

O M A N
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D A I L Y

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20 THE AMBITIOUS OMANI
CHEF TRANSFORMING
PERFUMES INTO
CHOCOLATE

HM, CROWN PRINCE HOLD BILATERAL TALKS

H i s M a j e s t y p a y s f r a t e r n a l v i s i t t o S a u d i A r a b i a

HM, PRINCE
MOHAMMED
DISCUSS
FRATERNAL
RELATIONS

EXCHANGE
VIEWS ON
REGIONAL,
GLOBAL ISSUES

SEEK SOLUTIONS
TO ACHIEVE
DE-ESCALATION
AND PEACE



ENSURE
SECURITY OF
STATES AND
PEOPLES IN THE
REGION

MEETING
FOCUSES ON
TRAJECTORY OF
BILATERAL TIES

TALKS EXPLORE
AVENUES
ACROSS VARIOUS
SECTORS

HIS Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on Tuesday paid a private fraternal visit to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. During the visit, His Majesty held a meeting with Prince Mohammed bin Salman al Saud, Crown Prince and Prime Minister, at His Royal Highness's residence in Jeddah.

The meeting focused on the trajectory of the deep-rooted fraternal relations between the two countries and explored avenues for their advancement across various sectors in a manner that serves

their mutual interests. The two sides also exchanged views on recent developments concerning key regional and international issues, as well as potential solutions to achieve de-escalation and peace, thereby ensuring the security of states and peoples while safeguarding their economies and interests.

Alongside His Majesty the Sultan, the meeting was attended by HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal al Busaidi, Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court, Gen Sultan bin

Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office, Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal al Busaidi, Minister of Interior, Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, Dr Hamed bin Said al Aufi, Head of the Private Office, Abdulsalam bin Mohammed al Murshidi, President of Oman Investment Authority, Eng Said bin Hamoud al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, and Sayyid Najeel bin Hilal al Busaidi, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Kingdom of

Saudi Arabia.

Meanwhile, it was attended from the Saudi side by Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman al Saud, Minister of Energy and Minister of Industry and Mineral Resources, Prince Saud bin Mishal bin Abdulaziz al Saud, Deputy Governor of Makkah Region, Prince Faisal bin Farhan al Saud, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr Majid bin Abdullah al Qasabi, Minister of Commerce, Ahmed bin Aqeel al Khatib, Minister of Tourism, Eng Saleh bin Nasser al Jasser, Minister of Transport and Logistics, Fahd bin Abdul Jalil al Saif,

Minister of Investment, Khalid bin Ali al Humaidan, Chief of General Intelligence, and Ibrahim bin Saad bin Bishan, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the Sultanate of Oman.

His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed bin Salman, accompanied by a number of senior officials, was at the forefront of those welcoming and bidding farewell to His Majesty the Sultan at the Royal Pavilion of King Abdulaziz International Airport in Jeddah.

— ONA
SEE ALSO P2 & 3

IN BRIEF

HM’S GREETINGS TO
VIETNAM PRESIDENT

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President To Lam of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam on his country’s National Day. In his cable, His Majesty wished President To Lam success in achieving further accomplishments and aspirations to serve the interests of his country’s people. His Majesty also wished the relations of cooperation between Oman and Vietnam continued progress and growth across various fields.

HM’S CONDOLENCES TO
PRESIDENT OF FRANCE

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of condolences to President Emmanuel Macron of the French Republic on the demise of former French prime minister Édouard Balladur. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his heartfelt sympathy to President Macron, the family of the deceased and the people of France.

US launches fresh air strikes on Iran



A commuter walks past a wall mural along the street in Tehran on Tuesday. — AFP

WASHINGTON: The US launched new air strikes on Iranian targets on Tuesday, quashing hopes that an exchange of fire last weekend might not presage a wider renewal of hostilities.

Oil prices had already risen after that first exchange of direct attacks since July and after reports of two tankers being hit leaving the Strait, the global oil supply waterway that Iran has effectively closed to shipping.

Tehran remained defiant, warning that it would prevent oil being exported from the Gulf, despite a threat by US President Donald Trump to hit Iran “hard” in response to the renewed Iranian strikes, and a warning from US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent that

Washington was about to impose new sanctions.

“Today at 12 pm ET (1600 GMT), US forces began striking Islamic Revolutionary Guard

Corps (IRGC) targets in Iran,” US Central Command posted on X. “The strikes follow recent attempted attacks by the IRGC against commercial

shipping in the Strait of Hormuz and against American service members deployed to the region.”

Iran’s state broadcaster said there had been reports of explosions on Iran’s Qeshm Island, on the northern side of the strait.

The state-linked news agency Nour News said there had been reports of explosions in the port city of Bandar Abbas and in Chabahar, a port on the southern coast.

The six-month-old conflict had shifted into an economic standoff before the weekend strikes, in which US forces attacked Iran’s Larak Island on Sunday and Iran responded by launching missiles at two US air bases in Jordan.

— Reuters

DEEP-ROOTED HISTORICAL PARTNERSHIP AND PROMISING FUTURE



HM'S VISIT SERVES AS A RENEWED OPPORTUNITY TO AFFIRM THAT SAUDI ARABIA AND OMAN ARE TWO NATIONS BOUND BY SHARED HISTORY, GEOGRAPHY, DESTINY AND MUTUAL INTERESTS

SAUDI-OMANI RELATIONS REPRESENT AN EXEMPLARY MODEL OF GULF COOPERATION FOUNDED ON DIALOGUE, MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING AND COORDINATION

OPENING OF A SAUDI PUBLIC INVESTMENT FUND OFFICE IN THE SULTANATE OF OMAN AIMED AT IDENTIFYING SUITABLE INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

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

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

In this context, Ibrahim bin Saad bin Bishan, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the Sultanate of Oman, stated that the private fraternal visit of His Majesty the Sultan to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia reaffirms the depth of the historic and enduring relations uniting the two countries and their peoples. The ambassador underscored the exceptional patronage and attention these relations receive from the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz al Saud and His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz al Saud, Crown Prince and Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

He added that this visit serves as a renewed opportunity to affirm that Saudi Arabia and Oman are two nations bound by shared history, geography, destiny and mutual interests. The trust, cordiality, and historical legacy shared by their leaderships and peoples constitute a powerful driver for building a future of greater cohesion and prosperity.

The ambassador emphasised that the strength of Saudi-Omani relations is not grounded solely in immediate interests, but rather in a profound historical legacy of trust and mutual respect, and in a common vision for a future defined by enhanced security, stability, and development. This, he noted, bolsters the two countries' standing as strategic partners and enables them to collectively shape the promising future of the region. He further observed that these bilateral ties have now surpassed half a century of distinguished cooperation, understanding, and continuous coordination between the two leaderships on a wide array of regional and international issues.

He elaborated that these relations have been reinforced by a series of high-level reciprocal visits, most notably His Majesty the Sultan's visit to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in June 2021 — his first official overseas visit after assuming the reins of power — in response to an invitation from the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz al Saud. That visit resulted in the establishment of the Saudi-Omani Coordination Council, serving as an institutional framework to enhance bilateral cooperation across various sectors.

The ambassador further noted that the official visit of His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz al Saud, Crown Prince and Prime Minister, to the Sultanate of Oman in December 2021, followed by his private visit in September 2023, underscored the depth of joint coordination, strengthened consultations on regional and international matters, and contributed to reinforcing the region's security and stability.

He also pointed out that this coordination is further underpinned by ongoing bilateral and international meetings and continuous deliberations between the Foreign Ministers of the two countries — alongside sustained engagements among the ministers and officials across diverse fields. These interactions reflect an advanced level of understanding and coordination, paving the way towards a more integrated future that serves the interests of both nations and their peoples, he added.

The ambassador indicated that this visit carries significant implications amid the ongoing regional transformations and challenges. He affirmed that Saudi-Omani relations represent an exemplary model of Gulf cooperation founded on dialogue, mutual understanding and coordination — thereby reinforcing regional security and stability

and supporting pathways to development and prosperity.

He underscored that the bilateral relationship extends well beyond the political dimension into broader horizons encompassing economy, investment, trade, tourism, culture, and media. This expanding scope opens the door to a new phase of partnership and integration, enhancing the shared interests of the two peoples. He noted that the establishment of the Saudi-Omani Coordination Council functions as an institutional mechanism to activate cooperation and monitor projects and initiatives between the two countries — including those emanating from Saudi Vision 2030 and Oman Vision 2040 — thereby contributing to economic integration and sustainable development.

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

He also highlighted the opening of a Saudi Public Investment Fund office in the Sultanate of Oman, aimed at identifying suitable investment opportunities and assisting fund portfolio companies and private sector partners in expanding into Omani markets.

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

The ambassador added that in 2025, Saudi direct investment in the Sultanate of Oman amounted to approximately RO 72.8316 million, while Omani direct investment in the Kingdom reached approximately RO 115.9 million.

He explained that trade and mobility between the two countries were significantly boosted by the opening of the Empty Quarter border crossing on 11 December 2021, as the first direct land port between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Sultanate of Oman, extending approximately 564 kilometres. This development marked a qualitative leap in trade movement, with the border crossing recording a remarkable growth in trade volume in 2025, valued at approximately RO 1.322 billion, compared to approximately RO 1.051 billion in 2021 — representing roughly 58 per cent of total bilateral trade — while also facilitating transit between the two nations.

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

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

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

The total bilateral trade volume for 2025 was approximately RO 2.4754 billion, of which the Kingdom's imports from the Sultanate of Oman accounted for RO 1.2179 billion, while Oman's exports to the Kingdom stood at RO 1.2574 billion.

Statistics further indicate that the number of Saudi visitors to the Sultanate of Oman reached 80,917 as of the end of August 2026, compared with approximately 116,880 Saudi visitors recorded in 2025. — ONA

RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES ARE ADVANCING TOWARD A NEW PHASE OF FUTURE-ORIENTED PARTNERSHIP, ENCOMPASSING CLEAN ENERGY AND GREEN HYDROGEN INITIATIVES

SAUDI INVESTMENT IN THE SULTANATE OF OMAN REACHED RO 82.69 MILLION BY 2024, WHILE OMANI INVESTMENT IN THE KINGDOM STOOD AT RO 115.9 MILLION OVER THE SAME PERIOD

SAUDI VISITORS TO THE SULTANATE OF OMAN UP TO THE END OF AUGUST 2026 REACHED 80,917, WHILE IN 2025 THE TOTAL STOOD AT APPROXIMATELY 116,880 SAUDI VISITORS.



His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq on Tuesday paid a private fraternal visit to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. During the visit, His Majesty held a meeting with Prince Mohammed bin Salman al Saud, Crown Prince and Prime Minister, at His Royal Highness's residence in Jeddah.



OMAN

SHORT TAKES



The RAO extends its expertise and capabilities to help the eligible candidates join the military service. — ONA

RAO BEGINS
ADMISSION FOR
OFFICER CADETS

MUSCAT: In coordination with the Ministry of Labour, the Royal Army of Oman (RAO) on Tuesday began procedures to admit candidates to military service as officer cadets from among those holding a Bachelor’s degree, a General Education Diploma (GED), or a Post-GED. The RAO extends its expertise and capabilities to help the eligible candidates join the military service and engage in national duty in a manner that enables them to perform their mission in defending the homeland and preserving its gains, in accordance with the scheduled plans and programmes. — ONA

AGREEMENT SIGNED
TO SAFEGUARD
CULTURAL HERITAGE



The National Museum signed a cooperation agreement with the Omani Women’s Association in Muscat on Tuesday. — ONA

MUSCAT: The National Museum on Tuesday signed a cooperation agreement with the Omani Women’s Association in Muscat aimed at strengthening joint collaboration between the two parties in the areas of safeguarding Omani cultural heritage, raising community awareness, and exchanging expertise and knowledge. This partnership contributes to highlighting Omani cultural identity and supporting the presence and contributions of Omani women across various fields. The agreement was signed on behalf of the National Museum by Jamal bin Hassan al Mousawi, Secretary-General of the National Museum, and on behalf of the Omani Women’s Association in Muscat by Liqa bint Saif al Maawali, Chairperson of the Omani Women’s Association in Muscat. — ONA

Oman, Nepal communities pay tribute to mountaineer Nadhira

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, SEPT 1

Omani and Nepali communities came together to pay homage to those who lost their lives in the recent floods including Omani mountaineer Nadhira al Harthi who lost her life along with 9 other mountaineers in an avalanche that happened during an expedition at the Broad Peak on July 30. The Embassy of Nepal organised a condolence meeting under the auspices of Bushra al Ajmi, Acting Chief of the Asia-Pacific Department of the Foreign Ministry, to honour those who lost their lives and to express solidarity with families affected by the devastating flash floods in Nepal witnessed a large number of people from different walks of life in attendance. Everest climber Sulaiman al Naabi, family members of the late Nadhira al Harthi, members of the Oman-Nepal Friendship Association, media persons, Nepali community members and Omani friends and other participants including ambassadors and other diplomats shared their memories with the ace mountaineer who made Oman proud. Bushra shared a condolence message to the families of the



During the meeting, a minute of silence was observed.

departed souls and appreciated the initiative of the Embassy of Nepal in Muscat for organising an event to honour the heroes. Bishesh Kumar Sah, Chargé d’Affaires at the Embassy of Nepal, delivered a message of condolence, expressing solidarity with the families of the deceased and the global mountaineering community. He recalled the remarkable achievements of the late Nadhira al

Harthi, who became the first Omani woman to climb Mount Everest in 2019. He also noted that Nadhira was closely associated with Nepal and the embassy. Furthermore, Sah paid tribute to the late Nirmal Purja (Nimsdai), renowned for his extraordinary achievement of climbing all 14 peaks above 8,000 metres in six months and six days. He remembered the other brave

mountaineers who lost their lives on July 30, 2026, at Broad Peak. Bishesh also expressed deep condolences over the loss of lives and property caused by the severe flash flood in Nepal on August 26, 2026. He highlighted the ongoing search, rescue and relief efforts of the Government of Nepal and appealed for prayers and support for the affected people. He also informed participants

Females aged 25-34 most exposed to work stress: Study

MUSCAT: A specialised study conducted by Dr Mohammed al Farraji, Vice-Chairman of the Professional Well-being Society, revealed several indicators related to the reality of well-being, highlighting key strengths and challenges facing employees in workplace environments. The study covered 133 employees, including 71 females and 62 males, and showed that the overall job satisfaction index reached 73

per cent — a moderate level that reflects positive aspects to build upon, while also exposing gaps that require institutional intervention to enhance employee satisfaction and professional stability. Results indicated that females aged 25-34 are the most vulnerable to work-related stress, recording the lowest satisfaction rate of 3.16 out of 5. Dr Al Farraji attributed this to several



DR MOHAMMED
AL FARRAJI

potential factors, including multiple social and family responsibilities, difficulty achieving work-life balance, and the nature of certain jobs and night shifts in some sectors. The psychological support and counselling dimension ranked lowest among quality of work life elements, scoring 2.73 out of 5, underscoring the need for institutional policies that provide effective psychological support and

professional guidance, enabling employees to cope with stress and workplace pressures. Conversely, employees with more than 12 years of experience demonstrated higher levels of work-life quality compared to other groups, indicating the importance of professional experience in strengthening adaptability, stability, and resilience in workplace challenges.

ROP launches traffic plan
for new academic year

LT MOHAMMED AL MADASARI
MUSCAT, SEPT 1

AHEAD OF the new school year, the Royal Oman Police (ROP) has activated a comprehensive traffic management plan to ensure safe and smooth access to schools across the Sultanate of Oman. The Directorate-General of Traffic will intensify its field presence around schools during peak morning and afternoon hours to regulate vehicle flow, reduce congestion, and monitor violations. Staff Colonel Salim bin Mohammed al Harrasi, Assistant Director-General of Traffic, said ongoing coordination with various authorities helps the ROP identify highly congested areas that require intensive monitoring to establish a safe environment around schools. “The success of the plan depends on the awareness of parents, students, and bus drivers,” Staff Col Al Harrasi stated. “Traffic violations and reckless behaviour near schools pose a direct threat to student and road user safety.” He warned that offenses such as speeding, using a mobile phone while driving, unsafe overtaking, and failing to give priority to pedestrians can lead to serious injuries and accidents.



