

O M A N
عمان
D A I L Y

Observer

SUNRISE 05:41 AM

PRAYER TIMINGS

FAJR 04:20 AM

DHUHR 12:17 PM

ASR 03:43 PM

MAGHRIB 06:49 PM

ISHA 08:05 PM

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SMART AGRICULTURE FOR SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

OMAN

INBRIEF

HM GREETINGS TO ECUADOR PRESIDENT

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Daniel Noboa of the Republic of Ecuador on the occasion of his country’s Independence Day. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere greetings and best wishes to President Noboa and the friendly people of Ecuador for further progress and prosperity.

EFFORTS TO BOOST TRAFFIC SAFETY

The Royal Oman Police (ROP) continues its efforts to protect lives and provide a safe traffic environment, thus contributing to the national development process. These efforts have resulted in a significant decline in the number of road accidents in recent years. Brig Eng Ali bin Sulayem al Falahi, Director-General of Traffic at ROP, said that traffic safety institutes train school bus drivers as part of the preventive driving programme, in coordination with the Ministry of Education. The results of this programme are reviewed by monitoring the drivers’ performance in transporting students resulting in a reduced number of traffic violations. **DETAILS ON P3**

FULL MOON RISES

The full moon rises behind the Fanar Mosque with its spiral minaret by the Doha Corniche, Qatar, on Saturday. — **AFP**

Oman welcomes Armenia-Azerbaijan peace deal

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman has welcomed the peace agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan, expressing its deep appreciation for the peaceful efforts that contributed in achieving this historic agreement, which ends decades of conflict and division.

In a statement issued by the Foreign Ministry on Saturday, the Sultanate of Oman commended the pivotal role played by the United

States and other parties in this context.

The statement expressed the hope that this step would inspire similar achievements in resolving various issues, most notably the Palestinian issue in the Middle East, through dialogue and peaceful means, based on the principles of justice and right. This approach will undoubtedly contribute to enhancing stability and prosperity

for all countries, peoples and all regions affected by conflicts around the world.

Meanwhile, US President Donald Trump said Armenia and Azerbaijan have committed to a lasting peace after decades of conflict, after the South Caucasus rivals signed a deal.

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Azerbaijan’s long-time President Ilham Aliyev said

Trump’s mediation should earn him a Nobel Peace Prize — an award the US leader has been vocal about seeking.

The two former Soviet republics “are committing to stop all fighting forever, open up commerce, travel and diplomatic relations and respect each other’s sovereignty and territorial integrity”, Trump said at a White House signing event on Friday. — **Agencies**

Oman condemns Israel’s plan to occupy Gaza Strip

THE Sultanate of Oman has expressed its firm condemnation and rejection of the Israeli government’s decision to solidify its military occupation of the Gaza Strip, continuing its violation of international law, disregard for international legitimacy resolutions and unchecked infringement upon the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people without deterrence or accountability.

In a statement issued on Saturday by the Foreign Ministry, Oman called upon all nations of the world — particularly members states of the United Nations Security Council — to uphold their legal and moral responsibilities in halting the injustice inflicted upon the Palestinian people. It urged decisive and immediate measures to enable Palestinians to reclaim their legitimate rights, end this aggression and terminate the Israeli occupation of their territories in accordance with the pre-1967 borders.

Meanwhile, Gaza’s civil defence agency said at least 18 people were killed across the Palestinian territory on Saturday, including civilians who were waiting to collect aid. Civil defence spokesman Mahmud Bassal said that at least six people were killed and 30 wounded after Israeli troops targeted civilians assembling near an aid point in central Gaza.

The spokesman said strikes hit areas elsewhere in central Gaza, resulting in multiple casualties.

An aerial view from a Jordanian military aircraft shows the Gaza Strip, before humanitarian aid is airdropped in Gaza, on Saturday. — **Reuters**

Oman called upon all nations of the world to uphold their legal and moral responsibilities in halting the injustice inflicted upon the Palestinian people

He later added that a drone attack near Khan Yunis killed at least three people and injured several others.

Media restrictions in Gaza and difficulties accessing swathes of the territory mean AFP is unable to independently verify the tolls and details provided by the civil defence and the Israeli military.

Thousands of Palestinians congregate daily near food distribution points in Gaza, including four managed by the

US- and Israeli-backed Gaza Humanitarian Foundation.

Since launching in late May, its operations have been marred by almost-daily reports of Israeli forces firing on those waiting to collect aid.

Israeli restrictions on the entry of supplies into Gaza since the start of the war nearly two years ago have led to shortages of food and essential supplies, including medicine and fuel, which hospitals require to power their generators. — **Agencies**

Groundbreaking UN plastic pollution treaty talks floundering

GENEVA: Talks on forging a groundbreaking treaty to combat the scourge of plastic pollution were floundering on Saturday, with progress slow and countries wildly at odds on what the proposed agreement should cover.

The negotiations, which opened last Tuesday, have four working days left to strike a legally-binding instrument that would tackle the growing problem choking the environment.

But in a blunt mid-way assessment, the talks chair warned the 184 countries gathered at the United Nations in Geneva that progress so far was well off track.

Some countries called for areas where countries are far from agreement to be ditched completely for the sake of expediency.

Others slammed the brinkmanship and said insistence on consensus could not be used as justification for sinking the more ambitious elements of the treaty.

“Progress made has not been sufficient”, Ecuadoran diplomat Luis Vayas Valdivieso told delegates in a frank summary as country delegations gathered in the assembly hall to take stock.

“We have arrived at a critical stage where a real push to achieve our common goal is needed.

An Afghan worker loads plastic bottles into a sack at a recycling yard in Kabul. — **AFP**

“August 14 is not just a deadline for our work: it is a date by which we must deliver”.

Countries have reconvened at the UN in Geneva after the failure of the supposedly fifth and final round of talks in Busan, South Korea in 2024.

After four days of talks, the draft text has ballooned from 22 to 35 pages — with the number of brackets in the text going up near five-fold to almost 1,500 as countries insert conflicting ideas.

Vayas Valdivieso said states had had two and a half years to make such proposals.

“Some articles still have unresolved issues and show

little progress towards reaching a common understanding”, he lamented. Kuwait spoke up for the so-called Like-Minded Group — a nebulous cluster of mostly oil-producing nations which rejects production limits and wants to focus on treating waste.

Kuwait said the scope of the treaty had not been given “an equal and fair chance for discussion”.

“Let us agree on what we can agree... consensus must be the basis of all our decisions”.

But Uruguay insisted that doggedly clinging to consensus “cannot be used as a justification to not achieve our objectives”. — **AFP**

OMAN

SHORT TAKES



The ship carries a message to highlight authentic Omani culture at its international stops

SHABAB OMAN II CONCLUDES PARTICIPATION IN SAILING FESTIVAL

ESBJERG: The Royal Navy of Oman’s (RNO) ship Shabab Oman II concluded its participation in the Tall Ships Festival, held from August 6 to 9 in Esbjerg, Denmark, as part of her seventh international voyage to Europe dubbed ‘Glories of the Seas’.

Shabab Oman II won the 2025 International Friendship Cup during her participation in the maritime festival which saw numerous associated activities and programmes.

During the festival, Shabab Oman II opened its doors to visitors with the aim of building bridges of friendship and brotherhood between the Sultanate of Oman and other countries around the world. The ship carries a message to highlight authentic Omani culture at its international stops and introduce the Sultanate of Oman’s glorious maritime history and rich heritage. The ship received approximately 150,000 visitors during its participation in the festival.

The ship’s crew took part in the parade of the participating ships’ crews in the city and also attended various sports, beach, and marine activities. — ONA



Heavy rainfall was recorded in various villages in the Wilayat of Yanqul

HEAVY RAINS LASH PARTS OF OMAN, OFFICIALS URGE CAUTION

MUSCAT: Heavy rains have been reported from several parts of the Sultanate of Oman, with the Directorate General of Meteorology noting continued cumulus cloud activity over parts of the Al Hajar Mountains.

The weather department forecast scattered rainfall of varying intensity, accompanied by thunder, active downdraft winds and hail, which may cause streams and wadis to overflow.

Videos of heavy showers emerged from the wilayats of Al Mudhaibi, Ibri, Dhank and other areas. The Royal Oman Police (ROP) urged motorists to drive cautiously, particularly in wet conditions, to ensure safe travel.

On Thursday, moderate to heavy rainfall was also recorded in various villages of the Wilayat of Yanqul in Al Dhahirah Governorate, leading to the overflow of several wadis.

SALALAH TO HOST GOVT TRANSFORMATION MEET FROM TODAY

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, AUG 9

The Government Transformation and Sustainable Leadership Conference opens today in Salalah, uniting senior officials, experts and decision-makers to explore innovative models for agile, high-performing public institutions.

Part of the Work Forum 2025, which runs from August 3 to 14, the three-day event takes place at Millennium Resort Salalah under the auspices of Shaikh Salim bin Mustahail al Mashani, Adviser at

the Royal Court.

The opening day will focus on Modern Organisational Structures: From Bureaucracy to Institutional Agility, featuring working papers on institutional challenges, tools for organisational restructuring and international case studies.

Day two will address Behavioural Engineering and Government Leadership and Competencies and Talent Empowerment, with sessions on motivating employees through guided behaviour, shaping future-ready leaders and managing public sector talent.

The final day will spotlight Smart Management, covering artificial intelligence, big data analytics and a practical case study from Ministry of Labour on turning technology into future opportunities. Proceedings will conclude with presentations on leading global experiences in public administration.

The event aims to equip government leaders with practical tools, international perspectives and strategies to drive sustainable institutional transformation in alignment with Oman Vision 2040.

Fire incidents in Oman rise sharply over 3 years

VINOD NAIR
MUSCAT, AUG 9

THERE has been an increase in the number of fire incidents reported in the country over the last three years.

According to the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI), 4,955 fire incidents were reported in 2024, compared to 4,622 in 2023 and 4,186 in 2022.

Of these, 1,577 were reported in Muscat Governorate in 2024, 1,095 in Al Batinah North Governorate, 469 in Al Batinah South Governorate and 401 in Dhofar Governorate.

All these governorates showed an increase in the number of incidents reported in 2023 and 2022. Most of these were reported from housing facilities (1,530), transportation (1,070), residues (1,173), agriculture (409), equipment and power lines (314), government facilities (69), industrial installations (48) and places of worship (14).

There was an increase in fire incidents in housing facilities by

Oman recorded

4,955

fire incidents in 2024, marking a steady increase since 2022, with Muscat leading the numbers



CDAA has urged the importance of regular vehicle maintenance and acquiring a handheld fire extinguisher

30.8 per cent and in transportation by 21.8 per cent.

The Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority (CDAA) has urged the importance of regular vehicle maintenance, acquiring a handheld fire extinguisher and first aid kits; and ensuring their validity.

Items such as batteries, gas cylinders and hand sanitisers should never be left inside a vehicle.

Causes behind vehicle fires include urging drivers to maintain their cars regularly, monitor electrical malfunctions due to faulty wiring, fuel leaks near ignition sources and engine overheating; and the use of substandard or improperly installed parts.

Drivers should avoid using vehicles during the afternoon when the summer heat is at its peak.

Discussion on 2025 Tawasul Award for Short Films held

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth organised a discussion session today at the Oman Film Society focused on the 2025 Tawasul Award for Short Films.

Hamad bin Khalfan al Harrasi, Head of the Youth Awareness and Education Department at the Ministry’s General Directorate of Youth, explained that the award, now in its third edition, aims to provide participants with an opportunity to explore themes central to the national dialogue. The award encourages films that reflect the individual’s relationship with themselves, their community and the surrounding environment.

Al Harrasi noted that the award is open exclusively to Omani filmmakers, while



The award offers participants a platform to explore themes at the heart of the national dialogue

allowing non-Omanis to participate as actors. The Ministry has set technical requirements for submissions,

accepting all film formats including narrative, documentary, 3D and digital. Films must be between one

and 45 minutes in length and must not have been previously shown or published on any social media platform. The deadline for submissions is November 15.

The session also featured a dialogue with the award’s jury panel, chaired by Abdullah Habib and including members Mazna al Musafir, Laura al Siyabi and Qaisar al Hanai. During the session, the jury addressed questions from attendees and prospective participants, providing guidance on the award criteria and process.

The Ministry continues to encourage Omani filmmakers to engage with this prestigious platform to highlight important societal themes through their creative work.

— ONA

RAM unveils tailored leadership programme for startup CEOs

MUSCAT: In its ongoing commitment to empowering the Omani business community, the Royal Academy of Management (RAM) has announced the launch of its bespoke Startup Leadership Programme, a flagship initiative for 2025.

Designed specifically for startup founders and co-founders, the programme focuses on aligning leadership purpose with business strategy to drive sustainable growth.

Delivered in partnership with the Small and Medium Enterprise Development Authority (Riyada), the programme will connect participants with regional and international experts and investors, equipping them to scale their ventures and compete globally.

Fifteen CEOs and co-founders of Omani tech startups will be competitively selected to join the programme. Eligible candidates must hold an executive role in a startup headquartered or



primarily operating in Oman, with a minimum team size of five employees and demonstrable potential for sustainable growth and expansion.

The learning journey comprises four core modules emphasising strategic leadership, technical and operational skills; and human capital management.

Combining theory with practical application, the programme also features an international field visit to explore best global practices

applicable to participants’ businesses.

Graduates of the programme will emerge with a strengthened global expansion mindset, enhanced leadership and technical expertise; and a comprehensive market-informed expansion plan.

Applications open from August 10 to 23, 2025. Interested startup CEOs and co-founders can register via the Royal Academy of Management’s official platform and website.



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SHORTTAKES

CALLS GROW TO REDESIGN IBRI ROAD

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
MUSCAT, AUG 9

The recent fatal accident in the Wilayat of Ibri, Al Dhahirah Governorate, has once again sparked calls from road users to improve the road design in the Al Rahba area. Known as an accident-prone spot, the steep descent combined with a sharp turn poses a serious hazard to both trucks and light vehicles.

Rescue teams in Al Dhahirah Governorate responded to a collision between two trucks in Al Rahba, resulting in three deaths and one critical injury. Victims received emergency care at the scene before being transferred to the hospital.

Local residents voiced their concerns: “This stretch is unsafe and unsuitable for vehicles. We suffer from its danger daily and urge authorities to change the route”, said Abu Abdulaziz al Maamari. Saif al Kalbani emphasised, “This street needs to be reorganised”. Hilal al Maamari added, “Lives have been lost here before. We urgently need a solution”.

Ibri, the centre of Al Dhahirah Governorate and a key regional hub, sees heavy traffic due to its strategic location connecting Oman with neighbouring countries and trade routes. Recent infrastructure developments, including a new road to Saudi Arabia and a major public park project, underline the importance of safe and efficient transport networks.



Dr J Retnakumar was awarded ‘Exemplary Leader of the Year’

OMAN RESIDENT NAMED ‘EXEMPLARY LEADER OF THE YEAR’

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, AUG 9

Dr J Retnakumar, CEO of Insurance Service Centre (ISC) Oman and Chairman of Privity Insurance Brokers, India, was awarded the ‘Exemplary Leader of the Year’ at the Oman Leadership Awards 2025. The ceremony, organised by CMO Asia/CMO Global, took place at Crowne Plaza, OCEC, with top industry leaders from across Oman in attendance. Expressing his gratitude, Dr Retnakumar said, “This award reflects the trust built through ISC. We remain committed to value-driven insurance solutions and advancing industry standards. It motivates us to continue our journey towards sustainability”.

Wadi Qafeefah dam supports agriculture in drought-hit Ibra region

TEXT & PHOTO BY
YAHYA AL SALMANI

Despite only sporadic rainfall, the Wadi Qafeefah Dam in the Wilayat of Ibra, Al Sharqiyah North Governorate, has managed to retain significant volumes of water — offering much-needed relief to a region that has long suffered from drought.

The water retention has already begun to support groundwater

replenishment and agricultural activity in the surrounding areas.

According to technical data, the dam measures 122 metres in length and reaches a maximum height of 24.3 metres. Its reservoir can store up to 926,520 cubic metres of water and is engineered to safely manage floods.

The dam directly serves communities near Wadi Qafeefah, where residents rely heavily on farming. Local produce such as



The dam’s reservoir can store up to 926,520 cubic metres of water

mangoes, dates, lemons, bananas, garlic, onions and clover is sold daily in nearby markets, sustaining both livelihoods and local food supply.

“The recent rains and the dam’s capacity to hold large volumes of water over the past two days demonstrate the importance of such vital infrastructure”, said a local farmer. “This water will nourish aflaj (traditional water channels) and recharge groundwater wells, boosting crop fertility in the months

ahead”.

The region is also rich in indigenous flora, including tamarisk, sidr and shua trees, which are valued for their use in traditional medicine. Many of these trees, particularly the acacias, support beekeeping and contribute to the production of sought-after local honey. They also provide habitats for birds, butterflies and other wildlife, enhancing the area’s biodiversity.

