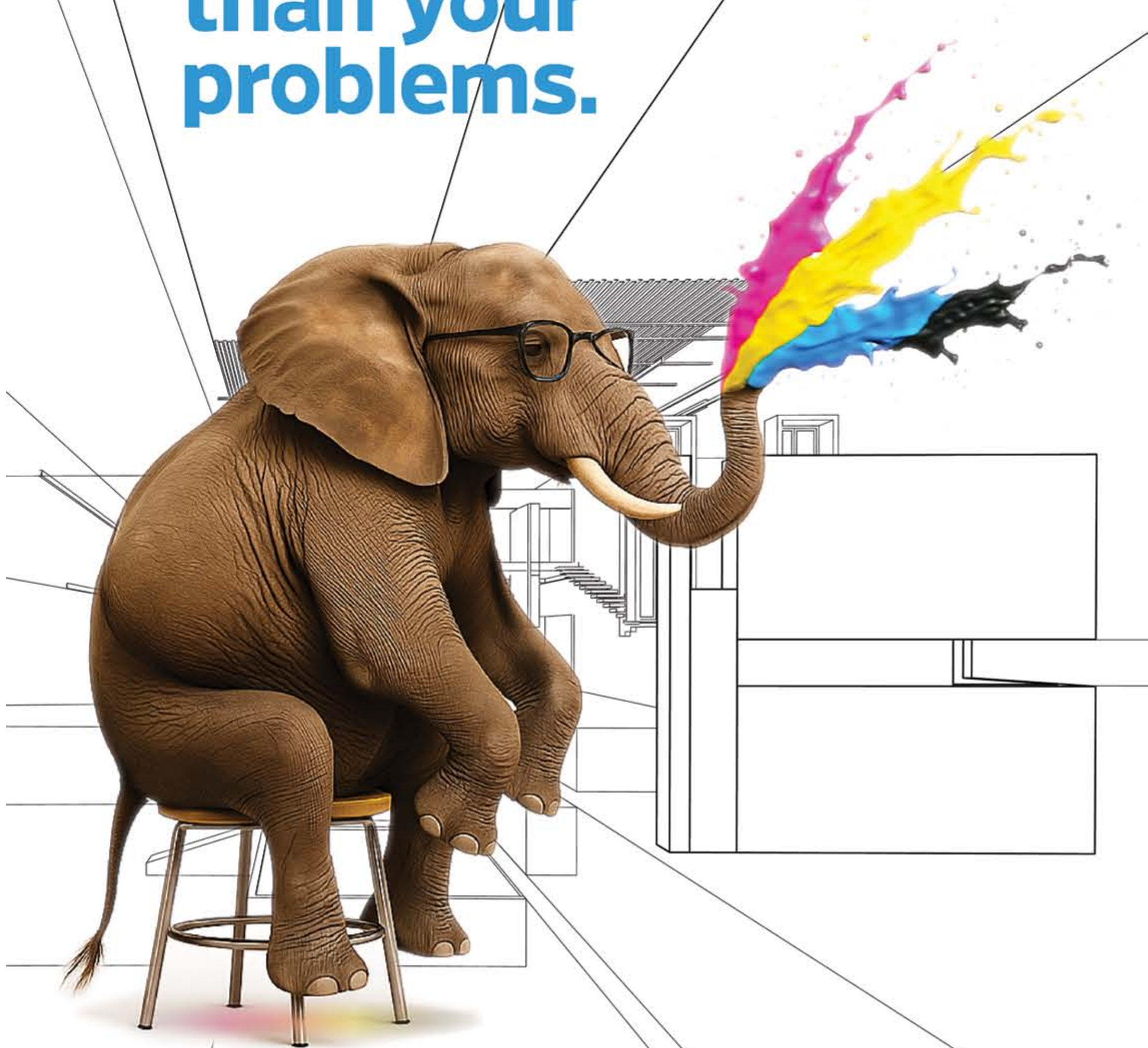


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Projects shortlisted for ‘Falling Walls Lab’ forum announced

The announcement came at the conclusion of the final qualifying round of the competition in its eleventh edition, hosted by the University of Nizwa

MUSCAT: The Research and Innovation Authority yesterday announced the projects shortlisted to represent the Sultanate of Oman in the global finals of the “Falling Walls Lab” Forum, scheduled to take place in Berlin, Germany, from 5 to 9 November 2026.

The announcement came at the conclusion of the final quali-



ifying round of the competition in its eleventh edition, hosted by the University of Nizwa under the patronage of Dr. Saif Abdullah Al Haddabi, Chairman of the Research and Innovation Authority, and in the presence of Professor Dr. Ahmed Khalfan Al Rawahi,

President of the University of Nizwa, with broad participation from researchers and innovators representing various academic and research institutions across the Sultanate of Oman.

Innovator Abdullah Mohammed Al Alawi secured first place for his

project entitled “Breaking the Wall of Inequality in Medical Education Opportunities,” while innovator Rayan Salim Al Sarmi achieved second place for her project “Breaking the Wall of Chemotherapy-Induced Hair Loss in Cancer Patients.” Innovator Ali Ahmed Al



Zadjali was awarded third place for his project “Breaking the Barrier of Circular Asphalt.”

The final stage featured 20 innovators and researchers who had qualified from among 158 participants in this year’s edition. Each participant delivered a three-minute presentation before

a specialized judging panel comprising a select group of experts, academics, and business leaders, tasked with evaluating the innovative solutions and selecting the most promising projects to represent the Sultanate of Oman on the international stage.

-ONA

ENHANCE TRADE

Oman, Kazakhstan discuss bilateral cooperation



ASTANA: The Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Kazakhstan discussed bilateral cooperation during the second political consultations session held in the Kazakh capital, Astana.

The session also included an evaluation of the steps taken to enhance trade and investment exchanges between the two countries.

The Omani side was headed by Sheikh Khalifa Ali Al Harthy, Undersecretary of the Foreign Ministry for Political Affairs, while the Kazakh side was headed by Arman Issagaliyev, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan.

During the consultations session, the two sides discussed existing agreements and memoranda of understanding, as well as those expected to be finalised. They also

exchanged views on a number of regional and international issues.

On the sidelines of the consultations, Sheikh Khalifa Ali Al Harthy, Undersecretary of the Foreign Ministry for Political Affairs, met with Alibek Kuantayrov, Head of the Kazakh side in the Omani-Kazakh Joint Committee.

AI Centre

The Undersecretary also visited the Artificial Intelligence Center in the capital, Astana, and met with officials from the Islamic Organization for Food Security.

The meeting and visits were attended by Badriya Hamad Al Ajmi, Deputy Head of Mission at the Embassy of the Sultanate of Oman in Kazakhstan, alongside a number of officials from the foreign ministries of both countries. -ONA

COMMENCES ON 29 SEPTEMBER

Oman Camel Racing Federation launches programme for 2026/2027 season

BARKA: Oman Camel Racing Federation announced the annual programme for the local camel races for the 2026/2027 season.

The programme includes a number of races, festivals, and show (Ardha) and beauty (Mazayna) competitions, in addition to races supported by several private sector institutions, which will be held across various governorates of the Sultanate of Oman.

The programme will commence on 29 September with the first race taking place in the Wilayat of Barka in the South Al Batinah Governorate and the Wilayat of Adam in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate.

Events will continue until 4 February 2027

These events will continue until 4 February 2027, while the supported races will run until March 2027.

The annual programme encompasses five consecutive races in the wilayats of Barka and Adam.

The first race will be held from 29 September to 1 October 2026; the second race from 13 to 15 October; and the third race from 27 to 29 October.

Meanwhile, the fourth race is scheduled from 10 to 12 November, and the fifth race will take place from 1 to 3 December 2026.

Furthermore, the programme includes the Thumrait competitive race from 13 to 19 November 2026, alongside a number of events dedicated to camel beauty and characteristics.

The programme also features the Federation’s annual festival,



slated to be held from 3 to 7 January 2027.

This festival constitutes one of the most prominent highlights

Within the framework of enhancing the partnership between the public and private sectors and supporting traditional sports, the programme includes several races supported by Occidental Oman and Oman Shell in the concession areas, which encompass the governorates of Al Dakhiliyah, Al Dhahirah, and Al Wusta.

The organisation of the annual programme for local camel races aligns with the attention the Sultanate of Oman accords to camel racing, as it is one of the sports deeply rooted in Omani heritage.

It reflects significant cultural, social, and sporting value, while also playing a vital role in supporting camel owners and trainers, and encouraging them to develop and preserve camel breeds. -ONA

BROAD PEAK

Nepal Embassy pays tribute to mountaineers, flood victims

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Embassy of Nepal in Muscat organised a Memorial Tribute Ceremony on 31 August 2026 at Nepal House, in memory of the ten mountaineers who lost their lives in the tragic Broad Peak avalanche on 30 July 2026 and the victims of Flash Flood that struck Nepal on 26 August 2026.

The ceremony was graced by Ms. Bushra Al Ajmi, Acting Chief of the Asia-Pacific Department of the Foreign Ministry of the Sultanate of Oman and other participants included Ambassadors, diplomats, Everest climber Sulaiman Al Naabi, family members of the late Nadhira Al Harthy, members of the Omani-Nepal Friendship Association, media persons, Nepali community members and Omani friends.

The programme commenced with the national anthems of the Sultanate of Oman and Nepal. Mr. Bishesh Kumar Sah, Chargé d’Affaires a.i., Embassy of Nepal, delivered a message of condolence, expressing solidarity with the families of the deceased and the global mountaineering community. He recalled the remarkable achieve-



ments of the late Nadhira Al Harthy, who became the first Omani woman to climb Mount Everest in 2019.

Paid tribute to the late Nirmal Purja

He also informed how Nadhira Al Harthy was closely associated with Nepal and the Embassy. Furthermore Sah paid tribute to the late Nirmal Purja (Nimsdai),

renowned for his extraordinary achievement of climbing all 14 peaks above 8,000 metres in six months and six days. He remembered the other brave mountaineers who lost their lives on 30 July 2026 at Broad Peak.

Mr. Sah also expressed deep condolences over the loss of lives and property caused by the severe flash flood in Nepal on 26 August

2026. He highlighted the ongoing search, rescue and relief efforts of the Government of Nepal and appealed for prayers and support for the affected people. He also informed participants about the Prime Minister’s Disaster Relief Fund and encouraged support through the official web portal.

On the occasion, Ms. Bushra Al Ajmi, Acting Chief of the Asia-



Pacific Department of the Foreign Ministry of Oman, also shared a condolence message to the families of the departed souls. She appreciated the initiative of the Embassy of Nepal in Muscat for organizing an event to honor the heroes.

A minute of Silence was observed in the memories of all those who left this world during the tragic incidents of 30 July and 26 Au-

gust 2026. The Embassy expressed thanked all the participants for joining the memorial ceremony and standing in solidarity with the families of the deceased and the people of Nepal and Oman during this difficult time. The ceremony concluded with a Nepali dinner hosted by the Embassy. Mrs. Usha Adhikari, third secretary, conducted the event.

COMMENTARY

SMEs: The Engines of Oman's Next Growth Story

Small and medium enterprises are more than businesses. They are sources of employment, innovation, competition and hope. In Oman, SMEs can play a central role in building a diversified economy and achieving the ambitions of Oman Vision 2040.

Large companies are important for major investments and infrastructure projects, but SMEs bring economic activity closer to communities. A small manufacturing unit, technology company, tourism operator, restaurant, transport business or agricultural enterprise can create jobs and opportunities in places where large corporations may not operate.

When an SME succeeds, its benefits spread across society. It employs local people, purchases goods and services from other businesses, trains young workers and keeps money circulating within the economy. Thousands of successful SMEs can therefore create a wider and more stable economic impact than dependence on only a few large organisations.

Oman has many advantages that can support entrepreneurship. It has political stability, modern infrastructure, strategic ports, a young population and access to markets across the Gulf, Asia and Africa. Opportunities are emerging in tourism, logistics, manufacturing, food processing, fisheries, mining, renewable energy, technology and creative industries.

The country has also established institutions and programmes to support entrepreneurs. The Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority offers services including training, mentoring, business incubation, consultancy, financing guidance and marketing support. The Entrepreneurship Card provides eligible businesses with access to certain benefits and facilities. These initiatives show that SME development is an important national priority.

However, creating an enterprise is only the first step. The real challenge is helping it survive, grow and become competitive.

One of the biggest difficulties faced by SMEs is access to finance. Many small businesses have good ideas and confirmed opportunities but



lack sufficient collateral or a long financial history. Traditional lending methods may not fully recognise the value of a strong business model, reliable customer orders or an entrepreneur's capabilities.

Financing institutions should therefore evaluate SMEs not only on the security they can provide, but also on their cash flow, market potential, management quality and confirmed contracts. More flexible instruments—including credit guarantees, invoice financing, equipment leasing and equity investment—can help deserving businesses grow responsibly.

Market access is equally important. An SME cannot survive on training and finance alone; it needs customers. Government entities, state-owned companies and large private corporations can play a transformative role by giving capable SMEs fair opportunities in procurement.

Large contracts can be divided into suitable packages so that smaller businesses can participate. Tender conditions should be proportionate to the size and risk of the work. Most importantly, approved SME invoices should be paid on time. Delayed payments can damage a small enterprise even when it is profitable on paper.

Support must also go beyond awarding contracts. Large companies can mentor SME suppliers in quality, safety, governance, financial management and technology. This will help local enterprises move from being small service providers to becoming dependable partners within national and international supply chains.

At the same time, entrepreneurs must accept responsibility for building stronger businesses. Government assistance cannot replace discipline, customer service or sound financial management.

SME owners must maintain proper accounts, understand their costs, protect cash flow and separate personal spending from business funds. They must invest in technology, train their employees and continuously improve the quality of their products and services.

Omani SMEs should also think beyond the domestic market. Digital platforms allow even a small company to reach regional and international customers. Products representing Oman's heritage, food, fragrances, tourism experiences, crafts and manufacturing capabilities can find buyers across the world when supported by good quality, packaging and branding.

Failure must also be viewed differently. Not every business idea will succeed, but an honest business failure should become a learning experience rather than a permanent social stigma. A healthy entrepreneurial culture allows people to learn, restart and return with stronger ideas.

Oman's next generation of entrepreneurs should not aim merely to own small businesses. They should aspire to build professionally managed companies that can innovate, export, create skilled employment and eventually become large enterprises.

The future of Oman's economy will not be built by the government or major corporations alone. It will also be built in workshops, farms, offices, kitchens, laboratories and digital studios by ambitious entrepreneurs.

If SMEs receive finance, market access, timely payments and practical guidance—and if entrepreneurs respond with discipline, innovation and courage—they can become one of the strongest engines of Oman's future growth.

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THREE-DAY EVENT

Specialised workshop to boost halal ecosystem

SALALAH: A specialised workshop titled "Halal Tourism" commenced on in the wilayat of Salalah.

The three-day event is organised by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, in collaboration with the Standards and Metrology Institute for Islamic Countries (SMIC), the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, and Omran Group.

The workshop was inaugurated under the patronage of Azzan bin Qasim Al Busaidi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism for Tourism.

