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HM RECEIVES CREDENTIALS OF AMBASSADORS

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik received the credentials of a number of ambassadors of countries accredited to the Sultanate of Oman, at Al Hosn Palace in Salalah, on Thursday. >A2

91% GROWTH IN OMANI STARTUPS IN ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE SECTOR

Oman's AI sector expands rapidly, with 42 firms driving innovation, digital transformation



MUSCAT: Oman's artificial intelligence (AI) sector is witnessing continued growth, supported by national efforts to expand the use of AI technologies across economic and development sectors and create new opportunities for innovation and entrepreneurship.

The growing adoption of AI is also opening avenues for young Omani talents to establish knowledge-based companies and develop innovative solutions for government and private-sector applications.

Tawah bint Abdullah Al Dawood, Head of the Development and Studies Department at the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, said Omani AI startups are playing an increasingly important role in supporting the Sultanate's digital transformation.

She told Oman News Agency that these companies are developing innovative technological solutions and products that enhance business efficiency, improve services, automate processes and support data-driven decision-making.

She explained that Omani companies have helped move AI from an emerging technology into practical applications that can be deployed across various government and private-sector activities. This development supports the establishment of an innovation- and knowledge-driven digital economy and aligns with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040.

The number of Omani companies operating in the AI sector reached 42 by the end of August 2026, compared with 22 a year earlier, representing growth of about 91 percent.

Al Dawood said the sharp increase reflects the rapid development of Oman's local AI ecosystem and the growing ability of Omani companies to move beyond ideas and prototypes towards commercially applicable technological solutions and products. >A5

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN

Non-oil exports reach OMR3.6 billion

1 Oman's non-oil exports of national origin reached approximately OMR3.6 billion by the end of June 2026, compared with OMR 3.3 billion during the same period in 2025, recording growth of 11%. >A2

OMAN

OMR1 billion inbound tourism spending

2 The number of visitors to the Sultanate of Oman reached 4 million in 2025, while inbound tourism expenditure exceeded OMR1 billion, according to bulletin issued by the NCSI. >A5

MARKET

Gypsum exports topped 14mn tonnes

3 The Sultanate of Oman's exports of gypsum ore reached nearly 14.02 million tonnes in 2025 reflecting the prominent position that Omani ore enjoys in global markets. >B1



Salalah hosts fifth critical infrastructure security and safety symposium B5

FROM JUNE 21 TO AUGUST 31

Number of visitors to Dhofar Governorate crosses 1.1 million

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The number of visitors to Dhofar Governorate from June 21 to August 31, 2026, reached 1,116,051, marking an 8.6 percent increase compared with 1,027,255 visitors recorded during the same period in 2025.

Preliminary estimates of visitors to Dhofar during Khareef 2026, issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI), showed that Omanis accounted for the largest share of visitors, with 816,719, or 73.2 percent of the total.

Visitors from Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries numbered 183,861, while visitors of other nationalities totalled 115,471. The data showed that 284,667 visitors arrived in Dhofar by air through the end of August, while 831,384 entered the governorate through land ports.

Land arrivals increased by 7.6 percent compared with the corresponding period in 2025, reflecting the continued importance of road travel to Dhofar during the Khareef season.

August alone recorded 643,602 visitors to Dhofar, accounting for 57.7 percent of the total visitors recorded between June 21 and August 31.



The figures underline the strong momentum of Dhofar's tourism season and the governorate's growing appeal as a seasonal destination, supported by its distinctive climate, natural landscapes and tourism attractions during the Khareef period.

The diversity of the Khareef Dhofar Season 2026 came along an innovative track that enhances integration between events, tourist and cultural assets, and economic aspects in the governorate.



T OMAN

PRAYER TIMINGS

Dhuhr	12:08pm
Asr	3:35pm
Maghrib	6:18pm
Isha	7:29pm
Fajr (Tomorrow)	4:37am

AT AL HOSN PALACE

HM the Sultan receives credentials of ambassadors





SALALAH: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik received the credentials of a number of ambassadors of countries accredited to the Sultanate of Oman, at Al Hosn Palace in Salalah on Thursday.

His Majesty received the credentials of the following:

Maulidah Bwanakheir Hassan, Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of President Samia Suluhu Hassan of the United Republic of Tanzania, accredited to the Sultanate of Oman.

Zubaydullo Zubaydzoda, Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of President Emomali Rahmon of the Republic of Tajikistan, accredited to the Sultanate of Oman.

Prashant Pise, Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of President Droupadi Murmu of the Republic of India, accredited to the Sultanate of Oman.

Lee Jung Il, Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of President Lee Jae Myung of the Republic of Korea, accredited to the Sultanate of Oman.

Ahmad Kamrizamil bin Mohd Riza, Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of King Sultan Ibrahim of Malaysia, accredited to the Sultanate of Oman.

Gregorio Bernasconi, Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of President Guy Parmelin of the Swiss Confederation, accredited to the Sultanate of Oman.

João Batista do Nascimento, Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva of the Federative Republic of Brazil, accredited to the Sultanate of Oman.

Monika Iversen, Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of President Frank-Walter Steinmeier of the Federal Republic of Germany, accredited to the Sultanate of Oman.

Endy Rhadian, Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of President Prabowo Subianto, President of the Republic of Indonesia, accredited to the Sultanate of Oman. During the audiences, the ambassadors conveyed the greetings of their countries' leaders and their sincere wishes to His Majesty for success, and to the Sultanate of Oman and its people for further progress, development, and prosperity under His Majesty's wise leadership.

They also expressed their countries' aspirations to boost diplomatic relations with the Sultanate of Oman and expand their horizons across various fields.

For his part, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his welcome to the ambassadors, expressing appreciation for the sincere sentiments and good wishes conveyed from their countries' leaders, affirming to them that the leadership of the Sultanate of Oman will extend all support to facilitate the performance of their duties and the undertaking of their responsibilities in the best manner. His Majesty the Sultan also emphasized Oman's keenness to continue consolidating relations of cooperation and partnership with their countries across various levels.

The credentials presentation audiences were attended by the Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court, the Foreign Minister, the Commander of the Royal Guard of Oman, the Head of Royal Protocols, and the Military Aides to His Majesty the Sultan.

Oman's non-oil exports reach OMR3.6 billion by end of June

The trade surplus increased by 51 percent to approximately OMR 4.7 billion

Times News Service



MUSCAT: Oman's non-oil exports are witnessing continued growth and expansion across international markets, supported by the increasing competitiveness of national products, improved capabilities of Omani companies to access new destinations, and the integration of trade and logistics services.

The country's ports, land border crossings and digital systems, coupled with streamlined procedures, are contributing to Oman's efforts to establish a sustainable export model and strengthen its position as a trade and logistics hub connecting regional and international markets.

"Exports Oman", an integrated platform operated by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, serves as a gateway connecting Omani companies with international markets. It provides market intelligence and data, technical guidance, training, promotion and links to international importers, helping companies make more efficient and sustainable export decisions.

Eng. Ghalib bin Said Al Maamari, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion for Commerce and Industry, said Oman's non-oil exports of national origin reached approximately OMR 3.6 billion by the end of June 2026, compared with OMR 3.3 billion during the same period in 2025, recording growth of 11.4 percent, according to data from the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

He explained that the growth accelerated during the second quarter of 2026. While exports stood at around OMR 1.6 billion in the first quarter, broadly in line with the same period last year, exports reached approximately OMR 2 billion in the second quarter alone, reflecting a significant acceleration in performance.

Total merchandise exports also rose by 15.3 percent by the end of June to approximately OMR 13.2 billion, while re-exports increased by 20 percent during the first half of the year, an increase of around OMR 163 million compared with the same period in 2025.

The trade surplus increased by 51 percent to approximately OMR 4.7 billion, in line with Oman's strategy to develop non-oil exports by diversifying target markets, improving exporters' readiness and expanding access for Omani products to international markets.

Al Maamari said Oman is working to build a strong base of exporters capable of competing and maintaining a presence in international markets, noting that the objective goes beyond increasing export volumes to include improving the readiness of national companies and making exports a sustainable component of their growth and expansion plans.

He added that "Exports Oman" focuses on identifying target markets, understanding their requirements and building long-term commercial relationships. Its support system includes market information and data, guidance on technical specifications, conformity certificates and market-access requirements, direct product promotion through international exhibitions and business meetings, links with importers and distributors, as well as export training and capacity-building programmes.

The growth in re-exports is also an important indicator of Oman's expanding trade and logistics activity, supported by the Sultanate's strategic location, infrastructure and logistics services, which facilitate the movement of goods and strengthen its role as a gateway to regional and international markets.

Oman's ports and land border crossings, together with integrated transport and logistics networks, are contributing to smoother movement of goods. The development of electronic systems and simplified procedures for trade, imports, exports and customs clearance is further improving efficiency and the experience of exporters and importers.

Omani products currently reach more than 130 countries worldwide, expanding the country's footprint in international markets and benefiting from the quality and diversity of national products, Oman's strategic location, efficient logistics infrastructure and programmes designed to empower exporters and open new markets.

Mubarak bin Mohammed Al Duhani, Director General of Planning at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion and the ministry's official spokesperson, said non-oil exports reached OMR 1.611 billion in the first quarter of 2026, equivalent to 15.7 percent of GDP at current prices, which stood at OMR 10.293 billion, compared with 15.2 percent during the same period in 2025.

He said non-oil exports are diversified across five major groups: mineral products; base metals and articles thereof; chemical industries; plastics, rubber and their products; and live animals and animal products, particularly fisheries.

According to the latest commodity breakdown published by NCSI for the first quarter of 2026, chemical industries recorded the highest growth at 17 percent, reaching OMR 216 million. They were followed by base metals and articles thereof, which grew by 10.8 percent to OMR 376 million. Exports of live animals and animal products increased by 6 percent to OMR 104 million.

Oman participated in 17 local and international exhibitions and trade events in 2025 under the umbrella of the Oman Product Promotion Committee "OPEX", resulting in several deals, distribution and agency agreements, and commercial opportunities.

Faris bin Nasser Al Farsi, an economic expert at the ministry, said Omani companies are expanding their target markets beyond traditional destinations to new and promising markets, including Iraq, East Africa and several Asian markets.

He noted that the shift is not limited to the number of new markets but also involves the way companies enter them, with businesses increasingly establishing direct relationships with importers and concluding distribution and agency agreements rather than relying solely on individual transactions.

Al Farsi said "Exports Oman" helps bridge the gap between exporters and target markets by providing market reports, export guides and information on documentation and logistics, as well as connecting companies with international buyers and importers.

Food and beverage industries, manufacturing, mineral products, electrical appliances and equipment, building materials, plastics, chemicals and Omani-origin personal care products are among the sectors showing growing opportunities in international markets.

Salim bin Nasser Al Bartamani, CEO of Areej Vegetable Oils and Derivatives, said the company's products currently reach more than 40 countries, while its production capacity has increased from around 60,000 metric tonnes two decades ago to nearly 240,000 metric tonnes today.

He said the company's sales structure has also changed significantly. While the domestic market previously accounted for around 80 percent of production and exports for 20 percent, approximately 80 percent of production is now directed to international markets.

Al Bartamani credited "Exports Oman" with providing market intelligence and export opportunities, helping the company explore non-traditional markets, identify target destinations and access information on importers relevant to its products.

Fahmi bin Said Al Hinai, CEO of Poly Products Ltd., said benefiting from "Exports Oman" had contributed to expanding the company's export activities and reaching new markets and buyers, including opportunities in Armenia, Georgia, Africa and East Asia, with the company aiming to enter additional markets, including China.

He stressed that strengthening the global presence of Omani products requires continued integration among companies, government entities, the logistics sector, financing and insurance institutions, and trade promotion bodies.

With continued growth in non-oil exports and re-exports and an expanding network of target markets, Oman is moving towards an integrated trade and export model that leverages its strategic location, logistics infrastructure and streamlined procedures.

The approach supports Oman's efforts to strengthen its role in regional and international trade and establish a sustainable Omani presence in global markets, in line with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040 to diversify the national economy, maximise local added value and enhance the contribution of the private sector and non-oil exports to the economy.



WORLD OF FOOD MOSCOW 2026

16 Omani companies to showcase their products, seek relations at food exhibition in Moscow

Times News Service



MUSCAT: Oman will participate in the World of Food Moscow 2026 exhibition, scheduled to take place in the Russian capital from September 15 to 18, with the participation of 16 Omani companies seeking to expand the presence of national products in international markets and open new avenues for exports to Russia and Central Asia.

The participation is organised by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, represented by Oman Exports, as part of efforts to strengthen the competitiveness of non-oil Omani exports, support national companies in accessing new markets and connect them with international importers, distributors and buyers.

The exhibition will also provide participating companies with opportunities to explore trade partnerships and business prospects that can expand the reach of Omani products and strengthen their competitiveness in global markets.

Through their participation, the Omani companies will showcase the diversity and quality of national products, explore new distribution channels and establish business relationships with importers, retail chains, restaurants and hotels.

The participation will also highlight Oman as a reliable source of food and halal products, creating opportunities to increase national exports to the Russian market and other related markets.

Zakia bint Abdullah Al-Amri, Trade Information Specialist at Oman Exports, said the participation represents an important step towards strengthening the presence of Omani products in a promising international market.

She said the exhibition provides national companies with an opportunity to engage directly with importers, distributors and international buyers, identify new export opportunities and establish sustainable trade partnerships.

Al-Amri added that Oman Exports supports Omani companies in accessing target markets through participation in international exhibitions and by connecting exporters with available trade opportunities.

Such efforts contribute to expanding the market base for national products and enhancing their competitiveness, she said, expressing hope that business meetings during the exhibition will translate into export opportunities and partnerships that support the growth of non-oil Omani exports.

She explained that the Russian market was selected because of the opportunities it offers for Omani products, particularly in the food sector.

The participation builds on the positive results achieved during the previous edition of the exhibition, which contributed to the signing of trade agreements and the establishment of strategic partnerships with suppliers and agents in the Russian market.

This experience, she said, reinforces the importance of maintaining Oman's presence at the international platform.

The participation is part of Oman Exports' programme of international events and exhibitions in target markets during 2026 and 2027. The programme supports the Ministry's efforts to develop non-oil exports, open new markets for national products and enable Omani companies to establish sustainable international trade partnerships.

World of Food Moscow is one of the leading international exhibitions specialising in the food and beverage sector in Russia. It brings together manufacturers, exporters, importers, retail chains and hospitality-sector representatives, providing opportunities for direct engagement between companies, buyers and industry decision-makers.

The 2026 edition is expected to bring together more than 1,100 exhibiting companies from around 30 countries and attract more than 26,000 trade visitors.

Oman eyes tourism gains from Ironman event

Minister of Heritage and Tourism, met with Scott Dero, CEO of the Ironman Group, in the French city of Nice to discuss ways to maximise Oman's benefit



Times News Service

NICE: Sayyid Ibrahim bin Said Al Busaidi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism, met with Scott Dero, CEO of the Ironman Group, in the French city of Nice to discuss ways to maximise Oman's benefit from its international promotional partnership with the group and strengthen the presence of the Discover Oman tourism brand at international championships and events.

During the meeting, Al Busaidi reviewed the performance and international reach of the Discover Oman Ironman Pro series, including its race calendar, viewership across digital streaming platforms and promotional value for partners.

