L DEVELOPMENT & INVEST	1,600	472	4	0.294	0.298	0.294	0.298	0.294	0.004	1.361	0.298	0.280	0.297	0.100	147,824,730
OM00000005963	PHOENIX POWER	100	29	1	0.288	0.288	0.288	0.288	0.285	0.003	1.053	0.288	0.260	0.310	0.100	421,229,220
OM00000009759	OQ EXPLORATION AND PRODUCTION	7,929,384	3,801,141	508	0.474	0.482	0.474	0.480	0.475	0.005	1.053	0.480	0.483	0.480	0.010	3,840,000,000
OM00000002549	BANK DHOFAR	721,713	148,263	460	0.207	0.207	0.204	0.207	0.205	0.002	0.976	0.207	0.210	0.207	0.100	629,238,296
OM00000004788	MADINA TAKAFUL	59,016	6,592	22	0.111	0.113	0.111	0.113	0.112	0.001	0.893	0.113	0.111	0.113	0.100	19,775,000
OM00000009098	OQ BASE INDUSTRIES (SF2)	40,857,787	10,443,180	1,581	0.255	0.258	0.255	0.257	0.255	0.002	0.784	0.257	0.260	0.257	0.040	889,089,148
OM00000004735	SEMBCORP SALALAH	20,000	5,200	5	0.260	0.260	0.260	0.260	0.258	0.002	0.775	0.260	0.255	0.280	0.100	248,188,707
OM00000008934	ABRAJ ENERGY SERVICES	555,331	224,983	233	0.403	0.407	0.403	0.406	0.403	0.003	0.744	0.406	0.404	0.406	0.100	312,701,200
OM00000004933	AL SUWADI POWER	175,000	34,690	14	0.197	0.199	0.197	0.199	0.198	0.001	0.505	0.199	0.196	0.199	0.100	142,166,862
OM00000004925	ALBATTINAH POWER	252,501	50,188	12	0.198	0.200	0.198	0.200	0.199	0.001	0.503	0.200	0.197	0.204	0.100	134,977,486
OM00000002267	GULF MUSHROOM PRODUCTS	17,225	7,537	12	0.435	0.440	0.435	0.437	0.435	0.002	0.460	0.437	0.420	0.440	0.100	21,999,619
OM00000002176	JAZEERA STEEL PRODUCTS	10,981	9,900	3	0.909	0.910	0.909	0.910	0.909	0.001	0.110	0.909	0.908	0.909	0.100	113,657,144
OM00000001533	OMINVEST	2,296	931	5	0.412	0.412	0.410	0.412	0.412	0.000	0.000	0.412	0.405	0.410	0.100	462,615,813
OM00000001681	OMAN EMIRATES HO	13,282	1,687	4	0.127	0.127	0.127	0.127	0.127	0.000	0.000	0.127	0.127	0.129	0.100	16,252,031
OM00000002374	UNITED FINANCE	53,622	4,719	5	0.088	0.088	0.088	0.088	0.088	0.000	0.000	0.088	0.080	0.089	0.100	31,339,202
OM00000002440	AL SHARQIA INVESTMENT HO	8,140	927	6	0.104	0.104	0.100	0.103	0.103	0.000	0.000	0.103	0.100	0.103	0.100	9,270,000
OM00000003224	RENAISSANCE SERVICES	39,771	11,522	18	0.289	0.291	0.289	0.290	0.290	0.000	0.000	0.290	0.290	0.290	0.100	88,558,900
OM00000003968	OOREDOO	241,084	7,7711	37	0.322	0.325	0.322	0.322	0.322	0.000	0.000	0.322	0.322	0.322	0.100	209,604,042
OM00000004420	BANK NIZWA	7,000	1,029	1	0.147	0.147	0.147	0.147	0.147	0.000	0.000	0.147	0.146	0.147	0.100	328,832,096
OM00000009072	OQ GAS NETWORKS	9,864,838	2,196,080	1,462	0.223	0.224	0.221	0.223	0.223	0.000	0.000	0.223	0.221	0.223	0.100	965,729,134
OM00000001010	ASYAD SHIPPING	1,964,390	463,783	1,096	0.237	0.237	0.235	0.236	0.236	0.000	0.000	0.236	0.259	0.236	0.000	1,229,263,650
OM00000001707	OMAN CABLES INDUSTRY	4,139	14,184	7	3.430	3.430	3.425	3.425	3.430	-0.005	-0.146	3.425	3.425	3.430	0.100	307,222,500
OM00000003661	VOLTAMP ENERGY	546,190	102,359	38	0.187	0.188	0.186	0.187	0.188	0.001	0.532	0.188	0.187	0.188	0.010	187,000,000
OM00000001483	NATIONAL BANK OMAN	9,000	4,388	6	0.487	0.490	0.486	0.486	0.489	-0.003	-0.613	0.486	0.441	0.486	0.100	790,290,929
OM00000002226	ALJAZEERA SERVICES	9,889	2,502	4	0.253	0.253	0.253	0.253	0.255	-0.002	-0.784	0.253	0.253	0.000	0.100	10,839,277
OM00000003026	OMAN TELECOM	2,461,426	3,404,670	96	1.388	1.388	1.378	1.378	1.389	-0.011	-0.792	1.378	1.378	1.251	0.100	1,033,500,000
OM00000007811	MUSANDAM POWER	45,335	15,418	2	0.343	0.343	0.340	0.340	0.345	-0.005	-1.449	0.340	0.340	0.349	0.100	23,932,600
OM00000003398	SOHAR INTERNATIONAL BANK	40,165,383	7,696,063	1,437	0.192	0.193	0.190	0.190	0.193	-0.003	-1.554	0.190	0.190	0.193	0.100	1,458,441,078
OM00000003141	BARKA WATER AND POWER	21,100	3,348	5	0.158	0.162	0.158	0.158	0.162	-0.004	-2.469	0.158	0.150	0.158	0.100	25,280,000
Total	33	126,427,341	36,801,532	8,535												