The event is part of the Sultanate of Oman's ongoing efforts to strengthen the national halal ecosystem, build technical and knowledge-based capacities in related sectors, and capitalize on the growing opportunities presented by the global Islamic economy. It further supports the approaches towards diversifying tourism products and services while enhancing their competitiveness in accordance with regional and international standards and specifications.

The opening programme featured a visual presentation on the national halal ecosystem and an overview of the national standardization system.

The first day's agenda encompassed several themes, including an examination of the halal tourism market within Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) member states, the full range of opportunities in halal certification for restaurants, and the general requirements for halal food products as per approved specifications.



the halal ecosystem and halal tourism, including an introduction to the standards of the Standards and Metrology Institute for Islamic Countries, the national halal system, the national standardization framework, as well as the concept of halal, the halal market, and halal certification procedures.

The programme will also provide an overview of the global quality infrastructure for halal under the auspices of the OIC.

The workshop targets government entities and private-sector stakeholders involved in tourism, food, inspection services, restaurant industry, and logistics. It aims to raise awareness of the requirements governing halal tourism services and to enhance the capabilities of institutions operating within these sectors. -ONA

RECRUITMENT

RAO begins process for hiring of new cadets



MUSCAT: Acting in coordination with the Ministry of Labour, the Royal Army of Oman (RAO) on Tuesday began procedures for the admission of candidates to military service, as officer cadets, from among those who hold the Bache-

lor's degree, a post General Education Diploma (GED) and the GED.

National duty

The RAO extends its expertise and capabilities to help the eligible candidates join the military

service and engage in the national duty in a manner that enables them to perform their mission in defending the homeland and preserving its gains, in accordance with the scheduled plans and programmes. -ONA

MUSCAT MUNICIPALITY

Approving names of streets

< FROM A1 Muscat Governorate, in coordination with Muscat Municipality, is responsible for implementing addressing activities, including approving street names, managing and updating the governorate's database, verifying addressing units and installing signboards.

National addressing teams are monitoring implementation across the governorate's wilayats and working with relevant authorities to verify data and ensure compliance with technical and organisational requirements. They are also involved in reviewing and approving street names while taking into account the historical, cultural and urban characteristics of each wilayat.

The offices of the Walis are also supporting implementation by coordinating with addressing teams and relevant authorities, facilitating fieldwork and helping identify challenges and requirements.

Easier access

The unified addressing system is expected to make it easier and faster to locate homes, businesses and public facilities.

Once operational, users will be able to search for addresses through the National Addressing System's application and access locations using digital maps and navigation services.

The system will also be linked to government platforms and other digital services, providing a common and reliable reference for locations.

A unified address is expected to benefit emergency and public services, including ambulance ser-

vices, Civil Defence and the Royal Oman Police, as well as municipal, postal and delivery services.

Utilities such as electricity, water and telecommunications, along with health, education and social services, will also benefit from more accurate location information.

The system will also support civil and national registration, commercial and investment services, land management and urban planning.

Digital transformation

The National Addressing System will provide a unified national spatial database that can be linked to government systems, helping authorities exchange information, reduce duplication and improve the quality and efficiency of digital services.

The database will provide up-to-date information on streets, buildings and addressing units, supporting urban planning, infrastructure development, public-service distribution, government asset management and maintenance planning.

The system is particularly significant for Muscat Governorate as the capital continues to experience urban growth. Accurate spatial data can help authorities monitor development, analyse population density, plan future expansion and identify areas requiring additional services and facilities.

The system will also support the development of smart-city applications, including asset management, traffic mobility, emergency response, logistics and other location-based services.

Boost for deliveries and businesses

The unified addressing system is expected to improve logistics and delivery services by making locations easier to identify, helping reduce delivery times, operational costs and errors.

E-commerce and postal services are also expected to benefit from standardised and reliable addresses.

Small and medium-sized enterprises will be able to register their locations using approved national addresses, making it easier for customers to find their businesses and improving their visibility on digital maps and e-commerce platforms.

The system is also expected to support investors by providing reliable location information for projects and establishments, while helping authorities verify commercial addresses and improve licensing and related services.

Public cooperation

Public participation will be important as the project moves into wider implementation.

Residents and owners of establishments in targeted neighbourhoods will be notified before signboard installation begins. They will be expected to cooperate with field teams and facilitate access to installation locations when required.

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning, in cooperation with Muscat Governorate and other relevant authorities, is also conducting awareness campaigns to explain the objectives of the National Addressing System and how citizens, residents and businesses can use it.



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ENDURING RELATIONS

Oman and Saudi Arabia: Strong ties, promising future

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia continue to advance their bilateral relations across all domains at an accelerating pace, reflecting the shared vision and unwavering commitment of the wise leaderships in both countries—under the leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The deep-seated historical, geographic and social ties between the two nations have laid a solid foundation for mutual understanding and coordinated cooperation, establishing them as a distinguished model on the international stage.

In this context, Ibrahim bin Saad bin Bishan, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the Sultanate of Oman, stated that the private fraternal visit of His Majesty the Sultan to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia reaffirms the depth of the historic and enduring relations uniting the two countries and their peoples.

The ambassador underscored the exceptional patronage and attention these relations receive from the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud and His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, Crown Prince and Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

In a statement to Oman News Agency (ONA), he added that this visit serves as a renewed opportunity to affirm that Saudi Arabia and Oman are two nations bound by shared history, geography, destiny and mutual interests.

The trust, cordiality, and historical legacy shared by their leaderships and peoples constitute a powerful driver for building a future of greater cohesion and prosperity.

The Ambassador emphasized that the strength of Saudi-Omani relations is not grounded solely in immediate interests, but rather



in a profound historical legacy of trust and mutual respect, and in a common vision for a future defined by enhanced security, stability, and development.

This, he noted, bolsters the two countries’ standing as strategic partners and enables them to collectively shape the promising future of the region.

He further observed that these bilateral ties have now surpassed half a century of distinguished cooperation, understanding, and continuous coordination between the two leaderships on a wide array of regional and international issues.

He elaborated that these relations have been reinforced by a series of high-level reciprocal visits, most notably His Majesty the Sultan’s visit to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in June 2021—his first official overseas visit after assuming the reins of power—in response to an invitation from the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud.

That visit resulted in the establishment of the Saudi-Omani Coordination Council, serving as an institutional framework to enhance bilateral cooperation across various sectors.

The Ambassador further noted that the official visit of His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud,

Crown Prince and Prime Minister, to the Sultanate of Oman in December 2021, followed by his private visit in September 2023, underscored the depth of joint coordination, strengthened consultations on regional and international matters, and contributed to reinforcing the region’s security and stability.

He also pointed out that this coordination is further underpinned by ongoing bilateral and international meetings and continuous deliberations between the Foreign Ministers of the two countries—alongside sustained engagements among the ministers and officials across diverse fields.

These interactions reflect an advanced level of understanding and coordination, paving the way toward a more integrated future that serves the interests of both nations and their peoples, he added.

The Ambassador indicated that this visit carries significant implications amid the ongoing regional transformations and challenges.

He affirmed that Saudi-Omani relations represent an exemplary model of Gulf cooperation founded on dialogue, mutual understanding and coordination—thereby reinforcing regional security and stability and supporting pathways to development and prosperity.

He underscored that the bilateral relationship extends well be-

yond the political dimension into broader horizons encompassing economy, investment, trade, tourism, culture, and media.

This expanding scope opens the door to a new phase of partnership and integration, enhancing the shared interests of the two peoples.

Oman Vision 2040

He noted that the establishment of the Saudi-Omani Coordination Council functions as an institutional mechanism to activate joint cooperation and monitor projects and initiatives between the two countries—including those emanating from Saudi Vision 2030 and Oman Vision 2040—thereby contributing to economic integration and sustainable development.

He added that the relationship between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Sultanate of Oman constitutes a fundamental pillar in supporting the Gulf Cooperation Council framework, reflecting both countries’ commitment to strengthening regional stability and harmonising political and economic positions in a manner that serves the interests of the peoples of the region.

He also highlighted the opening of a Saudi Public Investment Fund office in the Sultanate of Oman, aimed at identifying suitable investment opportunities and assisting fund portfolio companies



and private sector partners in expanding into Omani markets.

He further emphasised the Kingdom’s keenness to elevate the level of trade and investment exchange with the Sultanate of Oman in a manner that reflects the depth of bilateral relations, citing official statistics that indicate notable growth in trade volume over recent years.

The Ambassador added that in 2025, Saudi direct investment in the Sultanate of Oman amounted to approximately OMR72.8316 million, while Omani direct investment in the Kingdom reached approximately OMR115.9 million.

He explained that trade and mobility between the two countries were significantly boosted by the opening of the Empty Quarter border crossing on 11 December 2021, as the first direct land port between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Sultanate of Oman, extending approximately 564 kilometers.

This development marked a qualitative leap in trade movement, with the border crossing recording a remarkable growth in trade volume in 2025, valued at approximately OMR1.322 billion, compared to approximately OMR1.051 billion in 2021—representing roughly 58 percent of total bilateral trade—while also facilitating transit between the

two nations.

He further noted that the number of cross-border travellers through the border crossing from October 2021 through the end of December 2025 reached approximately 135,902 Saudi citizens, 640,260 Omani citizens, and 744,262 individuals comprising Gulf and Arab nationals, residents and visitors.

The Ambassador indicated that the relations between the two countries are advancing toward a new phase of future-oriented partnership, encompassing clean energy and green hydrogen initiatives, electrical interconnection projects, the Gulf railway link, as well as joint tourism initiatives aimed at developing tourist destinations in both countries through exchange programs and collaborative marketing strategies.

He stated that investment indicators reflect the strength of the economic relations between the two countries. Saudi investment in the Sultanate of Oman reached OMR82.69 million by 2024, while Omani investment in the Kingdom stood at OMR115.9 million over the same period.

Statistics issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information indicate that the volume of bilateral trade during the first six months of 2026 reached approximately RO 1.0862 billion. Omani exports to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia totaled approximately RO 547.6 million, while Omani imports from the Kingdom amounted to approximately RO 538.6 million.

The total bilateral trade volume for 2025 was approximately OMR2.4754 billion, of which the Kingdom’s imports from the Sultanate of Oman accounted for OMR1.2179 billion, while the Sultanate’s exports to the Kingdom stood at OMR1.2574 billion.

Statistics further indicate that the number of Saudi visitors to the Sultanate of Oman up to the end of August 2026 reached 80,917, while in 2025 the total stood at approximately 116,880 Saudi visitors. -ONA

Forum discusses sustainable changes in energy sector



The forum deals with the latest trends and technical solutions that pertain to the evolution of the energy sector

held under the auspices of HH Sayyid Marwan bin Turki Al Said, Governor of Dhofar.

The forum focuses on four main themes: “Integration of renewable energy and energy storage”; “Resilience of grids and artificial intelligence in energy”; “Removing carbon and low-carbon hydrogen”; and “The efficiency of energy and the circular economy”.

Participation of researchers and specialists

The event reviews 22 papers during four working sessions. It also includes two panel discussions, with the participation of researchers and specialists from eight countries: The Sultanate of Oman, Libya, Qatar, Palestine, Iraq, Iran, India and Denmark.

The forum deals with the latest trends and technical solutions that pertain to the evolution of the energy sector.

It also elaborates on the role of innovation and engineering in developing a more efficient, flexible and sustainable infra-

structure of energy.

The first day of the forum included an exhibition featuring solutions and initiatives in the fields of engineering and energy, in addition to a display of projects competing for the Energy Horizon 2026 Award. The exhibition showcases the programmes, solutions and initiatives of a number of academic and private institutions.

It also includes graduation projects from a number of universities in the Sultanate of Oman, notably engineering solutions and innovations that support transition in the energy sector.

On the sidelines of the forum, Oman Society of Engineers signed a cooperation agreement with the Office of the Governor of Dhofar to enhance support for professional and engineering initiatives in the governorate, in addition to boosting the governorate’s status as a platform for specialised engineering dialogue that serves the tracks of sustainable development. -ONA

SAFEGUARDING OMANI CULTURE

National Museum signs pact with Omani Women’s Association

MUSCAT: National Museum on Tuesday signed a cooperation agreement with the Omani Women’s Association in Muscat, aimed at strengthening joint collaboration between the two parties in the areas of safeguarding Omani cultural heritage, raising community awareness, and exchanging expertise and knowledge.

This partnership contributes to highlighting Omani cultural identity and supporting the presence and contributions of Omani women across various fields.

The agreement was signed on behalf of the National Museum by Jamal Hassan Al Moosawi, Secretary General of the Nation-



al Museum, and on behalf of the Omani Women’s Association in Muscat by Liqa Saif Al Maawali, Chairperson of the Omani Women’s Association in Muscat. The signing ceremony was attended by Sheikh Rashid Ahmed Al

Shamsi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Social Development for Family and Community Affairs, along with members of the Board of Directors of the Omani Women’s Association in Muscat. -ONA

TRAINING ASPECT

SAF Chief of Staff receives Indian military official

MUSCAT: Vice Admiral Abdullah Khamis Al Raisi, Chief of Staff of the Sultan’s Armed Forces (SAF), received Air Vice Marshal Manish Vasantkumar Patel, Senior Directing Staff at the National Defence College of the Republic of India, and his accompanying delegation, at Al Murtafaa Camp on Tuesday.

During the meeting, the two sides discussed matters of mutual interest, particularly related to academic and training, as well as the exchange of expertise. -ONA



SALALAH: The 5th edition of Salalah Engineering Forum, organised by Oman Society of Engineers, began in the Governorate of Dhofar on Tuesday.

The two-day forum is held in partnership with the Ministry of Energy and Minerals under the title “Engineering energy transition: applied innovations for a resilient clean energy infrastructure”.

The opening ceremony was



Ministry of Defence

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

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

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

2. Tenders documents and terms may be obtained on payment from the office of the Secretary of the Tender Committee, gate No. 14 of MAM Camp between 0900 to 1300 hrs on the working days.

3. Omanisation compliance certificate (Issued by Ministry of Labor) with a validity period not exceeding one month from the date of issuance must be submitted when purchasing tender's document.

4. Payment of Tender documents to be made by using of any Visa Electron Cards or "Visa credit" Cards or through Smart Card issued from all the banks are operated in Oman.

Russian drone, missile barrage kills at least 11 people in Ukraine’s Kyiv

The attack targeted Kyiv and the Odesa region and involved ballistic, cruise and anti-radar missiles, along with more than 200 drones and decoys



KYIV: Ukraine’s air force said Russia struck at least 28 locations in overnight attacks that continued into Tuesday, with debris falling at several additional sites. The attack targeted Kyiv and the Odesa region and involved ballistic, cruise and anti-radar missiles, along with more than 200 drones and decoys. At least 11 people were killed in the capital region, these include seven people in Kyiv’s Darnyt-skyi district; three others were wounded, including a child. Also, one Indian citizen was reported among those killed. One person was also killed in the Holosiivskyi district after a building was hit and caught fire.

Three people were killed and 12 were injured elsewhere in the Kyiv region. In Odesa, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said a Russian strike “deliberately damaged a border crossing point on the border with Romania, as well as export infrastructure.”