Data presented during the meeting showed that content from the series had reached approximately 24.6 million viewers by the end of July 2026, generating more than 1.62 million hours of viewing.

Discussions focused on enhancing the quality of Oman's media exposure, reaching target tourism markets and converting the international visibility generated by the partnership into tangible interest in Oman, including increased tourist arrivals and bookings.

Al Busaidi stressed that the success of international promotional partnerships should be assessed through their measurable promotional and economic impact and their ability to reach new audiences and markets.

On the sidelines of the meeting, the Minister visited the participants' village for the Ironman 70.3 World Championship, hosted by Nice.

He toured the facilities and services available at the event village and reviewed interactive platforms designed for athletes, spectators and partners. He also received a briefing on the championship's organisation, logistics and media coverage.

Al Busaidi said sports provide a powerful global platform for showcasing Oman's tourism potential, particularly in adventure tourism and outdoor activities.

He highlighted Oman's diverse landscapes and terrain, which provide suitable conditions for hosting endurance sports and related international events.

The Minister expressed his ambition to showcase Oman globally as a distinctive tourism destination and to use major international sporting events to support the Sultanate's tourism growth objectives.

The visit forms part of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism's efforts to monitor the performance of its international promotional partnerships and benefit from global experiences in organising major sporting events.

It also aims to strengthen Oman's position on the global sports tourism map and enhance the effectiveness of international events and partnerships in promoting the Omani tourism destination.

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Schools to adopt flexible morning assembly models

Times News Service



MUSCAT: The Ministry of Education has clarified the regulatory framework governing morning assembly in schools, stressing that the framework does not abolish the school assembly, national anthem or educational practices.

The ministry explained that the framework provides for these national and educational components to be implemented in flexible and effective formats that take into account students' needs and school circumstances, while preserving learning time.

The framework comes as part of efforts to develop the start of the school day, particularly the first lesson period, by preparing students for learning, strengthening national identity, values and positive discipline, encouraging student participation, and ensuring health and safety requirements while making effective use of available time.

The ministry said the framework includes three implementation models: classroom morning assembly, integrated morning assembly, and guided school assembly. These models maintain core national and educational components, including the national anthem, flag salute, Quran recitation, messages and educational segments, as well as student participation.

The framework will initially be implemented on a trial basis for one academic term in a sample of schools, with monitoring and evaluation based on specific indicators and feedback from the educational field to support continuous development and improvement.

The ministry affirmed that it aims to create a more flexible and effective start to the school day, balancing discipline with strengthening students' national identity and values, while ensuring their wellbeing and the quality of their education. headline

MINISTRY OF FINANCE

Govt contracts up to OMR5,000 for self-employed Omanis

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Finance has directed ministries, government units, authorities and public institutions to award specialised works and services valued at up to OMR5,000 to independent Omani self-employed individuals who are not employed.

The directive was issued through Financial Circular No. (1) of 2026 and is based on the regulatory framework outlined in the Guide to Contracting Procedures with Independent Employers in Oman, prepared by the National Employment Programme following a decision by the Financial and Economic Committee of the Council of Ministers.

Engineer Omar bin Abdul Aziz Al Maamari, Head of the Entrepreneurial Track at the National Employment Programme, said the circular represents a significant step in developing Oman's freelance work system and expanding opportunities for national talents to provide specialised services to government entities.

In a statement to Oman News Agency, Al Maamari said the initiative will strengthen the participation of independent Omani professionals in government projects and enhance their role in the national economy.

He revealed that the Guide to Contracting Procedures with Independent Employers will be issued during the next phase, providing a comprehensive procedure for contracting between government entities and freelancers.

The guide will set out contracting procedures and responsibilities, helping ensure efficient implementation and quality outputs and services, while creating a clearer framework for freelancers to compete for opportunities offered by government entities.

Al Maamari said the initiative forms part of a broader national effort to establish an integrated freelance work ecosystem that responds to global labour-market changes and enables people with specialised skills and competencies to access opportunities suited to their capabilities.

The national approach includes developing regulatory and legislative frameworks, identifying sectors and activities suitable for freelance work, strengthening training and qualification programmes, building professional capabilities, providing professional and commercial consultancy, and facilitating access to business opportunities.

It will also enable freelancers to benefit from incentives and support mechanisms provided by government entities.

He said allowing independent professionals to participate in government work would enable Omani talents to translate their skills and experience into direct economic opportunities.

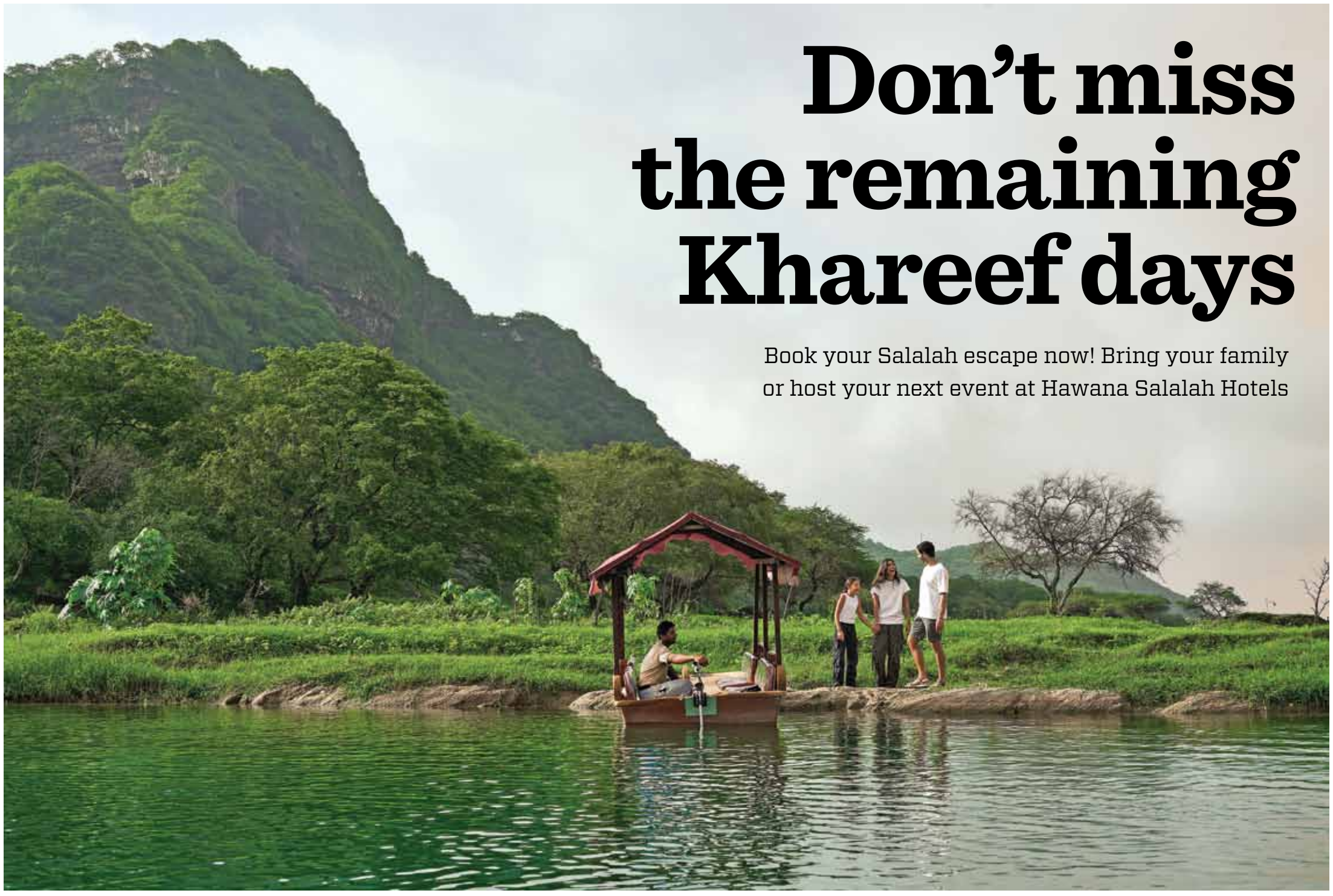
The initiative will also help freelancers build professional records that can strengthen their ability to develop their careers and compete in the labour market, while supporting local content, diversifying income sources and encouraging innovation and entrepreneurship.

Al Maamari noted that the initiative aligns with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040, particularly efforts to build a diversified and competitive national economy based on Omani knowledge and expertise.

He said the approach would contribute to greater labour-market flexibility, higher productivity and broader participation by young Omanis in economic activities and sectors.

Al Maamari described the financial circular as a practical milestone in moving freelance work from a regulatory and enabling framework towards tangible economic opportunities.

T OMAN



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COMMENTARY

Key VAT Exemptions for Goods and Services under Oman's VAT Law





Oman's Value Added Tax Law, promulgated by Royal Decree 121/2020, exempts a wide range of goods and services from VAT, with detailed conditions set out in the Executive Regulation issued by Tax Authority Decision 53/2021, which has since been amended by Decisions 456/2022, 521/2023, 81/2025 and 189/2026.

Speaking to Times of Oman, Dr. Mohammed Ibrahim Al Zadjali, Chairman of Mohammed Ibrahim Law Firm, stated that "the key categories of exempt supplies include financial services such as loans, credit facilities, deposits, financial instruments, securities, and life insurance. This does not cover financial services for which the customer pays a fee, commission, or commercial discount."

He further stated that "healthcare services from licensed medical establishments are exempt, along with directly related goods and services for patients, such as ambulance transport and accommodation. Education services from licensed institutions are also exempt, along with related goods and services for students, such as transport, meals, and accommodation. Courses outside an approved curriculum are taxable."

"Scheduled public transport and public taxis are exempt, except taxis run by specialised companies. Residential property leased for a continuous period of at least three months, under a lease agreement that complies with Oman's tenancy laws, is also exempt," he said.

He added that "undeveloped land, meaning land with no construction, structure, or part of a completed structure on its surface or underground, is exempt from VAT, and so is the resale of existing residential property. The first sale of a residential property, as well as hotels, tourist complexes, and commercial buildings, remains taxable."

"Imported goods exempt from VAT include goods for diplomatic missions and international organisations on a reciprocal basis; items for the Armed Forces and Internal Security Forces, including ammunition, weapons, supplies, military transport, and parts thereof; supplies to non-profit charities; returned goods; and personal belongings and used household appliances of citizens residing abroad or foreigners arriving in Oman for the first time," he said.

"Travellers' personal baggage and gifts are exempt if of a personal, non-commercial nature and within the value limit and other conditions of the Regulation. Disability equipment is also exempt when imported from outside the GCC by licensed associations, government entities, or GCC nationals holding an official disability card, for personal use, subject to the conditions set out in the Regulation," he concluded.

(Mohammed Ibrahim Law Firm (info@mohammedibrahim.net), (+968 244 87 600) was established on 14th December 2006 and is serving clients through its offices in Muscat and Sohar, as well as operating on a request basis in other areas. It offers legal representation across a wide range of practice areas that include Labour Law, Corporate, Commercial, Contracts, Banking and Finance, International Trade, Foreign Investment, Insurance, Maritime Law, Construction and Engineering Contracts, International Arbitration, Intellectual Property and more).



Inbound tourism spending topped OMR1bn in 2025

The average inbound tourist stayed 6.5 nights and spent an average of OMR 256

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman's tourism sector recorded strong growth in 2025, supported by increased investment and a range of public- and private-sector projects aimed at diversifying tourism products, enhancing visitor experiences and improving the quality of tourism services.

According to the "Tourism Reality in the Sultanate of Oman" bulletin issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI), the number of visitors to Oman reached 4 million in 2025, while inbound tourism expenditure exceeded OMR1 billion.

The average inbound tourist stayed 6.5 nights and spent an average of OMR 256. Meanwhile, the number of hotel guests rose to more than 5 million during the year, compared with 3.5 million in 2018.

The bulletin reviewed the tourism sector's recovery following the COVID-19 pandemic, analysing tourism indicators since 2018 and highlighting the sector's contribution to economic growth, gross domestic product (GDP), employment and economic stability.

The growth in tourism investment has also been reflected in the expansion of businesses operating in tourism-related activities. Their number exceeded 24,000 in 2025, representing growth of more than 40 percent compared with 2020.

Muscat Governorate accounted for the largest share of tourism establishments at 43.5 percent, followed by Dhofar Governorate at 17.5 percent and North Al Batinah Governorate at 11 percent.

The sector employed more than 182,000 workers in 2025. The number of Omanis working in tourism establishments increased to around 32,000, compared with about 28,000 in 2024 and 25,000 in 2023.

Tourism has been identified as a priority economic sector since the Ninth Five-Year Plan (2016–2020). The Tenth Five-Year Plan placed greater emphasis on increasing tourism's contribution to GDP, while the Eleventh Five-Year Plan (2026–2030) focuses on strengthening the sector's competitiveness and enhancing its contribution to economic growth.

Oman Vision 2040 aims to increase tourism's contribution to GDP to 3.5 percent by 2030 and 5.3 percent by 2040.

The bulletin showed that tourism's contribution to GDP at current prices rose to OMR 1.135 billion in 2025, an increase of 37.6 percent compared with OMR 825 million in 2018.

The increase was supported by growth across several tourism-related activities, rising visitor numbers and increased investment in the sector.

The direct added value generated by tourism activities reached approximately OMR 1.107 billion in 2025. Hotel activities accounted for OMR 252.1 million, followed by travel agencies and other reservation services at OMR 242.7 million.

Restaurant activities contributed OMR 198.8 million, while transportation activities accounted for OMR 196.5 million. Cultural activities contributed OMR 18.8 million, with other tourism activities accounting for OMR 197.9 million.

Investment in tourism-related activities has increased over the past five years, particularly in the hotel sector. The number of hotels reached about 1,475 by the end of 2025, an increase of more than 1,000 compared with 2018.

Hotel revenues also recorded significant growth, reaching OMR 359 million in 2025, compared with OMR 259 million in 2018.

The sector was severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, with hotel revenues falling to OMR 102 million. Recovery began in 2022, when revenues rose to OMR 224 million, followed by OMR 276 million in 2023 and OMR 293 million in 2024.

The latest figures indicate that the tourism sector has not only recovered from the pandemic shock but has entered a broader phase of expansion, with growing visitor numbers, investment, employment and economic contribution supporting Oman's efforts to diversify its economy under Oman Vision 2040.



ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE SECTOR

AI firms helping localisation of knowledge, technical expertise

< FROM A1

She noted that the expansion of these companies is contributing to greater operational efficiency and supporting digital transformation across economic and development sectors.

Work is also underway to strengthen the data and indicators system for the AI sector, she said, which will enable more comprehensive and accurate measurement of investment levels and growth in the sector in the future.

Regarding the direct impact of AI companies, Al Dawood said they are contributing to the localisation of knowledge and technical expertise through the development of local solutions and the building of national capabilities in AI, data and software development.

The companies are also creating opportunities for Omanis to work in advanced technical fields and gain practical experience in emerging technologies.



She added that the growth and commercial success of Omani AI companies are strengthening private-sector confidence in the economic opportunities presented by AI, encouraging greater adoption and investment.

This, she said, is helping build an integrated ecosystem bringing together innovation, entrepreneurship, investment, research and development.