Parallel Market

OM00000001368	CONSTRUCTION MATERIAL INDUSTRIES	1,000	82	1	0.082	0.082	0.082	0.082	0.078	0.004	5.128	0.082	0.071	0.082	0.100	5,125
OM00000005260	OMAN ARAB BANK	585,250	159,083	79	0.267	0.276	0.267	0.276	0.266	0.010	3.759	0.276	0.274	0.276	0.100	552,757
OM00000002333	SALALAH PORT SERVICES	12,400	6,076	2	0.490	0.490	0.490	0.490	0.478	0.014	2.941	0.490	0.473	0.490	0.100	88,120
OM00000001400	OMAN FLOUR MILLS	1,900	1,140	2	0.600	0.600	0.600	0.600	0.588	0.012	2.041	0.600	0.000	0.600	0.100	104,186
OM00000003521	GALFAR ENGINEERING & CONTRACTING	106,384	16,490	23	0.155	0.155	0.155	0.155	0.153	0.002	1.307	0.155	0.150	0.155	0.100	31,186
OM00000001982	AL MADINA INVESTMENT HOLDING	529,981	41,108	43	0.077	0.077	0.077	0.077	0.077	0.001	1.299	0.078	0.078	0.078	0.100	3,361
OM00000001160	NATIONAL GAS	110,186	12,889	14	0.115	0.116	0.115	0.115	0.114	0.001	0.877	0.115	0.114	0.116	0.100	9,775
OM000000010823	OMAN GATEWAY FUND	10,700	11,235	4	1.050	1.050	1.050	1.050	1.048	0.002	0.191	1.050	1.050	1.075	0.000	28,796
OM00000001426	OMAN REFRESHMENT	812	893	1	1.100	1.100	1.100	1.100	1.100	0.000	0.000	1.100	0.000	1.100	0.100	55,000
OM00000001590	MUSCAT FINANCE	400	28	2	0.069	0.069	0.069	0.069	0.069	0.000	0.000	0.069	0.066	0.069	0.100	21,193
OM00000002036	MUSCAT THREAD MILLS	1,225	285	2	0.233	0.233	0.233	0.233	0.233	0.000	0.000	0.233	0.233	0.238	0.100	4,311
OM00000002168	AL ANWAR CERAMIC	163,700	25,588	19	0.156	0.157	0.155	0.156	0.156	0.000	0.000	0.156	0.151	0.156	0.100	34,320
OM00000002200	AHLI BANK	3,300	663	3	0.201	0.201	0.201	0.201	0.201	0.000	0.000	0.201	0.195	0.201	0.100	558,436
OM00000002341	OMAN CHLORINE	5,600	926	4	0.165	0.168	0.165	0.165	0.165	0.000	0.000	0.165	0.160	0.165	0.100	11,798
OM00000002648	NATIONAL FINANCE	8,730	1,886	2	0.216	0.216	0.216	0.216	0.218	0.000	0.000	0.216	0.216	0.219	0.100	140,550
OM00000008447	OMAN RETT FUND	2,396	254	2	0.106	0.106	0.106	0.106	0.106	0.000	0.000	0.106	0.105	0.106	0.100	89,222
OM00000008688	THE PEARL REIF	21,800	3,892	4	0.179	0.179	0.179	0.179	0.179	0.000	0.000	0.179	0.178	0.179	0.100	105,897
OM00000001151	OMIPCO	4,075,101	881,002	255	0.218	0.219	0.215	0.216	0.218	-0.002	-0.937	0.216	0.216	0.216	0.100	1,444,905
OM00000002911	FINANCIAL CORPORATION	15,089	1,494	3	0.102	0.102	0.099	0.099	0.100	-0.001	-1.000	0.099	0.095	0.100	0.100	6,932
OM00000007084	MUSCAT CITY DESALINATION	10,172	896	4	0.089	0.089	0.088	0.088	0.089	-0.001	-1.124	0.088	0.088	0.089	0.100	13,688
OM00000001897	MAJAN COLLEGE	3,147	441	1	0.140	0.140	0.140	0.140	0.142	-0.002	-1.408	0.140	0.137	0.156	0.100	13,686
OM00000007079	AMMAN REAL ESTATE	8,850	619	1	0.079	0.079	0.099	0.099	0.099	0.000	-1.439	0.099	0.070	0.070	0.100	13,679
OM00000003711	SOHAR POWER	238	52	2	0.221	0.221	0.218	0.218	0.222	-0.004	-1.826	0.218	0.221	0.236	0.100	4,360
OM00000004776	TAKAFUL OMAN	910	55	1	0.060	0.060	0.060	0.060	0.062	-0.002	-3.202	0.060	0.059	0.062	0.100	15,000
OM00000001178	MUSCAT GASES	19,116	2,541	3	0.133	0.133	0.129	0.129	0.138	-0.009	-6.522	0.129	0.130	0.151	0.100	3,870
Total		5,698,267	1,169,418	479												



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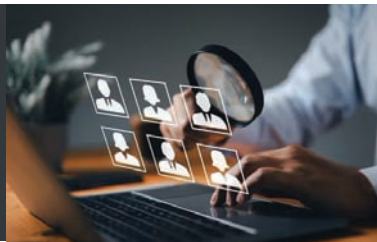
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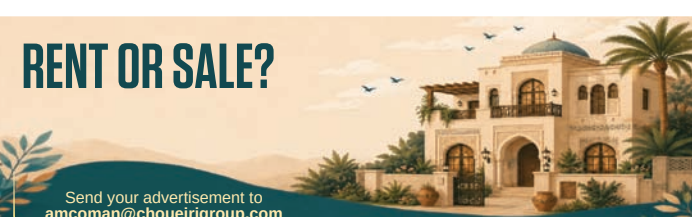
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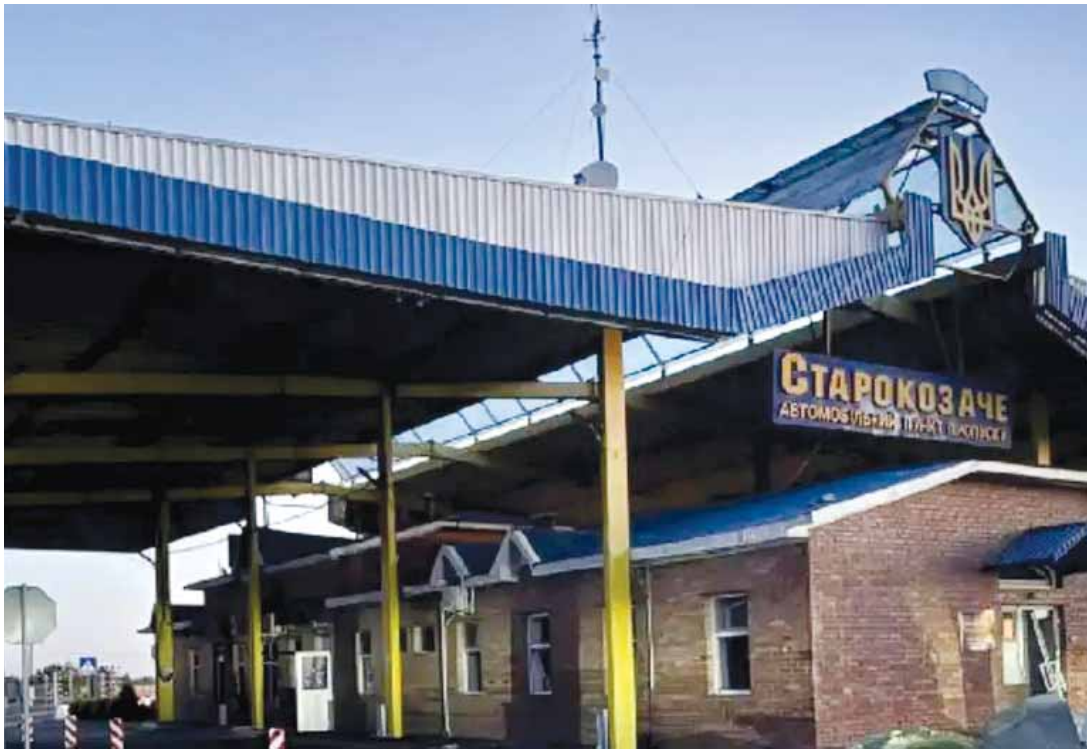
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Ukraine, Russia trade drone strikes