ROP enhances traffic safety with AI training, tracking

THE Royal Oman Police (ROP) continues its efforts to protect lives and provide a safe traffic environment thus contributing to the national development process. These efforts have resulted in a significant decline in the number of road accidents in recent years.

Brigadier Eng Ali bin Sulayem al Falahi, Director-General of Traffic at ROP, said that traffic safety institutes train school bus drivers as part of the preventive driving programme, in coordination with the Ministry of Education. The results of this programme are reviewed by monitoring the drivers’ performance in transporting students resulting in a reduced number of traffic violations.

Regarding new technological developments, such as self-driving cars and their impact on traffic safety, Al Falahi noted that the ROP has recently launched smart violation monitoring systems and is working on future projects that include artificial intelligence traffic monitoring, paving the way for dealing with smart vehicles by monitoring global developments and assessing risks.

ROP is keeping a close eye on the latest technologies related to smart and autonomous vehicles and studying the experiences of other countries to develop a future regulatory framework that suits the



Traffic safety institutes offer specialised training programmes most importantly the preventive driving training curriculum

ROP is keeping a close eye on the latest technologies related to smart and autonomous vehicles

Omani environment.

He pointed out that the ROP is working to improve the smart safety infrastructure by updating traffic signals to be compatible with the Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) as well as improving automated monitoring systems for violations using advanced technologies and installing smart surveillance cameras on main roads.

Al Falahi praised the ongoing cooperation between the ROP and the Ministry of Education, which aims to spread traffic awareness and instil a traffic culture among school students. The first initiative began by applying an experimental programme ‘Road Friends’ (VIA)

in the 2022-2023 academic year. Following the success of this initiative, the team expanded the programme to include 33 schools across the governorates. The programme is expected to bring a generation well-aware of traffic rules and safety norms.

He explained that the most important causes behind the decrease in road accidents are the increased commitment and awareness of motorists and road users, the efforts undertaken by the Directorate-General of Traffic to raise the level of traffic safety and continuously raise awareness among all society segments.

Commenting on the most prominent future challenges, Brigadier Eng Ali bin Sulayem al Falahi, stated that the increasing number of vehicles is one of the most significant challenges, along with population growth and urban expansion. These factors put pressure on existing road networks and infrastructure thereby increasing risk of an uptick in road accidents.

He said that risky traffic behaviours include mobile phone use, speeding, failure to use signals when changing lanes, failure to maintain a safe distance, incorrect overtaking and failure to adhere to pedestrian crossings, all of which contribute to traffic accidents.

— ONA

ROP urges public to help fight human trafficking

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, AUG 9

Reporting human trafficking is a shared responsibility and the public must play an active role in helping law enforcement combat this crime that undermines human dignity, the Royal Oman Police (ROP) has stressed.

The Directorate General of Relations and Security Information describes human trafficking as a grave violation of human freedom, noting that behind every case lies a story of survival and resilience.

Speaking during the Aman campaign led by the National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking, Lieutenant Rayyan Mohammed al Hasni from the Directorate General of Inquiries

Do not remain silent — report suspicious cases to the ROP hotline at 80077000 or visit the nearest police station

LIEUTENANT RAYYAN MOHAMMED AL HASNI

and Investigations said the ROP’s work goes beyond investigations to include prevention, protection and the preservation of human dignity.

“Major forms of trafficking include forced labour, exploitation, child trafficking and forced begging. Through the Aman campaign, we focus on raising awareness, informing the public about relevant laws and victims’ rights and encouraging reporting through official channels”, Lt Rayyan said.

The Aman campaign, launched under the auspices of Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthy, Under-Secretary of the Foreign Ministry for Political Affairs and Chairman of the National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking, coincided with the World Day Against Trafficking in Persons.

Running for three months, the national awareness initiative seeks to promote a culture of prevention, enhance victim support and strengthen cooperation between local and international institutions. It underscores Oman’s commitment to combating trafficking in persons in line with Oman Vision 2040, reflecting the integrated roles of security, judicial, legislative and humanitarian bodies.

The ROP has urged the public to remain alert and report any suspected trafficking activity, stressing that the crime often occurs in hidden forms with devastating consequences.

“Do not remain silent — report suspicious cases to the ROP hotline at 80077000 or visit the nearest police station”, Lt Rayyan urged.

SPOTLIGHT

TECH-DRIVEN
FARMING FOR
FOOD SECURITY

HYDROPONICS AND
SOLAR-POWERED
IRRIGATION

TRAINING
OMAN'S NEXT
AGRIPRENEURS

OVERCOMING
CHALLENGES THROUGH
PARTNERSHIPS



OMAN is embracing smart agriculture as part of its national strategy to ensure food security, sustainability and efficient resource management in the face of climate challenges.

As global temperatures rise and arable land becomes increasingly scarce, the Sultanate of Oman is turning to innovative technologies to enhance agricultural productivity and reduce dependency on imports.

Smart agriculture — also known as precision farming — incorporates data-driven solutions such as IoT (Internet of Things) sensors, drones, climate monitoring systems and AI-powered analytics to manage farms more efficiently.

These tools enable real-time tracking of soil conditions, crop health and water usage, leading to reduced waste and improved yields.

In Oman, pilot projects led by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources are underway across several governorates.

One standout initiative is the use of hydroponics and aquaponics in greenhouse farming, allowing crops to grow without soil and

As smart farming gains ground across the governorates, one standout initiative is the use of hydroponics and aquaponics in greenhouse farming



Smart agriculture incorporates data-driven solutions such as sensors, drones and climate monitoring systems

with significantly less water. These systems are proving particularly effective in arid regions like Al Batinah North & South Governorates and Dhofar Governorate.

Another vital element of smart agriculture in Oman is the adoption of solar-powered irrigation and climate-controlled greenhouses, which optimise temperature and humidity for crops while

minimising environmental impact. These developments align with Oman Vision 2040, which prioritises sustainable resource use and the diversification of the economy.

In collaboration with private sector partners and academic institutions, Oman is also training a new generation of agripreneurs and technicians. Initiatives like the Agriculture Innovation Centre

in the Wilayat of Suhar, Al Batinah North Governorate, are equipping youth with digital skills to operate and maintain high-tech farming equipment.

Workshops and hackathons are being organised to encourage solutions for pest control, smart irrigation and post-harvest technologies.

The shift to smart agriculture is not without challenges. High initial costs, lack of technical know-how and the need for customised local solutions remain hurdles. However, government support in the form of subsidies, training programmes and public-private partnerships is helping accelerate adoption.

Experts believe that Oman's transition to smart agriculture can serve as a model for other Gulf nations with similar environmental constraints. By investing in technology and human capital, the Sultanate of Oman is paving the way for a resilient and self-sufficient agricultural sector.

With climate-smart solutions gaining ground, Oman is poised to not only improve its food security but also contribute meaningfully to global sustainability efforts. — ONA

SHORT TAKES



The forum aims to enhance academic awareness among students and parents

AUTUMN FORUM
GUIDES STUDENTS ON
HIGHER EDUCATION
OPPORTUNITIES

SALALAH: The three-day Autumn Forum for Higher Education Institutions opened at the Grand Mall in Salalah on Thursday. Organised by the Directorate General of Education in Dhofar Governorate in cooperation with the Career Guidance Platform, the event concludes today, August 10.

Coinciding with the Dhofar Khareef Season, the forum targets two key audiences. They are the twelfth-grade students exploring university majors and visitors during the tourist season interested in pursuing higher studies.

Ali bin Abdullah al Buraiki, Director of the Career Guidance Platform, explained that the event features introductory sessions on the unified admissions system and registration procedures, alongside interactive competitions and prizes to engage participants.

The forum aims to enhance academic awareness among students and parents about available university majors and educational opportunities, while facilitating direct interaction with representatives from participating higher education institutions.

Institutions taking part include the University of Technology and Applied Sciences – Salalah, Dhofar University, Nizwa University, the National University of Science and Technology, Salalah Vocational College, Oman College of Health Sciences, International College of Engineering and Technology, Scientific College of Design, Majan University College; and Al Buraimi University College. — ONA

SALALAH
CELEBRATES
WINNERS OF
STORYTELLING
CONTEST

SALALAH: The Narrative Committee of The Omani Society for Writers and Literati — Dhofar Branch celebrated the winners of the ‘Speaking Storyteller’ competition at the lecture hall of the Sultan Qaboos Youth Complex for Culture and Entertainment in Salalah.

Nour bint Ghafraam al Shahriyah, Head of the Narrative Committee, said the competition aims to discover and develop storytelling talents across age groups, revive national heritage and foster



A participant at the ‘Speaking Storyteller’ contest

a deeper connection between generations and traditional tales. It also seeks to promote linguistic creativity, enhance expression in both classical Arabic and local dialects and build participants’ confidence through live public performances.

The ceremony featured a visual presentation tracing the competition’s journey from its launch to the finals, alongside an exhibition by female artists from the Irtiqaa Artistic Team. — ONA

Sunshine draws tourists
to Dhofar’s waterfalls

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, AUGUST 9

AFTER weeks of heavy monsoon rainfall, clear skies returned to Dhofar last week, revealing a breathtaking green carpet stretched across the governorate’s mountains and plains.

The sunshine, which broke through from the beginning of last week continued throughout the week, drawing large crowds to Dhofar’s natural wonders and heritage sites.

One of the most anticipated sights was the reappearance of waterfalls at Ayn Korr, a popular natural spring in Salalah. These seasonal cascades typically begin flowing in mid-August as rain-fed groundwater levels rise — marking the peak of the Khareef Dhofar Season.

“The view today is absolutely stunning”, said an Omani visitor. “Just a few days ago, the area was blanketed in heavy fog. Now, the green mountains and blue skies are



Many travellers are combining nature excursions with cultural discovery

Tourists from across the region have been arriving in growing numbers, drawn by Dhofar’s unique monsoon climate

like something out of a dream — especially for those of us living in the Gulf”.

Tourists from across the region have been arriving in growing numbers, drawn by Dhofar’s unique monsoon climate, which offers a refreshing escape from the intense summer heat elsewhere in the GCC.

“I’ve lived in the Gulf for nearly a decade”, said an Indian tourist based in the UAE. “But I never imagined a place like this existed — rain, greenery and pleasant temperatures in the middle of summer. After seeing photos online, I brought my family here and it has exceeded all expectations”.

Many travellers are combining nature excursions with cultural discovery.

A Saudi visitor to the ancient site of Sumhuram in the Wilayat of Taqah expressed his surprise at the depth of the region’s historical significance.

“I had no idea the Arabian Peninsula held such rich heritage”, he said. “The site is beautifully maintained and well-documented. I truly appreciate Oman’s commitment to preserving and showcasing its historical landmarks”.

Sumhuram, once one of the oldest known ports in the Arabian Peninsula, has become a major heritage attraction during the Khareef Dhofar Season, drawing history lovers and families alike.

Monsoon spectacle weaves
heritage, community spirit



The ‘Makhraf’, a temporary camel shelter, where guests are welcomed with fresh milk and warm hospitality

SALALAH: The mountain villages of Dhofar Governorate come alive each year during the Khareef Dhofar Season, when mist rolls in and green blankets the landscape, signalling a timeless renewal of life and tradition.

As the first rains fall, the region undergoes a dramatic transformation — reviving ancestral customs, seasonal rhythms and a deep connection between people and the natural world. Citizens who spoke to ONA reflected on the significance of this annual season and the preparations it demands.

“Khareef is our lifeline”, says Bakhit bin Said Daan al Shahri. “We begin preparing as early as June — repairing livestock pens, collecting firewood, storing fodder and cleaning tanks to harvest rainwater, which we rely on for drinking and cooking throughout the season”.

Pastoral life follows age-old patterns shaped by the changing weather. Camel herder Said bin Mohammed al Mashaikhi explains how herders move their animals to less humid areas — like the cotton plains behind the mountains — before returning to the highlands after the rains. Grazing routes are chosen daily

depending on grass availability. The ‘Makhraf’, a temporary camel shelter, is not only a functional space but also a social one, where guests are welcomed with fresh milk and warm hospitality.

Salim bin Musallam al Amri notes that Khareef intertwines agriculture, tourism and spirituality, drawing thousands of local and international visitors. “Many people take their annual leave during this season to spend time in the villages”, he adds.

Women, too, play a central role in sustaining seasonal life. Mazoon bint Agham al Shahriyah recalls earlier days: “We used to thatch cow sheds (Duqoof) with grass and dung, tan hides to churn ghee and sew traditional dresses for weddings and festive visits. Khareef is a season of joy, connection and celebration”.

Today, thanks to improved infrastructure and services, rural life has become more convenient. With better homes, piped water and electricity, women now dedicate more time to cultivating crops like cowpeas (Al Dougar), corn (Al Mahindi) and millet (Al Thayrit), keeping agricultural traditions alive. — ONA



TENDERS

Manah Power Company (MPC) invites the specialized companies to participate and submit their best offers for the tenders below:

Tender Number	Tender Name	Last Date for Collection of Tender Document	Last Date for Proposal Submission	Tender Fees + VAT 5%
MPC/2025/10	Call of Outsourcing Agreement Support Service for MPC	17 August 2025	31 August 2025	50/-
MPC/2025/12	Refurbishment of GE gas Turbine 9E Capital Parts	17 August 2025	31 August 2025	100/-

- Bids shall be submitted in a single envelope and sealed with red wax addressed to the “Chairman of the Internal Tender Committee” and the envelope shall be marked with the tender name and number. No indication or reference about the bidder is permitted on the envelope.
- Bidders are required to submit the original hard copy of their bid to the Manah Power Company office located in Manah.
- Five separate envelopes shall be included inside the single sealed envelope, and each of these five envelopes must be marked with the tenderer name and number as per the below:
 - Commercial Proposal
 - Technical Proposal
 - Bid Bond
 - Omanization Certificate
 - Tawteen Certificate
- Each bid should be accompanied by bid bond, in the form of a bank guarantee from one of the banks operating in the Sultanate of Oman, covering (1%) of the total bid value and valid for a period of (90) days from the last date for submission of offers, addressed to the Chairman of the Internal Tender Committee of MPC.
- Interested party must deposit the tender fee (Non-Refundable) to the following account:

Bank Name: Bank Muscat

Account Name: Manah Power Company LLC

Account No: 0423011069510017
- In the event of receipt of the tender document on behalf of another company, the interested purchasers in the above tender document should provide details of the person’s name and the company details.
- The company is not obliged to accept the lowest or any other bid.

Manah Power Company - Member of Nama Group -
Manah IZZ, Sultanate of Oman
E-Mail: Mithun.Rajappan@holding.nama.om
Phone Number: +968 93382832

WORLD

SHORT TAKES



A firefighting helicopter sprays water over a burnt area in Palaia Fokaia. — AFP

FIREFIGHTERS
BATTLE BLAZE FOR
SECOND DAY

ATHEN: Hundreds of firefighters battled a deadly wildfire near Athens for a second day on Saturday, with strong winds raising fears it could spread. A fire department spokesman said more than 260 firefighters with nearly 80 fire engines and 12 aircraft were deployed near Keratea, a rural area some 43 kilometres southeast of Athens. “The fire has weakened but there are still active pockets,” the spokesman said.

A new fire broke out close to the nearby town of Kouvaras on Saturday but was quickly brought under control. Dimitris Loukas, mayor of the nearest city of Lavrio, said the Keratea fire that broke out on Friday had devastated nearly 10,000 acres of brush and forest. “Many homes were destroyed, in addition to other properties, agricultural and forest land,” he told state news agency ANA.

The National Observatory in Athens on Saturday said the high winds will persist until at least on Monday. Firefighters and police evacuated dozens of people late on Friday from homes and an elderly care centre as the flames neared the coastal resort of Palaia Fokaia. — AFP



Lebanese army soldiers and onlookers stand near the wreckage of a vehicle. — AFP

BLAST NEAR BORDER
IN LEBANON KILLS
SIX SOLDIERS

BEIRUT: Lebanon’s army said a blast at a weapons depot near the Israeli border on Saturday killed six soldiers as a military source said troops were removing munitions from a facility.

Under a truce that ended a recent war between Israel and Lebanese group Hezbollah, the army has been deploying in south Lebanon and dismantling the militant group’s infrastructure there. An army statement gave a preliminary toll of six soldiers killed and others wounded “while an army unit was inspecting a weapons depot and dismantling its contents in Wadi Zibqin”, in the Tyre district near the Israeli border.