STAFF COLONEL
SALIM
AL HARRASI

The success of the plan depends on the awareness of parents, students, and bus drivers. Traffic violations and reckless behaviour near schools pose a direct threat to student and road user safety



The Directorate-General of Traffic will intensify its field presence around schools during peak morning and afternoon hours.

Staff Col Al Harrasi also urged drivers to avoid random parking, especially in front of school gates and pedestrian crossings, as this hinders the movement of students and buses. The ROP emphasised that safety aboard school buses is equally vital. “Drivers are advised to adhere to permitted passenger capacities, ensure students are clear of the vehicle before moving, and confirm

the bus is empty at the end of each trip. This is in addition to complying with speed limits and ensuring students’ safety during boarding and disembarking.” The ROP stressed that community cooperation is essential to maintaining a safe school environment and called on all road users to follow traffic rules to protect students.

SHORT TAKES



The seminar addressed themes centred on strengthening national security system. — ONA

SEMINAR REVIEWS INTEGRATION AMID GEOPOLITICAL TRANSFORMATIONS

MUSCAT: The Command of the Sultan’s Armed Forces on Tuesday organised a seminar titled “National Integration between Military and Security Services and Civilian Sectors Amid Geopolitical and Technological Transformations.” It was held under the auspices of Dr Hamed bin Mohammed al Dhawyani, Chairman of the National Records and Archives Authority.

The seminar, held at Al Shafaq Club of the Sultan’s Armed Forces, addressed a number of themes centred on strengthening the comprehensive national security system in the Sultanate of Oman and its role in supporting national policies. It also featured an examination of several leading international practices and experiences in the field of national integration, with a view to drawing relevant lessons that align with national requirements.

The event saw the participation of a number of stakeholders from the Ministry of Defence (MoD), the Sultan’s Armed Forces (SAF), military and security services, as well as representatives from civil entities and the private sector. This broad participation underscores the importance of enhancing partnership and coordination across various sectors in addressing ongoing and future technological shifts and geopolitical challenges. — ONA

SAF CHIEF RECEIVES INDIAN OFFICIAL



MUSCAT: Vice Admiral Abdullah bin Khamis al Raisi, Chief of Staff of the Sultan’s Armed Forces (SAF), received at Muaskar Al Murtafaa on Tuesday Air Vice Marshal Manish Vasantkumar Patel, Senior Directing Staff at the National Defence College of the Republic of India, and his accompanying delegation. During the meeting, the two sides discussed several matters of mutual interest, particularly those related to academic and training aspects, as well as the exchange of expertise. — ONA

Shortlisted ‘Falling Walls Lab’ projects announced

MUSCAT: The Research and Innovation Authority on Tuesday announced the projects shortlisted to represent the Sultanate of Oman in the global finals of the ‘Falling Walls Lab’ forum, scheduled to take place in Berlin, Germany, from November 5 to 9.

The announcement came at the conclusion of the final qualifying round of the competition in its eleventh edition, hosted by the University of Nizwa under the auspices of Dr Saif bin Abdullah al Haddabi, Chairman of the Research and Innovation Authority, and in the presence of Professor Dr Ahmed bin Khalfan al Rawahi, President of the University of Nizwa, with broad participation from researchers and



The announcement came at the conclusion of the final qualifying round. — ONA

innovators representing various academic and research institutions across the Sultanate of Oman. Innovator Abdullah bin Mohammed al Alawi secured

first place for his project entitled “Breaking the Wall of Inequality in Medical Education Opportunities,” while innovator Rayan bint Salim al Sarmi achieved second place for

her project “Breaking the Wall of Chemotherapy-Induced Hair Loss in Cancer Patients.” Innovator Ali bin Ahmed al Zadjali was awarded third place for his project “Breaking the Barrier of Circular Asphalt.” The final stage featured 20 innovators and researchers who had qualified from among 158 participants in this year’s edition. Each participant delivered a three-minute presentation before a specialised judging panel comprising a select group of experts, academics, and business leaders, tasked with evaluating the innovative solutions and selecting the most promising projects to represent the Sultanate of Oman on the international stage. — ONA

Al Sharqiyah South trains officials on energy transition

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
SUR, SEPT 1

AL SHARQIYAH South Governorate, in partnership with the Ministry of Energy and Minerals and the Oman Energy Institute, organised on Sunday a training programme on ‘New Energy’ to strengthen institutional readiness and enhance government officials’ understanding of the transformation taking place in the energy sector.

The programme aimed to raise institutional awareness of emerging energy trends and equip administrative and leadership cadres to respond effectively to the changing energy landscape, with a focus on transforming challenges into opportunities for investment, innovation, economic growth and diversification.

The programme covered key developments shaping the future of energy, including emerging trends, opportunities arising from different energy mixes, drivers of the energy transition, energy efficiency and emissions reduction.

It also examined the evolving role of the oil and gas sector amid global energy shifts and the opportunities the energy transition could create for Oman.

Discussions highlighted the importance of strengthening institutional capabilities and developing leadership skills to



The programme aimed to raise institutional awareness of emerging energy trends.

The programme covered key developments shaping the future of energy, including emerging trends, opportunities arising from different energy mixes, drivers of the energy transition

enable government entities to anticipate global developments and translate them into practical development and investment opportunities.

The initiative forms part of Al Sharqiyah South Governorate’s efforts to build institutional capacity and enhance the readiness of its workforce to respond to emerging economic and technological trends. It also supports the governorate’s broader development agenda and aligns

with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040, particularly priorities related to governorate development and sustainable cities.

The programme underscored the importance of cooperation between government institutions and specialised energy organisations in raising awareness of opportunities arising from the energy transition and ensuring that local development initiatives support Oman’s long-term economic and sustainability priorities.

Young artists add new dimensions to Oman’s art scene

MUSCAT: A new generation of young Omani artists is exploring diverse paths in fine art, combining traditional techniques with modern tools while seeking distinctive artistic identities and drawing inspiration from Omani culture.

Their experiences span portraiture, pencil drawing and Arabic calligraphy, reflecting a growing interest in using visual art to explore human emotions, cultural memory and personal expression.

Artist Suwaid bin Masoud al Yaarubi has made portraiture the centre of his artistic journey. His interest began in 2014 when he wanted to create a lasting gift for a friend. What started as a personal gesture developed into a sustained artistic practice, strengthened by encouragement from those around him.

Al Yaarubi pays particular attention to facial proportions, distances and measurements, believing that a successful portrait requires more than physical resemblance. For him, the artist must also capture something of the character and emotion conveyed by the face.

He considers skin tones among the



SUWAID BIN MASOUD
AL YAARUBI
Artist

The experiences of Omani artists span portraiture, pencil drawing and Arabic calligraphy, reflecting a growing interest in using visual art to explore human emotions

most challenging aspects of coloured portraiture, requiring multiple layers and careful attention to differences associated with age. Omani faces have featured prominently in his work, helping him develop precision while also allowing him to document aspects of society and its cultural memory.

One of his favourite works, ‘The Story of a King,’ depicts an elderly man, focusing on his wrinkles and expressions. Al Yaarubi completed the painting over four consecutive days.

While acknowledging the potential of digital technology and artificial intelligence, he views them as tools that can assist artists in developing ideas and adjusting reference images rather than replacing traditional artwork. He hopes to develop a distinctive style, participate in international exhibitions and eventually hold a solo exhibition.

Artist Khawla Mohammed Ali follows a different approach, working primarily in black and white and finding particular expression through pencil drawing. Although she has



experimented with acrylic and oil paints, she continues to return to pencil because of its flexibility and its ability to convey emotions and detail.

Portraits occupy a prominent place in Khawla’s work, with facial expressions and emotions providing a recurring source of inspiration. Omani characters of different ages and emotional states also feature in her drawings.

She considers establishing facial proportions and the initial features among the most demanding stages of her work. Depending on the level of



detail, a drawing can take from a week to 14 days or longer.

Khawla sees digital art and modern technologies as complementary to traditional drawing, but remains attached to hand-drawing for its authenticity and direct sensory connection between the artist and the tools.

Meanwhile, Marwa bint Abdullah al Hosani has made the Arabic letter the foundation of her artistic practice. Her interest in calligraphy began during childhood and developed more formally around 2022 through specialised workshops. — ONA

WORLD

SHORT TAKES



Syrian FM Asaad al Shaibani, speaks during an interview in Damascus. — Reuters

Syria wants diplomatic solution with Israel despite attacks

DAMASCUS: Syrian Foreign Minister Asaad al Shaibani said on Tuesday that his country was working towards a “diplomatic solution” with Israel, with US mediation, despite ongoing Israeli attacks. Israel has carried out repeated incursions deeper into Syrian territory and has vowed to keep troops in a so-called “security zone” in southern Syria, where it seeks a broader demilitarised area.

“The attacks are still ongoing. We observed 65 incursions in July alone, and 52 in the first 18 days of August,” Shaibani told a press conference with his visiting Danish counterpart Lars Lokke Rasmussen. He slammed a “campaign of raids on homes in Quneitra province and the Damascus countryside”, and said Syria had registered 147 cases of Israeli troops detaining Syrians so far this year, with “49 of them still detained”. “Despite these challenges, we are still committed to the option of a diplomatic solution and we are working seriously to achieve this,” Shaibani said, adding: “We are engaged in negotiations mediated by the United States of America.”

Israel and Syria have held several rounds of direct talks, most recently last month in Jordan after fresh Israeli strikes, including one on a disused airbase in the country’s northwest. — AFP

Turkish naval drone seeks answers from Cyprus ferry wreck



A Turkish aircraft flies over the waters during a rescue operation off the coast of Kyrenia. — AFP

ISTANBUL: A Turkish navy vessel equipped with a deep-diving drone arrived off northern Cyprus on Tuesday, seeking answers from the sunken wreckage of a deadly weekend ferry accident, officials said. The ferry capsized several nautical miles from the port en route to the Turkish mainland, with all eight of the victims Turkish nationals, officials said. Rescuers in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), which is only recognised by Ankara, have been searching for the last 20 who are still unaccounted for.

TRNC prime minister Unal Ustal said a Turkish naval vessel equipped with an underwater drone — or ROV (remotely operated vehicle) capable of descending to depths up to 1,000 metres — had arrived during the morning. TRNC officials say the wreckage lies at a depth of 514 metres. “Our top priority is to locate the missing,” Ustal said in remarks quoted by the official TAK news agency.

Police detained the ferry’s captain and 15 others, nine of whom appeared in court in Kyrenia, or Girne in Turkish, on Monday charged with negligent homicide as Northern Cyprus began three days of mourning. — AFP

MAKESHIFT BOMBS

Explosives damage power lines in Germany



Improvised explosive devices were used to target power lines near a coal-fired power plant in Germany, with several electricity lines damaged and supply briefly interrupted, police and a grid operator said. Several makeshift bombs were found around 08:00 am at the Preilack substation, which distributes power from the nearby Jaenschwalde plant that runs on lignite and also burns rubbish. At least one of the devices detonated but others failed to go off. — AFP

HEALTH RISKS SOARING IN GAZA AS RAINY SEASON NEARS, WARNS WHO

GENEVA: The approaching rainy season risks worsening a dire public health crisis in Gaza, where most people live in overcrowded tent camps amid rubble and overflowing sewage, the WHO warned on Tuesday.

The World Health Organization warned that there had already been a clear deterioration in the quality of water reaching the population in recent months, while the number of diarrhoea cases had surged. “Whilst we fail to provide people with the minimum quantities of water, water quality and water contamination remains a major issue,” said Reinhilde Van de Weerd, the WHO’s representative in the Palestinian territories.

Gaza has been engulfed in a devastating health and humanitarian crisis since Israel launched its war in the territory following unprecedented attack inside Israel. Despite a US-backed ceasefire that took effect in October 2025, violence has not halted in the

Gaza Strip, and Israel continues to impose significant restrictions on the entry of goods, including medical equipment and fuel.

Testing of some 6,700 water samples over the first eight months of the year indicated that “microbiological contamination almost tripled”, Van de Weerd told reporters in Geneva, speaking from the Gaza Strip. Contamination had gone from under six per cent in January to over 18 per cent in August, the tests showed. — AFP

Iran urges US to comply with June interim deal

IRAN said on Tuesday it would reciprocate if the United States honoured its commitments under a June interim deal on halting their conflict, but tensions remained high after US President Donald Trump threatened Tehran with further strikes. Oil prices rose after the first exchange of direct attacks since late July, and following reports of two tankers coming under fire leaving the Strait of Hormuz, the global oil supply waterway that Iran has effectively closed to shipping.

The six-month-old conflict had shifted into an economic standoff before a US attack on Iran’s Larak Island on Sunday, which Iran responded to by launching missiles overnight at two US air bases in Jordan. “We’re going to hit them hard ... There will be a response,” a Fox News reporter quoted Trump as telling the channel on Monday, although the president separately told reporters that the renewed strikes did not signal a return to full-scale war.

A senior Iranian source told Reuters the exchanges of fire were a “limited and contained confrontation” but said Tehran would deliver a harsh response if attacked again. While neither side appears to want a return to all-out war, their pledges to respond to further attacks highlight how quickly a conflict that has increasingly been fought through sanctions, blockades and economic pressure could spill back into military action.



Commuters make their way past a billboard installed on a building along a busy street in downtown of Tehran. — AFP

“The MOU declared an end to fighting but deferred many of the most difficult issues and paved the way for a broader 60-day negotiation period — which passed without further agreement

MASOUD PEZESHKIAN
IRANIAN PRESIDENT

Tehran has repeatedly said it will allow free navigation through the Strait of Hormuz only if Washington implements the terms of the Memorandum of Understanding that was signed by both sides in June but quickly unravelled. The MOU declared an end to fighting but deferred many of the most difficult issues and paved the way for a broader 60-day negotiation period - which passed without further agreement.

“I am stating clearly that if the US returns to its commitments under the Memorandum of Understanding, the Islamic Republic of Iran will immediately reciprocate,” Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said. He was speaking in Bishkek, capital of Kyrgyzstan, during a summit of the Shanghai Cooperation

Organisation, whose members also include Russia, China, India and Pakistan. He had also said on Monday that war was in no one’s interest and that Tehran was still open to a negotiated solution.

But there has been no sign of a breakthrough and the heightened tensions this week have renewed fears of oil supply disruptions from the world’s key crude-producing region, with Brent futures rising another 1.3 per cent on Tuesday. “The tit-for-tat missile exchanges between the US and Iran bring validation to those who believe that even if not a ‘forever war’, this conflict will run and run,” said PVM analyst John Evans. Highlighting such concerns, two supertankers carrying Saudi oil were struck by unknown projectiles within minutes of each other while transiting outbound through the Strait of Hormuz late on Monday, according to data from shipping intelligence and tracking firms Marisks and Kpler.

Thousands have been killed in the conflict, mainly in Iran and Lebanon, since it began with US and Israeli strikes on Iran on February 28. Washington has increasingly relied on economic pressure to try to force Tehran to stop blockading the Strait and end the conflict. US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent has warned that countries doing business with Iran could face US sanctions and said secondary sanctions are likely to be unveiled weekly in the effort to pressure Iran, with an initial focus on banks. — Reuters

NEPAL FLOOD DEATH TOLL CROSSES 1,000



KATHMANDU: The death toll in Nepal’s flood crossed 1,000 on Tuesday, as rescuers used heavy machinery, helicopters and excavators to reach the thousands still missing, nearly a week after the catastrophic Himalayan disaster left a trail of destruction across towns and valleys. Specialised rescue teams from China, India and Nepal built temporary bridges to reach remote areas and dug through the ruins of hydropower projects in the Himalayas, using excavators to rescue close to 300 workers trapped inside tunnels.

At least 639 people remain stuck in several devastated hydropower stations that have become the focus of

rescue efforts, the country’s disaster management authority said on Tuesday. The total confirmed death toll rose to 1,003, with about 4,000 people still missing, including 590 foreign nationals from 39 countries.

