

O M A N  
Observer  
D A I L Y

SUNRISE 05:44 AM

PRAYER TIMINGS

FAJR 04:25 AM

DHUHR 12:16 PM

ASR 03:42 PM

MAGHRIB 06:43 PM

ISHA 07:56 PM

12

ALCARAZ WINS CINCINNATI OPEN AS SINNER RETIRES

INBRIEF

HIS MAJESTY’S GREETINGS TO HUNGARY PRESIDENT

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Dr Tamas Sulyok of Hungary on the occasion of his country’s National Day. In his cable, His Majesty expressed his heartfelt sentiments and best wishes of further progress to this friendly country in various spheres. His Majesty also wished the relations of cooperation and partnership further growth to serve the joint interests in a manner that meets the aspirations of both peoples.

HEAVY RAINS LIKELY AS LOW PRESSURE PERSISTS

The National Multi-Hazard Early Warning Centre said that the Sultanate of Oman will continue to be affected by a trough of a low-pressure system with clouds covering most governorates. Scattered rains, occasionally associated with thunderstorms, will fall on the governorates of Al Wusta, Dhofar, Al Sharqiyah North and Al Sharqiyah South, as well as parts of Al Dakhiliyah and Al Dhahirah. On Tuesday, the governorates of Al Wusta, Dhofar, Al Sharqiyah North, Al Sharqiyah South, and parts of Al Dhahirah and Al Dakhiliyah experienced rainfall ranging from 10 to 35 mm. Active downdraft winds, with speeds between 20 and 45 knots, sent unstable objects flying and reduced visibility. **DETAILS ON P2**

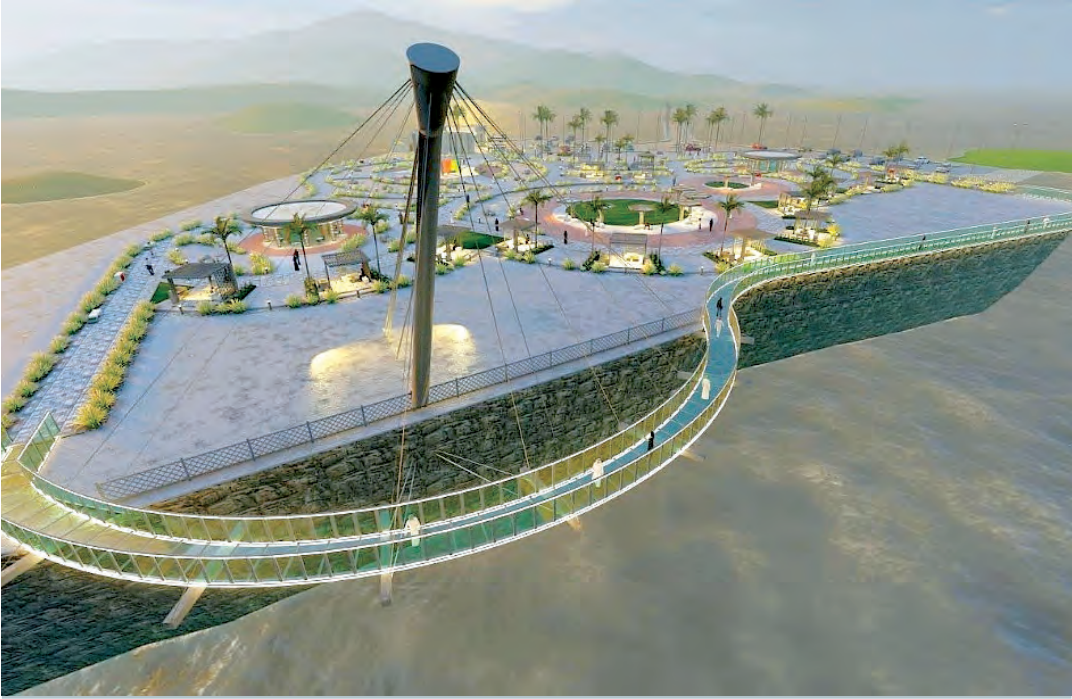
OMAN, UZBEKISTAN TO ENHANCE INVESTMENTS

Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, received Laziz Kudratov, Minister of Investment, Industry and Trade of the Republic of Uzbekistan, on Tuesday. The meeting aimed at enhancing economic and investment relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Uzbekistan. The meeting reviewed avenues for developing economic and commercial cooperation between the two countries. It also discussed promising opportunities in the fields of investment, industry and trade, and followed up on the outcomes of the Omani-Uzbek Joint Committee. Abdulsalam bin Mohammed al Murshidi, Chairman of Oman Investment Authority, also met Laziz Kudratov and his delegation. **DETAILS ON P2**

RO 2.8m projects to enhance Dhofar’s tourism potential

**SALALAH:** The Dhofar Municipality is implementing three projects for scenic overlooks in the Wilayats of Salalah, Rakhyout and Dhalkout, as well as a public park in Shahb As’aib, with a total cost exceeding RO 2.85 million. These projects are part of the governorate development programme, aiming to enhance natural features, provide new attractions, improve quality of life, and boost tourism in the governorate. The projects include the construction of public facilities, seating areas, pedestrian walkways and decorative lighting in locations with distinctive natural characteristics, including mountain viewpoints overlooking panoramic sea views. This will enhance the sustainability of tourism and recreational use of these sites while preserving environmental integrity and natural balance.

The project includes the construction of rest areas, seating areas, restaurants, a walkway, landscaping and public facilities for visitors at a mountain site overlooking the sea, with a total estimated cost of **RO 992,000**



The new projects will enhance the sustainability of tourism and recreational use of tourist sites.

27,537 students get admission in first-round sorting

**MUSCAT:** The Higher Education Admission Centre (HEAC) on Tuesday announced the results of the first sorting of students vying for seats in higher education institutions during the forthcoming academic year (2025/2026). As many as 27,537 male and female students received admission after the sorting of holders of the 2024/2025 General Education Diploma (GED) and equivalent qualifications.

Ahmed bin Mohammed al Azri, Director-General of the HEAC (Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation), said that government higher education institutions accommodated the largest number of students who received admission, equivalent to 56.3 per cent. The percentage of those who received admission for internal scholarships and study grants in private higher education

institutions comprised 41.4 per cent, while 2.3 per cent of the competing students received admission for scholarships and study grants abroad. Al Azri added that the majority of the seats (95 per cent) were occupied during the first round, while 5 per cent seats remained vacant due to a shortage in the number of students who met the admission requirements. Al Azri pointed out that the total number of successful applicants

stood at 43,145 students, of whom 9,432 had a general average of 90 per cent or higher, while 20,383 students had a general average of 80 per cent or higher. He said that educational specialisations saw high competition, with the average of the latest scores in educational specialisations at Sultan Qaboos University reaching 92.3 per cent among males and 97.5 per cent among females. **TURN TO P2**

Hamas accepts proposed deal for 60-day ceasefire

**ISRAEL** is studying Hamas’ response to a Gaza ceasefire proposal for a 60-day truce and the release of half the captives still held in the enclave, two Israeli officials said on Tuesday, although one source reiterated that all Israeli captives must be freed for the war to end. Efforts to pause the fighting gained new momentum over the past week after Israel announced plans for a new offensive to seize control of Gaza City at the heart of the enclave. Mediators Egypt and Qatar have been pushing to restart indirect talks between the sides on a US-backed ceasefire plan. The proposal includes the release of 200 Palestinian convicts jailed in Israel and an unspecified number of imprisoned women and minors, in return for 10 living and 18 deceased captives from Gaza, according to a Hamas official. Two Egyptian security sources confirmed the details, and added that Hamas has requested the release of hundreds of Gaza detainees as well. Israel says a total of 50 captives remain in Gaza, 20 of them still alive. “Israel’s policy is consistent and has not changed. Israel demands the release of all 50 captives in accordance with the principles established by the cabinet for ending the war. We are in the final decisive stage of Hamas and will not leave any captive behind,” an Israeli political source said. The comment, while adamant, fell short of



An injured youth walks on debris as Palestinians salvage items from the rubble of homes destroyed in Israeli strikes on the southern Al Zeitoun neighbourhood in Gaza City on Tuesday. — **AFP**

an outright rejection of the proposal on the table. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was expected to convene discussions about the ceasefire proposal soon, the two Israeli officials said. A response was expected in the coming two days, said a Palestinian source close to the talks. Qatar’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson Majed al Ansari said the 60-day truce deal would include “a pathway to a

comprehensive agreement to end the war.” The proposal includes a partial withdrawal of Israeli forces, which presently control 75 per cent of Gaza and the entry of more humanitarian aid into the enclave, where a population of 2.2 million people is increasingly facing famine. Israel had previously agreed to the outline, advanced by US special Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff, but negotiations faltered over some of its details. **SEE ALSO P6**

OMAN

FROM PAGE 1



27,537 STUDENTS GET ADMISSION IN FIRST-ROUND SORTING

The average of the latest competitive scores in educational specialisations at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences was 93 per cent among males and 97.5 among females.

In exclusion of seats allocated to the “programme for localising teaching positions in remote villages”, the latest average competitive rates for educational majors at private higher education institutions were 91.2 for males and 97.4 for females.

As for “flexible programmes for scholarships abroad”, 98.2 emerged as the latest acceptance rate set for the STEM programme — against a rate of 97.25 for the ESAM programme.

Al Azri said that students who received admission for the “flexible programmes in internal scholarships” are given the freedom to choose the private higher education institution they wish to join, as well as the sub-sections from among the specialisations specified in the student handbook. The “flexible programmes in internal scholarships” are scholarships designated for study at private higher education institutions within the Sultanate of Oman.

As for the mechanism set for selecting the desired institutions, the specialisations are available for the students in their respective registration pages in the Admission System during working hours of the period from August 19 to 21.

He said that after the first round, the HEAC will launch the Private-Funded Admission System, which regulates the admission of students wishing to study at their own expense at Sultan Qaboos University and in educational specialisation programmes at private higher education institutions in the Sultanate of Oman (including Sohar University, Nizwa University, Dhofar University and Al Sharqiyah University).

He noted that registration in the system will be available from August 25 until September 3. The names of students shortlisted for admission tests will be announced on August 31 and the results of the sorting will be announced on September 1.

Al Azri pointed out that the HEAC will offer a selection modification service to students who contest vacant seats after the first round of admissions, from September 15 to 16. This service is open to all students, irrespective of whether or not they received a study offer in the first round — or whether or not they received a study opportunity or were not previously registered via the system.