EU defence ministers meet in Ireland to discuss Ukraine air defences European Union defence ministers are gathering in Wicklow, south of Dublin, for talks that are expected to focus on bolstering Ukraine’s air defenses. Moscow has taken advantage of Ukraine’s shortage of US-built air defense missiles to pummel the

country, while Kyiv has hit back against Russian infrastructure with its own long-range drone strikes. There is also concern over Russia’s apparent move to ramp up operations in Europe. The ministers are also expected to discuss the bloc’s support for Ukraine, including the implementation of a €90 billion (\$104 billion) loan for Kyiv. The loan, approved in April, aims to assist Kyiv with its most urgent economic and military needs as it continues to fight against Russia’s full-scale invasion. The talks are also expected cover further military assistance and closer cooperation between Ukraine’s and the EU’s defence

industries. Ministers are also expected to discuss the growing role of space in modern defense strategy. EU foreign ministers are due to arrive later on Tuesday ahead of separate talks on Wednesday focused on continued support for Ukraine. Russia and Ukraine are not only battling for dominance in the air with drones, but are also increasingly taking the drone war to the seas. The commander of Ukraine’s Unmanned Systems Forces, Robert Brov, said Tuesday that his force struck 54 Russian “shadow fleet” vessels in August. He did not immediately provide additional details. — Agencies



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Palestinian minister briefs EU delegation

RAMALLAH: The Minister of Information and General Supervisor of Official Media, Ahmed Assaf, received on Tuesday a delegation from the European Union (EU) at his office in Ramallah. He briefed the delegation on the role of official media in the electoral process and the ongoing preparations for the upcoming legislative elections. **Objective media coverage** Assaf highlighted the importance of professional and objective media coverage in providing citizens with accurate information, raising awareness of their electoral rights and responsibilities, and encouraging participation while upholding their right to freely choose. He emphasised that the primary goal of official media is to contribute to the success of the electoral process, raise public awareness of the importance of participation, and solidify citizens’ right and freedom of choice,

thus guaranteeing the exercise of this right. Assaf pointed out that the official media’s experience in election coverage is rich and extensive, based on a long history of covering various electoral events. The most recent example was the local council elections, whose coverage received widespread praise from the Palestinian people and oversight bodies, most notably the Central Elections Commission, for its professionalism, impartiality, objectivity, and equal access to all parties. He also reviewed the amendments made by the President to the election law, which aim to enhance political participation and broaden the base of representation, particularly regarding the threshold for representation, women’s representation, and the age of candidacy, thus allowing for wider participation and representation of various segments of Palestinian society. — WAPA

PROVISIONAL STATISTICS

Summer 2026 was UK’s hottest on record

LONDON: The summer of 2026 was provisionally the warmest on record in Britain, the Met Office said Tuesday. Britain recorded an average mean temperature of 16.5 degrees Celsius over the meteorological summer, the highest in records dating back to 1884. The figure surpassed the previous record of 16.1 degrees Celsius set in 2025. The five warmest British summers have all occurred since 2003, according to the Met Office, the national weather service. The season began with Britain’s second warmest June on record, followed by its second warmest July.

Unsettled weather Although unsettled weather in late August moderated temperatures, persistent warmth across the three months was enough to set a new seasonal record. Daily temperatures peaked at 38.1 degrees Celsius at Kew Gardens in London on Aug. 13. In total, 54 Met Office weather stations broke their all-time daily maximum temperature records during the summer. Dr Amy Doherty, who leads the National Climate Information Center at the Met Office, said these records are now breaking with increasing frequency, reflecting the influence of human-

induced climate change on the temperatures being experienced in Britain. **Met Office scientists** A rapid attribution study by Met Office scientists has shown the record-breaking summer was made around 130 times more likely because of human-induced climate change. Dr Mark McCarthy, head of climate attribution at the Met Office, said the summer was an example of extremes expected to occur more frequently because of human-induced climate change. The summer was also notably dry and sunny. Britain had its third driest July on record. Late-August rain kept seasonal rainfall totals away from national records, though rainfall remained below average. Britain also had its sixth sunniest summer on record, with 621.9 hours of sunshine. Met Office climate scientist Dr James Pope said the summer of 2026 would be around average for Britain in a world 2.5 to 3 degrees Celsius warmer than the pre-industrial period. He added that the season’s dry conditions were also consistent with projections that British summers will become hotter and drier as the climate warms. — Xinhua

IRANIAN PRESIDENT PEZESHKIAN

‘If US returns to its commitments, Iran will immediately reciprocate’

BISHKEK: Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian on Tuesday said that Iran would “immediately reciprocate” if the United States returned to its commitments under the 14-point Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), according to the official website of the President of Iran. Addressing the 26th Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Summit in Bishkek, Pezeshkian said that Iran had a “brilliant record” of fulfilling its international obligations and treaties, while warning that unilateral policies, military force, illegal sanctions and geopolitical competition were threatening regional and global stability. “The attacks carried out by the United States and the Zionist regime [Israel] against Iran on June 13, 2025 and February 28, 2026 were a clear violation of the fundamental principles of the United Nations Charter and international law, against the principle of prohibition of the use of force, and against the right to life,” he said. Pezeshkian said recent developments in West Asia, including in Iran, Lebanon, Gaza and the West Bank, had shown that disregard for international law and approaches based on force and pressure threatened the security of countries as well as regional and global



stability. He said the strikes on Iran resulted in large-scale casualties, including strikes on a school in Minab and a stadium in Lamerd, Fars Province. “These were just three examples of the great crimes of the first day of a 40-day war. In the face of this volume of brutality, the Islamic Republic of Iran, relying on the great power of its brave and zealous armed forces and enjoying the nationwide support of its noble nation, inflicted heavy and strategic defeats on the United States and the occupying regime and achieved brilliant victories,” he said. Pezeshkian said the strikes were an assault on an SCO member state and an “ancient civilisation”, while expressing appreciation to the organisation and countries that condemned the aggression and expressed sympathy with Iran. He said that following 40 days of “resistance” by the Iranian people and, according to Pezeshkian’s claim that the US “failed” to achieve its “predetermined goals”, a ceasefire and an end to the conflict were forced. Pezeshkian said nearly three months of negotiations mediated by Pakistan and Qatar subsequently led to the 14-point MoU. “However, the US commitment to the document signed by the President of that country lasted less than two weeks, and the country’s excessive demands and reneging on its commitments began, which still continues. It is obvious that the violation of US commitments was met with a proportionate response from Iran. But I am saying frankly that if the US returns to its commitments in the aforementioned Memorandum of Understanding, the Islamic Republic of Iran will immediately reciprocate,” Pezeshkian said. “Unlike the United States, my country has a brilliant record of fulfilling its international obligations and treaties and has always acted in accordance with the principles governing international law,” he added. Earlier on Monday, Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian arrived in Bishkek to participate in the summit of the Shanghai Coop-

eration Organisation (SCO) member states and the Shanghai Plus gathering. Before his departure, Pezeshkian had said that Iran does not seek war, but will respond with strength and determination to any aggression. He considered instability in the region to be detrimental to all countries and emphasised the need for convergence to advance economic and security goals. “This meeting is very important, and most of the leaders of the region will be present at it. In a situation where some international institutions are seeking to create a unified space in the world, this meeting is considered a symbol of the existence of diverse and independent voices in the global arena,” he said. The 26th SCO Leadership Summit brings together 10 member states, 15 partner countries and two observer countries to advance dialogue and cooperation on regional and global issues. With the membership of 10 countries, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation represents about 25 per cent of global GDP. The SCO countries are developing long-term relations of good-neighbourliness, friendship and cooperation in the spheres of mutual interest based on the universally recognised principles and norms of international law. — ANI

BALLROOM/MILITARY COMPLEX

Supreme Court allows Trump ballroom project to proceed

Washington DC: The US Supreme Court on Monday allowed US President Donald Trump’s administration to continue with the \$400 million (€345 million) White House ballroom construction project for now. The ruling was backed by five of the court’s six conservative justices who said that the plaintiffs in the case likely didn’t have the legal right to challenge the case. **Court votes 5-4 to lift lower court’s order** “This Court has not found standing in circumstances like these before. To the contrary, we have repeatedly held that mere offense, disagreement, or distaste does not qualify as a concrete and particularized injury,” under the US Constitution, the five justices

wrote in their ruling. “Perhaps nearly any government action or project offends someone’s sensibilities,” they added. Chief Justice John Roberts joined the court’s three liberal-leaning justices in dissenting from the latest order, calling the construction “likely unlawful” because it hasn’t been approved by Congress. “Today’s decision is no victory for the separation of powers,” Roberts wrote. **Trump welcomes Supreme Court ruling** “I am pleased to report that the United States Supreme Court has just ruled in favour of the Ballroom/Military Complex being built without any further contingency, doubt, or threat,” Trump

said on his Truth Social network. “We are living in the Golden Age of America, and this Building will be one of the Greatest ever constructed in Washington, D.C.” Trump said. **National Trust for Historic Preservation vs. Trump** The nonprofit National Trust for Historic Preservation first brought the matter after the East Wing was torn down and work began on a 90,000-square-foot (8,360-square-metre) ballroom in the the biggest structural change to the White House in over 70 years. The Trump administration had asked the nation’s highest court to intervene after federal courts determined that the project needed to be halted on the grounds of it not having congressional approval.



US Justice Department lawyers previously justified the need for a secure ballroom, pointing to the July 8 missile threat against Air Force One when Trump was flown out of Turkey aboard a secret flight and other recent assassination attempts. — **ow**



Nepal death toll crosses 1,000, 3,916 people remain missing

Aerial rescue operations conducted by the Nepal Army account for 3,782 evacuated individuals



KATHMANDU: The death toll from the devastating flash flood in Nepal has reached 1,003, according to an official update released by the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority (NDRRMA) as of 1 PM on Tuesday. The recovered bodies, which

include unidentified human remains, have been found across eight districts: 321 in Chitwan, 216 in Nawalparasi East, 170 in Nawalparasi West, 95 in Nuwakot, 65 in Gorkha, 57 in Dhading, 41 in Rasuwa, and 38 in Tanahun. To manage unidentified remains, bodies

have been transferred to 21 hospitals across various districts, with details posted on official government web portals and social media channels. The report highlights that 3,916 people remain missing following the disaster. Local administrative reports indicate that

1,558 people are missing in Nuwakot and 865 in Rasuwa, alongside 639 workers from hydropower projects, 583 foreign nationals, and 164 Nepali citizens travelling with foreign groups. Missing security and administrative personnel include 45 mem-

bers of the Nepal Army, 25 from the Nepal Police, 13 from the Armed Police Force, 15 from the Customs Office, and three each from the Immigration Office, Langtang National Park, and the Quarantine Office. Large-scale rescue operations have successfully saved 11,884 people to date. Aerial rescue operations conducted by the Nepal Army account for 3,782 evacuated individuals, including 273 foreigners and 3,509 Nepalis. The Nepal Army has completed 592 helicopter flights, including 41 on September 1 alone, while private sector operators from Kathmandu have completed 29 flights. A total of 279 individuals were reported injured, with 168 already discharged from hospitals and 2,740 receiving medical treatment from Nepal Army medical teams. Additionally, NDRRMA out-

lined critical response developments across flood-devastated regions, detailing high-risk subterranean search-and-rescue operations at hydropower sites alongside ongoing transport corridor repairs. Specialised teams comprising Nepal Army personnel, the Armed Police Force, and Nepal Electricity Authority staff, supported by international experts, continue complex operations inside flooded tunnels. At the Trishuli 3-A Hydropower Project, a 90-person crew located the Crown Head section and cleared 10 meters of mud, but heavy water discharge from an initial test drill forced personnel to drill at a secondary location to gain safe access. At Trishuli 3-B, an excavator was airlifted via helicopter to support a 47-member search force. — ANI

Full story @ timesofoman.com/world

OVERSHADOWED BY DISSATISFACTION



US irks Germany and Europe with Russian G20 invite

ASHEVILLE: G20 finance ministers and central bank heads gathered in Asheville, North Carolina for two days of talks. The session is being overshadowed by dissatisfaction over the White House welcoming Russia to the meeting but not some critical reporters, the war with Iran and its economic fallout, and Donald Trump's latest trade dispute with Canada. Russian Finance Minister Anton Siluanov made an unexpected appearance as talks opened late on Monday. He held a bilateral meeting with US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent.

Getting along with everybody "We like getting along with everybody," Trump told reporters when asked about the first in-person Russian invite since the 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The US currently holds the rotating G20 presidency and so is hosting the session. The US government told several news agencies on condition of anonymity that Bessent used the meeting to tell Siluanov that the US would not give Russia economic relief until it brings its four-and-a-half-year invasion to a close.

How did European delegates respond? "Receiving the Russian finance minister here sends a troubling signal," German Finance Minister Lars Klingbeil said. He said he and his European colleagues made clear that they would not appear in the traditional "family photo" alongside the Russian media, saying this was a common EU position. The photo was ultimately taken without Siluanov and away from the media. Polish Finance Minister Andrzej Domanski told the Reuters news agency that he recognized the right of the G20 hosts to invite guests, but that he was unhappy to see Moscow represented. "We do not trust Russia. They lie constantly and you need to be really, really cautious while discussing with them," he said. "So for me it would be very difficult to have any kind of conversation with Russia."

Which reporters and outlets were excluded? As leaders gathered in Asheville, three giants of the US media landscape complained of either no or limited access to the meeting. The business-focused Bloom-

erg News said that its team was not allowed access, while the Wall Street Journal and the New York Times both complained that certain journalists who would typically cover such events were refused media credentials. Following a challenge from the DJV German journalists' union on Monday, Klingbeil was critical on the matter. **Legitimate interest** "I believe the press has a completely legitimate interest in reporting openly and freely on this G20 summit," he said. "I consider it unacceptable for journalists or entire editorial teams to be excluded." Klingbeil had also said in a German political podcast last week that he would bring a simple message to the US regarding what he called Donald Trump's "irresponsible" war in Iran — that it needed to come to an end. Host Bessent, however, was trying to drum up support among allies for the US plans for what it calls "Operation Economic Outcast," an intensified sanction regime against Iran reliant in no small part on third parties outside the US who still do business with Tehran. Iran has withstood decades of extensive US and western sanctions, but Bessent tried to argue when asked by reporters that it could swiftly be made to collapse if its remaining trading partners joined in. "I think it could be within weeks or months — and the economy doesn't have to collapse, we just have to have the regime come to their senses," he said. **Trump's latest Canada meltdown unsettles allies** The other major source of strain at the meeting was last week's sudden deterioration in trade talks between the US and Canada. This quickly descended into the tit-for-tat imposition of tariffs, and President Trump launching various social media jabs before unilaterally redesignating Lake Ontario as Lake America, at least on the books in the US. Canada's Finance Minister Francois-Philippe Champagne sought to stress that even the recent friction did not impact his participation. "Canada has always been at the table and constructive, ready to discuss," he told reporters, stressing the need to ensure continued economic growth and "bring back some stability in trade." — DW

Honouring Excellence in Social Impact

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

30th September, 2026
JW Marriott Hotel Muscat

AWARD CATEGORIES

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

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

SCAN TO NOMINATE

For partnerships, table bookings or award nominations, contact:

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23 clubs to compete in HM’s Cup Football Championship

Times News Service

MUSCAT: A total of 23 clubs will compete for the coveted His Majesty Cup Football Championship 2026/27 season, with defending champions Al Nahda beginning their title defence in the round of 16 after Tuesday’s draw mapped out the route to the trophy.