Veniamin Kondratyev, the governor of the Krasnodar region in southern Russia, said 29 others were injured in the drone attack. Meanwhile, Russia's Defence Ministry said nearly 600 Ukrainian drones had been shot down overnight



KYIV: A Ukrainian drone attack on the Black Sea port city of Novorossiysk overnight killed at least four people, including a child, Russian officials said Wednesday.

Veniamin Kondratyev, the governor of the Krasnodar region in southern Russia, said 29 others were injured in the drone attack.

Ukraine has frequently targeted Novorossiysk, a port city that is a major outlet for Russian oil and grain exports.

Earlier on Wednesday, the mayor of the city, Andrei Kravchenko, had said the debris from a Ukrainian drone fell onto several businesses and nearly landed on a residential building, sparking fires.

In the nearby town of Anapa, falling drone debris damaged three homes and a kindergarten, Kon-

dratyev said, adding that there were no casualties. Russia's Defence Ministry said nearly 600 Ukrainian drones had been shot down overnight.

Two civilians killed in Russian attack on border crossing

Russian drone strikes overnight on a border crossing between Ukraine and Moldova, meanwhile, killed at least two civilians, the regional governor Oleh Kiper said on social media. Three people were wounded in the strike on the Starokozache border crossing, around 500 kilometres (310 miles) south of Kyiv, Ukraine's State Border Guard Service said.

The strikes forced the checkpoint to close temporarily, Kiper said, adding that multiple fires

broke out as a result of the attack.

Ukrainian emergency officials also said the capital, Kyiv was attacked overnight. While some fires were started, there were no casualties.

What is the latest in US-brokered peace talks?

Russia on Tuesday resumed its near-daily airstrikes on Kyiv after a brief pause while US negotiators Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner visited Moscow for talks.

At least five people were killed in Kyiv on Tuesday, officials said.

Russia also said President Vladimir Putin had had an "extremely frank" phone call with his US counterpart Donald Trump on Tuesday, as Washington continues to press Ukrainian and Russian of-

ficials to hold face-to-face talks to end the war.

Ukraine has suggested talks that could take place in September, but Russian officials have said it is "too early" to discuss specifics such as a venue or dates for the talks.

Despite US pressure, talks between Moscow and Kyiv have yielded no results beyond sporadic prisoner swaps.

Ukraine seeks to procure around 1,000 Patriot missiles

Ukrainian Defence Minister Yevhenii Khmara has announced that his country is seeking to secure contracts for the supply of roughly 1,000 missiles for US-designed Patriot air defence systems, with the backing of its allies and



through an EU loan.

Speaking at a meeting of the Ukraine Defense Contact Group, Khmara said most of the missiles would not be delivered for several years, and reiterated calls for urgent assistance.

Ukraine is asking Western partners to provide more air defence missiles from their stockpiles in exchange for improved missile performance under contracts signed with Kyiv, he said, adding that Kyiv is facing obstacles due to a \$27 billion funding gap for drone supplies.

Russia has resumed its drone and missile attacks on Kyiv after a brief pause during the visit of US negotiators to both countries.

Ukrainian President Zelenskyy calls for support after fresh Russian drone strikes

The conflict between Russia and Ukraine continues unabated. On Wednesday Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy claimed that a Russian drone strike at an apartment had caused four injuries.

Zelenskyy blamed world leaders for not doing enough to block Russian action.

"This morning in Kyiv, a Russian drone struck an apartment building. Four people were injured.

As always, our rescuers responded swiftly, and the fire has now been extinguished. Last night in the Odesa region, the international Starokozache border crossing with Moldova was hit. Operations there have been suspended. Tragically, two people were killed and three others were injured. Sixteen people were evacuated by rescuers. My condolences to the families and loved ones of the victims. Efforts are also underway to deal with the aftermath of the Russian attack in the Dnipro, Mykolaiv, Zaporizhzhia, Kharkiv, Zhytomyr, and Kyiv regions," he said

"Unfortunately, there has been too little response from the international community to these strikes, which are taking people's lives practically every day. But a response is needed - Moscow must not go into the winter believing that it can get away with missile and drone terror without consequences. The aggression must be stopped here and now, before it spreads any further. And it is important that sanctions and support for Ukraine work effectively toward this goal. The partners who can help know exactly what is needed every day. And I thank everyone who is helping to the best of their ability," he added. — Agencies

TECHNICAL GLITCH



Travel chaos at UK airports as 1,100 flights cancelled

LONDON: A technical fault has forced the cancellation of around 1,100 flights to and from UK airports.

The UK's air traffic control body said recovery from the system failure took longer than hoped, before confirming the glitch had been resolved and operations had returned to normal, with maximum efforts underway to clear the backlog.

Heathrow, the UK's largest and busiest airport, was among those affected, along with Gatwick, Liverpool, Birmingham and Edinburgh, while Dublin Airport also cancelled dozens of flights.

British Airways said it was forced to cancel or divert more than 100 flights, affecting tens of thousands of passengers, while Irish low-cost carrier Ryanair said more than 65,000 passengers were affected and it had cancelled over 50 flights.

The disruption follows a technical failure last July that caused dozens of cancellations, though the worst UK air traffic control failure on record occurred in 2023, affecting more than 700,000 passengers.

Meanwhile, Martin Rolfe, CEO of the UK's National Air Traffic Services (NATS), has ruled out a cyberattack after a major interruption on Tuesday in operations at British airports.