Omani AI startups also have growing opportunities to expand into regional and global markets, particularly because AI-based digital solutions can be scaled and deployed beyond national borders.

Al Dawood highlighted the importance of Omani companies participating in regional and international events, exhibitions, programmes and technology competitions, as well as building partnerships with companies, investors and technology organisations.

Such engagement helps showcase Omani capabilities and creates new opportunities for business growth and international expansion.

She concluded that the emergence of a growing ecosystem of Omani AI companies strengthens Oman's position as a supportive environment for innovation and advanced technologies.

It also enhances the Sultanate's potential as an attractive destination for companies and investors seeking opportunities in the digital economy and AI, supported by Oman's digital infrastructure and national focus on investment in future technologies.

CONDOLENCES

* *

"ON THE SAD DEMISE OF"



GEETHA RAVINDRAN

mother of C.R. Sankaranarayanan
AL RAID GROUP
(Group General Manager & CFO)

* *

"Our collective hearts are with you during this time of sorrow. We are all deeply sorry for your loss. Our thoughts are with you and your family.

CHAIRMAN & FAMILY -
AL RAID GROUP

T OMAN

Bank Muscat Wins Excellence in Women Empowerment at the Workplace – Banking Award



Bank Muscat was felicitated with the 'The Origin Excellence in Women Empowerment at the Workplace – Banking 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.

As one of Oman's leading financial institutions, Bank Muscat has placed gender diversity, equal opportunity and women's professional development at the heart of its people strategy. The bank is committed to creating an inclusive and enabling workplace where employees are empowered to contribute, grow their careers and reach leadership positions.

Women currently account for 46.22% of Bank Muscat's workforce, with women represented across various functions and senior management positions. The bank's approach focuses on providing equal opportunities based on merit, supporting career advancement and investing in the skills and capabilities of its people.



Bank Muscat's commitment to women's empowerment also extends beyond its workplace. Through initiatives supporting women entrepreneurs and business owners, including the Wathbah programme for women entrepreneurs, the bank contributes to creating opportunities for women to develop their skills, strengthen their businesses and participate more actively in Oman's economic growth.

The recognition at The Origin 2026 celebrates Bank Muscat's continued efforts to create a workplace where women can grow, lead and make a meaningful impact. Its commitment to gender diversity and talent development reflects the bank's role in building a more inclusive, progressive and future-ready banking sector in Oman.

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.

For more information, contact: 78471944/97221630

HIGHER JUDICIAL INSTITUTE

Trainees welcomed

NIZWA: The Higher Judicial Institute welcomed the first batch of trainees comprising 24 newly appointed assistant judges enrolled in a two-year postgraduate diploma programme in judicial sciences. The course, which coincides with the establishment of the the Department of Investment and Trade, reflects the Institute's commitment to provide specialised judicial training. – ONA

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MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Oman condemns targeting of a pipeline in Saudi Arabia

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman has condemned and denounced the targeting of a pipeline in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

It underscores its firm position rejecting such attacks and the targeting of vital and civilian installations, whatever the motives or causes.



Solidarity with Saudi Arabia

In a statement issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Oman renews its solidarity with Saudi Arabia and its support for all measures aimed at protecting the Kingdom's territories and vital installations and safeguarding its security and stability. Oman emphasises the necessity of respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of states and avoiding anything that would threaten the security and stability of the region, the statement issued by the Ministry added. – ONA

WILAYAT OF MAHOUT

Pact inked to build fishing port

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources signed an agreement to construct a fishing port in the Wilayat of Mahout, Al Wusta Governorate, to enhance the fisheries economy and support development and investment.

The agreement was signed on behalf of the Ministry by Dr. Saud Hamoud Al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, while it was signed on behalf of the executing company by Eng. Ahmed Mustafa Al Assar, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Arab Contractors Company.

The construction of the port comes within the framework of the Ministry's efforts to develop the infrastructure ecosystem for the fisheries sector, enhance the efficiency of landing, handling, and marketing operations, and provide facilities and supporting services for fishermen, alongside creating an attractive environment for investment in fish processing industries, as well as tourism and maritime activities.

The project represents one of the important development projects in Al Wusta Governorate, given the Wilayat of Mahout's fisheries and maritime assets and potential, and its role in the governorate's fish production ecosystem.– ONA



WORLD

Zelenskyy offers to meet Putin

Zelenskyy and Putin have not met in person since Russia launched its full-scale invasion of its smaller neighbour in February 2022

KYIV: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has said he would travel to Miami if his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin, attended the Group of 20 (G20) leaders' summit scheduled for December.

Zelenskyy replied enthusiastically when DW's correspondent Misha Komadovsky posed the question on Friday.

"Yes, of course. We have to come. We have to meet, to speak and make decisions," he said.

Zelenskyy added that what he was going to say to Putin mattered less than results.

"It's not about words. What I will tell him or what he wants to tell me, it doesn't matter. It doesn't matter. [...] Results matter. That's it."

Zelenskyy and Putin have not met in person since Russia launched its full-scale invasion of its smaller neighbour in February 2022.

The Kremlin has so far declined to say whether Putin would go to Miami for the meeting.

The Russian leader has not personally attended a G20 summit since 2019.

Last month, Russia's Finance Minister Anton Siluanov was however invited by the US to attend a meeting of G20 countries in North Carolina in a move that upset European officials.

100-year partnership declaration with Canada



First up, however, Zelenskyy spoke of the deals he signed on Thursday with Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney, including a 100-year partnership declaration.

Zelenskyy underlined the importance of the deal, which he said covered numerous sectors, "from security, financing, energy, very important energy, veteran policy, and culture, and relationships and humanitarian issues."

"So it's a global decision, a really historic decision, and I'm happy that we have it," he said.

Zelenskyy said he had also signed a deal on collaboration on drone production with the Canadian leader involving a number of Ukrainian companies.

Zelenskyy pushes for more Patriot missiles ahead of winter

Zelenskyy's interview with DW comes as summer is nearly over and Ukraine is gearing up for the cold months of winter.

The Ukrainian president has conceded that his country has been struggling to counter flying jet-propelled drones that Russia has been increasingly deploying.

"They [US] have political will to sell and to help, but the production is not too big. So it means that stocks is a variant," he said.

"Will Americans be ready to give us (Patriots)? I don't know. We will see."

Patriot missiles are powerful weapons that are currently the most effective defense against Russian ballistic missile attacks.

What Zelenskyy needs from US and European allies

"Russia [currently] produces 140 ballistic missiles per month. So, according to the rules of NATO, if you want to destroy 140, you need a 1-to-2 [ratio], 280 missiles," Zelenskyy told DW.

"You will never have 280 missiles per month, and between us, it's a huge challenge to have [even] 100 missiles per month. This is what I want. I want to have 100-120 for these difficult months, especially the cold months."

Germany earlier this week said it was going to send Patriot missiles from its national stock, without specifying how many missiles that would be.

Zelenskyy called on Kyiv's European allies to provide more support.

"They have to give as much as possible. With all respect to them, they have to give to Ukrainians to save their lives."

Zelenskyy also spoke of having secured agreements with several European companies to develop a Ukrainian-led anti-missile system called Freya.

He said he was hoping that the first test phase would begin by the end of December, stressing that time was short. – DW

ANNUAL REMEMBRANCE CEREMONY





New York marks 25th anniversary of 9/11 attacks

NEW YORK: New Yorkers on Friday commemorated the victims of the Sept. 11 attacks on the 25th anniversary of the world-changing tragedy.

Family members of the victims, holding flowers and pictures of their loved ones, gathered at the 9/11 Memorial Plaza in Lower Manhattan in the morning.

US Vice President JD Vance attended the annual remembrance ceremony, along with four former presidents: Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, Barack Obama and Joe Biden.

A moment of silence came at 8:46 a.m. Eastern Time (1246 GMT) in observance of when a hijacked passenger plane struck the North Tower of the World Trade Center, followed by the reading of victims' names by their loved ones. A second moment of silence took place at 9:03am Eastern Time, marking when another hijacked passenger plane crashed into the South Tower.

For the first time, this year's ceremony added a silent moment to mourn the thousands who have died since 2001 from illnesses related to the toxic dust that poisoned the air for months afterward.

As the sun set, two massive blue beams of light illuminated the sky, symbolising the twin towers of the World Trade Centre that collapsed in the attacks. Other iconic landmarks across the city, including the Empire State Building, also illuminated their facades in blue.

All New York City municipal departments and agencies flew their flags at half-mast on Friday to commemorate the anniversary.

In early September, New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani issued an executive order designating Sept. 11 as "Day of Remembrance and Service."

More than 200 firefighters from across the world, including dozens of Americans who responded to the terrorist attack, concluded on Thursday their 343-mile (about 552 km) cycling journey from Boston to New York's Ground Zero.

The "Ride for Resilience" aimed to pay tribute to the 343 firefighters fallen a quarter-century ago and support first responders still facing long-term health challenges, according to the organisers.

A special exhibition, "In Their Honor," is set to open on Saturday at the National September 11 Memorial & Museum, focusing on how New Yorkers transformed their grief into action in the rebuilding of the city and neighborhoods in the wake of the tragedy. The exhibition will feature a massive papier-mache phoenix sculpture made by children of the victims. On Sept. 11, 2001, Al Qaida militants hijacked four airplanes and carried out suicide attacks against targets in the United States. Two of the planes were flown into the twin towers of the World Trade Centre in New York City, a third plane hit the Pentagon and the fourth crashed in a field in Shanksville, Pennsylvania. Almost 3,000 people were killed in the terrorist attacks. – Xinhua

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:
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SPORTS

Cox, Root fifties help England seal whitewash over Pakistan

The hosts' batters weathered an early storm from Mohammed Abbas to add a partnership of 128 that helped the side confirm victory



EDGBASTON: England survived an almighty scare to eventually win the third Test against Pakistan by eight wickets and complete a 3-0 clean sweep on Saturday.

The home side were already facing an unexpected chase of 130 on the fourth day after being frazzled by the hitting of Pakistan debutant Razaullah on Friday evening.

The prospect of one of Test cricket's greatest turnarounds was raised when England were reduced to 2-2 in the opening over. Ben Duckett edged Muhammad Abbas' first ball behind and Emilio Gay was palpably leg before.

England could have been 35-3 after Joe Root rashly dragged on to his own stumps off Mohammad Ali.

Ali was found to have overstepped and Root was reprieved on 23. While Root needed fortune, Jordan Cox once again impressed with a composed 59, further claiming a spot in the XI for the first Test against South Africa in December.

Cox and Root shared an unbroken stand of 128, with Root unbeaten on 62 when victory was sealed just before lunch.

For Root, this completes a successful return to the captaincy he resumed when Ben Stokes retired in June, while England end one of their most turbulent summers in history in a positive fashion.

They switch formats to begin a white-ball series against Sri Lanka in Southampton on Tuesday, with Brendon McCullum back in charge and Kevin Pietersen as part of the coaching staff.

Such was England's serene progress up to the third evening of the final Test of the series, it was easy to forget that they were without both a captain and a coach less than two months ago.

For all the good things they have done against Pakistan, there was the feeling their credentials had not been challenged by the tourists' dismal performances.

When Pakistan were 0-2 in their second innings, England could have won in two days. From then on, the visitors finally found some fight and England were asked to respond. The way Root's side coped with the pressure was not entirely convincing.

Their tactics in the field collapsed in the face of Razaullah's assault on Friday, then their batting was wobbling on Saturday morning.

An extra hundred runs on the target might have been difficult. How Pakistan will rue being dismissed for 133 on the first day.

It is to England's credit that they weathered the storm. Even if it took Pakistan two and a half matches to show up, England have still won three consecutive Tests after a previous run of two wins in 10.Greater challenges await on the winter trips to South Africa, Bangladesh and Australia.

New head coach Stephen Fleming arrives in the UK in the coming days with plenty in his in-tray.

In a dramatic start to the day, Abbas' metronomic accuracy not only sent nerves through the England dressing room, but also further exposed a growing issue at the top of the order.

Duckett edged a beauty for a golden duck.

Although he has registered England's only century of the summer, Duckett has not reached 20 in five innings against Pakistan and his average since the beginning of the Ashes is 23.

Gay has three half-centuries in his first summer as a Test cricketer, though being pinned on the shin by Abbas left his average below 25. Gay swished his bat in frustration toward the stumps and wasted a review, his immediate future in the team is vulnerable.

Brief scores: Pakistan 133 and 449 lost to England 453 and 130/2 (Joe Root 62*, Jordan Cox 59*; Mohammad Abbas 2/27). - Agencies

ANOTHER BATTING FAILURE

Oman's ACC Premier Cup campaign ends in heavy Hong Kong defeat

MUSCAT: Oman's ACC Men's Premier Cup campaign ended in disappointment on Saturday as Hong Kong powered to a nine-wicket victory in the third-place play-off, handing Vinayak Shukla's side a fourth successive defeat.

Sanju Sajeev's fighting half-century was not enough to prevent Oman from being bowled out for 144 in 40.1 overs at the UKM-YSD Cricket Oval in Bangi, Malaysia, as Hong Kong rode on Nasrulla Rana's four-wicket haul before Anshuman Rath and Zeeshan Ali made light work of the chase.

The defeat also brought into sharp focus Oman's batting struggles that persisted throughout the tournament.

Hong Kong raced to 146 for one in just 19.5 overs to secure third place and a spot in the ACC Rising Stars Asia Cup alongside UAE and Premier Cup champions Nepal.

In the final, also played on Saturday, Nepal defeated UAE by 44 runs to emerge champions and book their spot in the Asia Cup.

Electing to bat, Oman suffered an early collapse as Hong Kong struck four times inside the opening four overs.

Mujibur Ali fell for three at nine, Jatinder Singh followed for five two runs later, while Hammad Mirza was dismissed without scoring. Jiten Ramanandi's departure for four left Oman reeling at 16 for four after 3.5overs.

Karan Sonavale attempted to rebuild with 17 from 22 balls, hitting three boundaries, but his dismissal at 52 opened the door for another setback. Captain Vinayak Shukla then added 23 from 31 deliveries, including a four and two sixes, before becoming the sixth wicket to fall with Oman on 74.

From there, Sajeev was left to carry the innings. The 27-year-old middle-order batter, playing only his second ODI, showed determination as wickets continued to fall around him, reaching his half-century from 80 balls. He eventually made 59 from 99 deliveries, hitting six fours and a six.





Hong Kong batters Anshuman Rath and Zeeshan Ali against Oman on Saturday; Right, Sanju Sajeev of Oman in action during his knock of 59 against Hong Kong

However, he found little support from the rest of the batting order.

Apart from Sajeev's 59, Shukla's 23, Sonavale's 17, and Nadeem Khan's11, the remaining batters were restricted to single-digit scores. Oman lost their last wicket at 144 in the 41st over, with Sajeev's dismissal off Aizaz Khan bringing the innings to an end.

Rana led Hong Kong's bowling effort with four for 26 from nine overs. Yasim Murtaza claimed three wickets, while Aizaz Khan returned exceptional figures of two for three from 4.1 overs.

Hong Kong's response was in complete contrast. Rath and Zeeshan launched into the chase with purpose, bringing up the team's 50 in just 6.3 overs. The opening pair remained unbeaten through the first 10 overs as Hong Kong reached 79 without loss.

