

O M A N عُمَان D A I L Y

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SUNRISE 05:30 AM
PRAYER TIMINGS
FAJR 04:04 AM
DHUHR 12:18 PM
ASR 03:38 PM
MAGHRIB 07:01 PM
ISHA 08:22 PM

10
AL HARTHY
FINISHES 10TH IN
BRAZIL RACE

EX-REAL MADRID
MANAGER
CARLOS QUEIROZ
NEW OMAN
FOOTBALL
HEAD COACH

Carlos Queiroz

MUSCAT: The Oman Football Association (OFA) has officially appointed Portuguese veteran Carlos Queiroz as the new head coach of the national team.

Queiroz, a globally respected name in football coaching, brings decades of international experience to the Sultanate of Oman. He replaces Rasheed Jaber and is expected to lead the team through its next phase of competitive development. Hamad al Azzani will assist the new coach.

Born in Mozambique, Queiroz has held prestigious coaching roles throughout his career. He served as head coach for national teams including Portugal, South Africa, Iran and Colombia. His most notable international tenure was with Iran, where he made history as the country's longest-serving manager and the only one to guide them to two consecutive Fifa World Cups — in 2014 and 2018.

On the club level, Queiroz also boasts an impressive résumé. He had a stint as head coach of Real Madrid and worked closely with legendary manager Sir Alex Ferguson as assistant coach at Manchester United. His partnership with Ferguson coincided with one of the club's most successful periods.

The Oman Football Association's decision to sign Queiroz is seen as a bold move to elevate the national team's profile and performance on the international stage. In a statement posted on X, OFA thanked Jaber for his work as head coach of the national team and wished him the best.

PHARMACISTS MUST
BE OMANIS

BAN ON EXPATS IN COMMERCIAL
COMPLEXES AND HOSPITALS

The MoH emphasised that the circular is part of a broader national vision under Oman Vision 2040 to provide jobs for Omanis.

This is not just about replacing expats. It's about investing in local talent. We are well-trained and more than capable of leading the pharmacy sector forward.

ABDULLAH AL HOSNI
Omani pharmacist

While the decision has been largely applauded, stakeholders agree that implementing Omanisation requires parallel efforts to ensure that Omani pharmacists are fully equipped to take on their roles in the private sector.

Kholood al Balushi, a trainee pharmacist, believes that readiness is key: "As graduates, we must rise to the challenge. The job market is competitive, and we need to continuously improve our skills. Securing opportunities should be matched with personal development."

Some private pharmacy

owners have also highlighted the importance of additional support measures such as financial incentives or training to ensure a smooth transition.

The Ministry of Health (MoH) emphasised that the circular is part of a broader national vision under Oman Vision 2040 to provide jobs for Omanis. This is a carefully considered policy decision based on employment data and field studies. The ministry is committed to working closely with private healthcare providers to ensure that this transition is implemented effectively without compromising the quality of healthcare services.

Experts believe this directive will contribute to a broader shift in private sector employment dynamics. With more Omanis entering the pharmacy field, patient communication and trust may improve due to shared language, cultural understanding and stronger community bonds.

Moreover, the decision may also encourage higher education institutions to enhance their pharmacy courses by aligning them more closely with the needs of the local job market. It is expected that government-led initiatives such as training subsidies, internship placements and employer incentives will play a key role in supporting Omanisation.

90% of road accidents due to human error: ROP

the great developments in road infrastructure, legislation amendments and the utilisation of advanced technologies, the issue of road accidents is still around because human behaviour is the main cause of the problem."

Colonel Al Battashi noted that traffic statistics indicate that the human factor is the primary cause for over 90 per cent of road accidents with speeding being the leading cause of accidents, followed by misconduct and negligence while driving. "The ROP is making comprehensive efforts to reduce road accidents employing scientific

methodologies and a careful analysis of road accidents in cooperation with relevant authorities."

He pointed out that the ROP has enhanced police presence on the roads by intensifying traffic patrols and expanding the use of modern cameras and radars to detect violations. He added that the ROP is paying increasing attention to modern technologies, particularly autonomous driving and artificial intelligence due to their ability to reduce human errors resulting from distraction or lack of concentration. He

emphasised that the integration of these systems into modern vehicles will gradually contribute to reducing accident rates, although this technology is still in its development stages.

Al Battashi said that a safe traffic environment can only be achieved through the combined efforts of government institutions, the private sector and the civil society. However, the main factor remains the motorists themselves given the fact that road accidents can be reduced by raising motorists' awareness and their abidance by the traffic rules.

NOURA AL ABRI
MUSCAT, JULY 15

Despite the modern road infrastructure and the subsequent legislative and regulatory developments, road accidents continue to be a cause for concern in the Sultanate of Oman. Road accidents continue to claim many lives and cause significant human and material losses.

Colonel Khamis bin Ali al Battashi, Assistant Director-General of Traffic at the Royal Oman Police (ROP), said: "Road accidents claim many lives and cause significant financial losses. Despite

Excitement in the air as Oman Kite Festival kicks off in Bar Al Hikman

The 10-day festival brings together kitesurfers, who will compete in a series of races and freestyle showcases spanning Bar Al Hikman and Al Ashkharah to Masirah Island and Ras Al Hadd

dynamic watersport events Oman has hosted.

Organised by Oman Sail and proudly supported by Omran Group, the 10-day festival (July 14–24) brings together a diverse lineup of local kitesurfers.

"There's been a lot of excitement leading up to this," said Firas Asqul, Project Manager at Oman Sail. For Omani participant Khalfan al Athubi, a sailing skipper who has been kitesurfing for four years, the challenge goes far beyond competition.

"I've always wanted to try a

downwinder. I've never done long distance before — not even in training — so I'm really excited. Hopefully I can go far with it."

In addition to sporting excitement, the festival also showcases Oman's commitment to sustainability, tourism and youth engagement in line with Oman Vision 2040. Community beach clean-ups, a small business exhibition at Al Ashkharah Park, and artisan markets give the event a cultural and environmental dimension — connecting sport to purpose.

STAFF REPORTER
BAR AL HIKMAN, JULY 15

The skies above Bar Al Hikman came alive on Tuesday with colour and movement as the Oman Kite Festival was officially launched, ushering in a high-energy, coast-to-coast celebration of sport, sustainability and community.

Kicking off the festival, Dr Hashil al Mahrouqi, CEO of Omran Group, welcomed athletes, spectators and community members to the opening ceremony, setting the tone for what promises to be one of the most

OMAN

SHORT TAKES



The incubator focuses on developing the participating initiatives.

INITIATIVE TO
ENHANCE COMMUNITY
PARTICIPATION

JAALAN BANI BU ALI: The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth has launched the “Youth Initiatives Incubator 2025” in the Wilayat of Jaalan Bani Bu Ali in Al Sharqiyah South Governorate. This incubator is part of the ministry’s continuous support for Omani youth and aims to enhance their community participation through qualitative and effective initiatives.

The incubator targets owners of youth initiatives from various governorates across the Sultanate of Oman. These are non-profit youth projects specialising in specific areas and seeking to achieve a tangible social and developmental impact within the local community.

The incubator focuses on developing the participating initiatives using a specialised guide. This guide aims to improve the quality of youth initiatives and enhance their capabilities in design, planning, implementation, funding, impact measurement and building sustainable partnerships. — ONA

2ND PHASE OF
WATER DISTRIBUTION
PROJECT LAUNCHED



The project involves laying 40 km of water transmission lines and 217 km of distribution network lines. — ONA

AL MUDHAIBI: The second phase of the drinking water distribution network project in the Wilayat of Al Mudhaibi, Al Sharqiyah North Governorate, began on Tuesday.

Estimated to cost over RO 15 million, this project is a continuation of the first phase, which was completed in the wilayat earlier this year.

The project involves laying 40 km of water transmission lines and 217 km of distribution network lines, alongside installing 4,065 household connections.

Additionally, it includes a pumping station and an elevated storage tank. — ONA

SEVERAL LEGAL MEASURES TAKEN AGAINST HIDDEN TRADE

MUSCAT: Qais bin Mohammed al Yusef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, met on Tuesday at the Ministry’s headquarters with a number of entrepreneurs working in the vehicle repair and maintenance sector.

The meeting addressed key challenges facing workshop owners and businesses in this vital sector, including unfair competition under the guise of concealed trade. The ministry confirmed that it has taken several legal measures against violating companies by implementing the first phase of Ministerial Decision No 412/2023 on combating concealed trade, which covered the governorates of Muscat, Dhofar and Al Batinah North. The second phase of the decision will be rolled out in the coming period.



Qais bin Mohammed al Yusef met on Tuesday a number of entrepreneurs working in the vehicle repair sector.

The discussion also touched on challenges related to obtaining land usufruct rights for conducting economic activities in vehicle repair and maintenance, as well as financing difficulties for projects in

this sector, including personal and housing loans for entrepreneurs. The importance of digitising all government services was also highlighted.

Data released by the Information

and Statistics Department at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion indicates that the number of licensed companies in vehicle repair and maintenance activities exceeded 13,500 by June 2025, distributed across various governorates of Oman. Muscat Governorate leads with 3,690 establishments, followed by Al Batinah North (2,226 establishments) and Dhofar (1,941 establishments).

The data also reveals that the most common activities are vehicle electrical repair (3,651 establishments), vehicle mechanics (2,363 establishments) and oil change services (1,441 establishments). Meanwhile, full Omani ownership accounts for over 95% in most of these activities.

Health forum advocates
pre-marriage screening

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabiyousef

THE Muttrah Summer Health Forum, an initiative of the Office of the Wali of Muttrah represented by the Health Committee, was held to promote healthy habits and positive behaviours among young people.

The forum, held under the auspices of Abdulhamid bin Abdulrahman al Kharousi, Deputy Wali of Muttrah, educated school students about the necessity of following a healthy lifestyle and the importance of pre-marriage screening.

The campaign, conducted in cooperation with several health and community entities, is part of the ‘Together in Muttrah for a Continuous Partnership’ initiative, which emphasises the integration between institutions and entities concerned with health and development to achieve the principle of community partnership in developing a healthy society.

The forum includes a series of training workshops and awareness lectures over five days, involving health institutions, community organisations and volunteer teams to inspire students to follow healthy lifestyles and promote early prevention of lifestyle diseases.

On the first day, a team from Khoula Hospital and the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority conducted a first aid workshop where students were trained on rapid response methods and dealing with injuries and emergencies in society.

The forum also includes awareness seminars on chronic and genetic diseases, oral and dental health, food safety and nutrition, with the participation of specialists from Al Nahdha Hospital and



The forum educated school students about the necessity of following a healthy lifestyle and the importance of pre-marriage screening.

Al Mina Health Centre. Additionally, there will be discussions on child protection in collaboration with the Oman Women’s Association in Muttrah, and a lecture on the importance of pre-marriage screening in collaboration with Al Nahdha Hospital to promote early screening and family planning. The forum delivered skill workshops for first cycle students to develop their health and behavioural skills.

The participants will also visit the Hospitality Institute in Muttrah, where they will attend a lecture on healthy nutrition and a “Little Chef” event. Furthermore, there will be an educational workshop on smoking and its harmful effects to raise awareness

regarding the significance of stopping harmful habits.

The forum will conclude on its fifth day with a lecture on psychological first aid, and honouring the participants and supporters to appreciate their contributions to the successful forum.

Abdulhamid bin Abdulrahman al Kharousi, Deputy Wali of Muttrah, indicated that this event expresses the vision of the Wali Office to promote positive values and behaviours in young people, founding prevention and early health education to raise generations able to practice a healthy and balanced lifestyle that benefits the individual and society.

Tabseel season nears end; connects Omanis to their heritage

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, JULY 15

As the summer sun reaches its peak, the traditional ‘Tabseel’ season is coming to a close in many parts of Al Sharqiyah North and Al Sharqiyah South governorates. Over the past few weeks, communities have come together to harvest, boil and dry the semi-ripe dates of the Mabsali and Madloki — a cherished agricultural tradition that connects Omanis to their land and heritage.

Salim al Ghailani, a farmer from Jaalan Bani Bu Hassan, describes the season as more than just agricultural labour: “Tabseel is not simply about harvesting — it’s a celebration. The entire family participates, from early morning until sunset. It’s a tradition we inherited, and we’re proud to pass it on despite the hard work.”

The season has drawn in various wilayats including Wadi Bani Khalid, Al Kamil W’al Wafi and Jaalan Bani Bu Hassan.

Wadi Bani Khalid is known for boiling dates from the Madloki, Bonaranja, Abu Matrhi and Hilali palm varieties.

Fatima al Marzouqi, a resident of Siq, said: “I grew up watching and helping my family during the Tabseel season. We put special care into Madloki because their dates are in high demand across Oman.” Despite the sweltering heat and labour intensity, the season is filled with joy and family bonding.

Extended families gather around the palms, share meals and laugh together while working side by side.

One of the tools commonly used is the “mirad rope”, which helps lower the heavy date bunches safely from



Tabseel is not simply about harvesting — it’s a celebration.

the top of the palm.

Mohammed al Sawai, a young farmer from Jaalan Bani Bu Hassan, reflects: “Even in today’s modern

era, this tradition survives with its charm.” In the past, Mabsali dates were transported by camel caravans from interior villages to Sur, from

where they were exported to India.

Khalid al Farsi, from the Wilayat of Sur, explained: “Omani dates are in steady demand for their unique taste and quality. With modern logistics, it’s become more efficient for farmers and traders alike.” The Al Sharqiyah South Agricultural and Fisheries Wealth Department has confirmed that the Mabsali palm harvest is one of the most significant agricultural events in the governorate.

According to recent ministry statistics, Jaalan Bani Bu Hassan alone has 188,502 palm trees, producing around 12,243 tonnes of dates annually.

Saud al Mukhaini, a resident of Al Kamil W’al Wafi, stated: “Tabseel is about our relationship with the land. Every palm we climb, every bunch we pick, is a story. It’s about pride and purpose.”

SHORT TAKES



73 NEW JOB TITLES FOR HOTEL AND TOURISM SECTOR

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour, has endorsed 73 new professional designations for the hotel and tourist resort sector. This initiative is part of efforts to regulate and develop the tourism sector and enhance the labour market’s readiness to accommodate qualified national competencies in this field. These designations have been incorporated into the unified GCC guide for professional classification and description, where they were categorised and distributed according to the economic activities approved in the tourism sector. This includes hotels, resorts, hotel facilities, rest houses, chalets, heritage inns and guesthouses. These new designations provide employers and tourism establishments with broader options and greater accuracy in identifying their workforce needs, which contributes to improving institutional performance and raising the efficiency of human resources. — ONA

UTAS ACADEMIC COUNCIL HOLDS MEETING

SALALAH: The Academic Council of the University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS) convened its seventh meeting for the 2024/2025 academic year. The council discussed several academic and technical matters, including the approval of the results for 2,500 spring graduates for the 2024/2025 academic year. The council also reviewed the executive status of the university’s inclusion in the QS World University Rankings project, in addition to discussing regulations and requirements related to academic staff positions within the university. Chaired by Dr Said bin Hamad al Rubaie, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Technology and Applied Sciences, Chairman of UTAS Academic Board, the meeting also reviewed updates on the General Foundation Programme, specifically its implementation timeline and the approval of its documentation for the 2025/2026 academic year. — ONA

NATIONAL DEFENCE COLLEGE CELEBRATES GRADUATION OF 12TH COHORT

MUSCAT: The Academy for Strategic and Defence Studies on Tuesday celebrated the graduation of the 12th cohort of the National Defence College. The cohort included senior officers from the Sultan’s Armed Forces (SAF) and other military and security units, alongside officials from various ministries, authorities, government institutions and civil entities. The ceremony was held under the auspices of Dr Said bin Mohammed al Saqri, Minister of Economy, and



The cohort included senior officers from the Sultan’s Armed Forces (SAF) and other military and security units. — ONA

was attended by Maj Gen Hamid bin Ahmed Sakroon, Chairman of the Academy for Strategic and Defence Studies (ASDS). During the event, a visual presentation highlighted the course’s comprehensive curriculum, practical applications, relevant study visits, and lectures and seminars delivered by specialists and decision-makers. Following the presentation, the Minister of Economy distributed certificates to the graduating participants. — ONA

Smart screens in class rooms to better learning

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, JULY 15

EFFORTS are being made to implement the interactive screens project in schools in the Sultanate of Oman as part of the Ministry of Education’s push to promote digital transformation and utilise modern technology in education. This initiative is a key component in creating a modern and engaging digital learning environment. This step aims to activate an interactive learning environment that enhances the quality of the educational process and encourages students to learn through innovative methods. It is aligned with the national digital transformation strategy led by the Ministry of Education, which seeks to equip public schools with interactive screens and effectively integrate them into classrooms to support active learning and enhance the technical skills of both teachers and students. The distribution of interactive screens prioritises schools at the primary education level, considering factors such as school infrastructure readiness, curriculum and educational requirements, student population and educational levels. The goal is to ensure that interactive screens with standardised specifications are available in schools, making it easier for teachers to interact with them during class transitions. Dr Faisal bin Ali al Busaidy, Director-General of the Directorate General of Information Technology, stated, “In preparation for the upcoming academic



Through interactive screens, teachers will be able to deliver engaging lessons that promote deep understanding among students.

year, the ministry is planning to implement various digital transformation projects, including providing interactive screens in over 5,000 classrooms at primary education schools. Additionally, the next academic year will see the launch of projects like the Noor e-learning platform for all schools, virtual science labs, digitisation of curricula, digital atlas, and other initiatives to enhance the use of information and communications technology in education.” This project is anticipated to revolutionise the learning environment in schools by fostering classroom interaction, diversifying teaching methods and utilising multimedia resources to enhance lesson delivery. These efforts align with the ministry’s vision for a modern and integrated digital education system.

Through interactive screens, teachers will be able to deliver engaging lessons that promote deep understanding among students. Multimedia elements such as audio, video and interactive graphics will enhance classroom interaction and encourage active student participation. These screens will also support teachers in utilising innovative educational technologies, simplifying lesson preparation and diversifying teaching and assessment methods. Moreover, interactive screens will help integrate technology into curricula and develop students’ creative thinking and problem-solving skills using interactive tools. They will significantly improve student engagement in the classroom.