"We will be doing a very, very thorough and full investigation," Rolfe told the BBC on Wednesday morning.

More than 1,000 flights were cancelled and delayed due to air traffic control problems that started on Tuesday morning and lasted for several hours. NATS said a problem involved an issue with the flight processing system.

Although NATS said the problem was resolved, more than 150 flights were cancelled on

Wednesday, and more delays were expected throughout the day. London's Heathrow Airport on Wednesday said "some disruption may continue as airlines reposition aircraft and crew," and advised travelers to check flight status before heading to the airport.

"There are going to be dozens of cancellations in the morning of flights coming into Heathrow because, basically, the flights didn't go out tonight," travel journalist Simon Calder said to Sky News. "The consequences will be horrible," he added.

Questions over the UK's network

The UK's Transport Secretary Heidi Alexander said Wednesday that she had summoned Rolfe for a closer explanation of what caused the malfunction, amid concerns over the UK's air traffic network.

This is not the first time a major system failure has affected British airports. In August 2023, several flights were cancelled due to a "system meltdown," costing airlines \$135 million. In 2025, problems with flight radars affected several airports in the UK, including Heathrow Airport.

"I am seeking assurances that lessons will be learned and systems that support aviation are up to the job," Alexander said on X.

Ryanair, Europe's biggest airline, said at least 150,000 passengers using its services experienced delays of up to eight hours. Two hundred of its flights were cancelled.

For the second time, the airline demanded that NATS CEO Rolfe resign.

Rolfe told Sky News he accepted "full responsibility" but did not say if he was considering stepping down. — Agencies

UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

81st session of UNGA opens

UNITED NATIONS: The 81st session of the UN General Assembly (UNGA) was declared open by Khalilur Rahman, the new president of the General Assembly, on Tuesday.

In his speech at the opening session at the UN headquarters in New York, Rahman said he is assuming his responsibility at a consequential moment for the United Nations.

As the world body enters its ninth decade, many achievements deserve recognition, he said, noting that, at the same time, the world body faces grave challenges.

The United Nations has often fallen short of the expectations placed on it. Conflicts continue to inflict immense human suffering. Development gains remain feeble and fragile. Climate impacts are intensifying, he said.

"Together, these challenges have brought trust in multilateralism under tremendous strain. A widening trust deficit is testing confidence in international institutions and collective action -- a deficit that we must close by working together through dialogue, renewed cooperation and delivery," said Rahman.

He said his main pledge for the 81st session is to work tirelessly to revive trust in this organisation, upon which the success of member states' collective action ultimately depends. This conviction is the spirit behind the theme of this 81st session: "Restoring Trust, Managing Transformation: A United Na-



tions that Delivers for All."

Centering on the restoration of trust, the 81st UNGA session will focus its work around six priorities: to strengthen peace and security, accelerate sustainable development, step up climate action, advance human rights, help ensure that technological transformation serves people everywhere, and restore trust in multilateralism, he said.

"Delivering on these six priorities demands that we remain true to the values of our charter while adapting our institution to a world profoundly different from that of 1945. And if the United Nations is to remain indispensable in an ever-changing world, it must also remain fit for purpose -- and fit for the future," he said.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, in his remarks, said the global problem-solving system is more crucial than ever in these tu-

multuous times.

"We face conflicts, divisions and a risk of nuclear escalation; persistent poverty and inequality; worsening climate chaos; technology like artificial intelligence that offers great promise but also great peril without good governance and transparency around its environmental footprint; and sluggish progress on the Sustainable Development Goals," he said.

Displacement is near record levels. Human suffering is intensifying while funding for aid and development is being slashed. The institutions of the multilateral system, from the UN Security Council to the international financial architecture, are straining to meet the moment. International law and human rights, the core of the United Nations, are too often flouted with impunity. And geopolitical mistrust and suspicion continue to block the effective solutions

that are needed, and erode people's faith in the possibilities of global cooperation, he added.

Guterres expressed the hope that under Rahman's leadership, the UNGA, through diplomacy, dialogue and collaboration, can rebuild the trust and good faith that are missing from today's geopolitics, and ensure the people of the world inherit a better, healthier and more peaceful future.

"Our direction is clear. The Pact for the Future and the UN80 Initiative represent a blueprint for action, solutions and bold reforms to carry our organisation into the future. The work of this assembly is critical to bringing these commitments to life," said Guterres. "As we embark on the 81st General Assembly, let's meet the moment. Let's live up to the great promise of this organisation, and through solidarity deliver the solutions our world needs." — Xinhua

MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

India condemns Houthi attacks on Saudi Arabia

NEW DELHI: India has strongly denounced recent Houthi strikes directed at Saudi Arabia, explicitly condemning the deliberate targeting of civilian and economic infrastructure as unacceptable.

Responding to media inquiries concerning the reported assaults within Saudi territory, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal stated, "India condemned the attacks on Saudi sovereign territory, especially the targeting of civilian and economic facilities."

Jaiswal further pointed out that such aggressive actions, which "undermined regional security and stability and threatened freedom of navigation in the Bab-el-Mandeb, were unacceptable."

New Delhi's official position



follows a condemnation issued Tuesday by the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding Houthi assaults targeting civilian and economic sites across Abha, Jazan, Khamis Mushait, and Najran, an escalation that resulted in 73 injuries among civilians, including women and children.

In a statement shared on X, Riyadh also denounced ongoing attacks targeting commercial shipping vessels operating throughout the Red Sea alongside persistent threats directed at international maritime transit lanes.

"The Kingdom reiterated its categorical rejection of the hostile approach and criminal conduct persistently pursued by this militia in threatening the security and stability of the brotherly Republic of Yemen and its Arab and Islamic surroundings, as well as its continued rejection of all peace efforts," the ministry noted.

Underscoring its sovereign stance, the Saudi foreign ministry asserted its lawful prerogative to deploy all necessary measures to protect national territory, safe-

guard strategic assets, and ensure the safety of citizens and residents in accordance with international legal principles, emphasising a zero-tolerance policy towards territorial aggression.