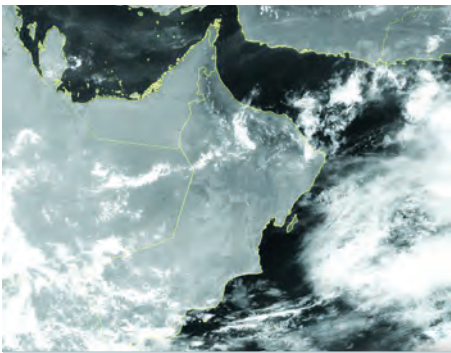
Al Azri advised students wishing to submit grievances to submit a request through the Government Services Portal. — ONA

HEAVY RAINFALL PREDICTED AS LOW PRESSURE PERSISTS

**STAFF REPORTER**  
MUSCAT, AUG 19

The National Multi-Hazard Early Warning Centre said that the Sultanate of Oman will continue to be affected by a trough of a low-pressure system with clouds covering most governorates. Scattered rains, occasionally associated with thunderstorms, will fall on the governorates of Al Wusta, Dhofar, Al Sharqiyah North and Al Sharqiyah South, as well as parts of Al Dakhiliyah and Al Dhahirah.

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experienced rainfall ranging from 10 to 35 mm. Active downdraft winds, with speeds between 20 and 45 knots,

sent unstable objects flying and reduced visibility. The National Multi-Hazard Early Warning Centre issued a statement on Tuesday on the expected weather conditions in the Sultanate of Oman. It said clouds will continue to form, bringing in rainfall of varying intensity across all governorates on Wednesday. Rainfall is expected to be concentrated in the governorates of Al Sharqiyah North, Al Sharqiyah South, Al Wusta and Dhofar.

The anticipated rainfall amounts could range between 10 and 30 mm. The rainfall will be associated with active winds with speeds between 20 and 45 knots, and waves rising to 4 metres on the coasts of the Arabian Sea.

Oman launches strategy for marine debris management

**BALQEES AL ORAIMI**  
MUSCAT, AUG 19

What has been described as a ‘landmark and pioneering step’, the Sultanate of Oman has unveiled its National Strategy for Marine Debris Management, a comprehensive plan aimed at protecting the marine environment and ensuring maritime safety.

The strategy is aligned with both national laws and international frameworks, reinforcing Oman’s commitment to building a sustainable maritime sector and safeguarding its marine wealth.

The strategy identifies several key objectives, including protecting the marine environment, enhancing maritime safety, allocating resources for debris management and strengthening institutional cooperation. It also establishes a national emergency plan in line with international agreements.

The Maritime Affairs Department at the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, stated that the launch of the strategy marks a turning point in Oman’s efforts to build a safe and sustainable maritime sector. “This is not only about removing abandoned or sunken vessels, but also about ensuring comprehensive protection of our marine environment while positioning Oman as a trusted maritime hub,” it stated.

Under Omani Maritime Law (Royal Decree No 19/2023), marine debris is defined as a ship and its appurtenances that are abandoned, sunk, or grounded in the territorial sea of the Sultanate of Oman or its exclusive economic zone.

This clear legal foundation allows authorities to regulate removal operations with well-defined responsibilities, ensuring that environmental and economic



The strategy identifies several key objectives, including protecting the marine environment and enhancing maritime safety.

considerations are both taken into account.

Abdullah al Rashdi, a specialist in marine environmental sciences, explained, “Over time, some wrecks become artificial habitats for marine life. Therefore, removal must be carefully studied to avoid ecological disruption. The strategy strikes a balance by involving experts in the decision-making process before any intervention.”

Beyond its environmental importance, the strategy also addresses maritime safety. Debris in shipping lanes poses direct threats to international trade routes and can cause significant economic losses.

Musallam al Hosani, a maritime safety expert, stated, “Marine debris in navigation routes is a serious hazard. Effective monitoring and regulated removal operations will directly strengthen global confidence in Omani waters as a safe passage for shipping companies.”

Authorities stress that the success of the strategy depends on active community involvement and the engagement of the private sector. Public awareness campaigns targeting ship owners, port operators and local communities are crucial.

Maha bint Salem, an environmental activist, commented, “Protecting our seas is a collective responsibility. While the government sets the framework, it is society that ensures the strategy succeeds. Awareness and cooperation at all levels are essential.”

With this strategy, Oman is charting a path towards a cleaner, safer and more sustainable maritime future. It not only tackles immediate challenges, but also builds a long-term framework that integrates legislation, science and community participation.

Oman, Uzbekistan explore ways to enhance investment cooperation

**MUSCAT:** Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, received Laziz Kudratov, Minister of Investment, Industry and Trade of the Republic of Uzbekistan, on Tuesday.

The meeting aimed at enhancing economic and investment relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Uzbekistan.

The meeting reviewed avenues for developing economic and commercial cooperation between the two countries. It also discussed promising opportunities in the fields of investment, industry and trade, and followed up on the outcomes of the Omani-Uzbek Joint Committee.

Cooperation in the fields of transport, industry, mining



The meeting explored prospects for joint work and opportunities that align with the priorities of Oman and Uzbekistan. — ONA

and the tourism sector was also discussed, alongside exploring the potential for exchanging expertise and building strategic partnerships that contribute to diversifying income sources and enhancing trade exchange, with a focus on activating partnerships between the public and private sectors.

Furthermore, Abdulsalam bin Mohammed al Murshidi, Chairman of Oman Investment Authority, met with Laziz Kudratov, Minister of Investment, Industry and Trade of Uzbekistan, and his accompanying delegation.

The meeting explored prospects for joint work, as well as promising potential and opportunities that align with the priorities of Oman and Uzbekistan.

The Uzbek Minister of Investment, Industry and Trade is accompanied by a high-level delegation comprising officials and businesspeople. During the two-day visit, the delegation will meet with a number of officials and company heads in sectors of mutual interest, including logistics, banking, textiles, and oil and gas.

The meeting was attended by Pankaj Kanaksi Gokaldas Khimji, Adviser for External Trade and International Cooperation at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, Abdulsalam Khatmov, appointed Ambassador of the Republic of Uzbekistan to the Sultanate of Oman, Eng Nasser bin Khalifa al Kindi, CEO of Invest Oman, and a number of officials from both sides. — ONA

SHORT TAKES



In particular, the ministry urged visitors to Dhofar Governorate to remain cautious while undertaking tours and excursions.

MoHT URGES CAUTION  
AMID WEATHER  
CONDITIONS

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MoHT) called on all tourism establishments across the Sultanate of Oman to exercise caution and continue adhering to public safety procedures in light of the prevailing weather conditions.

The ministry stressed the importance of maintaining vigilance and ensuring precautionary measures are in place to safeguard visitors and facilities.

In particular, the ministry urged visitors to Dhofar Governorate to remain cautious while undertaking tours and excursions, emphasising that their safety remains a priority.

Recently, a tourist lost his life in a tragic mountain climbing accident in the Wilayat of Mirbat, Dhofar Governorate. Rescue and ambulance teams from the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority, with the help of local citizens, responded to the incident after the tourist slipped while attempting to climb a steep slope in Jabal Samhan.

The fall caused him to sustain severe injuries that led to his death at the scene.

SUHAR COURT JAILS  
TRADER FOR LAW  
BREACHES

SUHAR: The Primary Court in Suhar recently issued five judicial rulings against a defendant in favour of several consumers, sentencing him to imprisonment and financial fines for violations of the Consumer Protection Law No 66/2014.

The cases originated from complaints filed with the Consumer Protection Department in Al Batinah North Governorate against a commercial establishment specialising in the fabrication and installation of doors, windows and glass partitions.

Consumers reported that they had signed contracts with the company to complete the work within a specific timeframe. However, the establishment failed to honour the agreements and delayed execution. Following the complaints, the Directorate undertook the necessary legal procedures.

After compiling the case files, they were referred to the Public Prosecution in Suhar, which investigated the matters and forwarded them to the competent court. The court subsequently convicted the defendant of failing to provide services properly. The rulings included both prison sentences and financial penalties.

Digitising school curricula a gateway to integrated education

AFRAH AL BALUSHI  
MUSCAT, AUG 19

The continuous modernisation of the education system and the enhancement of digital transformation processes in distance education through the use of information and communication technology in teaching and learning represent a fundamental starting point for the Ministry of Education in the Sultanate of Oman, through the digital transformation process it is currently implementing.

The launch of the Omani Curriculum Digitisation Project fulfils the ministry's objectives regarding the e-learning strategy by converting curricula into interactive digital books, offering a wide range of diverse interactive digital educational content. The Omani Curriculum Digitisation Project is an initiative to transform curricula



The Ministry of Education stated that the digitisation of the Omani curricula is part of an integrated digital transformation plan.

in the Sultanate of Oman into interactive digital content. It aims to promote digital transformation in education and provide an integrated, technology-based

learning environment for students and teachers.

The Ministry of Education, represented by the Directorate-General of Curriculum Development,

FIRST-EVER SINGAPORE FILM FEST KICKS OFF FROM SEPT 18

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH  
MUSCAT, AUG 19

The first-ever Singapore Film Festival in Oman will kick off from September 18 to 20 at Cinepolis, Oman Avenue Mall.

The three-day film festival will feature three critically acclaimed and award-winning films that have received international recognition, including awards from Cannes and Locarno Film Festival.

These films are being screened by the International Film Foundation of Oman (IFFO) in association with the Embassy of Singapore in Oman.



Syed Nouredin bin Syed Hassim, the Charge d'Affairs of the Embassy of Singapore.

Syed Nouredin bin Syed Hassim, the Charge d'Affairs of the Embassy of Singapore, stated, "We are extremely pleased to host the

first-ever Singapore Film Festival in Oman. This is a fantastic way to learn about each other's cultures. This year, we are also celebrating four decades of the relationship between Oman and Singapore, as well as six decades of our country's independence. The festival is a wonderful tribute to these milestones."

The three films being showcased are Ilo Ilo, A Land Imagined and The Autograph, which address cultural differences, migrant issues, and political scenarios, respectively.

Sudha Sha, coordinator of the festival and chairperson of IFFO,

said, "Films have the power to unite people regardless of their differences. When we think of films from Southeast Asia, we often focus on Korea, but we should not overlook the immense potential and depth of Singaporean films. They are deeply humane, sensitive and political all at once."

She also noted that the line between commercial and popular movies is becoming blurred with more offbeat films. While mass movies provide instant gratification, offbeat films encourage viewers to think about life with wisdom and depth.