Over 11,000 people have been rescued across the affected region, and power and communication lines were restored in some areas, he said, promising support for those who were displaced. More than 9,200 personnel were deployed in the affected areas, coordinating the search and rescue of the injured, assisting in the management of bodies, opening blocked roads and conducting emergency treatment, the army said. — Reuters

PLEDGING THE OATH

Zambia’s Hichilema sworn in for 2nd term



Obert Simwanza Zambia’s President Hakainde Hichilema pledged to build on the economic turnaround achieved during his first term. Thousands of cheering supporters of Hichilema’s UPND party packed the Lusaka stadium for his swearing-in ceremony attended by a handful of African leaders. “Having done the heavy lifting in our first term, the next five years is all about growth, expansion, opportunity and prosperity for all our people,” he said. — AFP

MASSIVE INVESTIGATIONS

Iraq wraps up questioning 5,700 IS suspects



Iraq’s judiciary said it completed the interrogation of more than 5,700 IS group suspects whom the United States transferred from neighbouring Syria earlier this year. Iraq’s Supreme Judicial Council said it concluded “the interrogation phase” of the 5,704 IS suspects who were brought from northeast Syria, and referred them to trial. The investigations led to identifying several IS commanders who were involved in “crimes at the international level”, according to the council. — AFP

SHORTTAKES



Britain’s ex-PM Keir Starmer reacts during a meeting with at 10 Downing Street in London.
— Reuters file photo

UK ex-PM Starmer quits parliament to focus on int’l affairs

LONDON: Keir Starmer will stand down as a member of parliament, he said on Tuesday, some six weeks after he resigned as Britain’s prime minister having lost the support of his Labour Party. Starmer guided Labour into power in 2024 with one of the biggest parliamentary majorities in Britain’s modern history, completing a remarkable turnaround having become Labour leader four years earlier after its worst election showing since 1935. But the former lawyer, whose tenure as prime minister was marked by several damaging U-turns, failed to connect with voters and steadily lost the support of the public and his party. Starmer had previously said he would remain as a lawmaker until the next general election. But he told the Camden New Journal, a local newspaper in his North London constituency, that he had changed his mind and intended to “concentrate on international affairs”. He confirmed his resignation in a statement on X. Despite the sagging popularity at home that cost him his job, foreign affairs were often seen as a strength during Starmer’s premiership. The newspaper report did not give a timeframe for when an election would be held for Starmer’s seat in the constituency of Holborn and St Pancras. — **Reuters**

DANISH FARMERS HOLD PROTEST



More than 1,000 farmers with around 200 tractors demonstrated outside Denmark’s parliament to protest against planned legislation regulating the use of fertilisers and arable land. The bill is backed by a majority of the political class but has sparked deep divisions within the Liberal Party with five of its 18 MPs announcing they would reject the party line and vote against it in parliament. If adopted, farmers starting in 2027 would receive an emissions quota based on the reduction in nitrogen emissions needed in their watershed. — **AFP**

Norway’s new king Haakon VIII takes oath before parliament

OSLO: King Haakon VIII of Norway took an oath before parliament on Tuesday following the death of his father, pledging to uphold the Nordic country’s constitution and laws in the latest in a series of ceremonies marking the passing of the crown. Haakon’s father King Harald died on Friday at the age of 89. Since then, tens of thousands of Norwegians have streamed to the royal palace to lay flowers, drawings, candles and flags. Many have praised Harald’s warmth and sense of inclusiveness, while Haakon described him as a wonderful father in his first address to the nation as sovereign. The monarchy remains broadly popular: 72 per cent of Norwegians support it, while 20 per cent favour a republic or another form of government, according to a Norstat poll for broadcaster NRK published on Tuesday, the first poll on the issue taken since Harald’s death. The previous Norstat poll, conducted in May, showed support for the monarchy at 64 per cent. Haakon was driven in an open-top

Many have praised Harald’s warmth and sense of inclusiveness, while Haakon described him as a wonderful father in his first address to the nation as sovereign. The monarchy remains broadly popular: 72 per cent of Norwegians support it



Norway’s King Haakon attends a ceremony to take the Oath of Allegiance to the Constitution at the Norwegian Parliament, Oslo. — **Reuters**

black 1966 Lincoln Continental through Karl Johan avenue in central Oslo, lined by soldiers and well-wishers. The 17-minute ceremony in the 169-seat chamber underlined Norway’s status as a constitutional monarchy. The king was invited in by the president of parliament, Masud Gharahkhani, the full cabinet and lawmakers, all dressed in black, to swear the oath of allegiance to Norway’s 1814 constitution, with Crown Princess Ingrid Alexandra by his side. Haakon declared: “Norwegian parliament, I promise and swear to rule the Kingdom of Norway in accordance with its constitution and laws, so help me God the Almighty and All-knowing.” In response, Gharahkhani stressed that the late king Harald “brought forth values that underpin our liberal democracy”. “Compassion was the core of his message in good times and tough times,” said Gharahkhani, who arrived in the Nordic country as a child as a refugee from Iran with his family. Haakon’s wife, Queen Mette-Marit, 53,

who is recovering from a lung transplant in June, was due to be at Haakon’s side, like Queen Sonja who was in 1991 when Harald took the oath. But on Tuesday she cancelled due to complications following her transplant, her doctor said in a statement from the royal palace. “It is not unusual with complications after a lung transplant. The queen has had complications on some occasions with the operation, including today,” said Are Holm, a pulmonologist with Oslo University Hospital. “As a result she must be put under observation throughout the day today.” In addition to Ingrid Alexandra, 22, Prince Sverre Magnus, 20, and their grandmother, Sonja, 89, also attended. Haakon automatically became king the moment his father died. There will be no coronation, as Norway abolished the practice in 1908. Large crowds gathered as members of the public began paying their respects at Harald’s coffin, which is lying in state at the palace chapel until September 8. His funeral will take place in Oslo on September 9. — **Reuters**

SUMMER 2026 WAS BELGIUM’S HOTTEST ON RECORD

BRUSSELS: Summer 2026 was the hottest on record in Belgium, the country’s weather agency said on Tuesday, making it the latest European nation to smash temperature records this year. Temperatures in the official national reference station in Uccle, outside Brussels, averaged 20.3°C — 2.4°C above the mean of recent decades — the Royal Meteorological Institute (RMI) said. “This represents an all-time record (based on observations dating back to 1833) and marks the first time this

average has exceeded 20°C,” the RMI said. “It is a significant increase compared to the previous record” of 19.9°C registered in 2018, it added. More accustomed to mild and wet weather, Belgium has experienced several heatwaves since June and was hit by its largest wildfire in a century in August. The blaze, which was brought under control after a seven-day fight involving hundreds of firefighters, was one of many that swept the continent over the past few months. France, Greece, Portugal and Spain also battled major

fires, as successive heat spells have roasted Europe since May, bringing temperatures of 40°C and above. All-time temperature records were also broken in Germany, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary earlier in the summer. Scientists warn that climate change is making extreme weather events more intense and resulting in heat records tumbling more often. Some 33 countries, spanning from western Europe to the Sahel and central America, recorded their hottest July. — **AFP**

Russian air attacks kill 12 in Kyiv on 6th day of strikes

RUSSIAN AIR attacks killed 12 people and injured many more in Kyiv and the surrounding region early on Tuesday, authorities said, in the sixth consecutive day of intense strikes on the Ukrainian capital. Russia, which began its full-scale attack of its smaller neighbour in 2022, has escalated its air attacks against Ukraine in recent months as its progress has slowed dramatically on the battlefield. In a new tactic since last week, Moscow has sent swarms of drones to plague Kyiv and nearby areas day and night, killing residents and damaging homes and warehouses. Many of the drones are new, fast-flying jet-powered models that are harder to intercept.

Ukraine’s Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha said Russian drones and ballistic missiles had targeted residential areas and railway infrastructure in the overnight attacks. He called on Ukraine’s allies to increase economic pressure on Russia, and to renew discussions about using Russia’s frozen assets to provide funding for Ukraine’s war effort. “It is time to signal (to) the Kremlin that imitating diplomacy does not work anymore,” Sybiha said in a post on X. He urged allies to provide Ukraine with more air defences, as it runs critically low on the US-made Patriot interceptors capable of stopping Russia’s ballistic missiles.

Eight people were killed in Kyiv in overnight attacks, most of them railway workers, officials said. More explosions were heard on Tuesday morning, when a further three people were injured in a daytime drone attack that caused a fire at a high-rise apartment building, Mayor Vitali Klitschko said. In Boryspil just outside Kyiv, four people were killed and a further



A mother and her daughter sit at a site of an apartment building damaged by a missile strike, in the town of Borispol, Ukraine. — **AFP**

Ukraine’s Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha said Russian drones and ballistic missiles had targeted residential areas and railway infrastructure in the overnight attacks. He called on Ukraine’s allies to increase economic pressure on Russia

13 injured in an attack that hit a residential building and other sites, Governor Tymur Tkachenko said on Telegram. One of the dead outside Kyiv was an Indian citizen. “There’s the crater. My car was parked here, and the blast threw it over there,” Yevhen Zavorodnyi, 44, told Reuters, pointing to a large crater in front of a building in Boryspil where residents were cleaning up. “But we’re alive and well, thank God. My wife, my son and our dog,” said Zavorodnyi, who moved his family recently from Sloviansk in eastern Ukraine. The Russian strikes also targeted a border crossing with Nato-member Romania in the Black Sea region of Odesa. Thousands of families there were left without electricity, President Volodymyr Zelensky said. Moscow has been pounding Ukrainian cities regularly during the war in largely overnight attacks. The new waves of daytime strikes have disrupted life in the capital. Russia attacked Ukraine with more than

2,800 jet-powered drones in August, air force spokesperson Yuriy Ihnat said, after it increased their use fivefold in July compared with June. Ukraine’s air force said it had been able to shoot down five ballistic missiles. Kyiv recently received a small batch of Patriot interceptors. Ukraine has also increased its attacks on Russia, targeting oil refineries and logistics infrastructure, including warehouses of online shopping companies. Russian regional governors said air attacks caused a fire in the port area of Ust-Luga, a major export outlet in the northwest, and damaged civilian facilities in the Samara region, home to a number of oil refineries. A civilian was also killed in an attack on Russia’s Belgorod region, which borders Ukraine, the acting governor said. Estonia’s defence forces said drones used in a Ukrainian strike against Russia had briefly entered Estonian airspace. Estonian Defence Minister Hanno Pevkur said the incident - the latest of a series in recent months - showed how important it was to support Ukraine with air defence assets. Russia’s defence ministry said Moscow hit military and energy facilities in Kyiv and Odesa overnight, as well as regions surrounding these cities. US-led peace talks stalled this year as Ukraine refused Russian demands to cede territory and as Washington has become increasingly preoccupied with the conflict with Iran. Zelensky said on Monday he had held a “detailed and constructive” call with US President Donald Trump’s envoys, Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner, and that the sides were working to finalise dates for a visit to Ukraine. — **Reuters**

OPINION

Honouring the past, shaping the future



HYESHA BARRETT

The writer is a Master Life Coach and Positive Parent Specialist

THIS WEEK, the Oman Across Ages Museum welcomed its one-millionth visitor, a milestone that says something powerful about our relationship with the past. Museums exist because history matters. They preserve what came before us, reminding us of the people, stories, traditions and achievements that helped shape who we are today.

There is something grounding about knowing where we come from. Yet history becomes even more meaningful when it encourages us to ask another question: what do we want to carry forward?

Every family has its own museum, although we don't call it that. It lives in the stories told around dinner tables, the values passed down from generations, the expectations we inherit, the traditions we repeat and the ways we learn to love, argue, apologise, succeed, parent and cope.

Some of what we inherit becomes a source of strength. Values such as loyalty, generosity, community and respect can anchor us through life. Other patterns may have served previous generations well, yet no longer fit the world we are raising our children in today.

This is where honouring our past and repeating our past become two very different things. We can respect where we came from,

while still allowing ourselves to evolve. Perhaps previous generations were taught that strong people kept their emotions to themselves, while today we understand that emotional awareness is a strength.

Perhaps children were expected to be seen and not heard, while we now recognise that giving them a voice does not mean giving them control. Perhaps asking for help was once viewed as weakness, while today we understand it can be responsible.

Growth does not require us to reject everything that came before us. It asks us to become curators of our inheritance: deciding what deserves to remain, what needs adapting and what should perhaps end with us. That requires awareness, particularly when the patterns we carry are so familiar that we barely notice them. We may hear ourselves saying something to our children and suddenly recognise the voice of our parents. Familiarity has an extraordinary ability to disguise itself as truth.

The same applies far beyond parenting. We inherit beliefs about success, relationships, money, happiness and what a 'good life' is supposed to look like. Some will serve us beautifully. Others may quietly keep us living according to expectations we never consciously chose.

Maturity is not simply knowing our history.

Perhaps the greatest respect we can show those who came before us is not to copy their lives exactly, but to take the strongest parts of what they gave us, and build upon them

It is having enough awareness to decide whether inherited stories deserve authorship over the lives we are living now.

There is something hopeful in recognising that inheritance is not fixed. Every generation adds another chapter. The way we communicate differently, apologise when we get it wrong, make space for emotion, set healthier boundaries or create more connection becomes part of what the next generation inherits.

Change does not always arrive through dramatic acts. Often it happens quietly, through moments we choose a different response from the one we learned.

A museum preserves the past so it will not be forgotten. Life asks something slightly different of us. It asks us to remember the past without becoming imprisoned by it.

Perhaps the greatest respect we can show those who came before us is not to copy their lives exactly, but to take the strongest parts of what they gave us, and build upon them. We often think inheritance is something our children receive one day in the future.

In reality, we are handing it to them now, in the way we love, communicate, listen, repair, forgive and live. The past deserves to be remembered. The future, however, deserves something even more powerful: to be consciously chosen.

Ethiopia’s Abiy could consolidate power as ‘executive president’

TOLERA FIKRU GEMTA

A weeks-long political dialogue in Ethiopia has backed constitutional changes to create a new presidential system that could extend Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed’s control over the country. Abiy, 50, has ruled the Horn of Africa country of 130 million since 2018. His party won another landslide victory at elections in June, albeit in the midst of a crackdown on the opposition and media. That was followed by a long-promised “national dialogue”, in which some 4,000 delegates gathered to discuss the country’s many challenges, including its deep ethnic divides and ongoing insurgencies. More than a month of talks ended on August 22 with the delegates overwhelmingly backing plans to combine the office of prime minister and the largely ceremonial presidency into a new “executive presidency”.

It could be put before parliament as soon as it reconvenes in October. Most assume that Abiy, who was absent from the dialogue, will get the job if it goes ahead, since this new president will be selected by a parliament packed with his supporters.

They say it will be a more unifying role, representing all of Ethiopia’s ethnic groups, compared to the current system in which Abiy is elected as a member of parliament from his Oromia region. It will create “a more unified country to overcome the challenges the country currently faces”, said Tiglu Melese, secretary-general of parliament’s upper house.

The dialogue also recommended that funding be cut to ethnic-based parties in favour of “national” ones. Critics fear all this will allow Abiy to consolidate personal power, as Türkiye’s Recep Tayyip Erdogan did when he jumped from prime minister to a newly created executive presidency in 2014. “It would only allow the current prime minister to assume the executive presidency while effectively concentrating power in a single individual,” said political analyst Befekadu Hailu.

Ethiopia faces deep ethnic divides, with armed conflicts ongoing in its two most populous states, Oromia and Amhara, and fears that the 2020-2022 civil war in the northern Tigray region — which killed an estimated 600,000 people — may reignite at any moment. Critics say the dialogue — which excluded armed groups and was boycotted by key opposition parties — did little to address these challenges. “It cannot ensure the two greatest needs of the country: durable peace and stability, and democratic governance,” said Merera Gudina, chairman of the Caucus of Opposition Parties, which stayed away from the dialogue. — AFP

AI’s wider adoption won’t produce better workers

US FEDERAL Reserve Chair Kevin Warsh is convinced, and prominent economists agree, that AI will meaningfully increase labour productivity. Don't bet on it. In fact, wider adoption of these models could reduce output per worker.

Widespread adoption of new technologies is a cornerstone of economic dynamism. And in the Internet era, accessible user interfaces and affordability have been indispensable enablers. Until the early 1990s, technical wizards relied on rigidly structured, text-based tools like Gopher to exchange documents on the Internet. Then, the more flexible World Wide Web emerged, spawning browsers — Mosaic, Netscape Navigator, and Microsoft’s Internet Explorer — and search engines that were quick, easy-to-use, and cheap.