Investigations were underway to determine the cause of the blast, it added. President Joseph Aoun said he was informed by army commander Rodolphe Haykal of the “painful incident” that led to troop casualties. Prime Minister Nawaf Salam paid tribute on X to the troops who were killed “while performing their national duty”, calling the army the protector of Lebanon’s “unity and its legitimate institutions”. — AFP

EASING RELATIONS

North Korea starts dismantling loudspeakers



South Korea’s military said on Saturday it had detected North Korean military dismantling some propaganda loudspeakers aimed at the South in parts of the border area, following similar moves by the South. This is the first time Seoul has made such a statement since President Lee Jae Myung became president two months ago. The military said further confirmation was needed on whether the dismantling was taking place across all areas. — Reuters

LANDMINE
INJURES THAI
SOLDIERS
NEAR
CAMBODIA
AMID
CEASEFIRE

BANGKOK: Three Thai soldiers were injured by a landmine on Saturday while patrolling a border area near Cambodia, the Thai army said in a statement, days after the two neighbours agreed to a detailed ceasefire following a violent five-day conflict last month. One soldier lost a foot and two others were injured after one of them stepped on a landmine as they patrolled an area between Thailand’s Sisaket and Cambodia’s Preah Vihear provinces. The soldiers are being treated at a

hospital, the army said.

Thailand said the incident took place within its territory and in an area recently cleared of landmines. It added it would lodge a complaint against Cambodia for violating a treaty that bans the use of landmines and for infringing Thai sovereignty, the Thai foreign ministry said in a statement. Both Thailand and Cambodia are signatories to the Ottawa Convention against landmines. Cambodia’s defence ministry

said on Saturday that it “has yet to receive clear confirmation from Cambodian frontline forces concerning the explosion,” adding that its army has been strictly respecting the spirit of the ceasefire. The incident is the third time in a few weeks that Thai soldiers have been injured by mines while patrolling along the border. Two previous incidents led to the downgrading of diplomatic relations and triggered five days of violent clashes. — Reuters

Palestinian Authority slams
Israel’s escalation in Gaza

THE Palestinian Authority on Saturday lambasted the Israeli government’s decision to expand its military operations in Gaza, as it called on the international community to push for the entry of aid into the strip. According to the official Palestinian news agency Wafa, the PA’s presidential spokesman Nabil Abu Rudeineh said the Israeli government’s moves were “an unprecedented challenge and provocation to the international will to achieve peace and stability”. He also called on the “international community, led by the UN Security Council, to urgently compel the occupying state to cease its aggression, allow the entry of aid, and work diligently to enable the State of Palestine to assume its full responsibilities in the Gaza Strip”, reported Wafa.

Early on Friday, the Israeli security cabinet approved plans to launch major operations to seize Gaza City, triggering a wave of outrage across the globe. Despite the backlash and rumours of dissent from Israeli military top brass, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu remained defiant over the decision.

In a post on social media late on Friday, Netanyahu said “we are not going to occupy Gaza — we are going to free Gaza from Hamas”. Netanyahu faces mounting pressure to secure a ceasefire to bring the territory’s more than two million people back from the brink of famine and free the hostages held by Palestinians. Israel’s arch enemy Hamas, whose October 7, 2023



Palestinians run toward food parcels dropped by a military aircraft in Jabalia. — AFP

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called the Israeli plan a “dangerous escalation” that risks “deepening the already catastrophic consequences for millions of Palestinians”. Diplomatic sources said that the UN Security Council will meet to discuss the plan.

attack triggered the war, slammed the plan to expand the fighting, calling it a “new war crime”. Israel’s offensive has killed over 61,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza’s health ministry, figures the UN says are reliable. The 2023 attack on Israel resulted in the deaths of 1,219 people, based on official figures.

Meanwhile, Gaza’s civil defence agency said at least 10 people were killed across the Palestinian territory on Saturday, including civilians who were waiting to collect aid. Civil defence spokesman Mahmud Bassal said that at least six people were killed and 30 wounded after Israeli troops targeted civilians assembling near an aid point in

central Gaza. The spokesman said strikes also hit areas in central Gaza, resulting in multiple casualties.

Thousands of Gazans congregate daily near food distribution points in Gaza, including four managed by the US- and Israeli-backed Gaza Humanitarian Foundation. Since launching in late May, its operations have been marred by almost-daily reports of Israeli forces targeting those waiting to collect aid supplies. Israeli restrictions on the entry of supplies into Gaza since the start of the war nearly two years ago have led to shortages of food and essential supplies, including medicine and fuel, which hospitals require to power their generators. — AFP



FLOODS, MUDSLIDES HIT NORTHWEST CHINA

BEIJING: The death toll from flash floods and mudslides in northwest China has risen to 13, state media said on Saturday, after the bodies of three people were found. Torrents of mud and water began hitting mountainous areas of Gansu province on Thursday, with the death toll listed as 10 on Friday as rescuers searched for at least 33 missing people. Chinese President Xi Jinping called for the “utmost effort” in rescuing missing people, state broadcaster CCTV reported. The death toll stood at 13, with the number of missing now listed as 30, state news agency Xinhua said on Saturday. Hundreds of people had been rescued and thousands more evacuated, Xinhua added. — AFP

ROTATION MISSION

Astronauts leave space station back to Earth



After nearly five months onboard the International Space Station, an international crew of four astronauts began their descent back down to Earth in a SpaceX capsule. US astronauts Anne McClain and Nichole Ayers, Japan’s Takuya Onishi and Russian cosmonaut Kirill Peskov are expected to spend more than 17 hours in the capsule before splashing down off California’s coast. Their return will mark the end of the 10th crew rotation mission to the space station. — AFP

NATIONAL SECURITY

Iran arrests 20 people alleged spies of Israel



Iran has arrested 20 people it alleges are operatives of Israel’s Mossad spy agency in recent months, the judiciary said on Saturday, warning that they will face no leniency and will be made an example of. Judiciary spokesperson Asghar Jahangiri told reporters that “the judiciary will show no leniency toward spies and agents of the Zionist regime, and with firm rulings, will make an example of them all.” — Reuters

The New York Times

Possible planet is spotted around Alpha Centauri star



KATRINA MILLER

The author is a science reporter at The New York Times

ALPHA Centauri has gripped the imaginations of sci-fi aficionados for decades. Only four light-years from Earth, the three-star system inspires fictional alien worlds and journeys through interstellar space. Its proximity also makes it alluring for astronomers, including a team that on Thursday provided the strongest evidence yet that a planet circles one of Alpha Centauri’s sunlike stars. The world is at the very edge of the region around the star where liquid water can exist, known as the habitable zone.

Because it is made of gas, the planet itself would not support life as we know it. But the possible planet, discovered through observations from Nasa’s powerful James Webb Space Telescope, would be the closest ever found orbiting within a sunlike star’s habitable zone. However, further observations are needed to confirm it is indeed a planet. The find was announced in two papers that have been accepted for publication in The Astrophysical Journal Letters. It is a potential preview of the types of discoveries that will be possible in the future as astronomers’ tools for hunting exoplanets — particularly ones like Earth — evolve.

Three stars make up Alpha Centauri. But only two, Alpha Centauri A and Alpha Centauri B, are like our sun. They are locked in close orbit around each other. Circling

this pair from farther away is a faint red dwarf known as Proxima Centauri. The stars themselves are “pretty run-of-the mill,” said Charles Beichman, an astronomer at NASA’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory and the California Institute of Technology. But the system is a touchstone for investigations of stars like our sun, Beichman added, because cosmically speaking, “it’s right next door.” So far, only Proxima Centauri has known planets. Astronomers discovered those worlds indirectly, by measuring the way their gravity tugs on their star.

Snapping an image of a planet is a more direct method, but also more difficult. Astronomers must isolate the faint light emitted by the planet from the more vibrant glow of its host star. Direct imaging so far has best been used to find young, massive planets, because they are hotter and burn more brightly, said Aniket Sanghi, a graduate student at Caltech involved in the discovery. With the Webb telescope, that trend may change.

Launched in 2021, scientists designed the space telescope to peer into the far reaches of the cosmos. But it trained its eyes much closer to home in August 2024, when astronomers pointed it at Alpha Centauri. A coronagraph on the telescope blocked most of the glow from Alpha Centauri A. That, combined with clever image processing to remove the glare from Alpha Centauri B, was enough for the astronomers to make out a

Because it is made of gas, the planet itself would not support life as we know it. But the possible planet, discovered through observations from Nasa’s powerful James Webb Space Telescope, would be the closest ever found orbiting within a sunlike star’s habitable zone

faint speck of light — a possible planet.

Further analysis ruled out the speck as a photo-bombing asteroid, a background galaxy or an image artifact. “We spent over the past year trying to kill this object in our images, but we haven’t been successful in doing so,” Sanghi said. The planet, if it is one, is about the size of Jupiter and has about the mass of Saturn. It orbits Alpha Centauri A every two Earth-years at roughly one to two times the distance between our sun and Earth. It has a temperature of about minus 55 degrees Fahrenheit.

To claim a discovery, astronomers will need to find the planet again, either with the Webb telescope, with another observatory on the ground or in space. The Extremely Large Telescope, a European observatory under construction in Chile, could help. So could NASA’s Roman Space Telescope, scheduled to launch by May 2027. Direct imaging of planets is difficult, even more so when there are multiple sources of light close by, as in Alpha Centauri. But the technique has high reward: It yields a wealth of information about the planets, including their size, mass, temperature and distance from host star.

The Habitable Worlds Observatory, a space telescope proposed as Nasa’s next flagship mission, will use direct imaging to hunt for Earthlike exoplanets around stars dozens of light-years away. According to Beichman, discoveries like a giant gas planet much closer to home are headway toward that goal.

Trump to meet Putin in Alaska



DAVID E. SANGER

The writer is the White House and National Security Correspondent for The New York Times



TYLER PAGER

The writer is a White House correspondent, covering President Trump and his administration

PRESIDENT Donald Trump said he would meet with President Vladimir Putin of Russia on Friday in Alaska as he tries to secure a deal to end the war between Russia and Ukraine. Trump announced the meeting shortly after he suggested that a peace deal between the two countries could include “some swapping of territories,” signaling that the United States may join Russia in trying to compel Ukraine to permanently cede some of its land. “We’re going to get some back, and we’re going to get some switched,” Trump said while hosting the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan for a peace summit at the White House. “There’ll be some swapping of territories to the betterment of both, but we’ll be talking about that either later or tomorrow.”

The meeting, the first in-person summit between an American and Russian president since President Joe Biden met with Putin in June 2021, reflects Trump’s confidence in his ability to persuade Putin in a face-to-face encounter, a goal that has eluded Trump and his predecessors. For Putin, the meeting itself is a victory after he spent the past several months largely isolated from the international community, with Nato leaders — other than Trump — refusing to communicate directly with him. The meeting also presents a host of challenges. Ukrainian leaders have adamantly opposed relinquishing any of their land to Russia, and the country’s constitution bars President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine from ceding any territory.

There would also be numerous political and military hurdles for Ukraine in turning over land to Russia, as well as questions including security guarantees

for Ukraine and the future of frozen Russian assets. And many diplomats have suggested that Putin may be more interested in dragging out diplomacy to give him time to pummel Ukraine than in securing a peace deal.

Trump also provided little additional detail about the meeting, what territory could be swapped or the broader contours of a peace deal, saying earlier on Friday that he did not want to overshadow the peace pledge between Armenia and Azerbaijan. But he told European leaders earlier this week that he planned to follow up his session with Putin with a meeting with Putin and Zelensky.

Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-SC, an advocate for US support of Ukraine, praised Trump’s announcement of the meeting. “To those who criticize President Trump for being willing to meet with Putin to end the bloodbath in Ukraine — remember Reagan met with Gorbachev to try to end the Cold War,” he posted on social media. “I’m confident President Trump will walk away — like Reagan — if Putin insists on a bad deal.”

Secretary of State Marco Rubio said on Thursday in an interview with EWTN, a Catholic media organization, that the United States has “some understanding” of what the Russians want “to stop this war from a diplomatic standpoint.” “Now, I’m not claiming that what the Russians would need and what Ukraine would need are the same,” he said, without providing specifics. “There’s a difference, and there’s a gap there.” He added: “Can we bridge the gap between the Ukrainian side and the Russian side on this close enough so the president can come in as part of any sort of meeting and maybe be the closer on this deal?”

Even a successful meeting between Trump and Putin



President Donald Trump delivers remarks at an event at the White House in Washington.

The meeting, the first in-person summit between an American and Russian president since President Joe Biden met with Putin in June 2021, reflects Trump’s confidence in his ability to persuade Putin in a face-to-face encounter, a goal that has eluded Trump and his predecessors.

would be just an opening move in any deal. Beyond the question of territory, a number of equally thorny issues would need to be settled. Among them is whether Zelensky would get security guarantees from Europe, the United States or NATO to keep Russia from pausing, then resuming, a war to try to take the rest of the country. In the past, Putin has also demanded sharp limits on the number and quality of arms that the West could provide to Ukraine, and he has argued for a variety of steps that could change the government, including elections, which he would presumably try to influence by seeking to place a more pro-Russia leader. Russian officials have demanded that Ukraine cede the four regions that Moscow claimed to have “annexed” from Ukraine in late 2022, even as some of that land remains under Ukrainian control.

Trump has grown increasingly frustrated with his inability to end a conflict that, as a candidate for president, he promised he would settle in 24 hours. And since taking office, he has oscillated in his

approach to Russia.

Earlier in his term, he showed considerable deference to Putin, to the point of joining North Korea in opposing a United Nations resolution condemning Russia for its 2022 attack. He also berated Zelensky in the Oval Office earlier this year for not showing enough gratitude to the United States for its military support, telling the Ukrainian leader that he didn’t “have the cards” to negotiate a peace deal. But more recently, he has criticized Putin for not accepting the terms of a proposed ceasefire and for prolonging the conflict.

Steve Witkoff, Trump’s special envoy, met with Putin in Moscow on Wednesday, a session Trump said was “highly productive.” But shortly after the meeting, Trump announced he would increase tariffs on India to 50% as a penalty for purchasing Russian oil. Friday also marked the deadline for Russia to agree to a ceasefire before Trump imposed additional sanctions on its oil exports, though it appeared Trump would not follow through on that threat after announcing his meeting with Putin.

OPINION

From stigma to support: The story of Khosrow



DR HAMED
AL SINAWI

The writer is a senior consultant psychiatrist at SQU Hospital

WATCHING movies can be relaxing during a weekend or holiday, but it can also be a way to learn about other cultures, their customs and geopolitical situations.

So when my Iranian friend recommended the movie ‘My Brother Khosrow’, I was curious to watch it.

The movie begins with Fahnaida, an elderly woman and her younger brother, Khosrow, driving to their brother’s house, ‘Nasser’, a dentist who lives in the capital with his wife and Son. We learn that ‘Khosrow’ is not well and has to take medication and that his sister, who is the main caregiver, has to leave him with Nasser as she has to visit her daughter in another state.

We see ‘Khosrow’ being cheerful, waking up very early in the morning to make breakfast for the family and being charming and talkative when Nasser meets with his friends for dinner.

Things gradually escalate when Khosrow starts to refuse his medications, becomes aggressive, breaking the furniture and

screaming, which leads Nasser to seek help from the psychiatric hospital so Khosrow can be admitted for a few days, but the doctors see no need for admission.

Nasser becomes too frustrated, decides to mix more medicine in Khosrow’s food, and ties him up to the bed while he is asleep which puts him in coma and leads to become over-sedated and admitted to intensive care. The film ends with Khosrow being driven back to the care of his sister.

The movie was able to explore themes of mental illness, family responsibility and societal perceptions of a person living with bipolar disorder and how others struggle or fail to empathise.

Khosrow’s brother’s irritation, frustration and harsh behaviour is not because he is a villain, but because he was emotionally distant to understand his experience.

In the movie, the mental health system seems to fail patients and caregivers, as inpatient admission was denied when the patient’s behaviour became too difficult to manage at home.

This actually takes place in real live, as family members who request admission are

The movie ‘My Brother Khosrow’ provided a realistic reflection on the burden of severe mental illness on the whole family

sometimes judged for wanting to dispose of the patient and ‘dump them in the hospital’.

This leads caregivers to feel shame and more stigma. The movie also shows how the short periods of happiness experienced by the patient are an escape from the harsh reality that he would never be able to hold a job, get married or have his own family, that he would always need to be cared for.

This is not always true for people with mental illness, as some, with the help of medications and doctor’s appointments, can live a normal life and achieve their potential just like all of us.

It is the duty of the health system and the whole society to make sure that a person with mental illness doesn’t suffer from exclusion and discrimination.

In my opinion, the movie ‘My Brother Khosrow’ provided a realistic reflection on the burden of mental illness on the whole family and the consequences of replacing compassion with judgment.

It challenges viewers to re-examine their beliefs about people with mental illness and open the discussion for further actions to include them and preserve their dignity.

DEAF PALESTINIAN
SHARES GAZA
STRUGGLES

EBRAHIM HAJJAJ

Basem Alhabel stood amongst the ruins of Gaza, with people flat on the floor all around him as bullets flew and filmed himself using sign language to explain the dangers of the war to fellow deaf Palestinians and his followers on social media.