Forum looks at importance  
of emotional intelligence

QASIM AL MAASHANI  
SALALAH, AUG 19

THE Oman Society for Human Resource Management (OSHRM), in partnership with the Ministry of Labour, opened the 5th Annual Human Resource Forum in Salalah on Tuesday under the theme "Leading from the Heart – The Power of Emotional and Social Intelligence in Communities."

The two-day forum, hosted at Millennium Hotel Salalah, brings together senior leaders, experts and practitioners in management and organisational development to explore the role of human-centred leadership in strengthening institutions and national talent in line with Oman Vision 2040.

The opening ceremony for the two-day event was held under the auspices of HH Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said, Governor of Dhofar, who felicitated the speakers and contributors to the event's organisation.

The forum's events included a panel discussion titled 'People with Disabilities: From Inclusion to Effective Empowerment', which discussed ways to effectively empower and integrate people with disabilities into society and enhance their role in various fields.

In his welcome remarks, Faisal al Siyabi, CEO of OSHRM, highlighted the forum's mission to "empower people, inspire teams and lift productivity." This was followed by a keynote from HH Sayyidah Meyyan bint Shihab al Said, who underscored the importance of values-based leadership in driving sustainable development and



The opening ceremony for the two-day event was held under the auspices of HH Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said, Governor of Dhofar. - ONA

enabling institutions to adapt to change.

The first day featured sessions on decision-making, inspiration in leadership and a panel on 'Transforming Towards Value-Driven Leadership' with contributions from Shaikha al Bassami, Abdullah al Rawahi, Shaikh Abdullah al Rawasi and Shaikh Mohammed bin Zuwed al Mashari.

The forum also honoured Dr Saleh al Fahdi for his contributions to leadership thought. Working papers covered topics including emotional intelligence, team cohesion and strategic planning. A practical training session on 'Maximising Personal Impact' introduced participants to tools such as the Pareto 80/20 principle and the DISC behavioural model.

"We're in Salalah to spotlight leadership from the heart – how emotional and social intelligence help leaders succeed and organisations thrive," said Mohammed bin Ahmed al Riyami, OSHRM board member. "This edition also showcases journeys of employees with disabilities who advanced into leadership roles – practical lessons others can adapt."

The programme continues on Wednesday with case studies from leading organisations on how emotional and social intelligence have shaped leadership strategies and improved institutional performance.

Organisers positioned the forum as a strategic platform to translate "leading from the heart" into actionable HR practices that support national development priorities.

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SPOTLIGHT



Feeling stuck in your career can be discouraging. One must update skills and explore new avenues to find fulfilment in one’s work. Embrace change, and believe in your ability to create a fulfilling career path

# GETTING UNSTUCK

KABEER YOUSUF  
@kabiyousef

**SOME** of us may have experienced a mid-career crisis. This happens when one has to apply force to do one’s job. There is no promotion in employment and it just becomes a default option to settle monthly bills

According to Harvard Business Review, middle age is, on average, the most difficult time of life. In 2008, the economists David Blanchflower and Andrew Oswald found that self-reported life satisfaction takes the form of a gently curving U, beginning high in youth, bottoming out in our mid-40s, and then recovering as we get older.

Experts advise that to get out of the problem and feel better in life, it’s important to take a proactive and positive approach by incorporating some techniques into life.

Dr Saleh al Khamaisi, coach and trainer, quotes John Maxwell, who said ‘Change is inevitable, but growth is optional’ and this powerful insight captures the essence of the challenge at hand.

“When an individual finds himself or herself feeling stuck with no clear career ladder to climb, it becomes essential to explore constructive solutions to break free from this catch-22 situation,” he said.

According to him, the key lies in maintaining an open mindset and seeking guidance – whether through senior leaders or by engaging with a professional coach whose thought-provoking questions can lead to practical and actionable solutions. Such interactions often reveal valuable pathways, such as reskilling or upskilling to pursue a lateral move within the organisation, or even explore new horizons.

“Ultimately, the formula for overcoming career stagnation is simple yet powerful: dare to open up, ask, listen effectively, and then act proactively by taking ownership of your journey. With courage and accountability, the path forward becomes clearer, and the promise of growth reminds us that there is always light at the end of the tunnel.”

He feels that being career-stuck can be tackled by having perfect emotional intelligence (EQ), which is the ability to recognise, understand,



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DR SALEH AL  
KHAMAISII  
Coach and trainer

and manage emotions, both our own and those of others. In this context, the first step is self-awareness: becoming conscious of what is happening in our career and how it makes us feel. From there, we can explore the range of options available and carefully select the one that offers the most effective path forward,” Dr Al Khamaisi said

According to Nandhini Nandakumar, psychotherapist and PhD scholar from Lincoln University Malaysia, having a degree alone doesn’t mean we have everything. The first step is to update our resume to match current norms and trends, and to pursue certified courses relevant to our profession. These add value to our profile and open doors to new opportunities.

“Tackling career-stuck syndrome needs an approach that includes self-reflection, setting clear goals, developing one’s skills, seeking guidance and mentorship and building newer opportunities,” says Yusuf Nalwalla, Chairman, Al Yusr International.

Jinachandran, an HR Professional, feels that to overcome the crisis faced by people aged 50+, it is essential to proactively modernise their job search strategy.

“This involves upgrading their professional skills through online courses or certifications to meet current market demands. They should also revitalise their resumes and online profiles to highlight accomplishments and a willingness to adapt.”

Dhanya Manoj, motivational speaker, goes a step ahead, saying one should recognise and affirm his or her emotions, rephrase negative thoughts and comments from outside.

“To address feeling career-stuck with no advancement chances, one should begin by identifying the root cause, which could be a lack of opportunity, skills or drive, then reflect on his or her goals, make short-term plans and preparations, pursue new challenges, broaden our network and invest in professional development,” she said.

SHORT TAKES



The fire spread to nearby grass before being controlled by the CDAA's firefighting teams with support from the police aviation. - Photo by Faisal al Balushi

FIRE ERUPTS AT AL ANSAB LAKES, NO INJURIES REPORTED

YOUSEF AL HABSI  
MUSCAT, AUG 19

Firefighting teams of the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority (CDAA) in Muscat Governorate handled and controlled a fire that broke out in a piece of equipment at the Al Ansab Lakes site, affiliated to Nama Water Services Company in the Wilayat of Bausher, on Tuesday.

The fire spread to nearby grass before being controlled by the CDAA's firefighting teams with support from the police aviation. No injuries were reported and the fire did not hamper the company's operations.

Nama Water Services Company issued a statement about the fire incident at its Al Ansab Lakes. The CDAA teams, alongside the relevant authorities, responded immediately to the incident, bringing the fire under control and extinguishing it in record time, with no injuries reported, the statement said.

In its statement, the company confirmed that its services and operations were not affected by the incident, affirming that it continues to implement all safety and preventive measures to ensure the protection of its employees and facilities.

Nama Water Services expressed its gratitude to the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority for their rapid response, high efficiency and professional handling of the incident to ensure the safety of the facility and the continuity of its services.

RNO  
BEGINS  
ASSESSMENT,  
ADMISSION  
FOR  
OFFICER  
CADETS

MUSCAT: The Royal Navy of Oman (RNO), in coordination with the Ministry of Labour, has begun the assessment and admission procedures for Omani citizens to join military service as officer cadets (university graduates - executives).

Applicants will undergo several assessment stages according to the RNO's recruitment procedures, leading to the final admission stages. The RNO is leveraging its administrative and technical capabilities to facilitate the procedures for joining military service and enlisting in the fields of honour and national duty.

These strenuous efforts by the Ministry of Defence and the



Applicants will undergo several assessment stages according to the RNO's recruitment procedures. — ONA

Sultan's Armed Forces to employ Omani citizens are in line with the plans and programmes established to recruit citizens and provide the branches of the Sultan's Armed Forces and other departments within the Ministry of Defence with national manpower. — ONA

Hikers mark 70 years of Oman-India relations

KABEER YOUSUF  
@kabiyousef

AS many as 25 mountain hikers from various parts of the country hiked the peak known as the Yellow Mountain in Al Wadi Al Kabir area, marking the 70th anniversary of Oman-India diplomatic relations.

The mountain, with its striking pyramid shape, stands tall at around 350 metres. Though the distance to the top was just 1.8 kilometres, the steep ascent made it a truly challenging yet exciting climb for the passionate hikers.

For the 25 hikers, the atmosphere was filled with energy, fun and laughter. "The weather added to the charm: super cloudy skies, a gentle, humid wind, and pleasantly low temperatures kept us going strong," said Mohammed Rayees, the guide to the hiking trail.

The spirit of bilateral relations was alive throughout the hike, and it turned into a celebration as well. Everyone was immersed in the joy,

The spirit of bilateral relations was alive throughout the hike, and it turned into a celebration as well. Everyone was immersed in the joy, taking memorable pictures and creating memories to cherish



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taking memorable pictures and creating memories to cherish.

Oman Hikers, a group of passionate hikers, have been keeping the spirit of hiking alive by exploring Oman's mountainous terrain.

Recently, around 60 people from Oman Hikers went on a hike in Al Wadi Al Kabir. According to Mohammed, the hiking leader, all the participants — men, women and children — thoroughly enjoyed the experience.

‘Al Salam’ tree regains its splendour

TEXT AND PHOTOS  
BY YAHYA AL SALMANI

Wild flowering is a natural phenomenon that occurs during specific seasons when wildflowers bloom and spread throughout the surrounding environment. The timing of flowering depends on the species and climatic conditions. Some trees flower early in the spring, while others flower in the summer or fall. This process contributes to the reproduction and enrichment of wildlife.

Among these trees is the Al Salam tree (Acacia Ethnbergiana), which shines during these days with the freshness of its green leaves and yellow flowers, becoming even more brilliant with each sunrise.

Visitors to the villages scattered throughout the Hajar Mountains are struck by the lush greenery and yellow flowers that adorn the edges and terraces of the mountains, captivating many hikers.

According to environmental studies, this tree is between 2 and 6 metres tall, with lax branching and straight, sharp thorns. Its flowers are yellow, in contrast to the white flowers of Al Simr trees, and its fruits are long and lean in semi-arched pods.

'Al Salam' is characterised by its strong trunks and long-reaching roots, as well as its ability to adapt to both dry and humid climates. These trees are an important food source for many wild animals, including deer, ibex, foxes, and other grazing animals.



These trees are an important food source for many wild animals, including deer, ibex, foxes, and other grazing animals.