AltaVista, the first “full-text” searchable index of the World Wide Web, went from receiving 300,000 hits on its first day in 1995 to more than 80 million daily hits. But AltaVista defaced its results with ugly banners.

So, when Google launched its search engine in 1998, users like me fell for its design, without regard to the quality of its results. Google’s success crushed rival search engines and traditional print publishers, and its engineers miraculously maintained the efficiency of computing infrastructure to ensure that searching for information remained quick, easy, and cheap.

But success also then undermined user experience and productivity. As Google became a monopolist, search-engine optimisers flooded results with useless links.

Traditional media resorted to clickbait. This flotsam forced users to learn new skills: how to select keywords, use Boolean operators



AMAR BHIDÉ

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Hyperscalers could make LLM addiction as widespread as physiological addictions by exploiting humans’ deep-seated desire for companionable conversation.

(like “AND”), and recognise clickbait. Google further degraded the experience by displaying “sponsored” results at the top of the page.

AI chatbots have followed a similar path. ChatGPT attracted a million users in its first five days after its launch in November 2022. As with Google’s initially clean search page, the chatbot’s interface was compelling: users could ask questions in plain English, no Boolean operators required. Unfortunately, ChatGPT turned out to be a mendacious talking horse. Filtering out its fabrications took more time than conducting keyword searches on Google, reducing productivity. Bard — the chatbot that Google, facing an existential threat to its search dominance, rushed to release — was equally disappointing.

Now, more than three years later, Google has shut down Bard and replaced it with both an “AI overview” above its traditional search results and an AI Mode option — a chatbot that urges users to “ask anything.” In my experience, though, the results remain maddeningly unreliable, even for simple queries.

Compared to traditional statistical models, including Google’s pioneering algorithms, large language models appear to offer compelling advantages. With trillions of parameters, LLMs can incorporate contextual factors that earlier models had to ignore. And LLMs do not merely inform; they use metaphors and humour in what the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein called “language-games” that reassure, explain, flatter, assert, and cajole.

Like their earlier counterparts, however, LLMs rely on statistical extrapolation, assuming futures that repeat the past. That is fine for natural phenomena like protein folding, but not for ever-changing goods and services. Small

modifications to the layout of a laptop battery, for example, can make instructions on how to replace it useless. Despite this, users — like the participants in Stanley Milgram’s notorious shock experiments — reflexively obey a chatbot’s confident answer. By contrast, traditional search links are better at displaying the outdatedness of information and the unreliability of sources. This gives users more discretion to exercise their judgment, which reduces misfires and costs.

AI pushers are going all out to addict people. Google’s AI overviews and AI Mode are like a free taste. Once users are hooked, hyperscalers will surely charge high prices to recoup their steep development and operating costs.

One might hope that even the most powerful firms cannot dupe consumers into submission. Despite seemingly unlimited resources, Google has had at least as many flops as hits. Meta’s very name memorialises a failed multi-billion-dollar bet on virtual reality. But the marketing blitz that has turned junk-food addiction into a booming business provides a disheartening counter-example.

Hyperscalers could make LLM addiction as widespread as physiological addictions by exploiting humans’ deep-seated desire for companionable conversation. As social ties fray, chatbots offer a simulacrum, potentially turning serious professionals into lovesick teenagers. And as with other addictions, LLMs are already usurping resources — including capital, electricity, chips, and entrepreneurial energy — that other deserving innovations need. As this continues, techno-optimists should rethink their rosy view of AI’s productivity promise.

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Defence tech hub Munich booms as Europe rearms



SAM REEVES

The writer is an AFP correspondent based in Frankfurt

MUNICH is booming as a hub for young defence tech firms making everything from AI-powered drones to cutting-edge military software as Europe rearms to face an increasingly dangerous world.

As Europe overhauls its defences against Russia at a time of wavering US security commitments, a new generation of innovative defence firms have joined the region's traditional industrial heavyweights.

They have benefited from long defence and aerospace legacies, top-flight technical universities, a ready pool of talent and a supportive political climate, industry insiders say. "Munich and the greater Munich area offer a great combination of skills, talent and history," Martin Karkour, chief revenue officer of spy drone maker Quantum Systems, said at the firm's headquarters on the outskirts of the city.

"We have engineering capabilities, we have software and AI capabilities, robotics capabilities - it is a great combination that would be hard to replicate somewhere else."

The Ukraine war, where AI-powered drone technology is crucial, has helped drive the wave of innovation, while persuading militaries in Germany and elsewhere to look beyond traditional kit like tanks and artillery.

Quantum Systems, established in 2015, supplies drones to the Ukrainian armed forces as well as other militaries worldwide and has expanded into new areas of unmanned systems, including on land and

at sea. Tytan Technologies, which makes interceptor drones designed to counter hostile unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) and protect against attacks, has also benefited from being based in the Munich area.

The company was founded in 2023 by two young men who had studied at the Technical University of Munich, after the pair took part in a hackathon in Ukraine focused on coming up with cost-effective ways to combat hostile UAVs.

"Our founders had a very straightforward mission — restoring the economics of European air defence," Nemo Farber, Tytan's chief manufacturing officer, said.

The firm, which has increased its staff 10-fold and is due to open a new production site, has worked with the German armed forces on developing a UAV to defend installations from hostile drones, and is also present in Ukraine.

Germany, a key backer of Ukraine in its fight against Russia, has reported suspicious drone sightings at sensitive sites, including the discovery in August of an explosive-laden drone at Leipzig airport.

For Farber, the "overarching ecosystem" in Munich and the surrounding Bavaria state is underpinning the growth of defence startups.

As the region's legacy automakers downsize, for instance, they are providing a source of skilled workers for defence firms, he said. Munich mayor Dominik Krause put the region's success as a defence tech centre down to collaboration between large and small firms, as well as good links between universities and state authorities.

The number of pure defence startups around Munich has doubled to around 60 in recent years, according to the local Chamber of Commerce and Industry, while drone makers have been announcing bumper fundraising rounds

"That ultimately creates a kind of fertile ground where many good ideas can take root," he said.

The number of pure defence startups around Munich has doubled to around 60 in recent years, according to the local Chamber of Commerce and Industry, while drone makers have been announcing bumper fundraising rounds.

Despite bigger military budgets, younger defence firms still complain that not enough is going towards autonomous systems compared to old-fashioned weaponry, like tanks, that is vulnerable to attack from cheaper drones. Germany's young defence firms face other hurdles, from lengthy security vetting for staff to red tape.

Building the facilities needed to keep pace with demand was especially challenging, defence expert Maximilian Epp from the chamber of commerce said.

"Startups really struggle when growth is there, and orders are there, and they want to ramp up production, but they can't fully exploit their production potential because the permits for new warehouses and production facilities haven't come through yet," he said.

Nevertheless, the Bavarian state government was seeking to address the industry's concerns and was generally supportive of the sector, he said.

The defence boom highlights how the Ukraine war is reshaping attitudes towards the industry in Germany, long regarded with suspicion by many due to the country's dark World War II history.

AFGHANISTAN WAR VICTIMS LEFT 'WITHOUT JUSTICE', SAYS UN

ISABELLE WESSELINGH

Most civilian victims of Afghanistan's 2001-2021 war have been left "without justice, reparation or even acknowledgement" of their suffering, the United Nations said on Tuesday, with one man in Kabul telling "the world has forgotten us".

The US launched a military intervention in Afghanistan following the September 11, 2001, attacks, ushering in two decades of conflict in which civilians suffered widespread violence and abuses. More than 40,000 civilians were killed and 77,000 wounded in attacks by Taliban insurgents, the IS group, and also during operations by the armed forces of the Afghan Republic or the international coalition led by the United States, the UN mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) said.

The UN mission has documented civilian casualties since 2009 in one of the most exhaustive studies on victims of the 2001-2021 war.

Tapa-e-Shuhada (Martyrs' Hill) in Kabul bears witness to part of the tragedy. One of its slopes is covered with graves, many belonging to members of the Hazara community, which was repeatedly targeted in attacks by the Taliban insurgents and IS. One gravestone visited by AFP in late August belongs to bespectacled 21-year-old Suhaila, who died in an attack at Kabul University.

Another is in memory of Muhammad Hadi, 17, who lost his life in an October 2020 attack claimed by IS against a school preparing students for university entrance exams.

Mohammad, 25, was wounded in the same school attack. From a modest family, he dreamt of becoming a computer engineer to "change his life", he said, withholding his surname because "the fear is still there".

He now works off and on as a tailor. "I have lost my focus," he said. "I couldn't continue my studies because of psychological problems."

"The world has forgotten us," he added.

In their small living room, his mother sighs: "He still has nightmares at night, and I am getting weaker day by day."

From memory loss to depression and suicidal thoughts, 95 per cent of the nearly 200 victims interviewed by UNAMA "experienced psychological harm".

In Logar province, south of Kabul, 46-year-old farmer Khan Yousufi recounts how his eight-year-old son was playing in front of the house when an Afghan Republic police tank opened fire, killing him instantly.

"My wife rushed towards her child; they shot her too," gravely wounding her, he added, tears rolling down his cheeks.

He filed complaints with authorities under the former Republic and "tried so hard" to get justice, but "no one listened". — AFP

Meta's settlement could reshape social media

FOR years, parents, educators and policymakers have debated what social media is doing to teenagers. The concerns are familiar: how much time young people spend scrolling, what content algorithms place in front of them, who can contact them and whether platforms are designed to keep them online for as long as possible.

The historic settlement between Meta and a bipartisan coalition of US attorneys general suggests those concerns are finally translating into concrete action. Meta has agreed to pay up to \$18 billion and introduce extensive protections for teenagers using Instagram and Facebook, resolving litigation that accused the company of designing features that encouraged compulsive use among young people; however, Meta has denied wrongdoing.

The changes are significant. Teenagers will face a default combined two-hour daily limit across Facebook and Instagram, with parental permission required to disable it. Access will be blocked between midnight and 6 am, while most notifications will be silenced during school hours from 8 am to 3 pm. Teens will also receive prompts after periods of continuous scrolling, have the option of a non-personalised feed and be able to turn off autoplay. Like counts will be hidden by default, and Meta has also agreed to strengthen age-assurance systems, parental controls and protections against unwanted contact.

For teenagers, attention is particularly valuable. Every hour spent endlessly scrolling is an hour that cannot be spent studying, reading, playing a sport, developing a hobby, sleeping or simply spending time with friends and family away from a screen.

Psychologist Jean Twenge has argued that teenagers should not be using social media in the middle of the night, during school, or for so long that it displaces exercise, sleep and face-to-face interaction.



OMAN AL YAHYAI

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The historic settlement between Meta and a bipartisan coalition of US attorneys general suggests those concerns are finally translating into concrete action.

Recent research suggests the problem is more complicated than simply declaring social media "bad". Pew Research Center found that teenagers use platforms such as TikTok, Instagram and Snapchat for entertainment, maintaining friendships, connecting with people who share their interests and even accessing news. Most teenagers surveyed said they believed they spent about the right amount of time on each platform. Yet around three in ten teenage TikTok users said they spent too much time there, while roughly four in ten said TikTok negatively affected their sleep.

It is important to keep in mind that distinction. The objective should not be to remove teenagers from the digital world, especially since social media is part of modern social life. The challenge is creating an environment in which teenagers control their use of technology rather than having technology constantly compete for their attention.

There are also concerns about the settlement. Stronger age assurance is essential if platforms are going to apply protections to minors, but verifying age can create its own privacy risks. Critics warn that systems involving identification documents, facial analysis or other personal information could require

users to surrender sensitive data simply to access an app. Experts have also questioned whether existing technology can reliably distinguish children from adults.

US Senator Richard Blumenthal has welcomed the agreement as progress while arguing that broader legislation is still necessary because the rules do not automatically cover competitors such as TikTok and YouTube and may struggle to keep pace with rapidly changing technology.

Part of Meta's financial agreement is explicitly structured to encourage TikTok and YouTube to adopt comparable protections. If competitors follow, stronger limits could become an industry standard rather than a Meta-specific experiment.

For too long, the responsibility for managing teenagers' social media use has fallen almost entirely on parents and young people themselves, while some of the world's most powerful technology companies have profited from keeping users engaged. The Meta settlement begins to shift some of that responsibility back where it belongs: onto the companies designing these platforms. If it forces the rest of the industry to rethink how it competes for teenage attention, its impact could extend far beyond Facebook and Instagram.

SPORTS

POSITIVE NOTE



An Oman player attempts a basket against Nepal during their Fiba Asia Cup 2029 Pre-Qualifiers match in Dubai. — **Ammar al Musafir**

OMAN END ASIA CUP PRE-QUALIFIERS WITH VICTORY OVER NEPAL

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, SEPTEMBER 1

Oman’s national basketball team concluded their Fiba Asia Cup 2029 Pre-Qualifiers first round campaign on a positive note after defeating Nepal 76-62 at the Shabab Al Ahli venue in Dubai.

The victory brought an end to Oman’s three-match losing run in Group A, although it was not enough to secure qualification to the next stage. Bahrain, UAE and Kuwait claimed the three qualifying places, while Oman finished fourth with five points, one ahead of Nepal.

Oman entered their final fixture determined to produce a stronger performance after defeats against Kuwait, Bahrain and UAE, and made an impressive start by taking control of the contest from the opening minutes.

Effective ball movement and improved attacking execution helped the national team establish an early advantage, with Oman scoring 29 points in the opening quarter while restricting Nepal to 15 to take a 14-point lead.

Nepal responded in the second quarter as Oman’s offensive rhythm dropped. The national team managed only eight points during the period, while Nepal scored 16 to reduce the deficit. Oman nevertheless maintained a 37-31 advantage at half-time.

The national side regained their rhythm after the break and produced a more composed third quarter. Oman improved their offensive organisation and widened the gap once again, taking a 55-46 lead into the final period.

With Nepal attempting to mount a late comeback, Oman managed the closing stages effectively and maintained control of the contest. The national team added 21 points in the fourth quarter while limiting Nepal to 16, sealing a deserved 76-62 victory.

The win provided Oman with a positive conclusion to a challenging qualifying campaign that began with an 88-63 defeat to Kuwait. The team then lost 106-62 to Bahrain before showing improvement in a 115-89 defeat against hosts UAE.

FIVE POINTS
Oman finished the first round with one victory from four matches and five points.

Bahrain topped Group A with eight points after completing their campaign with a perfect record, while UAE finished second with seven points. Kuwait secured the third qualifying position with six points, followed by Oman on five and Nepal on four.

Although Oman missed out on progression, the final victory offered the squad an encouraging end to their Dubai campaign and an opportunity to build on the experience gained against different levels of opposition during the four-match qualifying programme.

Al Shabab edge Sur as Oman Club, Samayil win

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, SEPTEMBER 1

AL SHABAB produced the most entertaining result of Monday’s Jindal League opening-round action after edging Sur 3-2 at Sur Sports Complex, while Oman Club and Samayil also began their campaigns with victories. Sohar and Ibri, meanwhile, shared the points in the only goalless draw of the round.

The results completed the first week of the 2026-27 season, with Oman Club, Al Shabab and Samayil joining Seeb, Al Nasr and Al Nahda among the early winners. The opening round produced 19 goals from seven matches and offered an encouraging start to a campaign that is expected to be closely contested.

At Sur Sports Complex, Al Shabab had to work hard for their three points in a five-goal contest that swung both ways. Sur started brightly and threatened early through Abdullah al Musharafi, who later opened the scoring in the 27th minute. Al Shabab responded before the interval when Dutch striker Pepijn Doesburg converted from the penalty spot in first-half stoppage time to send the teams into the break level at 1-1.

AWAY VICTORY
Al Shabab carried that momentum into the second half and took the lead shortly after the restart through Yousuf al Shabibi. Sur refused to fade and found their equaliser through Abdullah al Musharafi, who completed his brace with another decisive finish around the hour mark. However, the final word belonged to Al Shabab as Hatim al Rushdi struck the winner midway through the second half, securing a valuable away victory for last season’s runners-up.

At Nizwa Sports Complex, Samayil made a strong start to their league campaign with a 1-0 win over Saham.