Alhabel, 30, who describes himself as a ‘deaf journalist in Gaza’ on his Instagram account, says he wants to raise more awareness of the conflict — from devastating Israeli air strikes to the starvation now affecting most of the population — by informing Palestinians and people abroad with special needs.

Bombarded by Israel for nearly two years, many Gazans complain the world does not hear their voices despite mass suffering with a death toll that exceeds 60,000 people, according to Gaza health authorities in the demolished enclave.

“I wished to get my voice out to the world and the voices of the deaf people who cannot speak or hear, to get their voice out there, so that someone can help us”, he said through his friend and interpreter Mohammed Moshtaha, who he met during the war.

“I tried to help, to film and do a video from here and there; and publish them so that we can make our voices heard in the world”.

Alhabel has an Instagram following of 141,000. His page, which shows him in a flak jacket and helmet, features images of starving, emaciated children and other suffering.

He films a video then returns to a tent to edit — one of the many where Palestinians have sought shelter and safety during the war, which erupted when Hamas attacked Israel in October 2023, drawing massive retaliation. Alhabel produced images of people collecting flour from the ground while he used sign language to explain the plight of Gazans, reinforcing the view of a global hunger monitor that has warned a famine scenario is unfolding.

“As you can see, people are collecting flour mixed with sand”, he communicated.

Alhabel and his family were displaced when the war started. They stayed in a school with tents.

“There was no space for a person to even rest a little. I stayed in that school for a year and a half”, he explained.

Alhabel is likely to be busy for some time. There are no signs of a ceasefire on the horizon despite mediation efforts.

“We want this situation to be resolved so that we can all be happy, so I can feed my children and life can be beautiful”, said Alhabel.

— Reuters

The thin line between
prejudice and racism

In a world grappling with conflict, migration and cultural misunderstanding, the difference between prejudice and racism may seem academic — but it’s not.

These concepts are deeply woven into the fabric of human interaction and understanding them is essential if we are to build fairer, more tolerant societies. This is a personal reflection on how prejudice can emerge from experience and how easily — and dangerously — it can slide into racism.

I have often pondered whether there is a meaningful difference between racism and prejudice.

We all carry certain prejudices — assumptions or expectations based on limited experience. Even though we know that, statistically, in any country — including Oman — most people are polite, honest and kind-hearted, we occasionally meet individuals we don’t get along with or cannot trust.

For me, such experiences in Oman are rare. When I sit next to an Omani on a plane, I expect to be treated with good manners and invariably we get on well. In fact, I would rather sit next to an Omani than, say, a European.

Is that a form of prejudice? Most certainly. Why is this the case? I have met many Europeans — including, of course, my fellow Brits — who are kind, polite and warm-hearted. But I’ve met more Omanis who fall into that category than Europeans.

It’s not rational or logical to judge an entire nation based on the actions of a few unpleasant individuals, but it isn’t always easy to avoid such generalisations.

Let me share another example. In the UK, I used to buy and renovate properties. Over the years, I found that most British tradesmen I



KARIM
EASTERBROOK
k.easterbrook@yahoo.com

The writer is a former Cambridge School Principal and an Interview Skills Advisor

employed tried to cheat me in one way or another. By contrast, the tradesmen I hired from Eastern Europe were almost always honest, reliable and capable. So I ended up employing only Eastern European workers.

Yes, I admit that I developed a prejudice against British tradesmen. Interestingly, they were all white — so my bias was not based on the colour of their skin.

Both of these prejudices emerged from real but limited experiences — a statistically insignificant number of negative encounters with Europeans and British

tradesmen. Yet they shaped my expectations. That’s the insidious thing about prejudice: it’s often not rooted in ideology, but in personal experience. And that makes it harder to recognise and perhaps even harder to admit.

Then we come to the difficult question: is it reasonable to maintain such prejudices? I would argue that, to a degree, it is. There’s an old proverb — ‘Once bitten, twice shy’. If a pattern of behaviour appears to repeat itself, we become wary. Why should I risk another bad experience? That’s how prejudice works. But it’s also why prejudice can so easily lead to racism. This is the slippery slope.

Prejudice is usually based on behaviour — what someone does to you. Racism is based on identity — what someone is and particularly what is the colour of their skin or their ethnicity. And while I don’t believe I am a racist, I recognise how close the line can be.

I am not proud of my prejudices. I see now how even well-intentioned caution can slide into bigotry and racism if left unchallenged. Let us imagine that all my bad experiences had been with people of colour.

For some — especially those with little education or limited exposure to diversity — these experiences could easily evolve into racist attitudes. And in its most extreme forms, racism has led to some of history’s darkest atrocities.

Nazi Germany comes to mind, as does what the Israeli Zionists are doing in Palestine today. That is why I am working hard to root out my own prejudices. It isn’t easy. But I believe we all have a responsibility to examine our assumptions, recognise how prejudice can morph into racism and resist the temptation to generalise. Prejudice can destroy trust. Racism can destroy societies.

Road maps... taking the mystery out of school



RAY PETERSEN

The writer is a media consultant

WHETHER teaching or lecturing, I would always have a ‘road map’ of my lessons on the board, so my students could see where they were going and what they would be doing and to be sure, I would begin my lessons by explaining the road map to them. That way, there was no confusion, no mystery and they had an ownership of the lesson and a part to play in its success. Clarity and certainty are fantastic agents of learning, answering so many questions before they are asked.

I regret to say that of late, the education sector is sending its ‘inmates’ down a rabbit warren, a dimly lit path to darkness, along and through which our pupils and students have little or no awareness of direction or destination. They don’t see the light at the end of the ‘tunnel’, because nobody has ever taken the time to explain their wider educational journey to them and that itself, is a rejection of pedagogy and education, teaching and learning at its most rudimentary and is the reason why I always had my ‘road maps’.

Contemporary educational structures feature four levels of progression, being preschool, primary, secondary and higher education. Preschool prepares our younger children for school by engaging with their socio-emotional, cognitive and physical development within a semi-structured social environment. They learn within an

environment that nurtures language and communication, play and co-operation, creativity and problem-solving, curiosity and the ability to make choices. The children also gain their first experience of community, through common eat, rest and sleep periods.

These latter communal experiences have the objective of ‘habit conforming’, preparing the children for the structure and formality of primary school, which, as its name intimates, offers primary learning, in a class and classroom environment, in the basics they will need for their futures, which are often scathingly referred to in the old-fashioned way as ‘the three ‘r’s, “reading, writing and ‘rithmetic”. They will also be introduced to basic science, technology and the arts.

All these subjects are then developed further in the secondary school system, which usually integrates a greater mobility of learning in subject specific classrooms, with a greater diversity of teachers, teaching styles and demands.

Higher education though is where, socially and intellectually, so much greater personal responsibility is thrust upon these adolescents and they are generally expected to just ‘know’, how colleges and universities function. For example, they must attend lectures, meet student advisors, complete assignments and meet acceptable academic standards. They must become effective listeners, note-takers, researchers and writers; and understand plagiarism, that

Contemporary educational structures feature four levels of progression, being preschool, primary, secondary and higher education

wrecking ball of aspirations and reputations, because cheating, which is what it is, can scar them for life.

Having lived and worked across a diversity of educational environments, I can tell you... Nobody tells these kids what is coming, what are they there to learn, what are their obligations either to themselves, their parents, families, friends, classmates, schoolmates, communities or societies. They know nothing more than their big brothers or sisters tell them, or than they overhear.

They will not hear it at school, college or university when they arrive, as inductions and orientations tend to be more social and introductory by nature, rather than informative. Especially these institutions have largely become places not reflective of the societies they inhabit and that’s how they want it! Too many institutions prioritise control, not only behavioural, but intellectual. They want their ‘captives’ off balance and reliant upon the dominant influence at the front of the room, the teachers, because the institutional priority is less often the students and more often the ‘rankings’. To that end, they implement ‘teach to test’ practices, which is great for rankings, but lousy for learners.

Show them, tell them, but most importantly, be sure they understand what lies ahead of them... with no illusions... when they go to school. Make sure they have a ‘road map’.

TRUMP’S ‘TRADE TSUNAMI’ UNSETTLES GEOPOLITICS

PETER APPS

Visiting Beijing at the height of US President Donald Trump’s “Liberation Day” trade war rhetoric this April, Kenyan President William Ruto described a “broken... global order”. He declared that Kenya would work with China to build a “fair, inclusive and sustainable... world order”.

Even at the time, it looked like a particularly brazen example of a developing nation that traded heavily on its ties with the US and had become the only declared “major non-Nato ally” of Washington on the African continent in 2024 largely as a result of its declared support for Ukraine.

Now, Kenya faces a review in the US Senate of whether it deserves to retain that position given its ties with Iran and China in particular.

And with Kenyan newspapers reporting an imminent trade deal with Beijing with zero apparent trade barriers, just as Trump imposes 10 per cent tariffs on Kenya, Ruto implied there was now little choice which side to pick.

“I have a bit of a problem with some of our friends”, Ruto told an investment event in Nairobi this week, citing worries about the closer relations with Beijing. “But it’s what I must do for Kenya...”

Trump’s administration sees its embrace of tariffs as key to its approach to the wider world, including matters of war and peace including Russia and Ukraine, as well as efforts to stem cross-border drug flows from Mexico and Canada.

For multiple nations in the so-called “Global South”, what Indian newspapers have called a “trade tsunami” have come as a dramatic shock to countries that have long been used to walking an awkward path between various foreign power blocs.

In some cases, as with Kenya, that may simply have accelerated shifts already under way. In others, such as India, the world’s most populous democracy and fifth largest economy, it risks reversing decades of gradually built improvements in relations with successive US administrations.

It is a dynamic that reached a particular height this month, with Trump’s administration unveiling its latest tariffs on every nation in the world, just as Trump threatened to impose further trade costs on Russia’s trading partners — particularly India and China — if there was no ceasefire in Ukraine soon.

The 10 per cent US import tax imposed on Kenyan goods is in fact one of the lower rates — Brazil and India may grapple with tariffs up to 10 times that, with dozens of other nations facing levels somewhere in between and in multiple cases explicitly linked to specific political objectives.

As well as US envoy Steve Witkoff visiting Moscow, this month has seen Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent and Trade Representative Jamieson Greer sitting down with Chinese counterparts for discussions that already appear to be moving beyond a potential trade deal to much wider US-China issues. — Reuters

A new economic logic for sustainability

COMPANIES have long justified sustainability initiatives as a way to boost their reputation, comply with external and internal standards, or generate incremental profits. But the initiatives are rarely transformative, because markets disregard ecological limits and social goals, rewarding firms that burn through resources and often punishing those with regenerative models. No matter how compelling the business case, corporate sustainability strategies cannot escape their structural misalignment with the logic of our current economic system.

The problem runs deeper than many realise. In the absence of the narrative infrastructure needed to reshape economic logic, all the sophisticated sustainability standards and metrics we have developed — the technical infrastructure — are insufficient. Our efforts remain hostage to the quarterly earnings dance and companies that should be leaders on sustainability are instead cautionary tales.

Consider a hypothetical manufacturing company that designs products for complete circularity: every material input retains value indefinitely through continuous reuse. This would dramatically reduce the company’s material costs and insulate it from volatile commodity prices. But today’s markets — which are accustomed to business models based on linear extraction — would see only the high upfront investment demands.

With investors favouring immediate returns over long-term value creation and credit agencies struggling to price the benefits of resilience into ratings decisions, the circular manufacturer ends up starved of investment, while its resource-burning competitors have ample access to lower-cost capital. Rewarding companies for externalising costs is economic insanity disguised as financial prudence.



The first and most important step is to construct the missing narrative infrastructure.



IOANNIS IOANNOU

The writer is Associate Professor of Strategy and Entrepreneurship at London Business School

That is why we must initiate a shift to what I call “aligned capitalism”. In such a system, ecological impacts would be priced into markets, regulators would reward ecosystem restoration and investors would compete on resilience. Financial statements would capture natural and social capital, while credit ratings would factor in equity and environmental preparedness.

In other words, sustainability would move from cost centre to profit engine. Under this system, our hypothetical circular manufacturer would flourish. The resource efficiency and supply-chain independence of such companies would deliver huge advantages.

As materials become scarcer and more expensive and trade becomes increasingly fractious, these companies would be able to build competitive moats that strengthen over time.

Of course, to change the economic logic, all stakeholders in the political economy — from board members to regulatory agencies, trade unions, local communities and civil-society organisations — must do their part. But smart corporate

leaders will not wait for others to act. They can demonstrate what good business looks like when systems align with environmental and social realities. The recent backlash against environmental, social and governance (ESG) commitments makes this even more important.

The first and most important step is to construct the missing narrative infrastructure. Business leaders must engage in strategic, evidence-based storytelling that links corporate actions to broader realities and build trust within and outside boardrooms by entering into dialogues with stakeholders that outlast political cycles. They should also invest in research that demonstrates the superior outcomes of aligned practices.

Some companies are getting it right. The Brazilian cosmetics group Natura’s partnerships with indigenous communities have improved business results and social outcomes. Interface, the global flooring manufacturer, has inspired other companies with its Mission Zero commitment, which resulted in a 74 per cent reduction in its carpets’ carbon footprint.

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SPORTS

SHORT TAKES



The opening day will see 12 matches — six in beach handball and six in beach volleyball

OSSA’S 4TH SCHOOL BEACH GAMES TOURNAMENT TODAY

SALALAH: The fourth edition of the School Beach Games Championship, organised by the Oman School Sports Association (OSSA) in cooperation with sports committees from the educational directorates will kick off on Sunday. The event will take place on the sand courts of the Sultan Qaboos Youth Complex for Culture and Entertainment in Salalah, Dhofar Governorate, from Sunday and will run until Thursday with the participation of 93 students representing various educational directorates. The championship will feature two competitions in the boys’ category including: beach handball and beach volleyball events.

In beach handball event, as many as eight teams have been drawn into two groups of four, with the top two teams from each group advancing to the semi-finals. In beach volleyball event, nine teams will compete in two groups, with the first group consisting of five teams and the second of four teams, also with the top two from each group qualifying for the semi-finals.

Matches will be played in a single round robin format. The opening day will see 12 matches — six in beach handball and six in beach volleyball. Group stage matches will continue on Monday in both morning and evening sessions. The semifinal matches are scheduled for Wednesday, with the finals to be played on Thursday morning, marking the conclusion of the tournament.

The championship is held under the strategic sponsorship of OQ Group, with executive partnership from the General Directorate of Education in Dhofar Governorate and the General Directorate of Culture, Sports and Youth in Dhofar Governorate represented by the Sultan Qaboos Youth Complex for Culture and Entertainment alongside the School Sports Committees in the educational directorates, the Oman Volleyball Association, and the Oman Handball Association (OHA).

More than 50 supervisors and coaches are involved in organising the championship, in addition to members of the organizing, media, and technical committees, referees, and administrators. The organising committee has finalised its preparations for the event, forming the necessary technical, media, and logistical committees to ensure smooth operations.

Seeb Club gear up for Goa clash to secure spot in AFC Champions League

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, AUG 9

The Sultanate of Oman’s representative, Seeb Club, are primed for a crucial showdown against India’s Sporting Clube de Goa on Wednesday as they eye to secure a place in the AFC Champions League Two 2025/26 Group Stage. The match will be staged at the Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium in Goa at 6:00 pm (Oman time).

Under the technical leadership of experienced Romanian coach Valeriu Tița, Seeb are targeting to become the first Omani club to reach the group stage of the newly formatted tournament. The team arrived in Goa on Saturday to

acclimatise to the local conditions and will hold several training sessions to fine tune both technical and tactical plans ahead of the encounter.

Seeb’s continental historic milestone was firmly established in 2022, when they famously lifted the AFC Cup, etching one of the greatest moments in Oman’s sporting history.

The club, who clinched their fourth league title in the 2024/25 season, are now chasing up to add another chapter to their international success story.

The road to Goa has been marked by a busy pre-season for Seeb as Muscat based team played the Super Cup against Al Shabab, losing narrowly 5-4 on penalties



The team arrived in Goa on Saturday to acclimatise to the local conditions

after a goalless draw. In the four-team friendly tournament in Salalah, Seeb edged past Al Nasr 2-1 before a tight 1-0 defeat to Oman’s Olympic team.

A further friendly saw them defeat Dhofar 3-1, after which the squad returned to Seeb to continue preparations at their home base.

Earlier last month, Seeb have made a number of notable signings and renewals. Senegalese forward Abdulaziz Sesse joined Seeb squad while Marwan Tuaib al Siyabi returned to the club after a season with Al Nasr.

Oman national team midfielder Abdullah Fawaz has signed a one-year deal, and striker Musab al Shaqsi arrived from

Bahla Club. The club has also renewed contracts with seasoned stars including Mohammed al Musallami, Ali al Busaidy, Tamim al Balushi, Ahmed al Rawahi, Zaher al Aghbari, and Mutasim al Wahaibi ensuring a blend of fresh talent and experienced leadership.