Al Minzifah village regains its luster

TEXT & PHOTO BY
YAHYA AL SALMANI

Al Minzifah village, located in the Wilayat of Ibra (160 km from Muscat), is distinguished by its forts, towers and old houses built of plaster and mud. Its facades are decorated with engravings and ornaments, making it one of Oman’s archaeological landmarks. Although most of the village’s buildings have cracked walls and some of their columns have fallen, this has not diminished its identity as a symbol of Oman’s architectural arts. Anyone visiting this village can immediately recognise its historical and architectural significance. Historical sources indicate that it was the commercial centre of Ibra, with its architectural designs featuring shops that underscore the village’s vibrant marketing activity. In addition to its economic value, historical sources indicate that this village has succeeded in attracting many travellers and historians. Some have described it as one of the most beautiful Arab villages, with a unique Islamic and Arab character. In recognition of its historical and economic value, the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism has undertaken a comprehensive, detailed study of this unique village. This study covers the old buildings, the surrounding green oases and



Historical sources indicate that Al Minzifah village was the commercial centre of Ibra.

the revival of traditional crafts still practiced by residents. The ministry seeks to leverage all factors that may contribute to enhancing tourism in the coming period. The development plan also includes ‘Bait Al Derwazah’ one of the oldest houses in the village. It was built on several floors and is distinguished by its exquisite geometric carvings and decorations. The restoration of ‘Bait Al Derwazah’ dates back to 2012, in a deliberate move aimed at encouraging the villagers to restore their old homes. Parts of these houses, which

have been partially destroyed, can be restored and rehabilitated, and then invested in as museums, inns, or cafes. In addition to this house, the village includes other houses called Al Minzifah Palaces, most of which consist of two or three floors, including ‘Bait Al Shareeah’, ‘Bait Al Kabeer’, ‘Bait Al Oud’ and ‘Bait Al Boomah’. As for the date of construction of this village, some sources date it back to the beginning of the Ya’rubi state. The oldest inscriptions on the archaeological buildings in this village date back to 1716.

MINISTRY OF INFORMATION

ANNOUNCEMENT OF ELECTRONIC AUCTION

The Ministry of Information announces the holding of an electronic auction to sell unusable cars, furniture, materials and technical equipment through the Oman Auction platform ([www.mazad.om](#)), according to the following statement:

Statement	Inspection Location	Inspection Date and Time	Electronic Bidding Start Date
Unsuitable Furniture, Materials, and Technical Equipment	Ministry of Information Warehouses 1. Madinat Al Ilam 2. Wilayat Saham 3. Ruwi 4. Wilayat Nizwa	Sunday 20/07/2025 Monday 21/07/2025 From 8:00 AM to 1:00 PM	Wednesday 23/07/2025 To Thursday 24/07/2025
Vehicles	1. Madinat Al Ilam 2. Salalah		

- Entry for inspection will be regulated according to regulations to avoid overcrowding and ensure everyone’s safety.
- To view the terms and conditions and register, visit the website: ([www.mazad.om](#))
- For further inquiries, please contact us via email: ([info@mazad.om](#))

OMAN

SHORT TAKES



The act is deemed a legal offence and is punishable.

REFRAIN FROM DRIVING OVER GREEN PLAINS

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, JULY 15

The Public Prosecution has issued a firm warning to citizens and tourists, urging people to refrain from driving vehicles over the green plains and meadows of Dhofar Governorate during khareef season. The act is deemed a legal offence and is punishable under Article (4) of Local Order No (2/2016), which regulates vehicle movement and public parking in the region.

Authorities say off-road driving across grasslands and mountainous green areas damages fragile vegetation and disturbs the governorate’s ecological balance.

In a recent public advisory, the Public Prosecution highlighted the environmental consequences of such behaviour and emphasised the need for compliance with local laws to preserve Dhofar’s natural heritage.

Local residents have echoed support for stronger environmental protections. Salem bin Nasser al Maashani, a citizen from Salalah, said: “We ask visitors to respect Dhofar’s environment. This greenery is a rare and temporary national treasure that must be safeguarded by everyone.”

Younis bin Issa al Balushi, a visitor from Muscat, welcomed the awareness campaign. “I wasn’t aware that driving on the plains is prohibited,” he said. “Now, with these messages, we better understand the rules and the importance of abiding by them.” Officials confirmed that Dhofar Municipality, in coordination with the Public Prosecution and environmental agencies, will intensify field inspections and awareness campaigns across media platforms throughout the season.

These measures are part of Oman’s broader sustainability goals under Vision 2040, which prioritises the conservation of natural ecosystems and the promotion of responsible, eco-friendly tourism.

YOUR BEST MOMENTS OF KHAREEF CAN BE CAPTURED IN A PHOTO

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabiyousef

Reminisce about your experience at khareef, capture a melancholic moment, or showcase the bountiful nature for a chance to win this khareef season.

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism is dedicated to promoting khareef tourism, while social media groups and photographers are also working to showcase the beauty of the season. They are inviting photographs taken in and around khareef spots during the season and will be awarding the best photographers.

The Salalah Travellers Club, a group of backpackers, in collaboration with private entities, is hosting contests that feature stunning, untouched images of Salalah during its green, misty and rainy season.

“We are encouraging people to visit khareef and capture their best moments here. There are no restrictions on contest entries, which run daily for two months. The response has been amazing, with at least 100 photos submitted by amateurs and professionals each day. It shows the beauty of the governorate and the passion of its visitors,” said Faisal Backer from



The contests are friendly, and only original photos are accepted.

Salalah Travellers Club.

Now in its third year, the photography contest has received praise from the Dhofar Municipality and the khareef executive committee for its efforts. The social media groups have nearly 3,000 members across various groups contributing to the photo pool.

“These contests are friendly, and only original photos are accepted. Entries must be taken between June 21 and August 21, 2025, with no video screenshots allowed. Priority will be given to photos taken on mobile devices, and photographers must include the location and date of each photo,” added Backer.

New branding strategy to elevate Khareef experience

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, JULY 15

Dhofar has introduced a new dual branding strategy that highlights the governorate’s multi-faceted attributes, on the one hand, and tourism and investment-driven appeal, on the other, this was revealed by Dr Ahmed bin Mohsin al Ghassani, Chairman of Dhofar Municipality, during his appearance on Oman TV’s ‘People and Khareef’ programme on Tuesday.

The temporary campaign ‘Dhofar: Land of Glad Tidings’ has been launched in parallel with a comprehensive development strategy composed of six pillars: human capital, environment, economy, society, culture and urban planning.

The governorate’s commercial identity is represented by the ‘Frankincense Route’, a long-term brand rooted in Dhofar’s historical and cultural legacy. It is intended to guide both tourism and investment marketing initiatives across local and international platforms.



DR AHMED BIN MOHSIN AL GHASSANI
Chairman of Dhofar Municipality



For khareef 2025, commercial and event spaces were allocated directly to Omani youth-led enterprises, bypassing traditional bidding processes to ensure local impact.

Dr Al Ghassani explained that Dhofar Municipality initiates planning for the next khareef immediately after the previous season concludes. A dedicated evaluation team from the Youth Committee of Dhofar Governorate, established two years ago, conducts field visits to key tourist locations, engages with visitors and residents, and compiles opinion surveys. The findings are submitted in a detailed report to the Governor of Dhofar, in coordination with stakeholders from all sectors, to inform next season’s planning.

He also highlighted a number of high-impact initiatives, including road enhancements, traffic flow improvements and the development of new seafronts. Notable among them are: the waterfront at Dahariz and the seafront at Awqad. Some contracts have already been awarded, while others are nearing final signature stages.

Additional upgrades are planned for long-overlooked tourist sites, with a strong focus on maintaining Dhofar’s ecological character.

Dr Al Ghassani reaffirmed the municipality’s commitment to sustainable development. “We do

not pursue construction projects that compromise the environment,” he stated. “Our vision is to adapt the natural environment to serve people while preserving it for future generations.”

A national task force was formed to address seasonal environmental concerns, such as mosquito proliferation and heavy fog. The task force includes representatives from government agencies and universities. Initial pilot trials have yielded promising results, with ongoing assessments to ensure safety and scalability.

To better understand visitor motivations, Dhofar Municipality launched a social media campaign. The interactive initiative has generated widespread public engagement. According to Dr Al Ghassani, early responses highlight three recurring themes: nature, the people and the community.

He explained that this initiative is part of a broader strategy led by the Office of the Governor of Dhofar, in line with the Royal Directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik — issued after visitor numbers exceeded one million during last year’s khareef.

MINISTRY OF INFORMATION

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Dhofar Municipality implements internal road projects worth over RO 36 million

SALALAH: Dhofar Municipality is implementing a package of projects for the construction and paving of internal and dual carriageways across various wilayats of Dhofar Governorate during 2025, with total lengths estimated at over 300 kilometres and a cost exceeding RO 36 million.

These efforts are part of its commitment to enhancing infrastructure and developing the local road network.

The projects fall within the framework of the Governorates and Sustainable Cities Development Programme and the developmental projects implemented by Dhofar Municipality, in line with the national priorities of Oman Vision 2040. They aim to improve the quality of services provided to citizens, residents and visitors, and to facilitate movement between different residential areas, thereby supporting urban and economic development and enhancing traffic safety.

The ongoing and completed works during the current year include the construction and paving of internal roads in the wilayats of Salalah, Taqah, Mirbat, Sadah, Shaleem and Al Hallaniyat Islands, Thamrait, Maqshin, Al Mazyouna, Rakhyouit and Dhalkout, according



The projects fall within the framework of the Governorates and Sustainable Cities Development Programme. - ONA

to a timetable and technical standards that consider public safety requirements and infrastructure sustainability.

Dr Ahmed bin Mohsin al Ghassani, Chairman of Dhofar Municipality, stated to Oman News Agency (ONA) that the Wilayat of Salalah is witnessing the implementation of internal road totalling approximately 161 kilometres in residential areas within the centre of the wilayat, the plain and the mountain, at a cost exceeding RO 9 million. Additionally, there is a dual carriageway project of Sultan Qaboos Street, with a length of

9 kilometres, which has reached 22 per cent completion, at a cost of RO 16.3 million.

He also indicated that the municipality has begun implementing a project to pave 32 kilometres of internal roads in the Wilayat of Taqah (in the plain and mountain areas) at a cost of approximately RO 1.7 million, in addition to paving 20 kilometres of roads in the Wilayat of Mirbat at a cost of about RO 995,000, alongside the completion of the Mirbat Street dualisation project this year, spanning 3.5 kilometres, at an estimated cost of RO 1.96 million. — ONA

SHORT TAKES



The programmes target individuals aged 15 to 34 in all governorates. — ONA

PROGRAMMES LOOK AT AGRICULTURAL, MARITIME SECTORS

MUSCAT: The Youth Centre, in partnership with the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (Riyada), has launched a package of entrepreneurial programmes aimed at developing youth skills across various sectors, including agriculture, maritime affairs, logistics, technology and handicrafts.

These youth programmes target individuals aged 15 to 34 in all governorates of the Sultanate of Oman, with each governorate hosting programmes tailored to its specific nature.

The Agricultural Entrepreneurship Programme aims to equip young people with entrepreneurial skills in the agricultural sector and introduce them to promising opportunities within this field. Meanwhile, the Maritime Entrepreneurship Programme seeks to develop entrepreneurial skills among youth in the maritime domain by leveraging Oman's natural resources and strategic location.

In the technical field, the Technology Entrepreneurship Programme focuses on enabling participants to invest their technological skills and transform them into scalable tech projects. — ONA

Workshop highlights incentives, start-up index

SIHAM AL SAIDI
SUHAR, JULY 15

In a continued effort to enhance investment awareness and support the growth of high-potential businesses, Al Batinah North branch of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry organised an introductory workshop on the promotional campaign for the Incentive Programme and Promising Start-ups Index.

This initiative was launched by the Muscat Stock Exchange in collaboration with the National Programme for Fiscal Sustainability and Financial Sector Development 'Etidama'.

The workshop provided an overview of the objectives of the Incentive Programme and the Promising Start-ups Index, as well as the incentives available to closed and family-owned companies. It also covered the regulatory and technical requirements for transitioning to companies listed on the Muscat Stock Exchange.

The goal of this initiative is to promote integration among financial institutions, encourage small and medium enterprises to participate in capital markets, and foster the adoption of modern management and financing practices. This will help improve the business environment and drive sustainable economic growth in the Sultanate of Oman.

The workshop brought together entrepreneurs, investors and business leaders from the region and was graced



The workshop provided an overview of the objectives of the incentives available to closed and family-owned companies.

by the presence of Eng Said bin Ali al Abri, Chairman of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Al Batinah North Governorate branch.

The participants were introduced to the objectives and benefits of the incentive programme, with a focus on how it supports closed and family-owned companies in their transition to public listing on the Muscat Stock Exchange.

A detailed presentation of the three key listing pathways available under the programme was a major highlight for entrepreneurs. The first path is the Public Joint-Stock Company Path, which is tailored for private and family-owned firms with a market value exceeding RO 10 million.

This path allows these companies to access the main stock exchange and explore wider investment opportunities.

The second path is the Promising Companies Market Path, which targets small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)

and start-ups with a market value above RO 500,000. This sub-market under the Muscat Stock Exchange serves as a platform for emerging companies to expand, gain visibility and attract investors.

The third path focuses on transitioning to Closed Joint-Stock Companies, aimed at limited liability companies with a value above RO 500,000 and employing more than 20 Omanis. This pathway supports their evolution into more structured, scalable and investment-ready entities.

Majida al Hinaï, Project Manager of the Incentive Programme at Estidama, emphasised the national significance of the initiative, stating: “Launching this promotional campaign underscores our commitment to engaging underscores our commitment to engaging companies across all governorates. It is a strategic opportunity to empower businesses, enhance governance practices, and contribute to a more resilient and diversified national economy.”

Dhofar concludes creativity competition for clubs

SALALAH: *The second stage of the 10th edition of the Cultural Creativity Competition for Clubs concluded on Tuesday at the Sultan Qaboos Youth Complex for Culture and Entertainment in Salalah.*

Clubs from across Dhofar Governorate participated in the competition, which aims to

activate institutional work within clubs.

Musa bin Abdullah al Qassabi, Director-General of the Directorate-General of Culture, Sports and Youth in Dhofar, affirmed that the tenth edition of the Cultural Creativity Competition for Clubs features numerous categories targeting age groups. — ONA



TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Nama Electricity Supply Company S.A.O.C invites interested companies to participate in the following tender

Tender No.	Description	Last Date of Buying	Date of Submission	Grade	Tender Price (OMR)
NESC/2025/020	Compliance check against Oman Investment Authority Policies and Guidelines.	23/07/2025	30/07/2025	Specialist	Free cost

The table below shows the instructions for participation: -

Participation	- Companies registered with Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion may obtain Tender documents. - To obtain the tender document and payment procedure, please visit https://supply.nama.om , under NESCVENDOR/ E-Tender
Enquiries	- Any inquiry can be sent to procurement@supply.nama.om, using the inquiry form found in the tender document (05) Five working days before bid submission date. - Any request for clarification received after the above-mentioned period will not be considered.
Tender Submission	Please follow SUBMISSION OF TENDER and supplier guidelines available at NESCV Website https://supply.nama.om, under NESCVENDOR/ E-Tender.
Terms and Conditions	- The Tender shall be valid for a period of (90) days from the last date of tender submission including any extension thereof. - If the submission date extended, the bank guarantee or a certified cheque shall be extended in accordance with the bid extension date. - NESC is not bound to accept the lowest (or highest) Tenderer. - Preference of awarding the tender will be given to those bidders who achieved a high percentage of purchasing from Local Products and have a High-level percentage of Organization - NESC gives priority to award the projects to SMEs companies. - Failure to comply with the instructions in tender document may lead to disqualification.



Nama Electricity Supply Company SAOC
PO Box 1239, PC 131, Sultanate of Oman
Tel: +968 24250800 | CR 1712357
records@supply.nama.om | www.supply.nama.om





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Government Development Bonds

On behalf of the Government of the Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Finance, the Central Bank of Oman announces the 75th issuance of Government Development Bonds (GDBs) to be auctioned. The 75th issuance of GDBs will be issued on Thursday, 24th of July 2025, carrying a coupon rate of 4.3% per annum for a maturity period of 3 years (maturing on 24th of July 2028). These Bonds will be auctioned and priced on Tuesday, 22nd of July 2025. Investors may apply for these Bonds through licensed commercial banks by completing the application form.

Security of Capital

The GDBs are direct and unconditional obligations of the Government of the Sultanate of Oman.

Steady Returns

Interest shall accrue from the date of issuance and will be paid semi-annually on the 24th of July and 24th of January of every year until maturity. The first payment will be made on 24th January 2028. Interest payments will cease once the Bond matures.

Liquidity

The bonds will be listed and can be traded before maturity in the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) at the prevailing market price.

Collateral Advantage

The Bonds can be used as collateral security to obtain loans from any licensed commercial bank.

Who Can Invest?

The 75th issuance of GDBs is offered to all categories of investors, residents and non-residents (irrespective of their nationalities).

How to buy the bonds?

Investors may obtain bonds through any licensed commercial bank operating in the Sultanate of Oman, upon the submission of an eligible application form. Investors must provide their MCD Investor Code in the application form.

Bank Account Details

The investor must provide the same Bank Account details registered with Muscat Clearing and Depository Co. S.A.O.C. (MCD).

MCD Investor Code

Anyone without an MCD Investor Code can obtain it from MCD's website (www.mcd.gov.om) or via the Oman Stocks app at least one day before applying through the commercial bank.

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Tel: +968 24822222
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75th

Issuance

Open: Tuesday, July 15th, 2025

Close: Monday, July 21st, 2025

Auction: Tuesday, July 22nd, 2025

The minimum subscription amount

RO 100

To view the prospectus for the 75th issuance of GDBs, please visit the following websites:

Ministry of Finance | www.mof.gov.om
Central Bank of Oman | www.cbo.gov.om

Contact the Central Bank of Oman (Market Operations Department) or any commercial licensed bank for details.

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WORLD

COOPERATION TALKS



Chinese President Xi Jinping meets Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov in Beijing. — Reuters

CHINA’S XI VOWS GREATER SUPPORT IN LAVROV MEETING

BEIJING: Chinese President Xi Jinping told Russia’s top diplomat on Tuesday that their countries should “strengthen mutual support”, state media said, as foreign ministers gathered in Beijing for Shanghai Cooperation Organisation talks. Beijing has long sought to present the SCO as a counterweight to Western-led power blocs such as Nato and has pushed for greater collaboration between its 10 members.

Top diplomats from the grouping have arrived in Beijing for a meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers, including Russia’s Sergei Lavrov, India’s Subrahmanyam Jaishankar and Iran’s Abbas Araghchi.

Meeting Lavrov in the Chinese capital, Xi said the two countries should “strengthen mutual support on multilateral forums”, according to state news agency Xinhua.

Beijing and Moscow should work to “unite countries of the global South and promote the development of the international order in a more just and reasonable direction”, Xi said.

