

O M A N
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SUNRISE 05:39 AM

PRAYER TIMINGS

FAJR 04:18 AM

DHUHR 12:18 PM

ASR 03:42 PM

MAGHRIB 06:51 PM

ISHA 08:07 PM

SHIN BACK TO SOUTH KOREA AS ULSAN HD HEAD COACH

INBRIEF

HM GREETINGS TO CÔTE D’IVOIRE

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Dr Alassane Dramane Ouattara of the Republic of Côte d’Ivoire, on his country’s National Day. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes of success to President Dr Alassane in leading the people of his country and achieving further progress and prosperity.

MEETING DISCUSSES LABOUR MARKET CHALLENGES



A meeting organised by the Ministry of Labour (MoL) at the Sultan Qaboos Youth Complex for Culture and Entertainment in Salalah addressed key challenges facing business owners in the Dhofar Governorate. The event, held as part of the 2025 Labour Forum activities, saw participation from Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry and several private sector representatives. Dr Mahad bin Said Baowain, Minister of Labour, emphasised that the current phase requires accelerating efforts to address challenges and capitalise on opportunities. He highlighted the importance of supporting human resources through employment initiatives implemented by the ministry in partnership with the private sector.

DETAILS ON P15

SURGICAL PLAN FOR SCOLIOSIS TREATMENT

Khoula Hospital has successfully established a comprehensive surgical programme for treating spinal deformities (scoliosis), with the first surgeries performed in 2012. The programme has seen significant progress in recent years, thanks to national efforts to localise these complex procedures. Dr Sultan bin Saif al Kalbani, Head of the Spine Unit at Khoula Hospital and Consultant in Orthopedic and Spine Surgery, told Oman News Agency (ONA) that the programme achieved a qualitative leap with the introduction of early scoliosis treatment last year. This advancement, he affirmed, has enabled therapeutic intervention for children at younger ages, resulting in over 50 successful cases. He noted that such surgeries were previously performed outside Oman, imposing financial and psychological burdens on patients and their families.

DETAILS ON P3



POPULAR ATTRACTION

The Ayn Korr waterfall in Salalah began flowing on Wednesday, drawing visitors eager to witness the seasonal cascade. The natural spring is one of Dhofar’s popular attractions during the khareef, offering scenic views and a cool retreat for families and tourists alike. Photo by Mazin bin Ali

RO 37m contracts to boost food security

SALALAH: The Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning has signed 239 agricultural usufruct contracts in the wilayats of Thamrait and Maqshin in Dhofar Governorate, covering a total area of more than 9,000 acres and with an investment value exceeding RO 37 million.

This comes as part of its efforts to enhance the investment environment and utilise natural resources to serve food security and support the national economy. Part of these agreements were signed in the presence of Eng Hamad bin Ali al Nazwani, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning for Housing, along with a number of officials from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries

and Water Resources and the Najd Agricultural Area Development Office.

Sultan bin Hamad al Ghafri, Director-General of the Directorate-General of Housing and Urban Planning in Dhofar Governorate, said that these contracts represent a batch of approved projects and contribute to enabling investors to benefit from agricultural lands in the Najd region. He indicated that the agreements will contribute to enhancing agricultural production, providing direct and indirect job opportunities and supporting the Sultanate of Oman’s drive towards achieving self-sufficiency in some strategic crops. — ONA

MORE DEATHS IN GAZA AS ISRAEL REPORTEDLY MULLS TAKEOVER

Oman calls for end to Israeli genocide

SAYYID Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, on Wednesday received a phone call from Hussein al Sheikh, Vice-President of the State of Palestine and Deputy Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO).

During the call, they discussed the tragic developments in the Palestinian territories, particularly the ongoing Israeli genocide against civilians in the Gaza Strip, as well as the policies of starvation and siege imposed on the Strip.

The two sides emphasised the importance of combined regional and international efforts to halt this brutal aggression, lift the blockade and ensure the unimpeded delivery of humanitarian aid. They also stressed the need to continue supporting diplomatic, political and legal efforts aimed at resuming serious negotiations leading to a just and comprehensive peace, in accordance with international references and the two-state solution.

On his turn, Sayyid Badr called for a stronger global appeal to uphold humanity and end the atrocities and famine in Gaza. He reaffirmed Oman’s steadfast approach, based on dialogue, justice, respect for international law and support for the Palestinian people’s right to establish their independent state with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Meanwhile, at least 20 people were killed in the Gaza Strip on Wednesday while trying to get food, while others were asked to evacuate as the Israeli Security Cabinet is reportedly



A Palestinian woman holding a child looks on at the site surrounding an evacuated UNRWA clinic where displaced people were taking shelter, following an overnight Israeli strike, in Gaza City on Wednesday. — Reuters

set to meet on Thursday to discuss taking over the enclave.

The Palestinian news agency WAFA, citing medical sources, reported that dozens of people were also injured after a lorry loaded with humanitarian aid overturned into a crowd in the central part of Gaza as numerous starving civilians gathered to receive humanitarian aid.

The truck was allegedly forced onto an unsafe route by the Israeli army, overturned and fell into the crowd. These claims could not be independently verified. Palestinian eyewitnesses said looters had attempted to seize control of the truck. During the chaos, shots were fired, and the driver was fatally hit, causing the vehicle to overturn.

According to the United Nations, most trucks entering Gaza are looted before reaching their intended destinations, often by starving civilians.

Natural disasters caused \$135 bn in economic losses, says report

ZURICH: Natural disasters caused \$135 billion in economic losses globally in the first half of 2025, fuelled by the Los Angeles wildfires, Swiss Re said on Wednesday.

Swiss Re, which serves as an insurer of insurance companies, said first half losses were up from the \$123 billion in the first half of 2024.

The Zurich-based reinsurance giant estimated that of this year’s first half losses, \$80 billion had been

insured - almost double the 10-year average, in 2025 prices.

The Los Angeles blazes in January constitute the largest-ever insured wildfire loss event by far, reaching an estimated \$40 billion, said Swiss Re. It said the “exceptional loss severity” of the fires was down to winds, a lack of rainfall and “some of the densest concentration of high-value single-family residential property in the US”.

Swiss Re said losses from wildfires



The Los Angeles blazes in January constitute the largest-ever insured wildfire loss event by far, reaching an estimated \$40 billion. — AFP file photo

had risen sharply over the past decade due to rising temperatures, more frequent droughts and changing rainfall patterns - plus greater suburban sprawl and high-value asset concentration.

“Most fire losses originate in the US and particularly in California, where expansion in hazardous regions has been high,” it said.

Before 2015, wildfire-related insured losses made up around one per cent of all natural catastrophe

claims, but now account for seven per cent. Insured losses from severe thunderstorms amounted to \$31 billion in the first half of 2025.

The second half of the year is usually more costly for insurers due to damage during the North Atlantic hurricane season.

If current loss trends continue, global insured losses from natural catastrophes in 2025 could exceed the Swiss Re Institute’s projections of \$150 billion. — AFP

OMAN

SHORT TAKES



COOLER TEMPERATURES BRING RELIEF FROM INTENSE HEAT

MIDHUN RAJ
MUSCAT, AUG 6

After enduring a period of intense summer heat, residents across Oman are experiencing a welcome break as maximum temperatures dip and weather conditions moderate.

The Civil Aviation Authority’s daily bulletins indicate that several key governorates have recorded lower maximum temperatures in recent days, marking a noticeable shift from the oppressive highs of late July and early August.

At the peak of the recent heatwave, Barka recorded a scorching 50.7°C on July 31, one of the hottest temperatures of the year so far. Fahud and Hamra Al Duru followed closely, both touching 49.6°C and 49.1°C, respectively, on August 1 and 2. However, by Wednesday, the highest temperature recorded was 44.8°C in Al Sinainah, down significantly from the previous highs. Other typically hot locations such as Maqshin, Fahud and Marmul have also shown declines, now averaging below 42°C.

This cooling trend aligns with the Authority’s weather forecast for Wednesday, which indicated partly cloudy to cloudy skies over the coastal areas of Dhofar Governorate, accompanied by intermittent drizzle. The forecast also highlighted the possibility of convective cloud formation and isolated rain, occasionally accompanied by thundershowers and downdraft winds over parts of Al Hajar Mountains and adjoining areas. Residents along the Arabian Sea and Sea of Oman coasts were advised of fog patches and low clouds during late night and early morning hours, potentially affecting visibility. Additionally, dust storms remain a concern over desert and open areas, with warnings issued about reduced visibility, downdraft wind conditions, and possible wadi flows in mountainous areas.

While the drop in temperature brings relief, the Civil Aviation Authority has urged the public to remain alert to fluctuating weather dynamics.

The forecast suggests that though temperatures have cooled slightly, weather-related hazards such as fog, dust and flash flooding still pose risks, particularly for motorists and hikers.

BEWARE OF VIDEOS OF SCAMSTERS AS POLICE OFFICIALS

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabiyousef

The Royal Oman Police (ROP) has warned against fraudsters posing as public officials on video calls in an attempt to steal bank savings.

The ROP alert comes after many people reported receiving calls from individuals in uniform on video calls, requesting their bank cards for supposed rectification purposes.

“I received a call from someone in uniform asking about my debit

card, but I suspected something was wrong. I asked for proof of authenticity, and the caller showed me an official in uniform and requested to see both sides of my ATM card,” said Ramsheed, a travel agent. When the potential victim remained unconvinced, the fraudsters ended the call and blocked him.

Upon investigation, ROP officials discovered that scammers are using video call platforms to impersonate figures like police officers or

government employees to commit fraud. They pretend to be from reputable sources to obtain personal or financial information or make false legal threats.

“Always verify the caller’s identity through official channels before sharing any information. Protecting your information is everyone’s responsibility,” stated ROP sources.

The advisory warned that scammers may use fake visuals and names to appear legitimate while

requesting sensitive information during video calls. They often claim to be police officers or government officials and may threaten targets with fake legal consequences if they refuse to comply.

The ROP official advised the public to stay vigilant and not disclose personal details or documents without confirming the legitimacy of the communication. “Protecting your information is a shared responsibility,” the advisory emphasised.

Safeguarding Oman’s identity a national duty

SOCIAL media platforms have evolved to play a pivotal role beyond mere entertainment and personal communication, becoming influential tools for self-expression, idea exchange, shaping collective consciousness, articulating cultural values and defining national identity in the digital sphere.

Dr Sabra al Harrasi, an academic and researcher, said, “When the Sultanate of Oman is mentioned, morality precedes borders and demeanour precedes the name. It is an identity deeply rooted in a heritage acknowledged by the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, ‘If you were to visit the people of Oman, they would neither insult nor strike you.’”

In this prophetic testimony, he combined noble conduct and refined speech — the essence of Omani character, marked by wisdom, tolerance and dignity. She added that this demeanour was not merely individual behaviour but reflected in the country’s policies and choices, making Omani politics a sincere expression of a balanced identity that prioritises wisdom over clamour, responsible openness over recklessness and mutual understanding over clashing interests. Just as ethics are inherited, so are stances transmitted, and this collective upbringing has forged a unique model of behaviour, decision-making and balance.

She explained that digital platforms have become incubators of taste, directors of thought and shapers of behaviour. Thus, reintroducing this Omani demeanour in the virtual space is no longer just an educational necessity but a core aspect of cultural security.

On social media’s impact on Omani identity, Dr Amal al Jahwari, a researcher specialising in media and cultural affairs, explained that



Social media’s influence on Omani identity is dual, depending on the content these platforms offer. — ONA

social media’s influence on identity — particularly Omani identity — is dual, depending on the content these platforms offer.

She noted that these tools can be harnessed to reinforce constructive ideas, promote citizenship values and facilitate knowledge exchange and openness, contributing to a positive national image. Conversely, she said, social media can become a negative tool and a significant challenge due to exposure to diverse ideas and cultures, which may inversely affect national identity as societies and generations absorb foreign influences, potentially diluting their cultural uniqueness.

Dr Amal emphasised that media plays a crucial role in safeguarding national identity through its messaging, which inherently incorporates cultural elements. With social media’s rise, media responsibility doubles —promoting positive content that leverages these platforms to reinforce national values and cultural heritage innovatively while educating youth on preserving their identity amid social media challenges.

Qoot Al Quloob al Hussaini,

a social media activist, noted that social media platforms have become daily pulpits, shaping opinions and opening windows to people’s concerns and opportunities.

She stated that social media influencers must be ambassadors of their nation, showcasing genuine Omani societal values and adhering to Omani etiquette. True ambassadors, she affirmed, respect their identity even when addressing the world, and a genuine influencer presents behavioural and ethical models rooted in Omani authenticity.

She added: “Through these platforms, I believe we can reshape information dissemination and broaden perspectives. My role is simplifying complex economic and social concepts in accessible language — especially for youth — without sacrificing accuracy or oversimplifying. I am currently working to build an environment enabling content creators to deliver these messages more professionally, as institutional development of digital media is now a necessity, not a choice.” — ONA

Second edition of military discipline programme concludes in Salalah

SALALAH: The 2025 Military Discipline Programme came to a close in Dhofar Governorate, on Wednesday.

The closing ceremony was held at Salalah Air Base under the auspices of Shaikh alim Mustahail al Mashani, Adviser at the Diwan of Royal Court.

The ceremony began with a military salute to the chief guest and an inspection of the participants’ column. This was followed by a regular military parade to the tunes of the Royal Air Force of Oman’s music. It witnessed various events and performances that demonstrated the skills the participants acquired during the programme.

The graduates concluded with the anthem ‘Faltaslami Oman’ (May



Oman Be Safe) and a call of support and chants of allegiance and loyalty to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Supreme Commander. The commander of the column then asked the chief guest for permission

to leave.

Speaking at the ceremony, Al Mashani said that the Military Discipline Programme embodies institutional integration and enhances identity, discipline,

and responsibility among the participants. He praised the military parade which, he said, reflected the strong resolve of the Omani youth. He said that the programme prepares effective and qualified national cadre

to serve their country in various fields.

This ceremony represents the culmination of the participating students after month-long programmes that varied between military, sports, cultural, and volunteer activities.

Launched by HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports, and Youth, on July 13, the second edition of the Military Discipline Programme included several military training fields prepared and supervised by the Royal Air Force of Oman, including military infantry, physical fitness, first aid, shooting, sports competitions, field visits, and volunteer work.



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PASSENGERCARE



To benefit from the service, travellers can proceed to the ‘Passengers with Special Needs’ desk.

NOTIFY IN ADVANCE ABOUT WHEELCHAIR REQUIREMENTS

VINOD NAIR
MUSCAT, AUG 6

Oman Airports has urged passengers with disabilities to notify the airline in advance or during booking about the need for wheelchairs to ensure the availability of service for all travellers.

It added that designated parking spaces are provided for vehicles, along with full support for wheelchair users. “Ground service staff will accompany travellers from the moment of check-in until boarding the aircraft, with a dedicated lane and a designated passport desk to expedite procedures,” Oman Airports said in a statement.

“At Muscat International Airport, a fully equipped lounge is provided for passengers with disabilities, offering them comfort and privacy in a calm and safe environment. Appropriately equipped restrooms are also available nearby for easy access,” it added.

To benefit from the service, travellers can proceed to the ‘Passengers with Special Needs’ desk located in the front lobby of the departures hall.

Earlier, the Civil Aviation Authority notified that passengers must inform the air carrier of their condition and the required equipment/devices when making a confirmed reservation.

The passengers are not obligated to sign any waiver of their rights or be entitled to services under the provisions of the concerned regulations. The air carrier must ensure that passengers with disabilities or special needs receive their mobility aids and equipment. In case of damage or loss, compensation must be provided for their value.

If the air carrier fails to provide an alternative flight or the required services, the passenger shall be compensated with 200 per cent of the total ticket value for the confirmed reservation.

OMAN, SAUDI ARABIA DISCUSS TIES IN CIVIL DEFENCE

RIYADH: A delegation from the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority on Wednesday visited the Directorate-General of Civil Defence in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, with the aim of discussing cooperation in the field of civil defence between the Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom.

The delegation was headed by Maj Gen Sulaiman bin Ali al Husseini, Chairman of the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority.

The visit was part of steps to enhance bilateral relations between the two



The Omani delegation was briefed about specialised training programmes offered to civil defence personnel. - ONA

countries, in addition to exchanging expertise and reviewing other matters of common interest in the field of civil defence. The delegation was received by Maj Gen Dr Hamoud bin Suleiman al Faraj, Director-General of Civil Defence in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and other officials.

The visit included a field tour of the Saudi Civil Defence Institute. During the visit, the Omani delegation was briefed about specialised training programmes for different levels offered to civil defence personnel. — ONA

Job security scheme vital safety net for Omanis

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, AUG 6

In a dynamic labour market shaped by economic transitions and global uncertainties, Oman’s Job Security Scheme has emerged as a vital safety net for Omanis who face sudden job loss. Introduced under Royal Decree No 82/2020 and implemented in early 2021, the programme provides temporary financial relief and stability, allowing individuals to navigate unemployment with a sense of security.

The Job Security Benefit offers 60 per cent of the average insured salary over the last two years, with a minimum of RO 115 per month, paid for up to six consecutive or non-consecutive months. This support enables beneficiaries to manage essential living expenses while actively searching for new opportunities, easing the emotional and financial strain that comes with involuntary unemployment.