The winner of the match between Seeb and Goa will progress to the group stage of the AFC Champions League Two, while the losing side will drop into the AFC Challenge League.

Seeb’s ambitions are clear as they aim to build on last season’s quarterfinal finish in the AFC Challenge League where they bowed out to Kuwait’s Al Arabi SC, and make a resounding statement in Asia once again.

Afghan’s Azizi triumphs in main kickboxing bout

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, AUG 9

THE ‘Sports Spark Fighting Championship’ in boxing and kickboxing concluded on Friday, organised in collaboration with ‘Sabco Sports’ and ‘Scorpionest Martial Arts Academy,’ as part of the ongoing “Sports Spark” activities at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC). The championship attracted a large audience of over 2,000 spectators from various ages and nationalities, who enjoyed an atmosphere filled with excitement and interaction with the bouts featuring a selection of local and international fighters.

Over four hours of competition, participants showcased powerful fighting displays and thrilling matchups across different categories and weight divisions, with 20 fighters from Oman and various Arab and foreign countries engaging in 10 exciting bouts that reflected the advanced level of combat sports in the region. The matchups ranged from lightweight to middleweight and featherweight, featuring rising talents alongside seasoned professionals, creating an entertaining blend that thrilled the crowd and ignited the championship’s atmosphere.

At the conclusion of the competition, Afghan Jamal Azizi claimed the title in the main kickboxing bout, while the boxing matches saw victories from Mohamed al Rasbi, Saif al Ayash, Ahmed al Mahroobi, Sheikh Samer Al Ashkar, and Muneer Rashid. In the kickboxing bouts, Badr al Farsi and Hussam al Hinai emerged victorious, while Emar bin Bashar al Balushi and Amer Mohammed Orabi excelled in the open boxing competition.

Jamal Azizi, the winner of the main event, expressed his happiness and deep gratitude to the Sultanate of Oman and its people for hosting the event and providing the opportunity to participate. He extended his thanks to all those who supported him throughout his career, including coaches, organisers, and everyone who stood by him, dedicating the victory to the people of Afghanistan, who are facing difficult circumstances and suffering from food shortages and basic needs. He hoped this win would serve as a message of hope for them amidst their struggles.

Boxer Azan al Balushi, a competitor in the main event fight, explained that he returned to the sport after a five year break, considering the championship an opportunity to face a strong opponent and regain the competitive atmosphere. He confirmed that he performed well and was close to winning, but the deduction of two points from him —one for holding and the other without a clear reason — affected the result, especially since his opponent



Afghan Jamal Azizi claimed the title in the main kickboxing bout



Boxer Azan al Balushi, a competitor in the main event fight

committed two knee violations without penalty.

Al Balushi noted that his physical and mental condition was excellent despite being slightly affected by the break, emphasizing that facing international opponents was not new to him, as he had previously competed against fighters from Bahrain, the Philippines and Sri Lanka.

He expressed his hope to turn professional and support Omani talents through training camps and international exposure, ending with a thank you to his fans and a desire to raise the Sultanate of Oman’s name in international competitions.

Waddah al Harthi, General Manager of Scorpionest Martial Arts Academy, expressed his pride in collaborating with the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC) to organise the championship, considering it an

important platform for discovering and refining Omani talents.

He added that combat sports have a promising future in the Sultanate of Oman, highlighting the academy’s commitment to training fighters capable of competing in regional and global championships.

Eng Said al Shanfari, CEO of the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre, expressed his pride in hosting the championship, reaffirming the centre’s commitment to supporting sports and community initiatives by providing a professional environment to host various sports events, including the “Spark” Fighting Championship. He explained that this event was not just for entertainment but also contributed to building the capabilities of Omani youth and empowering them to achieve notable sporting achievements.

SHORTTAKES



Victoria Mboko (CAN) returns the ball to Naomi Osaka (JPN). — **Imagn Images**



Naomi Osaka (JPN) gets ready to serve the ball to Victoria Mboko (CAN). — **Imagn Images**

MBOKO, OSAKA OUT OF CINCINNATI OPEN

CINCINNATI: WTA Montreal tournament champion Victoria Mboko and beaten finalist Naomi Osaka officially withdrew on Friday from the ATP-WTA Cincinnati Open in decisions openly telegraphed after their Thursday night final in Canada.

Mboko, the 18-year-old Canadian who electrified Montreal with her run to a first WTA title, cited the wrist injury she suffered in the semi-finals while four-time Grand Slam winner Osaka blamed a “schedule change” for her absence.

Cincinnati tournament officials said the pair had received byes into the second round due to their performances at the previous event.

The withdrawals vaulted four lucky losers from qualifying into the first round of the main draw of the last major event prior to the August 25 start of the US Open.

After defeating Osaka 2-6, 6-4, 6-1 to win the Montreal title, Mboko revealed that the swelling in her wrist had been bad enough on Thursday morning to prompt her to have an MRI exam before the evening final.

“I woke up this morning, and I actually had my wrist a little bit swollen from (Wednesday’s) fall,” she said.

“We quickly went to the hospital for an MRI and an X-ray before I came to the courts to practice.”

Mboko said she and her team eventually “got the green light that nothing too serious was going on in the wrist.”

But she said Thursday night that she expected to give Cincinnati a miss.

“I’m not planning on playing Cincinnati at the moment. I just want to take care of my wrist a little bit right now,” she said. “It’s just very close and sudden for me to go there and play again (in), like, two days. “I think I’m just going to sit out on that one and prepare for the upcoming tournaments.”

Osaka was less definite, but said she was “teeter-tottering”.

“It’s going to be interesting to see, yeah, what my next match is and how I’m going to play,” the former world number one said. — **AFP**

Man City ready for new era without De Bruyne

MANCHESTER

CITY will embark on a new era this season in their first in 10 years without talisman Kevin De Bruyne as Pep Guardiola looks to make last term’s third-place finish a distant memory and restore his revamped outfit to their former glory.

They face a tough task against champions Liverpool, Arsenal and Chelsea — all big spenders in the transfer window — but the anticipated return of Ballon d’Or winner Rodri and scoring machine Erling Haaland to top form give reason for optimism.

City were tipped last season to win a record-extending fifth consecutive Premier League title, but a mid season nose-dive saw them fall well off the pace and miss a top two spot for the first time since 2016-17.

They finished third behind Liverpool and Arsenal with their worst points total under Guardiola, their nine league losses were more than their two previous seasons combined, they crashed out of the Champions League and League Cup early and their FA Cup final loss to Crystal Palace meant no silverware for the first time in eight years.

Rodri was sidelined for most of the season after suffering a torn anterior cruciate ligament against Arsenal in September. Guardiola’s men showed how much the Spaniard was missed when they went on a woeful run of nine defeats in 12 games across all competitions.

After leading the Premier League in scoring for two successive seasons, Haaland’s 31 goals across all competitions in 2024-25 remarkably constituted a drop in performance, although he still showed his lethal scoring ability in what was considered an off-year for the Norwegian.

He will be keen to prove a point this season and put himself back in the running for the Golden Boot.

Guardiola began his rebuilding last term, splashing out 180 million pounds (\$241.72 million) on Omar Marmoush, Abdukodir Khusanov, Nico Gonzalez and Vitor Reis. Marmoush had an almost immediate impact with a 13-minute hat-trick in a 4-0 win over Newcastle United in February.

City’s manager has further galvanised his squad by signing Dutch midfielder Tijjani Reijnders, Wolverhampton Wanderers defender Rayan Ait-Nouri, winger Rayan Cherki and goalkeeper James



De Bruyne



FILE PHOTO: Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola reacts. — **Reuters**

Guardiola aims to restore City success after third-place finish

City’s spending to strengthen squad exceeds 300 million pounds

Club still face 115 charges of breaching league financial rules

strikers in the game in Haaland, the fight to support the 25-year-old runs deep with Marmoush, Phil Foden, Jeremy Doku, Savinho, Oscar Bobb and Cherki all in contention.

Guardiola said that while there is a lot of positivity in the squad, he did not expect this season to be smooth sailing.

“I’m pretty sure it’ll be good, but it won’t be a red carpet season, there’ll always be problems, it’s how you overcome those situations,” the Spaniard said at a sold-out open training session earlier this week.

“The expectation at the beginning of the season is always, let’s go and try to do our best, win the first games, get confidence and move forward. Of course, we want to try and do better than last season, especially with consistency.”

The manager, who is under contract until June 2027, is not setting any targets for the season, saying it is difficult to determine what a successful campaign would be. — **Reuters**

Liverpool under the spotlight in Community Shield, says Slot

LONDON: Liverpool boss Arne Slot is relishing the rare chance to lift silverware in his side’s first game of the season as the new look Premier League champions face Crystal Palace in Sunday’s Community Shield.

Despite storming to a record-equalling 20th English top-flight title last season with four games to spare, the Reds have splashed out, spending nearly £300 million (\$402 million) in the transfer market.

New forwards Florian Wirtz and Hugo Ekitike, plus full-backs Milos Kerkez and Jeremie Frimpong could get their first chance to impress the Liverpool fans at Wembley.

The traditional curtain-raiser to the English football season sees the winners of the previous season’s



Liverpool manager Arne Slot acknowledges fans. — **Reuters**

Premier League and FA Cup face off. “Normally you have to play numerous games before you can win something,” Slot said at his pre-match press conference.



“Now we have a chance to win something in the beginning of the season. Unfortunately, we face a very good Crystal Palace that have been very difficult to win against for us.

“They showed in the last (FA Cup) final - and even in the semi-final, by the way, as well - how difficult it is to win a one-off game against them.”

Palace are appearing in the fixture

for the first time after lifting their maiden major trophy by shocking Manchester City 1-0 in May to win the FA Cup.

The Eagles’ joy has been slightly soured since as they were thrown out of the Europa League and demoted into the Conference League — the third tier of European competition — over a breach of multi-club ownership rules.

US businessman John Textor owned a stake in Palace and is the majority owner of French club Lyon, who have also qualified for the Europa League.

Despite Textor since selling his shares to New York Jets owner Woody Johnson, UEFA deemed Palace failed to meet the deadline to avoid a breach.

Under UEFA multi-club ownership rules, Lyon have been allowed to keep their place in the second-tier competition of European football as they finished higher in Ligue 1 (6th) than Palace (12th) in the Premier League last season.

Palace, however, have appealed to the Lausanne-based Court of Arbitration for Sport.

GUEHI, EZE TO START By contrast to Liverpool’s transfer bonanza, Palace have spent just £2 million on Croatian left-back Borna Sosa and a new reserve goalkeeper in Walter Benitez.

But the south London club have so far managed to keep hold of all of their prized assets despite interest from English and European giants.

— **AFP**

SPORTS

SHORT TAKES



Foulkes had match figures of nine for 77

NEW ZEALAND CRUSH ZIMBABWE TO SWEEP THE TEST SERIES

ZIMBABWE: New Zealand completed a crushing win by an innings and 359 runs on the third day of the second Test against Zimbabwe at Queens Sports Club on Saturday.

Zak Foulkes, playing in his first Test match, took five for 37 as Zimbabwe were bowled out for 117 in their second innings.

Nic Welch, batting at number three, made an unbeaten 47 and stood virtually alone against the New Zealand pace attack.

It was the third-biggest win by an innings in Test history.

England beat Australia by an innings and 579 runs at The Oval in London in 1938. Australia defeated South Africa by an innings and 360 runs in Johannesburg in 2001/02.

“We bowled well in the first innings after losing the toss,” said Mitch Santner, who captained New Zealand in both Tests in the absence of the injured Tom Latham.

“And the batsmen got through some tough periods with their partnerships and then cashed in.”

New Zealand’s previous biggest win - and Zimbabwe’s previous heaviest defeat - was by an innings and 301 runs when the two teams met in Napier in 2011/12.

Zimbabwe suffered their sixth successive defeat - four of them by an innings - since beating Bangladesh in Sylhet in April.

New Zealand declared their first innings closed on their overnight total of 601 for three.

It took only three balls for Matt Henry to start the home team’s collapse when he bowled Brian Bennett for his second duck of the match.

Henry had Brendan Taylor caught at second slip and Jacob Duffy caught Sean Williams off his own bowling before Matthew Fisher had Zimbabwe captain Craig Ervine held at third slip.

Foulkes, who briefly returned to New Zealand after a triangular Twenty20 series but was recalled after Nathan Smith was injured in the first Test, took the next five wickets.

Foulkes had match figures of nine for 77.

Devon Conway, who scored 153 for New Zealand, was player of the match while Henry, who took 16 wickets across the two matches, was player of the series. — AFP



Tommy Fleetwood plays his shot from the seventh tee during the second round of the FedEx St. Jude Championship golf tournament. — *Imagn Images*

Fleetwood leads FedEx St Jude tournament

ENGLAND'S Tommy Fleetwood, seeking his elusive first win on the PGA Tour, followed a first round 63 with a second round 64 on Friday to take the lead at the FedEx St. Jude Championship, the opening tournament of the season ending FedEx Cup playoffs.

Play was suspended in the afternoon with 21 golfers on the course at TPC Southwind as heavy rains flooded the area. Second round play will resume on Saturday morning before the third round begins off two tees in threesomes.

Fleetwood’s 13-under 127 total was four strokes better than Collin Morikawa and Akshay Bhatia. Morikawa’s 5-under 65 on Friday included holing out from the fairway on the par-4 ninth for an eagle. Bhatia, the first round leader after an 8-under 62, managed a 69 that included 15 pars.

England’s Justin Rose also was tied for second at 9 under with two holes remaining when the rains hit. Kurt Kitayama posted a 7-under 63 to finish at 8-under 132.

World No. 1 Scottie Scheffler, who opened with a 67, had a rollercoaster round that included four bogeys and eight birdies, but finished at 4-under 66 and stands at 7 under. Scheffler was visibly frustrated throughout the round, from attempting to kick his club

after an errant drive to talking to himself after a poor approach.

A win by the 34-year-old Fleetwood would give the tour back-to-back first time champions. Cameron Young won last weekend’s Wyndham Championship, the final regular season event.

“Maybe this weekend is the weekend,” Fleetwood said. “We’ll see.”

Fleetwood, in his 15th year as a pro, entered the second round one stroke behind Bhatia. Fleetwood quickly overtook him by recording birdies in bunches. They came at Nos. 2, 3 and 4 on the front side and at Nos. 13, 14, 15 and 16 on the back nine, building a five stroke cushion at the time. His only bogey came on No. 18 after his drive found a fairway bunker and his approach missed the green.

From early in the first round through the 17th hole of the second round, Fleetwood played a 30-hole stretch bogey free with 14 birdies.

“When you shoot two good scores, it’s easy to say everything has been going well, but I think for the most part I’ve been very good off the tee, put myself in position to have a go at the course,” Fleetwood said. “My iron play has been good and solid, and I’ve rolled the ball well. The greens are really true.”

Fleetwood has won seven times on the European Tour, his last victory coming in the 2024 Dubai Invitational. He has come close multiple times on the PGA Tour. Among

his three top-10 finishes in 2025 is a tie for second at the Travelers Championship in June.

“Happy to put myself in with a chance over the weekend,” Fleetwood said. “I think that’s exactly where you want to be and keep testing yourself. Yeah, it hasn’t happened for me yet out on the PGA Tour, but I would much rather be up there and not quite get it done than not there at all.”

Morikawa is trying to put his last two events — the Scottish Open and the Open Championship — behind him. He missed the cut in both, but is prospering after 36 holes in Memphis with a new caddie, Mark Urbanek, his fifth of the season.

“It wasn’t good,” Morikawa said of his game entering the week. “I went back to the drawing board, had to figure it out, had to really look at it from another perspective and say, OK, I look at my swing, looks like this, how do I just get down to the nitty-gritty and say maybe I need to be in this position, maybe I need to look at some setup stuff. You just keep trial-and-error stuff.”

The top 70 in the FedEx Cup points standings qualified for the St. Jude. Those who finish on Sunday ranked in the top 50 of the FedEx Cup points standings qualify for the BMW Championship, the second round of the playoffs to be held next week in Owings Mills, Md. The top 50 also will be eligible for each of eight PGA Tour signature events in 2026. — Reuters

Stegen back as Bara captain after signing LaLiga medical authorisation

BARCELONA: Barcelona have reinstated Marc Andre ter Stegen as first team captain after announcing on Friday that the goalkeeper has authorised the club to send his medical report to LaLiga.

The announcement comes after Ter Stegen hit back at suggestions he is to blame for Barcelona’s inability to register new players, insisting that his back surgery and recovery timeline were fully approved by the club.

The German’s three month rehabilitation created an unexpected headache for Barcelona, who had asked him to sign a long-term medical leave that would allow them to clear 80% of his wages until mid-season and comply with LaLiga’s Financial Fair Play rules, thereby allowing them

to register new players.

But Ter Stegen’s announcement on social media that he would be sidelined for only three months irked the club management as LaLiga rules require a player to remain out of action for at least four months to be considered a long-term injury.