Russia’s foreign ministry said in an earlier statement that “a number of issues of bilateral political contacts at the highest and high levels were discussed”. They included preparations for President Vladimir Putin’s visit to China to join a SCO summit and World War II anniversary celebrations. Russia’s TASS news agency reported that Xi met Lavrov after the Chinese president held a “general meeting” with SCO foreign ministers.

The meeting and pledges of support came just hours after US President Donald Trump warned Russia that he will impose “very severe” tariffs against Moscow’s remaining trade partners if it doesn’t resolve its war in Ukraine within 50 days. China, a diplomatic and economic ally of Moscow, in response said “coercion” by the United States would not resolve the conflict.

“China firmly opposes all illegal unilateral sanctions and long-arm jurisdiction. There are no winners in a tariff war, and coercion and pressure will not solve problems,” Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Lin Jian said.

Lavrov met on Sunday with his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi to discuss Ukraine and relations with the United States.

Beijing claims to be neutral in the war but it has never denounced Russia’s more than three-year military campaign, nor called for it to withdraw its troops. Xi noted on Tuesday that “political mutual trust among member states has deepened”, according to state broadcaster CCTV.

The SCO “has successfully explored a path of regional cooperation that aligns with the trends of the times and meets the needs of all parties, setting a model for a new type of international relations,” Xi said. — AFP

INDIA ORDERS AIRLINES TO CHECK FUEL SWITCHES ON BOEING JETS

NEW DELHI: India has ordered its airlines to examine fuel switches on several Boeing models after they came under scrutiny following last month’s crash of an Air India jet which killed 260 people. A preliminary report, issued by India’s Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau on Saturday, found that the switches had flipped from run position to cutoff shortly after takeoff. The report did not offer any conclusions or apportion blame for the June 12 disaster, but indicated

that one pilot asked the other why he cut off fuel, and the second pilot responded that he had not. India’s Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) issued the order on Monday to investigate the locking feature on the fuel control switches of several Boeing models, including 787s and 737s. The order came after Boeing notified operators that the fuel switch locks on its jets were safe. But it was in line with a Special Airworthiness Information Bulletin

(SAIB) issued by the US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) in 2018, which recommended inspection of the locks to ensure they could not be moved accidentally. “It has come to the notice of DGCA, that several operators — internationally as well as domestic — have initiated inspection on their aircraft fleet as per the SAIB,” DGCA said in a statement. In view of the SAIB, all airline operators of the affected aircraft must complete the inspection by July 21. — AFP

Israel conducts strikes on Syrian forces in Sweida

ISRAEL staged strikes on Tuesday against Syrian government forces in the Druze-majority region of Sweida, saying it was acting to protect the minority. Damascus had deployed troops to Sweida after clashes between Druze fighters and Bedouin tribes killed more than 100 people. Israel announced its strikes shortly after Syria’s defence minister declared a ceasefire in Sweida city, with government forces having entered the city in the morning. While most Druze religious leaders supported the deployment, at least one senior figure called for armed resistance.

“Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defence Minister Israel Katz have instructed the Israeli military to immediately strike regime forces and weaponry that were brought into the Sweida region... in order to carry out operations against the Druze,” a joint statement said. “We are acting to prevent the Syrian regime from harming them and to ensure the demilitarisation of the area adjacent to our border with Syria,” it added.

In a statement shortly after, the Israeli military said it had begun hitting military vehicles in the area. Syrian state media also reported strikes. Israel, which has its own Druze population, has sought to portray itself as a defender of the minority group since the overthrow of longtime president Bashar al Assad in December. It also says it will not allow a Syrian military presence south of Damascus. Analysts, however, say Israel is



Smoke billows amid Israeli strikes and Syrians' clashes in the city of Sweida. — AFP



To all units operating within the city of Sweida, we declare a complete ceasefire after an agreement with the city’s notables and dignitaries. We will respond only to sources of fire and deal with any targeting by outlaw groups.

MURHAF ABU QASRA

using the Druze as a pretext for intervention. Damascus, which recently entered diplomatic talks with Israel, did not immediately comment on the strikes.

“To all units operating within the city of Sweida, we declare a complete ceasefire after an agreement with the city’s notables and dignitaries,” Defence Minister Murhaf Abu Qasra posted on X shortly before midday. “We will respond only to sources of fire and deal with any targeting by outlaw groups,” he added. Druze representatives gathered at the residence of key leader Sheikh Youssef Jarbough to discuss implementing the ceasefire, a source close to the participants said.

A correspondent at a city entrance said gunfire subsided after the ceasefire announcement. A photographer saw government troops waving the Syrian flag atop

a roundabout. They had earlier reported clashes as government forces entered the city, with Druze spiritual leaders having sent conflicting messages before their arrival. Most had welcomed the deployment, but the influential Sheikh Hikmat al Hijri changed his stance and called in a statement for “resisting this brutal campaign by all available means”.

A curfew was to be imposed on the southern city in a bid to halt the violence, which erupted at the weekend and has since spread across Sweida governorate. The defence ministry urged people to “stay home and report any movements of outlaw groups”. Abu Qasra said defence ministry units were undertaking “combing operations” in Sweida city and would hand the areas over to the forces of the interior ministry once they were completed. — AFP



WEST BANK SEEING LARGEST DISPLACEMENT

GENEVA: The UN warned on Tuesday that mass displacement in the West Bank had hit levels not seen since the start of Israel’s occupation of the Palestinian territory nearly 60 years ago. The United Nations said an Israeli military operation launched in the north of the occupied territory in January had displaced tens of thousands of people, raising concerns about possible “ethnic cleansing”.

The military operation “has been the longest since ... the second Intifada”, in the early 2000s, said Juliette Touma, spokeswoman for the UN agency for Palestinian refugees. “It is impacting several refugee camps in the area, and it is causing the largest population displacement of the Palestinians in the West Bank since 1967,” she told reporters in Geneva via video from Jordan, referring to the six-day Arab-Israeli war that led to Israel’s occupation of the West Bank.

The UN rights office meanwhile warned that mass forced displacement by an occupation force could amount to “ethnic cleansing”. Since Israel’s military launched its operation “Iron Wall” in the north of the West Bank in January. — AFP

ARMED BANDIT GANGS

Gunmen kill 27 in restive central Nigeria



Gunmen killed 27 people in north-central Nigeria’s Plateau state, in the latest bout of violence in the restive region, local sources said on Tuesday. Plateau state, like other parts of Nigeria’s Middle Belt region, has long suffered deadly farmer-herder clashes over land and natural resources, as well as violence meted out by gangs of armed criminals known as “bandits”. Resident Haggai Gankis said that the attackers went into the settlement of Jebu-Rahoss. — AFP

MOUNTING ANGER

Amnesty slams Kenyan leader’s call



Amnesty International slammed a call by the Kenyan president to shoot protesters, saying it would fuel more violence. The demonstrations have shaken the country and Ruto said protesters “should be shot in the leg”. Amnesty International’s Kenya director Irungu Houghton said Ruto’s comments were “unlawful”. “It is extremely dangerous for politicians to instruct police officers... on how to conduct policing during protests” — AFP

FACILITIES ATTACKS

Drone attack shuts US-run oil field in Iraq



A drone strike on Tuesday forced a US company to suspend operations at an oil field in Iraq’s Kurdistan region, the latest in a string of attacks targeting the region’s energy facilities. The Kurdistan Regional Government said the Sarsang oil field in Duhok province was hit, denouncing the strike “an act of terrorism against the Kurdistan Region’s vital economic infrastructure”. The attack followed similar drone strikes on an airport hosting US troops. — AFP

SHORT TAKES



A person is detained by riot police officers, in Torre Pacheco, Spain. — Reuters

SEVERAL HURT IN ANTI-MIGRANT UNREST IN SPAIN

MADRID: Several people were hurt in a second night of anti-migrant unrest in the Spanish town of Torre Pacheco after a pensioner was beaten up, authorities said. Despite a major police presence, groups armed with batons roamed the streets looking for foreign-origin people, regional newspaper La Opinion de Murcia reported.

The regional government did not say how many people were injured but stated that at least one person had been arrested for the violence. The unrest erupted after a 68-year-old man told Spanish media he was beaten up in the street on Wednesday by three youths of North African origin.

The town hall organised a demonstration that was intended to be peaceful but where far-right elements shouted anti-migrant slogans. One group, named “Deport Them Now”, posted a message on social media calling for attacks against people of North African origin. Spanish authorities launched an appeal for calm in the town of around 36,000 people. Spain’s Youth Minister Sira Rego, a member of the extreme left wing party Sumar, condemned the violence against migrants in a message on Bluesky, blaming the role of the “ultra-right” in the unrest. — AFP

PROBE OVER GRAND CANYON FIRE



Arizona’s governor has demanded an investigation into why a wildfire that destroyed a historic lodge and dozens of other structures on the North Rim of the Grand Canyon was allowed to burn for a week before federal firefighters tried to put it out. The wind-driven wildfire burned down the Grand Canyon Lodge late on Saturday night or in the early hours of Sunday. The lightning-sparked fire has destroyed up to 80 other structures including cabins, park administrative buildings and visitor facilities. — Reuters

EU THREATENS TO HALT GEORGIA VISA-FREE VISITS OVER CRACKDOWN

BRUSSELS: The EU on Tuesday warned it could suspend visa-free visits for Georgians over the government’s crackdown on opposition and “democratic backsliding”.

“We will have today a letter sent to Georgia also regarding the visa free-regime,” said EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas. “So, they have certain conditions that they had to comply with, and if these conditions are not met within that deadline, then we will have to suspend the

visa-free regime.” Kallas did not give details on the deadline set by the letter.

Brussels has slammed the authorities in the South Caucasus state for a wave of arrests targeting politicians, activists, and journalists critical of the ruling party.

The EU has said the moves from the government — along with laws clamping down on civil society — have derailed Georgia from its longstanding EU membership bid. EU nations have been pushing to

take action against the authorities and a proposal to sanction judges over the jailing of opposition figures is on the table.

But opposition from Hungary — an ally of the ruling Georgian Dream party — has so far stymied EU efforts to punish the authorities. Visa-free travel for Georgians to the Schengen area was introduced in 2017 has been one of the most tangible benefits of its efforts to draw closer to the bloc.

— AFP

UN demands justice in Ukraine, as deaths spike

THE United Nations insisted on Tuesday that any peace talks on Russia’s war in Ukraine must include full accountability for the conflict’s litany of violations, following the deadliest month for civilians since May 2022. The call from UN rights chief Volker Turk came the day after US President Donald Trump told Moscow to end the war within 50 days or face massive new economic sanctions.

Trump also laid out plans for infusions of weaponry for Kyiv via Nato.

In recent weeks, Trump has shown increasing frustration with Russian President Vladimir Putin, with Moscow stepping up attacks rather than stopping them. “An immediate ceasefire is needed now to end this unbearable suffering,” Liz Throssell, a spokeswoman for Turk’s office, told a media briefing. “Work on a lasting peace, in line with international law, must intensify — a peace that ensures accountability for gross violations of international human rights law and serious violations of international humanitarian law.” Rather than being sidelined or overlooked, “any move towards ceasefire, towards peace — accountability must be at its heart”, she added.

Throssell said Turk wanted any negotiations to focus in the immediate term on ending attacks that affect civilians and protecting the rights of people in occupied territory. They should also seek to return forcibly transferred or deported children, establish humanitarian corridors across the line of control and an bring end to the torture and ill treatment of prisoners of war and other detainees, she said.

Russia launched the full-scale attack of its neighbour in February 2022.

Moscow has unleashed record waves of drone and missile attacks over the past few weeks, with the number of Ukrainian civilians killed or wounded in June hitting a three-year high, according to UN figures, with 232 people killed and 1,343 injured. “July has brought no respite for civilians in Ukraine,” said Throssell. So far this month at least 139 civilians have reportedly been killed and 791 wounded, she said, citing the



An unmanned ground vehicle is photographed during a military training organised by Ukrainian soldiers, in Kyiv region. — AFP

“intense and successive waves of missile and drone strikes” launched by Russian forces.

“Intense and sustained attacks using explosive weapons with wide area effects in populated areas are likely to have indiscriminate impacts and as such raise serious concerns as to their compliance with international humanitarian law,” said Throssell. The UN human rights office has so far been able to verify and document at least 13,580 civilians killed and 34,115 wounded since the Russian attack began but acknowledges that the full figures will be far higher.

Meanwhile, the Kremlin warned on Tuesday that US President Donald Trump’s pledge of more weapons for Kyiv and threat of sanctions targeting Russian trading partners could embolden Ukraine and further delay already stalled peace efforts. Trump a day earlier gave Russia 50 days to strike a peace deal with Ukraine, voicing fresh frustration with Moscow as he laid out an arrangement with Nato to supply Kyiv with new military aid sponsored by the alliance’s members.

The Republican forced Moscow and Kyiv

to open peace talks to end the conflict, now in its fourth year, but Russia has rejected calls for a ceasefire and launched a record number of drones and missiles at Ukraine in recent months. Moscow said it needed more time to respond fully to Trump’s statement, but hinted it did not appear conducive to successful negotiations. “It seems that such a decision made in Washington and in Nato countries and directly in Brussels will be perceived by Kyiv not as a signal for peace but for the continuation of the war,” Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters. “President Trump’s statement is very serious. We certainly need time to analyse what was said in Washington,” he told reporters in Moscow’s first reaction to the comments.

Two rounds of talks between Russia and Ukraine, held in Türkiye in recent months, have made no progress towards ending the fighting and yielded only large-scale prisoner exchanges. Tens of thousands have been killed since Russia launched its offensive, with millions forced to flee their homes in eastern and southern Ukraine, which has been decimated by aerial attacks and ground assaults. — AFP

Astronauts from India, Poland, Hungary return from space station

LOS ANGELES: NASA retiree turned private astronaut Peggy Whitson splashed down safely in the Pacific early on Tuesday after her fifth trip to the International Space Station, joined by crewmates from India, Poland and Hungary returning from their countries’ first ISS mission.

A SpaceX Crew Dragon capsule carrying the four-member team parachuted into calm seas off the Southern California coast at around 2:30 a.m. PDT (0930 GMT) following a fiery reentry through Earth’s atmosphere that capped a 22-hour descent from orbit.

The return flight concluded the fourth ISS mission organized by Texas-based startup Axiom Space in collaboration with SpaceX, the private rocket venture of billionaire Elon Musk headquartered near Los Angeles. The return was carried live by a joint SpaceX-Axiom webcast. Two sets of parachutes, visible through the darkness and light fog

with infrared cameras, slowed the capsule’s final descent to about 15 mph (24 kph) moments before its splashdown off San Diego. Minutes earlier, the spacecraft had been streaking like a mechanical meteor through Earth’s lower atmosphere, generating enough frictional heat to send temperatures outside the capsule soaring to 1,927 degrees Celsius. The astronauts’ flight suits are designed to keep them cool as the cabin heats up.

The Axiom-4 crew was led by Whitson, 65, who retired from NASA in 2018 after a pioneering career that included becoming the U.S. space agency’s first female chief astronaut and the first woman ever to command an ISS expedition. She radioed to mission control that the crew was “happy to be back” moments after their return. A recovery ship was immediately dispatched to secure the capsule and hoist it from the ocean onto



Axiom-4 astronauts are pictured in the spaceship. — Reuters file photo

the deck of the vessel. The crew members were to be extricated from the capsule one by one and undergo medical checkups before

the recovery vessel ferries them to shore, a process expected to take about an hour.

Now director of human

spaceflight for Axiom, Whitson has now logged 695 days in space, a US record, during three previous NASA missions, a fourth flight to orbit as commander of the Axiom-2 crew in 2023 and her fifth mission to the ISS commanding Axiom-4. Rounding out the Axiom-4 crew were Shubhanshu Shukla, 39, of India, Slawosz Uznanski-Wisniewski, 41, of Poland, and Tibor Kapu, 33, of Hungary.

They returned with a cargo of science samples from more than 60 microgravity experiments conducted during their 18-day visit to the ISS and due for shipment to researchers back on Earth for final analysis. For India, Poland and Hungary, the launch marked the first human spaceflight of each country in more than 40 years and the first mission ever to send astronauts from their government’s respective space programmes to the ISS. — Reuters

OPINION

Reimagining translation studies in Oman



GHAITH AL HIKMANI

The author is MA student in Translation, Sultan Qaboos University

In the last two decades, Oman has witnessed a growing demand for high-quality translation and interpretation services, driven by rapid globalisation, increasing government engagement in international diplomacy and the country’s strategic vision under Oman Vision 2040. This rise underscores the urgent need to reassess how Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) prepare translators to meet both linguistic and technological demands.

Recent research reveals a disconnect between academic training in Oman’s universities and the real-world expectations of employers and translation clients. As the profession evolves, particularly through AI and digital transformation, HEIs must modernise their curricula, pedagogy and assessment strategies to reflect current industry needs.

While translation is often associated with commercial language service providers (LSPs), in Oman it is increasingly embedded within institutional contexts. Ministries, universities, media outlets and judicial bodies frequently require in-house translation. However, a recent study conducted by Omani researchers shows that institutional translation practices often lack standardisation and quality control. Many public bodies rely on bilingual staff rather than professionally trained translators, which risks inconsistency, particularly in sensitive or technical contexts.

Despite the profession’s growing relevance, studies at institutions like the University of Nizwa indicate that many translation students face challenges with core linguistic

competencies, especially translating from English into Arabic. Errors in syntax and journalistic language remain common. Survey findings further show that many students find existing translation courses overly theoretical, disconnected from professional realities and lacking specialisation in fields such as legal or media translation. To address this, HEIs should adopt task-based, practice-oriented pedagogies that expose students to authentic translation briefs, revision processes and performance-based assessments. Technology has also transformed the translation landscape. A recent study at Sultan Qaboos University found that many EFL students use AI and machine translation (MT) tools like Google Translate, DeepL, and ChatGPT for both learning and translating. While students benefit from their speed and accessibility, they also recognise their limitations regarding tone and contextual accuracy. Crucially, many students lack training in computer-assisted translation (CAT) tools and post-editing techniques — skills now essential in the industry. Translation departments must therefore offer courses in CAT tools, AI-assisted translation and post-editing practices. In today’s market, digital literacy is no longer optional — it is a core competency.

A nationwide study on practical training and job readiness found a strong link between real-world translation experience and professional success. Yet many students reported limited internship opportunities and weak institutional engagement. HEIs must institutionalise internships and service-

By reforming curricula, investing in technological training, embedding real-world experiences and working closely with industry, Oman’s HEIs can ensure their graduates are not only employable but also positioned to support Oman’s multilingual communication and global engagement.

learning components within translation programmes. Such collaborations offer an added advantage: they enable HEIs to co-develop curricula that remain responsive to labour market needs. Gathering feedback from employers and alumni ensures that graduates are equipped with relevant and future-proof skills. Across the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), attention is growing around translation education quality — especially in adopting technology and aligning programmes with employability frameworks. Bibliometric studies show a steady rise in research on translation pedagogy and curriculum reform, suggesting regional momentum.