The competition is expected to begin in October 2026, according to the Oman football calendar, although the exact date for the opening matches is yet to be announced.

The draw introduced a format in which 14 clubs will contest the preliminary round, with the seven winners advancing to the round of 16. They will join nine clubs that have qualified directly,



bringing the field in the knockout stage to 16 teams.

Engineer Mohsin Al Hadhrami, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, was the chief guest at the draw ceremony.

Last season’s champions Al



Nahda are among the nine clubs given a direct place in the last 16, alongside domestic top-flight league champions Seeb.

The preliminary round on Tuesday produced seven games, with all matches to be decided by a single-leg knockout format.

Samail will face Bidiya, Saham will meet Muscat, Al Talee’a will take on Al Mudhaibi, Al Wahda will play Majees, Nizwa will meet Fanja, Al Suwaiq will face Ibri, while Al Musannah will take on Al Arouba.

The winners will advance to the last 16, where they will face one of the nine directly-qualified clubs.

The round-of-16 draw set up the following path: Winner of Samail vs Bidiya vs Al Nahda; winner of Saham vs Muscat vs Seeb; winner of Al Talee’a vs Al Mudhaibi vs Sohar; winner of Al Wahda vs Majees vs Oman Club; winner of Nizwa vs Fanja vs Dhofar; winner of Al Suwaiq vs Ibri vs Bahla; winner of Al Musannah vs Al Arouba vs Al Nasr; winner

of the remaining preliminary-round tie vs Al Shabab.

The preliminary and last-16 matches will be played on a knockout basis, with extra time and penalty shootouts used to determine the winner if the scores remain level after 90 minutes. The quarter-finals and semi-finals will be played over two legs.

The 23 participating clubs are Al Nahda, Al Nasr, Bahla, Oman Club, Samail, Sur, Sohar, Al Musannah, Fanja, Seeb, Dhofar, Saham, Al Shabab, Ibri, Al Wahda, Muscat, Nizwa, Al Mudhaibi, Al Suwaiq, Bidiya, Al Talee’a, Al Arouba and Majees.

Speaking at the draw ceremony, Oman Football Association Chairman Sayyid Sulaiman Al Busaidi emphasised the histori-

cal importance of the competition and the association’s determination to further enhance its sporting and commercial appeal.

“The HM’s Cup competition is an integral part of our glorious history, as it is the most precious competition and the closest to our hearts,” Al Busaidi said.

He added: “Our determination is firm to move forward towards constructive collaborative work that contributes to the development of this prestigious competition and enhances its artistic and marketing value, in a manner befitting its status and lofty name.”

“This prestigious competition represents the beating heart of Omani football and the authentic cornerstone of its development and prosperity.”

Pakistan sack 7 players and release head coach



Following the Test series defeat, Pakistan Cricket Board decided for a major shake-up

LAHORE: Pakistan have responded to their series defeat by England by taking the extraordinary step of dropping seven players, calling up five uncapped players and releasing their head coach.

After two one-sided defeats in the first two Tests, the tourists revamped their squad and backroom staff for the third and final match of the series at Edgbaston.

Five of the dropped players—Muhammad Rizwan, Imam-ul-Haq, Salman Ali Agha, Ali Usman and Khurram Shahzad—featured in the series so far, while Aamir Jamal and Muhammad Awais Jafar have been sent home without playing.

A total of seven players have been called up. Batters Saim Ayub and Abdullah Fazal have previous Test experience and join the quintet of uncapped newcomers.

Spin-bowling all-rounder Arafat Minhas, left-arm seamer Mohammed Imran Jr, wicketkeeper Said Baig and all-rounders Mohammad Imran and Razaullah have all received call-ups.

In addition, head coach Sarfaraz Ahmed and his assistant Umar Gul have been released to be replaced by Pakistan white-ball coach Mike Hesson and former Australia seamer Ashley Noffke.

The third Test in Birmingham begins on September 9.

Pakistan have been abject in the

opening two Tests, losing the first at Headingley by an innings and the second at Lord’s by 194 runs. They have been bowled out for less than 200 in each of their four innings. The response is remarkable. For a touring team to send home seven players and the head coach mid-series is unprecedented.

Ex-Pakistan captain Ramiz Raja, also a former chairman of the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) told BBC Radio 5 Live: “I’m trying to convince myself this is all OK, but it is not.

“It just shows Pakistan cricket has hit a panic button. It’s not good for the game, it’s not good for the confidence of the players who have come in, or for the players who are left, because it makes you a selfish team.

“What is the guarantee they will get results? Some of these guys have not played Test cricket. I’ve got no idea why this was done.”

Pakistan have a history of making eccentric decisions in the wake of defeats.

On England’s last tour of Pakistan in 2024, the hosts responded to losing the first Test, when England made a total in excess of 800, by playing the second Test on the same pitch in Multan.

On that occasion, Pakistan used garden heaters and fans to dry the surface, to assist their spinners. The home side won the next two

Pakistan changes ‘most shocking ever’: Afridi

LONDON: Pakistan’s decision to make wholesale changes to their squad and coaching set-up during the series in England has been branded the “most shocking decision ever by a selection committee” by former captain Shahid Afridi.

“Not sure what the logic or reasoning behind this decision is!”, Afridi wrote on social media.

“Even the replacements make no sense - T20 players have been included for a Test match in England?

“What is this thinking and



approach? Why has the coach been axed after five Test matches? “This is the most shocking decision ever by a selection committee which includes so many experienced selectors.” - Agencies

Tests to win the series 2-1.

Now, among the seven players sent home are Salman, who captained in the first Test in the absence of the injured Babar Azam, then was dropped for the second.

Also dropped is opener Imam-ul-Haq, who was criticised at Lord’s for not attempting to bat in either innings after suffering a calf injury while fielding on the opening day. Raja, who played 57 Tests between 1984 and 1997, added: “I’m really not happy with the situation.

“How many times have we seen this happen in world cricket? Never, ever. This is more like football, midway through the season, firing a

manager. “If you ask me how things can be fixed, I’ve got no idea.”

The sweeping selection changes come after the Pakistan team was surrounded by controversy during the second Test.

At lunch on the first day, the PCB threatened to cancel the remainder of the match and tour because of an interview with Imran Khan’s sons that was broadcast by Sky. Imran, the former Pakistan captain and prime minister, has been in prison for three years on charges of corruption. Pakistan ultimately completed the Test, with both captain Babar and head coach Sarfaraz denying any knowledge of a planned boycott. - Agencies

FORMER CAPTAIN

Misbah-ul-Haq resigns as Pakistan selector after Test squad upheaval

LAHORE: Misbah-ul-Haq has offered his resignation from the Pakistan men’s national selection committee the day after the PCB made wholesale changes to the Test squad and team management mid-way through the ongoing tour of England.

It has been learned that the PCB is yet to accept Misbah’s resignation; he has also decided to step down from his role as a batting consultant at the National Cricket Academy in Lahore.

Since retiring as Pakistan’s most successful Test captain in 2017, Misbah has served in various capacities in the PCB. He was appointed in the dual role of head coach and chief selector in 2019. He served in both roles until October 2020, when he resigned as the chief selector to focus entirely on the head coaching responsibilities, from which he ultimately resigned the next year.

Two years later, he was roped in as an advisor by the then chief of ad-hoc management committee Zaka Ashraf and had since remained involved with the PCB. He was announced as one of five men-



tors for the now-defunct men’s Champions Cup after the current management took over in 2024, and he also mentored women’s teams in domestic competitions. He was the coach of the Pakistan Gold side which won the 50-over National Champions Cup in Multan last month under Shaheen Afridi’s captaincy.

Misbah was made part of the four-member selection committee which includes Aaqib Javed, Sarfaraz Ahmed, and Asad Shafiq in March this year and had also been on a 180-days-a-year contract with the PCB as a batting consultant.

FORMER ENGLAND SKIPPER

Ben Stokes joins Big Bash League’s Adelaide Strikers

LONDON: Former England captain Ben Stokes has joined Adelaide Strikers for the 2026-27 season of the T20 Big Bash League.

The 35-year-old made the shock decision to retire from international cricket in June, with the announcement coming during the third and final Test of a 2-1 home series defeat against New Zealand.

Stokes played 122 Tests, 114 one-day internationals and 43 T20s for England.

He scored a superb 84 in the final against New Zealand when England dramatically won the World Cup for the first time in 2019. “I’m really excited to be joining the Adelaide Strikers for BBL 16,” said Stokes.

“I’ve always enjoyed playing in Australia, and when the opportunity came up to join the Strikers it was one I couldn’t pass up.

“Adelaide Oval is an incredible place to play cricket, the Big Bash is a fantastic competition and the Strikers have an exciting group, so I’m looking forward to meeting the players, getting stuck in and contributing to a successful season.

“I can’t wait to get started, create some special memories with the



group and give Strikers fans plenty to cheer about.”

Adelaide said Stokes, who had a brief stint at fellow BBL side Melbourne Renegades in 2015, would be available for the whole of the BBL 16 campaign, which starts in December.

“Ben is one of the greatest all-rounders the game has seen, a proven match-winner and a competitor who thrives under pressure,” said Adelaide Strikers head coach Tim Paine, whose side start their BBL season against Sydney Thunder on December 16.

“We’re thrilled to have a player of his ability join our squad and can’t wait to see him put on a show in BBL 16.” - Agencies

THREE MATCHES IN DELHI

Pacer Bumrah back in India squad for Afghanistan T20I series

MUMBAI: Jasprit Bumrah, Nitish Kumar Reddy, Harshit Rana and Washington Sundar have all been named in India’s squad for the three T20Is against Afghanistan in Delhi this month, but subject to fitness clearance from the BCCI’s Centre of Excellence.

Sanju Samson, Arshdeep Singh and Axar Patel are back in the squad after being rested from India’s most recent T20I series - in Zimbabwe in July. Hardik Pandya was not picked in the 15-member

squad as he continues his recovery from injury.

Varun Chakravorthy, who injured his hamstring during the T20I series in England in July and was withdrawn from the tour of Zimbabwe, is also back in the squad.

Rinku Singh, Prabhsimran Singh, Harsh Dubey, Suryansh Shedge, Ashok Sharma, Prince Yadav, Mayank Yadav and Yash Thakur were the players left out from the squad that toured Zimbabwe.



Pacer Bumrah missed the third ODI in England in July and the two-Test series in Sri Lanka in August after suffering a recurrence of an injury in his left knee, an issue he has had since the T20 World Cup earlier this year. Rana and Washington picked up hamstring injuries on the tour of England, while Reddy injured his quadriceps during the ODI series against Afghanistan in June.

India play Afghanistan in three T20Is on September 13, 15 and 17.

Though the games are being played in Delhi, Afghanistan are the official hosts of this bilateral series.

India squad for Afghanistan T20Is: Shreyas Iyer (capt), Abhishek Sharma, Vaibhav Sooryavanshi, Sanju Samson, Ishan Kishan, Tilak Varma, Shivam Dube, Nitish Kumar Reddy*, Axar Patel, Washington Sundar*, Varun Chakravorthy, Ravi Bishnoi, Jasprit Bumrah*, Arshdeep Singh, Harshit Rana*. (*Subject to fitness clearance). - Agencies

OMAN OIL PRICE RISES
The price of Oman crude oil has increased, with prices for delivery by November 2026 reaching \$99.81. The price of Oman crude oil rose by \$8.87. -ONA

MARKET

BUSINESS & FINANCE



MSX INDEX ENDS HIGHER
The MSX index closed at 7,611.00 points, up by 0.09% from previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 0.09% at 611.45 points. Oman Qatar Insurance, up 10.00%, was the top gainer while, National Aluminium, down 32.22%, was the top loser.

Oil production in Oman rises by 11.3% to 233.80mn barrels

The average oil price also rose by 15.7 percent, reaching \$83.9 per barrel by the end of July 2026, compared to \$72.5 during the same period in 2025

MUSCAT: The total oil production of the Sultanate of Oman increased by 11.3 percent by the end of July 2026, reaching 233.80 million barrels, compared to 210.12 million barrels during the corresponding period in 2025, according to preliminary data issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The average oil price also rose by 15.7 percent, reaching \$83.9 per barrel by the end of July 2026, compared to \$72.5 during the same period in 2025.

On the production front, the average daily oil production recorded a growth of 11.3 percent, reaching 1.10 million barrels per day by the end of July 2026, compared to 991,100 barrels per day during the corresponding period in 2025.

In terms of exports, Oman oil exports increased by 1.8 percent,



amounting to 181.93 million barrels by the end of July 2026, compared to 178.74 million barrels during the same period in 2025.

Natural gas production
Oman's natural gas production—including local production and imports — witnessed a 6.4 percent

growth by the end of July 2026, reaching 34.97 billion cubic metres, compared to 32.87 billion cubic metres during the correspond-

ing period in 2025.

Data issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) showed a 7.8 percent

increase in the production of associated gas by the end of July 2026, reaching 7.87 billion cubic metres, compared to 7.30 billion cubic metres during the same period of the previous year.

The production of non-associated gas (including imports) also rose by 6 percent, amounting to 27.10 billion cubic metres by the end of July 2026, compared to 25.57 billion cubic metres during the corresponding period in 2025.

In terms of consumption, natural gas consumption in industrial projects increased by 5.9 percent, reaching 17.33 billion cubic metres by the end of July 2026, compared to 16.37 billion cubic metres during the same period in 2025.

Gas consumption in power generation plants also increased by 13.7 percent, reaching 10,007 billion cubic metres by the end of July 2026, compared to 8.80 billion cubic metres during the corresponding period in 2025.

Conversely, gas consumption in oil fields (including losses, meter discrepancies, and shrinkage factors) decreased by 0.2 percent, reaching 7.52 billion cubic metres by the end of July 2026, compared to 7.5 billion cubic metres during the same period in 2025.

Furthermore, gas consumption in industrial areas (including industrial estates and the consumption of the Oman LNG Company) declined by 31.2 percent, reaching 111 million cubic metres by the end of July 2026, compared to 161.40 million cubic metres during the corresponding period in 2025. -ONA

GLOBAL SYMPOSIUM



Symposium explores AI's role in transforming government auditing

CAIRO: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the State Financial and Administrative Audit Authority, participated in the global symposium titled "Economic Artificial Intelligence: New Horizons for Supreme Audit Institutions."

The event was hosted by the Central Auditing Organisation, in its capacity as the Chair of the International Organisation of Supreme Audit Institutions (INTOSAI), in Cairo, the Arab Republic of Egypt.

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

The symposium discussed several topics, most notably the practical readiness of audit institutions to implement artificial intelligence (AI) technologies in auditing operations and digital empowerment. It also reviewed the experiences of various countries alongside practical use cases in this field. The sessions highlighted the concept of "Frugal Artificial Intelligence" as an emerging issue and explored ways to enhance its utilisation by Supreme Audit Institutions.

Furthermore, the symposium sought to explore the role of artificial intelligence in reshaping government institutional frameworks and the audit system as part of comprehensive digital transformation efforts. It also addressed mechanisms for managing associated risks, identifying potential challenges and gaps, and efficiently mitigating them.

