

OMAN
Observer
DAILY

VOL. 45, NO. 289
PAGES 20 | BAISAS 210

2010000387405

11

TOUR OF SALALAH
HIGHLIGHTS
SPORTING, TOURISM
AMBITIONS

IN BRIEF

HM SENDS
CONDOLENCES TO
KING OF NORWAY

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of condolences to His Majesty King Haakon VIII of Norway on the passing of his father, King Harald V. His Majesty expressed his sincere condolences to King Haakon VIII, the royal family and the friendly people of Norway. — ONA

OMAN OFFERS
CONDOLENCES
TO ALGERIA

The Foreign Ministry expressed the Sultanate of Oman's solidarity with the government and people of the sisterly People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, following wildfires that broke out in northern Algeria resulting in a number of deaths and injuries. The Foreign Ministry expressed its deepest condolences and sympathies to the families of the victims wishing a speedy recovery for the injured. — ONA

SEE ALSO P6

MOUNTAINEER
RESCUED, EVACUATED
TO KATHMANDU



Fathiya al Zadjali

Omani mountaineer Fathiya al Zadjali, who was stranded in Nepal amid devastating flash floods that swept through the country's mountainous regions, has been safely rescued and evacuated to Kathmandu. A spokesperson for the Embassy of Nepal in Muscat confirmed that Al Zadjali, who was in Nepal as part of a mountaineering expedition, was rescued from the area where she had been stranded and is now with Nepali authorities.

“Omani mountaineer Fathiya al Zadjali, who was in Nepal engaged in an expedition, has been rescued and evacuated to a safer place and is with the Nepali authorities. She would travel as soon as things become normal,” Bishesh Kumar Sah, Chargé d’Affaires at the Embassy of Nepal, told the Observer. SEE ALSO P6

6 WOMEN DEAD, 18 INJURED IN SAMAYIL ROAD ACCIDENT

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, AUGUST 29

A truck carrying heavy steel coils lost control in Samail, setting off a 15-vehicle collision that killed six women of the same family and injured 18 people.

Major Mohammed bin Salam al Hashmi, Director of Public Relations and Media at the ROP, said the crash occurred shortly before 8pm on Friday on Sultan Thuwaini bin Said Road, where the tractor-trailer was travelling towards Muscat.

An earlier accident near the scene had caused traffic to build up along the road, Al Hashmi said. When the truck reached the congestion, its driver lost control and the load of steel coils became dislodged.

The truck veered into the

opposite carriageway, while the heavy coils were thrown across the barriers separating the two directions of traffic, triggering a chain collision involving multiple vehicles. Some vehicles were severely crushed in the impact.

TURN TO P2

Dhofar offers **₹1.95bn**
investment opportunities

STAFF REPORTER
SALALAH, AUGUST 29

THE Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) has announced five strategic investment opportunities in Dhofar Governorate through its digital platform, Invest Oman, with a total investment value of approximately RO 1.95 billion.

The opportunities include a range of projects across urban development, real estate development, eco-tourism and marine tourism. The projects seek to capitalise on the natural, tourism, environmental and urban assets that distinguish the governorate.

SUHOUL AL RADHADH PROJECT
This integrated urban development project, located in the Ittin area in the Wilayat of Salalah, covers approximately 470,000 square metres, with an estimated investment value of around RO 40 million, including RO 15 million in government investment.

The project aims to develop an integrated destination featuring hospitality, retail, entertainment and business facilities, alongside public spaces and amenities.

BOTANICAL MEMORY GARDEN
The Botanical Memory Garden is being developed at Razat Plain in cooperation with the Environment Authority. The project covers approximately 1.5 million square metres and has an estimated investment value of around RO 4 million.

The project combines the conservation of rare and endangered Oman's plants with



The investment opportunities span the urban development, real estate, eco-tourism and marine tourism segments.

scientific research, education and eco-tourism. It aims to promote the sustainable use of Dhofar Governorate's rich plant and natural diversity while providing an experience that brings together environmental, scientific and tourism aspects.

ECO-LODGE, VISITOR CENTRE PROJECT
The Eco-lodge and Visitor Centre project at Khor Senaq, located in the Hasik area within the Jabal Samhan mountain range covers approximately 47,000 square metres and has an estimated investment value of around RO 3.9 million.

The project includes an eco-lodge, a visitor centre, wellness experiences and a range of outdoor

activities, alongside sustainable solutions such as renewable energy and low-impact environmental systems.

DIVING CLUB
The Diving Club project in the Al Hallaniyat Islands is backed by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism. The project covers approximately 5,000 square metres and has an estimated investment value of around RO 1.5 million.

The project aims to develop a specialised destination for diving tourism and marine activities, featuring facilities for diving instruction, equipment rental and marine excursions, alongside environmentally friendly accommodation. TURN TO P2

Future Salalah City is the largest of the five in terms of investment value, with a total value of approximately RO 1.9 billion and an area of up to 10 square kilometres

Dhofar’s ‘Gravity Hill’ road is actually downhill, study finds

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, AUGUST 29

Vehicles at Dhofar's famous Hashir Hill may appear to roll uphill on their own, but a new scientific study has found that the road is actually descending — by about 10 metres over a surveyed distance of 350 metres.

Researchers who carried out precision elevation and gravity measurements at the site found no local gravity anomaly behind the apparent uphill movement. Instead,

the results point to the surrounding landscape and human visual perception creating the impression that a downhill road is rising.

The study, published on August 11 in the journal Geosciences, examined Hashir Hill — widely known as “Gravity Hill” or “Magnetic Hill” — using detailed topographic surveying and high-precision relative gravity measurements.

Researchers established 36 measurement points at intervals of about 10 metres along the road. The first point was measured at 96.937



A precision survey of Hashir Hill shows a roughly 10-metre descent over 350 metres and no local gravity anomaly.

metres above sea level, while the final point, 350 metres away, stood at 86.824 metres. The measurements therefore show a continuous descent along the surveyed profile, even though parts of the road appear to motorists to slope upwards.

The effect becomes particularly convincing where the road gradient is very shallow. According to the study, the road descends more steeply at first before flattening substantially. At around 120 metres into the profile, the slope approaches zero in what the

researchers identify as the main optical-illusion zone.

With few reliable visual references to establish the true horizontal, surrounding landforms can distort the way the brain interprets the road's inclination, making a slight downhill gradient appear to be uphill.

The research team also tested whether variations in gravity could offer another explanation. Using a Scintrex CG-5 high-precision gravimeter, they recorded gravity at all 36 survey stations. TURN TO P2

OMAN

FROM PAGE 1

DHOFAR’S ‘GRAVITY HILL’ ROAD ACTUALLY DOWNHILL: STUDY

Gravity increased gradually by about 3.17 milligals as elevation decreased, a change the researchers said was consistent with the normal physical relationship between altitude and gravitational acceleration.

Crucially, the gravity profile showed no abrupt disturbances or local deviations that would indicate a detectable subsurface density anomaly at the scale and resolution of the survey. The measured variation was therefore attributed mainly to the difference in elevation rather than an unusual gravitational effect.

Put simply, a vehicle placed in neutral at the site is not overcoming gravity or being pulled uphill. It is moving towards lower ground under ordinary gravity while the surrounding terrain makes that direction appear to rise.

The study was conducted by Abdullah al Mashani of Dhofar University; Ram Raj Mathur of Osmania University in India; Asaad Al Hatmi of Oman’s National Survey and Geospatial Information Authority; Said Al Awaed of Dhofar University; and Luay Rashan of the university’s Biodiversity Unit, Research Center. According to the authors, no previously published study had combined precise topographic surveying and relative gravity measurements to investigate Hashir Hill specifically. Similar “gravity hills” have been documented in several countries, and previous scientific studies have generally linked the effect to visual misperception of terrain and distorted horizontal reference points rather than forces capable of pulling vehicles uphill.

The Hashir research adds site-specific measurements from Dhofar to that wider body of evidence. Its authors conclude that the apparent uphill movement is primarily the result of local topographic geometry and human visual perception. One question, however, remains outside the study. Despite the site’s popular description as “Magnetic Hill”, the researchers did not measure the local magnetic field.

They explicitly state that magnetic assessment was beyond the scope of the investigation and suggest that future work could incorporate magnetic-field measurements. For the apparent uphill movement itself, the evidence is much clearer: at Hashir Hill, what looks like uphill is actually downhill.

DHOFAR OFFERS 1.95 BN INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Future Salalah City, promoted by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning, is the largest of the five in terms of investment value, with a total value of approximately RO 1.9 billion and an area of up to 10 square kilometres. The project involves the development of an integrated urban masterplan combining residential, commercial, healthcare, educational, recreational and hospitality uses.

It will provide multiple investment opportunities for the private sector, support urban and economic growth, and contribute to enhancing the quality of life in Dhofar. The investment opportunities span the urban development, real estate, eco-tourism and marine tourism segments.

In a statement, Dr Ahmed bin Mohsin al Ghassani, Chairman of Dhofar Municipality, said the investment opportunities offered in the governorate represent an important step towards capitalising on these advantages and transforming them into value-added projects that contribute to diversifying the local economy and strengthening Dhofar’s position as a sustainable year-round investment and tourism destination.

Lamya bint Sultan al Habsi, Assistant Director-General of Investment Promotion at the MoCIIP, said Invest Oman, in coordination with the government entities associated with the investment opportunities, is working to highlight and showcase them through the platform, enabling investors to access information on each opportunity, its advantages and investment potential. This facilitates access to suitable opportunities and communication with the relevant entities, contributing to attracting strategic, value-added investments.

6 WOMEN DEAD, 18 INJURED IN SAMAYIL ACCIDENT

FROM PAGE 1

Police and emergency teams were dispatched to the scene in the Wadi Bani Rawaha area, where the collision caused significant congestion along Sultan Thuwaini bin Said Road.

The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology said on Saturday that it had opened an investigation into the crash through its Transport Safety Office.

The ministry also offered its condolences to the families of those killed and wished the injured a speedy recovery.

The Al Batinah South Governorate extended its condolences to the bereaved families and relatives of the victims of the tragic accident that occurred in Samail.

Sources from the Ministry of Health suggested that with a commendable, multi-sectoral national effort in responding to this mass-casualty incident, the

authorities were able to reduce the number of casualties after the tragic accident happened on this busy road connecting Muscat with Nizwa.

“The coordinated efforts of the ROP, CDAA, MoH and Muscat Municipality reflect the readiness of Oman’s emergency healthcare system and its ability to respond rapidly, effectively, and in a well-coordinated manner during such challenging situations,” said Dr Mahmoud al Rahbi, Head of Emergencies at the Samail Hospital.

Oman and Tajikistan hold political talks, review ties

THE FOREIGN ministries of the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Tajikistan held their third round of political consultations in the Tajik capital, Dushanbe, on Saturday. The two sides discussed existing cooperation between the two countries and ways to foster and develop it in various fields particularly the economic, investment, trade, scientific, and cultural sectors. They also explored ways to support joint investments and boost trade exchange to serve the common interests of both countries and their friendly peoples.

The Omani side was headed by Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthi, Under-Secretary of the Foreign Ministry for Political Affairs, while the Tajik side was headed by Sharifzoda Farrukh Homiddin, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Tajikistan. The two sides also exchanged views on a number of regional and international issues of common interest.

Al Harthi met with Sirojiddin Muhriddin on the sidelines of the consultations session. He conveyed to him the greetings of Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidi, Foreign Minister. The Tajik Foreign Minister stressed the importance of continuing visits and meetings between officials of the two countries at various levels, which contributes to strengthening cooperation between the two friendly nations. The consultations and meeting were attended by Zubaydullo Zubaydzoda, Ambassador of



The foreign ministries of the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Tajikistan held their third round of political consultations in Dushanbe.

Oman and Tajikistan explored ways to support joint investments and boost trade exchange to serve the common interests of both countries

the Republic of Tajikistan to the Sultanate of Oman and a number of officials from the foreign ministries of both countries.

Meanwhile, Qohir Rasulzoda, Prime Minister of the Republic of Tajikistan, received, Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthi, Under-Secretary of the Foreign Ministry for Political Affairs, during his visit to the Tajik capital, Dushanbe, to participate in the meeting of the Political Consultative Committee between the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Tajikistan. They discussed bilateral relations between the two friendly countries and opportunities to enhance cooperation in various fields were discussed.

Al Harthi conveyed the greetings of the Government of the Sultanate of Oman to the Tajik prime minister and its appreciation to the Government of the Republic of

Tajikistan for opening its embassy in Muscat and the support this step represents for bilateral relations and the strengthening of communication and cooperation between the two countries.

The Tajik prime minister expressed his government’s appreciation for the role and standing of the Sultanate of Oman, emphasising Tajikistan’s interest in deepening cooperation between the two countries and exploring new areas to enhance the bilateral partnership.

The meeting was attended by Sharifzoda Farrukh Homiddin, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Tajikistan, Zubaydullo Zubaydzoda, Ambassador of the Republic of Tajikistan to the Sultanate of Oman and a number of officials from the foreign ministries both countries. — ONA

Al Jabal Al Abyadh Road project to start soon

YOUSEF AL HABSI MUSCAT, AUGUST 29 The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology announced that Al Jabal Al Abyadh (the white mountain) road project is currently in the preparatory phase and the construction work will start soon on the project which is expected to be completed within 25 months.

The main route begins in the village of Ghrouba in the Wilayat of Tiwi, extending 9 kilometres to the mountain’s summit, at a cost of RO 13.5 million. The road will connect Al Jabal Al Abyadh peak to the Qurayat-Sur road, strengthening social ties for residents of the mountain villages and facilitating access to urban centres. The project also aims to open up tourism investment opportunities in the promising potential of Al Jabal Al Abyadh.

The ministry plans to construct seven branch roads, with a total of more than 46 kilometres, to connect dozens of mountain villages in the



The project’s design takes into account the tough and rugged terrain uses precise engineering.

future, according to financial allocations.

The proposed route of the project starts from the village of Ghrouba to the village of Al Jahl amid extremely rugged terrain up until the summit of Al Jabal Al Abyadh, 2,000 metres above sea level. Eng Khulood bint Khalid al

Farsi, Director of the Al Jabal Al Abyadh Project at the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, confirmed that the project’s design takes into account the tough and rugged terrain and is using precise engineering for the road’s path tailored to the slopes

and topographical conditions, in addition to employing advanced technologies in excavation and rock cutting.

She noted that the project is based on an integrated system of safety and protection elements, including solutions for rainwater drainage and protecting the slopes from flash floods.

Specialised rock stabilisation technologies will also be used, along with systems and netting to prevent rockfalls, thus enhancing the safety of road users and contributing to the continuity of traffic flow during extreme weather conditions. She added that the road will help remove terrain obstacles thus enabling the transportation of heavy equipment and the establishing of resorts and tourist facilities, making Al Jabal Al Abyadh an all-year-round integrated investment and tourist destination.

The road consists of one lane in each direction, which contributes to linking the region and facilitating movement through its rugged mountainous terrain.

بنك Dhofar
BankDhofar



Lionel Messi,
Official Mastercard Ambassador

Visit [bankdhofar.com](#)

Limited-edition
Messi Mastercard.

Get your branded card
only in 2026



Get your card today
For more information



SHORT TAKES



The museum has witnessed a large influx of visitors with Omanis comprising 81 per cent and international visitors 19 per cent.

OMAN ACROSS AGES MUSEUM RECEIVES 1 MILLION VISITORS

MANAH: The Oman Across Ages Museum on Saturday has received 1 million visitors since its opening, a milestone that reflects its status as a cultural, educational and tourist destination as well as the interactive experience it offers for learning about the Sultanate of Oman’s history, civilisation and journey through time.

Since its opening, the museum has witnessed a large influx of visitors from within the Sultanate of Oman and abroad with Omanis comprising 81 per cent and international visitors 19 per cent.

The museum organised a special event to celebrate its millionth visitor, during which the visitor was honoured and given a special tour of the museum’s halls to learn about the most prominent historical sites, interactive experiences, and modern technologies used in displaying the museum’s content.

Eng Al Yaqdhan bin Abdullah al Harthi, Director-General of the Oman Across Ages Museum, said that celebrating the one millionth visitor is an honour for all visitors who have come to the museum to discover the Sultanate of Oman’s history and cultural heritage. He noted that this achievement is the fruit of continuous efforts undertaken by the museum since its opening and an incentive to further develop the visitor experience. — ONA

AI IN FOCUS AT OMAN’S 25TH ENT CONFERENCE



The conference showcased the use of modern technologies and AI.

SALALAH: The 25th Omani Conference on Otolaryngology (ENT), Head and Neck Audiology Conference, organised by the Oman Otolaryngology Society, in cooperation with the Ministry of Health, concluded in Salalah, on Saturday.

The conference came up with a number of recommendations including enhancing the use of modern technologies and artificial intelligence (AI) in diagnosis and treatment, supporting modern and biological therapies based on the latest scientific evidence and developing continuous training and professional development programmes for healthcare personnel.

The two-day conference also called for enhancing scientific research and local, regional, and international cooperation, standardising and developing treatment protocols and pathways to raise the quality of healthcare and enhancing patient safety.

The conference brought together 250 medical and paramedical professionals from various public and private healthcare institutions. Around 70 experts and consultant physicians from across the Sultanate of Oman, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, other Arab nations, and several countries worldwide, delivered lectures at the conference. — ONA

KHAREEF SPECIAL PLATES DRAW STRONG DEMAND

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, AUGUST 29

There has been a strong response to the optional Khareef commemorative number plates introduced by the Royal Oman Police (ROP) for the Khareef Dhofar Season, with several hundred special plates issued so far.