"The Kingdom warned against the consequences of the terrorist Houthi militia's continued targeting of innocent civilians and civilian facilities, and stressed the need for an immediate halt to all forms of escalation carried out by the militia, as well as its continued threats to the security of maritime navigation," the Saudi statement added, while appealing for decisive international intervention through the enforcement of United Nations Security Council resolutions, specifically Resolution 2216 and Resolution 2722. — ANI

SPECIAL REPORT



EARLY-RIPENING APPLES IN CHINA’S GUIZHOU ENTER HARVEST SEASON



Farmers harvest apples in the Yi-Hui-Miao Autonomous County of Weining, Bijie, southwest China's Guizhou Province. Early-ripening apples in the Yi-Hui-Miao Autonomous County of Weining are gradually entering the harvest season. The county has 150,000 mu (about 10,000 hectares) of apple trees bearing fruit, with more than ten apple varieties. The county's apple industry has generated a comprehensive output value of 1.2 billion yuan (about 178.81 million U.S. dollars), boosting the incomes of nearly 100,000 rural households. **Xinhua**

Workers sort apples at a fruit company in the Yi-Hui-Miao Autonomous County of Weining, Bijie, southwest China's Guizhou Province. **Xinhua**



Workers pack apples at a fruit company in the Yi-Hui-Miao Autonomous County of Weining, Bijie, southwest China's Guizhou Province. **Xinhua**



A worker transports sorted apples at a fruit company in the Yi-Hui-Miao Autonomous County of Weining, Bijie. **Xinhua**

SPORTS

SOUTH EAST DONS CLUB

London amateur goalkeeper could be next in line for Ugandan throne

LONDON: An amateur goalkeeper, a vacant throne in a kingdom of Uganda and the search for a new king. Is this likely to be the most remarkable story of the season?

South East Dons - founded in 2014 by British rapper Andrew 'Don Strapzy' McHugh - are arguably one of the most well-known amateur football clubs in the UK. And given the situation surrounding their current captain and goalkeeper, George Desmond Kamurasi, that's unlikely to change anytime soon.

According to a BBC Sport report on Wednesday, the SE Dons player is currently in Uganda to attend the funeral of King Oyo Nyimba Kabamba Iguru Rukidi IV, which is expected to take place before the weekend.

As is tradition, his successor will

be named before the burial, and it has been widely reported Kamurasi has been chosen as the region's new king.

Uganda is governed by an elected president and parliament, but it has several traditional kingdoms that continue to have significant cultural influence despite not having political power.

The Tooro Kingdom in western Uganda was ruled by King Oyo from 1995. He died in the United States last week, aged 34, after receiving treatment for an aggressive form of cancer.

Kamurasi, 36, is a direct descendant of the clan of 'Babiito' and cousin to the late King Oyo.

It's a far cry from Bexleyheath in south east London, where Kamurasi has been a key member of the SE Dons team's quest to climb the



footballing ladder.

The club recently garnered attention by reaching the second qualifying round of the FA Cup. They are due to play Chichester City on Saturday, September 19.

Although Kamurasi is yet to comment on the reports, he took to social media to plead for patience and space regarding the situation.

Writing on X, he said: "I appeal to all Ugandans to remain patient and allow the Omusuuga and the committee to perform their duties in accordance with our cultural traditions for enthroning a new Omukama.

"Let us focus entirely on mourning my cousin, His Majesty King Oyo Nyimba Kabamba Iguru Rukidi IV." King Oyo was the world's youngest serving monarch, having ascended the throne at the age of three.

The vacant throne for the Tooro Kingdom of Uganda has courted much intrigue and speculation.

The Royal Select Committee, which is tasked with confirming a new king, must first create a shortlist that not only includes lineage through bloodlines but also relatives of the deceased monarch.

As is tradition, King Oyo's casket will be escorted to the royal burial grounds with his successor and a few close relatives. The ceremony will also see the new king throw nine coffee beans into the ground where King Oyo is buried.

Before heading to the palace, where he will have a special meal cooked by someone selected specially to prepare it, he is also expected to 'battle' with someone for the throne.

In the past, all rulers of the region have lived in the area - and in the history of the Tooro Kingdom no-one has ever refused to take the throne.

Although, if that were to be the case, the Royal Select Committee would gather again to choose the next suitable candidate until a successor accepts. - Agencies

Real Madrid, Man City kick off their campaigns with victories



Mbappe scored for Los Blancos against Inter while City's Haaland found the target against Porto on the Champions League season's opening night



Villa coach Unai Emery will hope victory sparks his team's season after the summer departures of star players Morgan Rogers, Ollie Watkins, Ezri Konsa and Emi Martinez.

LONDON: There were goals for Kylian Mbappe and Erling Haaland, and wins for Real Madrid and Manchester City as the Champions League returned on Tuesday for a new season.

Mbappe gave record 15-time champions Madrid an early lead en route to 2-1 victory over Inter Milan at the Santiago Bernabeu.

Haaland scored both goals as 2023 winner City beat Porto 2-0.

Madrid and City are expected to be among the main challengers to back-to-back defending champions Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) this season, and each club will be relying on its star strikers.

Mbappe's goal after 14 minutes was his 71st in European club foot-

ball's top continental competition and saw him move level with Madrid great Raul in fifth place on the all-time scorers list.

Haaland took his tally to 59 in 59 appearances in the Champions League. Borussia Dortmund beat Villarreal 3-2, and Real Betis won by the same score at Lille.

Aston Villa also won 3-2 over Club Brugge, and AEK Athens had a 1-0 win over LASK.

PSG begin their campaign against Slovan Bratislava.

Classic Mourinho

Jose Mourinho made a winning return to the Champions League as head coach of Madrid despite Inter dominating possession.

It was a classic Mourinho-inspired performance as Madrid

capitalised on two first-half errors by the visitors. When Inter lost possession deep in its own half Brahim Diaz slid in Mbappe, who fired low past Josep Martinez.

The Inter goalkeeper was then guilty of indecision when Federico Valverde closed him down in his own area and poked the ball into an empty net.

Inter, who ended the game with 61% possession, set up a tense finish when Carlos Augusto scored in the 77th.

"There's so much criticism when a game is boring, but today it was crazy - it could easily have ended 7-6," Mourinho told broadcaster Movistar.

Mourinho won his second Champions League title with Inter in 2010 and is aiming to join the

likes of Pep Guardiola, Luis Enrique and Zinedine Zidane by lifting the trophy for a third time.

Unstoppable Haaland

With five goals in his last three games, Haaland is in hot form. And it could have been even more if not for Porto goalkeeper Diogo Costa's first-half performance.

Haaland eventually found the breakthrough at Estadio do Dragao with a header two minutes into the second half. He side-footed City's second in stoppage time to make certain of the win and ensure new coach Enzo Maresca's 100% start continued. "We have to learn. Enzo demands a lot from us and we have to demand a lot from each other," Haaland told Amazon Prime. "We have to win games because at Man City, you have to win trophies.

That's what we have to do at this club."

Villa kick off with a win

Aston Villa put their domestic problems behind it with a win over Club Brugge.