Rath was the first to his half-century, reaching the milestone from 41 balls as the opening partnership continued to grow.

The pair brought up their 100-run stand from just 84 deliveries before Zeeshan completed his own fifty from 41 balls.

Zeeshan continued to attack, striking eight fours and a six in his 63 from 54 deliveries. His dismissal at 131 for one in the 19th over, bowled by Shakeel Ahmed, proved to be Oman's only breakthrough.

Rath remained unbeaten on 68 from 60 balls, hitting seven fours and three sixes, while Babar Hayat added a rapid unbeaten 14 from five deliveries. Hong Kong reached 146 for one in 19.5 overs to seal the nine-wicket win with Hayat slamming a six to complete a lop-sided victory

The result brought the curtain down on Oman's campaign, with Saturday's defeat following losses to Kuwait, UAE and Nepal.

Brief scores: Oman 144 all out in 40.1 overs (Sanju Sajeev 59, Vinayak Shukla 23, Karan Sonavale 17; Nasrulla Rana 4-26, Yasim Murtaza 3-51, Aizaz Khan 2-3) lost to Hong Kong 146/1 in 19.5 overs (Anshuman Rath 68 not out, Zeeshan Ali 63) by nine wickets.

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MARKET T
BUSINESS & FINANCE

INDIA DATA CENTRE

India's data centre construction and infrastructure value chain could grow into a $90 billion opportunity by FY35, up from an estimated $30 billion by FY30, as rapid capacity expansion creates demand across construction, power, cooling, networking and security.



MSX POSTS 7TH STRAIGHT GAIN

The Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) strengthened its gains during the week, with the main index rising for the seventh consecutive week, benefiting from the rise in shares of banks, industrial companies, services, investment and energy companies.

DATA

Oman's domestic liquidity rises 15.4% to OMR29.32 billion



Times News Service

MUSCAT: The effective exchange rate index of Omani Rial rose by 4.5 percent reaching 118.3 points at the end of June 2026 compared to 113.2 points at the end of June 2025, according to data issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The data showed that the total domestic liquidity in the Sultanate of Oman rose by 15.4 percent to OMR29.32 billion by the end of June 2026 compared to OMR25.41 billion during the same period of 2025.

The data further indicated that the narrow money supply increased by 29.8 percent, reaching OMR9.41 billion by the end of June 2026 compared to OMR7.25 billion during the same period last year.

The total amount of cash issued reached OMR1.626 billion, an increase of 4.6 percent compared to OMR1.555 billion at the end of June 2025. Regarding foreign assets, they recorded an increase of 2.7 percent, reaching OMR7.49 billion by the end of June 2026 compared to OMR7.30 billion during the same period last year.

On the deposits side, private sector deposits with commercial banks and Islamic windows increased by 11.8 percent, reaching OMR24.49, compared to OMR21.91 billion at the end of June 2025.

Total loans and financing granted by commercial banks and Islamic windows also increased by 12.3 percent, reaching OMR38.24 billionby the end of June 2026 compared to OMR34.69 billion during the same period last year.

In contrast, the average interest rate on total loans decreased by 3 percent, reaching 5.325 percent at the end of June 2026, compared to 5.487 percent during the same period in 2025.

Oman's gypsum ore exports reach 14mn tonnes in 2025

Mining activity related to gypsum recorded financial revenues of approximately OMR3.11 million during 2025, supported by the advanced infrastructure in the Dhofar Governorate





Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman's exports of gypsum ore reached nearly 14.02 million tonnes in 2025 reflecting the prominent position that Omani ore enjoys in global markets.

Mining activity related to gypsum recorded financial revenues of approximately OMR3.11 million during in 2025, supported by the advanced infrastructure in the Dhofar Governorate.

The Ministry of Energy and Minerals continues its efforts to regulate and manage the minerals and mineral ores sector in the Sultanate of Oman, and to maximise the local content of mineral resources.

It is being done through developing the legislative and investment environment, regulating production, marketing and export operations, and encouraging manufacturing industries. This is in order to enhance local content and increase the contribution of the mining sector to economic diversification in accordance with the objectives of the "Oman Vision 2040".

Gypsum ore is considered one of the most prominent mineral ores that reflect this trend, due to the large reserves and high quality that the Sultanate of Oman enjoys, in addition to the growth of the manufacturing industries associated with it and its competitive presence in regional and global markets.

The Dhofar Governorate is one of the most important gypsum production areas in the Sultanate of Oman. A significant part of the mining activity is concentrated in the Ruwaya area of Thumrait, which includes 36 quarries and 5 factories that form an integrated production system. The state has the second largest gypsum reserve in the Sultanate of Oman after the Shalim state and the Hallaniyat Islands.

Engineer Salem bin Bakhit Al Kathiri, Director of the Minerals Department in Dhofar Governorate at the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, said that the Ministry is working according to an integrated system to regulate and manage mineral raw materials, including gypsum raw material.

This includes among others regulating mining activity as well as monitoring production operations and to raising the efficiency of exploiting mineral resources. These include encouraging investment in manufacturing industries, in addition to monitoring the companies' compliance with regulatory requirements, and occupational health, safety and environmental standards.

He added to the Oman News Agency that the ministry's efforts are not limited to regulating the extraction and export of gypsum ore, but rather focus on maximising the added value of the ore within the Sultanate of Oman. It also aims in transforming mineral resources into products and industries that contribute to enhancing local content, attracting investments, and expanding value chains related to the minerals sector.

He explained that gypsum ore is used in a number of industries and products that are manufactured locally. In the Sultanate of Oman, there are industries for several products related to gypsum ore.

These include suspended ceilings, gypsum boards, agricultural fertilizer, gypsum powder, and plaster gypsum. These reflect the Ministry's direction towards promoting local manufacturing and processing, raising the economic value of mineral ores, and enhancing local content.

He pointed out that the production capacity of gypsum boards in the Sultanate of Oman is about 35.5 million square metres annually, in addition to more than 237,000 tonnes of gypsum powder and about 60,000 square metres of gypsum bricks annually. These reflect the growth of manufacturing industries based on mineral raw materials, and the trend towards utilising them locally instead of being limited to exporting them in their primary form.

As part of developing the system for marketing and exporting mineral raw materials, the Omani Minerals Trading Company was established to be a specialised commercial arm. The company contributes to organising marketing and export operations, improving pricing mechanisms, enhancing the bargaining power of the Omani product in global markets, in addition to opening new markets and achieving better returns for the sector and the national economy.

Oman Minerals Trading Company, is the dedicated centralised trading arm of Minerals Development Oman (MDO), and is responsible for marketing and exporting gypsum and chrome ore, through centrally managing export operations and negotiating with buyers in foreign markets. The company was established under Ministerial Decision No. (18/2025) which granted it the exclusive right to export gypsum and chrome ore as of June 2026, while local sales remain outside its jurisdiction.

The initial results of this model showed an 8 percent increase in the average selling price of gypsum exports compared to the same period last year.

The company marketed and exported more than 2.83 million tonnes of gypsum to 10 countries, via 54 ships that departed from the port of Salalah, in conjunction with expansion into new African markets and the reactivation of exports to the South Korean market.

Export operations comes in parallel with the Ministry of Energy and Minerals' directions towards achieving a balance between demand in foreign markets and the needs of local industries for raw materials. This provides greater opportunities to direct a portion of mineral resources towards manufacturing and processing within the Sultanate of Oman, and to attract investments in advanced stages of the value chain, including processing, manufacturing and the production of value-added products.

On the regulatory and environmental side, the Ministry of Energy and Minerals continues its monitoring and inspection work to ensure that companies operating in the mining sector comply with the Occupational Health, Safety and Environmental Guide. These efforts include monitoring waste management, reducing emissions, protecting water resources and implementing environmental impact assessments, in order to ensure the sustainability of mining operations and the preservation of the environment and surrounding communities.

These efforts reflect the Ministry's direction towards building an integrated system for managing mineral resources, based on organising production, raising the efficiency of marketing and exporting, developing manufacturing industries, enhancing local content. It also includes maximising the economic value of mineral raw materials thereby consolidating the Sultanate of Oman's position as a reliable supplier of gypsum and its products in global markets, and increasing the contribution of the mining sector to the national economy.

INVESTMENT AGREEMENT

Templewater to allocate 50% of its fund size to investments in Oman

Times News Service



MUSCAT: Oman Investment Authority (OIA) has signed an investment agreement in partnership with Hong Kong's Innovation and Technology Commission and China-based Templewater. Under the agreement, OIA will commit 25% of Templewater Innovation Fund's capital, with the Fund allocating 50% of its total capital to investments in a range of promising sectors in the Sultanate of Oman.

The agreement reinforces OIA's Omani Angle, an approach adopted across its international investments to maximise their impact on the national economy and generate benefits beyond financial returns. These include attracting investments and technologies, facilitating knowledge and expertise transfer, and opening new markets and opportunities for Omani companies. The agreement also adds to OIA's investments in innovation and technology ecosystem in Oman.

Signed as part of OIA's participation in the Belt and Road Summit 2026, hosted in Hong Kong, People's Republic of China, the agreement reflects OIA's approach to leveraging its international investments to create added value for the national economy.

OIA's commitment to the Fund is matched by an allocation twice that size for investment in the Sultanate of Oman, helping attract capital, companies and technologies to local sectors, facilitate knowledge transfer, build partnerships and open new markets, while supporting economic diversification objectives.

The agreement falls under Hong Kong's Innovation and Technology Venture Fund programme, through which the Innovation and Technology Commission is establishing Templewater Innovation Fund in collaboration with Templewater.

The Fund will invest in promising innovation and technology companies, supporting their growth and expansion while focusing on a range of future-oriented sectors, including advanced manufacturing, new energy, artificial intelligence and data science, and health and life sciences.

These sectors align with OIA's approach to diversifying its investments and expanding into emerging sectors associated with technology and innovation, creating opportunities to attract international companies and technologies and connect them with investment and economic opportunities in the Sultanate of Oman.

Muneer bin Ali Al Muneeri, Deputy President for Operations at Oman Investment Authority, said that OIA seeks to leverage its international investments to create value that extends beyond financial returns, an approach embodied by the Omani Angle. This involves connecting global investment opportunities with the needs of the national economy and attracting capital, technologies, expertise and partnerships to the Sultanate of Oman, thereby multiplying the targeted impact of OIA's investments and creating new opportunities in the innovation and technology sectors.

He added that, through this agreement, OIA looks forward to benefiting from the innovation and technology ecosystem in Hong Kong in particular and China more broadly, while connecting promising companies in these markets with opportunities available in the Sultanate of Oman. The agreement will also enable Omani companies and OIA companies to access technologies, expertise, partners and new markets, supporting economic diversification and reinforcing Oman's position as an attractive destination for technology investments.

Cliff Zhang, Chairman and CEO of Templewater, said: "Our partnership with Oman Investment Authority represents an important step towards connecting capital, innovation and industrial expertise with opportunities between Hong Kong and the Sultanate of Oman. We see Oman as a promising environment for technology companies to grow and expand into regional markets. Through the Templewater Innovation Fund, we will support high-potential companies and create opportunities that facilitate technology transfer, build partnerships and generate sustainable economic value."

The agreement further strengthens OIA's presence within the global innovation and technology ecosystem by providing a platform that connects promising technology companies in Hong Kong and China with opportunities in Oman.

This will enable them to explore Oman as a destination for growth and expansion and as a gateway to regional markets. In parallel, the agreement will provide Omani companies and OIA companies with opportunities to collaborate with international partners and benefit from the technologies and expertise developed by the targeted companies.

This approach also extends OIA's focus on future-oriented and technology-driven sectors and strengthens the integration between its international investments and local investment opportunities, supporting technology and knowledge transfer, capability development, and the establishment of commercial and investment partnerships that create added value for the national economy.

The agreement also forms part of broader efforts to strengthen investment and economic relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the People's Republic of China under the Belt and Road Initiative, while leveraging Hong Kong's position as a financial and investment hub connecting Asian markets with regional and international markets, alongside Oman's strategic location and the access it provides to regional markets.

The enhanced Innovation and Technology Venture Fund Programme is a government initiative launched by Hong Kong and administered by its Innovation and Technology Commission.

It aims to mobilise private capital to support the ecosystem of start-ups operating in innovation and technology sectors. Templewater was selected as a fund manager under the Enhanced Programme, leveraging its investment and sector expertise, as well as its institutional and industrial network, to support the growth and expansion of these partnerships and transform their technological potential into sustainable commercial opportunities.

MARKET

Total market capitalisation of MSX rises to OMR39.44 billion

Over the past seven weeks, the index has managed to rise by more than 530 points, benefiting from improved local economic indicators and increased profits of companies listed on the stock exchange



Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) strengthened its gains during the week, with the main index rising for the seventh consecutive week, benefiting from the rise in shares of banks, industrial companies, services, investment and energy companies.

The main index closed at the end of trading session at 7,647 points, up by 19 points. Over the past seven weeks, the index has managed to rise by more than 530 points, benefiting from improved local economic indicators and increased profits of companies listed on the stock exchange.

The sectoral indices recorded a collective rise, led by the industrial sector index, which rose 130 points and closed above the 9,940 point level. The financial sector index rose to about 13,560 points, an increase of 123 points. The services sector index rose 17 points, and the Sharia index recorded an increase of 5 points and closed at 622 points.

The total market capitalisation of the Muscat Stock Exchange rose to OMR39.44 billion at the end of the week's trading, recording weekly gains of OMR530.6 million.

The week also saw an increase in the number of transactions executed, with investors focusing on the shares of Bank Sohar International, OQ Basic Industries, OQ Gas Networks, Bank Muscat, Asyad Shipping, Oman India Fertiliser Company, OQ Exploration and Production, and Bank Dhofar.

The number of transactions executed reached approximately 47,000, compared to 44,000 in the preceding week, registering an increase of 6 percent. However, the value of trading declined by 19 percent, from OMR244.7 million to OMR196.9 million.

Bank Sohar International topped the list of most traded companies in terms of trading value, with trades worth OMR51.4 million, representing 26.1 percent of the total trading value. OQ Basic Industries came in second with trades worth OMR37.3 million, OQ Gas Networks came in third with trades worth OMR21.4 million, Bank Muscat came in fourth with trades worth OMR20 million, and OQ Exploration and Production came in fifth with trades worth OMR19.5 million, representing 9.9 percent of the total trading value.

Over the week, investors have shown increased interest in shares of Al Anwar Investments, Raysut Cement, International Financial Investments, Al Madina Investment Holding, and Al Anwar Ceramic Tiles.

The number of securities that recorded an increase during the week amounted to 45 securities, compared to 29 securities whose prices declined and 24 securities that remained unchanged at their previous levels.

The stock of the building materials manufacturing company recorded the highest gains, rising by 15.4 percent and closing at 82 baisa. The stock of Al Madina Investment rose by 13.7 percent and closed at 83 baisa. The stock of Al Anwar Investments rose to 216 baisa, rising by 13.6 percent. The stock of Al Anwar Ceramic Tiles rose by 7.4 percent and closed at 158 baisa. The stock of Oman Arab Bank rose to 280 baisa, rising by 280 baisa.

The share of Al Hassan Engineering (under liquidation) led the losing shares, declining by 16.6 percent and closing at 5 baisa. The National Bank of Oman's free bonds 2026 declined by 9.8 percent and closed at 101 baisa.