During the symposium, the

The sessions highlighted the concept of "Frugal Artificial Intelligence" as an emerging issue and explored ways to enhance its utilisation by Supreme Audit Institutions

Authority presented a working paper titled "Challenges Associated with Artificial Intelligence," which outlined five primary challenges. These encompassed data quality and the accuracy of results, transparency and interpretability, privacy and cybersecurity, in addition to institutional readiness.

The Authority's participation in this symposium underscores its ongoing commitment to keeping pace with modern technological advancements. It also reflects its dedication to leveraging artificial intelligence solutions to support the audit system, thereby contributing to enhanced institutional performance efficiency and facilitating the exchange of expertise and future visions with the Supreme Audit Institutions of participating nations. -ONA

SYNDICATED REFINANCING FACILITY

Sohar International and National Bank of Oman jointly leads \$720mn refinancing facility for Phoenix Power



Times News Service

MUSCAT: Reinforcing its commitment to supporting Oman's strategic infrastructure and economic development priorities, Sohar International and National Bank of Oman (NBO), signed the financing documents for the USD 720 million syndicated refinancing facility for Phoenix Power Company SAOG (PPC), following the 15-year extension of its Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) with Oman Power and Water Procurement Company (OPWP).

The financing documents were signed by Abdulwahid Mohammed Al Murshidi, Chief Executive Officer of Sohar International, Abdullah Al Hinai, Chief Executive Officer of NBO and Ahmed Al Abri, Chief Financial Officer of PPC, establishing a framework for collaboration towards financing the company's continued operations and supporting the reliability and resilience of Oman's power infrastructure.

Commenting on the signing, Abdulwahid Mohammed Al Murshidi, Chief Executive Officer of Sohar International, said: "At Sohar International, we see our role

extending beyond providing financial solutions to actively enabling the projects and partnerships that contribute to Oman's long-term economic resilience. Financing of Phoenix Power reflects our commitment to mobilising capital towards strategic assets that are integral to the Sultanate's development. By supporting the continued operation of a major power generation facility, we are contributing to the strength of Oman's energy ecosystem while advancing our broader commitment to the ambitions of Oman Vision 2040."

Significant financing

Commenting on the agreement, Pullattu Radhakrishnan Anil Kumar, General Manager & Chief Corporate Banking Officer at NBO said: "Transactions of this scale demonstrate the important role Oman's banking sector can play in financing the infrastructure that underpins the country's growth. The USD 720 million refinancing of Phoenix Power reflects the capabilities of local banks to structure and deliver significant financing for strategic assets. Together with Sohar International, we are

pleased to support an asset that strengthens energy security and contributes to long-term economic value for Oman."

Ahmed Al Abri, Chief Financial Officer of Phoenix Power Company SAOG said: "The successful refinancing represents an important milestone for Phoenix Power. We value the support and expertise of both National Bank of Oman and Sohar International throughout the transaction. The refinancing provides a strong financial foundation as we continue to operate a critical power generation asset and contribute to the reliable supply of electricity across Oman."

Phoenix Power operates one of Oman's largest power generation facilities, making its continued operations an important contributor to the Sultanate's electricity infrastructure. The 15-year PPA extension provides a long-term framework for the facility's operations, while the proposed syndicated financing will support the company's financial requirements following the extension. Through its role as joint lead alongside NBO, Sohar International is further strengthening its engagement with

strategic players across Oman's economy and demonstrating its corporate and institutional banking capabilities in facilitating financing solutions for projects with long-term national significance.

The partnership also highlights the value of collaboration between financial institutions and key industry stakeholders in advancing Oman's economic priorities. By facilitating access to capital for strategically important projects, Sohar International continues to support the development of a resilient economic ecosystem while creating sustainable value for businesses and the wider community.

The MoU forms part of Sohar International's broader commitment to supporting the objectives of Oman Vision 2040 through strategic partnerships, responsible capital mobilization and solutions tailored to the evolving needs of Oman's key sectors.

As the Sultanate continues to strengthen the foundations of a diversified and resilient economy, the Bank remains committed to enabling opportunities that contribute to sustainable growth and Oman's long-term prosperity.

MARKET

MSX index ends higher

Oman Qatar Insurance, up 10.00%, was the top gainer while, National Aluminium, down 32.22%, was the top loser



MUSCAT: The MSX index closed at 7,611.00 points, up by 0.09% from previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 0.09% at 611.45 points. Oman Qatar Insurance, up 10.00%, was the top gainer while, National Aluminium, down 32.22%, was the top loser. Shares of Sohar International Bank were the most active in terms of number of shares traded while OQBI were the most active in terms of turnover.

A total number of 9098 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating turnover of RO 53.38 million, with more than 213.88 million shares changing hands. Out of 74 traded securities, 27 advanced, 19 declined, and 28 remained unchanged. At the session close, foreign investors were net sellers for RO 1084K while domestic investors were net buyers for RO 613K, followed by GCC & Arab investors for RO 471K worth of shares.

Financial Index closed at 13,417.72 points, up 0.24%. Prices of Oman Qatar Insurance, Taageer Finance, National Finance,

DIDIC, Bank Dhofar were up by 10.00%, 4.43%, 3.77%, 1.43%, 1.38% respectively. Prices of Al Anwar Investment, Al Madina Investments, Bank Nizwa were down by 1.60%, 1.35%, 0.68% respectively.

Industrial Index closed at 9,654.42 points, up 0.42%. Prices of Oman Chromite, Voltamp Energy, Gulf International Chemicals, Oman Cables Industry, Oman Cement were up by 8.82%, 1.73%, 1.43%, 1.18%, 0.85% respectively. Prices of National Aluminium, Raysut Cement, Oman Flour Mills, A'Saffa Foods were down by 32.22%, 1.73%, 0.85%, 0.13% respectively.

Services Index was up by 0.15% before closing at 3,064.95 points. Prices of Al Suwadi Power, Oman National Engineering, Phoenix Power, Phoenix Power, Muscat Desalination were up by 3.68%, 3.43%, 1.42%, 1.42%, 1.14% respectively. Prices of OQ Exploration & Production, Barka Desalination, Sohar Power, National Gas, Oman Telecom were down by 2.94%, 2.44%, 0.91%, 0.89%, 0.72% respectively. — **United Securities**

OMAN STOCKS

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE

INDICES

Index	High	Low	Value	Prev. Value	Diff.	Diff%
MSX 30 INDEX	7,620.58	7,587.74	7,611.00	7,604.01	6.99	0.09%
FINANCIAL INDEX	13,438.54	13,363.73	13,417.72	13,385.26	32.46	0.24%
Industry Index	9,681.15	9,613.77	9,654.42	9,613.77	40.65	0.42%
Services Index	3,071.72	3,048.26	3,064.95	3,060.38	4.56	0.15%
MSX Shariah Index	613.15	608.69	611.45	610.88	0.57	0.09%
MSX TR INDEX	11,814.79	11,799.93	11,799.93	11,764.29	35.64	0.30%
FINANCIAL TR IDX	16,521.99	16,430.00	16,496.38	16,456.47	39.91	0.24%
INDUSTRIAL TR IDX	12,399.10	12,312.80	12,364.86	12,312.80	52.06	0.42%
SERVICES TR IDX	4,124.38	4,092.89	4,115.29	4,100.34	14.95	0.36%
FIXED INCOME INDEX	1,291.27	1,291.27	1,291.27	1,291.27	0.00	0.00%

Trading Summary

Volume	Turnover	Trades	Market Cap	Up	Down	Equal	Sec. Traded
213,887,333	53,377,138	9,098	38,877,608,945	27	19	28	74

SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 1

SIN	SECURITY NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF (RD)	DIFF %	LAST PR	LAST RD	LAST OFFER	PR VALUE	MARKET CAP
REGULAR MARKET																
OM000004933	AL SUWADI POWER	417,512	80,986	54	0.192	0.197	0.187	0.197	0.190	0.007	3.684	0.197	0.197	0.198	0.100	140,738,049
OM0000001152	OMAN NAT'L ENGINEERING & INVEST	1,000	151	1	0.151	0.151	0.151	0.151	0.146	0.005	3.425	0.151	0.146	0.150	0.100	22,650,000
OM000004925	ALBATHNAH POWER	245,969	47,974	29	0.192	0.197	0.192	0.197	0.192	0.005	2.904	0.197	0.196	0.198	0.100	132,953,824
OM0000003661	VOLTAMP ENERGY	479,456	83,821	71	0.172	0.176	0.172	0.176	0.173	0.003	1.734	0.176	0.175	0.190	0.010	176,000,000
OM000001509	DHOFAR INT'L DEVELOPMENT & INVEST	38,039	10,741	14	0.288	0.288	0.280	0.284	0.280	0.004	1.429	0.284	0.282	0.283	0.100	140,879,944
OM0000005983	PHOENIX POWER	255,284	72,806	41	0.282	0.289	0.282	0.286	0.282	0.004	1.418	0.286	0.286	0.286	0.100	418,304,018
OM0000002549	BANK DHOFAR	15,000	3,300	16	0.220	0.220	0.220	0.220	0.217	0.003	1.382	0.220	0.218	0.225	0.100	688,735,677
OM0000017077	OMAN CABLES INDUSTRY	15,690	33,790	38	3.420	3.435	3.420	3.435	3.395	0.040	1.178	3.435	3.410	3.435	0.100	308,119,500
OM0000009908	OQBASE INDUSTRIES (SF2)	67,791,769	17,496,944	1,872	0.256	0.260	0.256	0.259	0.256	0.003	1.172	0.259	0.250	0.259	0.040	896,008,130
OM0000003398	SOHAR INTERNATIONAL BANK	72,821,448	13,555,737	1,514	0.185	0.185	0.185	0.187	0.185	0.002	1.081	0.187	0.187	0.187	0.100	1,435,413,061
OM0000004768	MADINA TAKAFUL	54,390	6,037	8	0.111	0.111	0.111	0.111	0.110	0.001	0.909	0.111	0.110	0.111	0.100	18,425,000
OM000001749	OMAN CEMENT	2,454	1,443	6	0.586	0.594	0.586	0.594	0.589	0.005	0.949	0.594	0.570	0.594	0.100	196,538,390
OM0000010120	ASTAD SHIPPING	5,244,312	1,296,337	1,396	0.247	0.249	0.245	0.248	0.246	0.002	0.813	0.248	0.247	0.248	0.000	1,291,768,581
OM0000008934	ABRAJ ENERGY SERVICES	1,183,519	487,557	117	0.410	0.418	0.410	0.412	0.410	0.002	0.488	0.412	0.412	0.412	0.100	317,322,400
OM0000002796	BANK MUSCAT	4,664,909	1,923,608	712	0.412	0.415	0.410	0.413	0.412	0.001	0.243	0.413	0.415	0.413	0.100	3,100,141,987
OM0000001087	OMAN UNITED INSURANCE	177,590	55,941	8	0.315	0.315	0.315	0.315	0.315	0.000	0.000	0.315	0.284	0.315	0.100	33,075,000
OM0000001483	NATIONAL BANK OMAN	5,000	2,450	1	0.490	0.490	0.490	0.490	0.490	0.000	0.000	0.490	0.489	0.490	0.100	798,713,714
OM0000001681	OMAN EMIRATES HO.	14,700	1,896	1	0.129	0.129	0.129	0.129	0.129	0.000	0.000	0.129	0.121	0.132	0.100	16,507,969
OM0000002176	JAZEERA STEEL PRODUCTS	20,000	18,000	1	0.900	0.900	0.900	0.900	0.900	0.000	0.000	0.900	0.900	0.935	0.100	112,408,164
OM0000002226	ALJAZEERA SERVICES	3,100	775	5	0.250	0.250	0.250	0.250	0.250	0.000	0.000	0.250	0.248	0.250	0.100	10,710,748
OM0000002374	UNITED FINANCE	70,580	6,171	6	0.080	0.088	0.080	0.088	0.088	0.008	0.088	0.088	0.088	0.088	0.100	31,338,202
OM0000003125	GLOBAL FINANCIAL INVESTMENT HO.	662,990	224,754	7	0.339	0.339	0.339	0.339	0.339	0.000	0.000	0.339	0.339	0.339	0.100	67,800,000
OM0000003234	RENAISSANCE SERVICES	32,900	9,106	7	0.276	0.277	0.276	0.277	0.277	0.000	0.000	0.277	0.276	0.277	0.100	65,485,570
OM0000004735	SEMBOCORP SALALAH	159,827	41,284	22	0.258	0.259	0.258	0.258	0.258	0.000	0.000	0.258	0.259	0.259	0.100	246,279,563
OM0000007811	MUSANDAM POWER	313	106	1	0.340	0.340	0.340	0.340	0.340	0.000	0.000	0.340	0.340	0.344	0.100	23,932,600
OM0000002804	ASAFAA FOODS	815	696	2	0.750	0.750	0.749	0.749	0.750	-0.001	-0.133	0.749	0.745	0.749	0.100	89,880,000
OM0000003968	OOREDOO	64,600	20,619	14	0.322	0.322	0.321	0.321	0.322	-0.001	-0.311	0.321	0.321	0.325	0.100	298,953,098
OM0000003000	AI MAHA PETROLEUM PRODT'S MRKTNG	350	425	1	1.215	1.215	1.215	1.215	1.220	-0.005	-0.410	1.215	1.190	1.215	0.100	83,835,000
OM0000000972	OQ GAS NETWORKS	23,291,417	5,231,791	1,329	0.226	0.226	0.224	0.225	0.226	-0.001	-0.442	0.225	0.225	0.225	0.100	974,390,382
OM0000004248	SMN POWER HOLDING	1,000	188	1	0.188	0.188	0.188	0.188	0.188	-0.001	-0.529	0.188	0.188	0.207	0.100	27,531,493
OM0000004420	BANK NIZWA	187,145	27,281	31	0.147	0.147	0.145	0.146	0.147	-0.001	-0.680	0.146	0.145	0.146	0.100	326,595,143
OM0000003026	OMAN TELECOM	2,671,084	3,687,873	129	1.382	1.383	1.372	1.373	1.383	-0.010	-0.723	1.372	1.372	1.245	0.100	1,029,750,000
OM0000001772	ALANWAR INVESTMENT	17,796	3,293	4	0.185	0.185	0.185	0.185	0.188	-0.003	-1.596	0.185	0.172	0.188	0.100	56,888,261
OM0000000870	BARKA DESALINATION	2,245	361	3	0.181	0.181	0.180	0.180	0.184	-0.004	-2.439	0.180	0.161	0.184	0.100	12,083,500
OM0000000752	OQ EXPLORATION AND PRODUCTION	10,650,680	4,946,127	446	0.468	0.468	0.458	0.463	0.477	-0.014	-2.935	0.463	0.460	0.463	0.010	3,704,000,000
Total		35	191,264,443	49,400,451	7,908											