Social experts emphasise that the scheme’s value is not merely financial. “Receiving the benefit gave me the confidence to focus on finding a new job without worrying about my family’s immediate needs,” said Khalid al Tamtami, a former tourism employee affected by the sector slowdown.

The scheme is mandatory for all Omani



Beyond individual support, the Job Security Scheme reinforces the national economy by maintaining household purchasing power.

employees in both the public and private sectors, including those on permanent, temporary, or part-time contracts, as well as retirees still engaged in employment.

Beyond individual support, the Job Security Scheme reinforces the national economy by maintaining household purchasing power during periods of job loss. Economists note that the programme stabilises domestic demand, mitigates the ripple effects of layoffs and reduces pressure on other social assistance programmes.

Psychologically, it instils confidence in citizens, reflecting the government’s

commitment to social stability. Linking the benefit with training programmes and career development initiatives will strengthen its long-term impact.

By early 2025, the Social Protection Fund (SPF) reported that over 590,000 Omanis are active in various social insurance programmes, with thousands benefitting from the Job Security Scheme since its inception.

The SPF has also launched “Mazaya”, a complementary programme for retirees and job security beneficiaries, offering additional perks such as interest-free loans, delayed loan repayments and consumer support packages.

Experts recommend further steps to maximise the scheme’s impact, like strengthening links with vocational training and reskilling programmes, reviewing phased benefit reductions to ensure fair support, conducting regular actuarial studies to maintain financial sustainability and expanding programmes like “Mazaya” to provide comprehensive family support.

The Job Security Scheme reflects Oman’s broader commitment to human-centred development under Oman Vision 2040. By protecting workers during times of economic transition and promoting workforce resilience, the programme stands as a model of modern social protection in the region.

Khoula Hospital establishes surgical programme for scoliosis

MUSCAT: Khoula Hospital has successfully established a comprehensive surgical programme for treating spinal deformities (scoliosis), with the first surgeries performed in 2012. The programme has seen significant progress in recent years, thanks to national efforts to localise these complex procedures.

Dr Sultan bin Saif al Kalbani, Head of the Spine Unit at Khoula Hospital and Consultant in Orthopaedic and Spine Surgery, said that the programme achieved a qualitative leap with the introduction of early scoliosis treatment last year. This advancement, he affirmed, has enabled therapeutic intervention for children at younger ages, resulting in over 50 successful cases.

He noted that such surgeries were previously performed outside Oman, imposing financial and psychological burdens on patients and their families. The localisation of these services has alleviated these challenges, with national medical teams now capable of performing complex procedures without the need for patients to travel abroad.

Dr Al Kalbani added that this



The advancement has enabled therapeutic intervention for children at younger ages, resulting in over 50 successful cases. - ONA

achievement places Khoula Hospital among the few centres in the Gulf and Middle East offering such advanced, precision surgeries using state-of-the-art techniques, including intraoperative nerve monitoring and modern spinal fixation systems.

The hospital has also introduced advanced surgical navigation systems and robotic-assisted

surgery, enhancing precision, reducing complications and improving surgical outcomes. Khoula Hospital is now one of the region’s pioneering centres utilising these technologies in paediatric spine surgery.

In research and documentation, he pointed out that the hospital has completed a comprehensive unit documenting its scoliosis

treatment experience over the years, as part of ongoing efforts to enhance specialisation, training and scientific documentation.

Currently, an innovative strategic research project is underway in collaboration with artificial intelligence technologies to develop early scoliosis screening methods in schools. This initiative aims to enhance early detection and reduce the need for complex surgical interventions in the future, he added.

Dr Al Kalbani emphasised that this success results from collaborative efforts among doctors, technicians and healthcare administrators. Work is ongoing to expand the programme’s scope and develop research and training initiatives to meet patient needs nationally and regionally.

He affirmed that investing in national workforce training has been — and remains — key to this success, with medical, nursing and support staff receiving continuous training through workshops in Oman and abroad to ensure service quality and patient safety.

Dr Al Kalbani noted growing public awareness about early

scoliosis diagnosis and expressed pride in citizens’ confidence in government healthcare institutions, particularly Omani professionals who have demonstrated their ability to provide advanced treatment services meeting global standards.

On his turn, Dr Rashid bin Mohammed al Alawi, Director-General of Khoula Hospital, underlined the hospital’s aspiration to become a regional reference centre for spine surgery, led by Omani professionals. This vision, he said, is being realised through continuous training programmes, workshops, conferences, local and international fellowships, and advanced research in spinal disorders and surgeries published in prestigious scientific journals.

He stated that the hospital not only strives for medical excellence, but also prioritises patient-centred care. Expanding specialised services and adopting cutting-edge technologies, such as robotic-assisted surgeries, aim to alleviate patient suffering, accelerate recovery and enable them to return to a better quality of life, he added. — ONA

SPOTLIGHT

THE HEALING
POWER OF
OMAN'S
COASTLINES

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, AUG 6

ONE of the most accessible yet underrated forms of natural therapy is the sea breeze. In the Sultanate of Oman — blessed with over 3,000 kilometres of coastline — the air by the ocean is more than a passing wind. It's a healing experience, a natural remedy and a spiritual reset.

Oman's coastline, stretching from the northern tip of Musandam to the southern shores of Dhofar, offers a breathtaking range of marine environments. From the bustling Qurum Beach in Muscat to the untouched sands of Shannah, Al Ashkharah and Mirbat, the sea here is not just a view — it's an immersive experience of peace, rhythm and beauty.

Each beach tells a different story, inviting both locals and visitors to slow down, listen to the waves and simply breathe.

Scientific research shows that sea air contains negatively charged ions, which can increase oxygen intake, boost serotonin levels (a neurotransmitter that stabilises mood), and reduce the effects of stress and fatigue. Salt particles suspended in the sea breeze also help clear respiratory pathways and improve sleep quality.

Dr Ali al Shabibi, a psychological wellness consultant, explained that sea air has a direct impact on mental clarity and emotional regulation. "Being near the ocean reduces stress hormone levels and provides a meditative backdrop that resets the nervous system. In Oman, where the coasts are still largely unspoiled, the sea becomes a true sanctuary for psychological and

In Oman, where the coasts are still largely unspoiled, the sea becomes a true sanctuary for psychological and emotional well-being. The air by the ocean is more than a passing wind. It's a healing experience, a natural remedy and a spiritual reset

emotional well-being," he said. Rahab Said, a teacher from Muscat, said, "There's something magical about the sea air. After a long week, sitting by the water helps me clear my mind. I breathe deeper, sleep better, and even my children seem calmer," she said. For Rahab and many others, time by the sea is not a luxury — it's a necessity. "I think the sea listens and in its silence, it gives us answers," she said.

Recognising the therapeutic potential of the ocean, the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism is exploring ways to include wellness-focused experiences in its tourism strategies.

Oman's beaches also offer social healing. Families, friends and communities gather weekly along the shorelines, not only to enjoy nature, but to reconnect with each other.

Huda al Ghafri, a social researcher based in Sur, said, "Spending time at the beach fosters family bonding. We've noticed parents interacting more deeply with their children, and young people engaging in healthier social habits away from screens."

In a world increasingly dominated by noise, screens and schedules, the sea remains a gentle reminder of our connection to nature and the simplicity of stillness. Its breeze doesn't just cool the skin — it calms the mind.

Oman, with its pristine beaches and unspoiled coastal ecosystems, offers a gift that is both ancient and ever-relevant: the healing power of sea air. It's a call to pause, breathe deeply and let nature do what it does best — restore balance.

So, the next time stress builds and the world feels heavy, perhaps the answer lies not in more noise or distraction, but in a quiet moment by the water — where the breeze is steady, and peace is just a breath away.



SHORT TAKES



The success reflects a high level of integration and coordination between the multidisciplinary medical teams.

ROYAL HOSPITAL PERFORMS PARASITIC TWIN REMOVAL

MUSCAT: In a rare medical achievement, a medical team at the Royal Hospital successfully removed a parasitic fetus from the abdomen of a newborn baby. This is one of the rarest congenital anomalies, occurring at a rate of one in every half a million births.

The details of the case date back to the pregnancy, when obstetricians detected an abnormal cyst in the fetus’s abdomen during an ultrasound examination, necessitating further tests after birth. An MRI scan revealed a developing fetus inside the abdominal cavity, containing upper and lower limbs, fingers, a torso and a head, confirming that it was a ‘fetus in fetu’ case, a rare congenital condition in which a malformed fetus is found inside the body of its twin.

After the baby was admitted to the neonatal intensive care unit, the medical team proceeded with the operation, which lasted two and a half hours. The operation was completely successful and no complications occurred. The baby left the hospital a few days later in good health.

This success reflects a high level of integration and coordination between the multidisciplinary medical teams at the Royal Hospital and stands as a testament to the competence of national medical personnel in dealing with complex and rare conditions.

PDO EXPANDS ‘DHIYA’ SOLAR INITIATIVE TO 29 SITES



The initiative to save RO 160,000 annually.

MUSCAT: Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) has launched the second phase of its ‘Dhiya’ solar project, installing systems at 29 government facilities in Al Jazir, Haima and Shaleem and Al Hallaniyat Islands with a total capacity of 1.1 MW.

The initiative is expected to save RO 160,000 annually, cut diesel use and boost clean energy in public services.

Eng Mohammed bin Ali al Aghbari, PDO’s External Affairs Manager, said the project builds on the success of the first phase and is fully implemented by local contractors, supporting In-Country Value.

Equipment will include high-efficiency panels from Huawei and Sungrow, wind-resistant structures, and real-time monitoring systems.

Fully funded by PDO at a total cost of RO 769,000, Dhiya is part of the company’s strategy to reach Net-Zero emissions by 2050.

DHOFAR MUNICIPALITY SHUTS DOWN 43 FOOD OUTLETS

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, AUG 6

Dhofar Municipality has ordered the closure of 43 food establishments following a comprehensive inspection campaign aimed at upholding public health and consumer safety standards.

The operations, led by the municipality’s Health Affairs Department, covered a wide range of outlets, including markets, restaurants, cafes, slaughterhouses, traditional food stalls and unlicensed activities operating in residential neighbourhoods. Inspectors cited breaches ranging



The closures come as part of intensified seasonal monitoring in Dhofar.

from poor hygiene to improper storage of food products.

The authority underscored that such measures form part of

its ongoing strategy to maintain rigorous oversight of the food sector. It urged residents to play an active role in monitoring standards by reporting violations through the toll-free hotline (1771) or via official communication channels.

“Protecting public health is non-negotiable — food safety is a shared responsibility we are committed to enforcing without exception,” the municipality said in a statement.

The closures come as part of intensified seasonal monitoring in Dhofar, which attracts a large influx of visitors during the khareef season, placing additional demand on food services.

Transport ministry seeks name for EV charging app

VINOD NAIR
MUSCAT, AUG 6

TO promote sustainable mobility in the Sultanate of Oman, the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MoTCIT) has launched a public survey to select the name of the unified national application for charging electric vehicles.

As the first hydrogen station in Oman was launched this year, the ministry plans to replace government vehicles with electric ones. There are also plans to implement a green corridors project for trucks powered by hydrogen. Future expansion of the application will include Gulf countries within the framework of cooperation in the field of green mobility



The application will be a unified national platform for charging operators in Oman.

that reflects readiness and mobility, ECO - (Electric Charges Oman) - a combination of environmental and functional meanings and EV Connect OM - (Electric Vehicle Connect Oman), a name that expresses the connection between users and stations within a single network.

The participants in the survey can give another name suggestion for an app, apart from indicating plans, whether they own an electric vehicle or have any plans to purchase one within the next year. It may be noted that the ministry has launched and implemented

initiatives and projects towards Net-Zero emissions in areas such as legislation, governance, investment and pilot projects.

Achievements have been made in the use of biofuels in public transport, enhancing the infrastructure for electric vehicle chargers with more than 150 chargers installed by the end of 2024, implementing smart systems to reduce emissions, launching pilot hydrogen-powered vehicles and converting port equipment to electric power. The number of registered electric vehicles exceeded 1,500 in Oman in 2024.

Omani films get rave reviews at S Korea fest

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabiyousef

The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Oman Film Society (OFS), successfully participated in the 14th edition of the Arab Film Festival in South Korea with two films representing the country out of 12 films (9 feature films and 3 short films) from across the world.

Organised by the Korea-Arab Society, where 22 Arab countries participated between the period of July 15 and August 2 (both offline and online), the film ‘Al Manyoor’, by director Mohammed bin Abdullah al Ajmi, and ‘You’ll Never Dive Alone’, by director Fahad bin Ramadhan al Maimani received rave reviews.

The two films were screened offline in several Korean cities, including Seoul at the ‘Momo’ Art House, Busan at the Busan Cinema Centre and Gwangju at the National Centre for Asian Culture. They were also made available for digital viewing on the Korean Naver TV platform, providing wider access to audiences interested in Arab cinema.

This participation comes as part of the efforts of the Oman Film Society to enhance the presence of Omani cinema



MOHAMMED BIN ABDULLAH AL AJMI



FAHAD BIN RAMADHAN AL MAIMANI

in international forums, highlight national productions that reflect the identity of Omani society, and present stories with a human and cultural dimension.

The film ‘Al Manyoor’ explores the traditional art of ‘Zamt’ and examines the teams’ preparation for the competition through the preparation of appropriate venues and the judging process. The film relies on the distinctive voice of ‘Al Manyoor’ in

a suspenseful storytelling format that touches the viewers’ emotions and delves into the depths of the cultural heritage of the Sultanate of Oman.

The film ‘You Will Never Dive Alone’ tells the story of Omani sailors Faisal al Yazidi and Ahmed al Busaidy, and their

close relationship with the sea. They share their adventures between land and sea, on an exploratory journey that delves into the depths of the ocean and reveals the beauty of marine life in the country.

Speaking to the Observer, Mohammed bin Abdullah al Ajmi said that the OFS’s participation in the Arab Film Festival in Korea is a momentous milestone, not only on an artistic level, but also from a standpoint of cultural responsibility towards Oman’s maritime heritage.

“The film ‘Al Manyoor’ is an attempt to document a living part of the popular memory associated with the coastal environment and present it in a cinematic language that allows it to connect with a global audience. Through this work, I sought to evoke the spirit of heritage without separating it from its present, and to highlight the aesthetic and human values embodied in the Omani environment,” Al Ajmi said.

This participation embodies an extension of the Oman Film Society’s vision to support and empower Omani film-makers and deliver their works to a global audience through international platforms that value the art and celebrate cultural diversity.

WORLD

SHORTTAKES



People stand beside a damaged road at a village near Uttarkashi on Wednesday. — AFP

SCORES MISSING AFTER DEADLY HIMALAYAN FLOOD

NEW DELHI: The Indian army brought in sniffer dogs, drones and heavy earth moving equipment on Wednesday to search for scores of people missing a day after deadly Himalayan flash floods. At least four people were killed and more than 50 are unaccounted for after a wall of muddy water and debris tore down a narrow mountain valley, smashing into the town of Dharali in Uttarakhand state, rescue officials said on Wednesday.

Torrential monsoon rains continue to pour down hampering rescue efforts, with communication limited and phone lines damaged.

But as soldiers and rescue teams reached marooned individuals, assessment of the number missing has been reduced, down from around 100 who were reported to be unaccounted late on Tuesday. “The search for the missing is ongoing”, said Mohsen Shahedi, from the National Disaster Response Force. Videos broadcast on Indian media showed a terrifying surge of muddy water sweeping away multi-storey apartment blocks in the tourist region on Tuesday afternoon.

Shahedi said more than 50 people were missing from Dharali, the town hit by the floods, while 11 soldiers were unaccounted for from the nearby downstream village of Harsil. “Additional army columns, along with army tracker dogs, drones, logistic drones, earthmoving equipment etc., have been moved... to hasten the efforts”, the army said on Wednesday. Military helicopters were flying in “essential supplies”, it added, as well as collecting those stranded after roads were swept away, although rain and fog made flights difficult.

Uttarakhand state Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami said the flood was caused by an intense “cloudburst” of rain, and that rescue teams had been deployed “on a war footing”. Several people could be seen running before being engulfed by the dark waves of debris that uprooted entire buildings. Suman Semwal told Indian Express newspaper that his father saw the flood hitting Dharali with a “rumbling noise” from a village uphill. What he saw was on an “unimaginable scale”, he said. “They tried to scream, but could not make themselves heard,” Semwal told the newspaper. “The people couldn’t comprehend what was happening. The flood waters struck them in 15 seconds,” he said. — AFP

LEBANON DECISION

Hezbollah rejects disarmament plan



Beirut: Hezbollah harshly criticised on Wednesday the Lebanese government’s decision to task the army with preparing a plan to disarm the movement. The government “tasked the Lebanese Army with setting an implementation plan to restrict weapons” to members of the army only, making sure they do not fall into other hands, Prime Minister Nawaf Salam (pictured) said on Tuesday after the nearly six-hour Cabinet session. — dpa

Israeli military opposes Gaza war expansion

ISRAEL’S military chief has pushed back against Benjamin Netanyahu’s plans to seize areas of Gaza it doesn’t already control, three Israeli officials said, as the prime minister faces increasing pressure over the war both at home and abroad.