The ROP introduced optional white commemorative vehicle registration plates for the Khareef Dhofar Season 2026, valid from June to December 2026. The



seasonal plates are available on an individual, request-only basis to eligible vehicle owners for RO 70. Speaking to the Observer, a

spokesperson from the ROP Public Relations Department said the initiative gives motorists an opportunity to feature a custom-designed plate celebrating one of Oman’s most popular seasonal events.

“The Khareef commemorative plates have been warmly welcomed by motoring enthusiasts since their launch in June this year,” he said.

“The plates feature a distinctive design incorporating the ‘Khareef Dhofar 2026’ branding alongside the standard registration details.”

Business readiness key to closing SME financing gap

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, AUGUST 29

OMAN'S SMALL and medium enterprises (SMEs) may not always face a shortage of financing, but often a mismatch between the funding they seek and their readiness to use it effectively, experts said during a panel discussion on the future of SME financing.

The session, titled ‘The Future of Financing Small and Medium Enterprises’, brought together representatives from Sharakah, Development Bank and the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA) to discuss access to finance, guarantees, business preparedness and the funding choices available to entrepreneurs as they move from start-up to expansion.

Faris al Harthi, Deputy Director of the SME Development Department at Sharakah, identified three key readiness gaps faced by businesses seeking growth capital — financial, managerial and market readiness.

“The first obstacle is always financial readiness,” he said, pointing to weaknesses in financial accounts, cash-flow management and costing structures that can



The session discussed access to finance, guarantees, business preparedness and the funding choices available to entrepreneurs.

affect businesses even when they have viable products and growing demand.

The second challenge, he said, arises when businesses attempt to expand without having the management teams, policies and governance structures required to operate at a larger scale.

Market readiness is the third consideration, including whether an enterprise understands its target market, customers and expansion strategy.

“When these three areas are not at the same level of readiness, it becomes much harder for an investor or financier to enter the business,” Al Harthi said.

He said Sharakah’s support extends beyond financing. Enterprises are assessed to identify weaknesses, after which an action plan is developed with the entrepreneur. Financing is then aligned with the company’s growth

strategy, followed by monitoring and capacity-building.

Samira bint Said, Financing and Investment Specialist at SMEDA, said Oman offers entrepreneurs a range of financing options, including government-backed funding, banks, finance companies, venture capital and alternative financing platforms.

The key issue, she said, is understanding which type of capital is appropriate for each stage of a business.

“Financing is a tool,” she said. “What matters is what I actually need, what stage I am at, and whether this financing will open new opportunities for me or take me a step backwards.”

Businesses at the idea or establishment stage should carefully consider whether taking on debt before generating stable revenue could create an early financial burden, she said.

Omani entrepreneurs need to match funding tools to the stage of their business, strengthen financial records and prepare for growth before seeking capital

Registration opens for 13th Omani Song Festival

MUSCAT: Registration has opened for the 13th edition of the Omani Song Festival, with the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth inviting talented Omani singers to apply for the national music event scheduled from January 3 to 6, 2027.

The festival seeks to spotlight Omani singing talent, encourage musical creativity and strengthen the presence of Omani song at the local and regional levels.

It also provides a platform to celebrate musical achievements, discover emerging voices and foster greater interaction among singers, musicians and others involved in the arts.

According to the ministry, a key objective of the festival is to promote Omani artistic identity through the integration of four core elements — voice, melody,



The festival seeks to spotlight Omani singing talent and encourage musical creativity.

lyrics and musical arrangement. It also seeks to encourage the use of Omani rhythms, vocabulary and musical traditions while presenting them through contemporary artistic approaches.

The festival aims to support promising singers by providing opportunities to develop their skills, explore diverse artistic

experiences and make informed creative choices. The ministry said the initiative is intended to help nurture artists capable of representing Omani song with a modern and sophisticated approach. Participation is open to Omani singers aged between 18 and 39. Applicants are required to submit a video clip of themselves performing a song

of their choice, demonstrating their vocal and performance abilities.

The submitted video must not exceed two minutes, while the deadline for receiving entries has been set for October 31, 2026.

The festival also seeks to strengthen cooperation between government institutions and the private sector in supporting cultural and artistic initiatives and creating a more vibrant environment for musical creativity.

By bringing together established and emerging talent, the Omani Song Festival continues to serve as a platform for celebrating the country’s musical heritage while encouraging innovation and new forms of artistic expression.

— ONA

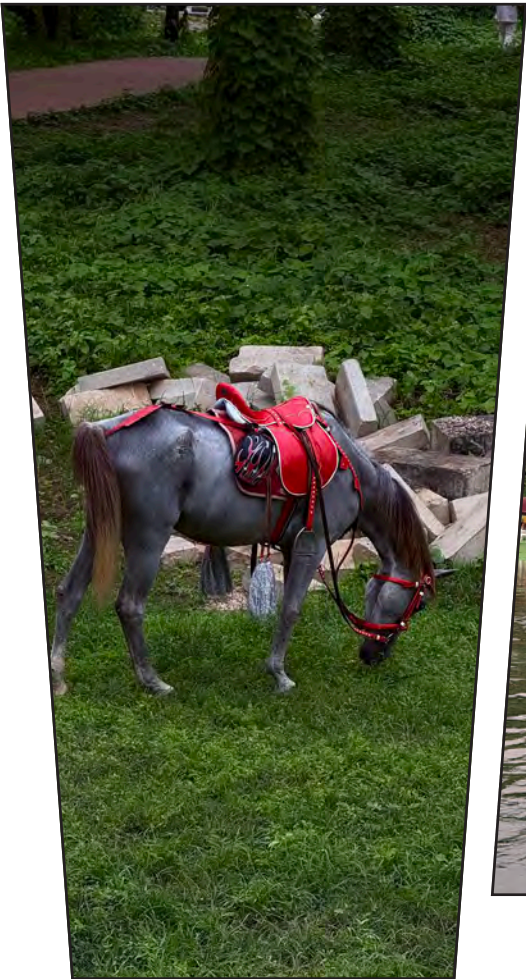


خريف
ظفار
KHAREEF
DHO FAR

Ancient fossils and archaeological sites tell a story millions of years old

Gulf visitors return year after year for its mist, rain and lush landscapes

Springs, wildlife, viewpoints and activities make Darbat more than a tourist stop



MOHAMED AL BATTASHI

WADI DARBAT in the Wilayat of Taqah, Dhofar Governorate, brings together in one place what rarely coexists elsewhere: freshwater lakes, waterfalls cascading more than 100 metres, towering mountains and deep caves, some of which remain only partially explored.

During the Khareef season, seasonal rain and dense fog transform the valley into a vivid green canvas, with water rushing over rocky cliffs in a scene that combines raw natural power with striking beauty.

Hashil bin Suwaih al Daraie, from the UAE, says anyone who has not visited Wadi Darbat has not truly visited Salalah. While that may sound like an exaggeration to those who have never been there, it captures the sentiment of thousands of visitors who flock to the valley each Khareef season to experience a landscape unlike any other in the region.

At the northern edge of the valley, Ain Aan flows year-round with fresh water, surrounded by mountains on three sides. For decades, the spring served as a primary water source for the people of Shihit and neighbouring villages, who depended on it for their daily needs before modern water networks were established.

DARBAT: SALALAH’S MUST-SEE GEM

“I left Europe behind for Dhofar’s Khareef — the nature, mist and rain make every moment of the journey worthwhile.”

FARID BIN SAAD AL SHARIF
Tourist from Saudi Arabia



Despite the development taking place across the governorate, the spring has retained much of its natural character, remaining largely untouched by vehicle tracks. It is also home to the hyrax, known locally as Al thafan, as well as flocks of birds and wild pigeons, creating a peaceful retreat amid the surrounding landscape.

For those looking to take in the valley from above, Ghadya Heights offers a panoramic view of Darbat, where green slopes, drifting fog and rugged mountains merge into a single spectacular scene. The viewpoint has become a favourite gathering spot for photographers and hikers.

But Darbat’s appeal goes beyond its scenery. Its rocks preserve a deep geological history. Limestone formations scattered across the valley contain marine fossils, evidence that the region was once covered by an ancient sea.

Over thousands of years, the limestone landscape gave rise to vast caves, including Teeq Cave, as well as deep sinkholes such as Tawi Ateer, known as the “Bird’s Well”. Nearby, the archaeological site of Khor Rori and ancient rock carvings provide further evidence of human activity in the region stretching back through the centuries.

Yet geological facts alone cannot fully convey the experience of visiting Darbat. The impressions

of visitors often tell the story more vividly.

Doaa bint Abdulrahim from Kuwait, visiting the valley for the first time, described it simply: “The atmosphere is lovely, and the nature and activities are many and varied.”

Farid bin Saad al Sharif from Saudi Arabia said, “I left Europe behind for Dhofar’s Khareef — the nature, mist and rain make every moment of the journey worthwhile.”

Kuwaiti social media influencer Hussein Abdulredha described Darbat as a destination he returns to every year. He believes Salalah cannot be fully experienced in a week or two and that visitors need the entire Khareef season to properly discover what the region has to offer.

He also noted the continued development of the destination, pointing to attractions ranging from boat rides on the lake to restaurants and cafes stretching along the valley.

Between its waterfalls, year-round springs, wildlife, geological wonders and archaeological heritage, Wadi Darbat is far more than a tourist stop.

For the thousands who return each year, it has become an essential part of the Salalah experience — the missing piece without which a trip to the city during Khareef feels incomplete.

SHORT TAKES



Omani artists, along with 27 others from Arab and European countries, took part in the arts camp.

OMANI ARTISTS SHINE AT GERMANY’S ARTS CAMP 2026

KREFELD, GERMANY: Omani visual artists Hafsa al Tamimi and Fakhratag al Ismaili are representing the Sultanate of Oman at the fifth Fine Arts Forum, ‘Arts Camp 2026’, in the German city of Krefeld, joining 27 artists from several Arab and European countries.

The forum, which runs until August 29, provides a platform for cultural exchange and artistic dialogue, while giving the participating artists an opportunity to present contemporary Omani artistic practices to an international audience.

The event also enables artists to explore different artistic schools, exchange techniques and experiences, and engage in collaborative creative work.

A key feature of the forum is its open art galleries, where members of the public can observe artists at work and interact directly with them. The programme also includes workshops and dialogue sessions exploring social and cultural themes, as well as the increasingly important intersection between visual art and artificial intelligence, including the generation of digital images.

The artworks created during the camp address themes including identity, cultural diversity, contemporary social change and cultural heritage, with artists exploring ways of translating these themes into modern visual languages.

Al Tamimi said her participation had provided an opportunity to engage with artists from different cultural backgrounds, each bringing distinct artistic experiences, ideas and perspectives.

“Despite these differences, we are united by a single language: the language of art,” she said, describing the forum as a valuable space for cultural exchange and mutual learning.

She said discussions at the forum extended beyond art to Oman’s culture, heritage, history and natural environment. — ONA

Art preserves Oman’s cultural memory, says Nadia al Balushi



MUSCAT: Omani visual artist Nadia bint Juma al Balushi believes art is far more than an aesthetic pursuit, describing it as a vital component of national identity, a means of preserving cultural memory and a powerful language for dialogue across cultures.

Speaking about the evolution of Oman’s visual arts scene, Nadia said the country had witnessed significant development during her artistic journey, marked by greater diversity in artistic styles, stronger participation by Omani artists in regional and international exhibitions, and an expanding range



NADIA BINT JUMA AL BALUSHI

of platforms for artists. She said the growth of digital platforms and modern communication tools had further opened opportunities for Omani artists to engage with international artistic experiences while presenting elements of the country’s heritage through contemporary perspectives.

For Nadia, Omani identity remains an inexhaustible source of inspiration.

SULTAN QABOOS UNIVERSITY (SQU) will welcome 3,182 new undergraduate students for the 2026-27 academic year as its orientation programme for the 41st cohort begins on Sunday, August 30.

The university has completed preparations to provide new students with an integrated academic, social and residential environment, with particular attention to accessibility and support for students with disabilities.

Dr Asma bint Nasser al Zidi, Dean of Admissions and Registration, said the new intake would be distributed across various undergraduate programmes. This year’s admissions include direct entry to programmes in the Colleges of Arts and Social Sciences, Science and Engineering. Students with hearing disabilities will also be admitted to the Bachelor of Education in Art Education.

The Deanship of Student Affairs has completed arrangements for student accommodation, with more than 1,000 male and over 900 female students expected to benefit from university housing, in addition to more than 20 students with disabilities.

Dr Anfal bint Nasser al Wahaibi, Assistant Dean of Student Affairs for Social Services, said accommodation arrangements would be managed electronically this year. Students will receive their room and residential complex details by text message and email, helping streamline the arrival and accommodation process.

Al Raha Housing Complex at Knowledge Oasis will accommodate male students, while female students will be housed in residential complexes on campus. Residential Complex No 7 has



The Centre for Preparatory Studies has completed extensive preparations for the new cohort, with planning beginning in April

been designated for students with disabilities, with facilities arranged to meet their needs.

Supervision and support teams will be stationed across the residential complexes to welcome students, respond to enquiries and assist them as they begin university life.

The orientation programme on August 30 will include a meeting between HH Sayyid Dr Fahd bin Al Julanda al Said, Vice-Chancellor of SQU, and the new students. It will also feature a presentation on the services and programmes offered by the Deanship of Student Affairs, followed by an orientation session led by Dr Rayya bint Salim al Mandhari, Dean of Student Affairs.

The programme will continue on Monday with an orientation session at 5.30 pm in Lecture Hall 1. On Tuesday, September 1, a sports evening will be held at 4 pm in the designated sports halls for male and female students, providing an opportunity for students to interact and build a sense of belonging.

Meanwhile, the Centre for Preparatory Studies has completed extensive preparations for the new cohort, with planning beginning in April.

Dr Zahra bint Ali al Lawati, Director of the Centre, said preparations included orientation activities, placement tests in English, mathematics and information technology, and updates to guides outlining Foundation Programme requirements.

The Centre has also coordinated examination halls and laboratories and worked with the University Hospital, Deanship of Student Affairs, Security Office and Royal Oman Police to ensure transport, support and traffic arrangements are in place.

The coordinated preparations are aimed at ensuring that the new students have a smooth transition into university life and a positive start to their academic journey at SQU.

Her work draws on the country’s diverse landscape and cultural heritage — from the sea, mountains and desert to traditional architecture, doors, ornaments, clothing and colours.

“I do not convey these elements as they are, but rather reformulate them with a contemporary vision that gives them human and aesthetic dimensions that go beyond documentation,” she said. She believes that an artist’s connection with place does not limit their work but gives it roots from which it can reach wider audiences. Authenticity, she said, enables local artistic expressions to communicate universal human experiences.

Nadia also highlighted the growing public appreciation of visual art in Oman, noting that society has become more engaged with fine art and increasingly recognises its cultural value. She stressed that artists have a responsibility that extends beyond producing aesthetically valuable works. They also contribute to shaping cultural awareness, encouraging young talent and making art an integral part of society.

“Art is not a luxury,” she said, describing it as a means of preserving cultural memory, promoting dialogue and strengthening both belonging and openness.

Her participation in Arab and international exhibitions has also strengthened her conviction that Omani art can compete on the global stage while retaining its distinctive identity.

She said international engagements had provided opportunities to exchange experiences, explore different artistic schools and understand art as a universal language transcending cultural and linguistic boundaries. — ONA

محافظة مسقط

Muscat Governorate

MUSCAT MUNICIPALITY

Advertisement No. (31/2026)

Muscat Municipality at Al Seeb invites Companies specialized in the field and registered with General Secretariat of Tender Board, to participate and obtain tender documents from the website via the following link: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> starting from the date of this announcement and until the end of deadline stipulated below.

No.	Tender Number	Description of Tender	Last Date to Collect the Tender	Tender Return Date
1	PRES/26/005	Supply, Installation and Completion of UPVC Pipe for Future Ducts at Wilayat A' Seeb	17.09.2026	08.10.2026
2	PRES/26/006	Framework Unit Rate Contract for Wadi Alignment and Mortared Riprap Protection Works at Various Locations in Wilayat Seeb (Phase 1)	17.09.2026	08.10.2026
3	PRES/26/007	Framework Unit Rate Contract for Wadi Alignment and Mortared Riprap Protection Works at Various Locations in Wilayat Seeb (Phase 2)	17.09.2026	08.10.2026
4	PRES/26/008	Framework Unit Rate Contract for Wadi Alignment and Mortared Riprap Protection Works at Various Locations in Wilayat Seeb (Phase 3)	17.09.2026	08.10.2026
5	PRES/26/009	Framework Unit Rate Contract for Wadi Alignment and Mortared Riprap Protection Works at Various Locations in Wilayat Seeb (Phase 4)	17.09.2026	08.10.2026
6	PRES/26/010	Design and Build of Road Level Adjustment and Surface Runoff Management Works at Al Hail North in Wilayat Seeb (Phase 1)	17.09.2026	08.10.2026
7	PRES/26/011	Design and Build of Road Level Adjustment and Surface Runoff Management Works at Al Hail North in Wilayat Seeb (Phase 2)	17.09.2026	08.10.2026
8	PRES/26/012	Design and Build of Road Level Adjustment and Surface Runoff Management Works at Al Hail North in Wilayat Seeb (Phase 3)	17.09.2026	08.10.2026
9	PRES/26/013	Design and Build of Road Level Adjustment and Surface Runoff Management Works at Al Hail North in Wilayat Seeb (Phase 4)	17.09.2026	08.10.2026
10	PRES/26/014	Design and Build of Stormwater Drainage System at Various Locations in Wilayat Seeb (Phase 1)	17.09.2026	08.10.2026
11	PRES/26/015	Design and Build of Stormwater Drainage System at Various Locations in Wilayat Seeb (Phase 2)	17.09.2026	08.10.2026
12	PRES/26/016	Design and Build of Stormwater Drainage System at Various Locations in Wilayat Seeb (Phase 3)	17.09.2026	08.10.2026

1. Bidders shall submit their offers electronically.

2. Clarification and Support:

- For any inquiries regarding tenders, please visit e-tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>.
- For technical support of e-tendering system please send an email to etenderhd@gstb.gov.om or call (+968 24402200).