The disagreement led to the 33-year-old being stripped of the club’s captaincy on Thursday.

“The Club announces that the player Marc Andre ter Stegen has signed the authorisation necessary for the Club to send La Liga the medical report relating to his surgery,” Barcelona said in a statement.

“The disciplinary case has been closed and the player is captain of the first team once again with immediate effect.”



Marc Andre Ter Stegen. — AFP

Ter Stegen was adamant that club officials had always been kept in the loop about his treatment and rehabilitation.

“The decision to undergo surgery was made after consultation with medical professionals and fully approved by the club,” Ter Stegen said earlier on Friday in a statement on Instagram. “Moreover, I announced publicly the minimum recovery timing that I shall need after that, which had been communicated to me by most reputed experts and always in coordination with the club.”

SEASON STARTS AUGUST 15

Barca signed 24-year old goalkeeper Joan Garcia from local rivals Espanyol last month while Marcus Rashford was signed on loan from Manchester United.

However, both players are yet to be registered with the new LaLiga season kicking off on August 15.

Despite Ter Stegen signing the authorisation, LaLiga’s Medical Committee must still rule on his case, with their estimated recovery time for the goalkeeper determining whether Barcelona can use part of his salary to register new signings.

The controversy highlights Barcelona’s financial struggles as they battle to register new signings once again.

Last season, the club approached Spain’s National Sports Council to allow them to field Dani Olmo and Pau Victor until the end of the season after LaLiga said they did not have the capacity to register the two players based on their accounts. — Reuters

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SHORT TAKES

Associated gas production climbed 11.4 per cent to 6.255 billion cubic metres, up from 5.616 billion cubic metres a year earlier.

OMAN’S NATURAL GAS OUTPUT EDGES UP BY 0.3 PER CENT

MUSCAT: Oman’s total natural gas output — including domestic production and imports — rose by 0.3 per cent to 27.692 billion cubic metres by the end of June 2025, compared to 27.601 billion cubic metres in the same period of 2024.

According to the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI), associated gas production climbed 11.4 per cent to 6.255 billion cubic metres, up from 5.616 billion cubic metres a year earlier. However, non-associated gas production (including imports) fell 2.5 per cent to 21.437 billion cubic metres, compared with 21.985 billion cubic metres in June 2024.

At the consumption level, industrial projects used 13.814 billion cubic metres, a decline of 5.3 per cent from 14.593 billion cubic metres last year. Gas consumption by power plants rose 1.6 per cent to 7.287 billion cubic metres, up from 7.175 billion cubic metres in 2024.

In the oilfields — including industrial zones and companies such as Oman Mining and Oman Cement — usage increased by 13.1 per cent to 6.454 billion cubic metres, compared to 5.709 billion cubic metres last year.

Gas consumption in industrial zones rose by 9.4 per cent to 136 million cubic metres, compared with 124.3 million cubic metres in 2024. — ONA

Oxy tests north Oman gas & condensate discovery

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, AUG 9

A MAJOR

hydrocarbon discovery announced recently by US energy major Occidental (Oxy) in one of its concessions in north Oman is undergoing production testing, alongside an evaluation of its appraisal and development plans.

The announcement came in published material issued during the Q2 2025 Conference Call hosted by senior Oxy executives over the weekend.

Oxy Oman, a wholly owned subsidiary of Occidental Petroleum Corporation, is one of the largest independent investors in Oman’s upstream sector, with interests in eight blocks: 9, 27, 62, 30, 65, 51, 72 and 53.

Dubbed the “North Oman Gas & Condensate Discovery”, the resource is estimated to hold around 250 million barrels of oil equivalent (boe).

The reservoir is under test production, while appraisal and development plans are being evaluated, said Oxy. Its proximity to existing infrastructure, including a gas plant with available capacity, is considered a key advantage.

However, dominating the Oman segment of the conference call were developments related to Oxy Oman’s flagship asset – the heavy-oil-producing

The Mukhaizna EPSA extension is a “win-win” for Oxy and the Omani government.

Mukhaizna field in Block 53.

An extension agreement signed recently by the Ministry of Energy and Minerals with Oxy and other Block 53 shareholders is “expected to deliver significant value while supporting Oman’s key national objectives,” the US energy firm said.

Furthermore, there is potential to grow resources by over 800 million gross barrels from the field, with competitive project returns, it noted.

Under the extension of the Block 53 Exploration and Production Sharing Agreement (EPSA), signed in May, Occidental Mukhaizna and its partners have committed to

investing an estimated RO 11.5 billion (approximately \$ 30 billion) through to 2050.

These investments will cover capital and operational expenditures aimed at enhancing production efficiency and deploying advanced extraction technologies to optimise resource recovery within the block.

To date, Oxy Oman has produced over 640 million barrels from Block 53 through the operation of 3,500 wells.

In remarks during the conference call, Vicki Hollub, President and Chief Executive Officer of Oxy, commented: “That was an incredible agreement that we made with

Under the extension of the Block 53 Exploration and Production Sharing Agreement (EPSA), signed in May, Occidental Mukhaizna and its partners have committed to investing an estimated RO 11.5 billion (approximately \$ 30 billion) through to 2050.

Oman because it benefits both Oxy and Oman, and it allows us the flexibility and possibility to invest there because now the economics will be comparable.”

Kenneth Dillion, Senior Vice-President and President, International Oil and Gas Operations, also highlighted the presence of multiple stacked pays — distinct hydrocarbon-bearing layers (pay zones) stacked vertically within the same geological structure — in the block.

“With all the work we’ve done there, what we see is multiple stacked pays across a very large block. And in the North, we’ve been producing the layup wells for some time now, which are totally different and don’t need any steam. So we see the extension as a win-win for Oxy and the government, and sustainable.”

Net hydrocarbon production from Oxy Oman’s portfolio climbed to an average of 76,000 barrels of oil equivalent per day (boepd) during the second quarter of 2025, up from 64,000 boepd in the corresponding period of 2024.

Manufacturing sector growth strengthens Oman’s in-country value

MUSCAT: Oman’s manufacturing sector remains a cornerstone of economic diversification, helping reduce reliance on oil, boost in-country value and create jobs.

The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion continues to implement the Industrial Strategy 2040, aiming to raise the sector’s contribution to over RO 11.6 billion by 2040, attract RO 40 billion in industrial investments, and focus on green industries and advanced technologies.

Economic indicators show robust performance, with the sector growing 7.45 per cent in 2024 to over RO 3.6 billion at constant prices, representing 9.4 per cent of GDP. Growth continued into 2025, with a 5.4-per cent rise in Q1 compared to Q1 2024, reflecting strong industrial activity and an attractive investment climate.

Non-oil commodity exports increased 7.2 per cent between January and May 2025, reaching RO 2.7 billion. The UAE, Saudi Arabia and India remained the top markets for Omani goods, underlining their

ENG KHALID
BIN SALIM AL
QASSABI

Director-General of
Industry

Growth continued into 2025, with a 5.4-per cent rise in Q1 compared to Q1 2024.

competitiveness in regional and global markets.

In 2024, the industrial sector employed more than 57,000 Omanis, highlighting efforts to build local talent and increase Omanisation

rates.

Eng Khalid bin Salim al Qassabi, Director-General of Industry, said the sector’s strong performance reflects the success of government policies and ministry-led initiatives

to support manufacturers, localise supply chains and offer incentives.

He noted that the sector is now a hub for innovation and modern technology, attracting both domestic and foreign investors.

He added that key strategic projects under the Industrial Strategy 2040 include the “Local Content Plan in the Industrial Sector – Manufacturing,” aimed at increasing local procurement, strengthening supply chains and supporting SMEs.

Achievements in H1 2025 include the launch of the Advanced Automation Centre for Industry 4.0, delivery of 262 initiatives to 14 partner bodies, cooperation agreements with UNIDO and GOIC and completion of strategic studies on national industrial development.

In addition, 20 factories were assessed under the Smart Industrial Readiness Index (SIRI), and 55 new factories were granted National Product Identity Certificates.

— ONA

ADVERTORIALS

SHORTTAKES



The agreement was signed by Ali bin Ahmed Muqaibal, CEO of Sharakah, and Iman al Barwani, CEO of MB Foundation.

SHARAKAH AND MB FOUNDATION SIGN PACT TO LAUNCH “USRATI” INITIATIVE

MUSCAT: Sharakah, Oman’s leading SME development company, and MB Foundation, the Charity and CSR arm of MB Group, recently signed an agreement to launch the “Usrati” programme, an initiative which aims to support and develop projects of Omani productive families.

The agreement was formally signed by Ali bin Ahmed Muqaibal, Chief Executive Officer of Sharakah, and Iman al Barwani, Chief Executive Officer of MB Foundation.

Under this agreement, the parties agreed on implementing a six-month development programme aimed at supporting and developing 15 productive families from across the Sultanate of Oman.

The programme focuses on empowering productive families by providing technical vocational training, enhancing their administrative capabilities and improving their financial literacy, in addition to supporting and developing their businesses.

Families will be selected in coordination with the Ministry of Social Development based on criteria such as business readiness, socio-economic need and a focus on handmade or craft-based products.

A joint committee from MB Foundation and Sharakah will oversee the nomination and selection process, ensuring a transparent and inclusive approach.

This initiative is divided into two main phases. The first phase focuses on empowering family heads/members aged 18 to 55 by enhancing the skills of female participants through specialised vocational training and raising their awareness of entrepreneurship.

The second phase targets youth from the same families, aged 18 to 25, by equipping them with knowledge in business management, productivity enhancement, brand building and digital marketing. The programme also includes regular field visits, performance monitoring and the provision of advisory support to participants.

“This partnership is a testament to the shared vision we hold with MB Foundation to build resilient communities through sustainable enterprise,” said Ali bin Ahmed Muqaibal, CEO of Sharakah. “We are proud to extend our expertise in SME development to empower families with practical tools that will foster long term economic independence.”

From her part, Iman al Barwani, CEO of MB Foundation, praised this collaboration, saying; “Our foundation is committed to supporting communities by creating a real and lasting impact.”

DFI TO PARTICIPATE IN FOOD SAFETY EXHIBITION IN SALALAH

MUSCAT: Dhofar Foods & Investment (DFI), Oman’s leading promoter of food security and sustainable agri-food development, will be participating in the upcoming Food Safety Exhibition taking place from August 10 to 17 in Salalah.

The exhibition will be held under the auspices of HH Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said, Governor of Dhofar, and Dr Saud bin Hamoud al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, with the presence of several dignitaries

and key stakeholders in the field of food security.

As Oman accelerates its journey towards self-sufficiency and sustainable development in line with Oman Vision 2040, DFI’s presence at this prestigious event is a reflection of its pivotal role in shaping the nation’s food landscape. With its deep roots in Dhofar and a diversified portfolio spanning dairy, beverages, agriculture, farms, poultry, edible oils and animal feed, DFI is uniquely positioned to lead conversations on food resilience,

innovation and safety.

As part of its broader efforts to engage with communities and promote national pride, DFI recently launched the year-long campaign ‘Rooted in Oman. Nurturing the Future’ to commemorate Oman’s 54th National Day.

Through monthly initiatives focused on culture, sustainability and health, the campaign reinforces DFI’s core values while celebrating Oman’s heritage and future aspirations.

Amouage reports record results for H1 2025

AMOUAGE, the Omani High Perfumery House, has closed the first six months of 2025 with a record second quarter, building on an exceptional start to the year. By the end of June, retail sales exceeded \$200 million, representing a +60% increase compared to the same period in 2024.

This remarkable performance underscores the creative and cultural relevance of Amouage, the continued trust of its clients and the dedication of its teams and partners.

THE SOARING RESONANCE OF AMOUAGE CREATIONS

The surge in global demand for both Amouage’s iconic perfumes and its most recent creations highlights the strength and depth of the House’s portfolio.

The Guidance franchise grew by more than 2.5 times, expanding across key markets through high-profile takeovers and earning major artistic recognitions worldwide. Today, one in every four bottles produced by Amouage is a Guidance creation.

The Odyssey Collection saw its sales double, driven by the outstanding success of the newly introduced Decision and Existence Eaux de Parfum.

High-value, high-quality collections continued to drive strong performance



Retail sales surpass \$200 million, reflecting +60% growth.

across the portfolio. Sales of the Exceptional Extraits rose by over 2.7 times, reflecting the enduring appeal of high-concentration products.

The recently introduced Essences Collection pioneered a proprietary six-month double-infusion technique, enhancing both complexity and richness of perfumes. Initial volumes sold out swiftly, surpassing expectations.

AN EXTRAORDINARY PERFORMANCE

ACROSS GEOGRAPHIES AND CHANNELS

Amouage’s record results were anchored in consistent growth across geographies and client touchpoints.

In the Middle East and Africa, sales rose by +84%, with the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia both doubling year-on-year, achieving leading rankings in all key department stores. In the Americas, growth reached +69% while Europe closed the semester at a breakthrough +59%.

Looking at the different channels, Amouage boutique sales increased by +55% like-for-like, while Amouage.com grew by +83%, reaffirming the success of its approach to build meaningful connections through curated physical and digital experiences. Travel Retail momentum continued, achieving +51%.

TRANSPARENTLY AND SUSTAINABLY ROOTED IN OMAN... TO THE WORLD

Amouage became the first beauty brand – and the first company headquartered in the Middle East – to join the Aura Blockchain Consortium, a leading alliance advancing traceability and transparency in the luxury sector through blockchain technology.

From a sustainability perspective, every Amouage fragrance bottle is now handcrafted in Muscat using solar energy. Following the installation of 160 solar panels, the manufacture operates independently, fully powered by the sun.

VIGO RENT A CAR OFFERS UNBEATABLE RATES THIS KHAREEF

MUSCAT: With Khareef 2025 in full swing and visitor numbers on the rise, Vigo Rent A Car (previously KR Rent A Car), KR Group’s auto-leasing arm, is offering flexible and affordable car rental solutions designed to elevate every journey through Salalah and the southern Dhofar Governorate.

With daily rates starting at just RO 8, Vigo is redefining convenience this khareef season. This limited-time offer is exclusively available for bookings made through our website or WhatsApp – making car rental easier than ever.

This year’s offering is ideal for tourists, weekend explorers and local residents seeking short-term rental solutions without the hassle of monthly commitments.

Customers can rent a vehicle for as little as one day, enjoying complete freedom and value. That’s not all, Vigo is also offering a limited-time



With daily rates starting at just RO 8, Vigo is redefining convenience this khareef season.

promotion, valid until August 15, 2025, wherein customers who rent a vehicle for five days or more will be eligible to enter a raffle draw for a chance to win an iPhone 16 Pro.

Backed by a fleet of over 1,000 brand-new vehicles from top international automotive brands, ‘Vigo’ caters to a wide range of mobility needs, from compact city cars to spacious SUVs, all maintained to the highest safety and service standards. Customers can browse and confirm rentals in real time through the company’s official website.

The user-friendly, mobile-optimised platform provides instant availability, transparent pricing and seamless confirmations, allowing travellers to plan their journeys with ease.

“Khareef is one of the most beautiful and vibrant times of the year in Oman, and we want to ensure that more people can explore its magic with reliable and cost-effective transportation,” said Ashok Kulkarni – General Manager, ‘Vigo’ Rent A Car.

Bank Muscat leverages innovation to enhance customer experience

MUSCAT: As part of its ongoing commitment to customer-centric transformation, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, continues to lead the way in adopting cutting-edge innovations and technologies that enhance service excellence and streamline operations across all channels.

From AI-powered tools to automated workflows, the bank is continuously raising the bar in delivering smarter, faster and more intuitive customer experiences.

Bank Muscat remains committed to being a future-ready institution, combining the strength of its workforce with the power of

technology to drive excellence, trust and long-term value for customers.

At the heart of this strategy is a vibrant internal culture of innovation, where employees are empowered to challenge the status quo and put forward ideas that solve real customer pain points.

Through dedicated innovation platforms and cross-functional collaboration, staff at all levels are encouraged to contribute to the bank’s goals of simplifying processes, anticipating customer needs and delivering meaningful experiences across every touchpoint.

Bank Muscat continues to expand a broad portfolio of



Bank Muscat remains committed to being a future-ready institution.

innovative initiatives designed to elevate service delivery, enhance efficiency and strengthen customer engagement. This includes investment in its mobile banking platform with new features

rolled out regularly to provide comprehensive and intuitive banking services from the App.

Also, the bank has introduced tokenised card services, Apple Pay, Samsung Pay, QR payments and soft POS solutions aimed at delivering secure, convenient and future-ready payment experiences.

Besides the comprehensive and intuitive banking services directly from the Mobile and Internet Banking, the bank has a network of ATMs, CDMs, instant card issuance kiosks and statement printing machines that offer customers easy access to banking services, reducing wait times and enhancing convenience.

The bank is a leader when it comes to Corporate Ecosystems Integration. Through API-based solutions, the bank enabled corporate customers to integrate banking capabilities directly into their operational systems. The bank is also utilising AI and robotic process automation across various functions to improve productivity, enhance decision-making, and support faster and more accurate service delivery.