The decisive moment came late in the first half when Mohammed bin Salim al Muhajiri reacted quickest after defensive hesitation and headed home in the 44th minute. Saham improved after the interval and pushed forward in search of an



In a match that saw five goals, Al Shabab triumphed 3-2 over Sur in the first round of the Jindal League.

equaliser, but Samayil stayed organised and protected their narrow advantage until the final whistle.

WINNING START FOR OMAN CLUB
Oman Club also enjoyed a winning start after defeating Dhofar 2-0 at Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher. Abdulaleem al Rawahi was the standout performer, scoring both goals to hand Oman Club an important early boost.

The result carried added value as it came against one of the traditional names in Omani football, while Dhofar will now look for a quick response in the second round after an opening defeat.

In Sohar, the meeting between Sohar and Ibri ended without goals at Sohar Regional Sports Complex.

Both teams had moments of possession, but neither side managed to find the required final touch in front of goal.

The draw gave each team its first point of the season and closed the opening round with six victories and one draw.

After the first week, Seeb lead the early standings on goal difference following their 3-1 win over Bahla, with Oman Club and Al Nasr close behind after their clean-sheet victories. Al Shabab, Al Nahda and Samayil also sit on three points, while Sohar and Ibri opened with a point each.

School Beach Games enter semifinals stage

RIYADH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, SEPTEMBER 1

The fifth School Beach Games Championship enters its decisive stage on Wednesday with the semifinals of the beach volleyball and beach handball competitions taking place at the sandy courts of the Sultan Qaboos Youth Cultural and Sports Complex in Salalah.

Organised by the Oman School Sports Association (OSSA), the championship has brought together school teams from across the Sultanate of Oman, with the competition now moving into the knockout phase after the conclusion of the group stages.

In the beach volleyball semifinals, Al Batinah North Education Directorate will face Al Dakhiliyah Education Directorate, while Muscat Education Directorate takes on Al Batinah South Education Directorate in the second last-four encounter.

The beach handball semifinals will see Al Dakhiliyah Education Directorate meet Dhofar Education Directorate, while



School teams compete fiercely in the beach handball semifinals.

Muscat Education Directorate will face Al Batinah South Education Directorate.

The winners of the semifinals will advance to the championship final, while the losing sides will compete in the third-place play-off.

The final round of group-stage matches in beach handball produced four decisive results. Muscat secured a 2-0 victory over Musandam, while Dhofar defeated Al Batinah North by the same scoreline.

Al Batinah South also recorded a 2-0 win against

Al Sharqiyah South, while Al Dakhiliyah completed its group-stage campaign with a 2-0 victory over Al Dhahirah.

Beach volleyball featured eight matches during the final round of group-stage action. Al Batinah North defeated Al Dhahirah 2-0, while Al Batinah South overcame Dhofar by the same score.

One of the most competitive encounters saw Al Dakhiliyah edge Al Batinah South 2-1.

Muscat, meanwhile, secured a 2-0 victory over Al Sharqiyah North. Al Batinah North later defeated Al Buraimi 2-0, while

Dhofar beat Al Dhahirah by the same margin. Al Sharqiyah South also recorded a 2-0 win over Al Wusta, before Muscat rounded off the round with a 2-0 win against Al Dakhiliyah.

YOUNG ATHLETES FORUM
Alongside the sporting competition, the OSSA, in cooperation with the Oman Olympic Committee, organised the Young Athletes Forum for participating students and supervisors.

The forum addressed several areas aimed at supporting and developing young athletes, including an introduction to the Athletes’ Commission, the rights and responsibilities of aspiring athletes, and mechanisms for safeguarding young participants.

Other sessions focused on developing athletes’ mental and sporting abilities, the pathway from emerging athlete to champion and Olympian, as well as an interactive dialogue with young athletes.

The forum sessions were delivered by Asaad al Hasani, Mohammed al Habsi, Nasser al Riyami and Khalifa al Jabri.

PARACYCLING



Omani para cyclist Sami bin Salim al Sulaimi during the 2026 Challenge Breton International in France.

AL SULAIMI FINISHES SEVENTH AT CHALLENGE BRETON

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, SEPTEMBER 1

Omani para cyclist Sami bin Salim al Sulaimi concluded his campaign at the 2026 Challenge Breton International in France with seventh place in the overall standings of the men’s H4 handcycling class.

Al Sulaimi collected 30 points from the four rounds he contested, finishing seventh among 12 riders in the final MH4 classification. The Omani rider began his campaign with sixth place in Landaul on August 25, completing the road race in one hour, 29 minutes and 20 seconds. He followed that result with seventh place at the Grand Prix de Plouay Para-cycling on August 27, clocking 1:49:13.

The competition then moved to Ploërmel, where Al Sulaimi finished ninth in the road race on August 29 in 1:38:30 before completing the individual time trial the following day in eighth place with a time of 30 minutes and three seconds. His four-round programme, comprising three road races and an individual time trial, was completed under the supervision of German coach Stefan Hoffmann as part of a development plan aimed at improving his technical level and readiness for international competition.

Despite the physical demands of contesting four races in six days, Al Sulaimi completed his full programme and remained consistent throughout the event, gaining further experience against established international riders in the H4 class.

French rider Sebastien Rio topped the overall standings with four points, followed by Luxembourg’s Carlos Filipe Neves Alves with nine points and Dutch rider Dave Versluis with 10. India’s Prashant Arkal finished fourth with 16 points.

Beyond the final position, the competition provided Al Sulaimi with an opportunity to assess his physical and technical progress, develop his pacing and race-management skills and identify areas requiring further improvement.

His participation formed part of the Oman Paralympic Committee’s efforts to support Omani para athletes by providing them with opportunities to compete internationally, gain valuable experience and raise their readiness for future continental and global events.

Al Sulaimi leaves France having completed all four races he entered and secured seventh place overall, marking another positive step in his continued development on the international para-cycling circuit.



Oman U20 players celebrate a strong start to their Asian qualifying campaign with victory over Qatar.

Oman U20 rally past Qatar in Asian Qualifiers opener

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, SEPTEMBER 1

OMAN’S national under-20 football team made a winning start to their AFC U20 Asian Cup China 2027 Qualifiers campaign after coming from behind to defeat hosts Qatar 2-1 at Abdullah bin Khalifa Stadium in Doha on Monday.

Second-half goals from Ali al Alawi and Ahmed al Fahdi overturned Qatar’s first-half lead and handed head coach Hamad al Azzani’s side three valuable points in their Group E opener.

Saudi Arabia also opened their campaign with three points after beating Hong Kong, China 2-0. The Saudis lead the group on goal difference with Oman second, both on three points, while Qatar and Hong Kong, China remain without a point.

Oman showed attacking intent from the early stages, creating their first opportunity in the fourth minute with a header that was well saved by Qatar goalkeeper Awad Ashraf.

The hosts gradually settled into the contest and broke the deadlock in the 26th minute through Muhannad Jameel, who found space inside the penalty area and converted Adam Riyadh’s pass to put his side ahead. Oman responded by pushing forward in search of an equaliser. Abdulaziz al Manwari came close in the 34th minute after racing onto a through ball from the left, but his effort went wide as Qatar carried their 1-0 advantage into the break.



Oman U20 players celebrate during their 2-1 victory over hosts Qatar in Doha.

The young Red Warriors returned for the second half with greater urgency. Mohammed al Sameen tested Awad Ashraf in the 51st minute before the Qatar goalkeeper produced further saves to deny Abdullah al Saadi and Ahmed al Fahdi as Oman increased the pressure.

AL FAHDI NETS WINNER The breakthrough finally arrived in the 64th minute. After Qatar failed to fully clear an Omani corner, the ball fell to Ali al Alawi, who unleashed a powerful left-footed strike into the net to level the score at 1-1.

Oman maintained their momentum and completed the comeback nine minutes later. Al Waleed al Buraiddi sent the ball into the penalty area, where Ahmed al Fahdi finished the move to give Oman a 2-1 lead in the 73rd minute.

Al Azzani’s side then remained composed through the closing stages to secure an important opening victory and strengthen their position in the race for qualification.

Attention now turns to a crucial second-round meeting with Saudi Arabia on Thursday at Hamad bin Khalifa Stadium. Kick-off is scheduled for 8 pm Oman time, with both teams entering the contest level on three points.

Oman will conclude their Group E campaign against Hong Kong, China on Sunday, September 6. Under the competition format, the eight group winners and seven best runners-up will qualify for the AFC U20 Asian Cup China 2027 Finals alongside hosts China.

Oman karate squad eyes strong Asian showing in Jordan

RIYADH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, SEPTEMBER 1

Oman’s national karate team is stepping up its preparations for the 24th Asian Karate Championships for Cadets, Juniors and Under-21 athletes, which will be held in Amman, Jordan, from September 8 to 11.

The continental championships, one of the major events on the Asian calendar for youth karate, will be staged at the Arena Hall in Al Hussein Youth City and are expected to attract around 350 athletes representing 30 Asian countries.

Oman will compete in the kumite events through Al Yaqdhan al Abdali, Mohammed al Shabibi, Mukhtar al Omari and Sharifa al Shabibi, who will take part in different age groups and weight categories.

The Omani delegation is headed by Shaihan Ahmed bin Said al Zakwani, a member of the Oman Karate Committee,, while the national



Seven Omani referees will officiate in the Asian Karate Championships in Jordan.

team’s technical programme is being overseen by international coach Ali bin Said al Shabibi.

The team has been following an intensive preparation programme designed to ensure the athletes enter the championships at peak readiness. Training has focused on physical conditioning, technical execution and tactical awareness, as well as mental preparation, reaction speed and precision in offensive and defensive techniques.

Al Shabibi has also been working

to address technical weaknesses identified during the preparation period while building on the athletes’ strengths. Tactical plans are being refined to enable the Omani competitors to respond effectively to the different styles and approaches expected from their Asian opponents.

OMANI REFEREES TO OFFICIATE Oman’s participation is aimed not only at achieving positive results but also at providing the young athletes with valuable exposure against

some of the continent’s leading competitors. The experience is expected to play an important role in their long-term development as they prepare for future regional, Asian and international competitions.

Oman’s representation in Amman will extend beyond the competition area, with seven Omani referees also participating in the championships. They are Yousef al Siyabi, Hilal al Abdali, Mohammed al Hinai, Adil al Hinai, Tariq al Raisi, Khalifa al Rasbi and Zulfa al Kindi.

The presence of seven officials underlines the growing standing of Omani karate refereeing and the confidence placed in national officials at major continental events. The referees will participate in Asian courses and examinations held alongside the championships before contributing to the officiating of bouts.

Their involvement will also provide an opportunity to gain further experience and keep abreast

of the latest interpretations and applications of International Karate Federation rules, with the knowledge expected to be transferred to domestic competitions in Oman.

The participation is part of the Oman Karate Committee’s wider efforts to develop the national teams, strengthen technical and officiating standards and expand the country’s presence on the international karate stage. The championships will also feature several prominent figures from the international and Asian karate community, including World Karate Federation President Antonio Espinos and Asian Karate Federation President Major General Nasser al Razouqi.

As the championships draw closer, Oman will be looking to translate its intensive preparations into strong performances, while the combined presence of its athletes and officials is expected to further highlight the steady development of karate in the Sultanate of Oman.

SPORTS

TEAM SHAKE-UP



Pakistan's Khurram Shahzad is bowled out by England's Josh Tongue during the second Test at Lord's Cricket Ground on August 30. — Reuters

PAKISTAN SELECTOR AND EX-CAPTAIN MISBAH RESIGNS AFTER COACH SARFARAZ SACKED

KARACHI: Pakistan cricket selector and ex-captain Misbah-ul-Haq resigned following the shock sacking of red-ball head coach Sarfaraz Ahmed in the wake of successive Test defeats to England, sources said on Tuesday.

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) announced on Monday that Ahmed was being replaced by white-ball coach Mike Hesson, from New Zealand, for the last Test starting in Birmingham on September 9.

The board also sent seven players home from the England tour and replaced bowling coach Umar Gul with Australian Ashley Noffke in a move that has drawn criticism in Pakistan.

The shake-up follows Pakistan's embarrassing innings and 103-run defeat at Headingley and a 194-run drubbing at Lord's, giving England an unbeatable 2-0 lead.

Seven players — Mohammad Rizwan, Imam-ul-Haq, Salman Ali Agha, Ali Usman, Aamir Jamal, Muhammad Awais Zafar and Khurram Shahzad — were sent home, with five of them replaced by uncapped players.

Former Pakistan captain and selection committee member Misbah later resigned in protest at not being consulted over the changes, sources said.

"Misbah sent his resignation to the PCB by email on Monday night and is yet to receive a reply," sources close to Misbah said.

Several former coaches and players were left shocked over the unprecedented shake-up with a match still to play.

"What an absolutely ridiculous situation," ex-Pakistan coach Mickey Arthur said from the United Kingdom.

"It makes me sad because I know what Pakistan could become with proper leadership, planning and structure."

He added it was "very disrespectful" to have sacked Ahmed.

Former selector and Pakistan spinner Tauseef Ahmed called the changes "unprecedented and unjust", adding they had "created a polluted atmosphere in Pakistan cricket."

"You don't treat your senior players like this," Tauseef said.

Former Pakistan captains Shahid Afridi and Shoaib Malik were also critical of the decision.

"It's not the way to treat your senior players," Afridi said.

"Such major decisions during a series are disturbing."

"The players dropped from the squad are still our national cricketers who have served Pakistan," said Malik, adding: "Accountability starts once a tour is done, not in the middle of it." — AFP



Pakistan's Mohammad Abbas celebrates after taking the wicket of England's Dan Lawrence with teammates during the second Test at Lord's Cricket Ground on August 30. — Reuters



Spain's Carlos Alcaraz hits a return to Russia's Roman Safiullin during their first round match on day two of the US Open tournament in New York City. — AFP

Alcaraz makes winning return, Sabalenka through

DEFENDING champion Carlos Alcaraz didn't miss a beat as he returned from a four-month injury absence with a straight-set first-round victory in the US Open on Monday.

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

"It's been a really tough five months for me," Alcaraz said.

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

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

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

Monday's performance might not have been peak Alcaraz, but the seven-time Grand Slam champion unleashed his powerful forehand with increasing confidence and displayed his familiar touch at the net.

"I think the level of tennis is going to be better for sure," said Alcaraz, who said he was most proud that he was able to quell his own doubts about his fitness.

"I tried to forget everything, I tried to enjoy," he said.

Alcaraz's smooth progress into the second round came less than 24 hours after an ailing Novak Djokovic suffered his earliest Grand Slam exit in 20 years, falling in five brutal sets to Mariano Navone.

The tournament was already missing top-ranked Jannik Sinner, who has a knee injury, and Djokovic's exit removed another possible obstacle for Alcaraz, who could have met the Serb in the semifinals.

AGGRESSIVE SABALENKA

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

She was slowed by 23 unforced errors but belted 32 winners to more than compensate, her thunderous groundstrokes proving enough to see off a counter-punching opponent who stepped up her game in the second set. "She brought the fight," Sabalenka said. "She battled really well and I just tried to stay as aggressive as possible.

"I think I played great. She's a tough opponent, makes you work really hard to get



Belarus' Aryna Sabalenka reacts after a point against Colombia's Camila Osorio. — AFP



Japan's Naomi Osaka celebrates after victory against Russia's Anastasia Zakharova. — AFP



Greece's Stefanos Tsitsipas plays a shot to France's Arthur Fils during their first round match on day two of the US Open at the USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center in New York City. — AFP

every point, so I'm happy that I was able to close the match in straight sets," she added.

Sabalenka hasn't reached a final since capturing the prestigious "Sunshine Double" of Indian Wells and Miami in March.

Japan's Naomi Osaka was forced to dig deep before overcoming Russian first-round opponent Anastasia Zakharova 7-6 (8/6), 7-6 (7/3) in just over two hours in a late night duel.

Poland's six-time Grand Slam singles champion Iga Swiatek sailed into the second round with a straight-set victory over China's Wang Xiyu.

Eighth-seeded Swiatek, who defeated Sabalenka on the way to her lone US Open triumph in 2022, eased past Wang 6-2, 6-3 in 1hr 28min.

Frenchman Arthur Fils, flying high after his first ATP Masters title in Cincinnati, was

brought back to earth by Greece's Stefanos Tsitsipas 4-6, 7-6 (7/3), 6-1, 6-4.