WORLD

SHORT TAKES

IRAN’S PRESIDENT ADMITS SANCTIONS IMPACTING ECONOMY



MASOUD PEZESHKIAN
Iran’s President

TEHRAN: Iran’s President Masoud Pezeshkian has admitted that US sanctions on his country are hurting its economy, despite just days ago insisting they would achieve nothing. “Some say sanctions have no effect at all; to those people, I really

don’t know what to say,” Pezeshkian told state TV. “We are in a war situation, and we must accept these wartime conditions,” he added.

On Monday, US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent laid out plans for the “economic asphyxiation” of Iran, warning of dire consequences for countries that do not join the American campaign. The new measures build on a sanctions regime by the US and allies that has been in place since 2018, when President Donald Trump withdrew from an international deal struck with Tehran on its nuclear programme.

Pezeshkian said that Iran’s exports and imports had fallen by 25 to 35 per cent in recent months as the US maintains a naval blockade of Iranian ports.

The president said the price of petrol should be increased in Iran to account for the fall in trade. “We should raise the price of the third-tier quota... For example, from 5,000 toman to 10,000 toman,” he added.

That quota refers to one of several consumption rates that determine the price an Iranian consumer is charged. Iran, a major oil producer with some of the world’s cheapest fuel, has for years heavily subsidised petrol, making any changes to pricing politically sensitive. — **AFP**

ALGERIA DECLARES NATIONAL MOURNING



ALGIERS: Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune declared a three-day national mourning after wildfires in the northeast killed at least 12 people and injured dozens. Tebboune described the deaths as “a great tragedy,” while authorities have not updated the death toll of 12 people from Wednesday.

Five people died in Jijel province, four in Bejaia and three in Tizi Ouzou, Interior Minister Said Sayoud said on Wednesday, adding that 54 were being treated in hospital for burns, including six in serious condition. The Algerian civil protection said that 46 fires were still burning out of 193 recorded over the previous 24 hours.

Videos shared online overnight showed fires engulfing large areas as residents were trapped by the flames. Three major roads connecting regions in the east of the country were closed due to forest fires near the cities of Bejaia, Jijel and Setif, the gendarmerie said.

Forest fires occur regularly in northern Algeria during the summer, but climate change is amplifying their impact by causing increasingly frequent droughts and intense heat. — **AFP**

ROAD TRAGEDY

Zimbabwe crash involving minibus kills 27



A minibus carrying churchgoers collided head-on with a truck in central Zimbabwe, killing at least 27 people, police said on Saturday, in the latest deadly road crash to hit the country. The crash occurred near Chivhu, about 140 kilometres south of the capital Harare, police said. The foreign-registered haulage truck was overtaking another vehicle when it collided with the minibus, which was carrying worshippers to a conference. Seven people were injured in the crash. — **AFP**

POLITICAL PRISONER

Ugandan figure Besigye back in hospital



Ugandan opposition figure Kizza Besigye, who is being tried on suspicion of treason, has been readmitted to hospital, his wife said, accusing the authorities of “persecution”. Winnie Byanyima said in a post on X that her husband was moved from prison to hospital “after dark”. Besigye, 70, is a former personal physician to Uganda’s veteran President Yoweri Museveni but has been targeted by the government after switching to the opposition more than 25 years ago. — **AFP**

CONTINUOUS ATROCITIES

Dozens of Israeli settlers attack WB village



Dozens of Israeli settlers attacked the Palestinian village of Qusra in the northern occupied West Bank, after nearly three weeks of tension in the area. On Saturday, Qusra resident Yussef Abdul Kareem Hassan said that a handful of villagers were doing work on a house when they were approached by a small group of settlers. The settlers then called for backup and returned with dozens more. Footage showed dozens of Israeli forces deployed to the site. — **AFP**

Missing toll from Nepal, China flood nears 3,000



Workers use excavators to clear the mud at the Dhunge Bazaar in Nepal’s Nuwakot district after flash floods and landslides hit the Nepal-Tibet border. — **AFP**

KATHMANDU RESCUERS in Nepal and China were battling on Saturday to locate thousands of people missing days after a deadly, tsunami-like wall of water and debris swept through the Himalayan region, engulfing entire villages. Figures from both countries put the number of missing close to 3,000, with 682 bodies recovered — and reports of some dead possibly swept downstream as far away as India.

Rescue worker Kawan Koirala, from the Nepal Scout Disaster Response Team, said they were struggling in thick, leg-sucking mud. “People want their family members’ bodies back, either dead or alive, but we cannot find them... you can see the mud,” he said, exhausted after an 18-hour shift. “It is very traumatic for me too. It is my first time seeing these types of things. Everywhere is mud. We faced floods in Nepal before, but not like this.”

The US Geological Survey said the disaster on the Tibet-Nepal border on Wednesday was caused by a glacial collapse that created a torrent of debris downstream. While the exact cause of the collapse is unclear, climate change is causing glaciers to melt worldwide, increasing the risks of such disasters.

Survivors face an agonising wait to learn the fate of missing relatives, and the prospect of rebuilding their lives from nothing. “All the settlements near the river were swept away,” Buddhi Ram Dangol said in Nepal’s Nuwakot district. “There is nothing left.” At Bidur’s army

base, a key rescue hub in the same district, relatives crowded around lists of rescued people pasted on a wall. “I have come here looking for my son,” said Kalka Sharda, scanning the list in desperation.

“He was a labourer at the hydropower plant, but I can’t find his name, and the authorities are not saying anything.” In an area home to vast energy

infrastructure projects, Nepal’s disaster authority listed 933 hydropower workers among the missing, along with 517 foreigners, including trekkers and Hindu pilgrims to Tibet’s sacred Mount Kailash.

The trauma of Wednesday’s catastrophe has been “enormous”, and as many as 93,000 people may have been affected, the Red Cross said,

with the death toll expected to rise. Nepal’s reconstruction bill could run into “billions of dollars”, Foreign Minister Shisir Khanal said on Saturday. “The urgency is on rescue and saving lives as much as we can,” he said, appealing for specialised assistance, including heavy-lift drones and technology to help locate people who are trapped.

— **AFP**

Omani mountaineer rescued

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, AUGUST 29

Omani mountaineer Fathiya al Zadjali, who was stranded in Nepal amid devastating flash floods that swept through the country’s mountainous regions, has been safely rescued and evacuated to Kathmandu.

A spokesperson for the Embassy of Nepal in Muscat confirmed that Al Zadjali, who was in Nepal as part of a mountaineering expedition, was rescued from the area where she had been stranded and is now with Nepali authorities.

“Omani mountaineer Fathiya al Zadjali, who was in Nepal engaged in an expedition, has been rescued and evacuated to a safer place and is with the Nepali authorities. She would travel as soon as things become normal,” Bishesh Kumar Sah, Chargé d’Affaires at the Embassy of Nepal, told the Observer.

Al Zadjali was stranded by the flash floods while on a trekking expedition near Yala Peak at a



high altitude. She was able to contact her family, after which the Nepalese authorities confirmed her safety. She is currently in Kathmandu and is expected to return to Oman once travel conditions return to normal.

Meanwhile, the exact number of Omanis who were in Nepal when the floods struck remains

unknown. Omanis can travel to Nepal without obtaining a visa in advance, making it difficult to establish the number of Omanis currently in the country.

“However, we are trying to locate the numbers and geographical locations with the help of tourism offices and hotels in Nepal,” Bishesh said.

SHORT TAKES



Peruvian President Keiko Fujimori

Peru govt seeks legislative powers to tackle security crisis

LIMA: Peruvian President Keiko Fujimori asked Congress to grant the government 120 days of legislative powers to pass laws aimed at addressing security concerns. Peru is going through its worst security crisis in decades, fuelled by the spread of local and foreign criminal gangs that oversee contract killings and extortion.

Fujimori submitted an “urgent” request to Congress to give the government “the power to legislate on matters of citizen security” and other areas including trade and tourism. One of the first measures proposed by Fujimori is the designation of “criminal organisations as terrorist organisations,” according to the request sent to Congress.

The request has to be approved by both the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate. Fujimori, who took office on July 28, is the daughter of former president Alberto Fujimori, who was jailed for corruption and crimes against humanity committed during what he considered a fight against terrorism. She campaigned on iron-fist security policies like those of her father, whose legacy remains divisive among Peruvians. — AFP

CROWDS GATHER AT ROYAL PALACE



Thousands of Norwegians gathered on Saturday to say goodbye to King Harald in front of the royal palace, where he lies in state, with many well-wishers remembering his sense of inclusiveness and tolerance. Europe’s oldest monarch, who emerged from the shadow of his well-loved, extrovert father to become a reformer during more than three decades on the throne, died on Friday at the age of 89. Flags were flying at half-mast throughout the country and portraits of the late king in gala uniform were everywhere, from bus stops, trams and metro stations to shops, offices and public buildings. — Reuters

FRENCH FAR-RIGHT ACCUSES LEFT OF THREATENING ‘CIVIL PEACE’ IF LE PEN WINS

PARIS: The French far-right on Saturday accused the left of seeking to “undermine civil peace” should Marine Le Pen win the presidential election next spring, underscoring the increasingly confrontational tone of the campaign. With less than eight months to go before France’s presidential election, far-right leader Le Pen, 58, remains the front-runner in the polls.

Speaking at an agricultural fair in the northeastern town of Châlons-en-Champagne, Jordan Bardella, president of the National Rally (RN)

party and Le Pen’s prospective prime minister in the event of her victory, said he was concerned by calls from the left for “civil disobedience” if the RN comes to power. Bardella, 30, said they amounted to “an admission of weakness from the left, which hates democracy and is calling into question the fundamental principles of the rule of law and the electoral process.”

“The attitude of France Unbowed at the start of this campaign is deeply worrying,” said Bardella. “They are already seeking to undermine civil

peace in our country.”

Mathilde Panot, leader of the LFI parliamentary group in parliament’s lower house, and Greens leader Marine Tondelier have recently said they would support “civil disobedience” in the event of an RN victory. Some observers say the election campaign is increasingly at risk of becoming a contest dominated by populist anti-establishment forces, raising concern among investors about the prospect of a presidential runoff between the far right and the hard left. — AFP

37 dead after Russian strike on depot near Kyiv



Firefighters work at a site of a Russian drone strike, amid Russia’s attack on Ukraine, in Kyiv. — Reuters

AT LEAST 37 people were killed when an overnight Russian drone strike on a depot near Kyiv sparked a huge fire and explosions, authorities said on Saturday. The depot, near the capital’s western suburbs, appeared to have been storing “explosive objects”, Ukrainian prosecutors said, as President Volodymyr Zelensky suggested ammunition was to blame. “Those who allowed this to happen must be held accountable for their decisions... ammunition cannot be stored near homes or other residential areas,” he wrote on X. Both Russia and Ukraine have intensified long-range strikes on each other in recent months, sparking fires and pushing civilian casualties to their highest level since Moscow attacked in 2022.

Reporters saw a huge column of black smoke rising over the capital’s western suburbs, as officials reported that hundreds had been evacuated from the area.

The blast damaged surrounding residential areas, as well as a care home for the elderly and disabled people, Zelensky said. At least 37 people were killed, among them the mayor of the nearby town of Dmytrivka, Kyiv region governor Tymur Tkachenko said on Telegram. “Rescuers and all relevant services are continuing their operations at the scene of the tragedy,” he said. The depot was located in the town of Myla, on Kyiv’s western outskirts. Officials did not say whether it was a military or civilian facility.

Ukrainian prosecutors said they had opened an investigation. “On 28 August at around 8:10 pm (1710 GMT), an unmanned aerial vehicle... fell on or struck the grounds of an enterprise in the town of Myla,” the office of

The blast damaged surrounding residential areas, as well as a care home for the elderly and disabled people, Zelensky said. At least 37 people were killed, among them the mayor of the nearby town of Dmytrivka

Ukraine’s prosecutor general said. “A large-scale fire broke out on the enterprise’s grounds, and detonation began,” it added. The prosecutor’s office said that its investigation would focus on “the legality of the... storage of explosive objects and materials on the enterprise’s grounds”, as well as whether the owner, whom it did not name, had the “necessary permits and approvals”.

Ukrainian Prime Minister Sergiy Korotshuk expressed regret that a “lesson” had not been learned following a previous deadly strike on a munitions depot near Kyiv in July. That investigation revealed serious failings on the part of a state-owned company, which did not comply with regulations regarding the proximity of residential buildings. “In the fifth year of the full-scale invasion, making the same mistakes over

and over is criminal negligence,” he said on Telegram. “Everyone responsible, without exception, must face severe punishment so that such situations never happen again.”

Russia launched at least two missiles and 267 drones at Ukraine between late Friday and early Saturday, according to the Ukrainian air force. In addition to the depot strike, Russian attacks on Ukraine killed three people on Saturday, including a two-year-old infant in Kyiv and a 14-year-old girl in the capital’s outer suburbs, officials said. In Russia, Ukrainian strikes killed three people in the Belgorod region and caused a fire at a warehouse belonging to Russian retailer Ozon, officials said. A strike on the city of Sevastopol in Crimea killed one person, according to Sevastopol’s Russian-installed governor. US-led diplomatic efforts to end the conflict, Europe’s deadliest since World War II, have been at a standstill for months.

Russia has demanded sweeping territorial and political concessions from Ukraine, which Kyiv has ruled out as tantamount to capitulation. Earlier this week, US Central Intelligence Agency Director John Ratcliffe visited Moscow on an unannounced trip, amid escalating tensions in the four-and-a-half-year war. The depot that exploded in a Russian strike overnight was owned by the Ukrainian military and stored shells, drones, and other munitions, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said later on Saturday. “The first impact was on a place where ammunition was being stored that absolutely should not have been there — a depot of the Defence Forces. Detonation of shells, mines, other munitions, and drones. On a significant scale,” Zelensky said in a video address. — AFP

Iceland votes on whether to resume EU membership talks

REYKJAVIK: Icelanders began voting on Saturday in a referendum on whether to resume membership negotiations with the European Union, in a tight race that will be closely watched in Brussels. The country of just under 400,000 people applied to join the EU in the wake of a 2009 financial crisis that devastated its economy. The membership talks were suspended in 2013 when a eurosceptic government came to power. The referendum result is expected to go down to the wire, with the latest Gallup poll crediting the ‘No’ camp with 51.6 per cent of voter support and the ‘Yes’ side with 48.4 per cent, a gap within the statistical margin of error.

“It’s pretty tight, but I’m always optimistic,” Foreign Minister Thorgerdur Katrin Gunnarsdottir said. “It’s not done until it’s done.” Voting began at 9:00 am. With no exit polls and given the tight race,

the first reliable results are only expected late on Saturday at the earliest.

Around 273,000 voters are being asked to answer ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ to the question: “Should Iceland resume accession negotiations with the European Union?” If the ‘Yes’ side wins, an accession agreement would be negotiated with Brussels and then put to a new referendum on actual membership.

The issue of fisheries — a pillar of Iceland’s economy and over which Reykjavik wants to retain exclusive control - would have to be hammered out with Brussels, which this time around appears more willing to compromise. “The fundamentals (of the debate) are very domestic, but there is a significant impact that has come with the second term of (US President) Donald Trump and this sort of geopolitical upheaval,” Bifrost University political scientist Eirikur



Iceland’s PM Kristrún Frostadóttir talks to the media after voting, at a polling station in Reykjavik. — Reuters

Bergmann said.

With Iceland’s economy now flourishing, some voters see no reason to discuss EU membership,

since the country already has access to the single market as a member of the European Economic Area. “It’s like if you are in a relationship with someone you don’t live with, and if you lose something you have by getting married, then why get married?” said Hjördís Vilhjálmssdóttir, a 60-year-old radio presenter wearing glasses in the red, blue and white of Iceland’s flag. “We don’t need Brussels to rule us. We can do it ourselves,” said Elias Theodorsson, a 65-year-old entrepreneur. “We used to be one of the poorest countries in Europe only a hundred years ago. And now we are the most prominent country in Europe. We did it ourselves,” he said.

On the global stage, the return of war in Europe with Russia’s war in Ukraine has shaken established security doctrines.

Trump’s unpredictability and his threats to take over neighbouring Greenland — which he has mixed up

with Iceland on several occasions — have added to Icelanders’ concerns. Their island is strategically located in the sub-Arctic, has no military and depends on Nato and a 1951 bilateral agreement with the United States for its defence.

The referendum result will be followed closely by the EU, which has not welcomed a wealthy, net contributor to its budget since 1995.