During a tense, three-hour meeting on Tuesday, Eyal Zamir, the military chief of staff, warned the prime minister that taking the rest of Gaza could trap the military in the territory, which it withdrew from two decades ago, and could lead to harm to the hostages being held there, the sources briefed on the meeting said.

The Israeli military says it already controls 75 per cent of Gaza after nearly two years of war, which began when Hamas attacked southern Israeli communities in October 2023. It has repeatedly opposed imposing military rule, annexing the territory, and rebuilding Jewish settlements there - policies advocated by some government members. Netanyahu is under intense international pressure to reach a ceasefire in the coastal enclave, which has been reduced to rubble in the fighting. Most of the population of about 2 million has been displaced multiple times and aid groups say residents are on the verge of famine.

The UN has called reports about a possible expansion of Israel’s military operations in Gaza “deeply alarming” if true.

The military, which accuses



A boy pulls a wheelchair at the site surrounding an evacuated UNRWA clinic where displaced people were taking shelter, following an overnight Israeli strike, in Gaza City on Wednesday. — Reuters

Defense Minister said the military chief has both the right and the duty to voice his opinion, but said that the military would carry out the government’s decisions until all war objectives are achieved

Hamas of operating amongst civilians, has at times avoided areas where intelligence suggested hostages were held and former captives have said their captors threatened to kill them if Israeli forces approached.

Netanyahu told Zamir that so far the military had failed to bring about the release of the hostages, the officials said, speaking on the condition of anonymity. Most of those freed so far came about as a result of diplomatic negotiations.

Defense Minister Israel Katz wrote on X on Wednesday that the military chief has both the right and

the duty to voice his opinion, but said that the military would carry out the government’s decisions until all war objectives are achieved.

The prime minister’s office confirmed the meeting with Zamir on Tuesday but declined to comment further and the military did not respond to a request for comment.

The prime minister is scheduled to discuss military plans for Gaza with other ministers on Thursday. A fourth source said Netanyahu wants to expand military operations in Gaza to put pressure on Hamas.

— AFP



CHINA PUSHES FOR AI LEADERSHIP

BEIJING: Fancy a robot chess partner to test your moves on? Perhaps a robotic pet dog? Or a life-sized replica of physicist Albert Einstein that could teach you his theories on relativity?

Those are some of over 100 robots that will be sold at a new store in Beijing that opens on Friday, showcasing humanoid models from more than 40 Chinese brands such as Ubtech Robotics and Unitree Robotics.

The store is among China’s first to sell humanoid and consumer-oriented robots, reflecting the country’s ambition to lead in AI and robotics.

“If robots are to enter thousands of households, relying solely on robotics companies is not enough,” Wang Yifan, a store director, said on Wednesday, emphasizing the need for tailored solutions for consumers.

Describing the store as “4S” — offering sales, spare parts, maintenance and survey services, like car dealerships — Wang said the robots range in price from 2,000 yuan (\$278.33) to several million yuan.

China’s focus on robotics aims to address challenges such as an ageing population and slowing growth.

— Reuters

\$1-BILLION GEM

Egypt opens Pyramids museum on Nov 1



Cairo: Egypt said that its new \$1-billion archaeological museum near the Pyramids of Giza will open on November 1. The Grand Egyptian Museum (GEM), which boasts the treasures of Tutankhamun among its collection of more than 100,000 artefacts, will attract visitors from around the world. Official say that at 124 acres, the museum will be the largest in the world dedicated to a single civilisation. — AFP

CAUSE UNKNOWN

Ghana ministers die in helicopter crash



ACCRA: Ghana’s defence minister Edward Omane Boamah and environment, science and technology minister Ibrahim Murtala Muhammed have died in a military helicopter crash, a government spokesperson said on Wednesday. According to initial reports, the top officials were aboard a Z-9 helicopter en route to Obuasi when the aircraft went off radar. Emergency response teams rushed to the crash site following the incident. — Reuters

SHORTTAKES



Kim Keon Hee arrives at the special prosecutor's office in Seoul on Wednesday. — AFP

Ex-first lady ‘sorry’ about graft probe of Yoon presidency

SEOUL: South Korea's former first lady Kim Keon Hee apologised on Wednesday and called herself “a nobody” as she appeared for questioning by investigators on a string of corruption charges that plagued her husband's term before it ended abruptly.

Kim and ex-President Yoon Suk Yeol are under separate investigations by special prosecutors appointed after he was impeached and then removed from office for briefly declaring martial law. Kim has been the subject of numerous high profile scandals, some dating back more than 15 years, which overshadowed Yoon's turbulent presidency and inflicted political damage on him and his conservative party.

“I am truly sorry that a nobody like myself has caused concern for everyone in the country,” Kim said as she entered the office of the special prosecutor. She did not answer reporters' questions about the charges against her.

After nearly 11 hours, Kim left the prosecutors' office without responding to reporters asking for comment.

The questioning “was progressing smoothly thanks to the special prosecutors' consideration”, her lawyers said in a text message, but did not provide further details. Kim's lawyers have denied the allegations against her and said news reports about some of the gifts she allegedly received were groundless speculation. — AFP

NEW PRESIDENT SWORN IN



Poland's President-elect Karol Nawrocki and his wife Marta Nawrocka applaud as they attend his swearing-in ceremony at the National Assembly at Poland's parliament, the Sejm, on Wednesday in Warsaw. — AFP

PRESIDENT TRUMP SEES VANCE AS HIS LIKELY SUCCESSOR

Washington: US President Donald Trump sees his Vice President JD Vance as “most likely” to be the future Republican presidential candidate and thus a potential successor.

“So it's too early, obviously, to talk about it, but certainly he's doing a great job, and he would be probably favourite at this point,” Trump told reporters during a press conference in the US capital. The event was attended by Vance,

Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem and Attorney General Pam Bondi.

Trump also floated the idea of a possible joint candidacy involving Vance and Rubio.

“I think Marco is also somebody that maybe would get together with JD in some form,” he said. “I also think we have incredible people, some of the people on the stage right here.”

The next presidential election in the United States is scheduled for 2028. Trump has not completely ruled out his own candidacy, as he and his circle frequently hint at the possibility of a third term. However under the 22nd Amendment to the US Constitution, no one maybe elected president more than twice. On Tuesday, when asked in an interview with CNBC whether he would run again, Trump said, “probably not.” — dpa

Putin, US envoy hold talks ahead of Ukraine deadline

RUSSIAN

President Vladimir Putin held “constructive” talks with US envoy Steve Witkoff in Moscow on Wednesday, the Kremlin said, two days ahead of a US deadline for Russia to halt its Ukraine offensive or face fresh sanctions.

US President Donald Trump, who had boasted he could end the conflict within 24 hours of taking office, has given Russia until Friday to make progress towards peace or face new penalties.

But three rounds of Russia-Ukraine talks in Istanbul have failed to make headway on a ceasefire, with the two sides far apart in their demands.

Russia has escalated drone and missile attacks against its pro-Western neighbour to a record high and accelerated its advance on the ground.

“A quite useful and constructive conversation took place,” Putin's aide Yuri Ushakov told journalists, including AFP, after the three hour meeting.

Putin and Witkoff exchanged “signals” on their positions, Ushakov said, without elaborating.

The Kremlin released video of Putin shaking hands with Witkoff at the start of the meeting.

Ahead of the talks, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky urged Washington to increase its pressure on Moscow to agree to a ceasefire.

The White House has not outlined what action it would take against Russia, but Trump has previously threatened to impose “secondary tariffs” targeting Russia's key trade partners, such as China and India.

The move would aim to stifle Russian exports, but would risk significant international disruption.

Trump said on Tuesday that he would await the outcome of the Moscow talks before ordering any economic sanctions.

“We're going to see what happens,” he told reporters. “We'll make that determination at that time.”

Without explicitly naming Trump, the Kremlin on Tuesday slammed “threats” to hike tariffs on Russia's trading partners as



Vladimir Putin welcomes Steve Witkoff in Moscow on Wednesday. — Reuters

“illegitimate”.

Russia's campaign against Ukraine since February 2022 has killed tens of thousands of people, destroyed swathes of the country and forced millions to flee their homes.

Moscow has demanded that Ukraine cede more territory and renounce Western support if it wants the fighting to stop.

Kyiv is calling for an immediate ceasefire, and Zelensky last week urged his allies to push for “regime change” in Moscow.

“It is very important to strengthen all the levers in the arsenal of the United States, Europe, and the G7 so that a ceasefire truly comes into effect immediately,” Zelensky

wrote on social media on Wednesday after Witkoff landed in the Russian capital.

“Ukraine sees the political will, appreciates the efforts of our partners, of America, and of everyone who is helping,” he added. Trump has voiced increasing frustration with Putin in recent weeks over Russia's unrelenting offensive.

Russia fired a record number of long-range drones at Ukraine in July, AFP analysis of data from Kyiv's air force showed.

Its troops have also accelerated their advance on the ground and pushed into parts of Ukraine that Russia has not claimed to have annexed. — AFP

Hiroshima warns against nukes as it marks 80 years since A-bomb

HIROSHIMA: Exactly 80 years since an atomic bomb was used in war for the first time, thousands bowed their heads in prayer in Hiroshima on Wednesday, as the city's mayor warned world leaders about the nuclear warheads that still exist today.

The western Japanese city of Hiroshima was levelled on August 6, 1945, when the United States dropped a uranium bomb nicknamed “Little Boy”, killing about 78,000 people instantly.

Hiroshima was the headquarters of some military units and a major supply base during World War Two. US war planners calculated that the surrounding mountains would concentrate the force of the bomb and enhance its destructiveness.

“Little Boy” unleashed a surge of heat reaching 4,000 degrees Celsius and radiation that killed tens of thousands more by the end of the year. It was followed by a plutonium

bomb on Nagasaki three days later, and Japan's surrender on Aug. 15.

Representatives from a record 120 countries and territories including nuclear superpower the United States, and Israel, which neither confirms nor denies having nuclear weaponry, attended the annual ceremony at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park for the milestone year.

After a moment of silence observed at 8:15 a.m., the exact time of the blast, mayor Kazumi Matsui called on leaders to heed the lessons of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and warned of the consequences of the global trend towards a military buildup.

“Among the world's political leaders, there is a growing belief that possessing nuclear weapons is unavoidable in order to protect their own countries,” he said, noting that the US and Russia possessed 90 per cent of the world's nuclear



A young boy watches as his paper lantern floats out on the Motoyasu River past the Atomic Bomb Dome to mark the 80th anniversary of the world's first atomic bomb attack, in Hiroshima on Wednesday. — AFP

warheads.

“This situation not only nullifies the lessons the international community has learned from the tragic history of the past, but also seriously undermines the frameworks that have been built for peace-building.

“To all the leaders around the world: Please visit Hiroshima and

witness for yourselves the reality of the atomic bombing.”

Yoshikazu Horie, a 71-year-old tourist, expressed a similar sentiment.

“It feels more and more like history is repeating itself. Terrible things are happening in Europe ... Even in Japan, in Asia, it's going the same way, it's very scary,” he said.

“I've got grandchildren and I want peace so they can live their lives happily.” In the decades following the attacks, those who survived, called “hibakusha”, often faced discrimination as rumours spread that they carried diseases and their offspring could be tainted. Their numbers fell below 100,000 for the first time this year.

Japan, the only country to have suffered nuclear attacks, has stated its commitment to nuclear disarmament but is not a signatory or observer of the UN treaty to ban nuclear weapons. — AFP

OPINION

The inconvenience of certain truths



RUMAITHA AL BUSAIDI

The writer is environmental strategist and advocate for sustainable development

SOME stories force us to confront more than injustice. They ask us to examine the limits of our empathy, the thresholds of our action and the truths we are still unwilling to hold.

A legal ruling. A rising sea. A city under siege. None of these are abstract. And yet, our responses often are: What if the problem is not what we do not know, but what we choose to turn away from? And what might change if we learned to stay with that discomfort long enough to let it shift us?

The Torres Strait Islanders have long warned of the damage climate change brings to their homes and traditions. Their case, brought before the Australian Federal Court, asked for recognition that government inaction placed their way of life at risk. They brought science. They brought testimony. They brought evidence rooted in lived experience. The court acknowledged none of it as a legal breach. The system remained intact. The tide, however, continues to rise.

Elsewhere, the International Court of Justice offered a different kind of clarity. In a landmark advisory opinion, it affirmed that states hold legal obligations to prevent climate harm. This ruling, led by young people and representatives from island communities, marked a breakthrough in

international law. But as some truths make headlines and others fade, we are reminded that progress in one space does not guarantee justice everywhere. The recognition is real. So is the gap.

In Gaza, grief arrives without a buffer. The losses are immense and ongoing. Entire families have vanished. Humanitarian agencies estimate that more than 60,000 people have been killed. Among them, thousands died while trying to access food. The numbers are available. The stories are there. Yet the reaction often comes wrapped in caution. Statements are issued in the language of balance with outrage delayed and mourning politicised. It becomes harder to explain why some suffering sparks global response, while other suffering waits on the margins, even as it grows deeper.

Environmental collapse adds another layer to that suffering. Gaza's farmlands have been razed, water infrastructure destroyed and rising temperatures now worsen health risks for displaced families.

More than 130,000 cubic metres of sewage flow into the sea daily, and climate patterns in the region are growing more extreme. Even the climate here is not a neutral force. It compounds devastation, deepens injustice and further isolates those already living on the edge of survival.

Perhaps justice begins not with consensus or comfort, but with our ability to stay where it hurts.

In both the Torres Strait and Gaza, land is not just threatened. It is contested. Climate vulnerability is inseparable from histories of displacement. Whether through rising seas or shattered infrastructure, the ground beneath people's feet is being taken from them. And still, their voices remain furthest from the decisions that determine their survival.

During my time at Harvard, I studied a leadership model that spoke of disequilibrium, the idea that systems only change when they are stretched. Pressure, discomfort and tension are not signs of failure. They are necessary conditions for transformation.

But most institutions are designed to reduce discomfort. They manage disruption rather than allow it to teach. The result is an engagement that sounds measured but skirts the heart of the matter.

This brings me to the question: if climate or impacts of war cannot move us to respond with urgency and consistency, what will? If we continue to place emotional safety above moral responsibility, how far will the tide rise before we choose to act?

Perhaps justice begins not with consensus or comfort, but with our ability to stay where it hurts. To name what has long been denied. To let the truth, unfiltered, shape what comes next.

Nawrocki: Nationalist historian becomes Poland's president

ANNA MARIA JAKUBEK

Nationalist historian Karol Nawrocki, who was sworn in as Poland's new president on Wednesday, is a former amateur boxer with a particular interest in the criminal underworld.

The 42-year-old Nawrocki won a June 1 election with the support of the populist right-wing Law and Justice (PiS) party, which governed Poland from 2015 to 2023. Nawrocki campaigned under the slogan "Poland first, Poles first".

While he has pledged to continue Poland's support for neighbouring Ukraine against Russia's war, he has denounced the benefits given to war refugees. He said in a campaign video in April that "social benefits will be above all for Poles" and that "in queues for doctors and clinics, Polish citizens must have priority". In May, he claimed Ukraine "has not shown gratitude for what Poles have done" and accused President Volodymyr Zelensky of "insolence". He opposes Ukraine's bid to join Nato. After speaking with Nawrocki last week, Zelensky said he looked forward to working together with the Polish leader.

Nawrocki is an admirer of Donald Trump and has said Poland should focus on shaping and leading Europe's relations with the US president.

The election campaign also saw Nawrocki embroiled in a series of scandals. While arguing against a property tax, he claimed to own one flat only. Later, it was revealed he had acquired a second one through a convoluted deal with an elderly man. Born in the Baltic port city of Gdansk, Nawrocki boxed and played football in his youth before earning a PhD in history and an MBA.

He served as the director of the World War II museum in Gdansk from 2017 to 2021. Since then, he has led the Institute of National Remembrance.

His research focused on Poland's anti-communist opposition, organised crime during the communist era and sports history. Last year, Russia added Nawrocki to its wanted list for his alleged efforts to remove Soviet-era monuments in Poland. Nawrocki has written several books, including one under a pen name that landed him in an unusual controversy. In 2018, he secretly published a book about the communist-era gangster Nikodem Skotarczak using the pseudonym "Tadeusz Batyr". That same year, a blurred and voice-altered Batyr appeared on state television claiming Nawrocki had inspired the book. Nawrocki later wrote on social media that Batyr had sought his advice and "thanked me with an interesting book, which I recommend". — AFP

Fraudulent scientific papers are increasing

FOR years, whistleblowers have warned that fake results are sneaking into the scientific literature at an increasing pace. A new statistical analysis backs up the concern.

A team of researchers found evidence of shady organisations churning out fake or low-quality studies on an industrial scale. And their output is rising fast, threatening the integrity of many fields.

"If these trends are not stopped, science is going to be destroyed," said Luis A Nunes Amaral, a data scientist at Northwestern University and an author of the study, which was published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences on Monday.