They play a significant role in wind protection and in regulating desert climates. Bees also favour these trees as a pasture, drawing nectar from them. Their fruits are used as animal feed, and their seeds are sun-dried to extract the pulp, from which oils are made after grinding and kneading to treat nerve, joint and abdominal pain.

Recent rainfall has helped moderate the weather and fertilise lands that were suffering from drought. The trees and plants have benefited from the water, enhancing vegetative growth and accelerating the flowering stages.

It should be noted that Oman is home to 1,407 plant species, including 77 rare Omani plant species found only in Oman. Scientific studies rank southern and central Oman among the 35 most important regions in the world for plant diversity, with 51 per cent of this concentrated in the Dhofar Governorate, which hosts 75 per cent of Oman's biodiversity.

وزارة التراث والسياحة  
Ministry of Heritage and Tourism

Tender Announcement

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| Tender No.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | 114/2025/MHT/HQ-25                                                                                                                                                                                       | Tender Name                           | Provide a boat for the management of heritage and tourism in Musandam Governorate.                                                                          |
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| Fees of Tender Documents (Non-refundable)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                          | 25 R.O                                |                                                                                                                                                             |
| Tender Document Sales End Date                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                          | 1/9/2025                              |                                                                                                                                                             |
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| Last Date for Bid Submission                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                          | 22/9/2025                             |                                                                                                                                                             |
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| Grade                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                          | First, Second, Third, Fourth          |                                                                                                                                                             |
| E-Tendering Portal                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                          | https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om |                                                                                                                                                             |
| <div>Interested Companies registered with Tender Board (in the mentioned Grade) may obtain Tender documents from the E. Tendering website: <a href="https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om">https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om</a>, against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of documents.</div> <div>The Tenderers must acknowledge commitment to the bid.</div> <div>All companies submitting bids for this tender are required to attach a valid and recently issued Omanization Compliance Certificate from the Ministry of Labour, provided that the certificate is not older than 30 days from the date of issuance.</div> <div>This certificate is considered a mandatory document, and failure to submit it — for any reason — shall result in the outright disqualification of the bid, without being evaluated technically or financially.</div> <div>The certificate must also demonstrate the company's compliance with the Omanization percentage required by the Ministry of Labour. If the required percentage is not met, the bid shall be automatically disqualified.</div> <div>The Ministry shall not be obligated to accept the lowest or any other bids</div> <div>The bid submission period starts after the end of the inquiry period shown in the e-tendering system, until the last date for submitting bids before (10:00 am, Oman time).</div> |                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                       |                                                                                                                                                             |
| Support and inquiries                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | For more information, related to the tender, kindly communicate through the website of the e-tendering system: <a href="https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om">https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om</a> |                                       |                                                                                                                                                             |
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| For further information                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Email : <a href="mailto:sotic@mht.gov.om">sotic@mht.gov.om</a><br>Phones : 22088348 - 22088085                                                                                                           |                                       |                                                                                                                                                             |

WORLD

SHORT TAKES



Joseph Aoun - Lebanese President

LEBANON URGES  
EXTENSION OF UN  
PEACEKEEPERS

**BEIRUT:** Lebanese President Joseph Aoun warned against ending the United Nations peacekeepers' mandate in the country's south, after the UN Security Council began debating extending their mission. The annual mandate renewal this year comes after Lebanese authorities, under heavy US pressure, have committed to disarming Hezbollah by year's end, following a November ceasefire deal with Israel.

"Any timetable for the mandate of UNIFIL that is different from the actual needs will negatively impact the situation in the south, which still suffers from Israeli occupation," Aoun told force commander Diodato Abagnara, according to a presidency statement. The UN Interim Force in Lebanon has been deployed since 1978 to separate Israel and Lebanon and counts some 10,000 personnel from around 50 countries.

Aoun said Beirut "has begun contacts with Security Council member states, and brotherly and friendly countries, to ensure the extension" of UNIFIL's mandate. He cited Lebanon's need for the force to help "maintain security and stability in the south" and to support the army following the government's decision to increase troop numbers there to 10,000 personnel. — AFP

ARMENIA REASSURES  
IRAN IT WILL  
CONTROL BORDER



Armenia's PM Nikol Pashinyan (R) shakes hands with Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian. — AFP

**YEREVAN:** Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan on Tuesday reassured Iran's president that a planned corridor linking Azerbaijan with its exclave will be under Armenian control, as Iran had voiced opposition to the project. The land corridor, dubbed the "Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity" (TRIPP), is part of a deal signed earlier this month in Washington between Armenia and Azerbaijan, two former Soviet republics previously engulfed in decades of disputes over territory.

Under the agreement, the United States will hold development rights for the proposed route, which would connect Azerbaijan to its Nakhchivan exclave bordering Iran and Türkiye. "Roads passing through Armenia will be under the exclusive jurisdiction of Armenia, and security will be provided by Armenia, not by any third country," Pashinyan said at a meeting with Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian. He added that the corridor would open new economic perspectives between the two countries and may offer a railway path from Iran to the Black Sea coast through Armenia. Iran has long opposed the planned transit route, fearing it would cut the country off from Armenia and the rest of the Caucasus. — AFP

MONSOON VICTIMS

Toll from Pakistan floods hits almost 400



Rescuers and residents resumed searching for survivors as the death toll from five days of torrential rain rose to almost 400, with authorities warning monsoon downpours would continue until the weekend. Torrential rains across Pakistan's north have caused flooding and landslides that have swept away entire villages, leaving many residents trapped in the rubble. The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) said 356 people were killed in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. — AFP

DR CONGO,  
M23 STILL  
'ENGAGING'  
IN PEACE  
PROCESS:  
MEDIATOR  
QATAR

**DOHA:** The Democratic Republic of Congo and the M23 group have not backed out of their peace process despite missing a deadline for an agreement, mediator Qatar said on Tuesday. "Both parties are engaging very positively. We are engaging with them also... and we are committed to the process," Qatari foreign ministry spokesman Majed al Ansari told a regular news briefing.

The Congolese government and the Rwanda-backed M23 signed a

ceasefire agreement in July aimed at leading to a permanent end to the fighting that has devastated the DRC's mineral-rich but conflict-torn east. Under the terms of the deal, which followed talks in Qatar, the parties were to begin peace talks on August 8 and finalise an agreement by August 18.

Despite the deadline having expired, Ansari said there was still a willingness to continue the process. "Timelines are not the strong suit of mediation," he said,

noting that in previous meetings and talks, "the parties have shown a level of willingness to agree that was not there before". On Sunday, a Qatari official said on condition of anonymity that a draft peace plan had been shared with the M23 and the DRC ahead of another round of talks expected to be held in Doha in the coming days. The July deal follows an earlier, separate peace agreement between the Congolese and Rwandan governments inked in Washington. — AFP

Killing of aid workers  
surges during Gaza war

**AID** worker killings rose nearly a third to almost 400 last year, the most deadly year since records began in 1997, and the conflict in Gaza is continuing to cause high death rates for humanitarian staff in 2025, U.N. and other data showed. In 2024, 383 aid workers were killed, nearly half of them in Gaza and the occupied Palestinian territories, the UN said on Tuesday, citing a database. "Attacks on this scale, with zero accountability, are a shameful indictment of international inaction and apathy," said Tom Fletcher, UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, in a statement.

So far this year, 265 aid workers have been killed, according to provisional data from the Aid Worker Security Database, a US-funded platform that compiles reports on major security incidents affecting aid workers. Of those, 173 were in Gaza in Israel's near two-year offensive against the Palestinian enclave, launched after the deadly Oct. 7, 2023, cross-border attacks, the provisional data showed. This year, 36 aid workers have so far been killed in Sudan and three in Ukraine, the database showed.

In one incident in Gaza that drew international condemnation, 15 emergency and aid workers were killed by Israeli fire in three separate shootings in March, before being buried in a shallow grave. Israel's military said in April that the incidents resulted from an "operational misunderstanding" and a "breach of orders". There had been "several professional failures" and a



A Palestinian child shelters in an UNRWA school, in Khan Yunis. — Reuters

*In one incident in Gaza that drew international condemnation, 15 emergency and aid workers were killed by Israeli fire in three separate shootings in March, before being buried in a shallow grave*

commander would be dismissed, it said.

Aid workers enjoy protection under international humanitarian law but experts cite few precedents for such cases going to trial, with concerns about ensuring future access for aid groups and difficulty proving intent cited as impediments. "It is catastrophic, and the trend is going in the opposite direction of what it should," said Jens Laerke, UN humanitarian office spokesperson.

Meanwhile, Cyprus has dispatched 1,200 metric tonnes of humanitarian aid for Gaza by sea via Ashdod in Israel, its foreign ministry said on Tuesday. The pre-screened cargo would be transferred without additional security checks on arrival in Ashdod and with international humanitarian organisation World Central Kitchen the final contractor and distributor,

the Cyprus Foreign Ministry said. "The entire undertaking is under the auspices of the UN delivery mechanism," it said.

Gaza has been devastated by Israel's nearly two-year-long military assault, which has killed more than 61,000 Palestinians, according to local health authorities who do not distinguish between fighters and civilians. The ground and air war has also created a hunger crisis, with aid encountering significant delays. More than 200 Gazans have died of malnutrition or starvation in the war, according to health authorities.

Cyprus and Malta contributed the bulk of aid, and there were contributions from organisations from the United States, Italy, the Sovereign Order of Malta and Kuwait. Input of the United Arab Emirates to the operation was essential, Cyprus said. — Reuters



DROUGHT DEPLETES TÜRKİYE 'S TEKIRDAG RESERVOIRS

**TEKIRDAG:** A drought in Türkiye's northwestern province of Tekirdag has left the area's main dams without potable water, straining infrastructure and leaving some homes without water for weeks, due to a sharp drop in precipitation in the country this year.