Institutions like Sultan Qaboos University, University of Nizwa and Al Zahra College are well-placed to lead in this area by developing interdisciplinary programmes that combine language, ethics, technology and institutional practice. Moreover, embedding soft skills training, such as critical thinking, time management and teamwork, is essential to prepare students for the collaborative and deadline-driven nature of today’s industry.

By reforming curricula, investing in technological training, embedding real-world experiences and working closely with industry, Oman’s HEIs can ensure their graduates are not only employable but also positioned to support Oman’s multilingual communication and global engagement.

It is time to reimagine translation education — not as an academic formality, but as a national strategy vital to development, diplomacy and digital progress.

WHO ARE THE MIDDLE EAST’S DRUZE MINORITY?

BEIRUT: The Druze are a prominent religious community of more than a million people spread across Syria, Lebanon and Israel, who for centuries have sought to preserve a distinct identity.

In Syria, Druze fighters have clashed both with neighbouring Bedouin tribes and with forces loyal to the government, as they have struggled to find their place in the new order ushered in by the December overthrow of longtime president Bashar al Assad. Israel’s bombardment of government forces deployed to the community’s Sweida province following the latest unrest has further complicated Druze relations with the government.

Israel says it is acting to protect the minority community, a claim challenged by most Druze outside Israel as well as the Damascus authorities.

The Druze are monotheistic and call themselves “muwahhidun”, or unitarians. The sect is highly secretive. It does not allow new converts and marriage outside the community is strongly discouraged. A source familiar with Druze rituals, requesting anonymity to discuss matters considered sensitive, said the faith’s emergence was influenced by other religious and philosophical teachings, including those of Greek philosopher Plato.Traditional Druze garb is black, with men wearing white caps or turbans and women covering their heads and part of their faces with a flowing white scarf. “The Druze don’t really recognise borders,” said Makram Rabah of the American University of Beirut.

Before civil war erupted in Syria in 2011, the community was estimated to number around 700,000. According to “The Druze Faith” by historian Sami Makarem, Druze have been migrating to southern Syria since the 16th century, to an area now known as Jabal Al Druze, meaning Druze Mountain, in Sweida province.

In Israel, some 153,000 Druze are Israeli citizens, living mainly in the north. Unlike other Arab Israelis, Druze serve in the Israeli army.

Well-known Druze include prominent human rights lawyer Amal Alamuddin Clooney and Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi.

Druze leaders have declared their loyalty to a united Syria, though some have called for international protection. The Druze largely stayed on the sidelines of the Syrian civil war, focusing on defending their heartland. — AFP

Trump sours on Putin, but bromance ain’t over

SHAUN TANDON

EVER since his political rise a decade ago, Donald Trump has sung the praises of Vladimir Putin — the Russian president was a “strong leader” who, perhaps more important, would often say “very good things” about him.

With his announcement on Monday of new arms for Ukraine via Europe and tariff threats on Russia, Trump’s bromance with Putin has hit a new low — but it may not have run its course. Trump, who had vowed to end the Ukraine war within a day of returning to the White House, said he was “disappointed” in Putin, who has kept attacking Ukraine as if the leaders’ telephone conversations “didn’t mean anything.” “I go home, I tell the first lady, ‘You know, I spoke to Vladimir today, we had a wonderful conversation. She said, ‘Oh really? Another city was just hit.’” “I don’t want to say he’s an assassin, but he’s a tough guy. It’s been proven over the years. He’s fooled a lot of people,” Trump said. Trump quickly rejected that he was among those fooled and again insisted that the 2022 war of Ukraine was the fault of his predecessor Joe Biden, who championed a hard line on Russia. Brandishing his favourite weapon, Trump gave Russia 50 days to comply before facing 100 per cent tariffs on countries that purchase from Russia, but stopped short of backing a bill before Congress for up to 500 per cent tariffs.

Russia’s own trade with the US has slowed down a trickle. Trump had “promised that he could get



Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin are seen during the G20 leaders summit in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in 2018. — Reuters

Trump, who had vowed to end the Ukraine war within a day of returning to the White House, said he was “disappointed” in Putin, who has kept attacking Ukraine as if the leaders’ telephone conversations “didn’t mean anything.

Putin to the negotiating table, and he has failed to do that,” said Heather Conley, a former State Department policymaker on Russia now at the conservative American Enterprise Institute. Trump stunned European allies on February 28 when he publicly berated Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky at the White House, telling him he was ungrateful for billions of dollars in weapons under Biden.

For the US president, a transactional-minded businessman, Putin committed a key offense — undermining Trump’s self-image as a deal-maker. “For six months, President Trump tried to entice Putin to the table. The attacks have gone up, not down,” Senator Lindsey Graham, a Trump ally who has led the push for tough new sanctions on

Russia, told CBS News show “Face The Nation.” “One of the biggest miscalculations Putin has made is to play Trump,” Graham said. Yet Trump has repeatedly shown a willingness to trust Putin, despite firm warnings from within the US government.

Most famously, he sided with Putin over US intelligence at a 2018 news conference after they met in Helsinki after the Russian president denied meddling to support Trump in his first election. For observers of Putin, the longest-serving leader in Moscow since Stalin, there was never much chance he would accept compromise on Ukraine or work with the West.

Putin has rued the demise of Russia’s influence with the fall of the Soviet Union as a historic calamity and rejected the idea that Ukraine has its own identity. With Russia making small but steady gains on the battlefield and bringing in North Korean troops, Putin has put his entire country on war footing, Conley said. “The Kremlin has thrown everything into this,” she said. “Putin believes that this is just going to be a slow erosion of Ukraine’s position and the West’s position, and he will win this conflict on its own merits,” she said. Mark Montgomery, a retired US rear admiral and Senate policy aide, said Putin believed in what has been referred to as TACO — Trump Always Chickens Out.

Putin “thought he could take it to the limit each time, and he found out he was wrong,” said Montgomery, a senior fellow at the Foundation for Defence of Democracies, a hawkish research group. “I don’t think this stops until Putin feels either weapons system pain or economic pain that he cannot sustain.” — AFP

Explore the Gulf with a single tourist visa



SAMUEL KUTTY

The writer is a freelance journalist and author who worked in Oman and India

A significant step towards enhanced regional integration in tourism, digital economy and security, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries are set to roll out a unified Gulf visa by the end of 2025.

Dubbed the GCC Grand Tours Visa, this historic initiative aims to facilitate tourist movement in the region. It has garnered consensus from Gulf nations and international support, drawing inspiration from the European Schengen visa model.

The unified tourist visa was a key topic at the 39th meeting of the GCC Passport Directors-General, recently held at the General Secretariat headquarters in Riyadh. “The unified visa reflects the vision of our leaders to strengthen cooperation,” the GCC Secretary-General Jassem al Budaiwi said after the meeting.

This visa allows its holder to enter the Sultanate of Oman, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the UAE, Kuwait and Bahrain without the need to obtain separate visas for each country.

According to details available so far, the visa is designed to allow travellers to choose between a single-country visa and a multi-country option. This change aims to simplify the planning and execution of multi-country trips across the Gulf region. However, it does not include provisions for employment or long-term stay.

While this initiative is a strategic effort to enhance the Gulf countries’ status as a cohesive tourist destination on the global stage, it will also pave the way for greater

integration in the sectors of transport, hospitality, security and collaborative investment in tourism infrastructure, airports and hotels, while simultaneously creating more job opportunities.

Estimates from Gulf tourism authorities indicate that the visa application process is expected to increase the number of visitors to approximately 128.7 million by 2030, thereby enhancing the Gulf’s status as a global tourist destination. It is a well-established fact that travellers worldwide are the driving force behind the GCC’s special interest tourism sector, thanks to its world-class infrastructure, luxury experiences and cultural attractions that appeal to high-spending visitors.

According to Future Market Insights Inc, a US-based research firm, the special interest tourism market in the Gulf Cooperation Council is projected to experience substantial growth, rising from \$1 billion in 2025 to \$5.9 billion by 2035. The compound annual growth rate during this period is expected to reach 19.2 per cent. “The special interest tourism industry in the GCC countries continues to grow as governments invest in niche travel experiences that cater to diverse preferences. Each country within the Gulf Cooperation Council has established a distinct tourism identity and welcomes visitors seeking cultural experiences, adventure and luxury,” notes the research firm in its report. According to the report, the Sultanate of Oman, the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Qatar have emerged as leading destinations,

While the historic GCC Grand Tours Visa initiative is a strategic effort to enhance the Gulf countries’ status as a cohesive tourist destination, it will also pave the way for greater integration in the sectors of transport, hospitality and security

attracting millions of visitors seeking novel and exclusive experiences. When discussing Oman, the report highlights that the country has leveraged its rich heritage and modern attractions to draw international visitors, especially from Europe, thereby strengthening its position in the competitive Gulf tourism market through its cultural, natural and historical offerings.

“Oman flourishes as a nature and cultural tourism destination. Tourists come to its craggy mountains for trekking in Al Jabal Al Akhdhar, while the turquoise pools of Wadi Shab offer a stunning retreat. Traditional dhow cruises in Musandam provide an authentic Arabian Gulf experience, complementing the country’s growing eco-tourism initiatives,” the Future Market report further states.

In alignment with several Gulf countries, Oman is intensifying its efforts to attract international tourists to achieve its goal of approximately 11.7 million visitors annually and create 500,000 jobs by 2040. This initiative is part of its sustainable tourism strategy.

Oman Vision 2040 establishes clear objectives for the tourism industry, including strengthening infrastructure development through increased investments and promoting the country’s unique cultural heritage and landscape.

Looking ahead, the introduction of new policies and initiatives, such as the unified visa, is expected to pave the way for sustained growth in tourist arrivals in Oman and other GCC countries in the coming years.

Tech giants scramble to meet AI’s looming energy crisis

THOMAS URBAIN

The artificial intelligence industry is scrambling to reduce its massive energy consumption through better cooling systems, more efficient computer chips and smarter programming — all while AI usage explodes worldwide.

AI depends entirely on data centres, which could consume three per cent of the world’s electricity by 2030, according to the International Energy Agency. That’s double what they use today. Experts at McKinsey, a US consulting firm, describe a race to build enough data centres to keep up with AI’s rapid growth, while warning that the world is heading towards an electricity shortage.

“There are several ways of solving the problem,” explained Mosharaf Chowdhury, a University of Michigan professor of computer science.

Companies can either build more energy supply — which takes time and the AI giants are already scouring the globe to do — or figure out how to consume less energy for the same computing power. Chowdhury believes the challenge can be met with “clever” solutions at every level, from the physical hardware to the AI software itself.

For example, his lab has developed algorithms that calculate exactly how much electricity each AI chip needs, reducing energy use by 20-30 per cent.

Twenty years ago, operating a data centre required as much energy as running the servers themselves. Today, operations use just 10 per cent of what the servers consume, says Gareth Williams from consulting firm Arup. Many data centres now use AI-powered sensors to control temperature in specific zones rather than cooling entire buildings uniformly. This allows them to optimise water and electricity use in real-time, according to McKinsey’s Pankaj Sachdeva. For many, the game-changer will be liquid cooling, which replaces the roar of energy-hungry air conditioners with a coolant that circulates directly through the servers.

This matters because modern AI chips from companies like Nvidia consume 100 times more power than servers did two decades ago.

Amazon’s world-leading cloud computing business, AWS, last week said it had developed its own liquid method to cool down Nvidia GPUs in its servers — avoiding have to rebuild existing data centres. For McKinsey’s Sachdeva, a reassuring factor is that each new generation of computer chips is more energy-efficient than the last.

Research by Purdue University’s Yi Ding has shown that AI chips can last longer without losing performance. “But it’s hard to convince semiconductor companies to make less money” by encouraging customers to keep using the same equipment longer, Ding added.

Yet even if more efficiency in chips and energy consumption is likely to make AI cheaper, it won’t reduce total energy consumption. — AFP

Oman-Zanzibar: A bond rooted in history, purpose

THE relationship between Oman and East Africa dates back centuries, shrouded in the mists of time. While the precise origins remain elusive, we know that during the early Islamic period — specifically in the 7th century — Omani princes Suleiman and Said, sons of Abbad bin Abd bin Al Julanda, sought refuge along the East African coast following the Umayyad conquest of Oman.

Yet this article does not seek to recount history already well-trodden by scholars, journalists and explorers. Indeed, libraries and online archives brim with pages detailing Oman’s ties with East Africa. Instead, I wish to explore what this relationship could and should look like today — particularly with Zanzibar, now a semi-autonomous region of Tanzania, to which many Omanis remain connected through cultural, familial and economic ties.

It is important at the outset to affirm a simple but essential point: Zanzibar is an integral part of Tanzania. Any engagement must respect this political reality, lest ambiguities undermine Oman’s constructive relations with the Tanzanian state as a whole.

Historically, relations between nations have rested on three pillars: mutual interests (by far the most common), ideological alignment (as during the Cold War), or shared moral and human values — such as the promotion of peace, justice and human rights. In today’s complex world, especially in the post-Trump era, these foundations are being re-evaluated. For Oman’s part, I believe our relationship with Zanzibar and Tanzania should be built on two complementary principles: ethical responsibility and mutual interest — in equal measure.

This is not to suggest idealism for its own sake. Oman is among the few countries that still attaches real weight to moral and humanitarian values in its foreign policy. This tradition of diplomacy grounded in principle should be at the forefront of



DR ABDULMALIK AL HINAI

The author is a researcher in political economy and development issues

Politically and diplomatically, it is in Oman’s interest to take the lead in fostering sustainable development in Zanzibar. We must not allow this region — so closely tied to Oman by blood, history and mutual reliance — to become a space where past grievances fester or future rivalries take root.

our engagement with Tanzania — not only because it is consistent with our national ethos, but also because it is politically and diplomatically sound.

Some may argue that pragmatism demands interests come first. But Oman’s connection with Zanzibar is not an ordinary one. It is underpinned by a unique historical legacy — one that calls not only for investment but also for stewardship. To understand why, we must revisit a formative episode in our shared past.

In the 1830s, Sultan Said bin Sultan shifted his capital from Muscat to Zanzibar, largely for economic reasons. Under his rule, trade between Oman and East Africa flourished. Zanzibar became a hub of commerce, and Oman’s revenues — from customs duties and agricultural exports — soared. Though Muscat, Gwadar and Bandar Abbas also contributed to the national economy, it was East Africa, and Zanzibar in particular, that underpinned Oman’s prosperity during this period.

When the Sultan died, internal disputes among his heirs over succession led to the fragmentation of the empire. Oman’s revenues fell sharply, and this economic downturn destabilised the political and social fabric of the country.

Eventually, Sultan Said’s sons reached a settlement to divide the empire. As part of the agreement, Zanzibar committed to an annual financial grant of 40,000 Maria Theresa thalers to Oman — a gesture known historically as the “Zanzibar Subsidy”. This subsidy continued for many years and was funded not through external income, but through Zanzibar’s own domestic revenues — customs duties, local taxation, and low-wage labour in plantations and ports.

This history matters. It is a powerful reminder that Oman’s legacy in Zanzibar is not one of exploitation, but of deep economic and human engagement. For that reason, any modern relationship must be rooted in the values of fairness, historical responsibility and shared prosperity. The second pillar,

of course, is mutual interest. Oman has already invested significantly in preserving Zanzibar’s heritage and supporting its infrastructure. Omani citizens continue to maintain economic ties with the region — in real estate, tourism and other sectors. These efforts should be scaled up and supported by encouraging private investment and charitable engagement through Omani philanthropic foundations.

A deeper, more structured partnership with Zanzibar would also serve to guard against attempts by others to sideline Oman’s historical role in the region. To achieve this, Oman should consider launching a long-term, well-governed development initiative with clearly defined short-, medium- and long-term goals. The focus should be on areas that make a tangible difference: basic and vocational education, primary healthcare and public health, affordable housing and critical infrastructure — especially roads, which require urgent improvement in both urban and rural areas. Understandably, concerns may arise regarding Zanzibar’s institutional capacity to manage such a programme. These concerns are legitimate and should be addressed through close coordination with the Zanzibar’s government. Oman should retain an active management role, working in partnership to set priorities and ensure resources are used effectively.

Ultimately, the scale or format of such a programme matters less than the principle behind it. It is in Oman’s interest to take the lead in fostering sustainable development in Zanzibar. We must not allow this region — so closely tied to Oman by blood, history and mutual reliance — to become a space where past grievances fester or future rivalries take root.

In a world increasingly shaped by transactional diplomacy, Oman’s enduring connection with Zanzibar stands as a reminder that international relations can still be guided by history, honour and humanity.

SPORTS

SHORTTAKES



Archive image of Ras Al Hadd Training camp

OMANI SAILORS CAMP IN RAS AL HADD

MUSCAT: Sailors from Oman’s national teams will spend the summer undergoing technical and tactical training in Ras Al Hadd under the guidance of specialist coaches. Starting from June 29 and running through until August 22, the Optimist, ILCA 4, 29er, ILCA 6 and ILCA 7 teams will work on their skills, improve their fitness and conditioning and train on and off the water in preparation for upcoming competitions, including the Oman National Sailing Championships and Mussanah Race Week.

In total, 32 sailors will join the camp across six training blocks spanning eight weeks. The camp will be led by Oman Sail’s Head Coach Performance, Hashim al Rashdi, and Instructor Marwa al Khaifi, the Female team leader.

The 13-strong Optimist team will be accompanied by Coach Sultan al Zadjali and Development Coach Hassan al Rahbi, 15 sailors representing the ILCA 4, ILCA 6 and 7 teams will be led by Coach Ahmed al Wahaibi, four sailors from the 29er team will be coached by Ahmed al Hasani.

Abdulaziz al Shidi, Oman Sail’s Acting Director of Sailing, said, “Ras Al Hadd is the ideal venue for our sailors to learn from each other in a supportive environment where sailing is the top priority for us all. The group has made significant progress in the past year and we’re looking to build on that by incorporating new challenges, new opportunities and different conditions to support the growth of all of our teams.”

Hashim al Rashdi, Oman Sail’s Head Coach Performance, added, “There are several important competitions on the horizon and we need to ensure we’re prepared as best we can be. That means being in peak physical and mental condition, gaining experience of the most likely scenarios they will face on the water and ensure all of our teams have the solutions to potential challenges at their disposal. Ras Al Hadd has proved to be an excellent venue in the past and we are all looking forward to another chance to sail in these waters.”