Victory in Belgium ended Villa's winless and goalless start to their 2026-27 season, after early struggles in the Premier League.

John McGinn recorded the first goal of the Champions League campaign with a sweeping low shot from an angle in the 11th minute. Hugo Vetlesen equalised for Brugge, but Emiliano Buendia and Nicolas Jackson put Villa 3-1 up by the break.

Nicolo Tresoldi scored for the home team with a penalty in the 61st, but Villa held on for the win.

Dortmund's Karetas hospitalised

Borussia Dortmund teenager Konstantinos Karetas was taken to the hospital after slumping to the turf 25 minutes into his Champions League debut. "Konstantinos Karetas had to leave the field due to circulatory problems," Dortmund said in a statement. Karetas "is doing well under the circumstances and is on his way to the hospital for further tests."

Serhou Guirassy scored three goals - two for Dortmund and one in his own net - in a frantic finish against Villarreal.

Guirassy gave Dortmund a 2-1 lead in the 80th and then struck again from the penalty spot five minutes later. An added-time own goal made it 3-2.

Parrott strikes again

It has been an eventful few days for Troy Parrott. The Ireland international scored his first goal for new club Betis with a late winner against Madrid on Friday and he was on target again with the decisive goal in the 3-2 win in Lille.

AEK Athens beat LASK 1-0 thanks to Razvan Marin's brilliant first-half free kick. - Agencies

PSG PLAYERS DOMINATE

Dembélé, Kane, Mbappé headline shortlist for Ballon d'Or

PARIS: Last year's winner Ousmane Dembélé, Harry Kane and Kylian Mbappé are among the top contenders for the men's Ballon d'Or.

The 30 men's and 30 women's nominees were revealed by *France Football* magazine on Tuesday, with the winners to be announced at a ceremony in London on October 26.

Dembélé and Mbappé both played for France at the World Cup, where their team lost to eventual champion Spain in the semifinals.

Although it's difficult to win the accolade without a major trophy, Mbappé made history when he overtook Lionel Messi for the most all-time World Cup goals (22), in fewer games.

After claiming a second straight Champions League title with Paris Saint-Germain, Dembélé has a chance to retain the Ballon d'Or.

Kane had one of his best seasons, scoring 73 goals for club and country and winning the Bundesliga title with Bayern Munich. Kane also led England to a third-



place finish at the World Cup.

Spain captain Rodri, who claimed the award in 2024 and played an instrumental role in midfield to help Spain secure their second World Cup title, was also included.

The 39-year-old Messi, who has a record eight Ballon d'Or awards, was on the shortlist after guiding Argentina to a runner-up finish at the World Cup and winning Major League Soccer with Inter Miami.

The other three Ballon d'Or

winners still active, Karim Benzema, Cristiano Ronaldo, and Luka Modric, were not in the list.

Dembélé was one of nine PSG players - 10 including newly acquired Ferran Torres - nominated for the men's award, alongside Achraf Hakimi, Marquinhos, Nuno Mendes, William Pachó, Khvicha Kvaratskhelia, Joao Neves, Fabian Ruiz and Vitinha. Torres scored Spain's winner in the World Cup final.

The other men's nominees in-

clude Real Madrid stars Vinicius Junior and Jude Bellingham, as well as Manchester City striker.

There was no goalkeeper nominated, ensuring Lev Yashin remains the only keeper to win the coveted trophy (1963) for another year.

The Ballon d'Or ceremony is moving from its traditional Paris home to London this year to mark the 70th anniversary of the first award won by England great Stanley Matthews. - Agencies

Messi nears deal to acquire Spanish second-tier club Eldense

MIAMI: Argentine star Lionel Messi is close to completing a deal to buy Spanish second-tier club CD Eldense, adding to his growing portfolio of football ownership interests, according to multiple reports in Spain.

Messi has agreed in principle to acquire all the shares held by majority owner TH Soluciones Group S.A.S., with an announcement expected in the coming days, the reports said. The Colombian investment group, which took control of Eldense in October, 2025, would transfer its entire stake to Messi. The deal remains subject to the approval of Spain's High Council for Sports (CSD).

Messi, who recently retired from international duty with Argentina, acquired fifth-tier Spanish side UE Cornellà on April 16. He is also due to re-



ceive a stake in Major League Soccer club Inter Miami, once his playing contract with the team ends. Eldense is based in Elda, a town of about 55,000 people in the eastern Spanish province of Alicante.

The club has spent most of their history in Spain's lower divisions but, following fresh investment, has played in the second tier in three of the past four seasons. Eldense sacked manager Claudio Barragan on Sunday. - Agencies

SHELTON DETHRONES ALCARAZ IN LATEST US OPEN FINISH THRILLER



The American shocked the defending champion in a five-set quarter-final that ended at the latest time in tournament history to reach the semi-finals



NEW YORK: Carlos Alcaraz's US Open title defence came to an end in a dramatic five-set quarter-final loss to Ben Shelton which ended at 03:34 local time - the latest finish in the tournament's history.

A large crowd remained captivated deep into the night as a modern classic unfolded over an unpredictable four hours and 28 minutes on Arthur Ashe Stadium.

The match did not begin until about 11pm in New York, after the start of the night session was delayed by Tuesday's earlier matches. At its conclusion, eighth seed Shelton basked in a standing ovation from a delirious audience after completing a 6-7 (5-7), 6-1, 6-3, 1-6, 7-6 (10-7) victory that will live long in the memory of all those present. "That was a war, an epic match, so physical," Shelton said.

"Carlos is one of the greatest champions in our sport already at 23 years old.

"It's ridiculous some of the stuff he comes up with sometimes - the most enjoyable match that I've had in my career, for sure."

This was the biggest - and certainly most significant - win of Shelton's career.

He had not beaten a top-three player in 17 attempts, and had lost each of his three previous matches against Spain's Alcaraz.

It also boosted home hopes of a first American men's singles champion in New York for 23 years. Shelton was less than a year old when Andy Roddick won the US Open in 2003 - but an American finalist is guaranteed when he and Frances Tiafoe meet in Friday's semi-finals.

Alcaraz had his 18-match winning streak in Grand Slam tournaments ended in a match that lasted 4 hours, 28 minutes. Shelton next plays No. 11 seed Tiafoe, who kept coming back until he had reached his third US Open semi-final, beating Alex Michelsen 5-7, 3-6, 7-5, 6-3, 7-6 (10-6) on Tuesday.

The match between Shelton and Tiafoe on Friday will be the first major meeting in the semi-finals or later between Black American men in the Open era. One will become the first Black American man to reach a US Open final since Arthur Ashe in 1972.