Authorities say drought is a critical issue, with several provinces warning of limited fresh water supply this summer. Various areas in Izmir, Türkiye's third-most populous province, have

experienced frequent water cuts this month, while the municipality in the western province of Usak was told over the weekend it would have access to water just six hours a day, with the main water reservoir depleted. Rainfall slumped 71% in July across the country from a year ago, according to Türkiye's Meteorological Service. In the Marmara region, which includes Tekirdag and Istanbul, it shrank 95% below the monthly norm in July. — Reuters

COURT DEMANDS

Nigeria delays trial over church massacre



A Nigerian court postponed on Tuesday the beginning of a highly anticipated trial over the killing of dozens of Catholic worshippers in a church massacre that rocked the nation's usually safer southwest region and drew international condemnation. Justice Emeka Nwite granted a request to delay the trial after prosecutors stressed that the attorney general had requested a new lead counsel for the case. Prosecutors also called for witness protection. — AFP

NEW APPOINTMENTS

Burhan shakes up army, tightens control



Sudan's army chief appointed a raft of new senior officers in a reshuffle that strengthened his hold on the military as he consolidates control of central and eastern regions. General Abdel Fattah al Burhan made new appointments to the Joint Chiefs of Staff a day after announcing the retirement of several officers. Sudanese politicians praised the decision, saying it would prevent the development of other centres of power in the military. — Reuters

CRITICAL MOMENTS



A firefighter walks through flames near San Martino de Alvaredos, Spain. — Reuters

SPAIN FACES ‘DIFFICULT HOURS’ IN WILDFIRE FIGHT

**MADRID:** Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez warned that “difficult hours remain” in the fight against wildfires that have ravaged a record area of land, despite temperatures dropping. “I ask the media, and also citizens, to exercise extreme caution, to not let our guard down. Critical moments remain, difficult hours remain,” he said during a visit to the hard-hit western region of Extremadura.

After 16 days of scorching heat, Tuesday saw lower temperatures and higher air humidity across the country. The improved weather conditions gave firefighters an edge in their battle against massive fires raging in western Spain that have burned over 100,000 hectares in less than two weeks.

Some 373,000 hectares have been scorched in Spain this year, according to the European Forest Fire Information System. That marks the country’s worst fire season since records began in 2006, surpassing 2022, when 306,000 hectares were consumed by flames. A firefighter was killed in a road accident in Spain on Sunday, taking the death toll from the blazes to four.

Tuesday’s visit was Sanchez’s second to the affected areas, following a similar trip on Sunday. During both appearances, he called for a “state pact to confront the climate emergency”, emphasising the growing severity of climate-related crises. “Every year the climate emergency worsens, every year it becomes more recurrent, and every year its effects accelerate,” he said.

Scientists say climate change is worsening the frequency and intensity of heat and dryness in parts of Europe, making the region more vulnerable to wildfires. By lowering humidity in the air, vegetation and soil, and reducing the threshold at which materials ignite, heatwaves turn vegetation into highly flammable fuel, making wildfires even harder to control and extinguish.

On Monday, thousands of firefighters backed by soldiers and water-bombing aircraft battled over 20 major wildfires raging across western Spain, where officials say a record area of land has already been burnt. Spain and neighbouring Portugal have been particularly affected by forest fires fuelled by heatwaves and drought.

Residents said they were frustrated with what they regarded as poor preparation and limited resources. “No one’s shown up here, nobody,” Patricia Vila, 42, said. — AFP

POLLUTION HOTSPOTS AT ENGLAND’S MOST FAMOUS LAKE NEED ‘URGENT’ ACTION

**LONDON:** Hotspots of bacteria and phosphorus at England’s most famous lake must be addressed urgently, the authors of a study into its water quality warned on Tuesday. Volunteers collected 1,020 samples from Windermere in the Lake District National Park in northwest England between June 2022 and November 2024.

The Big Windermere Survey released its summary report on Tuesday, finding “poor” standards of bathing water quality in some

parts of the lake owing to “hotspots” of illness-causing bacteria like E.coli and intestinal enterococci. The problem was particularly acute during the summer, when thousands of visitors swim and play in the lake. The Freshwater Biological Association, which carried out the study with Lancaster University, said hotspots “must be addressed urgently” by those responsible for improving water quality, and laid out a four-step plan.

“The first priority must be to identify and address causes of high nutrient and bacterial concentrations,” said the report.

More investment is also needed to enforce regulations and for investigation work, while monitoring needs to be increased in waters used for recreation, it added. Around seven million people visit Windermere each year, attracted by its scenery and cultural heritage. But concerns over pollution have risen over recent years. — AFP

Peace deal must ensure its ‘security’, says Russia

**RUSSIA** said on Tuesday that any deal on Ukraine should ensure its own security and that of Russians in Ukraine, as Kyiv’s allies met to discuss possible peace talks, after suggestions that Volodymyr Zelensky could sit down with Vladimir Putin. Hopes of a breakthrough rose when the Ukrainian president and European leaders met in Washington on Monday with US President Donald Trump, who said he had also spoken by phone with his Russian counterpart.

But Russia warned that any solution of the war in Ukraine must respect “Russia’s security interests”, with its Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov adding that any meeting between the leaders “must be prepared very thoroughly”. Face-to-face talks between Zelensky and Putin would be their first since Russia’s brutal war three-and-a-half years ago. The Ukraine war, which has killed tens of thousands of people, has ground to a virtual stalemate despite a few recent Russian advances, defying Trump’s push to end it.

Lavrov told state TV channel Rossiya 24 that any deal to end the conflict must ensure the rights of “Russian-speaking people who live in Ukraine.” His comments came as France and Britain were co-hosting a virtual meeting of about 30 of Kyiv’s allies known as the “coalition of the willing” to “keep them up to date on what was decided”, President Emmanuel Macron told French news channel LCI.

He added that work on setting the peace talks will start after that, hinting at Geneva as a possible location. Macron also voiced wider European concern about Moscow’s territorial ambitions, after suggestions that Ukraine could be forced to concede parts of the embattled Donbas region still under its control.

On the streets of Kyiv, there was scepticism about whether the latest talks could end the grinding conflict. “The main problem is Putin himself doesn’t want it,” Anton, 32, who works in a warehouse, said. “They can meet as many times as they want but Putin doesn’t need it and Donald Trump doesn’t really know what to do.” But in



A scaled model of the Statue of Liberty draped in a Ukrainian flag stands in the French Embassy gardens in Washington, DC. — AFP

Moscow, some people were more hopeful. “I hope we can agree on mutually beneficial terms,” said Vyacheslav, 23, who works for the government. He added that it would have been better if the meeting between the presidents had happened “at the very beginning.”

Trump, who last week held talks with Putin in Alaska, wrote on his Truth Social network after Monday’s meetings that he called Putin to start planning peace talks with Zelensky.

A three-way summit with both leaders would then be held, he added. German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, who was part of the European delegation, said Putin had agreed to the bilateral meeting within the next two weeks. Zelensky said he was “ready” to meet his bitter foe Putin and on Tuesday hailed the Washington talks as a “truly significant step toward ending the war and ensuring the security of Ukraine and our people”.

In Moscow, where a Kremlin aide said that Putin was open to the “idea” of direct talks with Ukraine, Lavrov said the United States had now taken “a much deeper approach to resolving the crisis”.

Trump’s summit with Putin last Friday

failed to produce a ceasefire and, just before Monday’s talks, a Russian drone strike on an apartment block in Kharkiv killed seven, including two children.

Trump, meanwhile, said he had discussed security guarantees for Ukraine and that Putin had agreed to them, despite ruling out Kyiv’s long-held dream of joining the Nato alliance. The guarantees “would be provided by the various European Countries, with a coordination with the United States of America”, he said.

The Financial Times said Ukraine had undertaken to buy \$100 billion of US weapons financed by Europe in return for US guarantees for its security. Zelensky later spoke to reporters about a \$90-billion package and said Ukraine and its allies would formalise the terms of the security guarantees within 10 days.

The presence of the European leaders, however, underscored continuing nervousness about whether Trump will pivot towards Putin as he has on a number of occasions.

Trump had pushed Ukraine ahead of the meeting to give up Crimea and abandon its goal of joining Nato — both key demands made by Putin. — AFP

Hurricane Erin douses Caribbean, menaces US coast

**WASHINGTON:** Hurricane Erin’s massive footprint battered Caribbean islands with heavy gusts and downpours on Monday, as it threatened rip currents and flooding along the US East Coast later this week.

The Category 3 storm strengthened dramatically over the weekend in a historic burst of intensification, which scientists said was fueled by human-caused climate change. It briefly peaked as a Category 5 hurricane before weakening.

In its latest advisory, the US National Hurricane Center said the Atlantic season’s first hurricane was packing maximum sustained winds of 125 miles (205 kilometres) per hour while moving northwest at 8 mph.

Erin is “unusually large”, with hurricane force winds extending 80 miles from the centre and tropical storm winds extending 230 miles,

the NHC said.

The storm’s outer bands were forecast to dump rain across Cuba and the Dominican Republic through Monday, as well as the Turks and Caicos and the southeast Bahamas, where a tropical storm warning is in place.

These regions could receive localised totals of up to four inches (10 centimetres) of rain, according to the NHC. The agency’s deputy director, Jamie Rhome, warned Americans not to assume the hurricane won’t impact them simply because its track keeps it offshore.

“Nothing could be further from the truth for portions of the Mid-Atlantic, especially the Outer Banks of North Carolina,” he said.

On Wednesday and Thursday, waves of up to six metres, coastal flooding and storm surge “could overwhelm dunes and flood homes, flood roads and make some communities impassable,” he said.



Troops of the TCI Regiment prepare to support humanitarian assistance, in Turks and Caicos Islands. — Reuters

Evacuations have been ordered for two North Carolina islands, Ocracoke and Hatteras. From Tuesday, much of the East Coast will

face a high risk of life-threatening surf and rip currents, which occur when channels of water surge away from the shore.

In Puerto Rico, a US territory of more than three million people, weekend flooding swamped homes and roads in the island’s east, and widespread power outages left residents in the dark.

“Erin is one of the fastest, most intensifying storms in the modern record,” Daniel Gilford, a climate scientist at the nonprofit Climate Central, said.

“We see that it has intensified over these warm surface temperatures — and this makes a lot of sense, because we know that hurricanes act like heat engines taking up energy from the ocean surface, converting that energy into winds.”

According to Climate Central, Erin travelled over waters whose extreme warmth was made up to 100 times more likely through climate change. The Atlantic hurricane season, which runs from June 1 to November 30, has now entered its historical peak. — Reuters

OPINION

How childhood wounds show up in adult decisions



HYESHA BARRETT

The writer is a Master Life Coach and NLP Practitioner

AS parents, we make countless decisions every day. Some feel small, like what snack to give or how much screen time to allow, while others feel enormous: choosing the right school, deciding how to discipline, or balancing work and family.

Yet, many of these choices are often not made from present-moment awareness. They are influenced by reverberations of our childhood, the wounds we carry, often without realising it.

The way love and safety were offered in our early years shaped the patterns in our nervous system. The brain wires itself around what it takes to feel secure and accepted. If love felt uncertain, we may grow into adults who strive for perfection, hoping to earn approval. If our homes were chaotic, we may cling to control as a way to feel steady. Those strategies helped us survive then, and as adults, they often guide the way we parent now.