The Oman National Sailing Championships gets underway from August 18-22. This will be followed by the 14th edition of Mussanah Race Week from October 15-21, 2025 where Optimist, ILCA 4, ILCA 6, ILCA 7, and the para inclusive RS Venture Connect class sailors from around the world head to Oman for one of the most popular events in the national sailing calendar.



AL HARTHY FINISHES 10TH IN BRAZIL RACE

HIGH determination and an immense amount of effort from Ahmad al Harthy, Valentino Rossi and Kelvin van der Linde resulted in a very hard-fought top 10 finish in the Rolex 6 Hours of Sao Paulo on Sunday, July 13, as the second half of the FIA World Endurance Championship got underway.

Contesting an uphill battle all weekend at the famous Brazilian track, the Team WRT trio and the squad itself maximised the performance available to them with the No.46 BMW M4 LMGT3 after overcoming a difficult qualifying on Saturday, July 12. Never giving in, fantastic teamwork and consistency of performance meant the squad did manage to come away from round five of the FIA WEC season inside the points-paying top 10, a result Al Harthy says was the most which could realistically be achieved this time around at Interlagos.

Qualifying, normally such a strong suit for Al Harthy and the Team WRT squad, didn’t work out as planned and so the team had to settle for 14th on the grid. The session was incredibly close though, with Al Harthy only missing out on the top 10 cut-off for the Hyperpole session by 0.2 seconds.

Al Harthy took the start of the race but after maintaining position initially, he was elbowed down to 17th place. Battling back with strong focus, he was back inside the top 15 with less than 20 minutes of the race elapsed and close behind the sister BMW. Both WRT cars gained two spots each shortly after and Al Harthy then made his first pit-stop from 13th before the end of hour one.

Van der Linde took over and when the action settled he was in 12th position, as the team’s strategy began to unfold. Climbing through to fifth with one hour and 45 minutes completed, before the end of hour two OQ Group, Sohar International, Omantel, Oman LNG, BMW Oman, Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth (MoCSY), and Experience Oman supported Al Harthy returned to the driving seat.

Holding sixth position initially, and



Team WRT (BMW M4 LMGT3)



Ahmad al Harthy

driving well around the 4.3-kilometre counterclockwise Interlagos track, he concluded his second run nicely inside the top eight as the differing strategies of the teams played out.

Van der Linde took over later in hour three with the car in 10th place when he emerged, and the South African reeled off a series of great passes.

With three hours and 45 minutes in the book van der Linde had moved up into third and at the next stop Rossi climbed into the BMW for his first miles of the race. When the race order settled once more he held sixth place and after the team’s fifth pit-stop, with just under 90 minutes to

go, Rossi remained behind the wheel and emerged eighth in LMGT3.

Climbing into the top six as the strategies again mixed the order, van der Linde returned to the No.46 car with just half an hour remaining and ultimately finished in 10th position, the highest placed of the BMW entries and a deserved championship point.

“I think it was a very strong race for us, we managed to make up so many positions throughout the six hours and to finish with a championship point makes all of the effort worth it. We know we’re not the most competitive car at the moment but hopefully things can change quickly for Austin. We executed a perfect race, I would say one of the best executed in terms of teams, so that’s a very proud thing for us and we all drove perfectly as well. Now we have a bit of time to analyse all of the data and hopefully have a more competitive car when we arrive at the Circuit of the Americas for the next round of the championship.” Al Harthy said

From South America, the FIA World Endurance Championship will head north next to the United States of America for round six of the season, the Lone Star Le Mans at COTA in Austin, Texas, over the weekend September 6-7.

Oman to take part in a friendly tournament in Bishkek

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, JULY 15

The Oman under-23 national football team delegation departed on Monday to Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyzstan, to participate in the four-team international friendly tournament which will take place from Thursday and will run until July 23. This key assignment comes as part of the team’s preparations for the upcoming AFC U-23 Asian Cup Saudi Arabia 2026 Qualifiers which is scheduled in September.

Before the departure, the Olympic squad performed few training sessions in Muscat, under the leadership of head coach Badar al Maimani and his assistant coaching staff. The short camp, hosted at Seeb Club, included several tactical and physical training sessions designed to sharpen the players’ readiness for the friendly tournament and the forthcoming assignment. The coaching staff focused on match fitness, team cohesion and technical drills to build momentum ahead of the crucial international fixtures.



The Oman U-23 national football team

The four-team tournament in Bishkek will include the hosts Kyrgyzstan, Syria, Bahrain, and the Sultanate of Oman. Oman team will kick off their campaign against Bahrain on Thursday, followed by a match against Kyrgyzstan on Sunday and wrap up their fixtures against Syria on July 23. The matches will be played across two stadiums in Bishkek: Alga Bishkek Stadium and Dolen Omurzakov Stadium.

Coach Badar al Maimani has called up 24 players for the Bishkek assignment, including a mix of young emerging talents who are expected to gain valuable match exposure

and international experience through the tournament. This friendly event is more than a warm-up as the players will enter into the mood of actual matches and will enhance their preparations ahead of Oman’s road to the AFC U-23 Asian Cup Saudi Arabia 2026. Oman placed in Group F alongside Iraq, Pakistan, and hosts Cambodia in the Asian qualifiers which will be held from September 1 to 9, with Oman opening their campaign against Cambodia on September 3, taking on Iraq on September 6, and concluding against Pakistan on September 9. Only the group winners and the best four runners-up will

advance to the finals in Saudi Arabia, joining the host nation.

Also, it is expected that Oman Olympic team will take part in the four-team football tournament which will be hosted in Salalah, bringing together elite domestic and national teams in preparation for critical upcoming continental competitions. The tournament will feature: Oman Olympic U-23 team, Seeb Club reigning Omantel League champions, Al Shabab Club – His Majesty’s Cup 2024–25 title holders and Al Nahdha Club – runners-up of the 2024–25 Omantel League. The event is scheduled to start on July 27.

SQUAD:
Jawad al Azi, Osama al Mahrouqi, Nasser al Saqri, Sameer al Hatmi, Said al Ghanbousi, Abdullah al Jabri, Abdulaziz al Shaqsi, Loqman al Jadidi, Mohammed Abdulhakim, Rashad al Dhaeen, Osama Majdi, Ziyad al Rasbi, Turki Abdullah, Nayef Faraj, Sultan al Marzooq, Mohammed al Oraibi, Ahed al Mashakheyi, Abdulaleem al Rawahi, Ali al Balushi, Abdulhadi al Manwari, Ibrahim al Kindi, Masoud al Bahri, Hamed al Naimi and Yassar al Balushi.

SHORTTAKES



Jordan Henderson. — Reuters

ENGLAND
MIDFIELDER
HENDERSON JOINS
BRENTFORD

LONDON: England midfielder Jordan Henderson insists he can still thrive in the Premier League after joining Brentford on a free transfer on Tuesday following his exit from Dutch side Ajax.

Henderson agreed a two-year contract with the Bees as he returned to the Premier League after leaving Liverpool in 2023.

“After a couple of years away I still have that fire to come back and play in the Premier League again,” the 35-year-old said.

“Obviously it’s the best league in the world, with the best players. So it’s a big challenge but one I’m keen on doing.

“When I was given the opportunity by Brentford and after speaking with the club it became an easy decision.”

Henderson will face his boyhood club Sunderland in August before an emotional return to Liverpool in October.

“Both clubs mean a lot to me. I owe a lot to Sunderland and then Liverpool was a huge part of my life,” he said.

“But when I’m playing against them there’s no friends, we know that in football.”

Brentford’s new manager Keith Andrews moved for Henderson after losing Denmark midfielder Christian Norgaard to Arsenal.

“When we became aware of Jordan’s availability, it was a pretty simple decision,” Andrews said.

“We did our due diligence around his recent games to see where he is. He’s still phenomenally fit and he’s still phenomenally motivated to achieve things in the game, having already achieved a lot.

“With the void of experienced players leaving the building — Christian Norgaard, Mark Flekken and Ben Mee — it was important to replace that.

“What Jordan will bring is that he has been one of the most influential leaders in modern Premier League years. He’s been at the forefront of driving for titles and Champions Leagues at a fantastic football club.”

Henderson has 84 England caps and was recently recalled by Three Lions boss Thomas Tuchel. He spent 12 years with Liverpool, winning the Champions League in 2019 and the Premier League in 2020 among numerous other trophies, before a lucrative move to Saudi Arabian club Al-Ettifaq two years ago. His contract with Al Ettifaq was cancelled just six months later. Henderson subsequently joined Ajax, earning the captaincy and making 57 appearances for the Dutch club.

However, Ajax’s late collapse cost them the Eredivisie title last season and his contract was terminated last week with a year still left to run.

— AFP



Scott Boland of Australia reacts after being bowled by Shamar Joseph (L) of West Indies. — AFP

Australia bowl out West
Indies to win third Test

AUSTRALIAN fast bowler Mitchell Starc produced a devastating opening spell as the West Indies were demolished for 27, the second-lowest score in Test history, to suffer a humiliating 176-run defeat on the third day of the third and final game at Sabina Park on Monday. Australia swept the series 3-0 after earlier victories in Barbados and Grenada to retain the Frank Worrell Trophy.

Starc reached the landmark of 400 Test wickets and Scott Boland completed a hat-trick but the hosts just avoided New Zealand’s record low of 26, set in 1955.

“We didn’t think things would start going our way with the ball today until the sun went down a bit,” Starc said after collecting the player of the match and series awards.

“But anyway our bowling attack has been pretty much on the money throughout the series,” he added.

West Indies captain Royston Chase warned his side must improve with the first of five T20 internationals on Monday.

“Assessing this series is simple: the bowlers kept us in the contest and the batting let us down time after time,” he said.

“We need to put in some serious work on our batting moving forward if we really want to compete,” he added.

West Indies were set a victory target of 204 after the tourists lost their last four wickets within 45 minutes of the start of play to be



Mitchell Starc

dismissed for 121 in the second innings, their lowest Test innings total against the West Indies for 30 years.

Alzarri Joseph led the effort with his best Test innings figures of five for 27 while Shamar Joseph claimed four for 34 to finish with 22 wickets in the series and go past the 50-wicket mark in Tests along the way.

Everything else in the frenetic first session faded into irrelevance though in the face of Starc’s wrecking ball-type performance as he reached the break with figures of five for six off five overs, finishing with six for nine when he bowled last man Jayden Seales half an hour into the second session to seal the win. In his 100th Test, the left-armed made up for a luckless first innings, when he picked up just one wicket, by dismissing John Campbell

with the first ball of the second innings and adding two more victims — debutant Kevlon Anderson and Brandon King off successive balls — before the opening over was completed.

Starc’s 400th wicket came at the start of his third over when the other opener, Mikyle Louis, was palpably leg-before.

At that stage, the West Indies were five for four and Starc boasted the astonishing figures of four wickets for no runs.

The 35-year-old eventually conceded two runs via the outside edge of Shai Hope’s bat but then promptly trapped the same batsman lbw for his fifth wicket.

He had taken just 15 deliveries, the fewest ever in Test history, to complete a five-wicket haul.

Skipper Chase was then caught behind off Josh Hazlewood to make the score an eye-popping 11 for six.

Boland then stole the honours at the start of the second session when he dismissed Justin Greaves, Shamar Joseph and Jomel Warrican off successive deliveries to complete the rare feat of a Test hat-trick.

“I was a bit nervous bowling that last ball (to Jomel Warrican),” Boland said.

“I was just trying to concentrate and keep bowling balls in good areas,” he added.

Australia were without first-choice wicketkeeper Alex Carey, who suffered a concussion when hit on the helmet by Alzarri Joseph late on day two. Josh Inglis replaced him behind the stumps. — AFP

Modric joins AC Milan on one-year deal after 13 years at Real Madrid

Croatia captain Luka Modric, who left Real Madrid after 13 years at the LaLiga club, has completed his move to AC Milan on a one-year deal with an option to extend until June 2027, the Serie A side said on Monday.

The midfielder’s arrival was confirmed by newly-appointed Milan coach Massimiliano Allegri earlier this month.

“Very happy to be here to start a new chapter in my career,” said Modric, who turns 40 in September, in an Instagram video shared by Milan.

Milan said Modric will wear the number 14 shirt, which he previously wore during his four years at English side Tottenham Hotspur to honour Dutch great Johan Cruyff.

“It’s an immense honour for them



Luka Modric arrives in Milan before signing for AC Milan. — Reuters

to compare me to (Cruyff)... I wore the no. 14 at Tottenham in honour of him, and because the no. 10 wasn’t available,” Modric had said after winning the Ballon d’Or award in 2018.

Modric, regarded as one of the greatest midfielders of all time, announced in May that he would leave Real after the Club World Cup. He has made 597 appearances for the Spanish club, winning 28 trophies including four LaLiga and six Champions League titles.

He played his last game for Real on Wednesday, coming on as a second-half substitute during a 4-0 loss to Paris St Germain in the Club World Cup semi-finals.

“It’s a bitter end... he’s a legend of world football and of Real Madrid. He’ll be remembered for many more

good things than for the 25 minutes he played today,” Real Madrid manager Xabi Alonso said after the match.

Modric, considered Croatia’s greatest player of all time, has represented the country a record 188 times, scoring 28 goals. He won the Golden Ball at World Cup 2018, where he led Croatia to the final for the first time.

He won the Ballon d’Or in December that year, becoming the first player other than Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo to win the prestigious annual award since 2007.

Modric’s arrival reinforces a Milan midfield that also features Youssouf Fofana, Yunus Musah and Ruben Loftus-Cheek, with Samuele Ricci joining from Torino earlier this month. — Reuters

SPORTS

HEALY LEADS, YATES WINS TOUR DE FRANCE 10TH STAGE



Ben Healy celebrates on the podium wearing the yellow jersey after stage 10. — Reuters

BEN HEALY became the first Irishman since Stephen Roche in 1987 to take the overall lead on the Tour de France on Monday with a relentless attack across eight gruelling hills in the Massif Central.

The 24-year-old EF rider had already won stage six in Normandy, but here the smiley Healy confirmed his promise with a career-defining ride claiming the fabled yellow jersey.

He becomes just the fourth Irishman to wear it following Shay Elliott, back in 1963, Sean Kelly in 1983 and Roche who went on to win an epic race 38 years ago.

Healy's performance even overshadowed that of stage winner Simon Yates, who sat on his wheel all afternoon as they crossed the ancient volcanoes that mark the region.

Such was the Irishman's effort as the escapees rushed through the grey-black volcanic rock villages that he was also awarded the combativity award for the most attacking rider of the day.

"Hats off to him, he's the one that dropped everyone," Yates said of Healy as the escape group was gradually whittled down from 30 to five.

The 2025 Giro d'Italia winner Yates attacked on the last of the day's climbs, with Thymen Arensman of Ineos second and Healy coming third at the line 31sec adrift and having never relented on a punishing day.

Healy was born in Birmingham but chose to represent Ireland in his youth. He is also in the white jersey for the best young rider.

"The stage win I got and the yellow today both mean a lot to me," said Healy, who had a tense wait at the line for Pogacar to cross 4min 51sec adrift



Simon Yates celebrates on the podium after winning stage 10. — Reuters

The 2025 Giro d'Italia winner Yates attacked on the last of the day's climbs, with Thymen Arensman of Ineos second and Healy coming third at the line 31sec adrift and having never relented on a punishing day.

and ceding the overall lead, likely for several days.

"This yellow is more for the team who worked so hard to put me here but the stage win possibly means more as it came first," he said.

FRENCH MOUNTAIN JOY

Race favourites Tadej Pogacar and Jonas Vingegaard crossed the line together after eight climbs in the Massif Central where they were rarely a wheel's length from each other.

Healy leads the Tour itself by 29sec from defending champion Pogacar,

with Belgian Remco Evenepoel in third at 1min 29sec.

Denmark's double Tour de France champion Vingegaard is fourth overall at 1min 46sec, and his Visma teammate Matteo Jorgenson sits fifth.

Third placed overnight, promising young French rider Kevin Vauquelin dropped a minute to finish the day in sixth place overall.

Recompense for the home nation on the national Bastille Day holiday came in the form of Lenny Martinez as he earned the King of the Mountains polka dot jersey with 27

points garnered on the day's stage.

His grandfather Mariano Martinez won the polka dot jersey outright on the 1978 Tour.

Successive escape bids ensued from the off on Monday as the 164 remaining riders raced out of Ennezat with top guns Pogacar and Evenepoel finally allowing one to get away over the ever-rolling terrain

Once they did, a gap over five minutes was established by a motivated group that rode so hard over the cattle dotted hills the sprinters were dropped to over 30 minutes at the finish line.

While Tuesday is a rest day, Wednesday's stage 11 is another flat run with a sprinter expected to take the honours in Toulouse. — AFP

TOUR DE FRANCE RESULTS AND STANDINGS:

- Stage 10**
1. Simon Yates (GBR/TVL) 4hr 20min 05sec, 2. Thymen Arensman (NED/IGD) at 9sec, 3. Ben Healy (IRL/EFE) 31, 4. Ben O'Connor (AUS/JAY) 49, 5. Michael Storer (AUS/TUD) 1min 23sec, 6. Joe Blackmore (GBR/IPT) 3:57, 7. Anders Johannesssen (NOR/UCT) 4:38, 8. Lenny Martinez (FRA/TBV) 4:51, 9. Tadej Pogacar (SLO/UAD) 4:51, 10. Jonas Vingegaard (DEN/TVL) 4:51.
- Overall standings**
1. Ben Healy (IRL/EFE) 37hr 41min 49sec, 2. Tadej Pogacar (SLO/UAD) at 29sec, 3. Remco Evenepoel (BEL/SOQ) 1min 29sec, 4. Jonas Vingegaard (DEN/TVL) 1:46, 5. Matteo Jorgenson (USA/TVL) 2:06, 6. Kevin Vauquelin (FRA/ARK) 2:26, 7. Oscar Onley (GBR/DFP) 3:24, 8. Florian Lipowitz (GER/RBH) 3:34, 9. Primož Roglič (SLO/RBH) 3:41, 10. Tobias Johannesssen (NOR/UCT) 5:03.



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TALENTHUNT



The Board of Directors of the newly announced Oman Tourism Association.

NEWLY FORMED
TOURISM BODY
TARGETS JOB GROWTH

HIBBA AL KINDI
MUSCAT, JULY 15

INCREASING employment within the tourism industry in Oman is amongst the top goals of the newly established Oman Tourism Association.

Speaking to the press, the Chairman of the first tourism association in Oman, Awadh Burham Ba Omar, highlighted that employment is one of the Association’s primary goals, “A key focus is on enhancing professionalism and increasing local employment rates within the sector”, he said.