Tsitsipas bagged his first win over 22-year-old Fils in six encounters.

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

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

American eighth seed Ben Shelton overcame a rocky start before booking his place in the second round with a 1-6, 6-1, 7-6 (7/3), 6-2 defeat of the Netherlands' Tallon Griekspoor in the night match on Arthur Ashe court. Shelton looked out of sorts as Griekspoor roared through the first set with three breaks of serve but turned the tables to win in 2hr 35min. — AFP

MUSCAT
STOCK
EXCHANGE
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BUSINESS

CRUDE OIL
OMAN \$99. 81
BRENT \$92.21
LIGHT \$87.87



SHORT TAKES



NCSI showed a 7.8 per cent increase in the production of associated gas by the end of July 2026, reaching 7,877,900,000 cubic meters, compared to 7,308,600,000 cubic metres last year.

OMAN’S NATURAL GAS OUTPUT REACHES 34.9BCM

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman’s natural gas production — including local production and imports — witnessed a 6.4 per cent growth by the end of July 2026, reaching 34,979,400,000 cubic metres, compared to 32,879,900,000 cubic metres during the corresponding period in 2025.

Data issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) showed a 7.8 per cent increase in the production of associated gas by the end of July 2026, reaching 7,877,900,000 cubic metres, compared to 7,308,600,000 cubic metres during the same period of the previous year. The production of non-associated gas (including imports) also rose by 6 per cent, amounting to 27,101,500,000 cubic metres by the end of July 2026, compared to 25,571,300,000 cubic metres during the corresponding period in 2025. In terms of consumption, natural gas consumption in industrial projects increased by 5.9 per cent, reaching 17,334,800,000 cubic metres by the end of July 2026, compared to 16,373,200,000 cubic metres during the same period in 2025.

Gas consumption in power generation plants also increased by 13.7 per cent, recording 10,007,200,000 cubic metres by the end of July 2026, compared to 8,804,800,000 cubic metres during the corresponding period in 2025.

Conversely, gas consumption in oil fields (including losses, metre discrepancies and shrinkage factors) decreased by 0.2 per cent, recording 7,526,400,000 cubic metres by the end of July 2026, compared to 7,540,500,000 cubic metres during the same period in 2025.

Furthermore, gas consumption in industrial areas (including industrial estates and the consumption of the Oman LNG Company) declined by 31.2 per cent, recording 111,000,000 cubic metres by the end of July 2026, compared to 161,400,000 cubic metres during the corresponding period in 2025. — ONA

OQEP lines up new investments across Oman’s upstream sector

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, SEPT 1

OQ Exploration & Production (OQEP), the upstream arm of Oman’s OQ Group, is finalising several new domestic investments that are expected to be signed during the third quarter of 2026, as the energy company pushes ahead with a strategy to expand its operated and non-operated portfolio.

Dr Anwar al Kharusi, Chief Executive Commercial, said the planned investments reflected OQEP’s continuing focus on deploying its domestic upstream expertise across Oman.

“We are now finalising our appraisal scheme in Block 48, which is one important growth lever for OQEP in Oman”, Dr Al Kharusi told investors during an earnings call covering the company’s first-half 2026 financial and operational performance.

The appraisal is expected to pave the way for Block 48 to transition towards development,

adding another potential growth asset to OQEP’s portfolio.

OQEP is also progressing the acquisition of a 35 per cent interest in Block 27, which, upon completion, will bring immediate additional production and reserves while creating operational synergies with neighbouring assets.

Another significant addition is Block 80 in Musandam, where OQEP has signed a concession agreement with Turkish Petroleum. OQEP will operate the block with a 50 per cent interest. Block 80 incorporates the producing West Bukha oil and Bukha gas fields, formerly associated with Block 8, while also offering significant exploration potential across the wider concession.

Beyond Oman, OQEP has signed strategic cooperation agreements supporting its international expansion ambitions. These include an agreement with the Libyan Investment Authority covering potential upstream



Top executives of OQEP taking part in the Earnings Call covering the H1 2026 financial results of the company.

exploration and production investments in Libya and Oman; and another with Indonesia’s Pertamina to explore joint oil and gas investments in Oman, Indonesia and other international markets, he said.

The expansion drive comes against a backdrop of stronger operational and financial performance. Mahmoud al Hashmi, Chief Executive Officer,

said OQEP’s production averaged 228,000 barrels of oil equivalent per day (boe/d) during the first half, almost 3 per cent higher year-on-year, supported by both operated and non-operated assets.

Revenue climbed 12 per cent to RO 685 million (\$1.78 billion), benefitting from higher production and stronger commodity prices, while operating costs remained below \$9 per barrel

of oil equivalent. Adjusted cash flow from operations increased 14 per cent to RO 331 million, while net profit rose 19 per cent to nearly RO 200 million.

Chief Financial Officer Khalid al Qassabi said oil and condensate sales volumes increased nearly 3 per cent to 11.6 million barrels, while the average realised price rose 8 per cent to almost \$81 per barrel. Gas sales recorded even stronger volume growth, increasing more than 17 per cent to 69.7 billion standard cubic feet, supported by higher production from operated and non-operated assets as well as improved condensate optimisation. OQEP’s average realised gas sales price also increased 2 per cent year-on-year to \$3.51 per million standard cubic feet.

Management said the combination of higher volumes, stronger realised commodity prices, reliable operations and a low-cost asset base provided a solid foundation for earnings growth during the first half.

Hydrom maps Oman’s next green transition

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, SEPT 1

OMAN is moving to connect its green hydrogen programme with a broader industrial ecosystem spanning renewable power, storage, green manufacturing and exports, as the country shifts attention from setting energy-transition targets to delivering commercially viable projects.

Eng Abdulaziz al Shidhani, Managing Director of Hydrogen Oman (Hydrom), outlined the emerging model during a keynote presentation at the 5th Salalah Engineering Forum on Tuesday.

The approach places green hydrogen within a wider value chain beginning with solar and wind generation, supported by battery storage and extending into industries such as green ammonia, low-carbon fuels and iron and steel.

A central element of Hydrom’s presentation was the integration of solar power, wind generation and battery storage to overcome the intermittency of renewable energy and provide more stable electricity for industrial operations.

The model is designed to combine complementary renewable resources with advanced storage to deliver more continuous power, improve system reliability and reduce the need for conventional backup generation.

This is particularly important for industries requiring reliable electricity around the clock rather than power that varies according to sunshine or wind conditions.

Hydrom also positioned green hydrogen as a potential decarbonisation tool for industries where direct electrification is difficult.

The presentation identified iron and steel, fertilisers and petrochemicals; and heavy



Eng Abdulaziz al Shidhani, MD — Hydrom, speaking at the 5th Salalah Engineering Forum on Tuesday.

Strategy links solar, wind and battery storage with hydrogen, green manufacturing and export supply chains.

maritime and aviation transport among the sectors where hydrogen and its derivatives could play a larger role.

Green ammonia and synthetic fuels, or e-fuels, were highlighted among potential downstream opportunities, alongside the conversion of Oman’s renewable resources into higher-value industrial products for international markets.

The approach would effectively allow Oman to export renewable energy not only as hydrogen but also through manufactured commodities produced using low-carbon energy.

Al Shidhani’s presentation also linked the strategy to Oman’s geographical position and existing industrial and logistics infrastructure, with economic and industrial zones including Al Duqm, Salalah and Suhar forming part of an emerging network connecting production, processing, logistics and exports.

Hydrom identified several priorities for the current phase of the transition.

These include developing contractual frameworks capable

of sharing technology and market risks, strengthening national capabilities in project management, deploying engineering solutions across ports, transport, manufacturing and construction; and accelerating digital transformation.

Smart grids, data centres and digital automation were among the areas highlighted as the future energy system becomes increasingly integrated and technology-intensive.

The presentation comes as Oman’s green hydrogen programme moves into a more execution-focused phase. The latest Ministry of Energy and Minerals update says seven green hydrogen developments are progressing towards a combined production capacity of one million tonnes annually by 2030, after two earlier projects were concluded by mutual agreement following changes in market conditions.

The ministry has separately put investment associated with the first two hydrogen auction rounds at more than \$44 billion, while renewable capacity supporting the hydrogen programme is projected at about 26.6 GW by 2030. These are planned investments and capacities rather than completed production.

Hydrom’s latest presentation therefore points to a broader challenge facing the next stage of Oman’s energy transition: converting large renewable resources and awarded hydrogen developments into an integrated industrial system capable of generating economic value beyond the production of hydrogen itself.

The 5th Salalah Engineering Forum is being held on September 1–2 under the theme “Energy Transition Engineering: Applied Innovations for Resilient Clean Energy Infrastructure”. It is organised by the Oman Society of Engineers in strategic partnership with the Ministry of Energy and Minerals.

ADVERTORIALS

SHORTTAKES



BankDhofar backs Oman's entrepreneurs and strengthens SME growth at the Salalah SME Growth Forum.

BANKDHOFAR BACKS SME GROWTH

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

The forum provided a platform for BankDhofar to engage directly with entrepreneurs, deepen relationships and gain a better understanding of their evolving business needs.

It also showcased the bank's range of banking, financing and digital solutions for SMEs, reinforcing its commitment to supporting the sector’s growth and enhancing its contribution to Oman’s economy in line with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040.

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

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

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

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

The forum also featured presentations aimed at equipping entrepreneurs with practical insights to strengthen and expand their businesses.

Hashar bin Khamis al Mandhari, CEO of Al Alama Marketing, delivered a presentation on the fundamentals of marketing in the digital age, exploring digital channels, the importance of building a strong brand identity and strategies for managing and scaling SMEs to reach regional and international markets.

Lexus LX 700h: Rewarded beyond expectations

IN a market that continues to demand more from luxury, the Lexus LX 700h stands apart at Saud Bahwan Automotive showrooms across Oman, now paired with a set of privileges designed for those who expect nothing less than the exceptional.

As part of the ongoing Lexus Benefits Campaign, “Crafted Beyond Measure... Rewarded Beyond Expectations”, owners of the flagship SUV can enjoy a 10-year/100,000 km service package, one year vehicle registration and NUQHBAH Loyalty Points worth RO 100 redeemable against future servicing, valid until October 7, 2026 (Terms & Conditions Apply.)

The LX 700h represents the pinnacle of the Lexus range, where uncompromising craftsmanship meets hybrid performance to create an experience reserved for the few. For those ready to claim it, a visit to the nearest Saud Bahwan Automotive showroom is all it takes to explore the offer before it concludes. At its core, the LX 700h is driven by a 3.5L Twin-Turbo V6 hybrid powertrain delivering 457 hp and 650 Nm of torque, with fuel efficiency rated at 10.8 km/l.

As the first hybrid ever offered in the LX lineup, it commands a 10-speed automatic transmission alongside Multi-Terrain Select, translating power into poise across any terrain.

Step inside and the cabin reveals the full extent of Lexus artistry — premium leather upholstery, ambient lighting and ventilated seating across all three rows, crafted for those who consider comfort non-negotiable.

Wireless charging, a premium audio system and seamless Apple CarPlay and Android Auto integration keep every



Discover the LX 700h at your nearest Saud Bahwan Automotive Lexus showroom in Oman.

passenger connected, while a head-up display and driver-focused cockpit put command at the fingertips.

Confidence comes built in, courtesy of the Lexus Safety System+ 3.0 — a suite that includes a Pre-Collision System, Dynamic Radar Cruise Control, Lane Tracing Assist and Adaptive High-beam system, engineered to anticipate the road ahead.

The LX 700h stands today as the clearest expression of what Lexus represents — a legacy of prestige, now matched with rewards worthy of it. Those ready to

experience it can visit the nearest Lexus Oman showroom, where a dedicated team awaits to guide the journey from first look to final drive.

For more information, please visit [www.lexusoman.com](#), subscribe to the YouTube channel “Lexus Oman”, like Lexus Oman on Facebook, follow [oman.lexus](#) on Instagram or follow [Lexus.oman](#) on Snapchat.

For further details and to ascertain the availability of stocks, please visit your nearest Saud Bahwan Automotive Showroom or call 99450244.

Saud Bahwan celebrates workforce excellence

In a significant national achievement, Saud Bahwan Automotive LLC has been honoured for the second consecutive year at the Excellence and Leadership Awards during Labour Forum 2026, organised by the Ministry of Labour under the theme “A Nation’s Vision...Empowerment and Growth”.The recognition acknowledges the company’s outstanding achievements in empowering Omani talent, advancing Omanisation and job localisation; and creating meaningful career opportunities for Omani nationals across leadership, managerial, technical and specialised positions.

The Labour Forum is organised by the Ministry of Labour in collaboration with the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the Arab Labour Organisation (ALO), the Executive Bureau of the GCC Ministers of Labour and Social Affairs; and the Arab Administrative Development Organisation (ARADO).

The event recognises organisations that demonstrate excellence in national workforce development and the adoption of leading human capital practices. This



On behalf of Saud Bahwan Automotive LLC, Mr. Jaber bin Ali Al Dhuhli, General Manager – Human Resources, receiving the excellence and leadership award at labour forum 2026.

latest recognition reflects the company’s sustained success in empowering Omani talent. It follows the distinction received last year in the State of Kuwait, making this the second consecutive year that Saud Bahwan Automotive LLC has been recognised for its achievements in Omanisation, workforce localisation and national talent development.

This continued recognition underscores Saud Bahwan Automotive LLC’s long-term strategy of transforming Omanisation objectives into measurable and sustainable outcomes.

Commenting on the achievement, Jaber bin Ali al Dhuhli, General Manager — Human Resources, said: “We are proud that Saud Bahwan Automotive LLC has been recognised for the second consecutive year.

This achievement reflects the sustainability of our commitment to empowering Omani talent and demonstrates that Omanisation and workforce localisation are not merely corporate targets, but a deeply embedded institutional philosophy and a strategic investment in the people of Oman”.

DEEPAL brings intelligent new energy vehicles to Oman

MUSCAT: For drivers who want the quiet confidence of electric mobility without the worry of range, DEEPAL, Changan Automobile’s dedicated new energy vehicle brand, brings a new driving experience to Oman.

With range extended electric vehicle (REEV) technology, intelligent design and advanced comfort features, the DEEPAL line-up is built for modern motorists seeking efficiency, performance and everyday practicality.

Available through Arabian Gulf Automobiles and Equipment (AGAE), the DEEPAL range in Oman includes the S05, S07 and G318 — three intelligent new energy vehicles, each designed around a distinct driving lifestyle. S05: Stylish and intelligent Crossover



Meet DEEPAL: Intelligent electric mobility, without range anxiety.

Powered by a 1.5-litre naturally aspirated range extender and 27.28

kWh LFP battery, the S05 offers a pure electric range of 160 km (WLTC)

and combined REEV range over 1,000 km, with 214 hp and 320 Nm torque. Highlights include 20-inch alloy wheels, 540-degree panoramic imaging with transparent chassis, a panoramic glass roof, AR head-up display, 15.4-inch infotainment screen, wireless charging and Apple CarPlay/Android Auto.

S07 brings refined comfort

The larger, more premium S07 pairs a 1.5-litre range extender with a 31.74 kWh battery for a 160 km WLTP electric range and 950 km combined range.

It features a 15.6-inch rotating touchscreen, AR head-up display, 14-speaker audio, heated/ventilated front seats, adaptive cruise control and 360-degree surround view.

G318 is about bold adventure

This all-wheel-drive SUV combines a 1.5-litre turbo range extender, dual motors and a 35.07 kWh battery, delivering 430 hp, 575 Nm torque, a 138 km WLTC electric range and 848 km combined range.

With 210 mm ground clearance, a rear axle differential lock, off-road crawling and 540-degree panoramic imaging, it’s built for capability with comfort.

An AGAE spokesperson said, “The DEEPAL range gives Omani customers confidence to embrace new energy mobility without compromising performance, comfort or practicality — whether through the intelligent S05, premium S07 or adventure-ready G318”.

SELECTIVEGROWTH



Oman Sustainability Week Awards 2027 invites ESG leaders to showcase measurable sustainability impact.