Brussels would see Icelandic membership as an example of positive enlargement that could also make it more palatable for member states to agree to take in poorer countries like Montenegro — or even help change some minds in ultra-wealthy non-EU member Norway, which could end up finding itself isolated. “Iceland’s decision would undoubtedly strengthen the case for the EU to welcome new members,” EU Enlargement Commissioner Marta Kos noted. — AFP

OPINION

The generational gap in how we talk about burnout



DR HAMED
AL SINAWI

The writer is a senior consultant psychiatrist at SQU Hospital

RECENTLY conducted a workshop on occupational burnout for employees in one of the private companies when a middle-aged employee raised their hand and said, “Burnout is something invented by young people who are too lazy to do their jobs.”

For a few seconds, the room went very quiet before a younger person shared his point of view. The generational gap in understanding burnout at work is an interesting topic that sparks several debates. While some people believe that Gen Z “can’t handle work”, others see it because of several socio-economic factors. When you work with Gen Z, you will notice that they are more likely to collaborate through breakout rooms, conduct meetings over virtual platforms, and begin careers online.

They are more likely to experience less job security because of the uncertainty in the job market. Social theory of generations suggests that the events we experience in our early childhood shape the values and expectations that we carry into adulthood. For Gen Z, these events included disruptions to education, work, and social development, like what during the Covid-19 pandemic.

A recent study shows that, although Gen Z reported lower resilience during the pandemic, they also showed more openness to change, which is one of the strongest

predictors of resilience. That same openness to change was reflected in their preference for hybrid learning and workplace training, suggesting that the environment in which they came of age continues to shape their expectations from work today.

Another important factor is that Gen Z are more open to talking about mental health and burnout, which changes how burnout is recognised. So people are more likely to label their exhaustion, stress, and anxiety as “burnout” rather than personal weakness.

Compared to other generations, Gen Z reports lower levels of mental health stigma, which suggests more accepting attitudes towards mental health problems.

Gen Z is also more likely to value psychological safety, work-life balance, structured mentorship, and transparent communication. Overall, they are less willing to accept chronic overwork as the price of professional success.

A colleague was recently sharing his disappointment when a new graduate who joined his team refused to work extra hours, saying that it is not “part of her contract”. My colleague recalled the time when working long hours was considered a sign of professional dedication, which can make Gen Z’s requests for flexibility appear unmotivated or even entitled.

The generational gap in understanding and addressing burnout at work is an interesting topic that draws several debates

Most research studies on occupational burnout use the Job Demands-Resources model, which suggests that burnout is more likely to develop when chronic job demands outweigh available resources.

This means burnout is not simply an inability to tolerate stress can emerge when the demands of a workplace constantly exceed the support, flexibility, and resources available to employees.

The researchers found that Gen Z employees’ burnout is caused by excessive workload, long work hours, and limited organisational support. Individual coping strategies like mindfulness, healthy boundaries, and stress management matter, but they cannot replace healthy workplaces that combat burnout.

Organisations can reduce burnout by addressing its root causes rather than expecting employees to cope with it. Flexibility, healthy leadership, transparent communication, psychological safety, and manageable workloads benefit not only Gen Z but also employees across every generation. In my opinion, organisations need to be mindful of generational gaps in experiencing and expressing burnout and develop well-being programmes that address everyone’s needs with interventions that are based on scientific evidence.

DOES THE NEPAL GLACIER COLLAPSE SIGNAL A NEW CLIMATE RISK?

ALI BEKHTAOUI

On Friday, Nepal issued an alert about the risks posed by a large body of water formed in China’s Tibet region, following the collapse of a glacier section two days ago. That collapse killed at least 584 people, and more than 2,400 remain missing.

“Once you take a piece of mountain away, then there’s probably another piece right beside it that’s been destabilised by the removal. And so you could have a similar thing collapse,” Simon Cox, principal scientist at New Zealand’s GNS Science research institute, said. “You may well have more material to fall down right from up at the source area, and the same thing could happen immediately again.”

According to the United States Geological Survey (USGS), the resulting flood was triggered by a glacier collapse so violent that it generated energy equivalent to a magnitude 5.2 earthquake and caused numerous landslides.

Etienne Berthier, a glaciologist at the French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS), said “we can’t rule out” the risk of similar phenomena occurring elsewhere.

“They reach such proportions in the Himalayas because the terrain and the region’s high tectonic activity amplify the likelihood of such events occurring on that scale,” he explained.

Other regions may have similarly “dynamic” glaciers - such as Alaska - but “this happens in completely uninhabited areas”.

“We have seen a dramatic increase in the number of extremely hazardous flows such as this globally in the past decade or so,” Tristram Hales, a professor of environmental hazards at Cardiff University, said, citing events in the Himalayas and Switzerland. Scientists warn that rockfalls and landslides triggered by earthquakes or the thawing of permafrost - which is being accelerated by climate change - are more likely than entire sections of mountain coming down.

These risks are greater for people when towns, roads, or tourist sites are located nearby.

In the Alps, this year’s extremely hot summer saw a record number of rockfalls, including some that were fatal - the vast majority of which can be attributed to the climate crisis, Ludovic Ravanel, a geomorphologist at the CNRS, said recently.

In Switzerland, the municipality of Randa, home to some 400 people, fears a glacier collapse in the coming days and has established safety perimeters following several rockfalls. — AFP

When propaganda takes control of language

WORDS MATTER when they are used to create political conflict. For example, democracy is often used as if it describes one clear political system. In reality, there are many forms of democracy, including representative, direct, parliamentary, presidential, semi-presidential and socialist democracy.

The West presents democracy as morally better than other systems. But which democracy are they talking about? And what makes their preferred system better than the alternatives? All forms of democracy have strengths and weaknesses. Elections may give citizens some influence, but they do not always give ordinary people much real power over the decisions that shape their country’s future. Political parties, wealthy individuals, corporations, the media and powerful interest groups can all influence public policy.

The former German Democratic Republic provides an example of how political language can be disputed. Although it was Communist, it called its system “socialist democracy”. The GDR argued that Western parliamentary systems were democratic in form but were controlled by capitalist interests. Western governments rejected this description, denying it was genuinely democratic. Opposing nations have used words to justify authority, attack opponents and present one country or system as morally superior. In extreme cases, they can even help provide a reason for war. The difference between Judaism and Zionism provides another example of how words can be confused. Judaism is a religion and a cultural tradition. For some Jews, it is also part of their sense of belonging to a wider people. Jewish communities have never



Younger Jews in particular oppose the Zionist dispossession of Palestinians and the denial of Palestinian self-determination



KARIM
EASTERBROOK

The writer is a Former Cambridge School Principal and Author

To oppose an extremist political ideology is not the same as hatred of a religious community

held one political opinion. Jews may be conservative, socialist, liberal, nationalist, non-nationalist, Zionist, or anti-Zionist. The most anti-Zionist groups and individuals are often Jews.

Zionism is not a religion and the word Zionist is not synonymous with Jewish. Zionism is a modern political movement. It emerged in Europe in the late nineteenth century and called for Jewish national self-determination. Although Zionists considered places outside Palestine, the movement eventually focused on establishing a state in Palestine since it allowed them to portray Palestine as the promised land for Jews. A Jew may be a Zionist, a non-Zionist, or an anti-Zionist.

Jews oppose Zionism for religious reasons or reject it because of its political consequences, including the displacement of Palestinians and the denial of Palestinian rights. Some Jews continue to support Zionism, clinging to an uncertain belief that a Zionist state offers protection and security. However, younger Jews in particular oppose the Zionist dispossession of Palestinians and the denial of Palestinian self-determination.

Anti-Jewish prejudice targets Jews because they are Jews. It may involve conspiracy theories, stereotypes about Jewish wealth, hostility towards Jewish religious practices, or the belief that Jews everywhere should be blamed for the actions of Israel or Zionist organisations. Such prejudice is both wrong and misguided. It ignores the political nature of Zionism and denies the existence of Jews who oppose it. At the same time, criticism of Israel or Zionism can become anti-Jewish if it blames all Jews for the actions of the Zionist government or demands that Jews be treated differently from other groups.

The word “antisemitism” also needs to be understood carefully. The word “Semitic” refers to a group of related languages, not to one race or religion. Arabic, Hebrew, Amharic, Tigrinya and Maltese are all Semitic languages.

Opposing Zionism is not the same as hating Jews. A person can oppose Zionism while defending the rights and safety of Jewish people. Someone can condemn the policies of the Israeli government while rejecting every form of anti-Jewish prejudice. Equally, a person who claims to be criticising Zionism may still be expressing anti-Jewish sentiment if they rely on anti-Jewish stereotypes or hold Jews throughout the world responsible for Zionist crimes.

Words are not harmless when used in politics. They can hide important differences, encourage hatred and silence criticism. Judaism, Zionism and antisemitism are separate ideas and should not be treated as though they mean the same thing. Clear definitions cannot always remove political disagreement, but they can show whether the real dispute concerns a political system, an ideology, government policy, religious identity or prejudice.

Social media ‘likes,’ are like stakes in the heart



RAY PETERSEN
r.j.petersen52@gmail.com

The writer is a media consultant

TWO UNPRECEDENTED incidents during the last week costing ten youth lives, two police lives, and causing life-changing injuries to four others, throw the spotlight once again on social media.

First, five teenagers died and four other people were seriously injured in a crash involving a car driving in the wrong direction on a motorway in County Kildare, Ireland. The balaclava-clad youths killed were joyriding, filming their antics for TikTok ‘likes’, when they collided, head-on, with three sisters in their twenties and thirties, and a seven-year-old boy, the son of one, en route to the airport, at 3 am. The injuries to these four innocents are believed to be ‘life-changing.’ A

Il five youths were suspects in recent thefts, burglaries and anti-social activities across Kildare and Carlow, and were known to have posted their escapades on social media, being among increasing numbers of youths trying to outdo each other in dangerous videos posted to social media. They were reported as having terrorised communities for weeks, not caring if they were caught.

County Kildare Police Commissioner Justin Kelly, commenting on the circumstances of that particular tragedy, said, “What makes this reckless behaviour even more appalling is that in some cases it is being done for social

media likes, regardless of the potentially devastating impact it might have on innocent people and themselves.”

Then, this week in Middlesbrough, in the North East of the UK, only days later, also during the small hours, five more young men in a stolen vehicle, on a crime spree, evaded pursuing police by escaping down a dual carriageway ramp, then slammed head-on into an oncoming police vehicle, killing two police officers. But they did not go home from work that night, and two more families are left bereft, mourning.

Among the young people who perished were, again, frequent social media contributors, posting and boasting of their stealing vehicles, burglaries and other ‘anti-social’ activities, several having appeared in court or having come to the attention of social services. Residents, while expressing their sympathy for the young men’s parents, have echoed frustration that neither their families nor the courts have been able to stop their endless ‘madness,’ of community and social disruption, and criminal activities.

And first, what about their families? How on earth does a family become so dysfunctional that mum and dad don’t know where their teenage son is and what he’s doing late at night? Where is the love; the concern; the parenting? If a teenager is going out late at night with dubious ‘mates,’ and getting up to no good, did they know?

Using youth ego and desire for ‘fame,’ social media is societal neglect, isn’t it? In fact, it’s madness that TikTok, for all their role in these tragedies, emerges unscathed in the face of their creative irresponsibility

Did they care? Did they question? Did they try? These aren’t palatable questions, and among grieving families will be unwelcome, for sure, but they will certainly ask them of themselves, unspoken... the unspoken answers are either a compassionate release, or an indomitable burden.

And the question we must all be asking is this: If these young people were so open to being so naïve, putting themselves at such risk, and in such danger, of compromising their futures, and of hurting those closest to them... for a few likes. Yes, likes, not love; likes, the most casual of sentiments akin to Bob Dylan’s ‘love watered down,’ or as Zack Rubin said, “Like has the characteristic of affection, but love, those of care, attachment and intimacy,” such as in family.

So, where was the love that should have nurtured and sustained them, kept them safe and sound, and brought them home in the dark of night? And then, should TikTok not be held to account, having given a platform to the prevalence of these activities, and by doing so, encouraging further such ‘deeds.’ Surely, encouraging criminal activities as such is promoting antagonism between them and the police. Is this their objective? Using youth ego and desire for ‘fame,’ social media is societal neglect, isn’t it? In fact, it’s madness that TikTok, for all their role in these tragedies, emerges unscathed in the face of their creative irresponsibility.

META’S TEEN SAFETY DEAL RUNS INTO AN UNSOLVED PROBLEM: PROVING AGE

BENJAMIN LEGENDRE

Meta’s landmark settlement with nearly every US state promises curfews and time limits for teens on Instagram and Facebook — but rests on age and parent checks nobody has figured out how to make work. The deal, which ended a federal trial in Oakland, California, on Wednesday, gives Meta one year to identify which of its users are 13 to 17 years old.

Those accounts will have curfews and time limits switched on by default, and only parents will be allowed to loosen them.

How that gets enforced is unclear — and any system Meta builds risks angering privacy advocates, who warn it hands platforms and governments yet another way to identify users, infringing on civil liberty.

For the new regime to work, Meta must determine the age of every user in the participating states and territories, adults included.

Methods could include identification documents, mandatory selfies, or analysis of user activity. Any account not verified within 14 days will face the same constraints as a teenager’s.

These approaches have already faltered elsewhere. Eight months after social networks were banned for under-16s in Australia, teen usage has climbed back almost to previous levels, thanks to virtual private networks, or VPNs, that conceal a user’s real identity and location.

As for parents, the agreement offers no way to establish that a supervising adult is who they claim to be.

What would stop an older sibling from passing themselves off as a guardian, Judge Yvonne Gonzalez Rogers asked Wednesday as she weighed Meta’s plans.

“There is some fluidity, very intentionally,” said Nicklas Akers, a California prosecutor, who added that there was no plan to require a birth certificate or identification from the parent.

With no reliable way of verifying ages and parents, curfews and time limits remain theoretical. “Teens are notorious for finding workarounds to these types of rules, and parents can also override some of the most stringent ones,” said social media industry expert Jasmine Enberg.

“Looking ahead, that could take some of the responsibility away from Meta and put it on parents, with the goal of helping insulate the company from similar cases in the future,” she added.

In France, where a ban on under-15s was just struck down by the Constitutional Council, many children get around the rules with their parents’ help, according to the communications regulator Arcom.

If Meta cannot verify a user with identification such as a driver’s licence or passport, it will estimate age by analysing that user’s activity — collecting still more data in the process. — AFP

The sanctions illusion

WHEN GOVERNMENTS impose economic sanctions, like the “economic D-Day” US President Donald Trump is now imposing on Iran, they portray them as a precision instrument — a scalpel rather than a sword — capable of pressuring ruling elites while sparing ordinary citizens. This narrative has been used to justify some of the most sweeping acts of economic coercion in modern history. The only problem is that the central premise is untrue.

The case against sanctions is not merely strategic — that they rarely achieve their stated foreign-policy objectives — but also moral. Sanctions, particularly financial ones, do not fall equally on a population. They fall hardest on those least able to bear them: low-income, wage-dependent, and publicly employed people. Thus, anyone who claims to care about the ethics of coercive statecraft must confront its distributional realities with the same rigor applied to questions of military tactics.

Cross-country research spanning decades has documented that economic sanctions reduce GDP growth, widen income inequality, increase child mortality, limit access to health care, and expand food insecurity in target states.

The 2012 sanctions severed all Iranian banks from the global payments system in the most comprehensive financial decoupling ever imposed on a major economy. As a result, poorer Iranian households lost 2.3-2.8 times more, as a share of their pre-sanctions real (inflation-adjusted) expenditures, than higher-income households, and the average household lost 13-42 per cent of its pre-sanctions purchasing power. Thus, financial sanctions reverse the distributional predictions typically associated with trade or commodity sanctions. They are not merely harmful but regressive.

The regressivity is not incidental. It reflects the mechanics of how financial sanctions function. When a country is cut off from the global payments system, it loses the ability to process international transactions, import intermediate goods, and maintain foreign-exchange reserves. The immediate consequence is inflation, which disproportionately affects imported



JAMAL IBRAHIM HAIDAR



SEYED MOHAMMAD KARIMI

The authors work at the Lebanese American University and the University of Louisville, respectively

Financial sanctions, as currently practiced, rarely achieve their strategic objectives, and they inflict predictable, severe, and regressive harm on civilian populations who bear no responsibility for the policies sanctions are meant to punish. Such harms are not more humane; they are harder to see and easier to ignore.

consumer goods and inputs that ordinary households depend on. Since wealthier households tend to have more diversified assets, foreign-currency holdings, and access to informal financial channels, they can partly insulate themselves as poorer households absorb the price shock in full.

The sectoral impact is similarly unequal. Workers in manufacturing and services, which are deeply integrated into international supply chains and depend on imported inputs, suffer disproportionately. Public-sector employees, whose salaries are denominated in a currency whose real value collapses as sanctions bite, also bear an outsize burden. In the Iranian case, households headed by public-sector workers needed 35-41 per cent more compensation than their private-sector counterparts to maintain their pre-sanctions standard of living. Those employed in manufacturing and services required 37-42 per cent more than workers in agriculture and construction.

These are not abstractions. They represent real losses in nutrition, health, education, and dignity for millions of families who have no voice in the geopolitical disputes that triggered their impoverishment.

In the perverse political economy of sanctions, this popular suffering is justified as a means of pressuring the target government. But that rarely happens. Authoritarian regimes have proven remarkably adept at insulating themselves from the economic pain felt by marginalised populations. After the 2012 sanctions, politically connected Iranians maintained real purchasing power while public-sector wage earners — teachers, nurses, civil servants — experienced a collapse in their living standards.