Parallel Market

OM0000006979	OMAN QATAR INSURANCE	11710	2109	5	0.180	0.187	0.180	0.187	0.170	0.017	10.000	0.187	0.186	0.187	0.100	30,147,873
OM0000001020	OMAN CHROMITE	170	649	2	3.630	3.950	3.630	3.950	3.630	0.320	8.815	3.950	3.700	0.000	0.000	14,338,500
OM0000003281	TAGEER FINANCE	100	12	1	0.118	0.118	0.118	0.118	0.113	0.005	4.425	0.118	0.102	0.118	0.100	33,475,513
OM0000002648	NATIONAL FINANCE	170	37	1	0.220	0.220	0.220	0.220	0.212	0.008	3.774	0.220	0.212	0.220	0.100	143,152,987
OM0000011151	OMIFCO	15,956,019	3,294,116	962	0.204	0.208	0.204	0.207	0.204	0.003	1.471	0.207	0.207	0.207	0.000	1,384,700,625
OM0000002028	GULF INTERNATIONAL CHEMICALS	44,125	3,130	6	0.070	0.071	0.070	0.071	0.070	0.001	1.429	0.071	0.068	0.071	0.100	1,491,000
OM0000007084	MUSCAT CITY DESALINATION	2,500	223	1	0.089	0.089	0.089	0.088	0.088	0.001	1.136	0.089	0.088	0.092	0.100	13,843,986
OM0000002200	AHLI BANK	7,100	1,434	3	0.202	0.202	0.202	0.202	0.200	0.002	1.000	0.202	0.195	0.220	0.100	561,214,765
OM0000001897	MAJAN COLLEGE	7,300	1,019	4	0.139	0.141	0.139	0.141	0.140	0.001	0.714	0.141	0.138	0.139	0.100	13,959,000
OM0000001983	OMAN GATEWAY FUND	21,700	22,611	4	1.042	1.042	1.042	1.040	1.040	0.002	0.192	1.042	1.042	1.045	0.000	28,576,685
OM0000001301	DHOFAR FOODS AND INVESTMENT	10,000	2,200	4	0.220	0.220	0.220	0.220	0.220	0.000	0.000	0.220	0.200	0.219	0.100	43,488,923
OM0000001426	OMAN REFRESHMENT	275	303	1	1.100	1.100	1.100	1.100	1.100	0.000	0.000	1.100	1.050	1.100	0.100	55,000,000
OM0000001889	SALALAH MILLS	7,500	4,465	5	0.599	0.600	0.599	0.600	0.600	0.000	0.000	0.600	0.540	0.600	0.100	37,477,838
OM0000002168	AL ANWAR CERAMIC	100,176	15,238	24	0.140	0.140	0.138	0.138	0.138	0.000	0.000	0.138	0.138	0.140	0.100	30,360,000
OM0000002275	SHELL OMAN MARKETING	90	68	2	0.755	0.755	0.755	0.755	0.755	0.000	0.000	0.755	0.755	0.800	0.100	71,725,000
OM0000002233	SALALAH PORT SERVICES	2,000	952	2	0.476	0.476	0.476	0.476	0.476	0.000	0.000	0.476	0.445	0.476	0.100	85,602,602
OM0000003521	GALFAR ENGINEERING & CONTRACTING	22,784.2	33,768	24	0.151	0.151	0.147	0.148	0.148	0.000	0.000	0.148	0.147	0.148	0.100	30,041,996
OM0000004787	FAKAR OMAN FUND	4,500	390	2	0.090	0.091	0.090	0.091	0.090	0.001	0.300	0.091	0.090	0.090	0.100	15,497,000
OM0000005005	ALMAHA CERAMICS	2,121	607	1	0.286	0.286	0.286	0.286	0.286	0.000	0.000	0.286	0.260	0.314	0.100	15,730,000
OM0000005390	OMAN ARAB BANK	690,000	170,940	50	0.259	0.259	0.259	0.259	0.259	0.000	0.000	0.259	0.258	0.259	0.100	518,710,000
OM0000007047	DHOFAR GENERATING	38,400	3,072	5	0.080	0.080	0.080	0.080	0.080	0.000	0.000	0.080	0.080	0.081	0.100	17,779,200
OM0000007910	OMAN REAL ESTATE	4,678,747	336,736	7	0.070	0.072	0.070	0.070	0.070	0.000	0.000	0.070	0.069	0.070	0.100	14,000,000
OM0000008447	OMAN REIT FUND	22,480	2,385	8	0.107	0.107	0.106	0.106	0.106	0.000	0.000	0.106	0.105	0.106	0.100	89,222,313
OM0000009569	JABAL REIT	30,672	3,283	5	0.107	0.108	0.107	0.107	0.107	0.000	0.000	0.107	0.104	0.107	0.100	18,618,000
OM0000008868	THE PEARL REIT	557	102	3	0.183	0.183	0.183	0.184	0.184	0.001	0.543	0.183	0.181	0.183	0.100	108,236,942
OM0000009400	OMAN FLOUR MILLS	1,011	391	2	0.585	0.585	0.585	0.585	0.590	0.005	0.847	0.585	0.540	0.585	0.100	101,381,580
OM0000010169	NATIONAL GAS	2,948	98,315	0.111	0.112	0.112	0.112	0.112	0.112	0.001	0.430	0.112	0.111	0.111	0.100	3,141,500
OM0000003711	SOHAR POWER	190	41	1	0.218	0.218	0.218	0.218	0.220	0.002	0.909	0.218	0.212	0.240	0.100	4,360,000
OM0000001962	AL MADINA INVESTMENT HOLDING	178,180	13,005	12	0.074	0.074	0.072	0.073	0.074	0.001	1.351	0.073	0.072	0.073	0.100	3,146,300
OM0000004669	SHARQIA DESALINATION	300	48	1	0.160	0.160	0.160	0.160	0.165	0.005	3.030	0.160	0.160	0.167	0.100	15,648,340
Total		30,263,650	3,916,511	1,160												



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Chinese President Xi puts forward four-point proposal at SCO Bishkek summit

Over the past 25 years, the SCO has gone through an extraordinary journey, Xi said, noting that its most significant achievement has been its gradual transformation into a new type of regional cooperation organisation

BISHKEK: Chinese President Xi Jinping on Tuesday put forward a four-point proposal at the 26th Meeting of the Council of Heads of State of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in the Kyrgyz capital of Bishkek.

In his speech at the summit, Xi said this year marks the 25th founding anniversary of the SCO. He pointed out that 25 years ago, safeguarding sovereignty, security and development interests became a shared consensus among countries in the region in the face of the profound lessons of the Cold War, the real threat posed by the “three evil forces,” as well as the strong aspirations of people in various countries for peace and develop-



ment. The SCO thus emerged, and the organisation has increasingly demonstrated its strong vitality and dynamism, Xi added.

Over the past 25 years, the SCO has gone through an extraordinary journey, Xi said, noting that its most significant achievement has been its gradual transformation into a new type of regional cooperation organisation that spans the largest geographical area, represents the largest population, and possesses enormous development potential in the world.

The SCO's most valuable spiritual asset is the pioneering proposal and steadfast adherence to the “Shanghai Spirit” of mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality, consultation, respect for diversity of civilizations and pursuit of common development, he said.

The SCO's most important ex-

perience for cooperation is that it has found the right way of coexistence featuring non-alliances, non-confrontation and not targeting any third party, while bringing countries in the region together to build a common home, he added.

Xi said that 25 years on, as profound changes unseen in a century are accelerating, the rivalry is intensifying between dialogue and confrontation, win-win cooperation and zero-sum, and multilateralism and unilateralism, and the shadow of war continues to haunt the world.

At the crossroads concerning the future of humanity, the SCO should shoulder its historic responsibility and take the initiative in steering the course of history, he said.

Xi called on the SCO to stay committed to putting development

first, and open up the prospects for shared prosperity.

The SCO, Xi said, should champion a universally beneficial and inclusive economic globalisation, consolidate cooperation in traditional areas such as trade and investment, connectivity, energy and resources, and expand cooperation in emerging areas such as artificial intelligence, digital economy, green industry and green mining.

China sees the SCO as a priority area for the high-quality joint construction of the Belt and Road and implementation of the Global Development Initiative, and will continue to host events such as the SCO Digital Economy Forum and the SCO Agricultural Expo, Xi said.

China will also establish an international cooperation centre on AI applications for SCO countries, set up a China-SCO port economy

cooperation center in Tianjin, and jointly implement 100 technological cooperation projects with SCO countries over the next three years, Xi added.

Xi urged the SCO to stay committed to taking security as a key goal, and foster an environment of common security.

The SCO should coordinate to counter traditional and non-traditional security threats, combat the “three evil forces,” transnational organised crime, drug trafficking and telecommunications fraud, strengthen cooperation on information security, bio-security and outer space security, and prevent external forces from interfering in the internal affairs, endangering political security and undermining regional stability, Xi noted.

Xi said China stands ready to work with all parties to act on the

vision of a common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security, and build the SCO into an important platform for implementing the Global Security Initiative.

China supports the early opening of the SCO's “four security centers” so as to enhance the capacity of member countries to address security threats and challenges, Xi said.

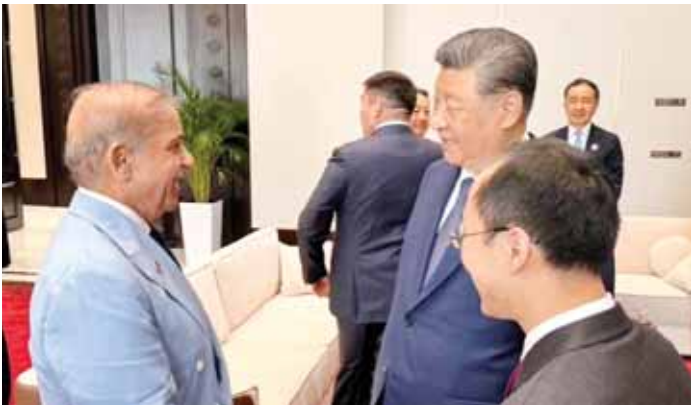
Xi also called on the grouping to put people first, and cement the foundation for everlasting friendship.

The SCO should take into account the characteristics of each member state's history, culture, social system and development stage, build cooperation networks between legislatures, political parties, schools, think tanks, enterprises and media, promote people-to-people exchanges, and inject vitality into the good-neighbourliness and friendship among member states, he said. China is willing to work with all parties to implement the Global Civilization Initiative, and supports a greater role of the SCO Good-Neighbourliness, Friendship and Cooperation Commission and other organizations of friendly people-to-people exchanges, Xi said.

The Chinese side will set up a China-SCO basic education cooperation center, and continue to build bridges for exchanges and mutual learning as well as people-to-people connectivity through such programs as Confucius Institutes and Luban Workshops, he added.

Xi also urged the SCO to promote dialogue and consultation, and strive for more equitable and orderly governance. — Xinhua

ON SCO SIDELINES



Pakistan PM holds informal meetings with world leaders

BISHKEK: Pakistan Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday held informal meetings with several world leaders, discussing key bilateral, regional and international matters.

The informal interactions were held on the sidelines of the 26th Summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)'s Council of Heads of State held in Bishkek.

The prime minister remained a central figure during these interactions, which were held in a warm and cordial atmosphere.

PM Shehbaz holds informal interactions with world leaders on SCO sidelines

The leaders who participated in these informal meetings included Chinese President Xi Jinping, Russian President Vladimir

Putin, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Iranian President Dr. Masoud Pezeshkian, Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko, Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, Tajik President Emomali Rahmon, and Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev.

PM Shehbaz holds informal interactions with world leaders on SCO sidelines

Earlier, as the prime minister arrived at the venue of the summit, he was warmly received by President of Kyrgyzstan Sadyr Nurgozhoevich Zhaparov followed by a handshake.

He later posed for a group photo along with other participating leaders of 10 member states before start of the formal proceedings of the meeting. — AFP

IN BISHKEK

SCO summit yields 13 outcomes

BISHKEK: Prime Minister Narendra Modi's participation in the 26th Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Summit in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, concluded with 13 key outcomes, including the adoption of the historic Bishkek Declaration alongside four MoUs and over 20 decisions, agreeing to adopt English as an official SCO language and establish a new Universal Centre for Countering Security Threats.

According to the Ministry of External Affairs, these outcomes provide India a strategic platform to articulate its positions on regional security, development, and connectivity while strengthening its engagement across Central Asia and the wider Eurasian region.

The summit adopted the core Bishkek Declaration on the 25th Anniversary of the SCO, consolidating member states' positions on regional security and development.

In a fundamental institutional move, leaders approved the Protocol on Amendments and Additions to the Charter of the Shanghai Co-



operation Organisation of June 7, 2002. The MEA noted that this enables India to actively participate in shaping the SCO's evolving institutional framework, ensures India's interests are appropriately reflected in the organisation's future functioning, and supports the formal inclusion of English within the SCO framework.

On regional counter-terrorism and security, member states approved the Regulations on the Universal Centre for Countering Challenges and Threats to the Security of SCO Member States. This

decision enhances joint cooperation against terrorism, extremism, organised crime, and other transnational threats while strengthening security information exchange.

To target law enforcement, drug trafficking, and organised crime, the summit finalised four separate outcomes. Leaders approved the Regulations on the Executive Committee of the SCO Anti-Narcotics Centre, supporting India's efforts against cross-border narcotics trafficking and narco-terrorism while facilitating inter-agency coordination. Member states established the Programme of Cooperation among SCO Member States in Combating Drug Addiction until 2030, complementing India's drug-demand reduction efforts and enabling the exchange of best practices in prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation.

The summit also adopted the Programme of SCO Member States on Coordination of Measures to Combat the Proliferation of Synthetic Drugs and their Precursors for the period up to 2030 to address synthetic drug diversion

and improve operational coordination among enforcement agencies. Additionally, governments signed a Protocol on amendments and additions to the Agreement on cooperation in combating crime of June 11, 2010, reinforcing law enforcement coordination against organised and cross-border crime.

On energy and climate, SCO member states signed three major agreements. A statement on developing cooperation in the field of energy conservation and energy efficiency was endorsed to support India's energy-security objectives and enable technology exchanges. Leaders adopted a Statement on the Development of Cooperation in the Field of Energy Systems to promote the development, modernisation, and resilience of energy systems across member countries. Governments further concluded a Memorandum on cooperation in combating climate change, providing an additional platform for climate adaptation, technology cooperation, and climate-resilient development aligned with India's development priorities. — ANI

TIMES SQUARE IN NYC

1 dead, 1 wounded in ‘unprovoked’ stabbing

NEW YORK CITY: A woman with two kitchen knives fatally stabbed one person and wounded another in New York City's popular Times Square on Monday before police shot and killed her, officials said.

The knife attack occurred just before 4:30pm near a police substation outside One Times Square, the building known for hosting the city's annual New Year's Eve ball drop.

New York City Police Commissioner Jessica Tisch said the 49-year-old suspect from the bor-

ough of Queens pulled the knives from a shopping bag and stabbed a 68-year-old man in the abdomen as he exited a subway station with his wife. She then attacked a 32-year-old woman, stabbing her in the abdomen. Both victims were hospitalised, with the young woman dying of her wounds. The older man is currently in stable condition, police said.

Officers surrounded the suspect and attempted to get her to drop the knives before deploying a Taser, which also failed to stop her, according to Tisch. — DW

WICKLOW: European Union (EU) foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas urged nations possessing air defence interceptors nearing their expiry date to donate them to Ukraine, emphasising that the country lacks the necessary hardware to safeguard civilians as it faces a brutal war with Russia.