The share of the Financial Center declined by 6 percent and closed at 94 baisa. The share of Al Batinah Development and Investment fell to 70 baisa, declining by 5.4 percent. The share of Bank Dhofar recorded a decline of 4.6 percent and closed at 207 baisa.

Company news: The Oman India Fertiliser Company (Omifco) has invited its shareholders to attend the Ordinary General Meeting on September 30. The meeting will consider the Board of Directors' proposal to distribute cash dividends to shareholders in the amount of 6.763 baisa per share.

The company's stock rose 7 baisa and closed at 216 baisa after climbing to 219 baisa, its best level since the company was listed on the Muscat Stock Exchange last July. The stock saw trading worth OMR9.5 million during the week, and the company's market value rose to OMR1.4449 billion, recording weekly gains of OMR46.8 million.

Oman stock market edges higher

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Omani stock market rose for another week, with the MSX 30 index up 0.25%, closing at 7,647.69 points and overall market capitalisation advanced by 1.55%. The value of shares traded declined by 19.57%, and the number of shares traded slipped by 21.48%.

"While persistent geopolitical tensions weighed on sentiment, the market continued to benefit from strong local fundamentals, higher crude prices, and ongoing diplomatic efforts," according to an industry watcher.

"On the geopolitical front, regional uncertainty and tanker strikes continue to fuel caution, and Tehran's warnings of further escalation kept concerns over prolonged tensions and maritime disruptions elevated," said Abdullah Mahfoodh Al Wahaibi, Coach and analyst in global financial markets.



At the same time, US President Donald Trump signalled that geopolitically driven crude prices are unlikely to ease until after the November midterms. "While this points to prolonged risks, elevated oil prices could continue to support the Omani energy sector. Markets will also monitor any progress on Strait of Hormuz," he added.

Meanwhile, markets focused on US inflation data. August PPI rose 0.4% month-on-month, with the annual rate accelerating to 5.4%, while CPI increased 0.4% and core CPI inched higher to 0.3%. "Along with the surge in oil prices amid regional uncertainty, the data signalled risks of tighter monetary conditions, potentially pressuring risk appetite and stock markets globally, including Oman's MSX 30 index," Al Wahaibi said.

Looking ahead, sentiment could be shaped by any clear progress on diplomatic efforts for improved conditions in the Strait of Hormuz.

"Investors will also closely monitor the Federal Reserve interest rate decision next week, which could affect sentiment and markets. At the same time, strong local fundamentals and elevated crude prices could continue to provide support," he further added.

ROLLS OUT FIRST PRODUCTION UNITS

ROX begins production at new manufacturing centre as global expansion advances





ABU DHABI: ROX has started vehicle production at its newly completed manufacturing centre, marking a step forward in the company's global expansion. The first production units have rolled off the line, with deliveries to customers set to begin shortly.

The facility brings together manufacturing, AI development and design under one operation. The newly-established ROX AI Lab will serve as the base for the company's outdoor AI platform, ROX AGENT, while the Design Studio will integrate regional customer insights and cultural perspectives into future vehicle development.

"We are building a manufacturing and innovation base that allows us to respond faster to our customers and scale our presence around the world," said Jarvis, Founder and CEO of ROX. "This is about making our global operations more agile, and more connected to the markets we serve."

MoU

ROX also announced the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding with Etihad Airways to explore future collaboration across travel, mobility and lifestyle experiences. The partnership will begin with the Africa Grand Tour S2, an overland expedition across Africa featuring the first production vehicles. Etihad's brand will be displayed on the vehicles, with both companies developing co-branded content around the journey.

Antonoaldo Neves, Chief Executive Officer of Etihad Airways, said: "The Africa Grand Tour brings together travel, mobility and storytelling in a way that creates natural opportunities for both brands. We look forward to exploring where a future collaboration could lead."

ROX is now present in more than 60 markets across the Middle East, Central Asia, Africa and Europe, with cumulative global sales surpassing 40,000 vehicles. The new centre is expected to support further growth as the company expands its retail and service network across regions.

The Africa Grand Tour S2 will cross 12 countries, taking the vehicles through desert, tropical and mountainous terrain before reaching Casablanca, Morocco. The expedition builds on the first GRAND TOUR, which covered more than 25,000 kilometres along the historic Silk Road.

KPMG REPORT



India's data centre construction value chain could reach $90 billion by FY35

NEW DELHI: India's data centre construction and infrastructure value chain could grow into a $90 billion opportunity by FY35, up from an estimated $30 billion by FY30, as rapid capacity expansion creates demand across construction, power, cooling, networking and security, according to a KPMG report.

The report said India's installed data centre capacity is projected to reach 7-7.5 GW by 2030, driving a sharp increase in downstream spending beyond the data centre facilities themselves. The report estimates the construction-related opportunity at USD 30 billion by FY30 and USD 90 billion by FY35.

The opportunity is spread across several segments, with design and construction accounting for about USD 27 billion, cooling infrastructure for USD 24 billion and power infrastructure within data centres for USD 18 billion by FY35, KPMG said.

Power infrastructure outside data centres is estimated to represent another USD 12 billion, while network infrastructure and security could each account for about USD 5 billion.

"A decade long, structural opportunity exists for the full engineering and infrastructure value chain as the sector scales capacity to meet demand," KPMG said.

The report said the growth of artificial intelligence is also changing the requirements of data centre infrastructure, increasing demand for higher-capacity power systems, advanced cooling and specialised equipment.

Power infrastructure inside data centres is seeing higher specifications as AI racks typically require 50-60 kilowatt of power per rack, compared with 8-12 kilowatt for non-AI workloads, KPMG said. Cooling is also shifting from traditional air-based systems towards water and liquid cooling, with liquid cooling emerging as a fast-growing opportunity because of AI workloads.

The report said the expansion will create opportunities not only for existing suppliers but also for domestic companies seeking to build capabilities in specialised areas. The report further noted that India already has a relatively strong domestic base in civil construction, cooling towers and fibre-optic cable manufacturing, while areas such as advanced grid systems, battery energy storage systems, precision cooling and active network hardware have greater import dependence.

Capturing the opportunity, however, will require coordinated execution among developers, engineering and construction companies, equipment manufacturers, utilities and regulators, particularly to reduce construction timelines and delays in securing power, the report said. -ANI

ACCELERATES

US consumer prices rise 0.4% in August

NEW DELHI: US consumer prices rose 0.4 per cent in August, accelerating from a 0.1 per cent increase in July, with higher gasoline and energy prices accounting for a significant part of the monthly increase, according to data released by the US Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) on Friday.

The Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) increased 3.4 per cent in the 12 months ending August, unchanged from the annual increase recorded in July.

Gasoline prices rose 3.9 per cent in August, accounting for more than one-third of the monthly increase in the overall index. The broader energy index increased 2.1 per cent during the month, reversing a 1.5 per cent decline in July.

Shelter costs, another major component of the index, increased 0.3 per cent in August after rising 0.1 per cent in July. Food prices edged up 0.1 per cent, with food away from home rising 0.3 per cent while food at home remained unchanged.

Core CPI, which excludes food and energy prices, increased 0.3 per cent in August after rising 0.2 per cent in July. The increase was driven by higher prices for communication, lodging away from home, airline fares, education and used cars and trucks.

On the other hand, medical care prices declined 0.2 per cent during the month, while motor vehicle insurance fell 0.8 per cent.

Energy prices remained a major source of inflationary pressure on an annual basis. The energy index increased 16.3 per cent in the 12 months ending August, led by a 27.4 per cent rise in gasoline prices.

Food prices increased 2.7 per cent over the year, while food at home rose 2.2 per cent and food away from home increased 3.4 per cent.

The core index rose 2.4 per cent over the 12 months ending August, easing from a 2.5 per cent increase in the 12 months through July. Shelter prices increased 3 per cent over the year. -ANI



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VACANCY
PROCUREMENT OFFICER

A manufacturing company in Sohar is looking for a **Procurement Officer** with a B.E. in Mechanical Engineering and 5–8 years of relevant industrial procurement experience. The role includes sourcing materials and equipment, vendor evaluation, negotiation, purchase processing, delivery follow-up, logistics arrangements, and participation in technical evaluations. Candidates should have experience working with ERP systems. A valid Oman driving licence and willingness to travel internationally, as required, are essential. Experience in the composites industry will be an advantage.

Interested candidates may send their CV to
E-mail: binuraju@cpioman.com

VACANCY
SALES ENGINEER

A manufacturing company in Oman is looking for a **Sales Engineer** with a B.E. in Mechanical Engineering and 3–5 years of industrial sales experience. The role includes preparing quotations and sales orders, following up on purchase orders, coordinating with planning and operations teams, managing customer relationships, and supporting sales across multiple countries. ERP experience, a valid Oman driving licence, and willingness to travel internationally frequently are essential. Experience in composites, piping, or the oil and gas industry is an advantage.

Interested candidates may send their CV to
E-mail: sales@cpioman.com

JOB WANTED

FINANCE
Chartered Accountant, 23 years' experience as Finance Head & Auditing firm in Oman. Well versed with Banking, IFRS and taxation, Banking & E-invoicing (basics) seeks suitable position.
Contact : 94274470

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ENGINEER
SENIOR CIVIL ENGINEER
with 21+ yrs experience in building construction, FM, civil maintenance, QS, site execution, project coordination and documentation. Seeking a suitable position in Oman.
94194399 Ahmadoman015@gmai.com

FINANCE
Indian male, MBA (Finance), with +9 years of experience in Accounting & Finance, seeking a position as an Audit Associate. NOC available. Valid driving license.
CONTACT : 72420067, 95272057

FINANCE
FINANCE MANAGER/ Chief Accountant
17+ years' Oman experience (Logistics, hospitality, manufacturing, contracting, trading). OACPA Consultant. Expert in IFRS, VAT, corporate tax, banking facilities & project costing.
WA:79788708 | neilks2020@gmail.com

ENGINEER
PMP-certified Construction Project Manager with 10+yrs Oman experience. M.E., Construction Eng. & Mgmt., and skilled in project execution, coordination, & team leadership. Immediately available.
Contact : 91736863

TEACHER
Lady teacher, Assistant professor MBA, B.Ed, Ph.D. (Management studies) pursuing 2nd yrs, with 16 yrs' experience, seeks teaching position in Oman. Immediate joining.
Email: mohammediyasmeen5@gmail.com
Contact: +968 77866559

MANAGER
PROJECT MANAGER/ PROJECT DIRECTOR
seeking senior management/ leadership position in major civil engineering projects. Experienced, available & ready to lead.
94108621 princejacub@gmail.com



QS MANAGER
Senior QS, B. Sc in Civil, 15+ yrs of Oman experience, Pre & Post Tendering, Contracts Management, FIDIC, Value Engg, Cost Control & Budgeting. Available in Oman for immediate joining. Email: qsprofessionalsk@gmail.com
WA/Call: +968 91117043

JOB WANTED

ACCOUNTS/FINANCE

Indian female MCom qualified, 10 yrs of experience in home country seeking job. Tally ERP, busy, Manager.io Contact : 95473637

Indian male B.com Accountant looking for suitable job. 13 yrs experience in Oman. D/L & NOC available. Contact : 90302933.

CA Inter qualified lady (keralite) with 3+ yrs of experience in accounting, financial reporting, bookkeeping Based in Oman on a family visa seeking fulltime or part-time roles. Contact : 91281006, 78536919

ACCOUNTS/FINANCE

Indian male, well experienced in accounts including finalization and audit seek suitable positions, can join immediately. Contact : 92824146, 94953826

Senior Accountant cum procurement (FMCB, construction), finance job required with D/L & NOC MBA-finance, 8+yrs experience in accounts, finance, admin (finalization, audit, MIS, banking, cash flow, VAT, payroll, etc). Contact: 94822604

Looking for job in Accounts with D/L Contact: 92092486.

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

ADMINISTRATION

Indian female, MSc Industrial Psychology graduate with 1 yr HR experience, seeking HR, Administration, Sales or Marketing roles. Excellent communication, coordination & people management skills. Contact : 99680529, Email: evapraisy@gmail.com

Indian male graduate with 20 yrs experience seeks job for executive secretary, admin or any other suitable post. Presently available in Muscat. Contact : 91410074.

ENGINEER

MEP, HVAC Eng: 4+yrs Oman experience with valid D/L is available. Contact : +968-75020107

Industrial & Quality Engineer, Masters in industrial engineering with 6+ yrs experience in manufacturing with a valid USA D/L. Contact: +96871753405 Email: abhinavchalla95@gmail.com

ENGINEER

B.E. Mechanical engineer with 6+yrs experience seeks job. Contact : 75270710, Email: jinsonrijo@gmail.com

MANAGER

Project Manager with 24 yrs Gulf experience, including 12 years in Oman extensive expertise in MEP project management, project execution, electrical and mechanical installation, testing & commissioning, team leadership, and project coordination. Contact: 76925100

MISCELLANEOUS

Male looking job for elecrtician & building maintenance with D/L. Contact : 97315461

MISCELLANEOUS

Indian male MBA, 4.4 yrs of experience in various sectors as a project coordinator, including inbound and outbound sectors. Willing to take on new challenges in a highly proactive manner. NOC and D/L available. Contact : 95921804. Email: vivithkumarr13@gmail.com

PURCHASE/ PROCUREMENT

Indian procurement engineer (35)- 10 yrs Oman oil and gas exp, SAP, PDO vendors, valid Oman license, available for immediate joining. Contact: +96894002909.