Science has made huge advances over the past few centuries only because new generations of scientists could read about the accomplishments of previous ones. Each time a new paper is published, other scientists can explore the findings and think about how to make their own discoveries.

"Science relies on trusting what others did, so you do not have to repeat everything," Amaral said.

As more graduate students were trained in labs, the competition for a limited number of research jobs sharpened. High-profile papers became essential for success, not just for landing a job, but also for getting promotions and grants.

Organisations known as paper mills are now turning scientific fraud into a lucrative business. Scientists eager to pad out their resumes can pay hundreds to thousands of dollars to be named as an author of a paper that they had nothing to do with, according to Anna Abalkina, a social scientist at Free University of Berlin who studies paper mills.

The manuscript might be provided



CARL ZIMMER

The writer covers news about science as a freelance contributor to The New York Times

The number of suspicious new papers appearing each year was doubling every 1.5 years. That's far faster than the increase of scientific papers overall, which is doubling every 15 years.

to the paper mill by a dishonest scientist for a price; in other cases, it might be generated in house. To ensure the papers get published, paper mills sometimes offer bribes to corrupt editors, according to an investigation by the Center for Scientific Integrity.

Abalkina said that such papers are typically riddled with fraud — everything from doctored images to plagiarised text. To avoid plagiarism detectors, paper mills often use artificial intelligence to alter the text they lift from other papers, sometimes introducing bizarre phrasing such as "bogus upside" instead of "false positive." Even as paper mills have worked to keep their efforts hidden, Abalkina has traced the output of companies in Russia, Iran and other countries, and found thousands of their papers in print.

Amaral and his colleagues have now analysed those patterns, using network theory and other statistical techniques. For their analysis, the scientists built a database of more than 1 million scientific papers. They searched for the papers in online forums where sleuths share duplicated images and tortured phrases, as well as the Retraction Watch Database, maintained by the Center for Scientific Integrity.

The researchers compiled a list of 30,000 papers that have either been retracted or show signs of having come from a paper mill. They discovered connections between the papers that strongly hinted that they were the product of large-scale fraud. Many of these connections linked clusters of editors and authors who often worked together.

The scientists found more evidence of paper mills by looking at duplicated images. Some papers contained images copied from more than one other paper. Mapping the connections between them, the

researchers charted networks of thousands of papers. The papers in a cluster all tended to be published in the same short window of time, often in journals put out by a single publisher.

The best explanation Amaral sees for the pattern of this network is that paper mills are creating banks of images that they use to create entire batches of papers, which they then peddle to certain corrupt editors. After a while, the paper mills make new images and find new targets.

Amaral and his colleagues warn that fraud is growing exponentially. In their new study, they calculated that the number of suspicious new papers appearing each year was doubling every 1.5 years. That's far faster than the increase of scientific papers overall, which is doubling every 15 years. Amaral and his colleagues found evidence that paper mills are selectively targeting certain fields to publish dubious papers. The team compared research on different versions of RNA, a molecule that has many roles in the cell. Papers on a form of RNA called microRNA and its role in cancer were much more likely to show signs of possible fraud than other RNA-related fields, such as the gene editing technology CRISPR.

But Amaral suspects that paper mills will eventually turn their attention to other fields as well.

In an executive order in May on "gold-standard science," President Donald Trump drew attention to the problem of scientific fraud. "The falsification of data by leading researchers has led to high-profile retractions of federally funded research," the order stated.

But the administration has not offered any new initiatives to address the problem. Thousands of scientists have protested the order, arguing that it would lead to the political muzzling of genuine scientific findings.

To whom it may concern... we are in a collective madness



SONIA AMBROSIO

The writer is journalist, academic and researcher in media studies

It is important to emphasise that the inhabitants of this planet, Earth, are not part of a WhatsApp family group, nor are they content creators on TikTok or Instagram. They are real individuals who deserve to benefit from the natural wealth that the planet provides, and they should be treated with dignity.

Instead, we witness the destruction of forests, the pollution of rivers and oceans, the disappearance of flora and fauna, and the degradation of human beings. One doesn't need to be smart to recognise that using explosive weapons has serious consequences for the environment. The destruction of nature and the degradation of humanity are interconnected.

Our existence is swinging on a pendulum controlled by rhetoric. By disagreeing with any of the prevailing narratives, one risks being ostracised within the dynamics of social media and the evolving tactics of political and diplomatic engagements.

The mental health of the inhabitants of this planet is exhausted. We are living in a constant state of anxiety. Bombardments, 'tactical pauses', blockades, famine and killings are not only acts of psychological terrorism; they are tactics designed to extinguish any hope that remains. Utter cruelty.

The indiscriminate bombings of civilians and medical, cultural and educational

infrastructures point to a process of erasure of Gaza's social fabric and its historical and cultural identity. Memories and collective remembrance are being erased – while the world observes the unfolding aggressions on FB, TikTok, X, or YouTube.

The international effort to airdrop food aid is an immoral act that humiliates and strips away any sense of dignity from those still alive in Gaza.

It is such a sadistic strategy to use hunger and starvation as weapons against women, children, adolescents and elderly people forced into besieged enclaves. It is a systematic approach that transcends physical violence.

Genocide and killings are being normalised in the 21st century, framed by puzzling narratives. At the same time, diplomacy appears ineffective – not because diplomacy can't work, but rather because some prefer its failure.

Additionally, the growing involvement of non-state actors as political players in the global sphere adds another layer of complexity.

There are so many absurdities happening at once that it is hard to tell right from wrong or fake from real. We live in collective madness and are forced to keep on with whatever pressures us. The inhabitants of this beautiful planet endure a form of 'slow violence' – a gradual, incremental, and often

Our existence is swinging on a pendulum controlled by rhetoric. By disagreeing with any of the prevailing narratives, one risks being ostracised within the dynamics of social media and the evolving tactics of political and diplomatic engagements

less obvious forms of harm.

In a time of noise, confusion, spin, global systems collapsing and natural catastrophes, we are witnessing an increase in armed conflicts, social unrest, instability and other types of crises. Violence is employed to assert dominance; control is used to humiliate. The world has been taken over by people full of hate.

In a broad sense, we can draw parallels with diplomacy, which has always been the art of persuasion. Communication is crucial in decision-making because negotiations aim to secure concessions and compensation. However, in the current context, these efforts are likely to fail, as conflicts of interest and power dynamics undermine diplomatic initiatives.

The shifts in the geopolitical landscape and the methods countries are employing in their diplomatic efforts point to worrying scenarios. Realpolitik is getting rough, often to the point of absurdity.

The severity of ongoing instances of genocide suggests that diplomatic engagement, whether through social media or other means, is unlikely to halt either occurrence. However, everybody is 'seeing' as if they are 'doing something'.

Despite the myriad challenges and struggles, a profound sense of resilience and hope remains – something that no social media platform can truly capture.

Role of parents in fostering children’s well-being, health



ISHWAR DESHMUKH

The writer works at Indian School Salalah, Oman

A few years ago, health was simply defined as the body's ability to function well. Times have changed, and so has the definition. The goal is that by maintaining good health, one can keep things in place. Health refers to a person's physical, mental and social well-being. One can enjoy good health by being free from physical disorders and mental strain, and by maintaining healthy social relationships.

A lot of factors are responsible for maintaining good health and well-being. It varies from what you eat, if you get adequate sleep, the air you breathe, regular exercise, social circle and the quality time you spend. Health has a lot of components that carry equal importance.

Let's try to understand the benefits and importance of physical activities – exercises are vital for the well-being and good health of children. Physical activities boost self-esteem, concentration and behaviour and reduce stress and anxiety. What one thinks and what one says is also related to good health. It is said that one can have good health while being mentally and physically fit. It is well understood that enjoyment is a key factor in maintaining good health. Happiness and good health are two sides of the same coin. Happiness makes your heart healthier and strengthens the immune system. To stay healthy, try to set your worries aside. One needs to introspect to understand one's needs and to lead life in the right direction.

A balanced diet plays an integral role in maintaining good health. Avoid junk food and smoking. Regular exercise helps you maintain physical fitness. Do any exercise, but don't miss it. Proper and sound sleep is also equally important.

Emotional well-being and psychological factors are related to mental health. Playing brain games, puzzles and chess can help improve cognitive health.

Effective and healthy communication with loved ones can help maintain good social health. One should make an effort to socialise and actively participate in social gatherings.

Laughter is good for health. It boosts the immune system and relaxes the whole body. It also reduces stress and draws you closer to others. Laughter is aptly mentioned as the best medicine.

Proper exercises and a balanced diet can be the foundation of a healthy and active life for your child. As a parent, you need to find a sport your child likes. It is also equally important to involve and spend time with your child. Don't forget to plan the appropriate time and place of exercise.

The obstacles to UN reform

At the 80th United Nations General Assembly this September, participants will have to confront the escalating development finance crisis that is engulfing the UN system. So far, responses to financial pressures have focused on cutting costs, such as by reducing overhead and improving efficiency. But a lasting solution will require deeper changes, which begins with a fundamental question: What kind of UN does the world need today, and are current funding models fit for purpose?

This year, a liquidity crisis created by non-paying or late-paying governments means that the UN faces a shortfall of \$2.4 billion in regular UN budget dues, and \$2.7 billion in peacekeeping contributions. Moreover, if the UN fails to spend any funds before year's end – say, because they were delivered late – it is required to return them to member states as credits, rather than rolling them over to the following year.

Despite plans to cut spending by 30 per cent this year from its 2023 peak, the entire UN system is at risk of insolvency. Compounding the strain, aid cuts are undermining UN programmes, with the consequences being borne disproportionately by the world's most vulnerable people. Shrinking budgets among some of the world's largest donors – the OECD expects a 9-17 per cent year-on-year decline in foreign aid in 2025 – exacerbate these problems.

While the scale of the UN's current funding and liquidity crisis is unprecedented, the underlying issues are not new. With its regular budget covering only a fraction of its needs, the UN is highly dependent on ad hoc, voluntary government funding. The UN Development System (UNDS) – comprising 43 funds, agencies and programmes that provide country-level development support and humanitarian assistance – is particularly dependent on voluntary contributions that can be quickly pulled back. Investment in the UNDS fell 16 per cent in 2023 (nearly \$9 billion), with 93 per cent of total funding coming from voluntary sources and 7 per cent from assessed membership dues.

To meet this crisis, UN Secretary-



In 2023, UN agencies met 56 per cent of their Compact targets.



JOHN HENDRA

The writer is a former United Nations Assistant Secretary-General



NILIMA GULRAJANI

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General António Guterres has launched the UN80 Initiative, which comprises three “workstreams”: finding ways to improve efficiency, reviewing implementation of the UN's mandates, and examining possible structural changes and programme realignments. The findings and proposals of the first two workstreams are supposed to inform thinking on the third.

In fact, it is the third workstream that has the greatest transformative potential. If done right, the effort could mark a turning point for both the “what” and the “how” of the UN. But success will require the UN to avoid the mistakes of past reform efforts, which have sought to decentralise and improve coordination between agencies but avoided deeper questions about the UN's purpose and financing.

As for purpose, the unique value of the UNDS lies in its power to advance and sustain globally agreed norms. Country-level activities that advance norms like gender equality, sustainability, and human rights should be at the top of the list.

Fulfilling this function depends on the UNDS's technical competencies, convening power, international credibility and diplomatic relationships. But, importantly, it also rests on access to ample, predictable funding that sustains operations in support of these norms. While assessed contributions can provide this, in practice they currently account

for a tiny fraction of total UNDS resources.

As a result, cash-starved UNDS funds, agencies and programmes end up accepting contributions attached to narrowly defined projects, which can fragment efforts and reflect the whims and preferences of a handful of major voluntary donors. This effectively turns the UN into a contractor accountable to its paymasters, instead of a trusted adviser to host governments and a global agenda-setter.

As for the financing itself, one solution would be to strengthen and expand the use of assessed contributions by re-examining the formula for allocating fiscal obligations among UN member states. The UN could also extend softer forms of earmarking, like joint and pooled funds; introduce more innovative forms of financing, such as replenishments and levies; and expand the scope for leveraging grant funds to crowd in additional investment.

Whatever happens next, one thing should be clear: countries get the UN they fund. Only with a robust and predictable financing framework, guided by a strong consensus on goals, can the UN serve as a credible channel for members' investments in global development. These are the missing pieces of the UN reform jigsaw that must now be quickly found.

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SPORTS

SAUDI2026



The OFA is expected to announce a new coaching team soon for the qualifiers.

AFC U17 ASIAN CUP QUALIFIERS DRAW CEREMONY TODAY

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 6

The Oman national under-17 football team is awaiting the results of the qualifiers draw for the AFC U17 Asian Cup Saudi Arabia 2026 at the AFC House in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on Thursday. The 21st edition of the Asian qualifiers will feature 38 teams, who will be drawn into seven groups including three groups consisting of six teams and four groups consisting of five. The matches will be played in a single round-robin, centralised format and are scheduled to run from November 22 to 30. The winners of each group will automatically advance to the AFC U17 Asian Cup Saudi Arabia 2026 finals. They will join nine teams who have already qualified through their participation in the Fifa U17 World Cup Qatar 2026 – namely: Qatar, Uzbekistan, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, North Korea, Japan, Tajikistan, the UAE and Indonesia.

The final tournament, scheduled for May 2026 in Saudi Arabia, will see the top eight teams earn their places to represent the Asian continent at the Fifa U17 World Cup 2026. Thirteen teams are aiming to reach the finals for the first time including: Bhutan, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Chinese Taipei, Guam, Lebanon, Macau, Maldives, Mongolia, Northern Mariana Islands, Palestine, Philippines and Sri Lanka.

As part of the draw process, host nations will be placed in a separate Hosts Pot to ensure balanced distribution across the groups. Teams have been seeded into six pots based on their performance in the previous three editions of the tournament. Oman has been placed in Pot 1 alongside other top-ranked teams such as Australia, Yemen, and Iran, reaffirming its position among the continent's elite youth sides. Other pots include strong contenders like Iraq, Malaysia, Kuwait, and Syria, as well as emerging teams such as Bhutan, Maldives, and Palestine. The cast will be seeded into six pots based on a points system derived from their final rankings across the previous three editions of the finals. In preparation for the qualifiers, the Oman Football Association (OFA) is expected to announce a new coaching team soon following the replacement of coach Anwar al Habsi, the former head coach. The announcement will be part of the OFA's wider plan to enhance technical readiness and ensure optimal performance during the qualifiers.

Oman's U17 squad delivered an inspiring performance earlier this year at the AFC U17 Asian Cup Saudi Arabia 2025, narrowly missing qualification to the Fifa U17 World Cup. Despite a tough 2-1 loss to Tajikistan in the opener, Oman bounced back with a stunning 2-1 victory over Iran and held North Korea to a 2-2 draw. Oman finished third in the group, with four points – just one point behind North Korea.

Oman ready for historic Asia Cup debut in UAE

MENDIS' MEN SET TO TAKE ON INDIA AND PAKISTAN

OMAN will take a historic step in their cricket journey this September when they make their maiden appearance in the 2025 Men's Asia Cup, to be staged in the UAE from September 9 to 28. Drawn in Group A alongside defending champions India, Pakistan and hosts UAE, the national team players, under head coach Duleep Mendis, will get a rare opportunity to test themselves against some of the biggest names in world cricket.

The eight-team tournament to be played in T20I format features the five ACC full-member nations – India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan – along with three Associate qualifiers – UAE, Oman, and Hong Kong.

Oman booked their berth by finishing as runners-up in the 2024 ACC Men's Premier Cup, a strong campaign that underscored the side's growing reputation in Asian cricket.

Oman have also built an impressive record in the shortest format on the global stage, being the only associate Asian team having qualified for the ICC Men's T20 World Cup three times – in 2016, 2021 and 2024 – with their 2016 debut highlighted by a memorable win over Ireland.

For Mendis, the Asia Cup is a landmark opportunity his players must fully embrace.

"This is a wonderful opportunity for Oman to play in the Asia Cup alongside Test-playing nations," said the Sri Lankan great.

Mendis, who also serves as the Chief Development Officer & Head Coach of Oman Cricket (OC) added: "It's not every day you get



ALKESH JOSHI
Treasurer, Oman Cricket



DULEEP MENDIS



Oman's support staff working with the team.

to compete against the big boys – India and Pakistan. Every Omani cricketer dreams of moments like this, and our players should seize it with both hands and give their maximum.

"In T20 cricket, it's anybody's game. We are preparing well, and plan to arrange pre-tour matches against good opposition teams. Our focus is on doing well in the Asia Cup before hosting the T20 World Cup qualifiers in Oman."

Oman Cricket (OC) treasurer Alkesh Joshi hailed the team's qualification as the result of years of dedication and strategic development.

"Qualifying to play alongside five full-member Test nations is a testament to the quality of our squad and the work Oman Cricket has put in over the years," Joshi said.

"We are delighted to be in the same group as India and Pakistan. Many of our players have grown up watching the greats from these countries, and playing against them will be a massive learning

experience." Joshi added: "Appearing in three ICC Men's T20 World Cups is something we can all be proud of, and having Oman's name on a stage watched by hundreds of millions gives us a chance to showcase the quality of cricket we're building here."