Alcaraz had played in the previous latest finish at the US Open when he outlasted Jannik Sinner in a match that finished at 2:50 a.m. in the 2022 quarter-finals en route to his first Grand Slam title at 19.

The latest finish in Grand Slam



Osaka makes passionate defence of on-court outfits

NEW YORK: Naomi Osaka says any criticism she receives for her extravagant outfits is "worth it" if it means "the people after me have an easier path".

The 28-year-old is renowned for her eye-catching on-court attire, which included a hooded white gown for her first-round win against Anastasia Zakharenko at the US Open.

Underneath was an all-black basketball-style kit in which Osaka played, while she also had her hair braided and wore a headband in a tribute to former NBA star Allen Iverson, who she called a "trailblazer" as "he's kind of like done a lot in fashion, whether it's on purpose or not".



In her latest outfit, Japan's four-time Grand Slam champion wore a decorated coat at the start of her last-16 US Open defeat by Elena Rybakina. In defending her fashion statements, she referred to

speaking out about her mental health in 2021 when she refused to speak to the media at the French Open and subsequently withdrew from the tournament.

Osaka, whose father is Haitian-American and mother is Japanese, also highlighted her ancestry.

"I don't mind being the first to do something and getting trashed for it," she wrote in a social media post.

"This happened when I talked about mental health and for some reason it's happening with my clothes lol. 'I'm literally Haitian it's in my blood to be this way, as long as the people after me have an easier path it's worth it.'" - *Agencies*

Sabalenka keeps her title defence hopes alive



NEW YORK: Aryna Sabalenka thought she had lost her US Open crown before leaving herself "speechless" as she battled back to beat Linda Noskova in three sets and advance to the women's singles semi-finals on Tuesday.

Taken to a deciding set for the first time in this year's tournament, the two-time defending champion trailed 4-2 in the third set and later 2-0 in the tie-break before recovering to close out a 7-6 (7-1) 3-6 7-6 (10-7) win.

It was the 28-year-old's 19th consecutive win at the tournament, having not tasted defeat since the 2023 final, while she becomes the first woman since Serena Williams in 2016 to reach six successive semi-finals at Flushing Meadows.

Victory also ensures she clings on to her world No.1 ranking, though she will be overtaken at the top regardless if Elena Rybakina beats Zheng Qinwen.

Asked if she would be happy if she retained her US Open title but Rybakina replaced her at the head of the standings, Sabalenka said: "I'll be more than happy. Three-peat - sounds great.

"I'm just super happy that I put myself in the position where

I have chance to go for the three-peat, even though I'm still far away from that."

"I'm speechless right now. I was pushing to the limit in this match, especially in the third set," said Sabalenka.

"I honestly thought that that's it, the match is over, but probably that's what helped me to feel loose and go after my shots."

Pegula in last four

Sabalenka will continue her bid to reach a fourth consecutive US Open final against Jessica Pegula, after the American third seed pulled off an impressive comeback of her own to defeat compatriot Emma Navarro 3-6, 6-4, 6-3.

For Noskova, this defeat, during which she hit more winners, fewer unforced errors, and saved seven of her nine break points, ends a run of 11 consecutive singles wins at Grand Slams.

Pegula can become world No.1 but must win the US Open and hope Rybakina does not reach the semi-finals. Pegula's frustration was clear as she grappled with 26th seed Navarro and her own inconsistency, before eventually plotting her way to a third consecutive semis at her home slam. - *Agencies*

GOLF

LIV files for bankruptcy protection with over \$45m owed to players

NEW YORK: LIV Golf has filed for bankruptcy protection with at least \$45m (£33m) owed to players, who will now have the option to leave. A Chapter 11 petition, which LIV says is to "preserve the company's business" as it attempts to restructure after Saudi Arabia withdrew its multibillion-dollar funding, was filed in the United States on Tuesday.

The breakaway league says it has found a new investor in BC Partners, following the decision in April by Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund (PIF) to pull its funding. Documents in the petition outline money owed to LIV Golf's creditors with the 30 largest

unsecured claims. Two-time major winner Jon Rahm tops that list with an unsecured claim of \$7.5m (£5.5m).

Bryson DeChambeau (\$5.7m - £4.2m), Dustin Johnson (\$5.5m - £4.1m), Cameron Smith (\$4.8m - £3.5m) and Tyrrell Hatton (\$3.4m - £2.5m) are also among the top 30 creditors, as well as Brooks Koepka, who left to rejoin the PGA Tour in January but has an unsecured claim of \$1.7m (£1.25m).

The total amount owed to the 14 current and former LIV players in the top 30 creditors is just over \$45m (£33m). A source familiar with the figures told BBC Sport the creditors list outlines the "amount



owed and not paid for Q3" of 2026, not the full amounts.

The court documents show LIV estimates its assets at \$100m- \$500m (£74m-£370m) and its li-

abilities at between \$500m and \$1bn (£370m-£739m).

LIV Golf intends to commence its new majority player-owned league early next year and it is un-

derstood the Chapter 11 process allows it to start talking to players about their participation in LIV's future.

BBC Sport understands there is no obligation on players to sign on to LIV 2.0, regardless of whether they had previously signed multi-year contracts with LIV Golf.

Since LIV's controversial launch in 2021, more than \$5bn (£3.7bn) has been spent by PIF, with major winners including Rahm and DeChambeau lured by lucrative contracts and vast prize money.

However, the future of the concept - and its star players - has been shrouded in uncertainty, with the 2026 season having ended early.

The bankruptcy filing was made in the federal district court of New Jersey, where LIV Golf set up a subsidiary earlier in the summer.

Chapter 11 protection postpones a US company's obligations to its creditors, giving it time to reorganise its debts or sell parts of the business.

PIF is providing a bankruptcy loan of \$49.6m (£36.6m) - called 'debtor in possession' (DIP) financing - to help fund the process.

When announcing its decision to withdraw funding, PIF said the "substantial investment required by LIV Golf over a longer term" was "no longer consistent" with its strategy. - *Agencies*

ROUND-UP

Foton’s 30-year milestone celebrates growth, trust and mobility in Oman



Represented by Gulf Great Sands (GGS), Foton supports a wide range of commercial needs through vehicles designed for freight, logistics, service operations and everyday business transport. The milestone highlights how the brand’s evolving portfolio continues to contribute to business mobility in Oman

MUSCAT: As Foton marks its 30th anniversary, its journey in Oman reflects the growth and trust the brand has built among businesses, fleet operators and drivers across the Sultanate.