“The local value generated by investment in the tourism sector is substantial and the sector has the capacity to absorb large numbers of job seekers. It is a vital industry and we hope to see strong partnerships between the association, investment institutions, professionals in the field, as well as the Ministry and other relevant government bodies”, he added.

According to Ba Omar, the sector — while rich in employment opportunities — comes with challenges in aligning qualifications with market requirements.

“There are indeed opportunities for employment, but the main challenge lies in meeting the requirements of these jobs — whether academic, professional, or experiential. The sector holds great potential, but it requires well-structured training to realise it”, he shared.

A starting point would be to address the gaps in job classifications according to global dynamics, he explained. “This is where the association plays a critical role. There is currently a significant gap in how roles are categorised and in defining their professional requirements in alignment with international standards. Tourism is a globally competitive industry”.

Mining sector grows
with 26 new licences

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, JULY 15

In a landmark year for Oman’s minerals sector, the Ministry of Energy and Minerals issued 26 new mining licences in 2024 and celebrated the start of commercial copper exports, marking a major step forward in the Sultanate of Oman’s efforts to diversify its economy under the Oman Vision 2040 framework. According to the Ministry’s annual report for 2024, the government granted 14 permanent mining licences and 12 exploration licences, with approvals spread across strategic governorates including Dhofar, Al Wusta, Al Sharqiyah North, Al Batinah and Al Dhahirah.

These licences covered a broad array of resources such as gypsum, limestone, chromite, copper, iron ore, marble and various construction materials.

The Ministry also renewed 10 mining licences and one exploration licence, helping ensure continuity for active operations while opening doors for new entrants to the market.

The year also saw major developments in copper mining, with two strategic projects beginning production and exports. In the Wilayat of Al Khabourah, the Al Ghuzayn Copper Project entered commercial operation in 2024, with an initial investment of RO 43 million.

The project, developed by Mawarid Mining, aims to extract six million tonnes of copper ore over six and a half



The new licences covered a broad array of resources such as gypsum, limestone, chromite, copper, iron ore, marble and various construction materials.

years. In addition to producing and exporting its first copper shipments, the company issued sales invoices and official export certificates, solidifying Oman’s re-entry into the global copper market. The project is also expected to generate 50 direct jobs for Omani nationals and allocate one per cent of its annual output to support local community development, in line with the provisions of Oman’s Mineral Wealth Law.

Meanwhile, in the Wilayat of Al Mudhaibi, the Wash-hi Copper Project achieved a significant milestone with the commencement of copper concentrate exports.

The site holds an estimated 16 million tonnes of reserves and is capable of producing high-quality copper concentrate with a purity of 24 per cent. Officials hailed the development

as a strong signal of growing investor confidence in Oman’s mineral resource potential, particularly in base metals.

Despite facing challenges linked to production reporting delays from several operators, Oman’s overall mineral output for 2024 remained substantial. Total mineral ore production stood at 67.7 million tonnes, down 14 per cent compared to the previous year.

Of this, 62.5 million tonnes were sold, generating revenues of RO 114.3 million. Exported volumes reached 35.9 million tonnes, with gypsum accounting for the largest share at 12.4 million tonnes, or 35 per cent of total exports. Limestone exports rose sharply by 49 per cent to 7.4 million tonnes, while the export of raw construction materials dropped by 39 per cent. Significantly, 2024

marked the first commercial copper exports from Oman, with 24,000 tonnes shipped to international markets. In tandem with licensing efforts, the Ministry also concluded several long-term concession agreements during the year to facilitate industrial-scale mining development. Among the key signings were Area 22-D in Al Sharqiyah North, which was awarded to Al Tamman Indsil Ferrochrome Company; Area 51-K, granted to Naqa Salt Company and Area 11-A, signed with Al Tasnim Gulf Potash.

These agreements support Oman’s aim of attracting responsible investment in mineral development while fostering the downstream processing and value-added industries required to localise production chains.

By the end of 2024, ten companies were operating across 21 designated mining concession areas in the Sultanate of Oman.

These blocks contain commercially viable reserves of copper, chrome, laterite, potash, dolomite, gypsum, limestone, nickel and cobalt. The Ministry is continuing to promote digital transformation in the sector and has launched an online bidding platform to enable transparent access to mineral blocks and facilitate the evaluation of applications by potential investors.

In terms of human capital, the mining sector employed 3,942 workers during 2024, including 890 Omani nationals. This translates into an Omanisation rate of 23 per cent.

New mechanisms to bolster appeal of Oman’s Round 3 hydrogen auction

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, JULY 15

HYDROM, the state-owned entity overseeing Oman’s green hydrogen strategy, has introduced a series of mechanisms and incentives aimed at generating stronger investor interest in the third round of auctions for green hydrogen development blocks.

Launched in April 2025, Round 3 centres on a 300 sq km land block in Al Duqm. Prospective developers may bid for a minimum of 100 sq km, with the flexibility to define their project footprint within the block.

This approach allows bidders to tailor configurations in line with their strategies and market outlook.

According to Abdulaziz al Shidhani, Managing Director of Hydrom, the latest round has been designed with enhanced flexibility to better align with investor expectations.

“We offered a 300-square-kilometre block where bidders can propose developing a third, two-thirds, or the entire area, depending on their capabilities. We can award the land to one, two, or three developers. Strategically, the message is that Oman is committed yet agile”,



ENG ABDULAZIZ
AL SHIDHANI
Managing Director -
Hydrom

a downstream auction aimed at domestic industry”, Al Shidhani explained.

“These initiatives are designed to stimulate local hydrogen demand by bridging the price gap between suppliers and buyers. We’re also allowing phased project development. Instead of delivering the full 50,000 tonnes per year within seven years, developers can start small and scale up”.

Additional incentives — yet to be disclosed — will reward developers that meet specific milestones, he noted. “Importantly, only 4 per cent of Oman’s 50,000-square-kilometre

he told *The Energy Year*, a UK-based energy news portal.

Crucially, Hydrom has embedded several new features into the auction process to elicit a stronger investor response.

“We’re introducing mechanisms such as a double-sided auction with a contract-for-difference model and

hydrogen potential has been allocated so far. We’re serious about scaling but also balanced about risk”, he added.

While optimism surrounds the auction, Al Shidhani acknowledged ongoing challenges facing the global hydrogen industry, such as political transitions and policy delays in key markets including Germany and Japan.

One critical challenge being addressed by Hydrom is the imbalance between global hydrogen supply and demand. “We’re tackling this through government-to-government agreements with Japan, South Korea, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium and Singapore”, he said.

“These aren’t just MoUs — we conduct workshops, run joint studies and have launched the world’s first liquid hydrogen corridor with partners in Germany and the Netherlands”.

Domestically, Hydrom is also focusing on building a viable local market for hydrogen. “We’re exploring downstream applications and support tools like the double-sided auction model to make green hydrogen affordable for local industries without undermining competitiveness”, he said.

“We’re not waiting for perfect conditions — we’re pushing ahead with real engagements and infrastructure planning”.

Also aiding investor convenience is a streamlined permit system that consolidates approvals across multiple government agencies. “We had a major breakthrough with the single automatic permit system”, Al Shidhani said.

“Previously, developers needed clearances from 36 entities. That’s now down to just nine. Through the newly launched Oman platform, once a project is approved, developers receive access to all requirements and full land access is granted the next day. This automated system has dramatically reduced administrative bottlenecks”.

While underscoring Hydrom’s central role in orchestrating Oman’s green hydrogen ambitions, Al Shidhani emphasised that the success of the sector depends on collective action.

“Hydrom remains the coordinator, but success hinges on ecosystem partners delivering on their responsibilities”, he said. “We expect our first hydrogen plant to be operational between 2029 and 2031”.

ADVERTORIALS

FINANCIALPARTNER



Abdulwahid bin Mohammed al Murshidi, CEO of Sohar International and Martin Rueegg, CEO of Liva Group sign the pact.

Sohar International extends RO 63 million consolidated loan facility to Liva Group

MUSCAT: In line with its commitment to enabling strategic partnerships that support sustainable business growth, Sohar International has signed a consolidated loan agreement with Liva Group, a leading multi-line insurance provider operating across the GCC.

The RO 63 million facility reflects Sohar International’s growing role as a trusted financial partner for regional corporates seeking to optimise capital structures and scale with resilience.

The signing ceremony took place at Sohar International’s Waterfront Office and was attended by Abdulwahid bin Mohammed al Murshidi, Chief Executive Officer of Sohar International and Martin Rueegg, Chief Executive Officer of Liva Group. Abdulwahid bin Mohammed al Murshidi, Chief Executive Officer of Sohar International, stated: “At Sohar International, we are focused on fostering strategic partnerships that create long-term value.

Our agreement with Liva Group is a testament to our commitment to supporting ambitious, high-performing organisations with customised financial solutions that drive sustainable growth. This facility not only enhances Liva’s financial flexibility but also reflects our shared commitment for regional progress, innovation and long-term value creation. We are proud to partner with Liva on its journey to scale, diversify and lead with purpose”.

The facility consolidates Liva’s existing borrowings into a single, streamlined structure — reducing financing costs, enhancing cash flow management and increasing agility in capital deployment across the Group’s operations. The agreement also provides a robust financial framework aligned with Liva’s long-term growth strategy, particularly as it expands its presence across key regional markets.

Martin Rueegg, Chief Executive Officer of Liva Group, added: “This agreement is about more than refinancing; it represents a proactive step in strengthening our capital efficiency and readiness for the future. Sohar International stood out as a strategic partner that understands our operational landscape and shares our ambitions around regional integration, digital innovation and customer-centric growth”.

This partnership further strengthens Sohar International’s growing regional presence and aligns with its aspirations to support clients expanding into high-growth markets such as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia — where both institutions share ambitious strategic goals.

Bank Muscat posts net profit of RO 125.82 million

BANK Muscat, the flagship financial institution in the Sultanate of Oman, announced its preliminary unaudited results for the six months ended June 30, 2025.

The Bank posted a net profit of RO 125.82 million for the period compared to RO 112.12 million reported during the same period in 2024, an increase of 12.2 per cent. The key highlights of the results for the period are as follows:

- 1 . Net Interest Income from Conventional Banking and Net Income from Islamic Financing stood at RO 206.44 million for the six months period ended June 30, 2025 compared to RO 190.63 million for the same period in 2024, an increase of 8.3 per cent.
2. Non-interest income was RO 81.83 million for the six months period ended June 30, 2025 as compared to RO 75.27 million for the same period in 2024, an increase of 8.7 per cent mainly due to growth in business volumes and higher investment income.
3. Operating expenses for the six months period ended June 30, 2025 was RO 108.08 million as



Key highlights of preliminary unaudited results			
Particulars (RO millions) For the period ended	30 June 2025	30 June 2024	Change (%)
Net interest income & Islamic financing income	206.44	190.63	8.3%
Other operating income	81.83	75.27	8.7%
Operating expenses	108.08	102.13	5.8%
Operating profit	180.19	163.77	10.0%
Net profit	125.82	112.12	12.2%
Particulars (RO millions) As at period ended	30 June 2025	30 June 2024	Change (%)
Total Assets	14,186	14,191	-
Net loans and Islamic financing	10,727	10,208	5.1%
- Conventional loans and advances	9,079	8,664	4.8%
- Islamic financing receivables	1,648	1,544	6.7%
Customer deposits and Islamic deposits	9,879	9,563	3.3%
- Conventional customer deposits	8,322	8,258	0.8%
- Islamic customer deposits	1,557	1,305	19.3%
Total Equity*	2,455	2,356	4.2%

*Total Equity includes Perpetual Tier 1 capital of RO 505 million (2024: RO 505 million).

Net Interest Income from Conventional Banking and Net Income from Islamic Financing stood at RO 206.44 million for the six months period ended June 30, 2025

compared to RO 102.13 million for the same period in 2024, an increase of 5.8 per cent.

4. Net impairment losses on financial assets for the six months period ended June 30, 2025 was RO 30.16 million as against RO 29.96 million for the same period in 2024.

5. Net Loans and advances including Islamic financing receivables increased by 5.1 per cent to RO 10,727 million as against RO 10,208 million as at June 30, 2024.

6. Customer deposits including Islamic Customer deposits increased by 3.3 per cent to RO 9,879 million as against RO 9,563 million as at June 30, 2024.

The full results for the six months period ended June 30, 2025 along with the complete set of unaudited financial statements will be released following the approval of the Board of Directors of the Bank at its meeting scheduled later during July 2025.

KIA CARENS: AN IDEAL 7-SEATER MPV FOR SUCCESSFUL START-UPS

MUSCAT: The Kia Carens is a bold and spacious multi-purpose vehicle, packed with class-leading features that ensure practicality and maximum output for small and upcoming business owners, designed to put their worries at bay.

With its SUV-inspired styling and innovative features, the Kia Carens offers exceptional utility for small and medium-sized businesses alike. It’s a versatile option for a wide range of enterprises, pertaining to supplies and deliveries of trading material such as Bakery, Laundry, Coffee shop goods, etc.

Carens is an ideal go-getter for SMEs & Souq shop owners who need ferrying of their items from purchase to delivery. Designed with comfort in mind, the Carens brings much needed functionality to the 7-seater MPV category. The 7-seater’s rear two seat rows can be folded to provide ample cargo space, perfect for deliveries or picking up essentials for establishments like bakeries and laundries.



The Kia Carens offers exceptional utility for small and medium-sized businesses alike.

At the same time, the Carens seamlessly transforms into the perfect family vehicle to carry 7 persons, combining convenience, comfort and safety for all passengers of all sizes, equipped with steering audio controls, rear view camera, smart key, roof AC vents and remote engine start, making it one of the most unique

MPVs in its segment.

From smart connectivity to flexible seating, the Carens is loaded with thoughtful additions, including a dashboard pop-out cup holder and tray, the Carens truly redefines automotive practicality. Inside the cabin, it boasts a range of useful connectivity features: an 8-inch audio display system

with Android auto, Apple CarPlay and Bluetooth, USB and type C charging points and auto cruise control functions, offering the driver enhanced control of the vehicle

. Equipped with anti-lock braking system (ABS), rear parking assist system and downhill brake control that make every family journey smooth and pleasure.

With its extensive list of convenience features, the Kia Carens is setting a new benchmark in the B2B mobility space.

Already trusted by small- to medium-sized business owners, the Kia Carens is raising the bar and capturing attention of those who are ready to upscale and take charge of their business transportation needs.

Experience the dynamic and practical appeal of the Kia Carens at your nearest Kia Oman Showroom.

Reliable International Automotive LLC (RIA), the official distributor of Kia in Oman, is committed to delivering an exceptional ownership experience.

MHD Automobiles hosts exclusive Jeep movie night for customers

MUSCAT: MHD Automobiles, the exclusive distributor of Jeep in Oman, recently brought its Jeep community together for an unforgettable evening at Jeep Movie Night.

Over 300 guests — including customers, their families and friends — were invited to a private screening of the highly anticipated film ‘Jurassic World: Rebirth’ at VOX Cinemas, Mall of Oman.

The event underscored MHD Automobiles’ commitment to delivering meaningful customer experiences, celebrating the spirit of Jeep ownership and the strong relationships built with its growing community.

Customers were personally invited by the sales team, who engaged directly with guests on the night —



The event underscored MHD Automobiles’ commitment to delivering meaningful customer experiences.

making the event more than just a movie, but a shared moment of

appreciation and connection. “Our customers are at the heart

of everything we do”, said Mohsin bin Hani al Bahrani, CEO of MHD Automobiles. “Jeep is more than a vehicle — it represents lifestyle, freedom and a spirit of adventure. This event was a chance to thank our customers and bring that spirit to life”.

The film, Jurassic World: Rebirth, was a fitting choice, as Jeep has long been associated with the Jurassic franchise, starting with the iconic Wrangler’s appearance in the original Jurassic Park.

Known for its Trail Rated capability, the Wrangler continues to symbolise rugged performance, capable of taking on the most extreme environments — cinematic or real.

Attendees left the venue with smiles, laughter and shared memories that reflected the camaraderie of the Jeep

community. “It wasn’t just a movie night — it felt like a family gathering”, shared Ahmed al Riyami, a long-time Jeep Grand Cherokee owner who attended the event with his wife and children.

“You could tell MHD really values its customers. From the warm welcome to the excitement of watching the Jurassic movie, it was a truly thoughtful experience that brought all of us closer”.

As part of the campaign, the MHD Automobiles Jeep showroom in Al Hail has been transformed with a Jurassic World theme, offering customers an immersive brand experience. Visitors can explore the latest Jeep Wrangler and Grand Cherokee models and learn more about current offers and pricing available for a limited time.

BUSINESS

FOCUSEDSESSIONS

SEZAD LAUNCHES
DUQM SUMMER
SERIES FOR TENANT
COMMUNITY



ENG AHMED
AKAAK
CEO, SEZAD

AL DUQM: The Special Economic Zone at Duqm is launching four focused sessions throughout August that tackle questions its tenant community is grappling with — how to implement AI effectively, build resilient supply chains, develop adaptive workplaces and create workplace cultures where

people want to stay and grow. The Duqm Summer Series (DSS) recognises that 2025 demands something more substantive than the usual business event formula.

Rather than generic presentations that promise transformation but deliver little you can use, these sessions bring together people who’ve done the work to share strategies they’ve actually implemented.

“Our tenant community operates in a fast-moving business environment where practical experience matters more than theoretical frameworks”, said Eng Ahmed Akaak, CEO, SEZAD.

“The four DSS sessions feature speakers who’ve successfully navigated the challenges they’re discussing — people who can share not just what worked, but how they made it work and what obstacles they encountered along the way”. The opening session on August 5 tackles artificial intelligence and automation.

Rather than another presentation on ChatGPT’s potential, attendees will hear from those who’ve moved beyond experimentation to actual deployment, complete with the messy realities of workforce transitions and the ethical considerations that emerge when algorithms start making decisions previously reserved for humans.

The second session on August 12 explores workforce development through the lens of organisations that have successfully balanced talent growth with cultural continuity.

Rather than broad leadership theories, the discussion centres on practical approaches to developing people while maintaining the elements that make them want to stay and advance — particularly important in a region where retaining skilled professionals can determine an operation’s success.

By August 19, the conversation turns to global trade and supply chains. Al Duqm’s strategic location between Europe, Asia and Africa means little if businesses can’t effectively navigate the complexities of modern logistics.

This session brings together those who’ve learned to manage risk and diversify suppliers through the hard-won experience of keeping operations running during disruptions.

The final session on August 26 addresses workplace culture and well-being, topics that might have seemed soft five years ago but now represent fundamental business imperatives.