The senior OC official said: "We have an exciting support team led by coach Mendis and newly appointed deputy head coach Sulakshan Kulkarni, and we are grateful to the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth for its unwavering support."

"We hope our fans turn out in large numbers to cheer for the national team when we take the field against India, Pakistan and the UAE," he added.

Now, with the Asia Cup stage set, the players are preparing to give their all – and, in the unpredictable world of T20I cricket, perhaps spring a few surprises against the continent's giants in a format where, as Mendis reminds his players, "T20 is anybody's game."

Oman Basketball Association approves 2025–26 season calendar with five major championships

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, AUG 6

The Oman Basketball Association (OBA), represented by the Competitions Committee, has approved the calendar of its tournaments for the 2025–2026 sports season, affirming its readiness for the launch of a new, highly competitive season. The Association has sent official letters to all affiliated clubs, announcing the opening of registration for participation in its competitions, with Thursday, August 21, set as the final deadline for clubs wishing to enter. This timeline gives teams ample opportunity to complete their technical and administrative preparations ahead of the season.

The season's calendar includes five main championships, beginning in September with the Under-16 League for players born in 2009, 2010 and 2011. This competition serves as an important platform for discovering and developing young talents. In October, the Credit Oman Elite



The Credit Oman Elite Clubs Championship will kick off in October.

Clubs Championship will kick off, featuring the strongest teams in the Sultanate and running through November, offering an opportunity to raise the technical level ahead of the other tournaments. November will also mark the start of the Under-19 Youth League for players born in 2007 and 2008, which serves as the main bridge for preparing future players for the senior teams.

In December 2025, the Sultanate of Oman's General

Basketball League, the premier championship that brings together all First Division clubs to compete for the most coveted title, will commence. Meanwhile, the 16th edition of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth Shield will begin in April 2026. This tournament is considered an opportunity for clubs to test new players and showcase the depth of their squads.

The Competitions Committee has also set clear participation

requirements, stipulating that any club competing in the General League must also take part in either the Under-16 or Under-19 leagues, to strengthen the youth base and ensure a steady supply of talent to senior teams. The Committee confirmed that clubs participating in the General League are eligible to compete in the Ministry Shield, while clubs wishing to participate in the Shield must be registered in the General League. For the Youth League, the Committee allowed each participating club to register only one player born in 2006, to raise the level of competition and give more opportunities for emerging players to shine.

In a statement, the Chairman of the Competitions Committee at the OBA said the season's calendar was designed to accommodate all age groups and create a structured pathway for the development of the sport in Oman, stressing that the primary goal is to raise the technical level and achieve more success at both the local and international levels.

SHORT TAKES



Viktoria Plzen's Tomas Ladra in action with Rangers' Lyall Cameron. — Reuters

RANGERS EDGE
PLZEN TO KEEP CL
CHANCES CLOSER

GLASGOW: Rangers took a step closer to the Champions League proper by beating Czech side Viktoria Plzen 3-0 in their third round qualification first leg tie on Tuesday.

A Djeidi Gassama brace either side of a Cyriel Dessers spot-kick at Ibrox put Rangers firmly in control ahead of next week's return fixture in the Czech Republic.

The winners of the tie will face either Austria's Red Bull Salzburg or Belgium's Club Brugge in the play-off for a spot in the league phase.

The two goalscorers on the night combined for the hosts' opener in the 15th minute as Dessers laid the ball off to Gassama before the Frenchman took a touch and finished coolly.

Dessers then doubled Rangers' advantage on the stroke of half-time by sending the goalkeeper the wrong way from 12 yards after new signing Oliver Antman went down in the box under Matej Vydra's challenge. Gassama gave Rangers the cushion they desired six minutes after the interval as he nodded in his fourth goal in qualifying this campaign.

Elsewhere, Swedes Malmo played out a goalless stalemate at home to Copenhagen. Wednesday's qualification ties will see Salzburg host Brugge, while Portugal's Benfica travel to Ligue 1 outfit Nice and Feyenoord of the Netherlands play Jose Mourinho's Fenerbahce. — AFP

PORTO 'LEGEND'
JORGE COSTA DIES
AGED 53

LISBON: Former captain Jorge Costa has died aged 53 after a cardiac arrest at the team's training ground, Porto announced on Tuesday, paying tribute to "a key figure in the club's history".

"The legendary FC Porto captain and current director of professional football, passed away this Tuesday following a cardiopulmonary arrest," the club said in a statement.

The former Portuguese international defender collapsed on Tuesday morning at the club's training ground.

He was rushed to hospital, where he died shortly after arriving, according to local media.

Costa spent most of his playing career with the club, winning eight league titles and the Champions League in 2004 under Jose Mourinho. He played 50 times for the Portuguese national team. He belongs to the golden generation of Portuguese players who won the 1991 Under-20 World Cup, alongside Luis Figo.

"It's a shock," Prime Minister Luis Montenegro wrote on social media, hailing Costa as "an example of dedication and commitment".

Porto's rivals Benfica and Sporting Lisbon also paid tribute. "Portuguese football is poorer," Benfica said in a statement, saluting "a key figure in football and national sport, first as a player, then as a coach, and, more recently, as a manager". — AFP



FILE PHOTO: Porto's Vitor Baia lifts the trophy with Jorge Costa. — Reuters

Shin back to South Korea
as Ulsan HD head coach

FORMER South Korea boss Shin Tae-Yong has vowed to restore Ulsan HD to their former glory after making his return to frontline coaching with the South Korean champions seven months after being unceremoniously dumped by Indonesia.

The 54-year-old has walked into a club attempting a rapid turnaround in the aftermath of a disappointing 13-month spell under predecessor Kim Pan-gon that has seen Ulsan surrender their status as the kings of Korean football.

But the former midfielder is confident he can revitalise a club that has won the last three consecutive K-League titles.

"Ulsan HD have been a powerhouse in the K-League for a long time," Shin said. "I will try to rebuild the dynasty here with everything I can."

Ulsan's form has plummeted since Hong Myung-bo, who led his team to the league title in 2022 and 2023, left in July last year to take charge of the South Korea national team.

His successor Kim managed to retain the K-League title only to oversee an embarrassingly early exit from

the Asian Champions League Elite, a poor performance by a side that had reached the semi-finals in April 2024.

The team's disappointing form carried into the new K-League season and, by the time of Kim's departure on Sunday, Ulsan were 23 points adrift of leaders Jeonbuk Motors with their title defence in tatters.

It is that gulf which Shin will be expected to bridge as he returns to club football in South Korea for the first time in 13 years.

During his previous spell in the K-League, Shin led Seongnam Ilhwa to the Asian Champions League title in 2010 and the Korean FA Cup a year later.

He moved on from Seongnam to work with the national team, first as Uli Stielike's assistant before taking on the

full-time role in 2017, when he won the East Asian Championship.

In 2018 he led his country to the World Cup finals, where the Koreans handed champions Germany a 2-0 defeat that eliminated Joachim Loew's side from the competition.

Shin took his services to Indonesia in 2020 and, in a four-year spell, led the Southeast Asian nation to the knockout rounds of the Asian Cup for the first time as well as to the third phase of the continent's 2026 World Cup preliminaries.

And while he was cast aside by the Indonesians in January to make way for Patrick Kluivert, Shin retains the faith of enough decision makers within the South Korean game to be given the opportunity to revitalise Ulsan.

"We have a great team here and if fans can just trust me and wait a bit patiently, I will put this team back in title contention," he said. — Reuters



Shin Tae-Yong

SHIN TAE-YONG HAS
REPLACED KIM PAN-GON AS
ULSAN COACH

RETURNS TO K-LEAGUE FOR
FIRST TIME IN 13 YEARS

PREVIOUSLY WON ASIAN
CHAMPIONS LEAGUE WITH
SEONGNAM ILHWA

Wirtz unfazed by huge Liverpool price tag

LONDON: Florian Wirtz says his huge price tag "doesn't matter" as he prepares for his first season in the Premier League after a switch to champions Liverpool from Bayer Leverkusen.

The attacking midfielder arrived at Anfield for an initial £100 million (\$132 million) that could rise to £116 million with add-ons, making his move a potential British record.

However, speaking after impressing in a 3-2 friendly win over Athletic Bilbao on Monday, the 22-year-old brushed off the size of his transfer fee. "I don't think about it. I just want to play football and how much money the clubs pay between each other, it doesn't matter," he said.

"Of course the big challenge is to win the title again and it is the most difficult thing so (I will) try



Liverpool's Florian Wirtz in action. — Reuters

and just create chances and also work against the ball. "I can also run a lot so (I will) bring this to the team and then with the ball I can make the team better and bring my teammates into better situations."

Liverpool face FA Cup winners Crystal Palace in the season-opening Community Shield on Sunday and kick off their Premier League title defence at home to Bournemouth on August 15. Germany international Wirtz said he was relishing the challenge.

"There are some differences to Germany but I think there is also something I can learn and make me better so I am really looking forward to it. It's more intense and more physical, every player is really strong, really fast. That is what everybody is telling me," he said.

BIG SPENDERS

Liverpool have spent more than £250 million so far in the summer transfer window on a clutch of new players including Wirtz, Hugo Ekitike, Milos Kerkez, Jeremie Frimpong, who also came from Leverkusen, and Giorgi Mamardashvili.

The club are understood to have made a bid of around £110 million plus potential add-ons for unsettled Newcastle striker Alexander Isak last week, which was rejected.

Manager Arne Slot said after two friendlies against Athletic Bilbao at Anfield on Monday that there was "always room for improvement" despite the club's march to a record-equalling 20th league title last season.

"We've added a few, in my opinion, extra weapons," said the Dutchman. — AFP

SPORTS

Spark Fighting returns with global talent in Sports Spark

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, AUG 6

THE activities of ‘Sports Spark’ continue into their third week at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre, running until August 16. On Friday evening, the second edition of the Spark Fighting Championship, organised by Scorpionest, will take place from 6 pm to 10 pm. This championship is one of the Olympic sports, held in accordance with internationally recognised rules and regulations for boxing.

The championship aims to support the sport of boxing in the Sultanate of Oman, providing a competitive platform for young talents of various ages and categories to showcase their skills and demonstrate their physical and technical abilities. The event will feature broad participation from more than 10 countries, in addition to over 10 local clubs, along with a selection of Omani athletes who have previously competed in regional and international tournaments. The bouts will be supervised by certified international referees, with a strong emphasis on athlete safety ensured by the presence of a specialised medical and advisory team for combat sports. The championship will include matches across multiple categories and weight divisions, with performance evaluations determining the winners at the conclusion of the competition. The event is organised in collaboration with an Omani company specialising in combat sports events, as part of Sports Spark’s efforts to deliver a comprehensive and diverse sporting experience for both the public and participants.

Wadhah bin Abdullah al Harthy, founder of Scorpionest martial arts, explained that the organisation of the second edition of the ‘Spark Fighting’ Championship stems from a clear vision to incorporate combat sports into the Sport Spark event’s agenda for two main reasons. The first is to strengthen the presence of various martial arts in Oman and expand the base of practitioners across its different wilayats. The second is to support and empower young Omani talents by providing them with a competitive platform to showcase their abilities and skills before a wide audience under the supervision of international referees. Al Harthy noted that there are more than 15 local clubs practicing martial arts in Oman, represented by over 50 young Omanis from various governorates, reflecting the growing interest in these sports among Omani youth. He emphasised that the



The championship will include matches across multiple categories and weight divisions.

championship is not limited to competition alone, but also serves as a space for growth and skill development, helping athletes build greater self-confidence in preparation for future participation in regional and international tournaments. Stefan Milekic, co-founder of Scorpionest martial arts, stated that the second edition of the ‘Spark Fighting’ Championship will take place on August 8, and is expected to draw more than 600 spectators. He explained that the main objective of the championship is to encourage Omani youth to engage in martial arts and highlight their development and skills in the ring. Milekic added that the championship will also feature fighters and athletes from outside the Sultanate, creating a unique blend of local and international talent. This will offer the audience the

opportunity to witness intense bouts and high-level competition, where participants will demonstrate their true abilities in a professional and exciting atmosphere. Khaled Oudeh Ghannam, Head of Judges and Referees for the Spark Fighting Championship (Edition 2), announced that this year’s event will feature an international panel of referees and judges with diverse experience from the UK, Austria, Iran, Jordan, Palestine, and the Sultanate of Oman. He explained that the championship will follow the official rules of K-1 and the Glory organisation. Scoring will primarily be based on ring control, pressure, defence, and technical skill demonstrated during the bouts. Ghannam emphasised that the referees’ top priority is to ensure both the safety of the fighters and the integrity of the championship.

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Osaka to face Tauson, Fritz to battle Shelton in Canadian Open semis

MONTREAL: Four-time Grand Slam champion Naomi Osaka advanced to the semifinals of the WTA Canadian Open on Tuesday with a comprehensive 6-2, 6-2 triumph over 10th seed Elina Svitolina. Osaka, chasing her first WTA Tour-level title since the 2021 Australian Open, needed only 68 minutes to dispatch the Ukraine star and book a Wednesday semifinal with Danish 16th seed Clara Tauson, who stunned reigning Australian Open champion Madison Keys 6-1, 6-4. “I’m just having a lot of fun playing. I’m glad to be here,” Osaka said. “I think I’ll be seeded in the US Open because I won my match. That was a really good goal for me. I’m just really excited.” Tauson dedicated her victory to her late grandfather, who died on Sunday as the Dane was dispatching Polish second seed Iga Swiatek, who won her sixth Grand Slam title last month at Wimbledon. “Two days ago, my grandfather unfortunately passed away so I really wanted to win for him today,” a tearful Tauson said after beating US sixth seed Keys. “I was told the day after I beat Iga so I really wanted to come out and show my best tennis for him. Hopefully he’s watching.” The US Open hardcourt tune-up in Montreal is the first event where Tauson has beaten two top-10 foes, with Swiatek and Keys exiting at her hand. Tauson dominated the opening set and took full advantage of Keys



Naomi Osaka (JPN) returns a shot to Elina Svitolina (UKR) in quarterfinal play at IGA Stadium. — Imagn Images

giving up a break on a double fault to open the second. The Dane won 12 of 19 points on her second serves and kept Keys at bay most of the night. Keys joined a scrap heap of Montreal seeds, with the top five seeds and seven of the top 10 seeds ousted before the quarterfinals. Tauson, 22, seeks her fourth career WTA title after the 2021 Lyon and Luxembourg Opens and this year’s Auckland Open, where Osaka retired after winning the first set of the final in their only WTA meeting. “She’s really tough,” Osaka said of Tauson. “I played her in Auckland this year. I had to stop halfway because I was injured. So I’m really excited that I’m healthy.” Elena Rybakina, the 2022

Wimbledon champion, and 18-year old Canadian sensation Victoria Mboko will meet in Wednesday’s other semifinal. FRITZ AND SHELTON FACE TO FACE US second seed Taylor Fritz overcame a late niggles while serving for the match on Tuesday to beat Andrey Rublev 6-3, 7-6 (7/4) and reach the ATP Toronto Masters semifinals. The American claimed his place in a fifth semifinal of the season after losing serve while trying to close out what had been looking like a quick win, finally coming through into the last four at this level for the first time after 83 minutes. The Californian will play for a spot in the Thursday final when he takes on fourth seed Ben Shelton, who won a Masters quarterfinal on his fourth attempt, defeating Australian Alex de Minaur 6-3, 6-4. Shelton laid down 11 aces in his 91-minute victory and dominated on rallies longer than nine shots. The result ended a seven-match win streak for last week’s Washington champion de Minaur. “I’m really happy with that performance. It showed mental toughness from start to finish,” Shelton said. “This win gives me a lot of confidence, I’m excited about the semifinal. Shelton set up three match points with his final ace and needed only one chance to emerge the winner. — AFP



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SHORTTAKES



The guide is designed to help entrepreneurs navigate Oman’s startup ecosystem.

DCO UNVEILS OMAN STARTUP GUIDE

HIBBA AL KINDI
MUSCAT, AUG 6

The Digital Cooperation Organisation (DCO) — the world’s foremost international governmental organisation focused on promoting a sustainable digital economy — has recently released the Startup Country Guide 2024 manual to support entrepreneurs navigating Oman’s startup ecosystem.

The guide provides in-depth insights into Oman’s legal structures, tax framework, government incentives and sectoral opportunities.

The report highlighted Oman’s efforts in driving economic diversification and establishing a digital economy.

“Oman’s forward-looking approach towards development, encapsulated in Oman Vision 2040, seeks to transform the nation’s economy from a dependency on oil and gas to a diversified, knowledge-based model.

With initiatives like the Oman Future Fund and the National Initiative for Artificial Intelligence (AI), accompanying a substantial budget allocation, the country is proactively advancing economic diversification. The rising Omani startups programme strives to foster innovation, empowers startup establishment, facilitates business connections and pinpoints investment prospects”, it noted

In addition to highlighting promising sectors, the guide outlines the significance of support programmes rolled out by the government.

“Comprising comprehensive support at all entrepreneurial stages, the programme leverages key partnerships, such as Omantel Labs and ITHCA Group, to offer invaluable resources for startups, including fintech, 5G, Internet of things (IoT) and more.