This shows up in discipline. A mother who grew up with harsh punishments may avoid

boundaries altogether, terrified of becoming the parent she once feared. Another, who grew up without structure, might lean into strictness as if order alone could protect her child. Neither response is truly about the child - it's about the parent's younger self, still trying to feel safe.

The same applies to emotions. If feelings weren't welcomed in childhood, it can feel unbearable to sit with a child's big outbursts. Shutting down in those moments isn't about a lack of love; it's about being pulled back into old discomfort. Or consider perfectionism. When achievement was the only way we felt valued as children, it's natural to push our kids towards constant success. The belief that worth must be earned doesn't disappear simply because we've grown up.

Even the most ordinary decisions can carry the weight of old wounds. Saying no to a school trip, hovering too closely at the playground, or pushing a child into activities we never had - all of it may be more about our younger selves than our children's needs.

The truth is that none of us parent in

Research on intergenerational healing shows that when parents do their own inner work, their children benefit.

isolation. We carry our past into every interaction, whether we admit it or not.

Pretending those influences don't matter only allows them to shape us unconsciously. The real shift begins when we pause to ask: whose voice is guiding this decision? Is it me, present and grounded, or my inner child, still protecting me from a hurt long gone?

Awareness itself is powerful. Research on intergenerational healing shows that when parents do their own inner work, their children benefit.

They feel it in our nervous system, in our ability to pause, in the way we respond instead of react. A single moment of compassion toward ourselves can open the space to see what our child truly needs.

Parenting free from old wounds doesn't mean perfection. It means choosing clarity instead of compulsion and setting boundaries without shame, encouraging without pressure, loving without fear. Every time we choose differently, we not only heal ourselves, but also change the story for our children.

Frontrunners in Chile’s presidential race offer contrasting futures

PAULINA ABRAMOVICH

A candidate from Chile’s Communist Party and a far-right veteran politician are seen as the frontrunners in the South American country’s upcoming November 16 presidential election, analysts say, an illustration of the country’s current political polarisation.

Eight candidates are running in total, with right-wing politician Jose Antonio Kast — who has run for the top office twice before — and leftist Jeannette Jara leading the polls. Conservative ex-mayor Evelyn Mattei and economist Franco Parisi are currently jockeying for third place.

Polls show a close race between Kast and Jara, who represent opposite sides of the political spectrum. “It’s a new stage of polarisation,” Mireya Davila, an analyst and academic at the University of Chile, said. Kast lost the last presidential runoff in 2021 to left-wing candidate Gabriel Boric, who was elected in the aftermath of 2019’s social unrest and the Covid-19 pandemic.

At the beginning of his campaign, Kast took up the mantle of seeking to crack down on organised crime, pledging “to reclaim each neighbourhood and each public space” while registering his candidacy. The 59-year-old’s sombre and pragmatic nature contrasts with the bombast of South America’s other far-right leaders, such as Argentina’s Javier Milei and Brazil’s Jair Bolsonaro. Nevertheless, he has promised to create “an emergency government” to “rescue” Chile.

“Don’t worry, everything is going to be fine,” he often says at the end of his speeches.

Jara, Kast’s primary opponent, is a 51-year-old lawyer who is running for office for the very first time. She entered politics as Chile’s labour minister under Boric’s administration, overseeing significant labour reforms for the country, such as reducing the standard work week from 45 hours to 40. Though affiliated with the Communist Party of Chile, Jara commands a broad coalition that stretches from the far-left to the country’s Christian Democrats. “The fact that Jara is a Communist could be a barrier, but I don’t think it’s definitive. The biggest problem with her candidacy is how she will establish herself as the leader of both her party and her supporting coalition,” Davila said.

Jara has insisted on defining herself as the “candidate of the centre-left and not of the Communist Party,” citing public differences she has had with the Communist leaders of Cuba and Venezuela.

Recent polls show Mattei, the former mayor of Santiago commune Providencia, and prominent economist Parisi as vying for third place. Mattei, 71, has worked in politics the longest out of all the candidates in the field. She had been leading opinion polls until a few months ago, when she lost momentum to Kast. — AFP

Alaska summit was not about Ukraine issue

WHEN elephants collide, the grass suffers.” But the grass also suffers when elephants whisper.

The recent Alaska meeting between US President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin ended with no ceasefire in Ukraine, despite weeks of hype. That failure was the headline, but it masked the real story. The summit was not about Ukraine; it was about carving up influence, dividing corridors and replaying a century-old script that the Arab world knows too well.



KHALID AL HURAIBI

The writer is an innovator and an insights storyteller

The summit was not about Ukraine, it was about carving up influence, dividing corridors, and replaying a century-old script that the Arab world knows too well.

THE CORRIDOR BEHIND THE CURTAIN

If Ukraine were the real agenda, Alaska would have produced at least a road map for de-escalation. Instead, the unspoken focus was the South Caucasus. The US is advancing the Zangezur corridor, cutting across Armenia to link Azerbaijan with Türkiye and onward to Central Asia. For Ankara and Baku, it’s a geopolitical victory; for Iran, it feels like encirclement; for Russia, it signals a slow squeeze on its influence. For Washington, the corridor is a chance to redraw Eurasia’s map without firing a shot. For Moscow, tolerating Western-backed routes may be a price worth paying if it gets space to freeze Ukraine on its own terms. Alaska, therefore, was about bargaining over maps, not about saving lives.

SYKES–PICOT IN A NEW DISGUISE

The Middle East has seen this play before. The Sykes–Picot Agreement of 1916 divided Ottoman Arab lands between Britain and France, planting borders that still bleed. The Yalta Conference of 1945 carved Europe into Western and Soviet zones, condemning Eastern Europe to decades behind the Iron Curtain. The Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact of 1939 secretly split Eastern Europe between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, erasing nations from the map overnight.

Each case followed the same



Matryoshka dolls depicting Russian President Vladimir Putin and US President Donald Trump at a gift shop in Moscow. — AFP

pattern: great powers publicly spoke of peace, while privately negotiating partitions. Those absent at the table paid the price. Alaska feels like a modern Sykes-Picot this time not with ink on colonial maps, but with corridors, pipelines and digital arteries.

PALESTINE: THE GRASS BENEATH THE BARGAIN

Nowhere is the cost clearer than in Palestine. As Palestinians endure genocide, their survival is not at the centre of Alaska’s chessboard. Both Washington and Moscow deploy Palestine as rhetoric, not as policy. The Israeli Occupation continues its genocidal campaign with tacit US protection; Russia frames itself as anti-Western but offers no tangible support. Just as Palestine was sidelined in the Sykes-Picot carve-up, it risks being sidelined again in today’s global bargains. Unless Arab and Islamic states hardwire enforcement, through humanitarian corridors, sanctions on war crimes, and legal pursuit in the ICJ and ICC, Palestine will remain the perennial victim of great-power “understandings.”

LESSONS FOR THE ISLAMIC AND ARAB WORLD

The Alaska summit carries three

urgent lessons:

- Corridors are the new borders. Whether Zangezur or Belt and Road, control over connectivity is control over power. The Arab world must invest in shaping, not just using, trade and energy corridors.
- Never trust transactional peace. Yalta left Eastern Europe trapped; Sykes-Picot fractured the South West Asia North Africa region (SWANA). Alaska warns that Arab and Islamic states could see their resources and sovereignty treated as bargaining chips.
- Make Palestine non-negotiable. Empty statements no longer suffice. Pair diplomacy with leverage: Gulf-backed humanitarian supply lines, targeted sanctions against inciters of genocide and Arab-led legal coalitions. Justice for Palestine must become the price of admission in any wider deal.

DRAWING OUR OWN LINES

Alaska was not about Ukraine any more than Sykes-Picot was about Arab independence. Both were about outsiders scripting the future of others. A century ago, Sykes-Picot drew borders that ignored the will of the people. Today, corridors and resource routes risk becoming the new colonial ink.

# Stop killing humanitarian workers...



SAMUEL KUTTY

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

**HUMANITARIAN** Day is observed worldwide on August 19. Similar to any other day, this one also went by with the unveiling of various data and events honouring humanitarian workers and those who perished while performing their duties. Also, on this day, the world renews its request to stop the killings of aid workers. In the midst of this grim yearly refrain, sadly, aid workers face targeting, detention, obstruction, or death. As with each day, regulations intended to safeguard civilians during conflicts are disregarded without consequence.

The perpetrators neglect and breach the regulations that protect civilians in times of war. The killing of aid workers has become routine, rarely appearing in the news. This signifies a collapse of humanity, responsibility, and guidance. According to data from the World Health Organisation, the number of attacks resulting in deaths or injuries to health personnel has increased by 75 per cent in the last three years compared to the previous three years. These attacks have led to a devastating 240 per cent increase in deaths of personnel and patients. The year 2024 was the deadliest on record for aid workers, with 383 killed, 308 wounded, and 125 kidnapped. With 265 aid workers already killed in 2025, we risk surpassing last year’s tragic toll. “Humanitarian workers are facing an

alarming level of violence, their bravery and compassion responding to gunfire and explosives,” stated Tom Fletcher, Under-Secretary-General for UN Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator. Globally, nearly 95 per cent of the fatalities are local aid workers —individuals from the regions in which they function. In Gaza, Sudan, Syria, and many other places, humanitarian workers encounter assaults, deaths, wounds, and kidnappings alongside the civilians they support. “Impunity for assaults on humanitarian workers has become the ‘new normal,’” stated Gilles Michaud, Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security. Due to multiple factors like varying security measures, these individuals often do not have access to the same resources or protections as international staff — and consequently lack the same ability to evacuate if conditions worsen. “There is an abundance of strong international legal systems to address this. What is missing is the political determination to adhere,” stated Joyce Msuya, Assistant-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, during the Security Council meeting, emphasizing, “Gaza is the most perilous location for humanitarians to date,” she remarked. The recent killing of 15 Palestinian paramedics and rescue personnel, whose bodies were found in a mass grave, led to global outrage; however, many violations and attacks continue to go unreported.