ESG AWARDS OPEN FOR ENTRIES

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 1

As Sultanate of Oman continues to advance its sustainability and Net Zero ambitions, the Oman Sustainability Week (OSW) Awards will return for its sixth edition to celebrate organizations that are setting new benchmarks through innovation, social responsibility, and measurable action.

Held as part of Oman Sustainability Week (OSW), the OSW Awards – ESG Category are co-organised by Oman Environmental Services Holding Company – be’ah, in partnership with the Center for Sustainability and Excellence (CSE), Chicago. The Expression of Interest (EOI) period will be open from 1 September 2026 to 19 November 2026.

The OSW Awards recognizes organizations demonstrating strong Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) frameworks, initiatives and tangible achievements. The prestigious recognition platform celebrates organizations that are advancing ESG practices, delivering meaningful impact, and demonstrating ongoing commitment to sustainable and responsible business. By bringing together leaders from across government, business and academia, the awards will reinforce the importance of collective action in building a more sustainable, efficient and resilient future for the Sultanate of Oman.

At the core of the Awards is the Oman Sustainability Index (OSI), which evaluates organizational performance across key environmental, social and governance (ESG) principles. Developed in alignment with the internationally recognized Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) standards, and in collaboration with CSE, the OSI provides organizations with a structured framework to benchmark their sustainability performance, strengthen transparency and accountability, and align their practices with Oman’s national priorities and global sustainability objectives.

Investment opportunities in Oman’s SEZs showcased

BUSINESS REPORTER
CAIRO, SEPT 1

THE Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) participated in the Oman-Egypt Investment Forum for Real Estate and Tourism Development, held in Cairo earlier this week. Taking part were officials, business leaders, investors and real estate developers from the Sultanate of Oman and the Arab Republic of Egypt. The forum aimed to strengthen investment cooperation between the two countries and explore opportunities for new partnerships in the real estate development, tourism and industrial sectors.

The OPAZ delegation was headed by Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Chairman of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) and joined by Abdullah bin Nasser al Rahbi, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Arab Republic of Egypt and Oman’s Non-Resident Ambassador to the State of Eritrea. The delegation also included a number of chief executive officers and officials from the special economic zones, free zones and industrial cities overseen by OPAZ, reflecting the diversity of investment opportunities available across these zones in various economic sectors.

OPAZ’s participation comes as part of its ongoing efforts to promote investment opportunities available in the special economic zones, free zones and industrial cities, attract high-quality investments, strengthen direct engagement with Egyptian investors and real estate developers; and explore opportunities for investment partnerships between the



Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Chairman of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ), led Oman’s delegation to the Cairo forum.

two sides. During the forum, OPAZ showcased investment opportunities available across a number of special economic zones, free zones and industrial cities, with particular focus on the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD). The presentation highlighted opportunities associated with Al Duqm’s coastal tourism master plan, which offers promising prospects for developers and investors in real estate development, tourism and hospitality projects, integrated tourism complexes, as well as related services and facilities.

OPAZ also highlighted Al Duqm’s competitive advantages as one of Oman’s leading investment destinations, including its vast land area, strategic location and advanced infrastructure, in addition to the range of incentives and facilitation measures available to investors.

In this regard, the Law of Special Economic Zones and Free Zones, promulgated by Royal Decree 38/2025, provides a supportive legislative framework for real estate development projects within special economic zones. The Law permits real estate developers to sell units within real estate development projects

to non-Omanis on a freehold ownership basis. It also provides for granting non-Omani property owners and their first-degree relatives residency in the Sultanate of Oman, further enhancing the attractiveness of special economic zones to developers and investors in the real estate sector.

Dr Said bin Khalifa al Quraini, Director General of Investment Development and Official Spokesperson of OPAZ, stated that the Authority’s participation in the forum forms part of its efforts to attract Egyptian real estate developers to capitalise on investment opportunities available in the zones overseen by OPAZ, particularly the Special Economic Zone at Duqm. He noted that the extensive expertise of Egyptian companies in real estate and tourism development creates significant opportunities for establishing high-quality investment partnerships.

Speaking to the media, he said: “Through this participation, we seek to provide Egyptian investors and developers with a closer understanding of the opportunities offered by the Special Economic Zone at Duqm, particularly within its

coastal tourism master plan and to benefit from the accumulated expertise of Egyptian companies in real estate and tourism development. This will contribute to the establishment of high-quality projects and sustainable investment partnerships that serve the mutual interests of our two brotherly countries”.

As part of the visit, the Omani delegation also toured the Suez Canal Economic Zone to learn about its experience in developing and managing economic zones and attracting investments, as well as to explore its key existing projects, investment opportunities and the services and facilitation measures provided to investors.

On the second day of the visit programme, the OPAZ delegation participated in the Oman-Egypt Industrial Forum, with the participation of the Federation of Egyptian Industries, a number of companies operating and investing in the industrial sector, as well as Egyptian investors and business leaders. The forum aimed to strengthen industrial cooperation and explore opportunities for joint partnerships and investments between Omani and Egyptian companies.

2026 shrimp season boosts economic value of fisheries resources

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, SEPT 1

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources has formally announced the start of the 2026 shrimp fishing season, which runs from September 1 to the end of November — an annual conservation-focused exercise aimed at sustainably developing shrimp stocks, bolstering local shrimp production and supporting a promising sector within Oman’s economic diversification strategy.

The Ministry reported that total shrimp production in 2025 reached 6,321.46 tonnes, valued at RO 14.15 million. Aquaculture-based shrimp output accounted for the largest share, producing 5,367.50 tonnes valued at RO 12.40 million,



Total shrimp production in the Sultanate reached 6,321.46 tonnes, valued at RO 14.150 million, in 2025.

compared to 953.96 tonnes from natural fisheries valued at RO 1.75 million.

This growth reflects the transformation of shrimp from a

traditional marine resource into an economically viable activity with substantial investment opportunities, particularly given Oman’s expansion in the aquaculture sector. Total aquaculture production in 2025 reached approximately 9,240 tonnes, valued at over RO 20.3 million, representing a 67.7 per cent increase compared to 2024. Whiteleg shrimp was among the most prominent species in this sector.

New investments are aimed at boosting the sector’s production capacity, including a shrimp farming project in the Wilayat of Shinas with an investment cost of RO 23.5 million and an expected annual production capacity of 7,500 tonnes at full operation. This will enhance the Sultanate of Oman’s ability to meet domestic demand and open up

greater export opportunities.

The economic value of the shrimp season extends beyond fishing and production to encompass a complete chain of activities including transportation, sorting, packaging, refrigeration, freezing, marketing and export. Developing this chain will increase the added value of local products, create job opportunities and support small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) operating in the coastal governorates.

At the same time, the Ministry confirmed that equipment permitted for use during the 2026 season is limited to gillnets, effectively prohibiting the use of trawls and any other unlicensed fishing methods. It also emphasised the prohibition of fishing, possession, trading, selling, purchasing, transporting, storing,

exporting and freezing shrimp outside the specified period and regulations.

Adherence to these regulations is essential to ensuring the sustainability of natural stocks, especially since the long-term economic viability of the sector depends on its ability to balance increased production with the preservation of marine resources.

With the continued expansion of aquaculture and related investments, shrimp can serve as a model for a marine sector capable of generating added value, stimulating the coastal economy, enhancing food security, increasing investment and export opportunities and contributing to the diversification of income sources in the Omani economy beyond traditional sectors.

YIELD SURGE

Global bond rout deepens



Japan’s benchmark 10-year bond yield struck the key 3% barrier for the first time since 1996 on Tuesday, amidst a deepening global debt selloff as traders fret about oil-driven inflation, monetary tightening and worsening fiscal conditions. With the Middle East crisis stoking price pressures globally, yields have been spiking from Tokyo and Sydney to New York and London as investors anticipate the need for central banks to raise interest rates. — Reuters

SALES TRENDS

Tesla’s Europe sales mixed



Tesla’s registrations across several European markets in August painted a mixed picture on Tuesday, with strong gains in France and Denmark contrasted by declines in Norway and Sweden. Registrations of new Tesla vehicles, a proxy for sales, soared 279% in France and 104% in Denmark from a year ago. Meanwhile, they fell 79% in Norway and 41% in Sweden, numbers from compilers OFV and Mobility Sweden showed. — Reuters

AI MANUFACTURING

AI boom drives Asia factory growth



Surging global demand for AI hardware kept Asia’s factories humming in August, private surveys showed on Tuesday, brightening prospects for the export-reliant region even as the prolonged Middle East war fuels uncertainty and rising costs. China, Japan and South Korea saw factory activity expand in August on solid demand for chips, computers and other AI-related products, helping offset mounting cost pressures from the conflict. — Reuters

OPINION

Do academic degrees alone determine executive success?



DR REEM MOHAMED KHAMIS AL HASHAR

The writer is Consultant in Corporate Wellbeing

IN contemporary organisations, the success of a leader is increasingly evaluated not merely by their formal credentials or academic degrees, but by their capacity to inspire, motivate and foster a high-performing work environment.

At the core of leadership is the understanding that leaders are human beings with personal needs and emotions. Their psychological wellbeing has a ripple effect, influencing team members and directly impacting focus, productivity and overall job satisfaction.

Research in organisational psychology suggests that employees are often more influenced by a leader’s interpersonal behaviour than by their technical skills. This perspective is eloquently addressed by Michael West in his book, “Compassionate Leadership”, where he proposes that compassion should be a fundamental value within organisations and among their teams.

West contends that prioritising compassion can help mitigate employee burnout, enhance quality and foster healthy work cultures. Moreover, when a leader arrives at the workplace appearing visibly stressed or agitated, it may shift the team’s focus from critical tasks to managing the emotional climate, thus redirecting valuable energy away from essential priorities.

This underscores the importance of emotional intelligence. An effective leader first acknowledges their own needs, enabling

them to empathize better with the challenges — be they health-related, social, or familial—that their employees may experience.

Effective leadership is grounded in open dialogue and a deep understanding of individual circumstances, rather than hasty judgements. A leader who makes decisions without listening may possess the title of a manager but may miss the fundamental qualities of leadership that foster an environment of safety, appreciation and belonging.

As management methodologies advance, traditional psychometric assessments are becoming insufficient for evaluating true leadership potential, as candidates can often be trained to provide idealised responses that do not accurately reflect their behaviours.

Additionally, “360-degree evaluations” present challenges, including personal biases, employees’ concerns about potential retaliation and limited insights into the executive’s responsibilities.

In response, prominent global organisations are increasingly adopting specialised behavioural assessments that evaluate both verbal and non-verbal behaviours, problem-solving strategies and responses in less formal contexts to assess traits such as humility and interpersonal adaptability. For organisations to thrive, it is essential to avoid appointing leaders whose detrimental behaviours could negatively affect workplace morale, as employee performance is intrinsically linked to

When a leader arrives at the workplace stressed or agitated, it may shift the team’s focus from critical tasks to managing the emotional climate, thus redirecting valuable energy away from essential priorities.

organisational success.

Leadership balance requires a nuanced understanding of the potential impacts associated with the “Dark Triad” traits. Introduced by Canadian psychologists Delroy L Paulhus and Kevin M Williams in 2002, this concept highlights the interplay between three distinct characteristics—Narcissism, Psychopathy and Machiavellianism — each reflecting a common thread of callousness and manipulation but functioning in unique ways.

Achieving balance does not necessarily mean maintaining a perpetual state of tranquility; instead, it involves the capacity to regulate emotions and discern when to engage in decisive action versus when to extend empathy and support. It is important to recognise that leaders who embody these challenging traits can pose risks to organisational wellbeing.

For instance, individuals with narcissistic tendencies may unduly take credit for team successes, those with psychopathic traits may struggle with empathy and Machiavellians might prioritise self-serving goals over ethical considerations. Acknowledging these dynamics is essential for fostering a healthy organisational culture.

Addressing these challenging behaviours requires proactive intervention.

It is crucial to nurture leadership qualities from an early age through educational systems and environments that promote integrity, accountability and collaboration.

ASIA’S FUEL IMPORTS FALL: CAN THE MIDDLE EAST HELP?

CLYDE RUSSELL

The crisis created by the Iran conflict in the supply of refined fuels in Asia continued in August, with the top-consuming region’s imports dropping to the lowest point since the war started.

Asia’s imports of light and middle distillates are estimated at 5.10 million barrels per day in August, falling from 5.61 million bpd in July, according to data compiled by Kpler, a commodities analyst.

Imports are down about 2 million bpd from the average of 7.06 million bpd in the three months leading up to February 28, when the US and Israel launched aerial strikes against Iran.

Since the start of the conflict much of the market focus has been on the supply of crude, given the massive drop in shipments through the Strait of Hormuz, the narrow waterway through which nearly 20% of global oil supplies moved prior to the hostilities.

Tanker movements through the strait remained constrained, though there is debate about how much oil is getting through, with claims by the US Energy Secretary of up to 9 million bpd being disputed by several vessel-tracking services, which see less than half that amount.

But the debate over crude volumes leaving the Middle East is not the argument the oil market should be pursuing, at least not in the immediate term. Asia, the destination for about 90% of Middle East crude, has adjusted to lower oil supplies, mainly with top buyer China slashing its imports by nearly 4 million bpd and also by drawing down on inventories.

But the real pressure is in the market for refined products, particularly for middle distillates like diesel and jet fuel.

The product market is having to deal with the loss of cargoes from the Middle East and also from Russia, which has curtailed fuel shipments after Ukraine successfully struck several of its refineries.

The constrained supplies of refined fuels are showing up in prices, with Singapore gasoil ending at \$155.15 a barrel on Monday, up 70% from where it was \$91.42 on February 27, the day before the Iran war started.

The profit margin for a typical Singapore refinery to produce a barrel of gasoil ended at \$67.93 on Monday, three times more than the \$21.90 that prevailed on February 27.

Gasoline shows a similar dynamic, with the profit for making a barrel of the light motor fuel ending last week at \$27.47, more than three times the \$8.00 from the day before the conflict started.

The wide margins for producing light and middle distillates do raise some questions about the market’s dynamics. The main question is why are Gulf producers running risks in shipping crude through both the Strait of Hormuz and the Bab El Mandeb waterway when they could make vastly more money moving refined products? — Reuters

World Bank’s role in Oman Vision 2040

FROM the era of how fleets and ancient spice routes to today’s deep-water ports, Oman’s strategic location at the crossroads of the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean has long made it a vibrant trade hub linking Africa, Asia and the Middle East.

That outward looking spirit now underpins Oman Vision 2040 — the Sultanate of Oman’s plan to reduce dependence on oil and gas and build a diversified, sustainable, technology driven economy.

Oman Vision 2040 is Oman’s blueprint to tackle challenges, adapt to regional and global change, seize new opportunities and strengthen economic competitiveness and social well being.

It aims to cut hydrocarbons’ share of GDP from about 30% today — two thirds of fiscal revenue and over 60% of exports — to 16% by 2030 and 8.4% by 2040, while accelerating growth in manufacturing, logistics, renewable energy, fisheries, mining and services.

Strengthening the private sector is central to Oman Vision 2040. Oman will need to create over 100,000 additional jobs for nationals by 2040, which the public sector alone cannot meet. In 2024, just over half (54%) of employed Omanis worked in the private sector, up from roughly a third a few years earlier following labour market reforms, yet still below international benchmarks.

To sustain diversification as hydrocarbon revenues decline, private sector investment — currently just over half of GDP — will need to rise towards the 70% target set for 2040. Broadening opportunities across non oil industries will be essential for creating quality jobs and building a resilient, competitive economy.

The good news: According to the World Bank, Oman’s economy grew by 2.6% in 2025, driven largely by non oil activity, while inflation averaged 0.9% — among the lowest in the GCC. Regulatory reforms and streamlined processes are attracting new investment, with



WENDY WERNER

The writer is World Bank Group Country Manager for Oman

The World Bank Group, through IFC and MIGA, is supporting this journey by mobilising finance, attracting strategic investors and expanding access to credit for smaller businesses.

the UK becoming Oman’s largest foreign investor in 2025 (\$42 billion), followed by the US and UAE.

Continued digital transformation — from AI adoption to advanced e government services — will further boost competitiveness, while education reforms are helping to align skills with the needs of emerging sectors.

PARTNERS IN PROGRESS

The World Bank Group (WBG) is helping to advance the country’s vision. Its partnership with Oman spans decades, evolving from technical cooperation to a broad engagement combining policy advisory work with private sector investment.