Additionally, the Oman Technology Fund’s (OTF) Techween pre-seed fund programme provides funding, collaborative workspaces and mentorship, reinforcing Oman’s position in the regional startup landscape.

Keel laid for bunker ship for Oman’s Marsa LNG

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, AUG 6

GLOBAL integrated energy group TotalEnergies recently celebrated the laying of the keel for a new LNG bunker vessel, which will be deployed at SOHAR Port and Freezone in the Sultanate of Oman upon the launch of the Marsa LNG project, currently under construction at the industrial seaport.

TotalEnergies is a major investor in the 1-million-tonne-per-annum (mtpa) LNG terminal, holding an 80% stake. The remaining 20% is held by OQ Exploration & Production (OQEP) — the upstream energy arm of Omani-owned OQ Group. Powered by a 300 MW solar farm, the \$1.6 billion project will pioneer the introduction of low-emission LNG as bunker fuel for maritime shipping in the Gulf.

Announcing the keel laying at a Chinese shipyard,



Executives representing TotalEnergies, Ibaizabal Group and others at the keel-laying ceremony at China’s Hudong-Zhonghua shipbuilding yard. **Picture credit:** TotalEnergies

TotalEnergies stated: “A new milestone has been unlocked in the construction of TotalEnergies’ future LNG bunker vessel for the Marsa LNG Project in Oman!

On July 29, a keel-laying ceremony was held at the Hudong-Zhonghua Shipbuilding yard — a time-

honoured tradition marking a major step forward in building the 18,600 m³ vessel”. The company further added: “Designed with best-in-class emissions performance and maximum operational flexibility, she will further strengthen our LNG bunkering capabilities to support

shipping’s energy transition.

A proud moment as we power forward with our partners towards her launch and delivery!”

Last October, TotalEnergies signed a charter agreement with the vessel’s owner, Ibaizabal Group — a Spanish-based provider of integrated ship management services to the international shipping and offshore industries.

Upon its delivery in late 2026, the vessel will be chartered to TotalEnergies for deployment at Marsa LNG.

The new LNG vessel will join TotalEnergies’ current fleet of three LNG bunker vessels: Gas Agility, positioned in the Port of Rotterdam; Gas Vitality, operated in the Port of Marseille; and Brassavola, located in the Port of Singapore.

When operational in 2028, Marsa LNG will supply low-carbon LNG to a wide range of vessels, notably containerhips, tankers, large cruise ships and ferries.

MOBILE LAB INTENSIFIES FUEL PUMP INSPECTIONS IN DHOFAR

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, AUG 6

Amidst the surge in tourism activity during Khareef Dhofar Season 2025, mobile laboratory teams are continuing intensive field inspections of fuel pumps across the governorate to ensure accuracy of quantities and quality of service for consumers.

According to the inspection teams, the campaign has so far covered 45 fuel stations across Dhofar Governorate, comprising 210 fuel dispensers.

A total of 429 technical checks have been carried



The campaign is part of an expanded monitoring plan during the Khareef Dhofar Season, when fuel demand increases due to heightened tourism and economic activity.

out to verify calibration and compliance with approved standards, resulting in violations being recorded at four stations, with legal action

taken in accordance with regulations.

The campaign is part of an expanded monitoring plan during the Khareef Dhofar Season, when fuel demand increases due to heightened tourism and economic activity.

The aim is to strengthen field supervision, safeguard consumer rights and maintain uninterrupted service delivery.

Authorities confirmed that inspections will continue throughout the season, with intensified checks and prompt response to any complaints, ensuring all stations comply with technical and quality standards.

Thamrait landfill expansion elevates Dhofar’s waste management standards

THAMRAIT: Oman Environmental Services Holding Company (be’ah) is expanding its engineered landfill in the Wilayat of Thamrait, Dhofar Governorate, by constructing a second cell with an additional capacity of 3,029,768 cubic metres.

The first cell, commissioned in 2017, holds a capacity of 2,345,910 cubic metres. The expansion aims to meet the rising demand for waste management services in the governorate.

In tandem with the landfill expansion, be’ah is building an integrated leachate treatment plant to process liquid waste generated from landfill decomposition.

The treated leachate will be reused for irrigating non-edible



be’ah is building an integrated leachate treatment plant to process liquid waste generated from landfill decomposition.

plants and other applications, promoting sustainable operations, reducing environmental impact

and conserving natural resources. Engineer Mohsen bin Mohammed al Barwani, Director General of

Planning and Service Improvement for the Municipal Solid Waste Sector, described the facility as a benchmark for sustainable and scientifically managed waste systems.

“The Thamrait landfill represents an effective model for sustainable, scientific waste management, while adhering to global best practices to reduce emissions and maximise the use of available resources”, he said.

In a statement, he added that be’ah remains committed to innovation in waste management, enhancing collaboration with government bodies and communities; and building environmental infrastructure to benefit future generations and

support a more sustainable future.

Activity at the Thamrait landfill intensifies during the annual Khareef Dhofar Season, with operations ramping up to handle approximately 74 waste trucks daily — amounting to 1,200 tonnes per day — compared to an off-season average of 58 trucks and 850 tonnes per day.

The facility’s reception and treatment operations follow strict protocols, including waste weighing, unloading and primary treatment within advanced engineered cells.

These processes are conducted in accordance with international best practices to ensure environmental safety and safeguard public health. — ONA

ADVERTORIALS

PREMIUM VEHICLES



MHD Automobiles has introduced exclusive anniversary pricing across select models.

MHD AUTOMOBILES CELEBRATES 2ND ANNIVERSARY WITH EXCLUSIVE PRICING ON JEEP, RAM AND ALFA ROMEO

MUSCAT: MHD Automobiles LLC, the official distributor of Jeep, RAM, Dodge and Alfa Romeo in Oman, proudly announces the launch of its 2nd anniversary celebration, marking two successful years of delivering premium vehicles, exceptional service and a growing community of passionate drivers.

To mark the occasion, MHD Automobiles has introduced exclusive anniversary pricing across select models, bringing some of the most iconic and performance-driven vehicles within easier reach for customers in Oman.

Among the highlights is the Jeep Wrangler Sport 2 Door, starting from RO 15,595, and the Wrangler Sahara 4 Door, from RO 19,495 — both engineered for off-road adventure and everyday reliability. The Wrangler Rubicon 392, delivering formidable V8 power, is now available from RO 35,995, while the Jeep Grand Cherokee range starts from RO 17,995, offering a balance of luxury, capability and versatility.

The RAM 1500 RHO, a bold and refined full-size pickup, is now available from RO 37,995, combining strength and sophistication for drivers who demand more. From Alfa Romeo, the Tonale TI starts from RO 13,295, delivering Italian performance and elegance in a compact, modern crossover.

In addition to these spotlight models, anniversary pricing is available across a wider selection from the Jeep, RAM and Alfa Romeo ranges, giving customers more ways to experience the craftsmanship and performance these brands are known for.

Reflecting on the occasion, Mohsin Hani al Bahrani, CEO of MHD Automobiles, said: “This anniversary marks more than just a timeline — it represents a growing connection with our customers and the trust they’ve placed in us. We are proud to bring world-class automotive brands to Oman and to continue evolving with the needs of the market. The anniversary pricing underscores our commitment to delivering greater value while maintaining the excellence these brands stand for”.

The 2nd Anniversary Celebration is available for a limited time, with select models available while stocks last.

Customers are invited to visit the MHD Automobiles showroom in Al Hail or call 80022008 to learn more.

BANKDHOFAR CHAMPIONS KHAREEF FESTIVAL 2025 AS GOLD SPONSOR

MUSCAT: A longstanding patron of Oman’s major cultural events, BankDhofar — the second largest bank in Oman by branch network — returns once again as a gold sponsor of the 2025 Khareef Dhofar Season, Dhofar Governorate’s celebrated seasonal showcase.

Spanning from July 15 to August 31, the season draws over a million visitors annually to Dhofar during the monsoon season, when the region is transformed into a lush, green haven alive with traditional



The season draws over a million visitors annually to Dhofar.

music, art, dance and cuisine. BankDhofar’s partnership with the season is two-pronged. With footfall surging across Dhofar, the Bank is seizing the opportunity to showcase its full range of banking products and financial services to both existing and prospective customers. Equally important, the Bank is using this platform to support local entrepreneurs and small businesses, many of whom rely on the khareef Dhofar Season to generate vital income.

Kia secures honours in 2025 IIHS Safety Awards

KIA Corporation has once again raised the bar for automotive safety, earning recognition from the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) in its rigorous 2025 crash test evaluations.

Reaffirming its commitment to occupant protection and advanced vehicle engineering, three Kia models have received the prestigious 2025 TOP SAFETY PICK+ (TSP+) designation, the highest possible safety rating awarded by the IIHS. The recognised models include the 2025 Kia K4 (built after January 2025), as well as the acclaimed 2025 Kia EV9 and 2025 Kia Telluride, all of which are specific to the US market.

An official from Kia Corporation commented, “At Kia, safety is a foundational pillar of our brand. Being recognised by the IIHS with three TOP SAFETY PICK+ awards under their most rigorous criteria to date is a strong validation of the work we’re doing. We’re continuously raising our safety standards by integrating advanced driver



Three Kia models have received the prestigious 2025 TOP SAFETY PICK+ (TSP+) designation, the highest possible safety rating awarded by the IIHS.

assistance systems (ADAS), reinforcing structural integrity and subjecting our vehicles to stringent internal and external testing protocols. Whether it’s through enhanced protection for rear occupants or technologies that help prevent night-time collisions, we remain focused on delivering real-world safety

benefits to our customers”. “This recognition reinforces our role as a leading Sustainable Mobility Solutions Provider in automotive safety and reflects our commitment to protecting every passenger, in every journey”. He further shared. Kia continues to prioritise safety in its overall strategy

through integrating advanced technology and stringent testing protocols, elevating safety benchmarks across its lineup. The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) is an independent, non-profit scientific and educational organisation dedicated to reducing deaths, injuries and property damage from motor vehicle crashes through research and evaluation and through education of consumers, policymakers and safety professionals. It’s TSP and TSP+ ratings are widely cited in the North American auto industry by consumers, media and analysts alike. For more award information, visit www.iihs.org. Reliable International Automotive LLC (RIA), the official distributor of Kia in Oman, is committed to delivering an exceptional ownership experience. With Kia ranked #1 in Sales Customer Satisfaction in 2024 across the Middle East and Africa, RIA offers not just vehicles, but a lifelong journey of excellence and satisfaction.

NATIONAL FINANCE ANNOUNCES ROBUST PERFORMANCE IN H1 2025

MUSCAT: Solidifying its position as the leading finance company in the Sultanate of Oman, National Finance has announced its financial results for the first half of 2025, reflecting a strong performance underpinned by prudent risk management, operational efficiency and an unwavering focus on long-term stakeholder value. Despite a cautious business climate, the company has continued to chart a resilient growth path driven by disciplined credit policies, an expanding suite of customer-centric financing solutions and a keen emphasis on inclusive access for retail, corporate and SME segments.

Through ongoing product innovation, National Finance remains steadfast in redefining the customer experience and reinforcing its long-term value creation strategy across all verticals.

With the largest regulatory capital base in



TARIQ BIN SULAIMAN AL FARSI
Chief Executive Officer of National Finance

compared to the same period last year, while net investment in leases grew to RO 614.62 million, a 6.18% increase since December 2024. This robust financial performance was driven by an uptick in financing activity, enhanced operational productivity and a

the country’s finance and leasing sector and a nationwide network of 23 branches, National Finance recorded a 48.52% year-on-year increase in operating profit, reaching RO 12.18 million as of June 30, 2025. Profit after tax rose to RO 7.02 million, reflecting a 19.83% surge

targeted lending approach that prioritises credit quality and sustainable portfolio expansion. Commenting on the results, Tariq bin Sulaiman al Farsi, Chief Executive Officer of National Finance, stated, “At National Finance, our strategy is rooted in creating sustainable value while adapting decisively to an ever-evolving financial landscape. Our H1 performance reflects not only sound financial stewardship but also a collective institutional drive to serve our stakeholders with foresight and purpose. By aligning our priorities with Oman Vision 2040 and remaining deeply attuned to customer needs, we continue to deliver consistent results. As we look ahead, our focus will stay anchored in responsible growth, deepening customer trust and building enduring partnerships that transcend short-term metrics”.

Sohar International sponsors Tamkeen and Summo Exhibition 2025

MUSCAT: Reaffirming its longstanding commitment to advancing Oman’s entrepreneurial landscape and driving inclusive economic growth, Sohar International has assumed the role of official and exclusive banking sector sponsor of the “Tamkeen and Sumou” (Empowerment and Elevation) Exhibition for Small and Medium Enterprises. Organised by the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), represented by the SME Committee, the exhibition is being held under the auspices of HH Sayyid Harib bin Thuwaini al Said, Assistant Secretary General of the Council of Ministers for Conferences and runs from August 5 to 20, 2025 in Dhofar Governorate.



The event brings together more than 75 Omani SMEs from nine key economic sectors.

The event brings together more than 75 Omani SMEs from nine key economic sectors, including light manufacturing, technology and innovation, Omani handicrafts, tourism and agriproducts such as honey and dates. It serves as a vital national platform for promoting local products, enhancing SME competitiveness and facilitating direct engagement with private sector stakeholders — all in alignment with Oman Vision 2040 and the bank’s strategy to empower the private sector as a catalyst for sustainable development. Commenting on the bank’s participation, Abdulwahid Mohamed al Murshidi, Chief Executive Officer of Sohar

International, stated: “SMEs represent a vital force within any dynamic economy. Their capacity to innovate, stimulate domestic value chains; and respond swiftly to market needs contributes meaningfully to economic resilience. Our engagement in this exhibition is a reflection of our long-term dedication to empowering this segment; beyond offering impactful financial solutions, we prioritise opportunities that enhance visibility, strengthen capabilities and support sustainable growth. Platforms such as these are integral to cultivating robust, future-ready enterprises that will ultimately steer Oman towards a more diversified and competitive economy”.

BUSINESS

TRANSITHUB



The port has already begun receiving container shipments through this new network, with goods arriving via SOHAR Port and Freezone as a transit hub.

KHAZAEN DRY PORT JOINS CMA CGM’S GLOBAL NETWORK

MUSCAT: Khazaen Dry Port, a key facility under the Asyad Group, has officially joined the global container terminal network of CMA CGM, one of the world’s leading shipping groups. This strategic move positions Khazaen as an approved container terminal within CMA CGM’s global system, significantly enhancing its integration with international shipping lines and offering Omani importers and exporters greater access to efficient and flexible global logistics solutions.

The port has already begun receiving container shipments through this new network, with goods arriving via SOHAR Port and Freezone as a transit hub.

Khazaen was able to complete clearance and handling procedures on-site — demonstrating its readiness to manage international freight flows effectively.

Leveraging its advanced infrastructure and operational capabilities, Khazaen was able to complete clearance and handling procedures on-site — demonstrating its

readiness to manage international freight flows effectively.

Khazaen Dry Port provides a range of value-added services that benefit both local and international trade.

These include generous free storage periods — up to 14 days for loaded containers and 21 days for empties — alongside specialised services for refrigerated containers, such as electrical hook-ups and pre-operation inspections.

It also hosts food and agricultural inspection facilities directly within the port, speeding up the entry of goods into domestic markets and boosting overall supply chain efficiency.

This milestone is the result of a strategic partnership between Asyad Ports and Free Zones and the CMA CGM Group; and was enabled by a streamlined customs corridor developed in collaboration with the Directorate General of Customs of the Royal Oman Police.

The new corridor allows container transport using a “shipping agent seal”, eliminating the need for traditional customs closures. Additionally, it provides for a “written financial undertaking” in place of a bank guarantee, reducing costs for logistics operators and encouraging direct connectivity. Saad Bait Naseeb, CEO of Khazaen Dry Port, noted that the port’s integration into CMA CGM’s global network reflects its commitment to positioning Oman as a competitive logistics hub in the region.

He said the initiative aligns with the broader objectives of Oman Vision 2040, which prioritises economic diversification and smart infrastructure development to enhance the Sultanate of Oman’s role in global supply chains.

“This step supports Khazaen’s vision of operational excellence, regulatory innovation and sustainable logistics solutions”, Bait Naseeb said, reaffirming Asyad Group’s dedication to building a globally connected and efficient logistics ecosystem. — ONA

MSX INDEX TRADING VALUE REACHES RO 28.211 BILLION

MUSCAT: The Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) 30 Index closed on Wednesday at 4,809.44 points, down 7.6 points or 0.16 per cent, compared to the last trading session’s close of 4,817.01 points. Trading value reached RO 28,211,023, up 20.1 per cent compared to the last trading session’s value of RO 23,483,011. A report issued by the MSX indicated that market capitalisation decreased by 0.110



Market capitalisation reaches approximately RO 29.27 billion.

percent from the last trading day, reaching approximately RO 29.27 billion. The value of non-Omani purchases on the stock exchange amounted to RO 926,000, representing 3.28 per cent, while the value of non-Omani sales amounted to RO 1,629,000, representing 5.77 per cent. Meanwhile, net non-Omani investment decreased by RO 703,000, or 2.49 per cent. — ONA

Ministry of Labour hosts Salalah’s business leaders

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, AUG 6

THE Ministry of Labour (MoL) hosted a meeting of Dhofar Governorate’s business leaders at the Sultan Qaboos Youth Complex for Culture and Entertainment in Salalah on Wednesday. The forum, held with the participation of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, focused on labour market challenges. Addressing the event, Dr Mahad bin Said Baowain, Minister of Labour, pointed to the current efforts undertaken by the Ministry of Labour to enhance the development of labour market tools.