The perpetrators neglect and breach the regulations that protect civilians in times of war. The killing of aid workers has become routine, rarely appearing in the news. This signifies a collapse of humanity, responsibility and guidance

Last November, the International Criminal Court released arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former Defence Minister Yoav Gallant for war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Gaza. The people of Gaza — particularly women and children — are facing the repercussions. Families are living among the ruins of their destroyed homes. Famine is not simply a danger but is expected to worsen rapidly in almost all regions of Gaza. Humanitarian aid personnel and recipients of assistance must be safeguarded and not attacked. Even conflicts have regulations. The Fourth Geneva Convention ensures that humanitarian aid reaches civilians in need safely. Nonetheless, assaults on aid personnel in conflict zones are increasingly happening globally. Last November, the Security Council passed a resolution addressing the increasing violence and dangers faced by humanitarian workers. The resolution instructs the Secretary-General to suggest actions to avert and address such incidents, bolster accountability, and strengthen safeguards for humanitarian staff and resources. There is no need to wait for an annual occasion like World Humanitarian Day to remind conflicting parties and leaders of nations of their responsibilities and duties under international humanitarian law. So let us uphold the spirit of global solidarity and local empowerment — not just in words, but through concrete action.

## WHY CLOUDBURSTS HAVE KILLED HUNDREDS IN ASIA

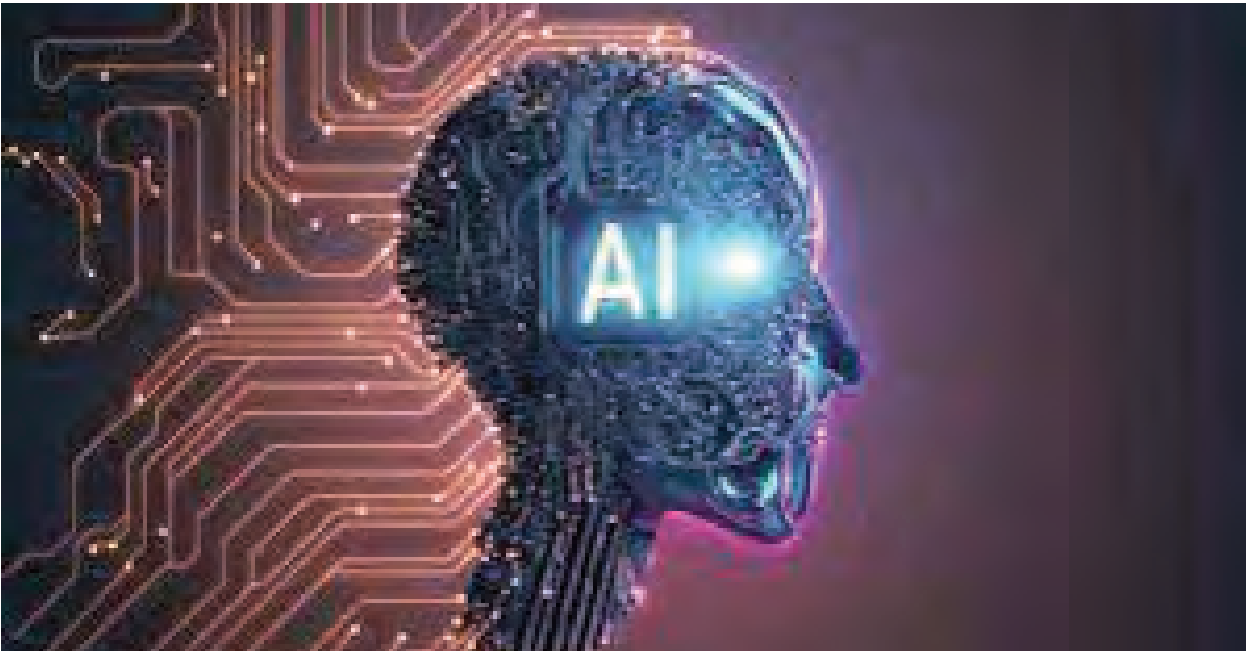
SAEED SHAH AND RAJENDRA JADHAV

Massive, sudden downpours of rain known as cloudbursts have struck Pakistan and India during this monsoon season, killing hundreds of people in the flash floods and landslides they have triggered. By a widely accepted definition, a cloudburst means more than 100 mm of rainfall in one hour, over a small area. This year, the monsoon, which originates in the Bay of Bengal and then sweeps westwards across northern India to Pakistan every summer, has brought deadly cloudbursts. Weather studies say cloudbursts typically occur in South Asia when warm, monsoon winds, laden with moisture, meet the cold mountain air in the north of India and Pakistan, causing condensation. With a warming planet, the monsoon has hotter air, which can carry more moisture. India’s weather department data shows cloudbursts are most common in the Himalayan regions of Indian Kashmir, Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand. Fahad Saeed, a senior climate scientist at Berlin-based Climate Analytics, said that in the mountains of northern Pakistan, the warm monsoon system coming from the east was meeting colder air coming from the west, from the subtropical jet stream - a high-altitude weather system that originates in the Mediterranean. Global warming is pushing this jet stream further south in summer, he said, where it can now combine with the lower-level clouds of the monsoon in Pakistan, forming a tower of clouds which then generate intense rain. Similar intense rainfall, though triggered by different local factors, takes place around the world, such as the floods in Texas in July, when more than 300 mm of rain fell in less than an hour, sending a wall of water down the Guadalupe River. This monsoon season has so far seen at least four major deadly cloudbursts, including in Uttarakhand, India, where video captured the moment when village buildings were swept down a mountain, and in Buner, in the Hindu Kush mountain range in Pakistan, where more than 200 people died after at least 150 mm of rain fell within an hour. S D Sanap, a scientist with the India Meteorological Department’s Pune office, said such cloudburst events were becoming more frequent in the western Himalayas, which run across India and into Pakistan, but pinning the rise on a single cause was not easy. Syed Muhammad Tayyab Shah, who leads risk assessment at Pakistan’s National Disaster Management Authority, part of the government, said that it was possible to warn about the general area but not possible to pinpoint the exact location in advance where a cloudburst will happen. — Reuters

# AI will replace most humans, but then what?

IS technology more job augmenting or job replacing? This has been a long-standing debate. But recent academic work suggests that technology has been a net destroyer of jobs for decades. Artificial intelligence and robotics could rapidly accelerate this trend, with significant implications for inflation, the size of government and US-China relations. Over the long arc of history, technological advances have enabled industries to emerge, as workers, released from “older” jobs by machines, have been able to transition into newer ones. Indeed, 60 per cent of workers today are employed in occupations that did not exist in 1940, or 74 per cent if we consider just the professional category, which added the most workers during the past eight decades.

However, recent academic research suggests we may have reached an inflection point in the US, whereby technology is now destroying more jobs than it is creating. David Autor, an economist at MIT and winner of the 2005 John Clark Bates Medal, argues that since 1980, the jobs replaced by automation have not been fully offset by new jobs created. This reflects the pace of technological change and the fact that advancements are now increasingly focused on “professional, technical, and managerial occupations,” Autor notes, rather than lower-skilled work. He finds that machines that are more powerful than an average human (e.g., a tractor) are typically labour-augmenting and productivity-enhancing, while machines that are also smarter than the average human tend to be labour-substituting. And AI is on pace to be a lot smarter than most humans. While forms of AI have been around since the 1940s, the immense computing power resulting from advances in semiconductor technologies has



AI is on pace to be a lot smarter than most humans.



STEPHEN JEN

The writer is the CEO and co-CIO of Eurizon SLJ asset management

now allowed machines to attain multidimensional intelligence. It is therefore reasonable to assume that many workers are going to be replaced by automation in the coming decades, even if the best AI is never as creative or imaginative as the smartest humans. In fact, a 2019 OECDE report and a 2018 paper by PriceWaterhouseCoopers argue that some 15-30 per cent of all jobs in developed markets are at risk of being automated. If AI does turn out to be a net job destroyer, what are some of the biggest implications? First, it’s likely to be deflationary. High and rising unemployment resulting from ever cheaper and more capable machines should, in theory, lead to structural deflation, as technologies that can rapidly augment the supply of goods and services should reduce demand if they cause massive job losses. Next, the US government will probably get even bigger. In a mass unemployment scenario, the government would likely be compelled to step in to facilitate income and wealth transfers from the owners of robots and tech businesses to the unemployed

workers. And which countries will come out on top? The economic winners and losers in the years ahead will likely be determined by who can best create and utilise technology. The US and China, both dominant in cerebral technologies, therefore appear well positioned to thrive in this environment. These economic and technology superpowers have adopted muscular industrial policies, while Europe — the other big regional power — has not yet done so. What this also suggests is that, even if the trade war between the US and China is short, the tech war between these two countries could be protracted — and ultimately much more consequential. The tech war, unlike the trade war, is dynamic, meaning it’s not about challenging the static comparative advantages of nations, but rather continually evolving and advancing. Investors would be wise to keep this distinction in mind, as the dynamic aspect of the tech war is apt to become much more important than, say, whether Vietnam is allowed to sell cheap running shoes in the US. — Reuters

# SPORTS

GOING GLOBAL



Omani trainer Tariq al Hashmi emphasised that the championship represents an important opportunity to showcase the quality of Omani Arabian horses.

## Dhofar International Arabian Horse Beauty Cup from today

RIYADH AL BALUSHI  
MUSCAT, AUG 19

The Dhofar International Arabian Horse Beauty Cup 2025 will commence on Wednesday in the Wilayat of Mirbat, Dhofar Governorate, and will run until August 22. The event is jointly organised by the Office of the Governor of Dhofar and Dhofar Tourism Company, as part of efforts to enhance the governorate’s position as a distinguished destination for hosting international sporting events.

This year’s championship marks its first international edition, following the remarkable success of the Dhofar National Arabian Horse Beauty Championship 2024. The event will feature the participation of more than 50 elite purebred Arabian horses, reflecting Dhofar’s growing prominence on the regional and global equestrian calendar.

As the Dhofar International Arabian Horse Beauty Cup 2025 kicks off in Mirbat, Omani trainer Tariq al Hashmi emphasised that the championship represents an important opportunity to showcase the quality of Omani Arabian horses and strengthen the Sultanate’s presence on the global equestrian stage.

Al Hashmi noted that the key qualities of a winning horse include body balance, a refined head and neck, graceful movement and confident presence in the show ring. He pointed out that preparing horses for such competitions is a challenge, as it requires balancing fitness with beauty, demanding both time and expertise.

He further highlighted that Arabian horse beauty competitions play a vital role in preserving Arab heritage and reinforcing cultural identity. Looking ahead, Al Hashmi expressed his aspiration to see Omani horses achieving top results internationally, while also contributing to the development of a new generation of skilled Omani trainers and breeders.

The competition, accredited by the European Conference of Arab Horse Organisations (ECAHO), places Dhofar on the global map of specialised Arabian horse beauty contests, while supporting the governorate’s aspirations to become a hub that brings together owners, breeders, investors and equestrian enthusiasts from around the world.