As the leading financial institution, the bank is committed to continuously evolving its operations and services to meet the changing expectations of customers, businesses, and the wider economy.

SHORTTAKES

OMAN AIRPORTS
HANDLE 6.9 MILLION
PASSENGERS IN H1



Muscat International Airport recorded 6,233,954 passengers by the end of June 2025.

MUSCAT: The total number of passengers travelling through Oman’s airports — Muscat, Salalah, Suhar and Duqm — reached around 6,921,569 by the end of June 2025, down 2.2 per cent from 7,074,913 in the same period of 2024, according to preliminary figures from the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

Muscat International Airport recorded 6,233,954 passengers by the end of June 2025, a 2.4-per cent drop from 6,384,874 last year.

The number of flights through the airport fell by 6.9 per cent to 44,743, compared with 48,052 during the same period in 2024.

Salalah Airport, however, saw growth, handling 657,209 passengers by mid-2025, up 4.5 per cent from 628,951 last year. The total number of flights edged up 0.3 per cent to 4,526.

In contrast, Suhar Airport recorded a steep decline, with passenger numbers plummeting by 98.9 per cent to just 336, down from 31,203 last year.

Flights also dropped 68.7 per cent to 84, compared with 268 in 2024.

Duqm Airport posted a slight 0.6 per cent rise in passenger numbers, reaching 30,070 compared with 29,885 in 2024, while the number of flights slipped 0.6 per cent to 306.

Indian nationals topped the list of passengers travelling through Muscat International Airport in June 2025, totalling 193,183, including 79,424 arrivals and 113,759 departures. Omanis came second with 135,093 passengers, followed by Pakistanis with 48,733.

— ONA

OMAN’S
PREMIUM
HOTELS EARN
RO 141 MILLION
IN H1 2025

MUSCAT: Revenues from three- to five-star hotels in Oman surged 18.2 per cent to approximately RO 141.21 million by the end of June 2025, compared with RO 119.50 million in the same period of 2024, according to the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The number of guests increased by 9.2 per cent to 1,142,702, up from 1,046,224 a year earlier. Occupancy rates rose by 14.4 per cent to 54.7 per cent, compared with 47.8 per



The number of guests increased by 9.2 per cent to 1,142,702, up from 1,046,224 a year earlier.

cent in the first half of 2024. By nationality, guests from Oceania recorded the highest growth rate,

up 57.9 per cent to 24,681.

African guests grew by 40.6 per cent to 7,794, while guests from the Americas rose 22.3 per cent to 39,293. European guests increased 20.1 per cent to 358,190, Gulf visitors grew by 10.6 per cent to 83,140, and Omani guests rose 5.7 per cent to 384,222. Asian guests also saw a modest rise of 2.4 per cent to 163,286.

The only decline was among other Arab nationalities, with numbers falling by 1.4 per cent to 48,453 guests. — ONA

Asyad Shipping sees 31%
profit surge in 2024

ASYAD Shipping has reported exceptional results for 2024, with profits rising by 31 per cent compared to 2023. The company’s total assets have reached RO 1 billion, reflecting its prudent investment strategies and over two decades of sustainable operations.

Its fleet of more than 86 vessels includes very large crude carriers (VLCCs), container ships, bulk carriers and LNG tankers, serving over 60 countries worldwide.

Chief Executive Officer Dr Ibrahim bin Bakhit al Nadhiri said the company posted net profits of RO 51.5 million (\$133.9 million), a 31-per cent increase year-on-year, underlining its resilience and adaptability to global market challenges.

Revenues rose 1 per cent to RO 366.1 million (\$951 million), driven by a shift towards fixed-term contracts that bolstered financial stability. The VLCC and petrochemical tanker segments remained the top earners, accounting for more than half of annual revenues.

Gross profits grew 28 per cent to RO 105.9 million (\$275.2 million), while operating profits rose 33 per cent to RO 86.9 million (\$225.7 million), aided



The company’s total assets have reached RO 1 billion.

by operational efficiency and strategic market investments.

In 2024, Asyad Shipping awarded local contracts worth over RO 13 million (\$34 million), with a strong focus on empowering SMEs and contributing to the national economy.

The company also created 122 jobs for Omani seafarers and offered training programmes to strengthen local maritime expertise.

The Omanisation rate reached 90.6 per cent, highlighting Asyad’s commitment to building skilled national talent in line with Oman Vision 2040.

On the sustainability front, Dr Al Nadhiri said the company cut emissions by 6 per cent and improved fuel efficiency by 5 per cent compared to 2023, through low-carbon transport initiatives and digital transformation efforts.

Asyad Shipping is expanding

its fleet with modern, technologically advanced vessels meeting international standards, while enhancing its digital logistics systems to improve efficiency and offer innovative customer solutions.

The company remains committed to investing in Omani talent and environmentally friendly maritime technologies, ensuring long-term growth and global competitiveness. — ONA

Opinion polls launched to gauge awareness of local content

MUSCAT: The National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI), in partnership with the Authority for Projects, Tenders and Local Content, will today, Sunday, launch two public opinion polls under the title “Measuring Community Awareness of Local Content.”

The polls will target two groups — one representing the general public and another comprising employees in public and private sector institutions. This initiative supports national efforts to boost in-country value and align with the economic and social goals of Oman Vision 2040.

Running until August 27, the surveys aim to measure awareness of the local content concept, assess the extent of public and institutional engagement with policies favouring local products and services, and



This initiative supports national efforts to boost in-country value and align with the economic and social goals of Oman Vision 2040.

explore factors influencing the preference for local goods. They will also identify challenges faced by individuals and organisations in adopting this strategic approach.

The first poll will involve Omani citizens and residents aged 18 and above. It will examine awareness of core concepts, including employment of the national workforce, use of local goods and services, knowledge transfer, and investment in national assets.

It will also explore preferences for Omani products, sources of knowledge about local content, and willingness to pay more for locally produced goods of equal quality.

The second poll will focus on Omani employees in supply, manufacturing, distribution and commercial marketing sectors.

It will assess the implementation of local content policies within their organisations, purchasing priorities, challenges in dealing with SMEs, and the benefits of local content application at institutional and sales levels.

Mahfouz bin Salem al Musharfi, Director of the Public Opinion Measurement Department at NCSI, said these surveys will give decision-makers a clear picture, based on reliable data, of the realities and challenges of local content in Oman at both individual and institutional levels.

He added that the findings will help consolidate empowerment, encourage national consumption and strengthen SMEs’ role in supply chains, supporting the goals of Oman Vision 2040 to create a sustainable, diversified economy. — ONA

MISSING FORECAST

China’s consumer prices flat in July



China’s producer prices fell more than expected in July, while consumer prices were unchanged, underscoring the impact of sluggish domestic demand and persistent trade uncertainty on consumer and business sentiment.

The producer price index fell 3.6 per cent year on year in July, NBS data showed on Saturday, missing the forecast of a 3.3 per cent slide and matching the near 2-year low recorded in June. — Reuters

AGGRESSIVE CYCLE

Brazil to see impact of high rates



Brazil’s government believes the economy is starting to feel the effects of high interest rates and will closely monitor data to see if those impacts are “wider than initially expected,” Economic Policy Secretary Guilherme Mello said on Friday.

The central bank held its benchmark rate at 15 per cent, pausing an aggressive tightening cycle, which should cool down economic activity. — Reuters

JOINING ALLIES

Canada to lower price cap on Russian oil



The Canadian government said it will join some of its closest allies in lowering the price cap for Russian oil over its continued war in Ukraine.

Canada will lower the price cap for seaborne Russian-origin crude oil to \$47.60 from \$60 per barrel. The price cap move brings Canada in line with the EU and the UK, who announced in July they would lower the cap as they target Russia’s oil revenues. — Reuters

OPINION

Enhancing the socio-economic contribution of Oman’s fisheries sector



DR HILAL AL SAWAI

The writer is local content, sustainability and innovation expert.

THE SULTANATE OF OMAN has a coastline stretching over 3,165 kilometres, providing diverse fisheries resources that the Omanis have depended on for socio-economic activities for centuries. Fishing has traditionally been the cornerstone of Oman’s economy and has, for a long time, been considered a way of living.

With the emergence of Vision 2040, Oman aspires to diversify its economy, and the fisheries sector is poised to become a potential driver for economic development.

The impact of the fisheries sector goes beyond the economic opportunities — fishing communities across the coastal governorates have a unique and rich cultural heritage that is closely intertwined with the marine ecosystem. Fishing communities hold rich traditions which include folk dances, cuisines and storytelling, which emphasise the significance of the fishing culture.

From a social perspective, the fisheries sector uplifts rural communities, creating a pathway for inclusive development to provide social, economic and food security to vulnerable households.

Although women’s contributions in post-harvest activities, like processing and trading, are often overlooked, these roles are impactful. There is, however, a lack of adequate support for women’s groups and social advocacy has sought to improve these conditions.

EXPORT LOGISTICS

Oman is strategically located near the Arabian Sea, which is advantageous for international and regional exports.

Oman’s logistics and cold chain capabilities have greatly improved with the modern fishing ports such as Duqm and Raysut.

These ports have sophisticated freezing, processing and warehousing facilities.

Oman has exported over 218,000 tonnes of fish by the end of 2024 and has been selling to over 70 countries. The key trade markets include the GCC, East Asia and Europe.

The government is developing new trade agreements and certifications to penetrate desired markets such as Japan, South Korea and the European Union.

Oman is continuing to enhance its seafood exportation by maintaining streamlined customs, implementing digital tracking and investing in cold chains.

GOVERNORATES’ CONTRIBUTIONS

Each of Oman’s governorates has unique contributions to the fisheries sector. Al Wusta Governorate has emerged as a hub for large-scale aquaculture and deep-sea fishing. Musandam Governorate is well-known for its artisanal and reef fishing because of the fjord-like coastline.

Dhofar is known for both coastal fisheries and inland aquaculture, and Al Batinah North and Al Batinah South specialise in the harvesting of sardines and mackerels.

The dispersal of fisheries activities minimises the growing imbalance of economic development in the country

The impact of the fisheries sector goes beyond the economic opportunities — fishing communities across the coastal governorates have a unique and rich cultural heritage that is closely intertwined with the marine ecosystem.

while also addressing the issue of rural-urban migration. The economic processing plants, education institutions and fishing cooperatives contribute to the development of the entire region.

ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES

The impact of climate change is a growing concern for Oman’s fisheries industry. The rising temperatures of the sea, acidification and shifting migration of species can impact the availability of fisheries as well as the catch. Furthermore, the seasonal upwelling cycles that supply nutrient-rich waters are especially vulnerable to climate change.

Oman is addressing these challenges by implementing climate-resilient adaptations such as real-time oceanographic monitoring and ecosystem-based modelling. Multinational marine research organisations are collaborating to aid in climate impact assessments and in-country climate forecasting.

Mangrove, seagrass and coral reef conservation — critical to the ecosystem as breeding and nursery grounds — are part of a broader strategy to climate change adaptation.

CONCLUSION

In the long term, Oman’s fisheries sector can serve as a valuable opportunity to contribute towards the country’s economy.

The vision and the intentions will aid in fortifying the industry as a benchmark for developmental aid.

TRUMP’S INDIA TRADE SLAP MISSES RUSSIAN OIL TARGET

YAWEN CHEN

Punishing India for buying Russian oil is a blunt weapon aimed at the wrong target. Donald Trump’s decision to whack an extra 25% tariff on US imports from the Asian country is potentially painful for New Delhi.

However, it’s unlikely to disrupt the flows that keep President Vladimir Putin’s war machine humming.

Like some of the US president’s previous trade measures, the noise may exceed the impact. That explains why oil investors are unbothered.

At first glance, the move, which the White House announced in an executive order on Wednesday, looks like a major escalation. India has become one of the largest buyers of Russian crude since the West imposed sanctions on Moscow following the war of Ukraine

It imports about 1.7 million barrels per day (mbd), often exporting refined products like diesel and jet fuel to customers in Europe and elsewhere. By threatening to double the tariffs on most Indian goods, Trump is taking a hard line on a key enabler of the Kremlin’s war effort – and putting others on notice.

But the punch is poorly aimed. The tariff is already a watered-down version of the 100% levy Trump once threatened, while a three-week grace period before it takes effect offers a window for a deal.

More importantly, the extra levy does not directly affect flows of Russian oil. It will, however, raise prices for American buyers, who spent \$87 billion on Indian goods last year.

Trump is hoping Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi will pressure large private refiners like Nayara Energy and Reliance Industries to shun Russian oil. Even then, the black stuff could still flow onto the market via other routes – most likely through China.

Refiners in the People’s Republic have the capacity to absorb an additional 1 mbd of Russian crude, JPMorgan analysts calculate. The US could respond by imposing similar additional tariffs on China, the top buyer of Russian fossil fuels including pipeline gas.

But Trump is trying to de-escalate tensions with Beijing, mindful of the country’s near-monopoly on exports of crucial rare earth minerals.

Putin has more to fear from the European Union’s less splashy but more surgical approach.

In its 18th sanctions package unveiled in July, Brussels lowered the price cap on Russian oil, targeted more of Moscow’s “dark fleet” tankers, and sanctioned foreign entities helping it evade restrictions. It banned imports of refined petroleum products made from Russian crude in non-EU countries. — Reuters

‘Not just more jobs — we need the right jobs’!

THE latest employment figures from Oman tell us something important — if we’re willing to look beyond the surface. At first glance, they seem reassuring.

In the first half of 2025, a total of 35,807 Omanis were either employed or received training. That’s about 38% of the government’s annual target of 45,000 opportunities.

Because behind the numbers lies a deeper challenge: how fast — and how boldly — are we transforming Oman’s labour market in an era shaped by global disruption, cautious private-sector dynamics and a new generation demanding more than just a job?

Over 12,900 Omanis were hired in the first six months of the year. That includes more than 10,600 placements in the private sector — a welcome sign given long-standing concerns about local hiring — and 2,300 jobs in government institutions.

It’s also heartening that training-to-employment schemes reached over 4,200 individuals, focusing on preparing Omanis to replace expatriates and build practical skills.

Even more significant: 17,228 of these were first-time entrants to the job market. That’s 17,000 personal milestones. It’s about independence, identity and possibility. In a region where youth unemployment remains a pressing concern, this is no small achievement.

With just 38% of the annual target reached by midyear, the pace is cause for concern. The question isn’t whether we’re doing enough. It’s whether we’re doing the right things fast enough — and in the right way.

Why hasn’t the private sector absorbed more talent? Why are training numbers lagging behind projections? Why does this effort still feel fragmented?

The root of the challenge is structural. Some private firms are still hesitant to invest in Omani talent. They worry about readiness,



The concept of “training linked to employment” is sound — train Omanis for real jobs, then place them.



QASIM AL MAASHANI

The writer is the head of business and politics section at Oman Observer.

retention and return. But the real issue is the gap between what companies need and what job-seekers are trained for.

There’s also a mismatch in expectations — wages, workplace culture and career paths remain points of friction. And these are not problems that the Ministry of Labour can fix alone.

The concept of “training linked to employment” is sound — train Omanis for real jobs, then place them. But we need to ask: are we training for the jobs of 2025, or the jobs of 2015?

The global economy is evolving rapidly. Clean energy, AI, logistics, fintech and creative industries are now front and centre. If our training programmes remain rooted in outdated models, we’re offering young people a certificate — not a future.

Training must be driven by private-sector demand, tied to actual hiring agreements and constantly updated. Otherwise, we risk creating another cycle of disappointment.

Another focus of this year’s job strategy has been replacing expatriates with Omanis. Nearly 3,820 roles have been localised so far.

The principle is sound. Omanis should have access to meaningful work, especially where the skills already exist locally. But this must be done with care. Forced localisation, where readiness is not matched by training or support, sets everyone up to fail.

We need a sector-by-sector road map — identify suitable jobs for Omanisation, create dedicated training pipelines and offer companies incentives to cooperate, not resist.

Vision 2040 demands a skilled, competitive Omani workforce that drives a diversified economy. That won’t happen through job placement alone. We need a whole-of-government strategy linking education reform, economic policy and innovation. And it must be localised — Muscat’s needs are different from those of Dhofar or Musandam.

And beyond placements, we must ask: are people thriving in their jobs? Are they progressing? Are employers satisfied? Success should be measured by impact, not intake.

There’s still time to accelerate in the second half of 2025 — but we must be bold.

- Build sector-specific alliances in clean energy, AI, logistics and tourism — especially in governorates needing a boost.
- Let employers shape training, tie it to real job offers and ensure outcomes are measurable.
- Support entrepreneurship as a real alternative — not everyone wants a job; some want to build their own future.
- Use data wisely — AI and labour analytics can match skills to needs in real time.

Employment isn’t a chart — it’s a human story. Every Omani hired is someone who feels seen, valued and responsible.