He highlighted the support extended to private sector institutions and the facilities available to establishments.

He also referred to the Labour Law and the regulations governing the labour market, which aim to ensure stability and keep pace with the progress witnessed in the global market.

Dr Baowain explained during the meeting — held as part of the activities of the Labour Forum 2025 — that the current circumstances call for



The meeting witnessed a discussion of the challenges facing business owners, particularly in the SME sector.

accelerating the pace of work.

This is due to the challenges and tremendous advancements taking place, which serve the interests of the markets and support human resources.

He emphasised that human capital is the true driver of development and progress. In this context, he pointed to employment initiatives adopted by the Ministry of Labour in genuine partnership with the private sector.

The official also stressed the importance of the role

of the private sector in Dhofar Governorate, which is growing at a rapid pace, particularly in the tourism field.

He noted the governorate’s role in strengthening the labour sector and the efforts made by small and medium enterprises and their national workforces in the establishments and companies of the private sector.

Additionally, he highlighted the importance of intensifying attention to entrepreneurial projects related to artificial intelligence and innovation,

as well as supporting training programmes. The meeting witnessed a discussion of the challenges facing business owners, particularly in the small and medium enterprises sector; and ways to simplify procedures to benefit from the facilities available to them to establish new projects and mechanisms for their development. Omanisation in certain activities, as well as the means of developing the Omani labour market, were also discussed.

INITIATIVE TO EMPOWER SME GROWTH IN DHOFAR

SALALAH: Vodafone Oman, in collaboration with the SMEs Development Authority (Riyada), hosted its first regional business event in Dhofar Governorate, bringing together over 150 SMEs to foster connections and explore growth opportunities. The event served as a platform for entrepreneurs to exchange knowledge and discuss how digital solutions can transform businesses and drive success in an increasingly competitive landscape.

Building on the discussion, Vodafone presented tailored offerings designed to support SMEs, including mobility solutions such as BLACK for Business plans with preferential rates for Riyada cardholders, messaging tools like MaxImpact Messaging for bulk SMS and advanced cybersecurity solutions.

“For us at Vodafone Oman, it’s never just about the resources we provide; it’s about the opportunities they unlock”, said Eng



The event brought together over 150 SMEs to foster connections and explore growth opportunities.

Mohammed al Alawi, Head of Enterprise at Vodafone Oman. “This collaboration with Riyada demonstrates that commitment by working closely with SMEs, understanding their priorities and equipping them with the right

tools to work smarter, extend their reach and contribute more meaningfully to Oman’s economic progress”. “At Riyada, we believe in empowering SMEs to be seen, heard and celebrated by connecting them with new audiences and creating the right platforms for their growth”, said Khalfan al Khatri, Acting Director of the Marketing and Events Department at the SMEs Development Authority. “Our collaboration with Vodafone Oman is about turning that belief into action, opening new doors and forging partnerships that make a lasting impact”. Launched in Dhofar under Vodafone’s “Live it Right” campaign, this initiative forms part of a broader series of events by Vodafone Oman and Riyada aimed at equipping SMEs across the Sultanate of Oman with the digital capabilities and strategic partnerships needed to thrive.

DIPLOMATIC CRISIS

Gold prices decline as dollar strengthens



Gold prices declined on Wednesday, as the dollar strengthened slightly, while investors refrained from making large bets ahead of US President Donald Trump’s decision on two Federal Reserve appointments. Spot gold fell 0.1 per cent to \$3,376.01 per ounce, after hitting its highest level in nearly two weeks on Tuesday. US gold futures fell 0.1 per cent to \$3,431.10. — ONA

PRICE REBOUND

Oil up on threats on Russian crude buyers



Oil prices climbed on Wednesday, rebounding from a five-week low the previous day, as traders focused on US President Donald Trump threatening India with higher tariffs over its Russian crude purchases and a larger-than-expected US crude draw. Brent crude futures gained 90 cents, or 1.3%, to \$68.79 a barrel, while Light crude was up 92 cents, or 1.4%, at \$66.32 a barrel. — Reuters

PROLONGED WEAKNESS

German factory orders fall amidst woes



German industrial orders unexpectedly fell in June, official data showed on Wednesday, as Europe’s biggest economy struggles with prolonged domestic weakness and volatile US trade policy. New orders, closely watched as an indicator of future business activity, dropped 1.0% month-on-month, according to preliminary data from federal statistics agency Destatis, after a fall of 0.8% in May. — dpa

OPINION

Oman’s credit rating upgrade heralds numerous benefits



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The writer is a Muscat-based economic analyst who previously worked for CBO and OCCI.

RECENTLY, Moody’s upgraded the Sultanate of Oman’s rating from Ba1 to Baa3, while revising the outlook to stable. The ratings agency attributed the upgrade to the improvement in Oman’s public debt indicators and the strength of its financial position, along with the efficiency of its financial management, which has enhanced its ability to withstand shocks, especially in light of the decline in average oil prices and production.

The issuer commentary cites financial policies and provisions, as well as the measures taken in many aspects related to the Omani economy, economic diversification policy, and private sector stimulation.

Most of us know that an uptick in a country’s credit rating contributes to strengthening the stability of its domestic economy, reducing the cost of borrowing, and stimulating foreign investment, especially if the country is free of bureaucracy in its daily operations.

An improved rating also increases the ability to finance development and social projects, enhances the country’s competitiveness, and contributes to improving the quality of life for citizens. Moody’s commentary also points to Oman’s

government efforts, explaining that they have achieved positive results, particularly with regard to public spending. Government spending declined to 29% of GDP, compared to an average of more than 41% during the period from 2016 to 2020.

Debt also declined from 37.5% of GDP at the end of 2023 to 35.5% at the end of 2024 and is expected to continue declining in the coming years.

The Moody’s report expects the Omani economy to witness further improvement in the coming years and accelerating growth in the non-oil sector and reduce the primary non-oil deficit.

Over the past few years, the government has taken numerous measures to diversify sources of income, which can enhance long-term financial stability by working to increase the contribution of non-oil revenues to the general budget, supporting plans to develop the green hydrogen sector and related industries and expanding liquefied natural gas (LNG) production by 2030.

Raising Oman’s credit rating could have significant positive impacts on the economy, finances and society as a whole. In the coming years, Oman can reap many benefits from this, particularly in terms of improving its ability to attract foreign investment.

A good credit rating reflects the stability of the economy and its ability to meet its

Moody’s commentary also points to Oman’s government efforts, explaining that they have achieved positive results, particularly with regard to public spending.

financial obligations, making Oman a more attractive destination for foreign investors who can contribute to the development of new sectors such as technology, tourism, industry and others.

A ratings upgrade can also reduce borrowing costs, enabling the government and companies to borrow at lower costs. Some analysts believe that a rating upgrade would enable the Omani government to issue international or local bonds at lower costs, helping finance important national projects without significantly impacting the general budget.

It would contribute to strengthening economic stability, improve the business environment and encourage economic expansion to implement development and social programmes by financing projects to improve education, healthcare and housing, which would positively impact citizens’ standard of living.

Oman seeks to achieve sustainable economic diversification away from oil and gas. The country is working to accelerate transition to a more sustainable and competitive economy, facilitate negotiations with its international trading partners and enhance its image in global markets. It will also support public-private partnership projects, which will contribute to stimulating social growth.

TRUMP’S DEGRADED DATA IS WORSE THAN BOOK-COOKING

GABRIEL RUBIN

DONALD TRUMP’S stance on Covid-19 turned out to be a prelude for his second term. The US president, who in 2020 argued that “If we stopped testing right now, we’d have very few cases” of the coronavirus, is applying this logic to environmental, health and — with the firing of the top Labour Department statistician — economic data.

With presumably committed professional staff still in place and alternative data sources available, the main risk isn’t fake, rosy data — it’s that firms, investors and policymakers will see pillars of the market crumble.

The Bureau of Labour Statistics each month estimates jobs created in the prior period and updates its two previous estimates. Glum numbers on Friday prompted Trump to shoot the messenger.

Following a report that 73,000 jobs were added in July, combined with a reduction of 258,000 for May and June’s numbers, the president fired BLS Commissioner Erika McEntarfer.

The agency revised down job growth by 818,000 during 2024’s presidential election — hardly positive news for an incumbent administration

administration. While this revision was large, volatility is unsurprising amidst a trade war and immigration restrictionism.

This president is already dismantling other research bodies, whether at the Environmental Protection Agency, or the carbon-tracking Mauna Loa observatory, or advisory boards at the Food and Drug Administration and Centres for Disease Control.

Companies and whole sectors, like insurance and pharmaceuticals, rely on government data for myriad uses: carbon markets, flood insurance calculations, automaker emissions compliance, solar energy output projections, disaster planning and resilience, creditworthiness for infrastructure projects and more.

There is no explicit promise to outright cook the books. Nonetheless, any threat to the integrity of this data degrades a vast infrastructure supporting modern markets, built up over more than a century.

A ham-fisted push to skew the numbers would probably be self-destructive, drawing skepticism from outside professionals. Signals like resignations of remaining career staff will be clear. And, simply put, people know whether they have a job or not. — Reuters

US banks have added 11K jobs in EU since Brexit

THE world’s top five investment banks have added nearly 11,000 employees to their European Union hubs since Brexit. Goldman Sachs, Bank of America, JPMorgan, Citigroup and Morgan Stanley have added thousands of dealmakers, traders and support staff to the hubs they set up in the EU post Brexit, according to people familiar with the matter and analysis of publicly available data.

It is now five years since the UK departed the EU and investment banks have been bulking up the cities including Frankfurt, Milan and Paris. Estimates of the impact of Brexit in the financial district of London (known as the ‘City’) have varied widely, with EY’s last Brexit tracker in 2022 putting the number of jobs that have moved across at 7,000.

“Despite this, both at the time and now five years on, London remains Europe’s leading financial hub”, said Andrew Pilgrim, UK financial services government leader at EY.

The former Lord mayor of the City of London, Michael Mainelli, who leads consultancy Z/Yen, estimates that 40,000 financial services roles have moved from London to the EU because of Brexit.

Meanwhile, the number of people employed in the City has grown since the 2016 Brexit referendum by around 130,000 to reach 678,000 at the end of last year.

“The City of London has been growing and continues to do so”, he said. “I remain bullish on London, but proportionately it is likely to have done better if it wasn’t for Brexit”.

JPMorgan Europe SE, the US bank’s post-Brexit hub, has grown from 562 employees in the EU in 2020 to 3,570 at the end of 2024. However, the bank now has around 6,000 staff overall in the EU, up from approximately 2,500 before Brexit.

Goldman Sachs Bank Europe SE, which houses some of its EU functions, has grown from 556 employees five years ago to 1,182 at the end of 2024. Bank of America’s Frankfurt EU hub has 2,549 employees, up from 2,349 in 2021.



The City of London financial district can be seen as people walk along the south side of the River Thames in London, Britain. — Reuters



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The writer is our foreign correspondent based in the UK

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Morgan Stanley’s main hub has increased from 293 people to 781 over the same period. However, it had 610 employees across the bloc in 2020, a number that grew to 1,075 in 2023 — the latest available numbers.

Citibank Europe PLC — Citigroup’s Dublin headquartered EU entity — has grown by around 6,400 employees over the past five years to reach a headcount of 16,647.

Mainelli said that while some claim that the impact of Brexit on the City has been relatively minimal, it has still had a negative effect.

“It’s like running into a brick wall, getting up and then saying the injuries aren’t too bad — it’s still a stupid thing to do”, he said.

Paris has arguably been the biggest beneficiary of Brexit’s exodus of talent from London.

While most investment banks chose Frankfurt to house new legal entities, Wall Street firms have largely moved trading floors to the

French capital.

JPMorgan’s Paris headcount has jumped from 78 in 2020 to 811 at the end of 2024 and the bank will move into a new office that can house 1,000 people this year. At Bank of America, staff numbers have risen from 70 to 700 over the past five years in the French city.

But high end jobs elsewhere in the banking sector have also gravitated to the EU. Morgan Stanley has expanded its presence in Frankfurt and Milan; and has also opened new offices in Copenhagen and Munich over the past five years.

Goldman Sachs’s post-Brexit strategy has involved transferring key bankers to European cities where important clients are located. Major investment banking sector teams led by partners have been shifting from London to other European cities including Frankfurt and Milan in recent years.

But the surge in jobs on the continent has not always come at the expense of the City of London.

BUSINESS

NEW DELHI: India expects to lose a competitive advantage in about \$64 billion worth of goods exported to the US due to President Donald Trump's 25% tariff and an assumed 10% penalty for buying Russian oil, four sources said citing an internal assessment report by the government.

India faces its most serious diplomatic crisis with the United States in years after Trump imposed the highest tariffs among Asian peers on goods imported from India, even before any penalty.

A relatively low share of exports in India's \$4 trillion economy is seen limiting the direct impact on growth to 40 basis points.

The Reserve Bank of India left its GDP growth forecast for the current April-March financial year unchanged at 6.5% and held rates steady on Wednesday despite the uncertainty created by tariff hikes.

The trade impact estimates were prepared by the Indian government after Trump announced the unexpectedly high tariff for Indian goods, along with the unspecified penalty.

The Indian government in its

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INDIA BRACES FOR HIT TO \$64 BILLION US EXPORTS



A worker makes final checks on jeans pants before packaging in a garment manufacturing unit on the outskirts of Ahmedabad, India. — Reuters

assessment report has assumed a 10% penalty for buying Russian oil, taking the tariff to 35%, the four Indian government sources said.

Trump said on Wednesday his administration will decide on the penalty for buying Russian oil post the outcome of US efforts to seek a last minute breakthrough in the Ukraine war.

US envoy Steve Witkoff is in Moscow, two days before the expiry of a deadline set by Trump for Russia to agree to peace or face new sanctions.

The impact of the tariff and possible penalty will be on nearly \$64 billion worth of India's exports to US that account for about 80% of total exports to the country, and it will lead to 'potential export losses' due to price disadvantages, the four sources said.

The internal assessment report is the government's initial estimate and will change as the quantum of tariff by Trump becomes clear, all sources said.

India exported goods estimated at around \$81 billion in 2024 to the US, including garments, pharmaceuticals, gems and jewellery, and petrochemicals, according to government data. — Reuters

CLASSIFIEDS

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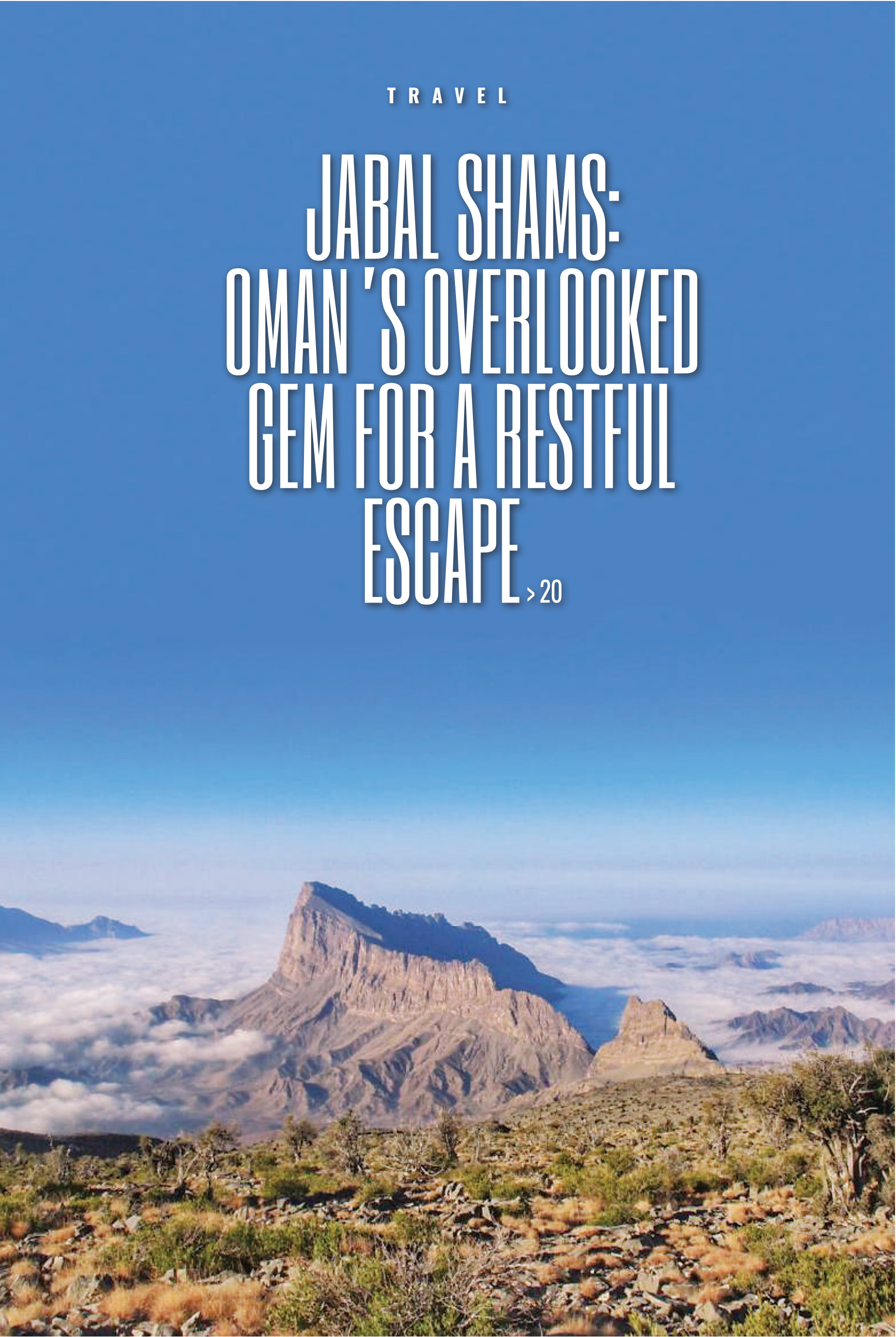


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> 20

CHANGING WORLD

Will there ever be weddings via WhatsApp groups?