Some will argue that without sanctions, policymakers have no tool short of military force to impel a government to change its behaviour. But this, too, is false. Diplomatic isolation, multilateral condemnations, targeted asset freezes, visa restrictions on ruling elites, and the patient construction of international mechanisms of legal accountability all carry far lower humanitarian costs. The question is not whether states should have

foreign-policy tools, but whether any tool that imposes the scale of civilian harm documented in the sanctions literature can be considered legitimate under the same ethical and legal frameworks we apply to armed conflict.

In wartime, the principle of proportionality limits permissible harm to civilians in pursuit of military objectives. Yet no equivalent principle governs economic coercion. Sanctions are routinely imposed, tightened, and maintained for years or decades with little systematic accounting of their human costs. The civilian harm they inflict is treated as regrettable collateral damage rather than a direct moral consequence of the sanctioning state’s choices.

This inconsistency is indefensible. If it is impermissible to bomb a civilian water treatment plant, it should also be impermissible to sever a country from the global banking system when the foreseeable and documented effect is to deprive low-income families of one-third or more of their real income.

This is not an argument for passivity in the face of aggression or human-rights violations. But financial sanctions, as currently practiced, rarely achieve their strategic objectives, and they inflict predictable, severe, and regressive harm on civilian populations who bear no responsibility for the policies sanctions are meant to punish. Such harms are not more humane; they are harder to see and easier to ignore.

But policymakers now have the analytical tools to measure these harms precisely. What is still missing is the political will to take such measurements seriously. That requires acknowledging that low-income people in Tehran, Caracas, Pyongyang, and Moscow are human beings whose welfare imposes obligations on those who would use their suffering as an instrument of geopolitical leverage.

Until sanctions regimes are held to the same humanitarian standards as military operations — with the same requirements to demonstrate proportionality, minimise civilian harm, and account for foreseeable consequences — their supposed ethical superiority to war will remain a convenient moral fiction for those who bear none of their costs.

©Project Syndicate, 2026

SPORTS

BEIJING TOURNEY



Oman team includes coach Wasim al Khateeb, players Younis al Toubi and Ashraf al Khasibi.

Oman para badminton team set for debut appearance in China

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 29

Oman’s national para badminton team left Muscat for Beijing on Thursday to take part in the China Para Badminton International 2026, marking the first international participation for the Oman Paralympic Committee (OPC) in the sport.

The tournament will be held in Beijing from August 30 to September 5, under the umbrella of the Badminton World Federation (BWF), and is organised by the China Administration of Sports for Persons with Disabilities. The event brings together several national teams and para athletes from across the world.

Oman’s delegation is headed by Rahma al Hajri and includes national badminton coach Wasim al Khateeb, along with players Younis al Toubi and Ashraf al Khasibi. The participation represents a new step for Oman’s para sports movement as the two players make their debut on the international para badminton stage.

The tournament carries added significance as the Omani players will undergo sport classification and assessment in line with BWF Para Badminton regulations. This process will enable them to enter the international competition and ranking system, paving the way for future participation in regional and global events.

The competitions will run from August 31 to September 5 and will include men’s singles, women’s singles, men’s doubles, women’s doubles and mixed doubles across the approved para badminton sport classes. Matches will be played in a best-of-three-games format, with each game played to 21 points.

Oman’s participation comes as part of the efforts of the OPC and the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth to expand sporting opportunities for athletes with disabilities, introduce new disciplines and support talented athletes in gaining international exposure. The tournament is also expected to provide Oman’s players with valuable experience through competition against athletes of different technical levels.

Al Adawi, Khalid claim titles in Dhofar bowling tourney

SPORTS REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUGUST 29

OMAN NATIONAL team bowler Musab al Adawi was crowned champion of the Open Championship at the Khareef Dhofar Bowling Championship 2026, while Khalid bin Ahmed Bait Issa claimed the Local Championship title as the six-day event concluded at the Dhofar Bowling Centre.

The championship attracted 92 players and featured separate Open and Local competitions to provide competitive opportunities for experienced bowlers and players from Dhofar Governorate.

The closing ceremony was held under the auspices of Faisal bin Ali al Nahdi, Assistant Director-General at the Directorate-General of Culture, Sports and Youth in Dhofar Governorate, in the presence of officials from Dhofar Municipality and the Dhofar Bowling Centre.

The final day featured eight players who had progressed to the decisive stage of the Open Championship.

Each bowler contested four games in a session lasting nearly two hours, producing an exciting battle for the podium in front of a good turnout of spectators.

Al Adawi emerged on top with a total score of 891, recording games of 222, 267, 166 and 236.

Khalid bin Ahmed Bait Issa finished runner-up with 834 points, following scores of 198, 223, 188 and 225, while Badr al Mahrami secured third place with 821 points after games of 187, 223, 198 and 213.

Sultan al Jabri finished fourth with 814 points, followed by Hassan al Azri in fifth with 810 and Hassan al Kharousi in sixth with 808. Khalid Qatan took seventh place with 773 points, while Mohammed al Hashmi finished eighth with 742.

KHALID SECURES LOCAL TITLE

In the Local Championship, Khalid bin Ahmed Bait Issa secured the title with 828 points, completing a successful tournament in which he also finished second in the Open event.

Suhail al Hamr claimed second place with 774 points, while Salem Qatan finished third with 742.



Winners of the Open and Local Championships pose at the Dhofar Bowling Centre.

Ahmed al Mahri was fourth with 740 points, followed by Musallam al Amri with 713, Ahmed Akkak with 707, Mohammed Salem with 699 and Hashim al Kathiri with 675.

Al Nahdi expressed his delight at attending the closing ceremony and praised the level of competition displayed by some of Oman’s leading bowlers, including national team players.

He said tournaments of this nature contribute to strengthening the presence of bowling in Dhofar by allowing local players to compete regularly and benefit from the experience and technical level of established national players.

He also thanked the Oman Bowling Committee for its continued efforts to stage competitions in Dhofar, noting the strong participation and growing interest generated by the championship.

Al Adawi said he was pleased to add another Open Championship title to his achievements this season.

“I am very happy to win another

title this season. The championship was challenging because of the strong competition among the players, and I benefited greatly from taking part,” Al Adawi said. “We also witnessed a good improvement in the standard of both the Local and Open Championships.”

Local champion Bait Issa said the tournament provided valuable competition for players in Dhofar and reflected the growing popularity of bowling in the governorate.

“The championship was very good, and everyone benefited from it. We thank the Oman Bowling Committee and Dhofar Municipality for their continued support,” he said.

“The large number of participants reflects the growing interest in bowling, particularly in Dhofar.

I worked hard to win the Local Championship and also competed strongly for the Open title. We hope the tournament continues and receives even greater support in the coming years.”

Oman ready for 50-over ACC Premier Cup challenge: Kulkarni

MUSCAT: Armed with confidence from a productive build-up and carrying the experience of finishing runners-up in the previous edition, Oman will launch their ACC Premier Cup 2026 campaign in Malaysia, on Sunday with head coach Sulakshan Kulkarni backing his well-balanced side to deliver a strong performance in the high-stakes 50-over tournament.

The challenge, however, will be different for Oman this time. Having finished second in the previous edition played in the T20I format, Oman will now look to make their mark in the 50-over competition, where the champions will earn a coveted place in the Asia Cup while the top three teams will qualify for the Rising Stars Asia Cup.

Oman begin their Group B campaign against Singapore on August 30, with Kulkarni confident that his players are ready for the challenge after a successful preparation period, including the recent warm-up series against India’s domestic side Goa.

“We have high hopes for the boys. They prepared well and are coming to the tournament with confidence,” Kulkarni said.

“We had a nice warm-up series against India’s domestic side Goa. We tried different combinations and are all geared up.”



Oman begin their Group B campaign against Singapore on August 30.

Oman used the five-match series against Goa to test their combinations ahead of the Premier Cup, winning the two-match T20 series 2-0 before losing the three-match 50-over series 2-1.

RIGHT MIX

Kulkarni believes Oman have the right mix of experience and emerging talent to mount a strong challenge in the tournament.

“We have a well-balanced squad and I thank the selectors for ensuring the right

balance. There are quite a few experienced players and I am hopeful that the boys will bring home positive results,” he said.

Among those returning to the squad are Karan Sonavale and Hassnain Wahab, with the latter earning his place following strong performance in the Goa series.

The tournament will also mark a significant milestone for Vinayak Shukla, who takes charge of Oman for his first major assignment as captain.

Kulkarni backed the wicketkeeper-batter

to handle the responsibility, describing him as a “confident leader with a strong tactical understanding of the game.”

And the coach signed off ahead of the start of the event, “We will do well in this tournament.”

Oman have been drawn in Group B alongside UAE, Kuwait, Qatar and Singapore and will face each of their rivals in the league phase.

After Sunday’s opening match against Singapore, Oman take on Qatar on September 2, Kuwait on September 5 and UAE on September 8.

The 10-team tournament is divided into two groups, with the competition progressing to the semifinals, final and a third-place playoff. The winners will qualify for the Asia Cup, while the top three teams will book their places in the Rising Stars Asia Cup. All Oman matches will begin at 1.30pm Oman time and will be streamed live on the ACC YouTube channel in Oman.

OMAN SQUAD: Vinayak Shukla (captain, wicketkeeper), Jatinder Singh, Hassnain Wahab, Hammad Mirza, Jiten Ramanandi, Shakeel Ahmad, Nadeem Khan, Muhammed Imran, Faisal Shah, Hasnain Ali Shah, Jay Odedara, Wasim Ali, Karan Sonavale and Mujib Ali.



HIGHLIGHTS SPORTING, TOURISM AMBITIONS

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 29

THE TOUR OF SALALAH is entering a new development stage as Oman continues to use international sporting events as a platform to promote the tourism, develop local athletes and strengthen its presence on the global sporting map. The sixth edition of the Tour of Salalah will take place from September 6 to 9, while the second edition of the Dhofar Classic will be held on September 5. Both events are organised by the Oman Cycling Association (OCA), with the support of Dhofar Municipality and in accordance with the regulations of the International Cycling Union (UCI).

The Tour of Salalah is more than an international cycling race. Classified as a UCI 2.2 event and part of the UCI Asia Tour, it has become an important sporting and tourism product that takes the name and natural beauty of Salalah and the Sultanate of Oman to cycling audiences around the world.

This year's Tour will feature four stages covering a total distance of approximately 499 km, taking riders through a variety of landscapes and tourism destinations across Dhofar. The routes combine coastal roads, mountains, valleys and natural and historical sites, offering both a demanding sporting challenge and a strong visual showcase of the governorate. On the other hand, the Dhofar Classic race event will cover 98 km on September 5. The race will start from Al Haffa Souq at 10 am, with the actual race beginning after approximately 8 km at Asser Roundabout before passing through Aser and Ain Saleet and finishing at Hajif Primary School.

LOCAL RACE TURNS INTERNATIONAL
OCA Vice-Chairman and Tour of Salalah Event Safety Manager Ishaq al Balushi said the development of the Tour since its first edition in 2021 reflects a long-term sporting project rather than simply an annual cycling race. "When we look at the Tour of Salalah from its first edition in 2021 to the sixth edition in 2026, we are talking about a sporting project that has developed rapidly," Al Balushi told Oman Observer. "The initial objective was to establish a strong stage race in Oman that could give Omani cyclists the opportunity to compete while also taking advantage of the natural assets of Dhofar. With every edition, we have improved the organisation, expanded participation and developed the routes and technical aspects."

The Tour became part of the UCI Asia

Tour in 2023, marking an important step in its international development. Last year's fifth edition featured 15 teams and national selections, further strengthening the event's reputation among international cycling teams.

"For us, real success is not only the continuation of the Tour. It is its transition from a local sporting event into an international race with a place on the Asian and international calendar, while also building Salalah's reputation as a destination capable of hosting cycling events at a high technical and organisational level," Al Balushi said.

95 RIDERS FROM 28 COUNTRIES

The 2026 edition is expected to feature 95 riders representing 16 teams and 28 nations, highlighting the growing international appeal of the event. The preliminary entry list includes Oman, Saudi Arabia, Algeria and Bahrain national teams, alongside continental and club teams such as Terengganu Cycling Team, Li Ning Star, Roojai Insurance, Jakarta Pro Cycling Team, Victoria Sports Pro Cycling, The Joyrun & Hurricane Cycling Team, Euro Cycling Trips, 7Eleven Cliqq Roadbike Philippines, Team Amani, JR Pro Cycling Team, Embrace The World and Prologue Racing Team.

Britain leads the nationality list with 10 riders, while Algeria, Ethiopia, Germany, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, Oman and the Philippines are each represented by six riders. Australia and Bahrain have five riders each. The field also reflects a strong presence of young cyclists. Around 38 per cent of the riders are aged 22 or under, while the average age of the field is 25.5 years.

UCI CLASSIFICATION

The UCI 2.2 classification has given the Tour a recognised position within international cycling and also placed greater responsibility on the organisers. Al Balushi explained that the classification requires the race to meet international standards covering areas such as officiating, safety, race convoy management, timing, results, technical services and team operations. "Being classified as UCI 2.2 is very important for us. It means that the Tour of Salalah is officially recognised as an international stage race and forms part of the UCI Asia Tour," he said. "But the importance goes beyond simply having the race listed on the international calendar. The classification places significant technical and organisational responsibilities on the organising committee."

Safety remains one of the key priorities, with the organisers working on road security, traffic management,



The impact of the Tour extends beyond the riders competing on the road.

medical and emergency services, communication systems and the management of potentially dangerous sections of the routes. The association also sees media production and international promotion as increasingly important elements of the event.

"International cycling races today are not only sporting competitions. They are also media, tourism and economic products. The better the quality of the television production, digital coverage and international promotion, the greater the value of the Tour," he said.

A PLATFORM FOR OMANI CYCLISTS

While international participation has helped raise the profile of the Tour, developing Omani cyclists remains one of its most important objectives. The Oman national team has been preparing through an external training programme that included camps in France, particularly in Brittany, as well as participation in European and international races. These experiences have given the riders more competition days and helped them adapt to the demands of international cycling, including riding in large groups, tactical racing, climbing, changes in pace and the physical pressure of consecutive stages. "The participation of the Oman team in the Tour is not symbolic," Ishaq said. "We want the Omani riders to enter the race ready to compete and to gain real technical experience from racing alongside international cyclists."

CYCLING DESTINATION

The sporting value of the Tour is closely linked to its tourism potential. Dhofar's mountains, coastline, valleys, historical locations and unique Khareef landscape provide a natural setting for an international cycling race while giving global audiences an opportunity to discover Oman through sport.

"Dhofar has an exceptional tourism and natural product, and cycling is one of the best sports through which we can take this product to the world," Al Balushi said. "When people watch the race, they are also watching the mountains, beaches, roads and natural and historical sites of the governorate."

This combination of sport and tourism supports Oman's wider ambition to use major sporting events to diversify tourism offerings, promote destinations and create opportunities for athletes, businesses and local communities. The Tour also has the potential to attract international teams for training camps. Dhofar's varied terrain can provide different training conditions, making the governorate a potential destination for the teams.

TOUR OF SALALAH 2026

DHOFAR CLASSIC

Saturday, September 5

Distance

98 km

Route
Al Haffa Souq –
Hajif

STAGE 1

Sunday, September 6

Distance

127 km

Route
Mughsail Beach –
Mirbat Castle

STAGE 2

Monday, September 7

Distance

108 km

Route
Dhazarez Beach –
Wadi Darbat

STAGE 3

Tuesday, September 8

Distance

156 km

Route
Taqah Castle –
Jabal Samhan

STAGE 4

Wednesday, September 9

Distance

105 km

Route
Ain Razat – Sultan Qaboos
Youth Complex

SPORTS

INTERNATIONAL OUTING



Faris al Aufti and Yousuf al Mahrouqi are attending an academies championship in Belarus.

BELARUS EVENT OFFERS OMANI ICE HOCKEY PROSPECTS VALUABLE EXPOSURE

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 29

Young Omani players Faris al Aufti and Yousuf al Mahrouqi are gaining valuable international experience through their participation with Galaxy Ice Hockey Academy at an international ice hockey academies championship in Belarus. The event, held from August 28 to 31, brings together teams and academies from several countries, providing a competitive platform for emerging players to test their abilities against different hockey schools and higher levels of play. For Al Aufti and Al Mahrouqi, the championship represents more than an overseas appearance. It is part of a wider development pathway aimed at improving the technical, physical and mental readiness of young Omani ice hockey players through regular exposure to external camps and competitions. Their selection in the Galaxy Academy squad reflects the progress they have made in recent age-group programmes and training camps. It also underlines the potential of Omani talents in specialised sports, where international participation remains an important tool for development. The Oman Skating Sports Committee has continued to emphasise youth categories as a foundation for the long-term growth of ice hockey in Oman. Overseas participation allows players to adapt to faster match rhythms, learn new training methods and build confidence in demanding competitive settings.

FIRST EXPERIENCE

Al Mahrouqi said the tournament is his first experience of this nature, adding that being part of a squad with talented players gives him strong motivation to work harder and learn from the challenge. He noted that such competitions help young athletes understand their strengths, recognise areas that need improvement and grow both inside and outside the rink. Al Aufti described the Belarus event as an important stage in his sporting journey following a period of preparation through training camps abroad. He said facing players with advanced technical standards would help him assess his level and push him to continue developing. He also pointed out the need for greater support for ice hockey in Oman, particularly through facilities that allow players to train consistently and attract more young talents to the game. Al Aufti thanked his coaches for their continued guidance and praised his teammates for their shared ambition to raise the level of Omani ice hockey.