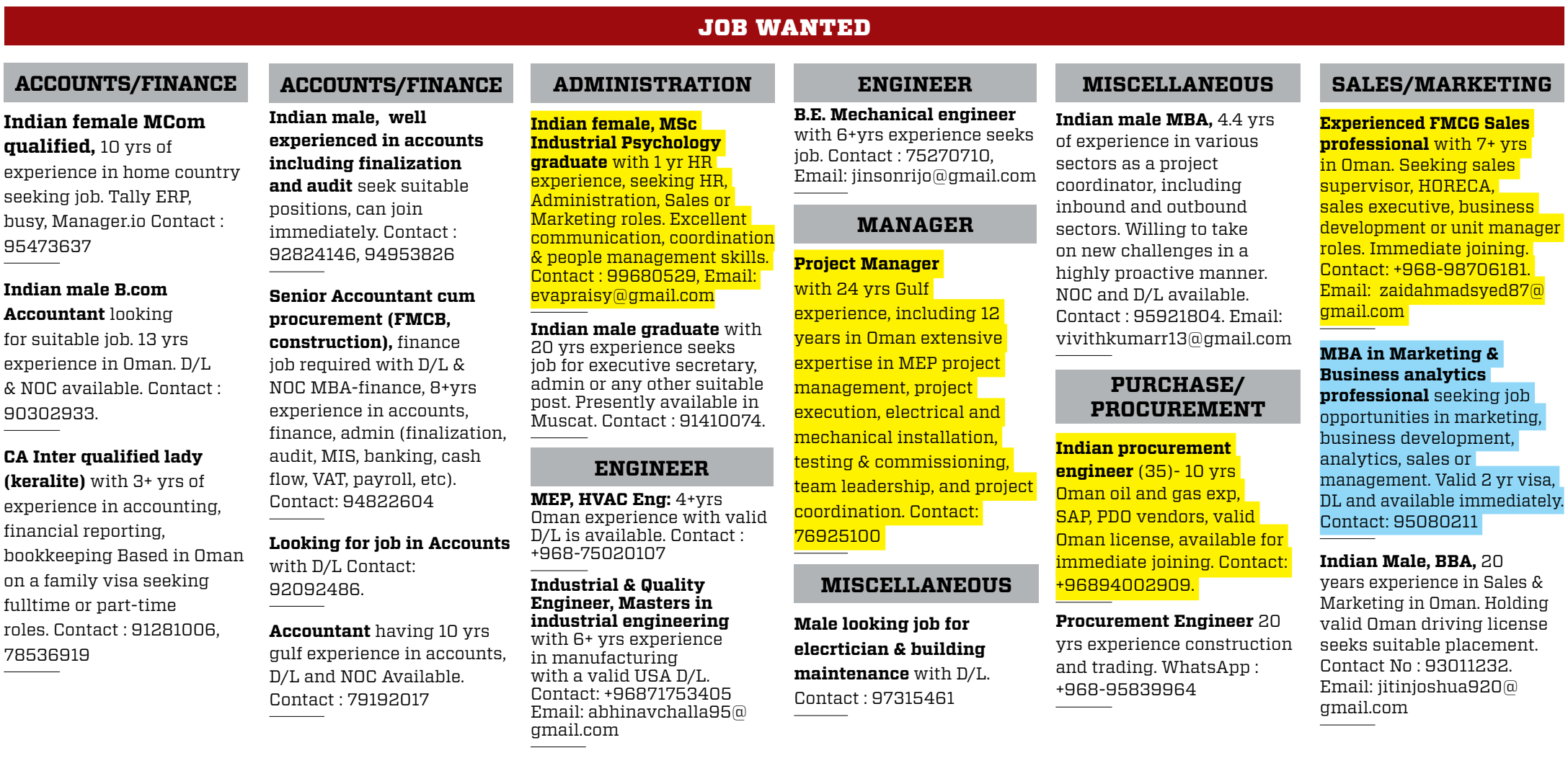
Procurement Engineer 20 yrs experience construction and trading. WhatsApp : +968-95839964

SALES/MARKETING

Experienced FMCG Sales professional with 7+ yrs in Oman. Seeking sales supervisor, HORECA, sales executive, business development or unit manager roles. Immediate joining. Contact: +968-98706181. Email: zaidahmadsyed87@gmail.com

MBA in Marketing & Business analytics professional seeking job opportunities in marketing, business development, analytics, sales or management. Valid 2 yr visa, DL and available immediately. Contact: 95080211

Indian Male, BBA, 20 years experience in Sales & Marketing in Oman. Holding valid Oman driving license seeks suitable placement. Contact No : 93011232. Email: jitinjoshua920@gmail.com



WORLD

BRICS New Delhi Declaration calls for 'maximum restraint' in Middle East

"We urge to ensure the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations in their entirety and interconnectedness, including respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the States"



NEW DELHI: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday announced the unanimous adoption of the New Delhi Declaration 2026 at the 18th BRICS Summit being held in the national capital.

The declaration expressed deep concern over the continued escalation of tensions in West Asia and called for exercising maximum restraint, as well as avoiding actions that could further aggravate the situation.

"We urge to ensure the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations in their entirety and interconnectedness, including respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the States. We encourage increasing efforts, through dialogue and diplomacy, towards a long-term understanding that will contribute to lasting peace, security and stability in the region. We stress the need to work together to maintain smooth flow of global trade, supply chains and energy, in accordance with applicable international law, " the declaration read.

"We express serious concern over deliberate attacks on civilian infrastructure and peaceful nuclear facilities under full safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), in violation of international law and relevant resolutions of the IAEA. Nuclear safeguards, safety, and security must always be upheld, including in armed conflicts, to protect people and the environment from harm," the resolution added.

The BRICS bloc also called for the implementation of the relevant UNGA and UNSC Resolutions and urge all parties to ensure the maintenance of ceasefire and full and unhindered humanitarian access in the Gaza Strip.

"We express deep concern on the continued violence in Gaza despite the ceasefire agreement of October 2025. We call for halting any policies aimed at forced displacement of Palestinians from Gaza Strip and express concern regarding arrangements that may prejudice the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and legitimise or prolong occupation. We reaffirm that a just and lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict can only be achieved by peaceful means and depends on the fulfilment of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, including the rights to self-determination and return.

The joint declaration noted the current global context of polarisation and distrust and encouraged global action to strengthen international peace and security.

"We call on the international community to respond to these challenges and associated security threats through politico-diplomatic measures to lower conflict potential and stress the need to engage in conflict prevention efforts, including through addressing their root causes. We underscore that security among all countries is indivisible and reiterate our commitment to the peaceful resolution of international disputes through dialogue, consultation and diplomacy. We encourage the active role of regional organisations in conflict prevention and resolution and support all efforts conducive to the peaceful settlement of crises," the declaration read.

Avenues for cooperation

"We agree to explore avenues for cooperation on the prevention of armed conflicts, UN peacekeeping missions, African Union peace support operations, and mediation and peace processes. We express concern about ongoing conflicts in many parts of the world and the current state of polarisation and fragmentation in the international order. We express alarm at the current trend that has seen a critical increase in global military spending, to the detriment of the provision of adequate financing for development to developing countries. We advocate for a multilateral approach that respects diverse national viewpoints and positions on crucial global issues, including sustainable development, the eradication of hunger and poverty and contributing to the global response to climate change, while expressing deep concern over attempts to link security with the climate change agenda," it added.

The joint BRICS nations declaration also expressed concern about the growing risks of nuclear danger and conflict. It reiterated the need for invigorating the system of disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation and for preserving its integrity and effectiveness to achieve global stability and international peace and security.

"We stress the significant contribution of nuclear-weapon-free zones to the strengthening of the nuclear non-proliferation regime, reaffirm our support for and respect towards all existing nuclear-weapons free-zones and their associated assurances against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, and acknowledge the paramount importance of the efforts aiming at accelerating the implementation of the resolutions on the Establishment of a Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and other Weapons of Mass Destruction in the Middle East, including the Conference convened pursuant to UN General Assembly Decision 73/546," the declaration read.

The declaration said that building on two decades of BRICS, the nations further commit themselves to strengthening cooperation in the expanded BRICS under the three pillars of political and security, economic and financial, cultural and people-to-people cooperation, and to enhancing strategic partnership for the benefit of people through the promotion of peace, a more representative, fairer international order, a reinvigorated and reformed multilateral system, sustainable development and inclusive growth.

The declaration also commended the significant progress achieved under India's BRICS Chairship in 2026, under the theme "Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability", which the declaration said reflected the shared commitment to strengthening BRICS cooperation in addressing common challenges with a balanced, practical, actionable, inclusive, development-oriented and people-centered approach. – ANI

ON SIDELINES OF BRICS SUMMIT



Indian PM holds bilateral meet with Chinese President

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi met Chinese President Xi Jinping on Saturday on the sidelines of the BRICS Summit in New Delhi. This is the first visit by the Chinese President in 7 years and follows a thaw in Sino-Indian relations after tensions escalated following the Galwan standoff.

Earlier, the BRICS nations unanimously adopted the New Delhi Declaration 2026. The declaration expressed deep concern over the continued escalation of tensions in West Asia and called for exercising maximum restraint, as well as avoiding actions that could further aggravate the situation.

"We urge to ensure the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations in their entirety and interconnectedness, including respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the States. We encourage increasing efforts, through dialogue and diplomacy, towards a long-term understanding that will contribute to lasting peace, security and stability in the region. We stress the need to work together to maintain smooth flow of global trade, supply chains and energy, in accordance with applicable international law, " the declaration read.

"We express serious concern over deliberate attacks on civilian infrastructure and peaceful nuclear facilities under full safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), in violation of international law and relevant resolutions of the IAEA. Nuclear safeguards, safety, and security must always be upheld, including in armed conflicts, to protect people and the environment from harm," the resolution added. – ANI

WEEKEND TRIP

US President Trump visits Ireland, says unification would be 'fantastic'



DUBLIN: US President Donald Trump has said he would "love" to see the Republic of Ireland, an EU member, unite with British-run Northern Ireland as he faced reporters' questions on a range of issues on Saturday.

Trump is taking the weekend trip largely to watch the Irish Open golf tournament held on a course he owns on the country's Atlantic coast, but he met as well with the Irish president and prime minister.

The US leader also spoke optimistically about his country's war with Iran and its trade conflict with Canada, among several other topics.

What did Trump say about Ireland?

After a meeting with Irish Prime Minister Micheal Martin in the capital, Dublin, Trump said he very much supported what he said would be the eventual unification of the two parts of the island of Ireland.

"Well, I don't want to cause any problems, but I will tell you, I'd love to see it unified," Trump told reporters.

"The way I look at it, it's going to happen eventually ... I think it would be a fantastic thing," he added.

"Now the UK will have something to say about it ... but I think it would be a great thing."

The British government responded swiftly to the remarks, with Prime Minister Andy Burham's office saying that in his view, there was no majority public support for a referendum on the issue and that there would not be another one until that changed.

Previous US presidents have avoided touching on the subject in view of the delicate nature of the issue, with Northern Ireland seeing decades of of deadly sectarian violence in the 20th century over the question of whom it should belong to.

What did Trump say about the Iran war?

Trump also said that the US war with Iran, which began on February 28, would "end very soon" — a view he has frequently expressed in the past, but which has not yet materialised.

He also said that the end of the conflict would mean that the price of oil, which has soared as a result of the war, would "come tumbling down."

However, he vehemently defended his decision to mount the military operation against Iran.

He said that the US attacked because "Iran cannot have a nuclear weapon", adding: "They were two weeks away from having a nuclear weapon."

"If they had it, they would have blown up Israel, they would have blown up the Middle East, and they would have hit some [...] in my opinion, [of] Europe's cities and beyond cities, and they would probably hit us soon before we put out the fire. But they cannot have a nuclear weapon."

The war with Iran is not supported by a majority of the US population, particularly in view of promises made by Trump on the campaign trail to keep his country out of foreign "forever" conflicts.

What did Trump say about Canada?

The president sounded a similarly optimistic note regarding the US trade war with Canada.

He said Canada was keen to make a deal and that one could be struck "fairly soon," while reiterating his claims that Canada had treated US farmers unfairly with its tariffs.

"Canada wants to make a deal very badly," he said.

"Canada has to treat our farmers better. They can't charge our farmers tariffs," he said, adding: "You'll probably see a deal with Canada fairly soon." – DW

2026 BRICS SUMMIT

Putin warns Europe against sending troops to Ukraine



NEW DELHI: Amid the ongoing conflict with Ukraine, Russian President Vladimir Putin warned European nations against sending troops to Kyiv, clarifying that the nation does not threaten European countries.

Speaking to reporters in New Delhi on the sidelines of the 2026 BRICS Summit, Putin affirmed that sending troops to Ukraine will mean "war with Russia."

He said, "There is no such threat, and there has never been. We are not threatening European countries, nor are we going to threaten them. Why would we? No one seems to even consider that we have no grounds for any conflict with Europe."

All issues were settled as a result of the Second World War. And what happened later, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, was done with the consent of the Russian Federation as the successor of the Soviet Union."

Everything that runs counter to those arrangements runs counter to our interests and does not comply with the fundamental principles of international law and the UN Charter."

"Now they are talking about how they are thinking about bringing troops to the territory of Ukraine. This means war with Russia," the Russian President added.

BRICS Summit

Putin is in India to attend the 18th BRICS Summit. On Friday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi held talks with Vladimir Putin in New Delhi ahead of the formal opening of the summit and discussed closer trade ties, including implementation of the Programme for Economic Cooperation 2030, as well as cooperation in infrastructure, energy, technology, defence and culture.

The meeting took place on the sidelines of the BRICS Summit and was the second meeting between the two leaders in less than two weeks following the meeting at the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Summit in Bishkek on August 31. – ANI

Salalah hosts fifth critical infrastructure security and safety symposium with 350 participants and 36 expert papers



Governor of Dhofar attended closing ceremony as three-day event brought together local, regional and international experts









SALALAH: The fifth edition of the Critical Infrastructure Security and Safety Symposium, held alongside the inaugural Security and Safety Exhibition, concluded in Salalah on September 9, marking another significant milestone in Oman's efforts to strengthen the protection, resilience and preparedness of critical infrastructure.

Held from September 7 to 9 at the Sultan Qaboos Cultural and Entertainment Centre in Salalah, the three-day event brought together around 350 participants from Oman, the GCC, the wider Arab world and the international community, with 36 specialised papers presented by experts and professionals in security, safety, risk management, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity and critical infrastructure protection.

The closing ceremony was held under the patronage of His Highness Sayyid Marwan bin Turki Al Said, Governor of Dhofar, and was attended by Brigadier General (Ret.) Saeed bin Sulaiman Al Asimi, Chief Executive Officer of the Security and Safety Services Foundation, as well as Sheikh Naif bin Hamad bin Amer Fadhil, Chairman of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry – Dhofar Branch, alongside senior officials, specialists, representatives of government and private-sector organisations, and leading companies in the security and safety sector.

Growing platform for critical infrastructure protection

The fifth edition reinforced the symposium's position as a specialised platform for bringing together decision-makers, experts, practitioners and technology providers to address the evolving challenges facing critical infrastructure.

The discussions highlighted the changing nature of security threats and the need to move beyond traditional reactive approaches towards preventive, intelligence-led and technology-enabled security systems.

Opening the event, Brigadier General (Ret.) Saeed Al Asimi stressed that security is no longer limited to conventional protective measures, but has become an institutional responsibility and a strategic investment in protecting national assets, supporting economic activity and strengthening resilience.

He highlighted the growing importance of preventive security, data-driven risk assessment, advanced technology, continuous training and early detection in protecting critical infrastructure and ensuring operational continuity.

36 papers covering emerging security and safety challenges

A major achievement of this year's symposium was the presentation of 36 specialised papers, providing a broad platform for the exchange of knowledge and international best practices.

The papers covered a wide range of issues, including critical infrastructure security strategies, industrial security engineering, workforce management, risk assessment, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, occupational health and safety, psychological safety, emergency preparedness, disaster management, information security and document protection.

The first day featured nine papers addressing critical infrastructure security strategies, international development perspectives, workforce management and smart accident prediction.

The second day included 12 papers focusing on the human factor in security, critical infrastructure protection, international laws and regulations governing critical facilities, risk assessment, artificial intelligence and cybersecurity.

The final day featured 15 papers addressing psychological safety in the workplace, the "Ain Oman" artificial intelligence platform, strategies for dealing with natural disasters, information security and document protection.

The diversity of speakers and topics underscored the symposium's increasingly international character and its role in connecting Omani expertise with GCC, Arab and global experience.

First Security and Safety Exhibition adds a technology and business dimension

Running alongside the symposium, the first Security and Safety Exhibition provided a dedicated platform for companies and institutions to showcase the latest technologies and solutions designed to strengthen security, safety and risk management.

The exhibition featured innovative solutions in smart surveillance, artificial intelligence, data analysis, integrated security systems and other emerging technologies, giving participants an opportunity to explore practical tools for improving prevention, preparedness and emergency response.