The discussion moves beyond wellness buzzwords to examine how companies are creating genuine connection and supporting mental health in ways that actually improve both performance and retention.

Each session starts at 1:00pm and runs for an hour at SEZAD’s headquarters, respecting the reality that busy professionals need events that deliver value within clear time constraints.

The format combines expert presentations with interactive discussions, creating an environment for meaningful exchanges between industries. “Al Duqm’s strength lies in the diversity of industries operating here, from renewables and manufacturing to fisheries and logistics”, remarked Eng Akaak.

OMAN’S TOTAL
OIL EXPORTS
EXCEED 126
MILLION
BARRELS

MUSCAT: Oman’s total oil exports by the end of May 2025 amounted to approximately 126,056, 900 barrels, a 2.3 per cent decrease compared to the same period in 2024, which amounted to 128, 991,500 barrels.

Preliminary statistics issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information indicated that the average price of crude oil decreased by 6.9 per cent to reach \$75.2 per barrel by the end of May 2025, compared to \$80.8 per barrel during



Average price of crude oil reaches \$75.2 per barrel by end of May 2025.

the same period last year. Statistics showed that average daily oil production fell to 987,600 barrels per day by the end of last May, compared to 996,100 barrels per day during the same period in 2024. Statistics also showed that Oman’s oil production also declined by 1.5 per cent, recording 149,133,700 barrels by the end of May 2025, compared to 151,401,200 barrels during the same period in 2024. — ONA

RO 60 million bonds at
4.3% to attract investors

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, JULY 15

THE Government of the Sultanate of Oman, through the Central Bank of Oman (CBO), has announced the 75th issuance of Government Development Bonds (GDBs) worth RO 60 million, with an additional RO 30 million greenshoe option, to be auctioned on Tuesday, July 22, 2025.

Carrying a competitive coupon rate of 4.3 per cent per annum, the bonds will mature in three years, on July 24, 2028, offering semi-annual interest payments.

The first coupon will be disbursed on January 24, 2026, making this issuance an attractive vehicle for both income-focused investors and those seeking a safe, sovereign-backed opportunity.

According to the CBO, this offering is open to all categories of investors, including both residents and non-residents, regardless of nationality, making it a potential magnet for regional and international capital.

The bonds are fully backed by the Government of Oman and serve as unconditional obligations, providing investors with a high level of capital security.

The auction aligns with the government’s wider efforts to deepen local financial markets, promote financial inclusion, and offer diverse investment instruments in line with Oman Vision 2040 goals. With interest rates remaining volatile globally, Oman’s offering at



The offering is open to all categories of investors, including both residents and non-residents, regardless of nationality.

4.3% is expected to garner keen interest amid a tightening international credit environment. “This issuance sends a strong signal about the resilience and transparency of Oman’s financial sector”, said a senior market analyst based in Muscat. “Government Development Bonds are a preferred instrument for institutional investors looking for low-risk and stable returns”.

The subscription window opens on Tuesday, July 15, 2025, and closes on Monday, July 21, 2025, allowing investors a six-day period to apply. Participation is facilitated through licensed commercial banks operating in

the Sultanate of Oman, who will handle application submissions. The minimum investment required is RO 100, making it accessible to retail investors as well.

Beyond attractive returns and safety, the bonds offer collateral advantages — they can be pledged as security for loans from licensed banks. Additionally, the bonds will be listed on the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX), providing liquidity and a secondary market for early exits. To participate, investors must possess an MCD Investor Code, which can be obtained through the Muscat Clearing and Depository Company (MCD) website or the MSX at least one day prior to the application deadline. Applicants must also provide a bank account registered with MCD to receive interest payments.

The inclusion of a RO 30 million greenshoe option — an additional allotment in case of oversubscription — indicates confidence that market demand could exceed the initial offer.

Previous GDB issuances in Oman have witnessed strong investor participation, especially from pension funds, corporates and high-net-worth individuals seeking fixed-income opportunities.

This 75th issuance comes at a time when Oman continues to focus on economic diversification, fiscal reform, and building investor trust in its capital markets. With steady yields, guaranteed government backing, and full tradability on the MSX, the GDBs are set to serve as a benchmark for financial instruments in the region.

RAYSUT CEMENT NARROWS H1 2025 LOSS ON HIGHER REVENUE

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, JULY 15

RAYSUT Cement Company SAOG, Oman’s largest cement producer, reported a consolidated net loss of RO 2.99 million for the first half of 2025, down from RO 1.51 million in the same period last year, as revenues surged and a new leadership team implemented a turnaround strategy.

Group revenue rose 30.8 per cent year-on-year to RO 41.81 million in the six months to June 30, 2025, compared with RO 31.87 million a year earlier, driven by improved sales in domestic and export markets, particularly Yemen, the Maldives and East Africa.

Total group expenses increased sharply to RO 36.44 million from RO 23.44 million in H1 2024 — an annual rise of 55.5 per cent — reflecting higher input costs and logistics challenges. Loss before tax narrowed to RO 2.90 million, down from RO 1.37 million in the same period last year. After accounting for tax provisions of RO 90,042, the group posted a net loss of RO 2.99 million for the period.

On a standalone basis, the parent company



A new board, appointed in March 2025, has launched a five-point restructuring plan aimed at restoring profitability by 2026.

reported revenue of RO 21.58 million, up 25.5 per cent from RO 17.16 million in H1 2024. However, standalone losses widened to RO 3.33 million from RO 2.48 million, primarily due to increased operating costs.

The results follow the release of the company’s 2024 Board of Directors Report, which confirmed a full-year consolidated net loss of RO 10.63 million and cumulative group losses of RO 24.06

million across 2023 and 2024. Net cash flow for the group was positive at RO 1.07 million in 2024 and total assets stood at RO 9.49 million at year-end.

A new board, appointed in March 2025, did not oversee 2024 operations but has since launched a five-point restructuring plan aimed at restoring profitability by 2026. The strategy includes addressing legacy debt, streamlining operations, improving efficiency, enforcing corporate governance and strengthening liquidity management.

Group-wide cement sales reached 2.47 million metric tonnes in 2024, up from 2.14 million tonnes the previous year. Parent company exports rose to 1.29 million tonnes, with domestic sales also increasing to 0.65 million tonnes.

Despite improvements in top-line performance, the company continues to face industry-wide pressures, including regional cement overcapacity, currency risks in key markets and competition from Asian producers.

The Board stated it remains committed to executing its recovery plan and enhancing shareholder transparency.

PICKED UP

US inflation expected to rise in June



US consumer prices likely picked up in June, potentially marking the start of a long-anticipated, tariff-induced increase in inflation that has left the Federal Reserve cautious about resuming its interest rate cuts.

The Consumer Price Index report from the Labour Department is expected to show a rebound in gasoline prices and higher costs for some tariff-sensitive goods last month. — Reuters

50 DAYS

Oil drops on Russia deadline delay



Brent crude futures were down 32 cents, or 0.5%, at \$69.20 a barrel by 10:03 GMT. US West Texas Intermediate crude futures fell 44 cents, or 0.7%, to \$66.87. “The focus has been on Donald Trump. There was some fear he might target Russia with sanctions immediately and now he has given another 50 days”, said UBS commodities analyst Giovanni Staunovo. — Reuters

SHOW RESILIENCE

China’s economy slows in second quarter



China’s economy slowed less than expected in the second quarter in a show of resilience against US tariffs, though analysts warn that weak demand at home and rising global trade risks will ramp up pressure on Beijing to roll out more stimulus.

China has so far avoided a slowdown due to policy support and as factories took advantage of a US-China trade truce. — Reuters

OPINION

A renewed vision for institutional repositioning



MOHAMMED BIN
ISSA AL BALUSHI

The writer is a media advisor specialised in economic affairs.

FOR EUROPE, 30%
US TARIFF WOULD
HAMMER TRADE,
FORCE EXPORT MODEL
RETHINK

PHILIP BLENKINSOP AND FRANCESCO
CANEPÀ

THE 30% tariff on European goods threatened by US President Donald Trump would, if implemented, be a game-changer for Europe, wiping out whole chunks of transatlantic commerce and forcing a rethink of its export-led economic model.

European ministers meeting in Brussels on Monday remained convinced they can bring Trump back from the brink before his August 1 deadline and reach a deal that would keep the \$1.7 trillion two-way trading relationship broadly intact.

But the wild swings in Trump’s mood towards the European Union — which he has sometimes labelled as friendly and at other times accused of being set up specifically to destroy the United States — keep the 30% threat very much alive for now.

“It will be almost impossible to continue the trading as we are used to in a transatlantic relationship”, EU trade chief Maros Sefcovic said of the 30% rate before meeting ministers and officials of the 27 EU capitals to give them an update.

“Practically it would prohibit trade”. EU officials had been hoping they could limit the damage by agreeing a baseline tariff around 10% — the one currently in place — with additional carve-outs for key sectors like autos.

Last year the United States accounted for a fifth of all EU exports — its largest partner. Trump’s bugbear is the \$235 billion US deficit generated by the goods component of that trade, even though the US earns a surplus on services.

UPEND POLICY PLANS

The impact of making European exports — from pharmaceuticals to autos, machinery or wine — too expensive to be viable for American consumers would be instantly tangible.

Economists at Barclays estimate an average tariff rate on EU goods of 35% including both reciprocal and sectoral duties combined with a 10% retaliation from Brussels would shave 0.7 percentage points off euro zone output.

This would eat up most of the euro zone’s already meagre growth and likely lead the European Central Bank to cut its 2% deposit rate further.

“Inflation would likely undershoot the 2% target more deeply and for longer, prompting a more accommodative monetary policy stance — with the deposit rate potentially reaching 1% by March 2026”, the Barclays economists said.

An earlier estimate by German economic institute IW found tariffs of 20% to 50% would cost Germany’s 4.3 trillion euro economy more than 200 billion euros between now and 2028.

While arguably small in percentage terms, that lost activity could still upend Chancellor Friedrich Merz’s plans to push through tax cuts and spend more on renewing the country’s long neglected infrastructure. — Reuters

SOME institutions are moving towards repositioning their mission, vision, work methodology and management approach with the aim of maximising their economic and investment returns.

This is often achieved through revisiting their organisational structure — especially those operating in highly competitive environments. What occurs during the restructuring of institutions may at times seem unfamiliar to public perception.

There may be a need to understand the rationale behind merging certain functions, jobs and roles, while expanding in other areas to create new tasks and opportunities that align with the institution’s future vision. Such dynamics are natural in projects of this nature.

Regardless of the reasons or motivations behind restructuring, one constant remains: the importance of keeping pace with change, seizing renewed opportunities in business sectors and improving performance in ways that enable institutions to build the enterprises of tomorrow.

It is no secret that human-led development often requires explanation — so that the path towards the goal is clearly understood without

misinterpretation and the direction is set without delay.

It also ensures that newly introduced or redefined roles are well articulated and that resources are allocated accordingly. This necessitates the following steps:

First: Strengthen the internal communication programme to ensure effective, objective dialogue. This involves sharing the executive leadership’s vision regarding the restructuring programme and clarifying its potential impacts — so that all employees are engaged and aligned with the transformation.

Second: Reassure the human capital regarding their current and future roles. Staff should be guided towards the new opportunities made available through the restructuring, helping them view the future with ambition, realism and clarity — particularly in terms of the nature of new roles and ongoing development prospects.

Third: Train employees on the strengths of the new organisational structure. This includes repositioning certain functions and enhancing the competencies of staff taking on merged or newly created roles. It also involves preparing teams for the nature of upcoming tasks across

Regardless of the reasons or motivations behind restructuring, one constant remains: the importance of keeping pace with change, seizing renewed opportunities in business sectors and improving performance in ways that enable institutions to build the enterprises of tomorrow.

different sectors related to the institution.

Fourth: Strengthen direct communication with all departments and divisions within the organisation.

This ensures staff are kept up to date with the evolving business environment, stage-by-stage progress and fosters active collaboration to overcome any immediate or future challenges.

Fifth: Keep key partners informed of developments to enable them to play a positive role in supporting the sector’s ongoing transformation, while aligning with the institution’s vision and ambitions for the new phase.

We affirm here that the rapid pace of economic change globally requires nations, institutions, companies and individuals to respond — whether collectively or individually — in a manner that achieves defined goals. It is not always the case that change is merely a correction of the present.

More precisely, development and improvement must be driven by a vision for renewed opportunity and the pursuit of a better place that we must reach. By changing our perspective, we begin to see the opportunities ahead.

Solar shift: Transforming
the energy landscape

IN deserts, on rooftops, floating on reservoirs and soon even stitched into our clothes — solar power is no longer just about traditional panels. In 2025, a wave of innovation is turning sunlight into energy with unprecedented efficiency and creativity.

And it’s happening at a scale that could redefine how nations power homes, cities and industries.

One of the most exciting breakthroughs is the rise of perovskite solar cells. Once considered too unstable for everyday use, perovskites are now outperforming expectations, with laboratory efficiencies exceeding 25 per cent.

In January 2025, the US National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) confirmed new tandem cell designs that combine perovskite and silicon layers, demonstrating higher energy yields and improved stability.

By mid-2025, a new world record was certified: 34.85 per cent efficiency in a tandem perovskite-silicon cell — underscoring the technology’s rapid evolution.

These next-generation modules are thin, flexible and can even be printed onto glass or fabric; opening doors to solar-powered windows, wearables and vehicles.

Japanese companies have already begun mass-producing ultra-thin perovskite sheets for commercial applications.

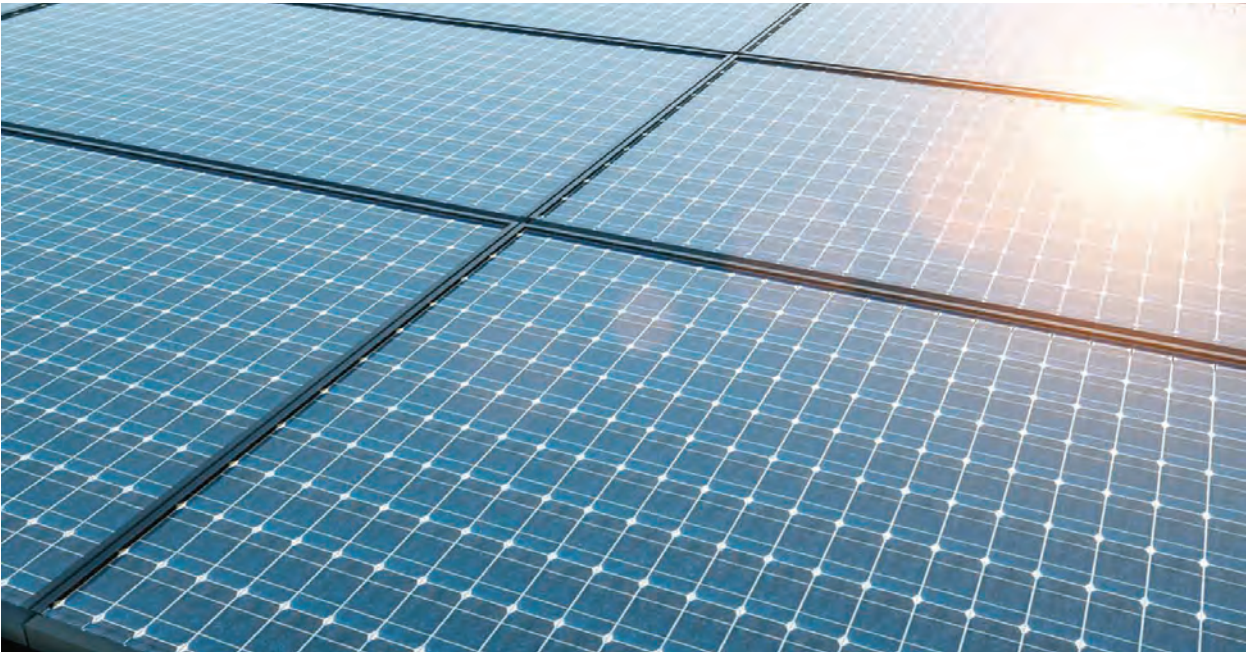
According to a report by EA Global, the technology is expected to move from pilot-scale to widespread deployment within the next two years. Meanwhile, industry leaders like Hanwha and Trina Solar are racing to commercialise tandem panels that offer higher output with lower material costs.

Another innovation changing the solar landscape is bifacial panel design. These solar modules generate power on both the front and back sides; capturing reflected sunlight from the ground or surrounding surfaces.

In combination with sun-tracking mounts and vertical installation, bifacial panels can boost energy output by up to 30 per cent.

Greenlancer, a US-based solar platform, highlights the growing use of such systems in desert and high-reflectivity environments.

Floating solar farms, also known as floatovoltaics, are also gaining momentum; with the installation of



Once considered too unstable for everyday use, perovskites are now outperforming expectations, with laboratory efficiencies exceeding 25 per cent.



NAJAH
AL RIYAMI

The writer is a Media and Communication Master’s graduate.

solar arrays on reservoirs and canals not only conserving land, but also benefitting from natural cooling effects that improve efficiency.

According to a report by global market research firm IMARC Group, floating solar installations could grow by more than 20 per cent annually across Asia and the Middle East, particularly in water-scarce nations like Oman.

Solar design is also evolving to blend seamlessly with architecture. Building-integrated photovoltaics, or BIPV, now allows solar modules to be incorporated into facades, roof tiles and even windows.

Several Gulf cities are exploring BIPV for high-rise developments, where solar glass can reduce energy use without compromising design. Under the surface, material science is advancing rapidly.

Nanocoatings are improving panel durability and reducing glare, while new solar modules come equipped with artificial intelligence and sensor technology.

These “smart panels” can adapt in real time to optimise energy yield and detect issues before they become problems.

Looking further ahead, researchers are developing energy-harvesting fabrics and quantum dot solar cells. While these technologies remain in the experimental phase, they hold promise for lightweight, portable power ideal for off-grid areas, emergency response and even consumer clothing.

As reported in the Encyclopedia

of Solar Materials, textile-based solar could soon transform tents, bags and uniforms into self-sustaining energy sources.

This burst of innovation comes at a pivotal time. As demand for electricity soars — driven by data centres, electric transport and desalination — solar is emerging as one of the most scalable, fast-deploying and increasingly affordable solutions.

According to the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), the cost of utility-scale solar power has dropped by over 80 per cent in the last decade, making it the cheapest source of new electricity in many parts of the world — even without subsidies.

For the Gulf region, the implications are enormous. Oman is ramping up investments in solar-powered green hydrogen, aiming to become a regional leader in clean energy exports and decarbonisation.