MUNOZ’S LATE STRIKE EARNS LIVERPOOL DRAW HULL EXTEND DREAM START, MAN CITY CRUISE PAST PALACE



Liverpool’s Victor Munoz scores their second goal against Nottingham Forest at Anfield. — Reuters

VICTOR MUNOZ saved Andoni Iraola from his first defeat as Liverpool manager with the late strike that rescued a 2-2 draw against Nottingham Forest on Saturday, while Hull beat Coventry to extend their dream return to the Premier League. Forest were set to win at Anfield for the third consecutive season as Dan Ndoye and Morgan Gibbs-White’s penalty twice put the visitors in front. Alexander Isak briefly brought Liverpool level in the second half before Munoz’s deflected effort rescued a late point for the second time in Iraola’s two matches in charge. “It’s quite clear the first half has been poor, we haven’t controlled the game,” Iraola said. “We improved a lot in the second half, much more intense, much quicker on the ball but not enough to win the game.” After a 2-2 draw at Newcastle in his first game as Liverpool boss last weekend, Iraola had hoped for a memorable day to mark his first match in charge at Anfield. But instead the former Bournemouth boss got a reminder of why he was hired to replace the sacked Arne Slot in the close-season. Iraola could have Bradley Barcola to unleash by the time Liverpool are next in action at Ipswich on Friday. The France winger has been one of the Reds’ top targets for months and a £106 million (\$144 million) deal with Paris Saint-



Hull City’s Liam Millar celebrates scoring their first goal against Coventry City. — Reuters

Germain, which could rise by a further £17 million, is reportedly close to completion. “I cannot tell you anything right now. There are still things going on at this moment,” Iraola said. “Now we have to wait and look forward to having the squad on September 2, when this is who we are and can work with certainties.” **HULL ON THE RISE** Hull substitute Liam Millar struck in the closing stages to steal a 1-0 win at Coventry.

Millar slotted home with eight minutes left as Hull won a battle between sides promoted from the Championship last term. Having stunned Manchester United with a 2-0 victory last weekend, Sergej Jakirovic’s men have won both their matches in their first season in the top tier since 2016-17. Frank Lampard’s Coventry won the Championship to end a 25-year exile from the Premier League, but they are still awaiting their first point back in the big time after losing their opener at Arsenal last week. James Tarkowski’s stoppage-time equaliser earned Everton a 1-1 draw that left Marco Rose still waiting for his first win as Bournemouth manager. Alex Scott’s 41st-minute goal put Bournemouth ahead at the Vitality Stadium. But Everton defender Tarkowski capitalised on a mix-up between Ryan Christie and Marcus Tavernier to drill home following a corner in the closing seconds. Everton remain unbeaten after a 2-0 win against Crystal Palace last weekend, while Bournemouth were beaten 2-1 at Manchester City in Rose’s first game since replacing Iraola. Later on Saturday, big-spending Tottenham face Newcastle as Roberto De Zerbi’s side look to bounce back from their embarrassing 3-0 defeat at Brentford last weekend. Manchester City eased to a 4-1 win at Crystal Palace on Friday thanks to two goals each from Rayan Cherki and Erling Haaland. — AFP

‘Smooth’ Marquez wins Aragon MotoGP sprint, Bezzecchi on pole

ALCANIZ, Spain: Reigning world champion Marc Marquez glided to a dominant sprint win at MotorLand on Saturday after Italian Marco Bezzecchi snatched a surprise pole position for the Aragon MotoGP with a circuit lap record. Seven-time MotoGP champion Marc Marquez of Ducati will start Sunday’s Grand Prix second on the grid, but will seek to repeat his flying start to the sprint when he blitzed past Bezzecchi’s Aprilia on the inside at the first turn. The 33-year-old held off the challenge of his brother

Alex Marquez to come in 1.140 sec ahead, with Bezzecchi rounding out the podium. It was his third sprint win at the circuit in northeast Spain. “Today, I was riding smooth,” Marc Marquez told TNT Sports. “It’s something that normally happens in a circuit where you feel well, you are faster with less stress. “Here, I’m riding in a very smooth way and I feel the bike... I feel good so let’s see tomorrow that is the most important but the first job is done.” Bezzecchi and the elder



Winner Team Ducati Lenovo Team’s Marc Marquez (C) celebrates on the podium with second placed Team Gresini Racing MotoGP’s Alex Marquez (L) and third placed Team Aprilia Racing’s Marco Bezzecchi after the sprint race of the MotoGP Aragon Grand Prix at the Motorland circuit in Alcaniz, northeastern Spain. — AFP

Marquez are attempting to close the gap on championship leader Jorge Martin. The Spaniard, riding for Aprilia, could only place fifth in both qualifying and the sprint race. Martin’s lead is down to 29 points over second-placed Bezzecchi, with Marc Marquez a further four adrift. Marc Marquez has won three of the past five races to haul himself back into title contention. Earlier Saturday, Bezzecchi clocked a blistering lap in qualifying after already lowering the circuit record on Friday, finishing 0.089 sec

clear of second-placed Marc Marquez. Alex Marquez, on his Gresini Ducati, was 0.299 sec back and will start in third. The pole was the 12th of Bezzecchi’s MotoGP career. It came at a circuit that has long been a happy hunting ground for defending world champion Marc Marquez, who has also won seven of the 11 premier-class races held at Aragon. “We start in a good place, but Marc and Alex are both super fast in terms of pace. It’s going to be a tough fight,” said Bezzecchi. “Now the real job starts,” the Italian added. — AFP

BUSINESS

SHORT TAKES



Consumer price inflation averaged 2.85 per cent over the January-July period.

OMAN ECONOMY RECORDS 2.6% GROWTH IN Q1

BALARAB AL TAMIMI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 29

Oman’s economy expanded by 2.6 per cent in real terms in the first quarter of 2026, with petroleum activities growing at nearly twice the pace of the non-oil sector, according to the Ministry of Economy’s latest Economics Brief.

Gross domestic product at constant prices totalled RO 9.69 billion at the end of Q1 2026, the ministry said in the August edition of its key economic indicators bulletin.

Petroleum activities accounted for RO 3.04 billion, a year-on-year increase of 4.6 per cent, while non-petroleum activities reached RO 7.04 billion, up 2.4 per cent over the same period.

The bulletin also pointed to a sharp divergence in foreign direct investment. The total FDI position stood at RO 32.20 billion at the end of the first quarter, an increase of 8.7 per cent year on year. Flows of foreign direct investment, however, fell 35.7 per cent to RO 2.57 billion — the only indicator in the brief to register a decline.

Consumer price inflation averaged 2.85 per cent over the January-July period, the ministry said.

The average oil price reached \$83.9 a barrel by end-July 2026, up 15.7 per cent from a year earlier.

On the trade front, Oman recorded a trade balance of RO 4.68 billion at the end of June 2026, an increase of 51 per cent year on year — the steepest rise among the indicators published.

Non-oil Omani exports grew 11.4 per cent to RO 3.64 billion over the same period, while recorded merchandise imports rose 2.1 per cent to RO 8.57 billion.

The Economics Brief is issued periodically by the Ministry of Economy and published through its official channels.

58MW wind projects take shape in Duqm

CONRAD PRABHU
AL DUQM, AUGUST 29

TWO new wind energy projects are under development at the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD) as part of the Duqm City Renewable Energy initiative spearheaded by Naqaa Sustainable Energy, a subsidiary of Oman’s integrated clean-energy platform O-Green.

Collectively known as the Duqm North and South Wind Project (DNSWP), the initiative comprises two wind farms featuring a total of six wind turbine generators with a combined installed capacity of 58 MW. Planned across two sites within SEZAD, the projects are expected to generate around 190 gigawatt-hours of electricity annually, contributing to the decarbonisation of a wind turbine manufacturing plant currently being developed by O-Green in Al Duqm.

Recently, prominent Omani multidisciplinary architectural and engineering consultancy Design Group Engineering Consultants (DGEC) announced the successful completion of its electrical design scope for the two wind energy packages.

According to DGEC, both projects have progressed from concept design and regulatory approvals to a fully tendered, construction-ready stage, with the consultancy managing the process from initial engineering through to grid-connection arrangements and permitting.

Duqm North, a 9.6 MW single-turbine development, required a comprehensive 33 kV electrical design covering approximately 2.5 kilometres from the turbine switchgear to the point of grid connection. The scope included underground cabling, trenching, integrated protection and SCADA systems, as well as a temporary power connection to support



Omani multidisciplinary architectural and engineering consultancy Design Group Engineering Consultants (DGEC) oversaw the electrical design scope for the two wind energy packages.

construction activities.

Duqm South, the larger of the two developments, will have a capacity of 48 MW across five turbines. Its electrical infrastructure includes 33 kV inter-array cabling, medium-voltage collection switchgear, step-up transformers, a 132 kV switchgear bay, and a nine-kilometre overhead transmission line connecting the project to the grid, located approximately eight kilometres away. The scope also includes extension works at the receiving substation.

Beyond the engineering design, DGEC was responsible for securing the necessary permits and approvals from relevant authorities and managing the grid-connection application process, taking both projects from concept through to construction readiness.

“Projects of this scale reflect the kind of end-to-end engineering ownership DGEC is built for - moving seamlessly from 33 kV collection networks to 132 kV grid-level integration under one team

and one design vision”, a DGEC spokesperson said. “We are proud to support Naqaa in advancing renewable infrastructure in the Al Wusta Governorate, contributing directly to Oman’s Vision 2040 sustainability goals”.

The Duqm developments also complement a broader renewable energy expansion strategy being pursued by Naqaa and OQ Alternative Energy (OQAE), the clean-energy investment arm of OQ Group. Earlier in July, the partners signed agreements to develop a series of wind power projects across the Wilayats of Al Duqm, Mahout and Sadah with a combined capacity of up to 1,100 MW.

The projects are expected to utilise locally manufactured wind turbines supplied by Mawarid Turbine, a first-of-its-kind venture currently under development in Al Duqm. Backed by O-Green, the facility is planned to manufacture multi-megawatt-class wind turbines based on technology licensed from Shanghai Electric Group.

“
We are proud to support Naqaa in advancing renewable infrastructure in the Al Wusta Governorate, contributing directly to Oman’s Vision 2040 sustainability goals.
”
DGEC SPOKESPERSON

Salalah Engineering Forum to spotlight clean energy innovations

SALALAH: The fifth Salalah Engineering Forum will open on September 1, Tuesday under the theme ‘Energy Transformation Engineering: Applied Innovations for a Flexible Clean Energy Infrastructure’, bringing together experts, specialists, academics and decision-makers to examine the engineering challenges and opportunities shaping Oman’s transition towards a cleaner and more resilient energy system.

Organised by the Oman Society of Engineers in partnership with the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, the two-day forum in the Wilayat of Salalah will focus on practical engineering solutions and innovations that can support the development of sustainable, reliable and flexible energy infrastructure.

The forum comes at a time when the global energy sector is undergoing rapid



SAID BIN MOHAMMED AL MAKTOUMI

Artificial intelligence is another key area of discussion, reflecting the growing use of digital technologies to improve energy management, efficiency and infrastructure resilience



transformation, driven by the expansion of renewable energy, advances in energy storage and artificial intelligence, growing efforts to reduce carbon emissions and the development of low-carbon hydrogen.

Discussions will focus on four main themes: the integration of renewable energy and energy storage; grid resilience and the use

challenges associated with the energy transition.

Said bin Mohammed al Maktoumi, Chairman of the Energy Committee at the Oman Society of Engineers, said the organisation of the forum reflects the Society’s commitment to strengthening the contribution of engineering to sustainable development.

He said the Society was also seeking to expand its initiatives beyond Muscat Governorate and enhance professional engagement across Oman’s governorates.

The forum, he added, would contribute to consolidating Dhofar Governorate as a platform for specialised engineering dialogue, while strengthening links between engineering-sector outputs and national development priorities.

The event will feature 31 speakers and panellists, with more than 22 scientific

papers to be presented during four specialised scientific sessions. Two additional dialogue sessions will provide opportunities to discuss challenges facing the energy sector and examine potential areas for and cooperation.

The wide participation is expected to highlight the importance of coordination among government institutions. The forum will also examine how technological innovation can contribute to creating energy systems that are not only cleaner but also more flexible and capable of responding to changing conditions.

Particular attention will be given to renewable energy and storage technologies, which are becoming increasingly important as countries seek to integrate greater amounts of renewable power into their energy systems while maintaining grid stability and reliability. — ONA

ADVERTORIALS

SHORTTAKES



Musk and Altman have been at odds for years, a feud that culminated earlier this year in a trial over Musk’s \$150 billion lawsuit against OpenAI.

OPENAI TO PULL AI MODELS FROM SPACEX’S CURSOR

OpenAI said on Friday that it plans to stop providing AI models to Cursor, the coding-tool company now owned by Elon Musk’s SpaceX, marking a further escalation in the bitter rivalry between OpenAI CEO Sam Altman and Musk.

Musk and Altman have been at odds for years, a feud that culminated earlier this year in a trial over Musk’s \$150 billion lawsuit against OpenAI. During the trial, Musk’s lawyer said that Musk and other witnesses had testified that Altman was a liar, while OpenAI argued that Musk had sought control of the company.

“We are making this choice because we cannot be confident that SpaceX will use our technology within our terms of service, based on our experience with Elon Musk’s companies violating contracts”, OpenAI said in a blog post.

Musk responded early on Saturday in an X post, writing, “I couldn’t care less”.

He accused Altman and OpenAI President Greg Brockman of being “untrustworthy”, while repeating his assertion that they “stole an open source nonprofit”.

Musk, the world’s richest person, had sued OpenAI and Altman for “stealing a charity” by betraying the company’s original nonprofit mission for their own enrichment. A federal jury ruled against Musk earlier this year, finding that he had filed the case too late.

However, Michael Truell, a co-founder of Cursor and now an executive at SpaceX, said on X that the company was speaking with the OpenAI team to resolve this issue.

Hours after OpenAI’s announcement, Anthropic, which rivals both firms but has an ongoing partnership with SpaceX, said it planned to increase compute to support Claude models in Cursor, according to Tom Brown, one of the co-founders of the firm.

In its blog post, OpenAI said that X, formerly known as Twitter and now part of SpaceX, had breached the terms of its contract with OpenAI after Musk acquired the platform.

“To work with a large partner like SpaceX, we typically rely on custom contracts to ensure compliance with our terms of service and that the integration provides for safety at scale”, the AI company added.

The ChatGPT-maker said it proposed a shutdown date of November 12, 2026, adding that its agreement with Cursor gave it a limited time window to cancel the contract following “a change of control”.

SpaceX announced a deal to buy Anysphere, the startup behind Cursor, for \$60 billion in an all-stock deal in June, and completed the acquisition earlier this month. — Reuters

NBO OFFERS EXCLUSIVE 30% DISCOUNT ON NOON

As part of its commitment to provide rewarding banking experiences, the National Bank of Oman (NBO) has partnered with Noon to offer an exclusive back-to-school offer to its Retail Visa Credit Cardholders.

Running until September 4, 2026, eligible cardholders can enjoy 30% off their first eligible purchase made through the Noon app or website using the promo code NBO30. The offer applies to orders of RO 40 or more, with a maximum



discount of RO 15 per customer during the campaign period and is exclusively available on eligible e-commerce transactions made using NBO Retail Visa Credit Cards.

The campaign reflects NBO’s commitment to enhancing the banking experience through strategic partnerships that reward customers on their everyday spending while supporting their seasonal shopping needs.

For more information, visit www.nbo.om or call 24 770 000.

MHD ACERE backs Oman’s sustainable energy drive



MHD ACERE reinforced its long-term commitment to Oman’s sustainable energy transition through its sponsorship and participation in the “Muscat Energy Security Conclave 2026” on Future Energy Security, held on August 24 at Grand Hyatt Muscat.

Organised by Mercuré Events under the theme “Future Energy Security for the Region: Oman’s Role”, the conclave brought together senior representatives from government entities, the energy sector, diplomatic missions, financial institutions and leading businesses to exchange perspectives on energy security, renewable energy, cleaner mobility and future-ready infrastructure.

Highlighting MHD ACERE’s strategic vision, Mohsin bin Hani al Bahrani, Chief Executive Officer, MHD ACERE, emphasised that the successful transition towards sustainable e-mobility requires more than the introduction of new technologies. It also depends on building a reliable and integrated ecosystem that supports their long-term adoption.

Commenting on MHD ACERE’s

The successful transition towards sustainable e-mobility requires more than the introduction of new technologies. It also depends on building a reliable and integrated ecosystem that supports their long-term adoption.

participation, Mohsin al Bahrani also said:

“At MHD ACERE, we recognise that Oman’s transition towards a more sustainable future requires strong collaboration, continuous innovation and investment in the right infrastructure. Our ambition goes beyond introducing advanced e-mobility and renewable energy solutions to the market. We are equally focused on building the ecosystem necessary for these technologies to be adopted successfully and deliver lasting value.

Through our capabilities in renewable energy, engineering and e-mobility, together with our partnerships with global technology leaders such as ABB, we are committed to supporting Oman’s sustainability ambitions. We will continue working closely with government entities, industry partners and other stakeholders to help develop a resilient, future-ready e-mobility and energy landscape for the Sultanate of Oman”.