The participation of international technology companies added an important global dimension to the exhibition.

Among the prominent exhibitors were Hikvision Oman, headed by General Manager Oliver Wang, and Oriental Security Technology SPC, headed by General Manager Shao Wei.

Their participation highlighted the growing role of advanced technology and artificial intelligence in transforming security and safety operations, while creating opportunities for knowledge exchange, technology partnerships and potential investment.

B2B platform opens new opportunities for partnerships

One of the exhibition's key features was its Business-to-Business (B2B) platform, which facilitated direct meetings between companies, government entities and organisations involved in security, safety and related services.

The platform helped create opportunities for commercial cooperation and strategic partnerships, with several agreements and memoranda of understanding signed during the event.

Among the agreements were arrangements involving Al Sharqiya Aviation, DER A LLC and the Security and Safety Services Foundation, focusing on the integration of helicopter services into security and safety operations. Cooperation was also established in relation to aerial support services for the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning.

The agreements demonstrated the event's ability to move beyond knowledge exchange and translate professional networking into practical cooperation and business opportunities.

AI and cybersecurity at the heart of future security

Artificial intelligence and cybersecurity emerged as two of the most important themes throughout the symposium.

Participants examined the potential of AI to transform critical infrastructure protection through smart surveillance, predictive analytics, anomaly detection, automated response and early identification of potential threats.

The discussions also highlighted the need to strengthen cybersecurity for operational technology, industrial control systems and sensitive information, particularly as critical infrastructure becomes increasingly connected and digitally dependent.

A key recommendation was the establishment of a Regional Centre for AI Safety in Oman, which would provide a specialised platform for research, standards development, capacity building and the responsible application of artificial intelligence in security and safety.

Recommendations focus on resilience and long-term preparedness

The symposium concluded with a comprehensive set of recommendations aimed at strengthening critical infrastructure security and safety at national and regional levels.

Key recommendations included developing advanced AI-powered early-warning and risk-monitoring systems, enhancing cybersecurity capabilities, establishing specialised cyber incident response teams, strengthening occupational health and safety programmes, and improving psychological support for personnel working in critical environments.

The recommendations also called for stronger protection of official documents and sensitive information, improved business continuity and disaster recovery planning, enhanced cooperation between government, security, civil and technology sectors, and greater investment in research, innovation and specialised training.

Participants further emphasised the importance of updating legislation and national policies governing critical infrastructure protection and developing common standards for security, safety, inspection and accountability.

Dhofar strengthens its position as a destination for specialised events

The successful conclusion of the fifth edition further strengthened Dhofar's profile as a destination for specialised professional and strategic events.

With its combination of an international symposium, specialised exhibition and B2B business platform, the event created opportunities not only for knowledge exchange but also for investment, commercial cooperation and professional networking.

The participation of 350 professionals and the presentation of 36 papers demonstrated the growing scale and reach of the symposium, while the presence of international technology companies reinforced Salalah's ability to connect local stakeholders with global expertise and solutions.

A platform for the future

The fifth Critical Infrastructure Security and Safety Symposium concluded with a clear message: protecting critical infrastructure requires a shift towards prevention, resilience, innovation and continuous preparedness.

As threats become increasingly complex — ranging from cyberattacks and technological vulnerabilities to industrial incidents and natural disasters — effective protection requires closer cooperation between government institutions, the private sector, technology companies, researchers and specialised professionals.

With five editions now completed, the symposium has established itself as a valuable platform for dialogue and knowledge exchange across Oman, the GCC, the Arab world and the international community.

The outcomes of this year's event are expected to contribute to strengthening security and safety practices, supporting innovation and digital transformation, and enhancing the resilience of critical infrastructure in Oman.

SPORTS

Mastantuono breaks Messi's record with Fiorentina hat-trick in Serie A







At 19 years, 28 days, he became the youngest Argentine player to score a treble in Europe's top five leagues

MILAN: On-loan Real Madrid winger Franco Mastantuono eclipsed Lionel Messi as the youngest Argentine player to score a hat-trick in Europe's top five leagues after scoring three times in Fiorentina's 4-2 victory at Venezia on Friday.

At 19 years, 28 days, Mastantuono is 231 days younger than Messi was when he scored the first hat-trick of his Barcelona career against Real Madrid on March 10, 2007.

Mastantuono's goals on Friday were his first for Fiorentina since joining from Madrid on a season-long loan last month and gave the Italian side its first points of the season.

With the hat-trick, the Argentina international matched the goal tally he managed in 35 appearances for the Spanish giants last season.

Venezia, who had also lost their first three Serie A games drew first blood when Akor Adams scored in the 22nd minute with a nice right-foot finish after good leadup work from American midfielder Gianluca Busio.

However, Mastantuono scored twice in one minute, 38 seconds on the half-hour mark to give Fiorentina a halftime lead. In doing so, he became the youngest Fiorentina player to score multiple goals in a single game.

Mateo Pellegrino made it 3-1 midway through the second with his second goal in two games and Mastantuono got his hat trick six minutes from time.

Antoine Hainaut scored a late second for Venezia but the defeat left it pointless and at the bottom of the 20-team table. Fiorentina moved into 15th.

Mastantuono emerged as a star at River Plate, making his senior club debut aged 16, and becoming the youngest player to play for Argentina's national team in June 2025. He was one of the most sought-after young talents in world football when he signed for Madrid -- beating Paris Saint-Germain to his signature -- from River in June 2025, on a six-year deal.

However, he found life difficult in Spain last season, struggling to make an impact at the Bernabéu, and was left out of Argentina's squad for the World Cup.

Elsewhere, Rennes and Sevilla maintained their promising starts in Ligue 1 and La Liga respectively, and Schalke beat Union Berlin 3-1 in a Bundesliga match where the referee was replaced on Friday.

Schalke went home happiest thanks in part to a fine goalkeeping display from player of the match Loris Karius.

Robin Gosens opened the scoring for Schalke with an angled volley and Aouchiche doubled their lead moments after the break with a superbly taken strike.

Karius held Berlin at bay for much of the second period and though he could not stop Tim Skarke from scoring in the sixth minute of added time, Maximilian Wober restored Schalke's two-goal lead with almost the last kick of the game.

The match was notable for the substitution of referee Timo Gerach early in the second half. Gerach complained of a sore calf and was replaced by fourth official Jarno Wienefeld, an experienced Bundesliga 2 referee who took charge of his first top tier game.

Valencia lose again

Sevilla moved into joint second in La Liga with a late 1-0 win over struggling Valencia.

A poor game produced few real chances but the home side finally broke the deadlock with nine minutes remaining. Giorgi Kochorashvili's deep cross from the left was met by Juan Antonio Iglesias, whose header looped in over the keeper.

Valencia, who didn't put a shot on target, were bottom of the table with one point from a possible 15.

Rennes win third in a row

Rennes went to the top of Ligue 1 after beating Marseille 1-0.

Recent signing from Lens Adrien Thomasson got his first goal for the club six minutes into the second half to guarantee a third win on the bounce for the Breton side.

Marseille are suffering their worst start to the league in more than 20 years. The latest defeat was their third in a row and they sit in 11th place with three points.

Rennes rose to one point above Monaco. - Agencies

HEAD COACH



Kartal still Fenerbahce boss despite resigning

ISTANBUL: Ismail Kartal remains head coach of Fenerbahce, despite saying he had resigned following Thursday's Champions League tie with Roma.

Minutes after the 1-1 home draw, the 65-year-old said he planned never to return to the club he previously served as a player and assistant coach. But Fenerbahce president Aziz Yildirim later said in a statement on the Turkish club's website, external he had not accepted Kartal's resignation. The club, who face Gaziantep FK in a Turkish Super Lig game on Monday, also confirmed he was still in charge in a statement on Friday.

The statement read: "Our team will continue its preparations for the Gaziantep FK match with the training session to be held tomorrow (Saturday) at 11:30 under the direction of our technical director Ismail Kartal."

Kartal took over for a fourth spell as head coach in June as the club returned to the Champions League for the first time in 18 years.

Before Monday's game, his side are ninth in the Super Lig with six points from four games and their next Champions League group-phase tie is at Aston Villa on 14 October. Yildirim confirmed in his earlier statement he spoke to Kartal following the news conference, with the coach citing "pressure" of the role and a mid-match incident where he was struck by a bottle thrown from the stands as factors in his decision. In a post on social media, the club said a spectator involved in the bottle incident had been identified and banned from the stadium. "You can't show support by throwing punches at him like this," added Yildirim.

"Ismail Kartal doesn't need to say he'll continue. I am his senior. I said he'll continue, and that's it. We're a family." Kartal made more than 250 appearances for Fenerbahce during his playing career. - Agencies

SPANISH GIANTS

Mourinho: Jeered Real Madrid duo are just 'fruit-bearing trees'



MADRID: Real Madrid boss Jose Mourinho has compared Kylian Mbappe and Vinicius Jr to fruit trees in defending the pair after they were booed by their own fans this week.

Mbappe moved joint-fifth in the list of all-time Champions League scorers when he netted the opener in a 2-1 victory against Inter Milan on Tuesday.

But both the Frenchman and Brazilian Vinicius Jr were subjected to jeers from the home support at the Bernabeu.

Both players have been criticised for their lack of defensive work but Mourinho says the criticism is because people "want to get a piece" of the duo.

"In Portuguese, we have a proverb that says we only throw stones at the trees that have fruit," Mourinho said when asked about winger Vinicius Jr.

"So what Vini has done here over recent years - how many CL has he won, how many goals has he scored, how many balls has he won? His achievements speak for themselves so he is the tree that has a lot of fruit on it and people want to get a piece of Vini.

"During this digital era where we have access to so many stats, we can tell that he is very close to getting to his best version. He's even set some records already. The stats and numbers he registers suggest we will see his best version very soon."

Mourinho provided a similar defence of Frenchman Mbappe, who is among the nominees for this year's Ballon d'Or after scoring 42 goals in 44 games for his club last season.

"I want to remind you of the proverb I said before. He is the tree with a lot of fruit," Mourinho added. "Obviously a player who scores more than 40 goals for a team is never a problem.

"I saw Kylian giving it his all. He was defending like an animal, even when he had nothing left. His attitude is incredible. It is a joy for me to see a player like that."

Despite Mbappe's goals, Real Madrid did not win a trophy last year. - Agencies

Dictator meme shows lack of human awareness: Mbappe



Kylian Mbappe has criticised a viral meme which superimposes his face on the body of a dictator, saying it shows "a lack of political and human awareness".

The Real Madrid and France forward, 27, said he understood there was a "funny side" to the AI-generated meme, but that it downplayed serious issues. It is seemingly used by some fans on social media to reflect the way Mbappe dominates matches, while others have suggested it refers to his influence at clubs.

Speaking in an interview with *France Football,* Mbappe said: "There's a funny side to it because you can sense that, for some people, it's good natured.

"Then there's a side that's a bit less funny, because we know the damage people like that have caused throughout history. "Being compared to people who murder others, or who have made millions upon millions of people miserable... I don't think I've done that in my life.

"On one hand, I know it's done lightheartedly and doesn't go that far, but it sometimes reveals a lack of political and human awareness among people."

Mbappe also referenced the "Mobut" nickname he was called by France team-mate Ousmane Dembele during the 2026 World Cup.

That nickname comes from Mobutu Sese Seko, the dictator who ruled the Democratic Republic of Congo - formerly Zaire - for three decades.

"Ousmane, that's a different thing. He took that from social media. He's just having a laugh," Mbappe said. - Agencies

MONTSERRAT AND MALDIVES

FIFA bans for life two top officials for financial wrongdoing

GENEVA: FIFA judges imposed life bans on two former football federation presidents for financial misconduct, including one who stayed in office since being sanctioned in 2011 as part of a notorious election bribery scandal in the Caribbean.

Montserrat's long-time football leader Vincent Cassell was charged with "abuse of position, systemic conflicts of interest" and misuse of FIFA and federation funds, FIFA said in a statement on Friday. The former president of the Maldives football federation, Bassam Adeel Jaleel, was expelled from the sport for "misusing FIFA Covid-19 Relief Plan funds for his personal benefit," FIFA said. During the pandemic in 2020 FIFA said it would make up to $1.5 billion available in grants and loans.

Maldives media reported this year that Jaleel was sentenced to 23 years in prison for embezzling $1.2 million from FIFA. The money was intended for local football



clubs and was reportedly used to buy apartments.

Cassell and his federation's long-time general secretary, Tandica Hughes, pleaded guilty in a Montserrat court in April to tax evasion charges.

Both men also were prosecuted in 2011 by FIFA's then-ethics committee in connection with Caribbean football officials taking $40,000 cash payments linked to Mohamed bin Hammam of Qatar during his failed campaign to challenge Sepp Blatter for the FIFA presidency.

Hughes was banned by FIFA judges for 15 years for "benefiting from and facilitating improper transactions," abuse of position and misuse of funds.

Cassell also faced FIFA charges of "conduct affecting the physical and mental integrity of (federation) staff members," and was fined 1 million Swiss francs ($1.23 million). It is unclear what authority FIFA has to get the money.

Hughes was ordered to pay 150,000 Swiss francs ($184,000), FIFA said.

Jaleel from the Maldives also was ordered by FIFA to pay 1 million Swiss francs. His verdict was announced more than two years after he was provisionally suspended from football by FIFA.

Both Cassell and Jaleel, who was elected like Infantino in 2016, were presidents of their federations the next year during the FIFA congress in Bahrain. - Agencies

ROUND-UP

Shelton sets up title showdown with Zverev in US Open final

Shelton won against Frances Tiafoe in an all-American semi-final while Germany's No.1 seed Zverev defeated Russian Karen Khachanov in the other semi-final





NEW YORK: Ben Shelton powered his way into the US Open final with an impressive four-set win over Frances Tiafoe in an epic all-American semi-final on Friday.

Both players were bidding to reach their first Grand Slam final and put on a show for a raucous crowd on Arthur Ashe Stadium, with eighth seed Shelton coming from a set down to win 4-6, 6-3, 6-3, 7-5.

Neither American was overawed by the occasion and they lived up to their reputations as dazzling shot-makers, but after three hours and 17 minutes, Shelton won through.

The 23-year-old will face Germany's No.1 seed Alexander Zverev in Sunday's showpiece after the top seed beat unseeded Russian Karen Khachanov 6-3, 7-6 (9-7), 7-6 (8-6) to reach a third consecutive Grand Slam final and continue his bid for a second major of the year.

Shelton becomes the first black American male player to reach the US Open singles final since Arthur Ashe in 1972, and the first black male player to reach a Grand Slam singles final since Jo-Wilfried Tsonga was beaten in the 2008 Australian Open final. He is aiming to become the first American male player to lift the US Open singles title since Andy Roddick in 2003.

Asked about the weight of history on his shoulders before Sunday's showpiece, Shelton said: "It's a lot of emotion. My mum and dad sacrificed a lot for me to be in this position today.

"My dad lost his mum earlier this year. She's the reason he was able to play tennis.

"Without her there's no Ben Shelton standing here today. This one is for her."

Shelton, who is close friends with Tiafoe off the court, said it was extra special to face him at Flushing Meadows.