In 2025, a new WBG Country Office in Muscat brought together the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development and International Development Association (IBRD) — which supports public sector projects — with the International Finance Corporation (IFC), focused on private sector growth and the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA), the home of the World Bank Group Guarantee Platform.

This integrated presence allows rapid support for development priorities and greater coordination in mobilising finance, de risking investments and sharing expertise.

In April 2025, during the first World Bank Group Day with the Ministry of Finance, IFC announced agreements to mobilise sustainable finance, expand non oil sectors and support a major greenfield manufacturing investment.

In 2019, MIGA issued \$1.7 billion in 15-year guarantees for seven infrastructure projects in the Special Economic Zone of Duqm — expanding Oman’s logistics sector and export capacity, while boosting growth and job creation in Al Wusta Governorate.

A LANDMARK IN MANUFACTURING: THE POLYSILICON PLANT

Oman’s new polysilicon facility — the region’s largest — is a flagship

example of Oman Vision 2040 in action.

Supported by IFC, the \$1.6 billion plant will produce 100,000 tonnes of polysilicon annually — enough for 40 GW of solar modules to power up to 12 million homes each year — and is expected to avoid 8.8 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions annually. The facility began operations in January 2026 and is expected to ramp up to 100,000 tonnes based on market demand.

The facility will create nearly 3,000 direct and indirect jobs, alongside opportunities for smaller businesses and renewable energy integration.

IFC led the financing, committing \$250 million, including \$200 million in long-term debt and \$50 in equity and mobilising \$713 million from development finance institutions, regional and international investors and local banks — the latter drawn in by IFC’s participation in the investment. Oman Investment Authority’s Future Fund Oman — the largest shareholder — invested \$260 million, underscoring sovereign confidence in the plant’s role in diversification and export growth.

The earlier MIGA guarantees for infrastructure in the Duqm economic zone remain part of the WBG’s ongoing support, helping to lay the groundwork for investments of this scale.

A POSITIVE OUTLOOK

Fiscal reform has strengthened Oman’s foundations: the Sultanate of Oman posted a surplus of 0.7% of GDP in 2025, reduced debt from nearly 69% in 2020 to 38.5% by 2025 and is projected to achieve a current account surplus of 3.4% in 2026.

Central bank reserves reached \$19.3 billion at the end of 2025, covering about four months of imports. While near term challenges remain — from regional tensions to softer tourism inflows — projects like the polysilicon plant demonstrate Oman’s ability to attract global capital and integrate into future focused supply chains.

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LOOKING for part time OR full time Accounts/ Finance job. 20yrs experience in Muscat. Up to finalization & Audit.

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

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

Contact: 90159392

PAKISTANI male, having diploma in mechanical engineering, 10+ years experience as "sales engineer" in UAE and 15 years experience as "operation manager" in Oman with D/L.Looking for job

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THE AMBITIOUS OMANI CHEF TRANSFORMING PERFUMES INTO CHOCOLATE

ON SECOND **THOUGHT**

A DEGREE WORTH STAYING FOR



Yeru Ebuen
The writer is a luxury media strategist and a creative director

A friend and I recently had a long conversation about her plans to finish a master’s degree. She had the ambition, the experience and a clear idea of where she wanted her career to go. What she could not find in Oman was the right programme.

Her experience was not unusual. Another friend flew to Europe for a degree she could not pursue here. The discussion among many working professionals is not that Oman has no postgraduate education. Sultan Qaboos University and several private institutions offer master’s and doctoral programmes. The Sultanate of Oman has programme for post graduates and encourages students to study inside the country. The concern is choice: when the specialisation is highly specific, interdisciplinary or designed around working professionals, the options can still feel limited.

That should interest us economically as much as academically.

The countries that built strong education brands: Britain, Australia, Canada, Germany and France — understood that universities are more than classrooms. International students pay tuition, rent homes, use transport, support cafés and shops; and bring visiting families. Britain recorded £32.3 billion in education-related exports and transnational education revenue in 2022. Yet the greater dividend is knowledge: research partnerships, new businesses, skilled workers and relationships that often survive long after graduation.

The UAE has brought that model much closer to home. Dubai’s 41 private higher-education institutions enrolled 42,026 students in 2024–25. International students made up 35 per cent of the total, after their numbers rose 29 per cent in one year. International campuses such as Birmingham, Heriot-Watt and Middlesex offer postgraduate study in fields ranging from artificial intelligence and bioinformatics to media, psychology and construction management. Dubai is not merely selling degrees; it is building an ecosystem around talent.

Oman has a compelling proposition of its own: safety, cultural depth, a bilingual environment, an attractive quality of life and industries that can become living laboratories. Imagine internationally competitive master’s programmes in sustainable tourism, water security, fisheries, logistics, heritage conservation, renewable energy, mining, food security, Arabic digital media and desert urbanism, designed with employers and offered in flexible formats.

This would give Omanis and long-term residents more reasons to remain, while drawing students from the GCC, East Africa, South Asia and beyond. Campuses would gain diversity; local businesses would gain customers; employers would gain specialised talent; and communities would gain new ideas. The risks — quality control, housing pressure and graduates whose skills do not match jobs — are real, so expansion must be selective and properly regulated.

Oman already funds postgraduate study and places knowledge and research within Oman Vision 2040. The next step may be to make Oman itself a destination for that investment.

Should we continue sending ambitious students elsewhere, or build more of the programmes that persuade them and others to come here? Is this an investment Oman should now make?

> 20

QUICK FEATURES



STUNTS

A trick rider performs acrobatic stunts for the audience during the Karacena International Biennial of Circus Arts and Travel in Morocco. — **AFP**



TRIBUTE

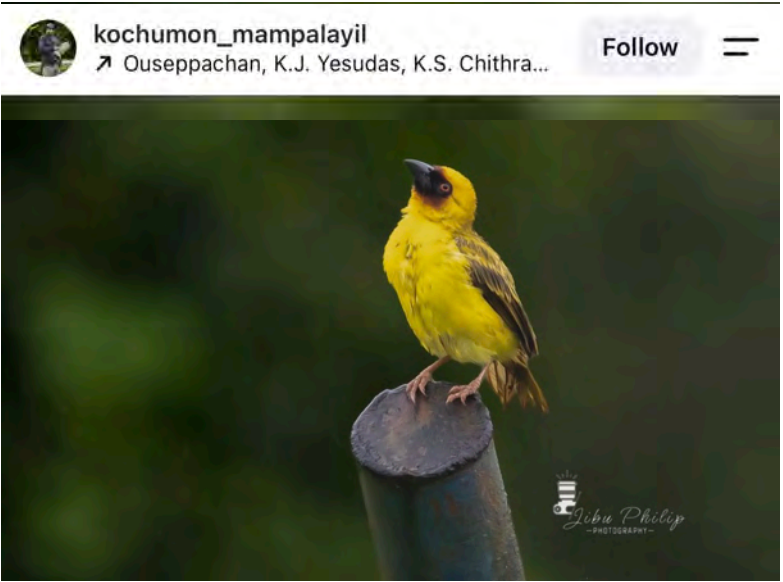
A fan of the late Michael Jackson performs during an annual event held to mark the anniversary of the singer’s birth in Mexico City. — **AFP**



CULTURE

Artists prepare backstage ahead of a dance drama performance in New Delhi. — **AFP**

INSTA PICKS



Rüppell’s weaver in Salalah



Sometimes, nature creates the perfect frame without asking for permission

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NAOMI WATTS TO RECEIVE LIFETIME AWARD



Hollywood star, actor and producer Naomi Watts. — AFP

Hollywood star, actor and producer Naomi Watts will receive a lifetime achievement award at Spain’s top film festival next month, organisers announced on Monday.

The San Sebastian Film Festival said the British-born Australian, a two-time Oscar nominee, would receive the Donostia Prize as “one of the most talented and recognised actresses of her generation”.

Watts, 57, first made a name for herself in David Lynch’s 2001 movie “Mulholland Drive” and has played versatile roles in both auteur cinema and major productions.

She earned Oscar nominations for her performances in “21 Grams” (2003), by Mexican director Alejandro González Iñárritu, and “The Impossible” (2012), directed by Spain’s Juan Antonio Bayona.

Iñárritu’s “Birdman” (2014), Woody Allen’s “You Will Meet a Tall Dark Stranger” (2010)

and Michael Haneke’s “Funny Games” feature among her other standout films.

Watts was nominated for an Emmy Award for her work in Ryan Murphy’s miniseries “Feud: Capote vs. The Swans”, on which she also served as an executive producer.

Watts has also stood out in recent years for raising awareness about women’s health and menopause.

The prize ceremony will take place on September 19 in the northern coastal city of San Sebastian, where the Spanish-speaking world’s most prestigious film festival will run from September 18 to 26.

A screening of the new film “The Housewife” will follow. Watts stars as the enigmatic wife of a suspected former Nazi official living in 1960s New York. German director, screenwriter, producer and actor Werner Herzog is also due to receive a Donostia Award this year. — AFP



THE MAGIC FLUTE: DEFEATING THE MONSTERS, Music by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

ROHM UNVEILS ITS 15TH ANNIVERSARY SEASON SHOWS



SINDBAD: THE OMANI SAILOR by Hungarian Radio Symphony

STAFF REPORTER

THE Royal Opera House Muscat (ROHM) has announced its 2026–2027 15th Anniversary Season, marking fifteen years of artistic achievement and cultural exchange. From October 2026 to May 2027, the season will feature 28 unique shows across 43 performance nights, spanning opera, Arab music, concerts, ballet, jazz, world music and family entertainment, alongside exhibitions and an expanded education and community programme.

Since opening, ROHM, Oman’s flagship performing arts institution and the first opera house in the GCC, has evolved from a landmark venue into an internationally respected producing house. Its anniversary season reflects this growth through international collaborations, original productions, Omani heritage and programmes designed to nurture local talent and engage new audiences.

The season opens with Verdi’s Rigoletto, presented in ROHM’s acclaimed co-production with the Lithuanian Opera and Ballet Theatre and marking legendary director Franco Zeffirelli’s final operatic vision. Another highlight is ROHM’s original production, Sindhbad: The Omani Sailor, inspired by Oman’s maritime heritage and created with international artists in collaboration with Müpa Budapest.

Other operatic highlights include The Opera!, a signature ROHM production inspired by the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice, and The Magic Flute: Defeating



The Don Quixote ballet by Rudolf Nureyev, performed by the Teatro alla Scala Ballet with the Hankyung Arte Philharmonic



Elina Garanča will make her Oman debut performing with the Orchestra of Teatro Regio of Turin

the Monsters, an adaptation of Mozart’s masterpiece for younger audiences.

Arab music remains central to the season, with performances by artists including Nawal, Nabeel Shuail, Marwa Nagy, Yosra Mahnouch, Medhat Saleh, Mohammed Assaf and Aseel Abu Bakr. Ramadan programming will feature evenings of Sufi and Inshaad music from Oman and Syria.

The international concert programme includes Oman debuts by mezzo-soprano Elina Garanča and accordionist Ksenija Sidorova, a Grand Opera Gala and Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets™ in Concert. Omani qanun virtuoso Wahab al Dhanki will join international musicians for Homage to the Qanun, blending Omani and Armenian musical traditions.

The season also presents Teatro alla Scala Ballet in Rudolf Nureyev’s Don Quixote, a celebration of jazz, Portuguese Fado, Sicilian-Arab music, military music, international folk traditions and The Nutcracker on Ice.

Beyond the stage, ROHM will expand its education and community initiatives, including youth programmes, school collaborations, workshops, accessibility projects and its summer camp. The anniversary exhibition, 15 Years of Stage and Splendour, will showcase costumes, artefacts and archives tracing ROHM’s artistic journey.

The 2026–2027 season celebrates ROHM’s fifteen-year legacy while reaffirming its ambition to connect Oman with the world and inspire the next generation through artistic excellence and cultural dialogue.

THE AMBITIOUS

OMANI CHIEF

TRANSFORMING

PERFUMES



IDRIS AL BALUSHI

FOR most people, perfume is an experience reserved for the senses of smell and memory. For Omani pastry chef Zahwa al Rahbi, however, a fragrance can be something to taste.

Driven by her love of both perfumes and desserts, Al Rahbi has embarked on an unusual culinary experiment, transforming the character of renowned fragrances into luxurious chocolate bonbons inspired by perfumes such as Gris Dior and Amouage's Lilac Love. Her Instagram reels documenting the process have attracted widespread attention, with viewers praising the originality of the idea and eagerly waiting to discover which perfume she will reinterpret next.

The concept began with curiosity about how two seemingly different worlds, fragrance and pastry, could meet through the senses.

"Omani perfumes, especially Amouage, are rich in details and identity", Al Rahbi explains. "That inspired me to translate these details into an experience that can be tasted".

Her process is less about simply reproducing a perfume and more about interpreting its personality. She begins by studying its key notes before searching for edible ingredients that can evoke similar aromas, flavours and sensations. She then develops the bonbon through layers, textures and forms that reflect the character of the fragrance.

One of her striking creations draws inspiration from Amouage's Lilac Love, a fragrance built around notes including heliotrope, lilac,



"For me, chocolate is not only about taste, but a complete sensory experience", Pastry chef Zahwa al Rahbi says. "I want people to taste the piece and feel that they have discovered the personality of the perfume through another sense".

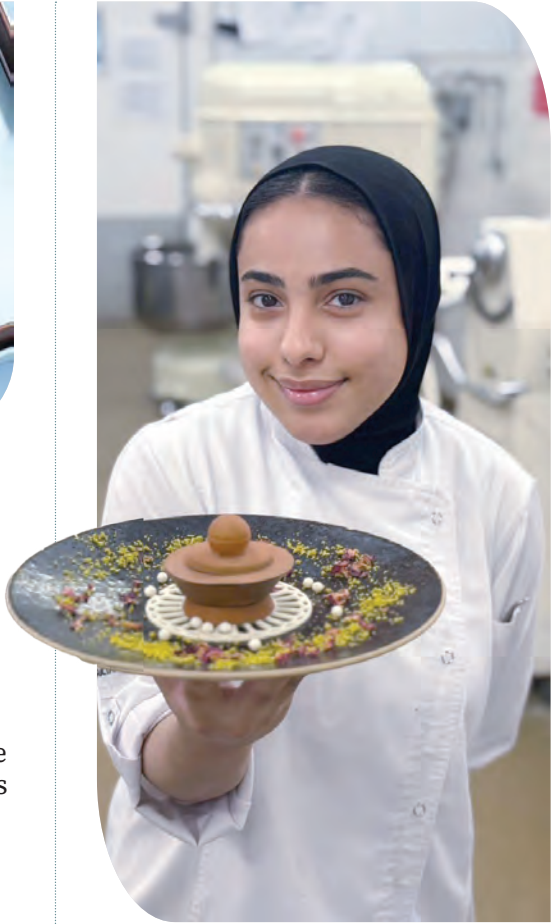
gardenia, jasmine, peony and rose. Rather than attempting to replicate the perfume literally, Al Rahbi translates its floral identity into an elegant chocolate bonbon, allowing familiar notes to take on an entirely new dimension.

"The perfume's notes are a source of inspiration, but I don't transfer its composition literally", she says. "I reinterpret them using ingredients suitable for chocolate while trying to preserve the personality of the fragrance and the feeling it leaves behind".

The challenge lies in the complexity of perfume itself. Some scents cannot be directly translated into taste, particularly when their compositions are layered or abstract. Instead, Al Rahbi focuses on the emotion and sensation a fragrance creates, finding ingredients and textures capable of expressing them.

Her creations have proven that the idea is as captivating visually as it is conceptually. The response to her reels has been both positive and unexpected, with viewers fascinated by the possibility of tasting a scent they already know.

"For me, chocolate is not only



about taste, but a complete sensory experience", she says. "I want people to taste the piece and feel that they have discovered the personality of the perfume through another sense".

With plans to explore more Omani and international fragrances, Al Rahbi sees considerable potential in the concept, including future collaborations with perfume houses.

What began as a creative experiment is becoming a delicious meeting point between Oman's fragrance culture and the artistry of pastry, proving that sometimes, a perfume does not have to be worn. It can be savoured, one bonbon at a