Bassam Alshabatat, ABB E-mobility Solution Lead, MENA & North Africa, was also present

at the event and shed light on ABB’s e-mobility solutions and EV charging infrastructure across the GCC.

The conclave provided MHD ACERE with an important platform to engage with senior stakeholders representing prominent organisations, including OQ Exploration & Production, Al Maha Petroleum, ABB E-Mobility, Moore, the French Embassy, the British Embassy and InnovateQ, among others.

Through its participation, MHD ACERE further strengthened its position within Oman’s renewable energy and sustainable e-mobility sectors while showcasing its capabilities across renewable energy, engineering, procurement and construction, e-mobility and EV charging infrastructure.

MHD ACERE remains committed to working with government and industry stakeholders to support Oman’s transition towards cleaner energy, sustainable e-mobility and future-ready infrastructure, contributing meaningfully to the Sultanate of Oman’s long-term sustainability objectives and the vision of His Majesty.

Trump announces deal for huge US stake in Venezuelan oil

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump said on Friday his administration has reached a huge oil deal with Venezuela that gives the United States majority control of 65 billion barrels of proven petroleum reserves.

The deal — which Trump proclaimed as “the biggest oil deal in world history” — will bring nearly \$100 billion in private investment to Venezuela, US and Venezuelan officials said.

Venezuela has the world’s largest proven oil reserves. Its government has operated under intense pressure and close scrutiny from the Trump administration since the US ousted and captured long time ruler Nicolas Maduro in January.

Washington allowed his vice president, Delcy Rodriguez, to stay



The biggest problem for companies to operate in Venezuela is “the safety and security of your investment.

on and serve as interim leader so long as she toes the US line.

Trump has made no secret of his desire to secure Venezuelan oil for the US and in his post announcing the deal on his Truth Social platform, he said it will more than double US oil reserves.

Interim leader Rodriguez confirmed what she called a “historic agreement” that would “have a significant impact on the rebirth of our nation”.

Writing on social media, she hailed potential investment of “more than \$100 billion and more than \$209 billion in tax revenue for the State”.

Trump said Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth had reached the deal with Rodriguez “through a

partnership with private business”.

“This Transaction will greatly strengthen the already growing relationship between Venezuela and the United States!” Trump wrote.

— Many questions remain —

Rubio said the deal demonstrated how “President Trump’s bold foreign policy is driving America First wins: securing stable reserves and low-cost oil in our Hemisphere and lowering gas prices here at home”.

“For the Venezuelan people, this deal will bring nearly \$100 billion in private investment, support thousands of high-paying jobs, and drive the reconstruction of Venezuela’s economy”, Rubio wrote on X, without providing further details. — AFP

SHORTTAKE

HALAL TOURISM IN FOCUS AT SALALAH WORKSHOP

SALALAH: A specialised three-day workshop on halal tourism will begin in Salalah from September 1, Tuesday, bringing together government and private-sector institutions involved in tourism, hospitality, food services and conformity assessment.

Organised by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion in cooperation with the Standards and Metrology Institute for Islamic Countries, the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism; and Omran Group, the workshop aims to strengthen Oman’s national halal system and build technical and professional capabilities in related sectors.

The event comes as Oman seeks to tap into the growing opportunities of the global Islamic economy while diversifying its tourism products and services and enhancing their competitiveness in line with regional and international standards.

The workshop will cover key aspects of the halal system, including international standards, Oman’s national halal framework, standardisation, halal certification, the halal market and global quality infrastructure under the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation. It will also examine the halal tourism market in OIC countries, opportunities for halal certification of restaurants and requirements governing halal food and tourism services.

Participants will review practical requirements for establishments involved in preparing, storing and serving halal food and beverages, supported by case studies and practical applications designed to improve their understanding and implementation of relevant standards. The workshop targets government and private entities involved in tourism, food, inspection, restaurants and logistics, as well as hotels, tourism companies, airlines, laboratories, inspection bodies and certification organisations.

Emad bin Khamis al Shukaili, Director General of the Directorate General of Standards and Metrology at the Ministry, said the workshop forms part of efforts to build national capabilities and strengthen knowledge of standards and requirements related to halal tourism.

He said the initiative would help Oman benefit from international experience and support the development of high-quality, reliable tourism services, strengthening the country’s competitiveness in a promising segment of the Islamic economy. Al Shukaili noted that halal extends beyond food to sectors including tourism, hospitality, logistics, pharmaceuticals, cosmetics and financial services, requiring an integrated national system based on standards, accreditation and conformity assessment. — **ONA**

Frozen bulk vessels begin calling at Oman’s ports

BUSINESS REPORTER MUSCAT, AUGUST 29

Gulf Warehousing Company, one of the region’s leading logistics groups providing cross-border and integrated logistics solutions, has completed one of the first frozen bulk vessel operations in the Sultanate of Oman, extending its management of the full cold value chain across the GCC.

Frozen goods entering Oman typically arrive in standard containers. Handling a full frozen bulk vessel required specialist cold chain expertise at every phase, from vessel offloading through temperature-controlled storage to onward distribution, maintaining uninterrupted frozen integrity from port to warehouse.

Delivery of that first operation earned GWC Group a second, larger commission: the largest frozen bulk vessel operation the Group has handled to date. The same customer then awarded a long-term cold storage contract extending the relationship from vessel handling into ongoing storage. The Group subsequently began transporting frozen poultry products by road from Barka to Qatar and Kuwait, bringing combined volumes to more than 1,000 truckloads of frozen cargo handled, stored and distributed from Oman to local and regional warehouses.

The project reflects the continued growth of GWC Group’s regional platform, with the net revenue contribution from its international operations having tripled over



Frozen bulk vessel handling demands strict, uninterrupted temperature control at every phase, from offloading at the port through storage to long-distance cross-border transportation.

the past two years as the Group strengthens its capabilities across Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Oman and Bahrain.

Haitham al Rawahi, General Manager of GWC Oman operations, said: “Executing a project of this scale and complexity shows how GWC Group truly connects the region. Frozen bulk vessel handling demands strict, uninterrupted temperature control at every phase, from offloading at the port through storage to long-distance cross-border transportation. Our teams in Oman delivered that without compromise, drawing on the Group’s specialised assets and technical knowhow”.

He added: “From our operations in Oman, we can now serve cold

chain demand across Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates while maintaining the highest standards of quality and temperature integrity. The confidence our customers place in us continues to create opportunities for long-term growth across the region”.

GWC Group’s cross-border cold chain logistics is supported by a global network spanning more than 120 countries through over 550 freight partners worldwide. The Group operates more than four million square meters of logistics infrastructure supported by over 1600 specialised vehicles and a network of 20 strategic locations across the GCC, moving more than two million tonnes of freight annually.

CURRENCY WAR

Trade tensions split loonie and aussie



The Canadian dollar has held up relatively well against the US currency since Donald Trump took office in January 2025, suggesting tariff hostilities haven’t caused major weakness. But the loonie’s slide against the Australian dollar looks more telling and technical analysis suggests it may be on the cusp of a bigger drop. — **Reuters**

STATISTICAL BULLETIN

Oman private deposits rise 12.45%



The total value of private deposits with commercial banks in Oman rose 12.45 per cent to RO 19.369 billion at the end of June 2026, compared with RO 17.135 billion during the same period in 2025. According to the latest bulletin issued by the Central Bank of Oman (CBO), the deposits comprised RO 5.216 billion in term deposits, RO 6.537 billion in savings deposits and RO 7.284 billion in demand deposits. — **ONA**

TURNAROUND PLAN

Call for agreement on VW restructuring



One of the main players in a struggle to agree a restructuring plan for Volkswagen AG, Lower Saxony state Premier Olaf Lies, said there was heavy pressure on all sides to reach an agreement in the next few days. The board of Europe’s largest automaker is due to meet on September 4 to discuss a turnaround plan potentially involving tens of thousands of additional job losses. — **Reuters**

From spending local to building local capability



DR HILAL AL SAWAI

The writer is local content, sustainability and innovation expert

THE Sultanate of Oman is using local content more often as it strives towards the goals outlined in Oman Vision 2040. While local content discussions mainly revolve around manufacturing and buying local goods, a significant opportunity involves improving local services.

Local services include, but are not limited to, engineering, maintenance, logistics, transportation, information technology, consulting, training, facility management, professional services and tourism, as well as construction support, among many others. Developing such local services offers Oman the opportunity to retain a larger portion of its expenditure rather than having it flow out of the country.

This broader approach is reflected in the National Local Content Policy, which strives to retain the highest level of economic value from expenditure by supporting local suppliers, developing Omani capabilities, strengthening supply chains and creating quality jobs.

Local content should not just be about local purchases. The more important question should be, to what extent is sustainable capability created in Oman?

One example would be if an international service was purchased from a local company. Most of the technical work may still be done out of Oman. While the business may have been transacted locally, the actual economic value retained in the country may still be low.

To develop a more robust local content policy, the service delivery location, the service provider, the employee location, the participation of Omani professionals, the extent of the knowledge transferred

and the integration of local small and medium enterprises should be taken into consideration.

This repositions local content from a procurement obligation to a mandated economic development activity.

Local services present perhaps the easiest opportunity for SMEs to engage with major projects. Not every SME will be in the position to establish a factory requiring a major capital investment. However, several SMEs could provide specialised services in areas like technical maintenance, digital solutions, logistics, training, inspections, engineering support and business services.

Clear signs are visible that this policy is working. According to the Oman Vision 2040 report, the value of government contracts awarded to SMEs rose from RO 53.5 million in 2023 to RO 84.5 million in 2024. In addition, the number of government tenders and procurement awards to SMEs climbed from 1,783 to 3,431 during this period.

This clearly shows that procurement can be useful in advancing the goals of enterprise development beyond the mere procurement of goods and services.

The professional requirements stimulated by the localisation of services create an important opportunity to build the appropriate high-level professional capabilities Oman needs.

It is therefore important to ensure that large contracts identify services that can be progressively performed by Omani professionals and/or companies. Where local capability is lacking, contractors would need to prepare and pursue a formal plan of capability development encompassing training, mentoring, certification, partnering

The value of government contracts awarded to SMEs rose from RO 53.5 million in 2023 to RO 84.5 million in 2024

with local companies and a plan for the transfer of required technology.

Oman's local content regulations focus on national human-resource development, employment creation, local sourcing and Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) development within related government contracts (PTLC).

This focus over time will help Oman graduate from localising basic services to engaging in more complex activities of engineering design, digital technologies, research and development, advanced consulting and other technical and specialised services.

This next level approach is about measuring the real value of local services. Indicators could be set such as expenditures with local service providers, SMEs, Omani employment with the provision of opportunities for professional development, delivery of local services with opportunities for knowledge transfer and the development of new capacities.

Digitisation helps this approach. The local content requirement as part of the Isnad e-Tendering system is allowing Oman to capture more detail on its spending and contractual commitments in terms of local content. Eventually, local content must be able to answer the following question: what is the long-term value of each dirham spent in Oman?

Local services offer Oman a significant opportunity to build long term productive capacity from each dirham spent. Working to develop Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) through procurement will help develop local talent, create a local technology base and increase the nation's capacity.

COULD GEOTHERMAL POWER HAVE A FUTURE IN OMAN?

NAJAH AL RIYAMI

Oman's renewable energy transformation is becoming increasingly visible across its landscape. Solar installations capture the intensity of the desert sun, while wind turbines operate along some of the country's strongest wind corridors. Yet another source of renewable energy remains almost entirely out of sight, stored beneath the mountains and plains in the form of natural heat.

Geothermal energy harnesses heat from beneath the Earth's surface and is already used for electricity generation and heating in several countries. Oman does not have the volcanic landscapes normally associated with major geothermal resources, but its geology tells a more interesting story. Naturally heated water emerges at thermal springs in several areas, providing visible evidence of heat and water movement deep underground.

Some of the best-known examples are found around the Al Hajar Mountains, including Ain Al Kasfah in Al Rustaq. Groundwater can travel through fractures in the rock and descend into deeper geological layers, where it is gradually heated before faults provide pathways for it to rise towards the surface again.

Recent research into thermal springs in northern Oman has provided further insight into what may be happening below ground. A 2026 study examining springs across the Batinah Plain estimated underground reservoir temperatures of approximately 66 to 103 degrees Celsius, with water circulating at depths ranging from around 400 metres to 1.9 kilometres. The findings suggest that Oman possesses underground thermal resources that could warrant further investigation.

Harnessing this heat does not necessarily require the extremely high temperatures found in volcanic regions. Binary-cycle geothermal technology, for example, transfers heat from underground water to a secondary fluid with a lower boiling point. The fluid vaporises and drives a turbine before being cooled and reused, allowing electricity to be produced from lower-temperature geothermal resources.

For Oman, however, the potential may extend beyond electricity generation. Geothermal heat could eventually support applications such as desalination, industrial processes and building cooling.

Desalination is particularly relevant because producing fresh water from seawater requires considerable energy, while cooling accounts for a significant share of electricity demand during Oman's intense summer months.

Public money, regional flights and aviation future

OMAN is preparing to strengthen domestic air connectivity. The difficult decision will not be where an aircraft can land, but where public money should help keep one flying.

That question matters as the National Aviation Strategy 2040 moves towards a Public Service Obligation, or PSO, framework for regional airports. Where an air connection is socially or economically important but the commercial market cannot provide an adequate service, the state can support essential connectivity.

But a public-service route should begin with a transport problem, not an empty runway.

Oman's civil aviation rules already point in this direction. They allow PSO arrangements for remote, sparsely populated or developing regions, while requiring consideration of alternative transport and whether those alternatives can provide an adequate journey within a reasonable time.

That distinction is crucial. Masirah, Musandam and Al Duqm do not present the same transport problem. An island has different needs from an industrial centre and both differ from a destination already served reasonably well by road. Passenger demand therefore cannot be the only test, but neither should existing airport infrastructure become an automatic argument for subsidy.

Recent traffic data underline the point. Al Duqm handled only tens of thousands of passengers in the first half of 2026, while Suhar recorded limited passenger activity.

Those figures do not prove that either airport lacks value. Airports can support industry, logistics, emergency access and long-term regional development. But they do



QASIM AL MAASHANI

The author is the head of the Business and Politics dept at Observer

As the National Aviation Strategy 2040 moves towards a Public Service Obligation framework, the test for subsidy should be a transport problem — not an empty runway

demonstrate that infrastructure and demand are not the same thing.

A runway does not create a market.

Before supporting a route, policymakers should ask a more basic question: what specific problem does this flight solve that a road, ferry or other transport option cannot solve adequately?

If the answer is geographic isolation, essential access, tourism development or support for a strategic economic centre, then public support may be justified. But the objective should be defined before the operator is chosen.

That means defining what the government is buying: frequency, capacity, operating period, fare limits, reliability and the level of compensation required.

Oman's regulations contain much of this logic. They provide for public tendering and require compensation to be linked to the net cost of operating the service, after revenues are taken into account, together with a reasonable profit.

This should remain the foundation of any broader PSO programme.

Competition matters as well. Following the government's acquisition of SalamAir, Oman's two principal national carriers are publicly owned while remaining commercially separate.

There is nothing inherently wrong with a publicly owned airline operating a publicly supported route. But ownership and public-service procurement are different decisions.

Where practical, qualified operators should compete for the service on clear terms. The winning bid should be judged on service quality, fares, reliability and the compensation required — not on ownership.

There is a legitimate

counterargument. Regional development cannot always wait for demand to appear first. Roads, ports and airports are often built before the economic activity they are intended to support reaches full scale. Judging every new air link only by its early load factor could therefore undermine development policy.

That argument is valid.

But it makes measurement more important, not less.

If a route is intended to support tourism, measure whether it creates additional visitor demand and spending. If it supports an industrial centre, assess whether it improves business access and investment. If it serves an isolated community, measure the accessibility problem it is meant to solve.

And every subsidy should have an exit test.

If demand grows to the point where an airline can operate commercially, public support should be reduced or removed. That would be a policy success. Equally, if a route remains expensive, poorly used and unable to demonstrate the benefit for which it was created, continuation should not become automatic.

Oman has already invested heavily in aviation infrastructure. The next phase requires something harder than building airports: choosing where connectivity genuinely creates public value.

Some routes will deserve support even if they cannot make money. Others should remain commercial decisions. In some cases, the better investment may not involve an aircraft at all.

The principle should remain simple.

A public-service flight should start with a public problem — and end when that problem no longer requires a subsidy.