"Frances is like a big brother to me, every time that we get to take to this court together and play each other is super special," said Shelton, who also paid tribute to those affected by the 9/11 attacks 25 years ago in his on-court interview.

"This is both of our favourite tournament, our favourite court in the world and to be able to light it up in front of you guys [the crowd] is the best feeling there is."

After losing his previous two major semi-finals, Shelton can now look forward to his maiden final and will aim to end a 23-year wait for an American winner in the men's singles of a Grand Slam.

Since Roddick's triumph at Flushing Meadows in 2003 - 11 months after Shelton was born - an American man has only reached a Grand Slam final on six previous occasions, most recently Taylor Fritz two years ago in New York.

To end the drought and emulate Roddick will require another first of Shelton as he has lost all five previous meetings with Zverev, but with the confidence gained from this run and the backing of a partisan crowd, there is a chance to make history.

"I'm going to need you guys on Sunday to bring the energy," Shelton added. "I'm going to leave it all on the court and I hope you guys come and back me. Let's do this for the USA."

Zverev through to third Grand Slam final in a row

Zverev ended his long wait for a Grand Slam title with his French Open triumph in June and the 29-year-old reached the Wimbledon final in July, losing in four sets to world No.1 Jannik Sinner.

With Sinner and defending US Open champion Alcaraz suffering from injuries this year, Zverev has found a consistency that has allowed him to reach all four Grand Slam semi-finals.

He started the tournament slowly, being taken to five sets in his opening two matches, but has not dropped a set since.

Zverev faced brief moments of pressure against world number 50 Khachanov, saving two set points in the third set, but otherwise remained in control.

"After the second round, at about 3am I was sitting with my team in the locker room and we were laughing at how bad I was playing," Zverev said. "That sense of humour helped me. I obviously have improved a bit otherwise I would not be in the US Open final."

Zverev broke Khachanov to go 5-3 up before serving out the opener. Khachanov fought back after going a break down early in the second set and forced a tie-break, saving set point with a magnificent backhand to polish off a 22-shot rally.

In a pivotal point of the match, Zverev took the initiative to earn another set point, converting it as he outlasted Khachanov in a draining rally with some magnificent defence from the baseline.

Khachanov settled quickest in the third-set tie-break, creating two set points - both of which were saved by Zverev.

From there the top seed never looked back, ultimately clinching victory as Khachanov put a forehand long. Zverev will play in his second US Open final six years after his first - a five-set defeat by Dominic Thiem in 2020.

Sabalenka-Rybakina to meet in women's final

Aryna Sabalenka is going for a third consecutive US Open title. Standing in her way is Elena Rybakina, who is taking over for her as the No.1-ranked women's tennis player in the world.

Sabalenka and Rybakina meet in the final on Saturday, their third time playing for a Grand Slam championship and 18th head-to-head matchup of their careers. It comes with them at the top of their games and the top of the sport after Sabalenka beat Jessica Pegula in straight sets and Rybakina rallied past Coco Gauff in the semi-finals. - Agencies

SOLHEIM CUP GOLF

Europe build 7-5 lead against the US



DEN BOSCH: Team Europe finally took down the record-setting US partnership of Nelly Korda and Allisen Corpuz at the Solheim Cup on Saturday on the way to winning the morning foursomes and building a 7-5 lead after three sessions.

The top-ranked Korda and Corpuz had won their first five matches as a team dating to 2023 — an unprecedented feat in the Solheim Cup — but were beaten, 3 and 2, by Swedish pair Maja Stark and Linn Grant in the lead match at Bernardus Golf in the Netherlands early on Day 2.

It set the tone for a big session by the Europeans, who got another point from Mimi Rhodes and Nastasia Nadaud as they became the first rookie duo to win two matches at a single Solheim Cup.

Then, in a significant late-morning rally, Leona Maguire and Esther Henseleit won two of the final three holes to beat Jennifer Kupcho and Rose Zhang, 1 up, in the final match of the session. It was the only one that went to No. 18.

The only negative on a big morning for Europe was another setback for its star English pairing of Charley Hull and Lottie Woad, who were thrashed 6 and 5 by Alison Lee and Lauren Coughlin in a result that tied the record margin of victory in a Solheim Cup foursomes match.

Hull and Woad, the only European players in the world's top 10, have contributed just a half-point from three outings together so far this week but have been retained as a pair by captain Anna Nordqvist for the afternoon fourballs.

Korda, meanwhile, was rested by US captain Angela Stanford. Coughlin, still unbeaten in the Solheim Cup (5-0-2), will go out again and be the only American to play five matches.

After back-to-back split sessions on Day 1, there was finally separation between the teams, and history suggests that is a big deal. Since 1998, the team that held a lead at the end of the third session has gone on to win 11 of those 13 occasions. The United States, who have an 11-7-1 advantage in a series that dates to 1990, are the defending champions and needs 14 points to retain the crystal trophy. - Agencies

US OPEN WOMEN DOUBLES

Townsend-Siniakova complete career Grand Slam in New York



NEW YORK: Katerina Siniakova and Taylor Townsend won the women's doubles at the US Open on Friday to complete a historic career doubles Grand Slam as a pairing.

The top seeds came from a set down to beat American wildcards Ashlyn Krueger and Robin Montgomery 5-7, 6-0, 6-2 in New York.

Their triumph at Flushing Meadows means they have now won all four Grand Slam titles, adding to their triumphs at Wimbledon in 2024, the Australian Open in 2025 and this year's French Open.

It was Czech player Siniakova's 12th Grand Slam doubles title in total, while she also became the first player to complete the career Slam with two different partners.

The 30-year-old achieved it previously with fellow Czech Barbora Krejcikova.

For American Townsend, who is also 30, victory marks her first US Open doubles title after suffering defeat in the final last year alongside Siniakova to Gabriela Dabrowski and Erin Routliffe.

Townsend said the fact that the final included two black women was a source of 'pride' for her.

"This is a phenomenal time for tennis, for inspiration, for representation. It's just getting started," said Townsend.

Siniakova and Townsend had not dropped a set before the final, but lost the opener when the Czech player double-faulted three times in the final game.

They hit back in the second set, winning 23 of 27 points after the first game to force a decider.

Siniakova and Townsend remained in control from there, consolidating an early break in the third set to go 3-1 up before safely seeing out the rest of the match.

Siniakova is one of only eight women to have won at least 12 Grand Slam doubles titles in the Open era.

Should Siniakova end this season as the world No.1 in doubles, it will mark the sixth time she has achieved the feat, surpassing Martina Navratilova for the most year-end top-ranked finishes in WTA history. - Agencies

IRISH OPEN GOLF



Brilliant Lowry surges clear as McIlroy struggles

DOONBEG: Shane Lowry carded a course-record 62 to take control of the Irish Open as putting woes prevented defending champion Rory McIlroy from making a second-round charge at Doonbeg on Friday.

Irishman Lowry, who won his national title as an amateur in 2009, made six birdies in the space of seven holes on his front nine to surge clear in more favourable conditions after Thursday's heavy wind and rain.

Three more birdies - and a bogey on 13 - followed as the 39-year-old established a three-shot lead over China's Li Haotong and the Danish pair of Jacob Skov Olesen and Niklas Norgaard Moller at Trump International Golf Links in County Clare on the west coast of the Republic of Ireland.

"It was real fun out there. I got off to a nice start and then I just kept going," said Lowry, who is playing his first tournament since failing to make the final two PGA Tour play-off events.

"I felt great out there. Just kept my foot on the gas and tried to keep hitting good shots and keep holing putts and it was a nice day."

The world No.53, who attracted large galleries around the spectacular links course, rolled in a 19-footer for birdie at 15 to return to -11 before finishing with three pars. "I thought about it," Lowry, who has not returned a top-20 finish since February, said when asked if a sub-60 round entered his mind.

"Yeah, I did think about it until I three-putted 13. No, I did have a little laugh. Out in 30 and the back nine is only 34, so, yeah, you do kind of think about it a little bit."

He added: "I know I made a little mistake on 13, but I think I did a good job after that of playing the rest of the round really well and giving myself a couple of chances on the way in."

While Lowry prospered in more benign conditions, his good friend and Ryder Cup team-mate McIlroy failed to climb the leaderboard as he finished the day nine shots back and in a tie for 21st place.

Six-time major winner McIlroy, who is chasing a third Irish Open triumph, was even par for his round before a stunning fairway metal from 267 yards to two feet set up an eagle three at the eighth.

That moment of brilliance failed to ignite McIlroy's challenge, however, as he bogeyed the 11th and missed a series of birdie putts before sinking a 40-footer to pick up a shot at the 17th.

Northern Ireland's McIlroy looked set for a birdie-birdie finish after firing his approach at the final hole to four feet, but he took three putts to drop a shot and card a second consecutive 69.

"I just didn't have it on the greens. I really struggled to read them," said McIlroy.

He added: "It's been a tough one on the greens the last two days. But tee to green I've actually been pretty happy with how everything else is. I just need to try to hole a few more over the weekend."

Li, who finished tied fourth in last year's Open Championship at Royal Portrush, carded seven birdies, an eagle and two bogeys to shoot 63, while Olesen mixed seven birdies with a single bogey in a 64. In the late wave, Norgaard matched his compatriot's 64 with a bogey-free round. - Agencies

ROUND-UP

Season to gather: Alila Jabal Akhdar welcomes pomegranate harvest

Beyond a seasonal offer, it is a way to experience Jabal Akhdar more closely—walking through the orchards, taking part in the harvest and discovering pomegranate through menus inspired by the surrounding landscape





MUSCAT: This September, Alila Jabal Akhdar invites guests to slow down, reconnect and experience the mountain at one of its most generous moments, as pomegranate season brings colour, flavour and a renewed sense of togetherness to Jabal Akhdar.

Why pomegranate season is so special in Jabal Akhdar

Pomegranate season is a short, anticipated moment in the mountain calendar. Oman's Ministry of Heritage and Tourism identifies August and September as the time when visitors can pick Omani pomegranates, while the Al Hajar Mountains offer a milder climate than the lowlands. At Jabal Akhdar, the harvest connects a distinctive mountain landscape with local orchards, seasonal foodways and the community's long-standing relationship with cultivation.

The experience is special because it can be felt rather than simply described: guests walk among the trees, harvest the fruit, taste its sweet-tart freshness and see it transformed by the culinary team. The ruby colour, delicate balance of flavour and limited harvest window make pomegranate a natural expression of place and season. It is also a story of contrast—terraced green orchards and dramatic rock faces, warm Omani hospitality and refreshing mountain air, an ancient agricultural rhythm and a contemporary Alila experience.

A mountain escape shaped by the harvest

Set nearly 2,000 metres above sea level, where the air is approximately 15°C cooler than the lowlands, the resort offers a refreshing September escape, with stays starting from OMR 135++ and 15% back in resort credit. The credit may be enjoyed across the resort's restaurants, Spa Alila and Alila Experiences, allowing guests to shape their stay around the moments that matter most to them.

Beyond a seasonal offer, it is a way to experience Jabal Akhdar more closely—walking through the orchards, taking part in the harvest and discovering pomegranate through menus inspired by the surrounding landscape.

The harvest experience

On 4, 11 and 18 September, guests can take part in a hands-on pomegranate harvesting experience, followed by seasonal canapés, refreshments and a chef-led demonstration. In-house guests may enjoy the harvest experience and canapés with our compliments, while visiting guests may join for OMR 15++ per person.

The flavour of September

Throughout September, the pomegranate story continues at Rose Lounge with a Pomegranate Afternoon Tea, served with signature teas, fresh juices and pomegranate-inspired beverages. The experience brings together sweet and savoury creations, from pomegranate and Brie tartines to Omani shuwa bites and pomegranate mille-feuille.

For a more leisurely gathering, guests can enjoy a pomegranate-inspired four-course lunch or dinner throughout September, priced at OMR 25++ per person. An optional beverage pairing is available at OMR 30++, with alcoholic and non-alcoholic interpretations designed to complement the menu's sweet, tart and savoury notes.

PROMOTION

Towell Auto offers OMR500 trade-in bonus on 212 SUVs



MUSCAT: Towell Auto Group is continuing its attractive trade-in campaign for the 212 Navigator and the 212 Adventurer 4x4 SUVs, giving customers across Oman the opportunity to exchange their existing vehicle and move into a new 212 SUV with an assured OMR 500 trade-in bonus.

The assured bonus is offered over and above the approved trade-in value of the customer's existing vehicle, making it easier to step up to the authentic capability, distinctive design and everyday comfort of the 212.

Under the campaign, the 212 Adventurer is available for OMR 12,999, while the 212 Navigator is available for OMR 14,999. Both prices are inclusive of VAT.

In addition to the assured OMR 500 trade-in bonus, customers can benefit from 3 years/30,000 kms periodic maintenance, complimentary first-year registration and a 5-year/200,000 kms warranty. Applicable terms and conditions apply and the campaign is valid until 15 October 2026.

Born from a legendary military 4x4 heritage dating back to 1961, the 212 represents more than six decades of strength, endurance and off-road engineering. That formidable legacy continues through the 212 Adventurer and 212 Navigator, two distinctive models designed for drivers who expect their vehicle to perform confidently both on the road and beyond it.

Further strengthening its local credentials, the 212 has been tested and certified by the Oman Automobile Association, providing an important Oman-based endorsement of its authentic 4x4 capabilities.

The 212 Adventurer and Navigator are powered by a 2.0-litre turbocharged engine producing 228 hp and 390 Nm of torque. Both models feature an eight-speed automatic transmission and advanced four-wheel-drive capability.

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Front, centre and rear differential locks provide the mechanical confidence required to tackle challenging terrain, while ten selectable drive modes help optimise performance across sand, rocks, mud, mountainous terrain and water crossings.

The Adventurer offers 235 mm of ground clearance, a wading depth of 659 mm and an impressive 80 per cent climbing capability. For those seeking even greater off-road ability, the Navigator provides 252 mm of ground clearance, a wading depth of up to 910 mm and a remarkable 100 per cent climbing capability.

While remaining true to the fundamentals of a thoroughbred 4x4, the 212 complements its purposeful exterior with a refined and technology-rich cabin. Depending on the selected model, occupants can enjoy premium leather-trimmed seating, electrically adjustable front seats, automatic climate control, wireless smartphone charging, Apple CarPlay, Android Auto, a 10.25-inch digital instrument cluster and a 12.3-inch infotainment display. Front-seat heating, ventilation and massage functions further enhance comfort during long journeys and everyday driving.

A 360-degree panoramic camera helps drivers navigate tight urban spaces as well as demanding off-road trails. Electronic Stability Program, Hill Start Assist, Hill Descent Control, tyre-pressure monitoring, parking sensors, an electronic parking brake and ISOFIX child-seat anchors further contribute to driver and passenger confidence.

The Adventurer and Navigator have also undergone more than 1.5 million kilometres of extensive endurance testing, including high-temperature, anti-corrosion and extreme-weather validation programmes, reinforcing the strength and reliability expected from the 212 name.

Both models are available with Service 3 Years / 30,000 kms (whichever is earlier. Service interval 1 Year / 10,000 kms) and Warranty 5yrs / 200,000 kms (whichever is earlier).

The 212 is available at Towell Auto Group's dedicated 212 showroom in Al Hail, Muscat and at Towell Auto Group showrooms in Barka, Sohar, Nizwa, Sur and Salalah.







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