The Columbia Energy Policy Institute notes that countries like the UAE and Saudi Arabia are also deploying some of the world’s largest solar farms. These advances don’t just serve climate goals — they promise long-term energy security in a rapidly warming world.

From the shaded rooftops of Muscat to smart-integrated solar facades in Dubai and Riyadh, solar is steadily reshaping the energy equation. Its strength lies not just in its efficiency, but in its adaptability. As countries look to secure their energy future, the sun is no longer a distant source of potential — it’s part of the plan.

BUSINESS

NASRULAH AL AJMI
MUSCAT, JULY 15

ASYAD Shipping Company SAOG, a listed entity on the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) under the trading code ASCO, has announced the successful delivery of one of two Very Large Crude Carriers (VLCCs) it acquired earlier this year.

The vessel was received on July 11, 2025 and has been named “Qurayyat”, reflecting the company’s pride in Oman’s identity and coastal heritage.

The update follows a previous market disclosure made on April 30, 2025, which outlined the purchase of two VLCCs worth a total of \$206 million.

The second vessel is expected to be delivered soon, with shareholders and the market to be notified upon its arrival.

The vessels, each with a capacity of up to two million barrels, are among the largest in the world and represent a strategic investment to strengthen Asyad Shipping’s capacity in the global energy sector.

ASYAD SHIPPING TAKES DELIVERY OF VLCC ‘ QURAYYAT ’

As of April 2025, Asyad Shipping’s fleet comprised 85 vessels, with ongoing plans to grow further across key shipping sectors, including crude oil, liquefied natural gas (LNG), ethylene, ammonia and oil derivatives.



The delivery of Qurayyat and the arrival of its sister vessel signal another step forward in Oman’s ambition to become a key logistics and energy transport hub.

In remarks reported by the Oman News Agency (ONA) on May 24, 2025, Emad bin Said Al Khaduri, Chief Commercial Officer of Asyad Shipping, said the acquisition is part of an integrated fleet expansion plan.

He stressed that the new tankers are aligned with carbon neutrality standards, supporting the company’s sustainability goals and enhancing its competitiveness in regional and international markets. As of April 2025, Asyad Shipping’s fleet comprised 85 vessels, with ongoing plans to grow further across key shipping sectors, including crude oil, liquefied natural gas (LNG), ethylene, ammonia and oil derivatives.

The company also operates with flexible commercial models, offering short- and long-term contracts in addition to spot agreements to meet dynamic market needs.

According to Al Khaduri, Asyad Shipping aims to invest between \$2.3 and 2.7 billion as part of its expansion strategy, of which over \$1 billion has already been committed.

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INDIAN Male, 4 years of experience in web development in a product based company. Looking for a suitable position as software developer. Contact: + 968-99226403 suhail23599@gmail.com

INDIAN male MBA, 20 years experience in Oman & GCC in Project sales/ Dealer market in All construction materials including Cables & Accessories having D/L looking for the post of Sales Manager/Assistant Manager. Contact: 00968 78099493

OMAN Experienced sales executive, valid D/L, 6 +years in FMCG, telecom, Trading, Leading teams and expanding market reach. contact: 94510339

ACCOUNTS/ Finance: Indian male (MBA Fin) having more than 19 years of experience in Oman accounts & finance looking for suitable placement, NOC available and can join immediately. Contact: 92076716

PLANNING Engineer, PMP. Indian male 11 years experience in Construction Projects. Well versed with Primavera P6 Software, strong communication skills, Interpersonal skills, EDT Claims, Recovery schedules, project control. Having Omani Driving Licence. Contact: 78002582. Email: engineer4planning@gmail.com

INDIAN male (Mechanical Engineering) with 3 years experience in diesel engine works (Gensets/ Engines), 2 years in Machine Maintenance, seeks job. Contact: 78022420

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URGENT HIRING

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• 15 years of experience in the same role.
• Experience in pipe laying, road and infrastructure projects.
• PMP will be an added advantage.

Project Manager
Requirements: Civil Engineer Graduate
• Minimum of 15 year experience in marine, infrastructure and buildings and construction work.
• Out of 15 years, 8 years shall be in the managerial level

Planning Engineer
Requirements: Civil Engineer Graduate (4 years program)
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• PMP will be an added advantage

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MEP Engineer
Requirements: Engineer Graduate (4 years program)
• With minimum of 5 years experience in the field.

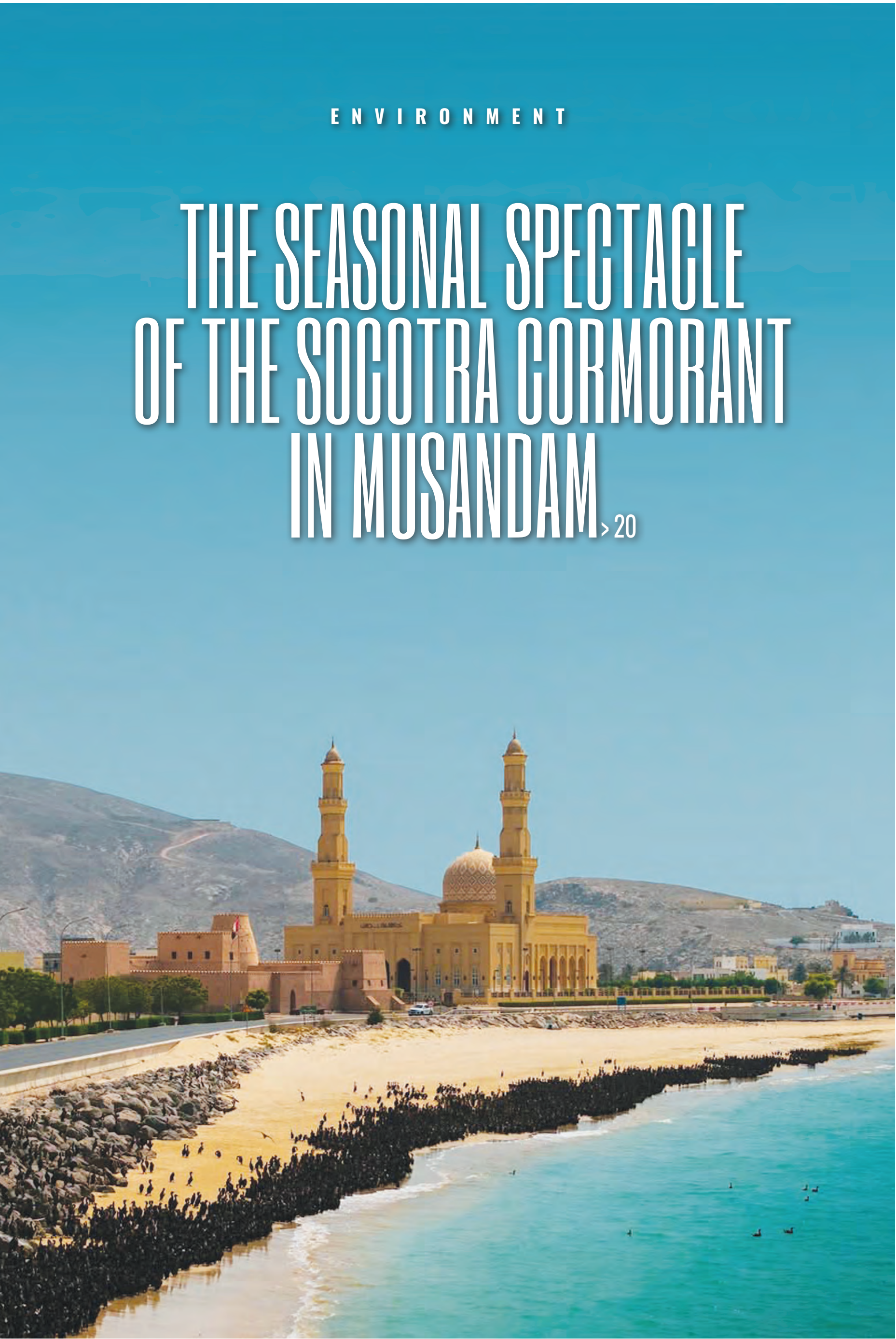
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• Experience in water supply projects.

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ART/LIFE



E N V I R O N M E N T

THE SEASONAL SPECTACLE OF THE SOGOTRA CORMORANT IN MUSANDAM_{>20}

HOBBY

Rare Pokémon cards worth more than \$100,000 stolen from shop



MORE THAN \$100,000 worth of rare, high-end Pokémon cards and box sets were stolen from a Massachusetts shop that specialises in trading cards and collectibles, an owner of the store said.

A burglar used a hammer to smash open the door of the shop, 1st Edition Collectibles in New Bedford, Massachusetts, around 2:30 am on Tuesday.

Once inside, the thief dashed to a display case and stashed the Pokémon collectibles in a bag before taking off, according to William Gilmour, one of the store’s three owners.

He said that the stolen items, which included five rare cards and some vintage box sets, were valued at \$100,000 to \$113,000.

“They were in and out of our store within 30 seconds”, Gilmour said on Sunday about the burglar. “They went straight to these high-value items”.

The stolen cards included a BGS 8.5 First Edition Shadowless Charizard and a BGS 7.5 First Edition Shadowless Blastoise. (BGS stands for Beckett Grading Services, a company that grades collectibles and trading cards.) The sealed boxes included a Pokémon base set Unlimited Green Wing Booster Box.

Gilmour said that a booster box contains 36 packs of original cards.

“They are really rare because how many sealed boxes are still there from 1999 to 2000?” Gilmour said.

The shop, which sells Pokémon items, sports trading cards and vintage video games, is in downtown New Bedford, about 60 miles south of Boston.

“We are small but mighty”, Gilmour said of the store, adding that he opened the shop with his childhood buddies “for the love of the city and the love of the hobby”.

Holly Huntoon, a spokesperson for the New Bedford Police Department, said that the break-in remained under investigation and that no arrests had been made.

On Facebook, the store’s owners posted a surveillance video image of the burglary and a list highlighting the stolen items to raise public awareness.

Pokémon, short for pocket monsters, first became popular in the 1990s, when they were rolled out in Japan as a video game and then as trading cards that introduced a collection of creatures who live in a fantasy world alongside humans. The monsters, who are more cute than scary — think of the yellow, mouselike Pikachu, which has a lightning-bolt shaped tail and can discharge electricity from its red cheeks when angered — have cultivated a fierce following among fans and collectors. — NYT

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



HERITAGE

A bride arrives on horseback at the centre of the village during the wedding procession of the “Galicnik Wedding” in the western Macedonian village of Galicnik. — AFP



CULINARY

Japanese chef Shintaro Awa will replace French chef Bernard Pacaud as he steps down from triple Michelin-starred restaurant L’Ambroisie in Paris. — AFP



ENTERTAINMENT

People pose for a picture with a sculpture of Colombian actress Sofia Vergara at the Malecon in Barranquilla, Colombia. — AFP

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS

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Wadi Al Hoqain

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Enjoying the Swim

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Fiona the pregnant sea reptile’s fossil hints at the birth of a new ocean



About 131 million years ago, a pregnant ichthyosaur — a dolphin-like reptile of the dinosaur era — swam in seas that are now part of southern Chile. And then she died.

An accomplice in the killing: the breakup of the southern supercontinent of Gondwanaland. South America, once unified with Africa and Antarctica, pulled away and a new ocean basin called the Roca Verdes opened up.

“One of the hypotheses is that this is actually the opening of the early South Atlantic Ocean”, said Matthew Malkowski, a professor of geological sciences in Texas.

The geological forces that pulled apart the continents also ruptured the Earth’s crust, causing volcanoes and earthquakes; and those earthquakes sometimes set off massive underwater landslides.

One day in the early Cretaceous period, one of those landslides collapsed down a submarine canyon in Roca Verdes, generating turbulent flows of sediment.

“Probably these landslides might have trapped the ichthyosaurs and threw them to the bottom of the canyon and covered them with sediment”, said Judith Pardo-Pérez, an associate professor in Chile. — KENNETH CHANG / NYT



This is what fashion needs now

THE LAST time Maison Margiela held an “artisanal” show, the brand’s version of couture, it shook the fashion world. That was back in January 2024. John Galliano was creative director and his theatrical vision of smoke-filled cafes and nighttime assignations had attendees swooning in delight and shrieking genius.

So it was pretty audacious, all things considered, for Glenn Martens, the new designer of the brand, to decide that his first coed

attention on the clothes — but here the models looked as though they were suffocating. It was painful to see and seemed even more painful to wear, whether or not it was conscious commentary on the state of women in the world.

Just as the outrage was beginning to bubble up, however, out came a figure in a sweeping, mud-colour cloak, with the inside of the hood and its matching mask covered in dark crystals. That was followed by a series of three gowns in bronze, gold and silver made from aged duchesse satin that swirled around

layered on top of texture on top of reference; preciousness rooted in the memories each piece seemed to contain. Rather than, say, the number of bugle beads.

It was couture, but not as it has existed anywhere else. Except maybe in the archives of Margiela, where value always rested in the potential of found objects. And it was spectacular.

Mostly.

A series of gowns in flesh-tone jersey so thin as to expose the corset and bones beneath simply transformed the wearers into



show — and the first Margiela show of any kind since Galliano’s — should also be couture.

Good thing it offered some genius of its own.

An exhilarating, multidimensional, occasionally misguided explosion of ideas, it was the most propulsive show of the week; a scream of originality amidst collections and designer debuts that have largely offered well-calibrated wearability. It was extreme in its imagination and technique (sometimes too much so), but never namby-pamby. It’s what fashion needs.

Even if it did not begin well.

Held in the same underground warren of concrete rooms where Martin Margiela, the founder, had staged his last show in 2008, it began, in fact, with two women in transparent plastic dresses. Their hands were trapped at the waist, their faces encased in plastic masks.

Masks were a Margiela signature — he thought they served to focus

the bodies like storm clouds and it was clear we were in a whole different universe. From there, things just got wilder.

Patchwork skirts and jackets that suggested elaborate ruined wallpaper, or pages from a diary, were peeling back at the seams. Flowers sprouted up out of prints like still lifes run amok. One dress made from more than 10,000 pieces of gold costume jewels looked as though a giant magnet had walked into a pawn shop. A skirt seemed composed of an entire flock of pigeons that had collided midflight. T-shirts were speckled with crystal shards, as if they had clawed their way out of the centre of the earth.

Imagine the weather gods had come down to Earth during medieval times, started collecting both heraldic tapestries and Flemish flower paintings and then marauded their way across the centuries to join Hell’s Angels for the fall of the Berlin Wall. This is how they might look. History was

skeletal wraiths, while wire belts with corseted backs seemed more like garrotes for the waist. And it was impossible to look at the masks that accompanied every look — in hammered metal or gleaming crystal, no matter — and not think of the way masks are being used around the world.

As with the state of women, facial coverings have taken on a complicated political meaning in the present day and no matter how fantastical fashion may be, it is not exempt from the shadow of current events. Ultimately, choosing to obscure the models’ faces detracted from the humanity that otherwise permeated the clothes.

You may like the masks or hate them, but like the feral, unbridled nature of the collection itself, it was impossible not to react to them. Which, given how dulled everyone’s senses have become by the never-ending stream of imagery in which we all exist, is Martens’ magic. — NYT

FEATURES



THE SEASONAL SPECTACLE OF THE SOCOTRA CORMORANT IN MUSANDAM

BY ARWA AL HASHIMI
PHOTOS BY ALI AL HARBI

EACH YEAR, between July and September, the coastlines of Musandam Governorate are transformed into a breathtaking scene, one that occurs only once annually and captures the hearts of nature lovers and wildlife photographers alike. It is the season when the elusive Socotra Cormorant makes its way to the shores of Oman, turning the northern tip of the Sultanate of Oman into a living stage for a rare natural performance. For birdwatchers and photographers in search of extraordinary moments, this seasonal migration is nothing short of a gift, one that draws lenses and eyes from all corners of the country and beyond.

This dark-feathered seabird, known scientifically as *Phalacrocorax nigrogularis*, is named after Socotra Island in Yemen but migrates across specific regions of the Arabian Gulf. Standing up to 80 centimetres tall, the Socotra Cormorant is distinguished by its shimmering black plumage and graceful movements. Oman's Musandam coast serves as one of the bird's key seasonal stopovers and one of the most remarkable, as the species is globally classified as "Vulnerable" by the IUCN Red List. What makes this bird particularly captivating is its synchronised behaviour. It travels in flocks that can number in

the tens of thousands, swimming in perfect harmony as if composing a moving artwork across the sea's surface. Underwater, the cormorant displays agile hunting techniques, diving up to 15 metres deep and remaining submerged for more than three minutes while pursuing sardines, anchovies and other small fish — an extraordinary feat among seabirds of the region.

Musandam's isolated and quiet beaches provide the ideal sanctuary for the cormorant's summer migration, which typically begins in July and lasts until late September or early October. During this brief window, the coastline becomes a hub of ecological activity. Studies have recorded as many as 45,000 birds congregating along the shores of Musandam during the summer months, making it one of the largest and most vital gathering sites for this species in the world. For photographers, researchers and birding enthusiasts, this gathering presents a rare opportunity to observe and document the bird's natural behaviour without the need to travel to remote islands or restricted reserves.

What astonishes many observers is not only the sheer size of the flocks but also the bird's endurance and flight capabilities. Despite having relatively narrow wings, the Socotra Cormorant is capable of travelling vast distances with remarkable efficiency. One of the most visually stunning moments happens at sunrise and sunset, when thousands of birds take flight or land in synchronised waves, casting dancing shadows across the ocean in a spectacle that seems almost choreographed by nature itself.

Recognising the ecological and tourism value of this annual phenomenon, Oman has taken deliberate steps to protect the Socotra Cormorant and its natural habitats. National efforts include monitoring migratory populations, restricting disruptive human activities during the migration season and designating areas of high ecological importance for special conservation oversight by entities such as the Environment Authority. Moreover, Oman's vision for sustainable eco-tourism increasingly embraces such natural spectacles, aiming to transform them into meaningful experiences that support local communities whilst preserving biodiversity.

For photographers, nature enthusiasts and anyone drawn to rare and fleeting wonders, the presence of the Socotra Cormorant on Musandam's shores is an open invitation. This majestic and mysterious bird calls on you to witness its journey, to capture moments that cannot be replicated and to become part of a quiet celebration of nature's artistry. Its presence is more than just a seasonal migration; it's a symbol of the delicate balance between nature and humanity, a reminder that some treasures, once lost, may never return.

In the end, the migration of the Socotra Cormorant is not merely a biological event. It is a silent festival of life, a visual symphony that touches the soul of every person who believes in the beauty of the natural world. With every new season, this bird reminds us that Oman is home to some of the planet's most extraordinary ecological treasures, gems worth protecting, cherishing and sharing with the world.