Addressing an informal gathering of EU defence ministers upon her arrival in Wicklow, Ireland, Kallas stated, “The main issue is air defence. They are lacking interceptors.”

Further, she said, “We know that some of the countries have interceptors that will expire soon. So, it would be very good if those would be given to Ukraine so that they can use them to protect their people”.

Highlighting the urgency of these supplies, Kallas noted that July and August marked the deadliest periods for civilians, stating that “Russia is really escalating to hurt the people of Ukraine as much as possible to break them”.

An overnight Russian air of-



fensive targeted Ukraine's capital, Kyiv, and its surrounding areas, killing at least 12 people, including an Indian national, and injuring over a dozen others.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky took to his social media to state, “Overall, 12 people were killed, among them an Indian citizen, and dozens more were injured in the attack.” He also offered his condolences to those who lost their loved ones.

This major aerial assault on the broader Kyiv region marked the sixth successive day of attacks on the Ukrainian capital that came

at a time when Russian President Vladimir Putin was in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, for the 26th Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Summit, where he met with Prime Minister Modi to address regional and global matters.

According to President Zelensky, the offensive deployed a high volume of jet-powered drones and ballistic missiles, damaging residential buildings and civilian infrastructure.

The Ukrainian leader further asserted that Russia's bombardments were deliberately planned “to destroy lives as much as possible --and it succeeds only when air defence resources are insufficient”.

Locked in war with Russia since February 2022, Ukraine currently confronts a severe deficit of interceptor missiles, particularly American-built Patriot systems used against ballistic threats.

Moscow has capitalised upon this worldwide shortage of air defence interceptor missiles, largely linked to the US war in Iran, to in-

tensify its aerial bombardments.

Beyond the capital, Moscow has drastically elevated both the frequency and severity of drone strikes targeting export infrastructure in the Odesa region, blocking primary Black Sea ports that once handled 90 per cent of the nation's exports and forcing Kyiv to reroute cargo through lower-capacity Danube river ports and western border railway crossings.

Addressing these multifaceted security crises, Kallas outlined that the EU is simultaneously engaging with non-EU states to procure interceptors for Kyiv and working collaboratively with Ukraine to manufacture European interceptors.

Alongside the immediate focus on Ukraine, the ministerial agenda in Ireland also covered space capabilities, maritime security in the Strait of Hormuz, the protection of vital undersea infrastructure, and a potential European mission to support the Lebanese armed forces.



LIFESTYLE

FROM
TEARS TO
TRIUMPH:



MESSI'S
EMOTIONAL
FAREWELL
TO ARGENTINA

BUENOS AIRES: Lionel Messi has announced his retirement from international football at the age of 39, bringing an extraordinary 21-year career with Argentina to an emotional close following the team's defeat to Spain in the 2026 FIFA World Cup final.

Messi confirmed the decision on Monday through a heartfelt message on social media. Although he had written the farewell shortly after Argentina's 1-0 extra-time defeat to Spain in the World Cup final on July 19, he waited until August 31 to publish it. The recent death of his father, Jorge Messi, further strengthened his decision to step away from the national team.

"Little time remains and chapters keep ending, and this is one that really hurts me. I love, have loved, and will always love being part of the national team. I gave everything I had; I have nothing left to give," Messi wrote, while also pointing to the emergence of a new generation of Argentine players who deserve an opportunity.

Messi ends his Argentina career as the country's record appearance-maker and leading goalscorer. According to Reuters, he leaves with 207 appearances and 125 goals, having made his senior debut in 2005. He also became one of the defining figures in South American football history.

From painful defeats to international glory
For much of Messi's early international career, Argentina's greatest player was haunted by near misses. He reached the 2007 Copa America final and later suffered defeats in the 2014 World Cup final and the 2015 and 2016 Copa America finals. The 2014 defeat

to Germany was particularly painful, while the back-to-back Copa America final losses to Chile pushed Messi to announce his first international retirement in 2016.

That decision lasted only 66 days
Messi returned to the national team and continued his pursuit of the major international trophy that had eluded him. The breakthrough finally came at the 2021 Copa America, when Argentina defeated Brazil at the Maracana to end a 28-year wait for a senior men's international title.

The triumph transformed the relationship between Messi and Argentina. A year later, he went one step further.

World Cup glory in Qatar
At the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar, Messi finally achieved the greatest ambition of his career. Argentina defeated France in one of the most dramatic finals in World Cup history. The match finished 3-3 after extra time before Argentina prevailed on penalties, giving the country its first World Cup since 1986 and its third overall.

His international honours include:

- 2022 FIFA World Cup
- 2021 Copa America
- 2024 Copa America
- 2022 Finalissima
- 2008 Olympic gold medal
- 2005 FIFA U-20 World Cup

He also finishes his career as Argentina's leading scorer and most-capped player.

Messi scored twice in the final and converted his penalty in the shootout, completing a tournament in which he played a central role in Argentina's campaign. The victory also changed the narrative surrounding his international career. After years of comparisons with Diego Maradona and criticism that he had not

delivered a World Cup for Argentina, Messi finally lifted football's biggest trophy.

Argentina subsequently won the 2024 Copa America, giving Messi another major international title and extending the country's remarkable run under coach Lionel Scaloni.

One final World Cup

Messi returned for what would prove to be his sixth and final World Cup in 2026.

Despite being 39, he remained a key figure for Argentina as the team reached the final once again. Messi scored eight goals during the tournament and finished his World Cup career with 21 goals.

Argentina ultimately lost 1-0 to Spain after extra time in the final at the New York New Jersey Stadium on July 19. It was Messi's final appearance for the national team.

FIFA noted that Messi's final tournament was a particularly emotional one. Despite being physically less dominant than in his younger years, his experience, movement and ability to influence matches remained crucial to Argentina's run.

His World Cup career spanned six editions, beginning in Germany in 2006 and ending in 2026.

Father's death adds to emotional farewell

Messi's decision to retire came against the backdrop of the death of his father, Jorge Messi, who died in Rosario on August 8 at the age of 68.

Messi had written his retirement message on July 21, only two days after the World Cup final, but said that his father's death left him even more convinced that the time had come to close the chapter.

Messi's mother, Celia Cuccitini, said the entire family was struggling emotionally with the timing of the events.

She recalled that Jorge had often wondered what he would do once his son stopped playing for Argentina.

"What am I going to do when he stops playing?" Jorge had asked, according to comments reported by América TV. Celia said the two events ultimately happened almost simultaneously.

Antonela pays tribute to her husband

Messi's wife, Antonela Roccuzzo, also shared an emotional message after the announcement.

She reflected on the years she had spent watching Messi experience both the greatest victories and the most difficult defeats of his career.

Antonela said she was especially moved by the fact that their children had been able to witness their father's entire journey — including his determination to overcome setbacks and eventually win the World Cup.

She described herself as proud of Messi's achievements, his journey and, above all, the person behind the footballer.

A legacy that will be difficult to match

Messi leaves the Argentina national team with a collection of records and achievements that place him among the country's greatest sporting figures. FIFA described his departure as the closing of a defining chapter in Argentina's football history, noting that he leaves as a World Cup winner and as the central figure of the country's successful era under Scaloni.

Infantino praises Messi

FIFA President Gianni Infantino paid tribute to Messi following the announcement, praising his extraordinary international career and influence on football.

Infantino highlighted Messi's World Cup triumph, records with Argentina and ability to bring supporters together across the world.

The Argentine Football Association also paid tribute to its captain, thanking him for what it described as an unforgettable journey and for the memories created while wearing the national shirt.

Club football continues

Messi's international retirement does not mean the end of his playing career.

The Argentine superstar will continue to represent Inter Miami in Major League Soccer. His decision therefore marks the end of his Argentina chapter rather than an immediate retirement from professional football.

For Argentina, however, the era of Messi in the famous No. 10 shirt is over.

From the heartbreak of four lost major finals to the joy of finally lifting the Copa America and World Cup trophies, Messi's journey with Argentina became one of football's greatest stories of perseverance and redemption.

He leaves the national team having fulfilled the dream that once seemed impossible: becoming a world champion for Argentina.

And after more than two decades, the player who carried the country's hopes through generations will now watch the next generation carry them forward.

SPORTS

Saka nets winner as Arsenal beat Villa to maintain a perfect start



The 59th minute goal turned out to be the decisive strike for the Premier League champions on Monday

BIRMINGHAM: Bukayo Saka scored the only goal as Premier League champions Arsenal came away from Aston Villa with all three points.

The England international slid the ball into a near-empty net from Riccardo Calafiori's cutback; this

was the first shot on target in the 59th minute.

Villa went close in the first half when Emiliano Buendia's shot hit the crossbar, although a goal may well have been disallowed for a foul had the ball found the net.

Not long before Arsenal's goal,

they were awarded a penalty for an Ian Maatsen foul on Saka, but a video assistant referee review found the incident happened outside the box so it was overturned and a free-kick awarded instead.

Kai Havertz forced a save from Villa's debutant goalkeeper Zion Suzuki as the Gunners tried to make the win safe.

Arsenal sent on England defender Ezri Konsa for a second-half debut against his former club, and he received a good reaction from Villa fans 10 days after his departure.

Mikel Arteta's Arsenal move to six points with their win, while it is back-to-back defeats for Aston Villa, who have lost a large

chunk of last season's team.

Arsenal were never likely to have it as easy as they did in the 3-0 opening-day win over Coventry City, but they did more than enough to merit the three points here. Shots and clear chances were at a premium - they only had two shots on target, which was two more than Villa.

Off target

Gabriel Magalhaes and Saka had efforts off target in the first half.

They thought they were going to have a penalty when Saka was fouled by Maatsen, but VAR made it a free-kick instead, which Martin Odegaard curled just wide.

The goal came when Eberechi Eze, a half-time substitute for the booked Christos Tzolis, fed Calafiori and the left-back laid the ball on a plate for Saka to score for the third time at Villa Park in his Premier League career.

One negative for Arsenal was a second-half injury for Cristhian Mosquera, who was replaced by £55m centre-back Konsa.

The 28-year-old Konsa became the first player to make his debut for Arsenal against the team they signed him from since Petr Cech against Chelsea in August 2015.

Declan Rice also limped off late on, but it was not immediately

clear whether that was going to be an issue.

The win kept Arsenal joint top of the table, one of four teams with six points from two games, and left Villa pointless and, more worryingly for coach Unai Emery, without a shot on target so far.

More than half of the players who started Villa's Europa Cup win in May have since left the club and Emery faces a daunting rebuild.

Two of his new signings started against Arsenal: Nicolas Jackson taking the striker's role and Zion Suzuki replacing goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez. - Agencies

PREMIER LEAGUE

Man City bolster attacking options with twin signings

MANCHESTER: Manchester City signed Brazilian winger Allan and reportedly reached an agreement to purchase Senegal forward Iliman Ndiaye on Monday in an effort to strengthen their attacking options late in the transfer window.

The 22-year-old Allan moved from Palmeiras for US\$46 million and takes the place in the City squad vacated by Savio, who joined Tottenham last week. He is likely to have the same role as his compatriot - as a backup winger.

Allan has never played for Brazil or for any of his country's age-group teams, so he arrives as a somewhat low-profile signing.

"This is a surreal moment for me," Allan said in a City statement, in which he said it was an easy decision to move to the club.

"Manchester City, with everything they have won over the past 15 years, are one of the most attractive clubs in the world for players. To be able to sit here today and say I have joined them is the proudest moment of my life."

City is set to pay Everton an initial fee of US\$81 million for Ndi-



aye plus \$6.8 million in potential add-ons, according to reports.

Ndiaye, who can play on either wing, has played for Everton since joining from Marseille in 2024.

City director of football Hugo Viana described Allan as "a really exciting" winger and a team player.

"We watched his progress in Brazil and saw a player that thrives in the big moments and works hard for the team with a superb attitude," Viana said. - Agencies



EUROPEAN LEAGUES

Yamal, Raphinha shine as Barcelona hammer five

BARCELONA: Raphinha and Lamine Yamal both scored twice as Barcelona beat Rayo Vallecano 5-2 to make it three wins out of three in Spanish La Liga on Monday. Brazil's Raphinha is the first player to score five goals in the first three La Liga games of a season since Lionel Messi for Barcelona in 2017, while 19-year-old Lamine Yamal's double took him past 50 goals for the club. Barcelona's early games have come in the space of nine days, crammed in after starting late because of the amount of World Cup players in their squad.

Rayo actually led Monday's game through Sergio Camello's tidy first-time effort, but Raphinha levelled when he showed good footwork before slotting into the bottom corner. Lamine Yamal blasted a pile-driver in from just inside the box to put Barca ahead. Florian Lejeune then turned fellow former Newcastle player Anthony Gordon's cross into his own net.

Camello's header gave Rayo hope again, before England forward Gordon's backheel found Raphinha to make it 4-2.

Spain teenager Lamine Yamal



Malen keeps scoring for Roma

In Serie A, Donyell Malen took his season tally to five in two games as Roma went to Lecce and won 4-0.

Malen, who scored a hat-trick in Roma's opening win over Fiorentina, had Roma 2-0 up midway through the first half, and Matias Soule added a third before half-time. Rodrigo Mora completed the scoring 20 minutes into the second half as Roma established its title credentials early.

The result, a second consecutive 4-0 win for the capital club, lifted Roma to the top of Serie A after two games.

Later, Atalanta sneaked past Bologna thanks to a stoppage time goal from Lazar Samardzic.

Neither side convinced in an ordinary encounter and it wasn't until stoppage time that Samardzic's long-range effort squirmed in past the Bologna goalkeeper.

The result was harsh on Bologna and left it pointless after two games.

Atalanta moved into the top five, one of six clubs with maximum points. - Agencies

Al Hilal, Benzema agree to terminate contract

JEDDAH: Former Ballon d'Or winner Karim Benzema of France is leaving Al Hilal just six months after joining from rival Al Ittihad.

The Saudi club said in a statement on Monday that they have agreed to mutually terminate their contract.

It's unclear whether the 38-year-old Benzema will join another club or retire.

The announcement of Benzema's departure came after England striker Ollie Watkins joined the list of high-profile departures from Aston Villa on Sunday to sign with Al Hilal for a reported \$69 million.

Benzema moved to Saudi Arabia in June 2023 when he left Real Madrid after 14 years and 648 games in which he scored 354 goals.

Benzema won a club record



25 titles with Madrid, including five Champions League trophies. He has 97 caps and 37 goals with France. - Agencies

SUMMER TRANSFER WINDOW

Barcola joins Liverpool in record \$166mn deal

LONDON: Liverpool finalised the most expensive transfer of the summer window by signing Bradley Barcola from Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) on Monday in a deal worth US\$166 million.

Liverpool secured their main target of the summer after a months-long pursuit of a speedy 23-year-old France international who is coming off winning back-to-back Champions League titles with PSG but mainly as an impact substitute, backing up Desiré Doué.

Now Barcola will expect to be a key part of an expensively assembled Liverpool attack that also includes striker Alexander Isak and Florian Wirtz, who were signed last summer for US\$170 million and US\$156 million, respectively.

"It took a long time," Barcola said in a Liverpool statement after signing what the club described as a long-term contract, "but I'm really happy today to be able to play for Liverpool and all I want is to be on the pitch and be able to play."