Represented by Gulf Great Sands (GGS), Foton supports a wide range of commercial needs through vehicles designed for

freight, logistics, service operations and everyday business transport. The milestone highlights how the brand’s evolving portfolio continues to contribute to business mobility in Oman.

Through its exclusive distribution partnership with Foton Motor Group, one of the world’s leading commercial vehicle manufacturers,

GGG brings a broad range of Foton vehicles to the Sultanate. The partnership combines Foton’s experience in commercial vehicle development with GGS’s understanding of local operating requirements, giving customers access to trucks and pickups suited to a variety of sectors and applications.

A spokesperson for Gulf Great Sands, the exclusive importer of Foton vehicles in Oman, said, “Foton’s 30th anniversary is an important milestone that reflects the brand’s continued growth and its ability to evolve with the changing needs of businesses. In Oman, our focus has been to bring customers practical and capable vehicles for different commercial applications, backed by dependable aftersales support. As we mark this anniversary, we remain committed to helping businesses stay productive, mobile and ready for the opportunities ahead.”

From daily distribution and customer deliveries to long-haul freight and off-road assignments, Foton’s

range reflects the many ways transport supports commercial activity across Oman. The current line-up includes vehicles for heavier freight requirements, versatile logistics applications and day-to-day pickup duties. Together, these models illustrate the breadth of applications Foton is addressing as businesses seek dependable mobility for varied operating environments.

Auman EST M
At the heavier end of the range, the Auman EST M is designed for inter-city freight and demanding transport duties. Its 4x2 chassis is powered by a 6.7-litre Cummins diesel engine and paired with an eight-speed manual transmission. With a gross vehicle weight of 19,500kg and a rated payload of 13,900kg, it is equipped with ABS, a reverse parking sensor, air conditioning and an air-suspended driver’s seat.

Aumark S
For businesses requiring a flexible

platform, the Aumark S offers a 4x2 chassis that can be configured for applications including cargo boxes, cranes and recovery vehicles. It features a 3.8-litre Cummins engine producing 125hp and 600Nm of torque, coupled with a six-speed ZF manual transmission. With a gross vehicle weight of 12,000kg, the Aumark S is suited to a variety of logistics and service operations.

Tunland pickup 2WD variant
Foton’s Tunland pickup range adds versatility for businesses whose mobility requirements extend from city roads to work sites.

The double-cab petrol 2WD variant features a 2.4-litre engine producing 134hp and 200Nm of torque, matched to a five-speed manual transmission. It offers a maximum load mass of 1,050kg and includes ABS with EBD, electronic stability control, tyre-pressure monitoring, dual airbags and a reverse sensor.

Tunland double-cab diesel 4WD
For customers requiring added capability across more demanding terrain, the Tunland double-cab diesel 4WD variant uses a 2.0-litre turbo-diesel engine delivering 163hp and 380Nm of torque through a six-speed manual transmission. Its specification includes a mechanical differential lock, 360-degree surround view, front collision warning, lane-departure warning, blind-spot monitoring, cruise control and front and rear parking sensors.

Beyond the vehicles themselves, GGS supports Foton customers through its state-of-the-art service centre in Ghala, Muscat, as well as periodic maintenance services in Jalan, Salalah and Sohar. As Foton enters its next chapter after 30 years, the brand and GGS remain focused on supporting businesses in Oman with practical commercial vehicle solutions, dependable aftersales support and a portfolio designed around the realities of work.

FIRST-OF-ITS-KIND INITIATIVE

Sohar International celebrates outstanding general diploma achievements of employees’ children

MUSCAT: Reinforcing its commitment to fostering a people-first culture that celebrates the milestones that matter most to its employees and their families, Sohar International hosted a special ceremony at W Muscat to honour employees’ children who achieved outstanding results in the General Diploma (Thanawiya) examinations.

A first-of-its-kind initiative in Oman’s banking sector, the event brought together the high-achieving students, their parents—who are employees of Sohar International—and their families to celebrate academic excellence and determination, while highlighting the pivotal role families play in supporting their children’s journey towards success. The students were selected based on their General Diploma examination results.

The ceremony was attended by Abdulwahid Mohammed Al Mursidi, Chief Executive Officer of Sohar International, and Mahira Saleh Al Raisi, Chief People Officer, who joined the students and their families in celebrating this achievement and recognising their dedication and academic excellence.

Commenting on the occasion, Abdulwahid Mohamed Al Mursidi, Chief Executive Officer of Sohar International, said: “Oman’s future will be shaped by the capabilities, aspirations and determination of its people. In this context, our celebration of these outstanding students goes beyond recognising academic excellence; it reflects our belief in the importance of investing in national talent that will help shape the Sultanate’s future and advance its progress.

“In line with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040 and its emphasis on developing empowered, future-ready national capabilities, we believe that nurturing ambition



from an early stage is fundamental to building a competitive, knowledge-driven economy.

“This celebration also reflects Sohar International’s commitment to recognising outstanding students, their families and the wider community, acknowledging that achievement is the result of collective effort and shared support. We are immensely proud of what these young Omanis have accomplished and look forward with confidence to the meaningful contributions they will make in shaping Oman’s next chapter of growth

and prosperity.”

Mahira Saleh Al Raisi, Chief People Officer at Sohar International added: “A truly people-first culture extends beyond the workplace to the moments that matter most to our colleagues and their families. Through this initiative, we celebrate the students’ success while also recognising the patience, encouragement and dedication demonstrated by their parents throughout their academic journey. We hope this recognition inspires them to begin the next chapter of their lives with greater confidence and a

clear sense of purpose.”

The programme featured an inspiring address by Fatma Sultan Bahwan, Co-founder and Chief Operations Officer of Al Jabr, who reflected on her experience as a student, the challenges she faced and the resilience and determination that enabled her to overcome them. She encouraged the students to remain focused, embrace continuous learning and approach future challenges with confidence and determination.

The event also featured a panel discussion with several parents of

the students, all of whom are Sohar International employees. They shared their experiences of supporting their children throughout their studies and preparations for the examinations. The discussion highlighted the importance of encouragement, balance and creating a positive home environment that supports learning. Several students also took to the stage to share their academic experiences, the challenges they had overcome and their aspirations for the future.

The event concluded with a recognition ceremony, during which

the students received awards before joining their families and Sohar International’s leadership for commemorative photographs.

Through this pioneering initiative, Sohar International continues to strengthen its culture of belonging and wellbeing, celebrating the achievements of its employees and their families as an integral part of the Bank’s wider community. It also continues to create meaningful experiences that reflect its people-first approach and recognise the important milestones in their lives.



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