Let’s treat this with the gravity it deserves. Let’s shift from counting placements to making each job meaningful.

There’s still a second half of the year to go. Let’s make it count.

BUSINESS

MUSCAT: The Muscat Stock Exchange's main index closed last week at its highest level in 29 months, buoyed by strong buying from local funds, institutions and investors.

The index climbed 68 points to 4,849, its best since March 30, 2023. All sector indices advanced, led by the industrial sector, which gained 150 points.

The services sector rose 28 points, the financial sector 18 points and the Sharia index 3 points to 469.

Trading activity was robust, with turnover rising 31.3 per cent to RO 129.8 million, compared with RO 98.8 million the week before. Transactions increased 3 per cent to over 10,700. Market capitalisation grew by RO 269 million to RO 29.40 billion.

Prices rose for 42 securities, fell for 21 and remained unchanged for 29. United Finance Bonds and Oman

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MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE REACHES 29-MONTH HIGH



The index climbed 68 points to 4,849, its best since March 30, 2023.

Refreshments led the gainers with 11.1 per cent increases, while Muscat Insurance topped the losers, dropping 18.9 per cent.

Bank Muscat was the most traded stock by value, with RO 35.2 million in transactions, followed by OQ Base Industries (RO 29.8 million), Bank International (RO 16.8 million), OQ Gas Networks (RO 16.1 million) and OQ Exploration and Production (RO 11.3 million).

In corporate news, Omantel and Ooredoo announced that the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority has standardised the royalty rate for mobile and fixed services at 10 per cent of revenue, effective fiscal year 2025.

Omantel expects this to boost net profits by RO 1.7 million after tax in the first half of 2025, while Ooredoo forecasts a RO 2.5 million post-tax benefit for the year. — ONA

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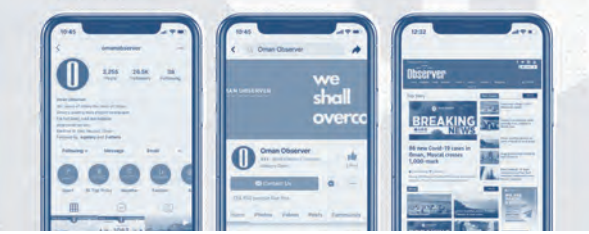
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ART/LIFE



T R A V E L

HOW YOUNG OMANIS ARE RECLAIMING SUMMER'S TRUE SPIRIT >20

AUCTION

Rare first edition of ‘The Hobbit’ set for auction sale



A rare first edition of J.R.R. Tolkien's "The Hobbit" was expected to sell for thousands of pounds on Wednesday after it was found during a house clearance in southwest England.

The book is one of 1,500 original copies of the British author's seminal fantasy novel.

Of those, only "a few hundred are believed to still remain", according to auction house Auctioneum, which discovered the book on an old bookcase at a home in Bristol.

"The surviving books from the initial print run are now considered some of the most sought-after books in modern literature," Auctioneum said in a statement.

Bidding, which ends at 2000 GMT on Wednesday, reached £23,000 (\$30,000) by late morning.

Auctioneum unearthed the book during a routine house clearance after its owner passed away.

"Nobody knew it was there," said Auctioneum rare books specialist Caitlin Riley. "It was just a run-of-the-mill bookcase."

"It was clearly an early Hobbit at first glance, so I just pulled it out and began to flick through it, never expecting it to be a true first edition," said Riley.

"I couldn't believe my eyes," the specialist added, calling it an "unimaginably rare find".

The copy is bound in light green cloth and features rare black-and-white illustrations by Tolkien, who created his beloved Middle Earth universe while he was a professor at the University of Oxford.

The book was passed down in the family library of Hubert Priestley, a botanist connected to the university.

"It is likely that both men knew each other," according to Auctioneum, which said Priestley and Tolkien shared mutual correspondence with author C.S. Lewis, who was also at Oxford.

"The Hobbit", which was followed by the epic series "The Lord of the Rings", has sold more than 100 million copies worldwide.

The beloved sagas were turned into a hit movie franchise in the 2000s.

A first edition of "The Hobbit" with a handwritten note in Elvish by the author sold for £137,000 at Sotheby's in June 2015.

— AFP

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



LIFESTYLE

A staff member holds the Helmet of the character Sauron from the Lord Of The Rings film trilogy during a press preview of movie props set to go to auction, in London. — AFP



FASHION

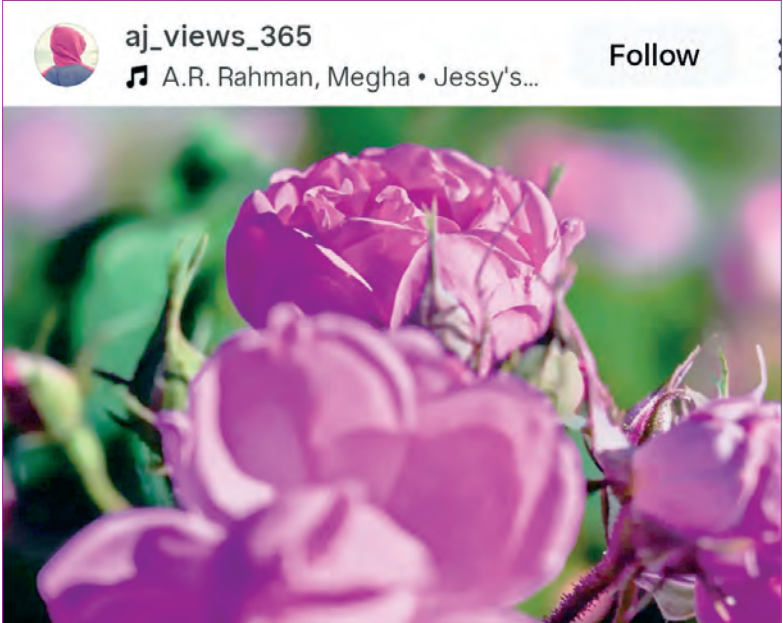
Models present creations from the Ferragamo Fall/Winter 2025/2026 collection during Fashion Week in Milan, Italy. — Reuters



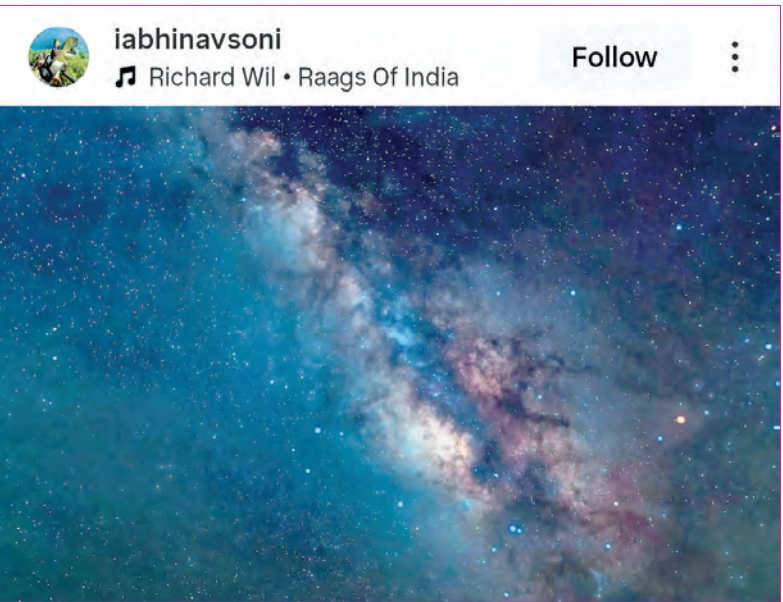
CULTURE

Artists march during street circus festival Karandash-fest, in memory of famous Soviet clown Mikhail Rumyantsev, known under his stage name Karandash, in Staritsa, Tver region. — Reuters

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Two fake Picasso prints sold at German auction house, police say



TWO FORGED Pablo Picasso prints were sold at an auction house in Stuttgart while German authorities managed to seize two additional counterfeits before they could be auctioned, police said last week.

An Italian national is suspected of introducing high-quality forgeries of works from Picasso’s “Suite Vollard” series into the international art market over a period of years.

The fakes made their way into the Stuttgart auction house, the Baden-Württemberg State Criminal Police Office (LKA) said in a statement.

Of the two fakes that were sold, one was seized at an art dealer in the city of Worms, while the other is currently located in Austria.

Italy’s Carabinieri art crime unit in Rome took action

against the suspect in early July. Authorities have not disclosed further details on the investigation.

Germany’s state police offices in Baden-Württemberg and Berlin have been working on the case for several years, in close cooperation with the Picasso Museum in Münster, which confirmed the artworks were counterfeit. A total of seven forged prints linked to the suspect and his network have been recovered so far, according to the LKA.

The “Suite Vollard” is a celebrated series of 100 etchings created by Picasso between 1930 and 1937, commissioned by art dealer and publisher Ambroise Vollard. The collection is widely regarded as one of Picasso’s most important graphic works.

— dpa



How to pick up the local language before you go

THERE ARE plenty of reasons to learn a foreign language before you travel. Perhaps you’re venturing beyond major tourist centres, or you want to be prepared for emergencies. Whatever the reason, speaking even a few words of the local language with residents can quickly elevate you from mere tourist to sympathetic traveller.

“This tiny interaction instantly connects you,” said Mary Green, vice-president and executive editor of Pimsleur Language Programmes. “That’s the feeling travellers are chasing. You’re not just passing through, but actually engaging and connecting.”

Fortunately, there are lots of ways to learn languages, and getting started is affordable or even free.

Start simply and build from there. Aim to reach a “survival level” before you travel. That means abandoning your inhibitions and not getting hung up on grammar or achieving proficiency, said Thomas Sauer, assistant director of resource development for the National Foreign Language Center at the University of Maryland. Travellers can connect and communicate surprisingly well at this level, which he described as a speaking style, akin to that of a toddler, that gets the point across.

For Brandon Shaw, a co-owner of the Tour Guy, a company providing specialised tours in Europe and North America, reaching survival level means focusing on a core of essential verbs (including “go,” “see,” “eat,” “drink,” “have,” “do” and “be”), then learning a small vocabulary of other words centred on your particular interests for a given trip.

“Then you can literally build a hundred sentences around that,” Shaw said.

Learning those “right words” doesn’t happen overnight. Getting beyond the transactional tourist tropes of “Where’s the bathroom?”

and “Check, please,” for example, can take anywhere from one to three months of daily practice, although everyone learns differently. As with a fitness programme, you get out of language study what you put in. The trick is finding what works for you.

HIT THE APPS

Diplomats, CEOs and missionaries often learn languages in high-intensity, immersive environments with dedicated instructors. For the rest of us, an app is often the first step.

Esther Gutierrez Eugenio, a language learning expert from Geneva, said apps can be helpful — she prefers Babbel — but encouraged learners to test several options. More important than any specific app or method is to get started right away, she said, and practice every day. Shorter, consistent sessions are more effective than longer, sporadic ones.

“There’s a big time and effort commitment when you learn a language. So you definitely need to find something that you enjoy,” making it more fun to practice regularly, she added.

Test out different apps like Duolingo, Babbel, Memrise and Busuu, which all offer either free versions or free trials, to see which one works for you.

Eugenio recommends systems that employ spaced repetition, an evidence-based learning technique that reviews and repeats material at increasing intervals.

Some apps, like Duolingo, use spaced repetition, but don’t always provide authentic cultural context, which is important for learning intuitively, said Sauer.

Eugenio said some of her clients have had success conversing and drilling with artificial intelligence chatbots in voice mode. And Google, whose Translate app is already indispensable for travellers, recently released Little Language Lessons, a free, customisable, interactive tool

that uses AI.

Speaking with another person can help you make progress, Sauer said, and apps like HelloTalk or Tandem, which both offer free versions, can be a good way to find a partner who speaks your target language and wants to learn English. You can also check out the Language Learning Community on the social platform Discord.

For an entertaining way to learn, stream a foreign movie or TV show, turn on the English subtitles, and try to follow along. To improve listening comprehension, cue up music in a foreign language and view the lyrics using Apple Music or Spotify.

If apps aren’t your thing, consider time-tested alternatives such as in-person classes, language groups, practice sessions with a fluent friend, books, audio guides or flash cards. Many of these resources are free at your local library.

BE BRAVE, AND RESIST FALLING BACK ON ENGLISH

Don’t fear being laughed at or scolded for speaking imperfectly, said Massimo Macchiavello, the marketing manager for Posta, a destination management company in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

When visitors speak to him in broken Spanish, Macchiavello said, “It’s easy to see they are making an effort to communicate, and in that effort, there comes a bond with us.”

Once you’re at your destination, resist the urge to initiate or respond in English, and try to speak the local language whenever people are receptive. It’s fine to seek help with pronunciation or in finding the right word, or to ask speakers to slow down or repeat themselves, Macchiavello said.

You’re going to make mistakes and run into limits, and that’s all right. Or as Green said: “You don’t need thousands of words, just the right ones, and the confidence to use them.” — NYT

FEATURES



rainy season — transform into spectacular playgrounds for adventure seekers. Wadi Shab and Wadi Al Hoqain, with their breathtaking landscapes of mountains, shimmering water pools and lush palm trees, are perfect spots for hiking, swimming and unwinding.

Huda al Hajri, an avid adventurer, recalls her most memorable experience at Wadi Al Nakhr: “That place offers healing, growth and a peace that stays long after you leave.” These natural wonders don’t just offer exhilarating escapes — they also foster reflection and a deep connection to nature.



CELEBRATING FAMILY AND FRIENDSHIP

Summer offers the perfect opportunity for family reunions and friend gatherings. Whether staying at a chalet, visiting home villages, or simply relaxing at family homes, these moments strengthen bonds and revive cherished traditions. Time spent with elders is a treasured experience — a chance to hear stories of the past, learn family histories and draw inspiration. Hoor al Barwani reflects: “My grandmother’s presence is the purest form of love. Her prayers and advice guide me, and being with her is like capturing a moment of eternity.”

UNLEASHING CREATIVITY IN MUSCAT’S ART HUBS

For those seeking a different kind of summer escape, Muscat’s burgeoning art scene offers a vibrant alternative. Studios like Mofun and Rfoof provide workshops in pottery, painting, and even crocheting at accessible prices. Young creatives say these activities serve as a much-needed retreat from the overstimulating digital world — a chance to let inner visions flourish. Alya al Masruri, an aspiring artist, shares: “Painting gives me a break from screens and the hectic pace of life. It’s a way to create and relax at the same time.”



HOW YOUNG OMANIS ARE RECLAIMING SUMMER’S TRUE SPIRIT

BY MAYA AL SINAWI

AS THE long, sun-drenched days of summer finally arrive, Omani youth find themselves at a crossroads: a wealth of free time with limited options to stay cool and engaged. While the soaring temperatures can restrict outdoor activities, this season also opens the door to adventures, cultural exploration and meaningful connections. Amidst the heat, many young Omanis are discovering innovative ways to balance fun and productivity — from cooling water escapades to creative pursuits, all offering a well-deserved break from routine.

MAKING WAVES: WATER ADVENTURES FOR ALL AGES

What’s a better way to beat the heat than diving into Oman’s stunning water destinations? Whether it’s leisurely boat trips, beach days, or even surfing the waves, water activities remain a popular choice. Wadis — dry riverbeds that come alive during the

EXPLORING INNER AND OUTER LANDSCAPES: LOCAL TOURISM

For families wishing to escape the humidity of the city, domestic travel provides a refreshing alternative. From the cooler climes of Al Ashkharah and Sur to the tranquil inner villages, these destinations offer a respite from summer’s sweltering heat. The Al Sharqiyah South Festival in July celebrated Oman’s rich heritage, showcasing traditional crafts, lively performances and local cuisine — all while supporting small businesses.

The crown jewel remains Salalah in Dhofar, often called the “Swiss of the Gulf”. With its foggy mornings and temperatures rarely exceeding 20°C, Salalah beckons families and travellers alike. The governorate’s cooler climate and lush landscapes provide the perfect backdrop for outdoor adventures, cultural discovery and quality time with loved ones. “Internal tourism is not only cost-effective, but also a chance to rediscover the beauty and cultural legacy of Oman,” explains a local historian.

JOURNEYING BEYOND BORDERS: TRAVEL AND CULTURAL EXCHANGE

Finally, summer is a prime time for travelling beyond Oman’s borders. Exploring new countries, tasting diverse cuisines, and meeting different people broaden horizons and deepen understanding. Travelling also pushes young adventurers out of their comfort zones, helping them develop resilience and cultural sensitivity. Dr Hamed, a keen travel enthusiast, notes: “Travel is about discovering new cultures and meeting new people. It’s an experience that shapes you in ways nothing else can.”

In essence, Oman’s youth are turning summer into a season rich with possibility — balancing moments of adventure, learning, family and creativity. With every splash in the water, every brushstroke or journey taken, they are weaving memories that will last long after the days grow shorter once more.