Barcola is primarily a left wing-



er so isn't a like-for-like replacement for Liverpool great Mohamed Salah, who played on the right for nine years before leaving for Trabzonspor to end a trophy-laden spell at Anfield.

The deal will see Liverpool paying \$143 million for Barcola, who was part of the France team which lost in the semi-finals to Spain at the World Cup this summer, and up to an additional \$23 million in potential add-ons.

Barcola joined PSG for 45 million euros (\$38.5 million) from Lyon in 2023. The fee sets a record for a player leaving the French league.

Liverpool will also play in the Champions League this season.

According to football industry website Transfermarkt, Barcola comes in at No.10 in the list of most expensive transfers of all time, in euros.

The up-front base fee of 125

million euros is far below the 222 million euros that PSG paid Barcelona for Neymar in August 2017, which doubled the then-world-record outlay of Manchester United to sign Paul Pogba from Juventus a year earlier. That fee for Neymar remains the world record nearly a decade on.

A few weeks after buying Neymar, PSG also secured a loan deal for Kylian Mbappé—then the rising star of French soccer playing for Monaco—that included the option to make the move permanent in 2018. PSG did so for 180 million euros, putting that at No. 2 in the all-time list.

English clubs have spent big this summer - but this is the biggest deal of the lot. The most expensive previously was Morgan Rogers, who left Aston Villa for Chelsea for \$156 million. Next is Elliot Anderson, who joined Man City from Nottingham Forest for \$155 million and then it's Sandro Tonali, who signed for Tottenham for \$133 million from Newcastle. - Agencies

ALCARAZ WINS ON RETURN; SABALENKA ADVANCES



Defending champions ease to straight set victories in the first round, with Alcaraz making a return after 139 days

NEW YORK: Defending men's champion Carlos Alcaraz did not miss a beat as he returned from a four-month injury absence with a straight-sets first-round victory in the US Open.

Out of action with a wrist injury since April, Alcaraz passed his first test with flying colours, beating Russian Roman Safiullin 6-4, 6-4, 6-4 at Arthur Ashe Stadium, where women's defending champion Aryna Sabalenka also made it safely into the second round on Monday.

"It's been a really tough five months for me," Alcaraz, the world No. 3, said.

"Being able to step on the Arthur Ashe, being able to compete again, I couldn't decide to come back in a better tournament. It's a really special place for me.

"I tried to enjoy as much as I can. I missed the crowd, I missed the energy, I missed competition. I missed everything."

Alcaraz is trying to bookend his season with major titles after his Australian Open triumph in January made him the youngest man to complete a career Grand Slam – the achievement of winning all Grand Slam titles.



Monday's performance might not have been peak Alcaraz, but the seven-time Grand Slam champion unleashed his powerful forehand with increasing confidence and displayed his familiar touch at the net. "I think the level of tennis is going to be better for sure," said Alcaraz, adding that he was most proud to have quelled his own doubts about his fitness. "I tried to forget everything, I tried to enjoy," the 23-year-old said.

Alcaraz's smooth progress into the second round came less than 24 hours after an ailing Novak Djokovic suffered his earliest Grand Slam exit in 20 years, falling in five brutal sets to Mariano Navone. The tournament was already missing top-ranked Jannik Sinner, who has a knee injury, and Djokovic's exit removed another

possible obstacle for Alcaraz, who could have met the Serb in the semifinals.

Aggressive Sabalenka

Sabalenka's bid for a rare US Open three-peat comes during a worrying drop in form, but the Belarusian star rose to the occasion in a 6-2, 6-4 victory over Camila Osorio.

Sabalenka was slowed by 23 unforced errors but belted 32 winners to more than compensate, her thunderous groundstrokes proved enough to see off a counter-punching opponent who stepped up her game in the second set.

"She brought the fight," Sabalenka said. "She battled really well, and I just tried to stay as aggressive as possible. "I think I played great. She's a tough opponent, makes you work really hard to get every point, so I'm happy that I was able to close the match in straight sets," she added.

World No.1 Sabalenka has not reached a final since capturing the prestigious "Sunshine Double" of Indian Wells and Miami in March.

"I feel like this is one of my favorite stadiums," Sabalenka told the crowd afterward. "I really experienced the best emotions here in this stadium."

Sabalenka changed up her look from last time she played on Ashe.

Her orange Nike outfit was covered by orange mesh, rather than the black mesh of last week in her mixed doubles match with Djokovic that drew some criticism on social media.

Sabalenka dismissed the comments, saying all that mattered was she loved it, and turns out the reason for the change was simple.

"To be honest, I didn't know that I have a day dress," she said. "I thought I have a black dress with orange underneath. I figured out when I went to Nike that I actually

have a day session and a night session, which is just like black and orange for the day."

Japan's Naomi Osaka was forced to dig deep before overcoming Russian first-round opponent Anastasia Zakharova 7-6 (8/6), 7-6 (7/3) in just more than two hours in a late-night duel. Poland's six-time Grand Slam singles champion Iga Swiatek sailed into the second round with a straight-sets victory over China's Wang Xiyu.

Eighth-seeded Swiatek, who defeated Sabalenka on the way to her lone US Open triumph in 2022, eased past Wang 6-2, 6-3 in 1hr 28min. No. 26 seed Emma Navarro outlasted Lois Boisson 7-6 (6), 6-7 (1), 6-3 in a first-round match that began on Sunday but was not completed until Monday because of rain.

Tsitsipas advances

Frenchman Arthur Fils, flying high after his first ATP Masters



title in Cincinnati, was brought back to earth by Greece's Stefanos Tsitsipas 4-6, 7-6 (7/3), 6-1, 6-4. Tsitsipas bagged his first win over 22-year-old Fils in six encounters.

"I am speechless, I don't know what to say," said Tsitsipas, a former top five player who has slumped to 53 in the world. "It's an amazing start to the tournament."

Canadian third seed Felix Auger-Aliassime also advanced, defeating Australia's Rinky Hijikata 7-5, 4-6, 6-3, 7-5.

American eighth seed Ben Shelton overcame a rocky start before booking his place in the second round with a 1-6, 6-1, 7-6 (7/3), 6-2 defeat of the Netherlands' Tallon Griekspoor in the night match on Arthur Ashe.

Shelton looked out of sorts as Griekspoor roared through the first set with three breaks of serve but turned the tables to win in 2hr 35min. - Agencies

THREE-TIME SLAM WINNER

Wawrinka bids goodbye after final Grand Slam match

NEW YORK: Three-time Grand Slam champion Stan Wawrinka received an emotional farewell at the US Open on Monday as his final appearance at a major ended with a 6-7(4), 6-7(3), 0-6 defeat to Matteo Berrettini. The 41-year-old is set to retire at the end of the season.

Wawrinka's exit carried extra weight given his history in New York.

It was here in 2016 that he won the third of his three Grand Slam titles, beating Novak Djokovic in the final. Monday's defeat on Grandstand marked his last appearance at a major tournament.

"It has been 20 years since I first came to New York," Wawrinka said during the post-match ceremony.

"I remember the first time I came here. It was impressive for me to feel the New York vibe and the energy of this tournament."

The result did little to dampen the occasion as the packed crowd repeatedly rallied behind the Swiss throughout a fiercely contested opening two sets. Berrettini eventually pulled away in the third, but the night belonged to Wawrinka and the memories he had built in New York.

Wawrinka had chances to extend his farewell. After falling behind early in the opening set, he broke Berrettini while the Italian was serving for it and later earned a set point. Berrettini survived a lengthy game before taking the tie-break.



The second set followed a similar pattern. Wawrinka created seven break points, including three set points, but could not convert them. Berrettini held his nerve again in the tiebreak to move within one set of victory.

Wawrinka was unable to produce another fightback in the third. Berrettini secured three breaks and completed the win without dropping a game.

The crowd's response was perhaps the most touching part of Wawrinka's farewell. Their support, he said, was a major reason he continued his career into his 40s.

"But over the years, I have received so much support and love. Because of you [the fans] I really enjoyed it and I found a way to play my best tennis here," he said.

"Tonight, again, was the reason why I kept playing until 41. [It is

because of] the moments like you gave me tonight, like you gave us tonight. This is an amazing sport."

Wawrinka had initially missed out on a place in the singles draw before receiving a last-minute wildcard following Patrick Kypson's withdrawal. That gave him the chance to complete his Grand Slam farewell at the tournament where he lifted the trophy 10 years ago. "I am super grateful for the wild card because it was important for me to have the opportunity to finish playing all four Grand Slams here in New York," Wawrinka said. "I'm gonna miss it for sure. I'm gonna miss it big time."

Wawrinka finishes his US Open career with a 46-17 record, having also reached the semi-finals in 2013 and 2015. Berrettini advances to the second round, where he will face Mariano Navone. - Agencies

TEENAGE AMERICAN

Frodin: From playing Serena on screen to following in her footsteps

NEW YORK: Thea Frodin is playing her first US Open singles match against the No.2 player in women's tennis.

It's a big task for the 17-year-old, but Frodin hits the ball like Serena Williams. Well, like Serena Williams in the movies, anyway.

In the 2021 film "King Richard," Frodin was the body double for actor Demi Singleton, who played the younger Williams. Now, Frodin will play tennis on camera as herself on Wednesday when she faces Elena Rybakina.

"I've worked so hard to try and get to this level, and to have an opportunity like this is just really special for me," Frodin said on Monday in a phone interview.

Tournament tennis is what gave Frodin, who is from Los Angeles, the chance to reach the US Open. She won the USTA Billie Jean King Girls' 18s National Championships to earn a wild card into the field.

It's also what got her into the movies.

She was playing at the 10-and-under level in California and won the singles, doubles and mixed doubles sectional titles. She was then invited to audition for the part, in which she would be the on-court body double for Singleton.

"I was on set for six months and I got to be alongside some really cool actors and obviously Will



Smith, and just the whole experience was super cool for me," Frodin said. "And obviously to be able to play the double, or the role of somebody that I look up to and I have always been inspired by was truly, like, a very special experience for me."

Smith won an Oscar for his performance as Richard Williams, Venus and Serena's father.

Frodin found it fairly easy to replicate Serena Williams' swings because of how familiar she already was with them from

watching the 23-time Grand Slam singles champion's career. The problem, she found, was that it started to affect her in her day job.

"It's actually funny. After I was done with the movie, I actually got into the habit of using, or playing with her strokes, and I couldn't switch back to mine because I was so used to hers," Frodin said. "So my parents – I mean, obviously it's a great person to replicate – but my parents were a little bit upset because I was playing like Serena, so it took me a while to get back to my normal technique."

Frodin, who played in the US Open doubles last year, has not met Serena or Venus Williams.

The match against Rybakina will be her first at the WTA Tour level, having lost in the qualifying round earlier this year in Miami in her previous attempt. Frodin has a year left in high school and doesn't know her plans after that.

If Hollywood comes calling, she'd be interested.

"Obviously, my No. 1 focus always has been tennis, but I've always had this little thought in the back of my mind. I feel like it would be really cool if I could somehow balance both," Frodin said. "I mean, I loved every second of being in that kind of environment, of that kind of acting life. I enjoy it a lot and yeah, if it's even possible, I don't mind having that as a side gig, you know?" - Agencies

ROUND-UP

PDO extends partnership with Toyota, signs six-year fleet deal with Saud Bahwan Automotive

This contract marks another milestone in a proud 35-year partnership that began in 1991

MUSCAT: Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) and Saud Bahwan Automotive (SBA) have signed a major six-year contract for the Supply and Maintenance of Toyota Light Vehicles across PDO's operational network.

The agreement was executed by Eng. Moosa Al Sheriyani, Director of Logistics at PDO and Abdullah Mohamed Bahwan, CEO of Saud Bahwan Group.

This contract marks another milestone in a proud 35-year partnership that began in 1991. It once again entrusts Toyota with PDO's fleet operations for the next six years. At the core of this enduring relationship is the unmatched durability, safety and field-tested reliability of Toyota vehicles, which continue to prove their worth in Oman's most demanding desert terrains and tough operating conditions.

Long-standing confidence
The SBA team sustains PDO's long-standing confidence by complementing Toyota's performance

with comprehensive, high-standard operational and maintenance support, keeping PDO's field operations moving seamlessly day in and day out. Beyond operational excellence, both organisations remain deeply aligned on shared values and national priorities. Together, they are committed to empowering Omani talent in line with Oman Vision 2040, upholding non-negotiable "Goal Zero" safety standards and advancing PDO's decarbonisation journey through the induction of electric vehicles into the fleet.



SHOWCASES BANK'S RANGE OF BANKING, FINANCING AND DIGITAL SOLUTIONS

Salalah SME growth forum highlights BankDhofar's support for entrepreneurs and deepens relationships

MUSCAT: BankDhofar has strengthened its engagement with Oman's entrepreneurial community by hosting the SME Growth Forum in Salalah, under the auspices of His Highness Sayyid Marwan bin Turki Al Said, Governor of Dhofar, and in the presence of dignitaries, officials from BankDhofar and other institutions, and entrepreneurs.

The forum provided a platform for BankDhofar to engage directly with entrepreneurs, deepen relationships and gain a better understanding of their evolving business needs. It also showcased the bank's range of banking, financing and digital solutions for SMEs, reinforcing its commitment to supporting the sector's growth and enhancing its contribution to Oman's economy in line with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040.

Ahmed bin Said Al Ibrahim, Chief Retail & Government Banking officer at BankDhofar, said SMEs represent a fundamental pillar of Oman's economic transformation and will play a crucial role in driving diversification and creating new opportunities for sustainable growth.

"SMEs represent one of the fundamental pillars upon which much depends to bring about a qualitative shift in the national economy," Al Ibrahim said, adding that BankDhofar accords the sector particular importance within its strategy to promote entrepreneurship and empower SME owners.

Adnan bin Mohsen Al Balushi, Head of SME Banking (Numo), highlighted the department's portfolio of products and services designed to address the needs of SMEs, recognizing the sector as an important engine of innovation, entrepreneurship and economic growth.

"During the forum, we focused on building genuine partnerships with entrepreneurs and understanding their needs. This, in turn, contributes to developing banking, financing, and digital services that meet their daily requirements at every stage of their projects," Al Balushi said.

The forum also featured presentations aimed at equipping entrepreneurs with practical insights to strengthen and expand their businesses. Hashar bin Khamis Al Mandhari, CEO of Al Alama Marketing, delivered a presentation on the fundamentals of marketing in the digital age, exploring digital channels, the importance of building a strong brand identity, and strategies for managing and scaling SMEs to reach regional and international markets.

Abdullah Al Ansi, founder of the Sikka platform, shared his entrepreneurial journey, highlighting the challenges he encountered, how he overcame them and the promotional strategies he adopted to build and market his business.

The event concluded with an interactive session that enabled entrepreneurs to engage directly with BankDhofar representatives, raise questions and share feedback and suggestions. The dialogue is expected to help inform the continued development of banking and financial solutions tailored to the evolving requirements of Oman's SME community.

BankDhofar is among Oman's leading banks, with a branch net-



work of more than 145 branches across the Sultanate. Through its extensive network and range of specialised banking services, the bank serves diverse customer segments while continuing to expand solutions tailored to entrepreneurs and SMEs.



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