CLASSIFIEDS

Driving School

Special offers for those wishing to learn driving in (Aziba - Khwair Qurum - Ruwi Al Amirat)

Contact No: 99074072

SIT. WANTED

SALES professional with 5 yrs Experience in Medical sector. Graduate, Available in Muscat. akhilmanu777@gmail.com Contact: 76323324

OPERATIONS Support / Tendering / Contract Management / Procurement professional with 18+ years' Oil & Gas experience. NOC & driving license available. 96227272, jijilmathew@gmail.com

LOGISTICS Documentation Executive. Indian male, 25 years, BBA, PG Diploma in Logistics & SCM and have 2 years of experience in this field. Seeking a position in Logistics field +968 7506 9882 Mail: shafazhussain18@gmail.com

ACCOUNTS/ SALES Indian male (b com) having 2+ years of experience in India accounts sales looking for suitable placement, join immediately. Contact: 76324360

MECHANICAL engineer with 11+ years experience in projects & marketing in Oman having valid driving licence. Seeking suitable placement. Contact: 91162085

15+ experience in building material, project sales & Trade market, deal with corporate project customers, looking for a suitable job. Contact 78384283

INDIAN male MBA Graduate with 15yrs experience in Oman seek suitable senior position in finance office admin., sales DTC. Contact: 94158080

INDIAN electrical engineer more than 20 years experience in "MEP" construction field in Oman seeks suitable job. Contact: 92919281

INDIAN Male, BSc, 20 years experience seeks suitable position as System Administrator / System Engineer. Contact: 93642216

ALL SEASON AYURVEDA CLINIC

The most efficient and authentic Ayurvedic Treatment & Medicine, Panchakarma, Yoga, Kalari, Massage Dhara etc.... Rehabilitation, Marma Therapy & Post Delivery Care

Zaher Building, 1st Floor, Flat 8A, Al Khuwair Service Road, Near Al Zawawi Mosque & Burger-King
Tel: 24475280, GSM: 95371664, 92504980, Website: www.siddhayur.com

PEST CONTROL OMAN CO. L.L.C.

Supply of Pesticides, Gel (Cockroaches), Public Health Chemicals, Agriculture Chemicals, Snake Repellent, Rodent Baits and other insect repellent from UK & USA

PROFESSIONALS in Pest Control Service, Bedbug Treatment, Rodent Treatment, Snake Treatment and Termite Treatment [Pre & Post Construction]

Tel: 24787606, 24787503
Direct Line: 24786077
GSM: 99382355, 99172309

pcomctom@omantel.net.om
P.O. Box 565, Al Wadi Al Kabir 117, Sultanate of Oman

SIT. WANTED

LOOKING for SUPPLY CHAIN / SALES jobs Indian male 24 years. Commerce graduate, Experience in logistics, procurement and sales in reputed company in Oman.Valid Oman D/L. Contact +96891121694, issacantony2002@gmail.com

INDIAN male, 10 year experience in Oman as Coordinator have Driving licence. Contact: 95645241

DESKTOP support engineer, 6+ years experience, skilled in Windows/ Server/ Ubuntu, Network configuration, M365 & Google workspace admin. Contact: 99639710, jay.prajapati5655@gmail.ci

EXPERIENCED Accounts & Finance Candidate Seeking Suitable Opportunity. Expertise in Accounts, Invoicing, Reconciliation & Reporting. Contact: 75177637

LOOKING for Pipeline Engineer with 8 Years Experience offer salary: 200 OMR Phone : +96896965333 Email : sultanalhabsi701@gmail.com

LOOKING for warehouse manager role. Indian male, 14 years GCC experience with driving licence. Available to join immediately. Please contact: 92991621

SENIOR Logistics Coordinator seeking opportunity. 8 years' experience in Import, Export, Customs Clearance & Freight. PH +968 92267276

SIT. WANTED

LOOKING for part time or full time Accounts/ Finance job. 20yrs experience in Muscat. Upto finalization & Audit. Please contact: 92065499

LOOKING for part time OR full time Accounts/ Finance job. 20yrs experience in Muscat. Upto finalization & Audit. Please contact: 92065499

SENIOR Accountant: Indian male 20 years experience in Oman, shipping & logistics, Trading & contracting upto finalisation, cont: 95915852

Accounts & Finance professional with 7+ years' experience in reporting, revenue assurance, audit, compliance & ERP. Contact: 90159392



WJ Towell Group Company

Quality car rentals at competitive prices.

Muscat 9014 6672, 9679 0684
Sohar 9731 6218 Salalah 9429 9325
www.orbit-oman.com

- Fleet of 2,000 vehicles
- Choose from a wide range of brands & models
- PDO, OXY and BP spec vehicles available
- Attractive rates for short-term & long-term lease

Lost Bill of Lading Notice

Six Construct LLC, registered under Commercial Registration No. (9014276), has lost Bill of Lading No. (GBTJS0H039/056) on 20/7/2026. Whoever finds it should hand it over to the nearest branch of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry or contact the following number: +968 99229518.

URGENTLY REQUIRED

An excellent grade and reputed contracting company requires the following:

- * MEP Project Managers (Minimum 15 years Gulf experience)
- * MEP Project Engineer (Minimum 3 years Gulf experience)

Kindly forward their CV to omanjobvacancies2026@gmail.com

SIT. WANTED

LOGISTICS Experienced in Logistcs,warehouse & Operation incharge Seeking Suitable position with 15 yrs of experience in Logistics,warehouse Management & Supply chain along with hand on Chemical storage, involvement in project operation handling, Also have sales experiance in Mechanical & Instrumentation products. Immediate joiner Valid Oman D/LOL Contact: 95852916

SALES Executive required For working in oil and gas / building materials industry Vehicle Driving license preferred Email: kirit@bustaninternational.com Mobile: 95544641

PAKISTANI male, having diploma in mechanical engineering, 10+ years experience as "sales engineer" in UAE and 15 years experience as "operation manager" in Oman with D/L.Looking for job Contact: 99495131 email: manzoor.Ahmed1997@gmail.com

PROJECT manager (IT) 4+ years experience seeking opportunities in PMO Project Management or business analysis, MS Engineering Mgt. Experience across IT, Banking. Higher Education & nonprofit sectors. PMP (in progress) currently in Oman. Contact: 95800828

FOR RENT

10000 sqm plus area of open yard fully blacktop with compound wall, wide gate & CCTV for immediate rent in Jifnain. Contact: 99853040

4 Ready made office space for rent in Bank Melli Iran building MBD area Ruwi, opposite Centre point. Contact: 99011352.

SIT. WANTED

INDIAN male B.Tech Mechanical engineer with 3+yrs experience as Project engineer in project execution, commissioning, Auto CAD. Currently in Oman seeking job. Contact: +968 75174368

INDIAN male civil engineer with more than 30 years experience in different ministers, seek immediate suitable position. Contact: 94158080

PROJECT management professional with 20+ years' experience in tendering, business development, business systemisation, ISO QMS, planning and procurement. Possesses managerial and team lead skills. Seeking an opportunity. Contact: 91799438

To advertise in Ministry of Information channels



To advertise

71455532- 71455531- 71455530
adv@omaninfo.om
izdihar_info izdihar.info



ART/LIFE



H I J A B R I D E R N O O R



FROM CHENNAI TO OMAN ON TWO WHEELS

> 20

ENDURINGMUSIC

MALIAN SONGBIRD KEEPS AGE-OLD SOUNDS ALIVE AT 88



At 88, barefoot and cinched into a belt of cowrie shells, renowned Malian singer Mariam Bagayoko still sweeps across the stage with infectious energy, captivating audiences with the rhythms of a bygone Mali.

Known as the “Nightingale of Beledougou”, Bagayoko has spent a lifetime carrying traditional music beyond her homeland while working to keep it alive in a rapidly changing world.

At Bamako’s Palace of Culture, she spun across the stage, bending her knees and dipping low before springing back up. In her right hand, she gripped a yabara, a percussion instrument made from a large calabash filled with dried seeds. Its sharp rattle blended with the deep notes of the n’goussoumbala, a large xylophone-like balafon unique to the Beledougou region of central-western Mali.

Before performing, Bagayoko clasped her hands behind her back as a gesture of respect to protective spirits and griots, the guardians of the spoken word, before launching into powerful Bambara songs that evoke moonlit village gatherings.

A towering figure in Mali’s music scene, Bagayoko has spent decades introducing little-known local traditions to audiences around the world. In late 2025, she received a lifetime achievement honour at the Aga Khan Music Awards in London, becoming one of 11 laureates selected from more than 400 candidates across Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Europe.

The jury praised her “passionate and unwavering dedication” to preserving Mali’s musical heritage, particularly among women and girls. Sang before she spoke, Born in Beledougou, north of Bamako, Bagayoko grew up in Beledougou, where music and dance accompany everything from farm work to ceremonies. She says she learned to “sing before I could speak”.

As a child, she followed village women as they pounded shea nuts for butter, joining their songs with a small calabash.

“At first, nobody paid attention to me. But little by little, my presence became indispensable”, she recalled. Her father, a musician who performed in traditional koteba theatre troupes, initially opposed her ambitions, fearing success could bring jealousy and danger.

Drawing on traditional songs, Bagayoko uses music to comment on social issues and offer advice inspired by current events.

“It is the artist’s privilege to be able to speak out”, she said. “Through song, we give lessons without hurting people”. One of her best-known performances is “Ciwara”, a tribute to farmers, courage and hard work. She is also famous for dancing atop the wooden keys of the n’goussoumbala.

“The future is in good hands” Bagayoko has trained many young musicians, determined that traditional music should not disappear. Yet she worries that technology and foreign influences are changing the rhythms of her homeland. — AFP

Q U I C K F E A T U R E S



TRIBUTE

The Empire State Building is lit up in pink to honour the late US singer-songwriter and country music legend Dolly Parton in New York. — **AFP**



ROBOTICS

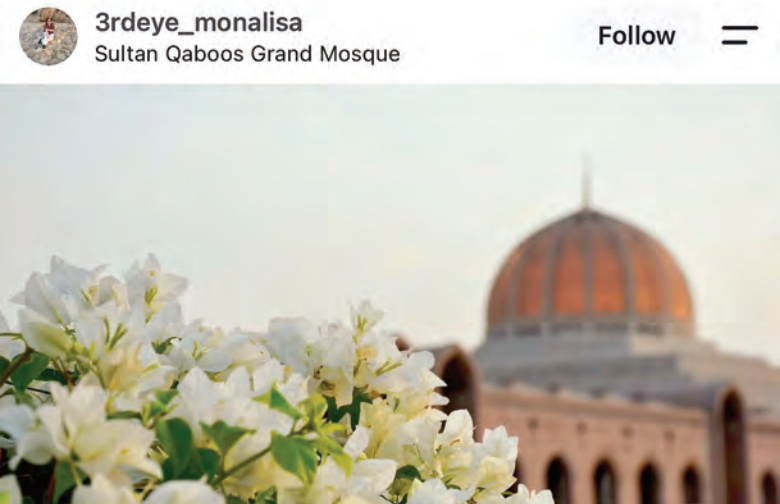
A humanoid robot by Unitree Robotics competes during a Wushu contest at the 2026 World Humanoid Robot Games. — **Reuters**



NATURE

A Morpho butterfly lands on a leaf at the butterfly conservatory of the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute (STRI) in Panama City. — **AFP**

INSTA PICKS



The serenity of Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque



Black-winged kite in Dhofar

SHARE A SLICE OF YOUR LIFE

We select photos daily for our Instagram Top Picks of the Day. The rules are simple. Follow us on Instagram. Upload your photos. Tag us and use #OmanObserver and #BeAnObserver.

AUSTRALIA’S TOP MUSIC CHARTS BAN AI SONGS



Music made by artificial intelligence will be banned from Australia’s top charts under new guidelines aimed at protecting “the human nature of artistry”, an industry body said.

Under new rules in force from Friday, music must be “substantially human made” in order to be eligible for the charts, the Australian Recording Industry Association (ARIA) said.

“Wholly AI-generated tracks will not be eligible for the ARIA Charts”, the group said.

It said its charts would exclude songs that use AI “to generate the entirety or the primary portion of the creative elements”.

But “recordings that use generative AI in a supporting role remain eligible”, it added.

The move follows growing concern in the music industry over a surge in AI-generated music hitting the airwaves.

In July, a cover of Madonna’s “Like a Prayer” soared to the top of the charts in Australia but drew scrutiny after it was revealed to have used AI-

generated vocals and drums.

Streaming giant Spotify has said it will launch a new “AI Persona” badge clearly identifying content producers that are AI-generated and not real people.

More than one-third of new uploads to Apple Music are entirely created with AI, a platform executive said this year. That month, several major music industry organisations unveiled a labelling system for content created with generative AI that they would like to see widely adopted.

“These changes reflect our intent to remain dynamic and promote the human nature of artistry in what is — to say the least — a rapidly developing space”, ARIA CEO Annabelle Herd said.

“The ARIA Charts will always remain a transparent measurement of the music Australia consumes, but a chart that rewards unlicensed AI output would undercut the very basis of the recorded music we exist to represent”, she said.

— AFP

Rafts on Rome’s Tiber River cool down overheated tourists



FORGET the long lines at Roman ruins and overpriced gelato — sweating tourists are enjoying a break from the scorching heat by rafting on the Eternal City’s Tiber River.

A welcome change from the beaten tourist track, river rafting on the Tiber — long the lifeblood of the ancient city — is a unique and relatively new option for tourists seeking to discover Italy’s capital.

Starting at the water’s edge near the historic Piazza del Popolo, the inflatable rafts float by some of the city’s most photographed landmarks, from the Castel Sant’Angelo — the burial place of Emperor Hadrian — to St Peter’s Basilica, the dome of which can be seen from the water.

“It’s really nice to get a different view of Rome. It’s something special compared with what you can see on foot,” said Manuel Frank, 19, a visitor from Germany on a recent “Roma Rafting” tour.

After approximately two hours, tours end at an ancient Roman port in the neighbourhood of Trastevere, whose name literally means “Across the Tiber”.

“It’s really nice to get a different view of Rome. It’s something special compared with what you can see on foot,” said Manuel Frank, 19, a visitor from Germany on a recent “Roma Rafting” tour.

His guide, Giuseppe Battaglia, said the 40-euro (\$46.7) tour allows tourists a different perspective on the city, one that follows “much the same route that the Romans used to take before setting off on their conquests”.

In Ancient Rome and centuries beyond, Italy’s third-longest river provided water and food, while acting

as a key trade route for the city’s inhabitants.

“We’re always used to thinking about roads, cars and motorbikes, but Rome also gives us the chance to take a tour along the river”, said the 37-year-old guide.

As the rafts reach the picturesque Tiber Island, the current picks up and creates light rapids, splashing the rafters as they pass beneath some of Rome’s oldest stone bridges.

Belgian tourist Sabine Maisano, 50, said she had sought out something different for her visit to Rome with her family.

“After a day of walking for kilometres, being able to sit down in a boat... even though you have to paddle a little, that allows us to relax, stay cool and discover the city at a more relaxed pace”. — AFP



HIJAB
RIDER

NOOR

FROM
CHENNAI
TO OMAN
ON TWO
WHEELS

KABEER YOUSUF

ON a Royal Enfield Himalayan 450, with her hijab tucked under the helmet and the mountains of the Sultanate of Oman in the background, Noor calls Oman “beautiful from the soul.”

For the Chennai native known online as Hijab Rider Noor, this stop in Oman is not just another pin on the map. It’s home, at least for now.

A MISSION BEYOND KILOMETRES

Noor is two years into riding across geographical borders and a few months on a solo Middle East expedition that began with a deeply personal ride: her first big journey was across India and to the holy city of Mecca to perform Umrah. That ride set the tone for everything that followed.

“I’m on a mission to visit Islamic historic places across the world,” the 28-year-old, who holds a Master’s degree in HR, says. “The bike is my way of connecting — not just seeing, but feeling these places.”

In the last 2 years of riding, Noor has already covered over 19,000 kms across India and Middle East on her Enfield Bullet and Classic Himalayan 350, sleeping in tents, gurudwaras, and locals’ homes instead of hotels. That India ride was about discovering herself. The Middle East ride is about discovering her roots.

FROM THE IRAQ BORDER TO THE OMAN MOUNTAINS

Her route has taken her through Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Iran, and Iraq, immersing herself in Bedouin culture and Arab lifestyles. It hasn’t been easy.

“During the war I got stuck at the Iraq border,” she recalls. “That’s when you learn patience, and that the road teaches you more than any classroom.”

Funded entirely by her personal savings, Noor rides alone, navigating borders, deserts, and mountain passes

on the bike. She had actually planned to stay in Oman for just 1 month, but...

“I fell in love with this country,” she laughs. “The green of Salalah in Khareef, most importantly, the highly hospitable people, the calm. I’ll stay longer.”

BREAKING STEREOTYPES, ONE BORDER AT A TIME

Famous on Instagram as Hijabi Rider, Noor is consciously breaking stereotypes about Muslim women and solo travel.

“A lone woman on her bike embarking on a breathtaking sojourn — that’s what freedom to live life means to me,” she says. “I want other women to see that we can achieve our goals while being spiritually grounded, and free chasing our dreams.”

Her India journey took her from Bengaluru through Karnataka, Maharashtra, Pune, Daman and Diu, Gujarat, Bihar, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, and even Nepal. But this Middle East leg is different. It’s slower, more intentional.

In Oman, she’s exploring forts, wadis, and coastal roads, documenting how Islam and local culture intertwine. Next stops on her list include more historic Islamic sites across the region.

“OMAN IS FROM THE SOUL”

Between rides, Noor volunteers and speaks with local riders and women’s groups. She says Oman’s hospitality made her extend her stay in the country.

“The mountains here, the fog in Khareef, the way people respect a solo woman traveller Oman touches you,” she says. “It’s beautiful from the soul.”

For now, the Himalayan 450 will stay parked a little longer in Muscat and Salalah. The mission continues, but Noor is in no rush.

“I have little savings, I have a dream, I have a road and I have an unbending mind,” she says. “That’s enough.”

From India to Mecca and across the Middle East, Noor is riding solo in search of Islamic history, cultural connection and a deeper sense of self. Now in Oman, the hijabi rider has found a country she calls “beautiful from the soul”, inspiring her to stay longer as she continues her journey of faith, freedom and discovery.