SHADDAD
AL MUSALMY
The writer is a
Senior Editor at
Oman Daily Observer

LAST WEEK my childhood friend from school far away from Oman added me to a WhatsApp group meant to announce the arrangements for his wedding. The group currently has over 470 people, the average number that attends weddings.

While the concept of a wedding conducted entirely via WhatsApp groups is not a current reality, WhatsApp is extensively used for various aspects of wedding planning, communication and even for creating a sense of community among guests, especially for destination weddings.

The platform's features make it a highly convenient tool for modern couples. This led me to wonder if there will be a real wedding ceremony held via such groups one day.

At present, WhatsApp's utility in weddings primarily revolves around communication and organisation. Couples and wedding organisers use WhatsApp groups to streamline information flow, manage guest lists and coordinate various activities leading up to and during the wedding itself.

This digital approach offers several advantages over traditional methods, including instant delivery, cost-effectiveness and the ability to share rich media like photos and videos.

For example, WhatsApp groups are commonly used for sending invitations and RSVPs. Dedicated groups can also be created for the wedding party, family members, or specific committees to discuss logistics, share ideas and make decisions.

These groups are essential for coordinating outfits, planning pre-wedding events like henna parties and ensuring everyone is on the same page. For destination weddings, WhatsApp groups become indispensable, allowing for real-time updates on travel, accommodation, event schedules and helping guests connect with each other.

However, the idea of a wedding conducted via WhatsApp groups, with the actual ceremony and vows taking place solely within the app, is not feasible or legally recognised in most jurisdictions.

A wedding typically requires a physical presence for legal solemnisation and often involves traditional rituals and celebrations that cannot be replicated virtually through a messaging app. While virtual elements like live streaming for remote guests are common, they supplement, rather than replace, the in-person ceremony.

The trend indicates a continued integration of digital tools like WhatsApp into wedding planning and guest management, making the process more efficient and interactive. However, the core elements of a wedding, particularly the legal and ceremonial aspects, remain largely in the physical realm.

Until we meet next, I wish my childhood friend a very happy wedding.

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



FASHION

A general view of a limited edition of a Labubu figure called Labubu Pilot in Beijing, ahead of an auction by the Yongle Auction house. — AFP



FILM

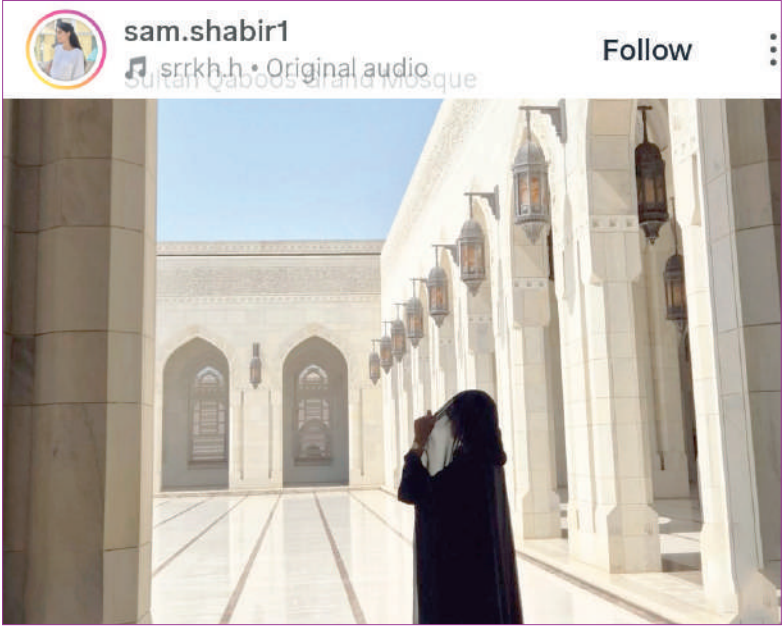
A staff member holds Indiana Jones' Bullwhip and Belt from the film Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade during a press preview of movie props set to go to auction. — AFP



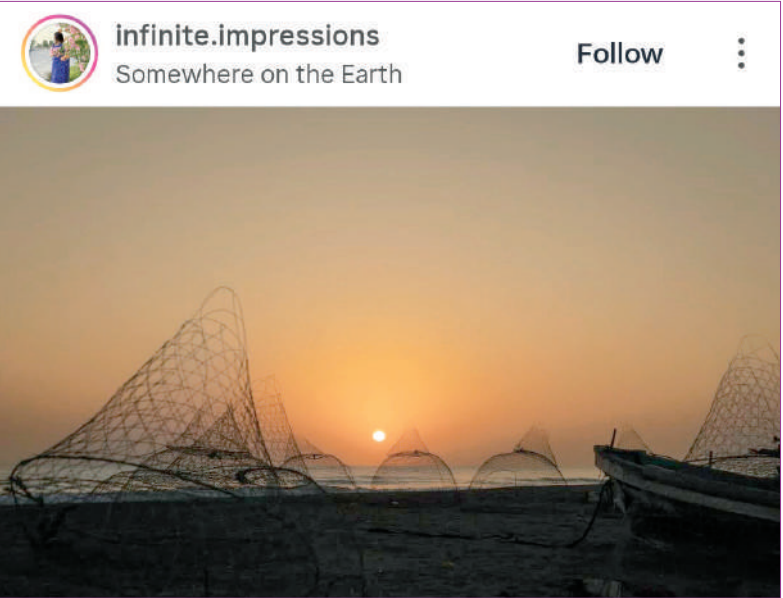
MUSIC

Palestinian singer Saint Levant performs during the 59th edition of the Carthage International Festival at the Roman Theatre in Carthage in Tunis. — AFP

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Australia’s Great Barrier Reef sees sharp coral cover decline



HARD CORAL cover across Australia’s Great Barrier Reef has dropped sharply following a record bleaching event in 2024, the Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS) reported on Wednesday.

Two of the reef’s three regions recorded their largest annual declines in coral cover since monitoring began nearly 40 years ago, according to AIMS’ annual survey report.

The 2024 bleaching event, triggered by climate change-induced heat stress, was the main driver of the losses, AIMS said. Cyclones and outbreaks of crown-of-thorns starfish also contributed.

AIMS noted that this was the fifth mass bleaching event to impact the region since 2016 and the largest ever recorded on the Great Barrier Reef. The report warned that such events are becoming more frequent, while recovery periods are shrinking.

“We are now seeing increased volatility in the levels

of hard coral cover. This is a phenomenon that emerged over the last 15 years and points to an ecosystem under stress”, said AIMS long-term monitoring programme leader Mike Emslie.

“We have seen coral cover oscillate between record lows and record highs in a relatively short amount of time, where previously such fluctuations were moderate”, he added.

The findings are based on surveys carried out between August 2024 and May 2025. Of the 124 reefs assessed, nearly half (48%) showed a decline in coral cover, while only 10% showed gains.

Despite the setbacks, Ems lie noted that the reef still retains more coral cover than many reef systems globally.

Located off Australia’s north-east coast, the Great Barrier Reef is the world’s largest coral reef system, home to about 400 types of coral, around 1,500 fish species and 4,000 mollusc types. — dpa



Squeezed by urban growth, Nigerian fishermen stick to tradition

IN THE shadow of luxury apartment buildings under construction on the shores of the reservoir, Maniru Umar dips his oar into the water, pushing his shallow, wooden canoe forward through thick reeds.

Out of a mix of pride and necessity, Umar and his fellow fishermen in Nigeria’s rapidly expanding capital still do things the old-fashioned way, two-men crews working in a deft balancing act as they throw out nets over the side.

where graduates often trickle back into the informal sector anyway.

According to the World Bank, Nigeria only tipped into a majority-urban population in 2019 — a marker the United States passed about a century ago.

On the whole, only sub-Saharan Africa and south Asia have yet to tip from majority rural to majority urban — and into the drastically different economy that shift brings.

“Nigeria could do a better job of utilising the intellectual, the physical, the behavioural strength

them here in the first place: the government built the Jabi reservoir dam in 1981. Fishermen from the countryside soon followed.

But regular check-ins from the agriculture ministry have been replaced by the government selling off plots of land for development, Suleiman said.

Nigeria’s staggering economic inequality looms over them as luxury housing goes up just feet away from their settlement, which has been displaced twice in three years.



“I grew up fishing with my father”, said Umar, 20. “As long as I’m still fishing, I’ll teach my son how to fish as well”. Across Africa’s most populous nation, city living isn’t easy. Despite vibrant tech, oil and finance sectors, Nigeria’s graft-plagued economy has long struggled to provide enough jobs for its more than 200 million-strong population.

As the country rapidly urbanises, passing down their craft has become both a cultural lifeline and economic lifeline for Abuja’s fishermen.

“We only focus on primary and secondary school”, said Kabir Suleiman, chairman of the fishermen’s village, a settlement of one-room shacks tucked on the rocky shore of Jabi Lake, around 10 minutes drive from downtown Abuja.

Sending children to university is seen as a waste, he said, in a country

of its young and urbanising population”, said Ikemesit Effiong, a partner at SBM Intelligence, a Lagos-based consultancy, noting more than half the country is under the age of 30.

Nigeria’s urban poor are increasingly made up of people moving from the countryside, he said — but due to lacklustre public service delivery, they’re often unable to access the fruits of urbanisation, from paved roads to clinics and schools.

— Evicted for luxury housing — The 200 or so fishermen’s relationship with Abuja’s growth has been mixed.

There are far more people to sell fish to in the capital than in the countryside. The city is also safe from “bandits”, armed kidnapping gangs that rove the rural hinterlands.

It was urbanisation that brought

Construction workers have at times cleared paddies and other vegetation — key fish habitats, Umar said.

But he also wondered if the growing population of fishermen is leaving less fish to catch.

Modern boats dot the lake, rented out by revellers keen for a cruise.

In recent weeks, the fishermen say, surveyors have come to the village, saying it too is being sought by property developers.

Next door is a new restaurant, gated off from the settlement.

Above the entrance gate is a sign: Fisherman Village, Jabi Lake Resort.

The actual Jabi fishermen, meanwhile, have their sights set on self-preservation, no matter what.

“This is our job”, Suleiman said.

“This is our business, this is the business our fathers have been doing, our parents have been doing”. — AFP

FEATURES



landscape is a favourite for outdoor enthusiasts and families eager to indulge in hiking, canyon exploring and star gazing. One of the key attractions is the Balcony Walk, a breathtaking trail that runs along the edge of the canyon, giving hikers an exhilarating perspective of the world beneath.

Families often find Jabal Shams particularly appealing due to its wide variety of accessible activities. The mountain's cooler climate provides relief from the desert heat, making it an all-season destination. Kids and adults alike marvel at the dramatic cliffs, lush terraces and the chance to encounter local wildlife like mountain goats and native birds. The starry nights here are renowned for their clarity, offering unforgettable astronomy experiences.

While the natural allure of Jabal Shams is undeniable, where to stay is equally important for crafting a memorable escape. Visitors have a wealth of options, from high-end hotels to eclectic glamping experiences, ensuring comfort amidst the mountain's

coupled with the opportunity to witness starry nights, provides an enchanting escape from the city noise. The proximity to the Balcony Walk and other hiking trails makes these domes a strategic base for exploring.

Al Khitaym Guest House, another beloved spot, offers cosy family rooms with balconies and patios overlooking the mountains. Its welcoming atmosphere is enhanced by traditional touches, such as local-style breakfast and dinner, featuring fresh fruits and regional delicacies. Many guests comment on the spectacular mountain views, starry skies and a peaceful, home-like ambience. Though some advise travelling with a 4x4 vehicle for better access, the hosts are friendly and accommodating, often offering helpful pickups.

Sama Heights Resort, perched at an altitude of nearly 7,000 feet, is a newer option that combines luxury with eco-consciousness. Surrounded by striking landscapes and offering unique hiking trails, Sama Heights is a haven for families and adventure lovers alike. Visitors often praise its serene atmosphere, the warmth of staff and the panoramic vistas of the Grand Canyon of the Middle East.

CONNECT WITH NATURE AND LOCAL CULTURE

What truly endears visitors to Jabal Shams is its unspoiled natural beauty combined with the authentic Omani hospitality reflected in these diverse accommodations. Unlike the more extravagant, urban-style resorts at Al Jabal Al Akhdhar, Jabal Shams offers



wilderness.

Panorama Guest House captures the essence of modern mountain living with its contemporary design crafted from local stone, blending beautifully into the landscape. Guests consistently praise the hosts, Ram and Ibrahim, for their exceptional hospitality and flexibility, often going out of their way to satisfy guests' needs. The guest house's prime location at the start of the Balcony Walk trail offers stunning sunrise views directly from the rooms — a magical way to awaken amidst nature. Its ease of access with a regular 2WD vehicle makes it accessible for most travellers and the modern amenities — including efficient air conditioning and clean, stylish interiors — complement the breathtaking surroundings.

Many visitors rave about the rich, traditional Omani cuisine prepared by the hosts' family, providing a warm and authentic taste of local hospitality. The panoramic vistas from the balcony walk and the chance to watch both sunset and sunrise from the comfort of the guesthouse make it a top choice for those seeking relaxation and connection with their environment.

The Jabal Shams Domes introduce an entirely different experience — luxurious, space-efficient and designed with visual elegance. These domed houses boast thoughtful interiors equipped with large beds, heating, cooling, private bathrooms and even star-viewing seating areas outside. The interior design reflects an emphasis on comfort and style, making it an ideal retreat for couples or adventure seekers looking for a unique accommodation.

Guests highlight Fahad, the host, for his warm hospitality and meticulous attention to detail. The domes' private setting adjacent to stunning landscapes,

a genuine connection to nature and local culture. Guests often remark that staying here feels like retreating into a peaceful mountain sanctuary, with each accommodation providing a personal, warm and authentic experience.

The variety of lodging options means that visitors can select accommodations that suit their preferences — be it the luxurious comfort of a modern guest house, the unique charm of dome houses, or the cosy familiarity of family-run inns. The hosts and staff take pride in providing personalised service and authentic regional cuisine, making every stay special. If you want to take the camping route, this mountain is also perfect for wild camping.

For those seeking a truly enriching experience amidst Oman's natural splendour, Jabal Shams is an ideal destination that deserves more attention. It promises not just scenic views, but a deep sense of connection with nature and the warm hospitality of local Omanis. Whether it's a family adventure, a romantic weekend, or a peaceful solo retreat, the mountain's diverse offerings ensure every traveller finds something to cherish. So, next time you plan an adventure in Oman, consider leaving the well-trodden paths and heading to Jabal Shams.

JABAL SHAMS:
OMAN'S
OVERLOOKED
GEM FOR A
RESTFUL ESCAPE

BY YERU EBUEN

JABAL SHAMS often called the “Mountain of the Sun”, remains a strikingly majestic yet somewhat underrated destination for travellers seeking a tranquil escape into nature. With its dramatic peaks, deep canyon vistas and unparalleled vistas of the surrounding landscape, Jabal Shams offers an authentic and immersive experience that continues to captivate those willing to venture away from the more luxurious and crowded resorts of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar.

While Al Jabal Al Akhdhar is renowned for its opulent hotels and premium accommodations, Jabal Shams presents a compelling alternative — less commercialised but equally impressive in its natural grandeur and diversity of lodging options. Visitors are increasingly discovering that, amidst its scenic splendour, Jabal Shams provides a remarkable range of stays, from luxurious four-star retreats to charming inns and uniquely designed dome houses, each offering an intimate and memorable experience.

**DISCOVERING JABAL SHAMS:
A NATURAL PLAYGROUND FOR FAMILIES**

Famous for its awe-inspiring scenery, Jabal Shams boasts the highest peak in Oman at 3,009 metres, offering panoramic views that stretch as far as the eye can see. This rugged mountain