The Dhofar International Arabian Horse Beauty Cup showcases Omani heritage, elevates the region’s global equestrian status, and combines cultural pride with the breathtaking beauty of Khareef Dhofar.



Al Hashmi expressed his aspiration to see Omani horses achieving top results internationally.

# Queiroz opts for 30-player squad for Türkiye camp

ADIL AL BALUSHI  
MUSCAT, AUG 19

THE Oman national team head coach, Carlos Queiroz, unveiled a 30-player squad for the upcoming external camp in Türkiye and the Central Asian Football Association (Cafa) Nations League 2025. The camp will serve as a vital stage in the Red Warriors’ preparations for the decisive AFC Asian Qualifiers – Road to 2026.

The newly announced roster included four goalkeepers. However, Al Shabab’s promising goalkeeper Abdulrahman al Badri was not selected on this occasion, marking a notable change in the squad list. Queiroz’s selection otherwise reflects consistency, with the majority of names carried over from the previous camp, signalling the coach’s intent to build continuity and trust within his core group.

Seeb Club players returned to the national setup after missing the earlier domestic camp due to their commitments in the AFC Cup playoff. Their inclusion is expected to strengthen the squad with added depth and experience, particularly in midfield and attack.

The veteran Portuguese coach also delivered an inspiring message to his players and fans through his official Instagram account. In his statement, Queiroz highlighted the significance of the mission ahead and the honour of representing the nation:

“After thorough observation and analysis, this is the call-up list of players for our next stage of preparations for the World Cup. The people of Oman dream of qualification, and our fans deserve this reward. We have the privilege and honour to serve and bring glory and pride to our nation. It is often when everyone thinks it is impossible that great victories begin. We are aware of the enormous challenge and risks, but greatness belongs to those who dare to attempt the improbable. We must be willing to pay the price of hard work



and sacrifice, but in the end, our journey will be legendary in the service of Omani football.”

The Türkiye camp, which kicks off on Wednesday, will run for seven days and is expected to include friendly matches against Turkish clubs, subject to confirmation. Following the camp, the Red Warriors will head directly to Uzbekistan to participate in the Cafa Nations League, which runs from August 26 to September 9.

Oman are drawn into Group A of the tournament alongside Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan. Group B will feature Iran, Tajikistan, Afghanistan and India. The competition will provide a valuable platform for Queiroz and his players to test themselves against regional rivals and fine-tune their preparations ahead of October’s Asian Qualifiers matches against Qatar and the UAE. **Oman Squad:** Ibrahim al Mukhaini, Fayez al Rushedi, Bilal al Balushi, Ahmed al Rawahi, Ahmed al Kaabi, Ali al Busaidy, Mahmood al Mushefiri, Ahmed al Khamisi, Musab al Shaqsi, Khalid al Buraiki, Amjad al Harthy, Thani al Rushedi, Ghanim al Habshi, Sultan al Marzooqi, Ahed al Mushaikh, Musab al Mamari, Harib al Saadi, Arshad al Alawi, Abdullah Fawaz, Hatim al Roushdi, Zaher al Aghbari, Abdulrahman al Mushefiri, Jameel al Yahmadi, Ahmed al Riyami, Essam al Subhi, Mohsin al Ghassani, Nasser al Rawahi, Salah al Yahyaiei, Mohammed al Ghafri and Al Mundher al Alawi.

## Sohar stun Rustaq in six-goal thriller, Bahla down Saham

AHMED AL KAABI  
MUSCAT, AUG 19

Sohar secured an exciting 4-2 victory over Al Rustaq in a thrilling, goal-filled encounter hosted at the Al Rustaq Sports Complex, as part of the opening round of the Elite League.

Both teams started cautiously, seeking to avoid an early setback. Sohar’s first chance came in the third minute when striker Amir Alaa’s shot went straight into the hands of Al Rustaq’s goalkeeper. With Sohar gradually increasing their pressure, Duane Muckette opened the scoring in the 15th minute, giving his side the lead. Al Rustaq retreated and relied on crosses, while Sohar maintained control. AL Rustaq’s best attempts came through Ibrahim al Harrasi and Khalid al Haddabi, with the latter’s strike denied by the left post in the 23rd minute. Sohar responded with a chance from Mohamed Ihab, while Al Haddabi missed a golden header opportunity just before half-time, which ended 1-0 in Sohar’s favour.

Al Rustaq came out aggressively in the second half searching for an equaliser,



Sohar and Al Rustaq players fight for the ball.

with Ahmed al Adawi forcing Sohar’s keeper into a save in the 54th minute. Sohar replied with a dangerous chance from Duane Muckette in the 65th minute, but Al Rustaq’s defence held firm. Persistence paid off for the hosts when Qusai al Maamari struck a powerful left-footed effort in the 78th minute to level the match. However, Sohar quickly restored their lead in the 81st minute as Muckette netted his second with a thunderous shot from distance. The game reached peak

drama in the final moments. Issa al Buraidi equalised for Al Rustaq in the 85th minute with a header, but Sohar responded almost instantly when Amir Alaa struck in the 86th minute, before sealing the win with his second goal in stoppage time. Sohar walked away with a 4-2 triumph, earning three valuable points to kick off their Elite League campaign.

**BAHLA BLANK SAHAM** Meanwhile, Bahla launched their Elite League campaign with a valuable away win,

defeating Saham 2-0 at the Sohar Sports Complex. The first half was fairly balanced, with Bahla enjoying more possession and control in midfield. However, their dominance produced just one dangerous chance, while Saham’s attack was completely ineffective, failing to trouble the goalkeeper. Early in the second half, Bahla broke the deadlock in the 49th minute when Abdulsalam al Shukaili converted a left-footed finish from a corner delivered by Nasser al Saqri. The visitors continued to press, and in the 64th minute, Al Shukaili doubled the lead, finishing off a precise pass from his brother, Majid al Shukaili, once again with his left foot. Bahla wasted further opportunities to widen the margin, while Saham struggled to keep up with the tempo, creating their only real chance in the 83rd minute through Ahmed al Abdulsalam’s shot. In the closing stages, both sides exchanged half-chances, but the defences and goalkeepers held firm. The match ended in a deserved 2-0 victory for Bahla, leaving Saham disappointed in their opening fixture.

FUTSAL CHALLENGE



Oman's 3x3 basketball school team will begin their challenge on Thursday with a match against Saudi Arabia.

OMAN TO BEGIN CAMPAIGN AT ARAB SCHOOL CHAMPIONSHIP IN JORDAN

SPORTS REPORTER  
MUSCAT, AUG 19

Oman's school futsal team will kick off their campaign at the Arab School Sports Championship with a highly anticipated opening match against Libya on Wednesday. The match will start at 7 pm (Muscat time) at Hussain College Stadium, which is the official venue for all futsal games.

Later, the young players will meet Saudi Arabia on Sunday before concluding their group stage with a clash against hosts Jordan on Tuesday. According to the tournament's organising committee, the futsal competition for both boys and girls will be played in a double round-robin format, with each team facing their opponents twice. The team that secures the highest number of points will win the title. As many as four teams are competing in the futsal category, including Saudi Arabia, Libya, Oman and Jordan.

Meanwhile, Oman's 3x3 basketball school team will begin their challenge on Thursday with a match against Saudi Arabia. They will meet Jordan (B) on Saturday and wrap up their campaign against Jordan (A) on Monday. All basketball matches are scheduled to take place at the Jordan Tennis Club.

As part of final preparations, Oman's futsal team held their second training session under the guidance of head coach Salman al Mediouli and assistant coach Sultan al Balushi, focusing on tactical setups and team coordination. The basketball squad, led by coach Nidhal al Mughairi, also completed their second training session on Tuesday, sharpening skills and boosting team chemistry ahead of the tip-off.

The Arab School Sports Championship, hosted in Amman under the supervision of the Jordanian and Arab School Sports Federations, featured student-athletes from seven teams, including Jordan, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Libya, Egypt, Lebanon and Palestine.

Markram, Maharaj lead SA to crushing ODI win

**AIDEN** MARKRAM hit 82 before left-arm spinner Keshav Maharaj tore through Australia's new-look batting order as South Africa claimed the One-Day International series opener by 98 runs in Cairns on Tuesday.

Sent in to bat, Markram — opening for the first time in ODIs since 2021 — crunched nine boundaries in his 81-ball knock to power South Africa to a formidable 296-8.

Skipper Temba Bavuma (65) and Matthew Breetzke (57) also helped set the tone for the three-match ODI series.

In reply, openers Mitchell Marsh and Travis Head flattened South Africa's pacemen as Australia raced to 60-0 after seven overs.

But the match flipped after the introduction of spin, with Maharaj conjuring rampant turn and he picked up four wickets in his first 15 balls.

He finished with career-best figures of 5-33 from 10 overs as Australia were dismissed for 198 in the 41st over.

It was a strong bounce back from South Africa after their 2-1 defeat in the Twenty20 series between the teams.

"I just tried to utilise the conditions and was fortunate to get the rewards," Maharaj said.

Marsh played a lone hand with 88 off 96 balls in a disappointing batting effort from Australia, transitioning after the recent retirements of veterans Steve Smith and Glenn Maxwell from ODI cricket.

"He's (Maharaj) an outstanding bowler and there was certainly a little bit more spin than we expected," said Marsh, who is captaining Australia in this series in place of Pat Cummins.

South Africa had been rocked by the news that quick Kagiso Rabada would miss the series with an ankle injury.

An unruffled Markram appeared to be cruising to his fourth ODI century before he was caught behind off left-arm quick Ben Dwarshuis in the 24th over.

A sluggish Bavuma was overtaken by Breetzke, playing his third ODI.

But South Africa lost three wickets for just seven runs with the fall of Breetzke, Tristan Stubbs (duck) and Dewald Brevis (six), before Bavuma kicked on.

After a breakout T20 series, ODI debutant Brevis hit a first-ball six — but then holed out to Head, who finished with 4-57.

Head's excellent match continued with the bat until he was stumped for 27, providing debutant offspinner Prenelan Subrayen with his first ODI wicket.

Making his return since being axed from Australia's Test team, Marnus Labuschagne (one) fell on his sixth delivery after unsuccessfully reviewing an lbw decision off Maharaj. Cameron Green (three) and Josh Inglis (five) were clean bowled by a pumped-up Maharaj, who also had Alex Carey lbw for a golden duck.

Maharaj was unable to complete the hat-trick, but claimed his maiden five-wicket haul in ODI cricket when he knocked over Aaron Hardie (four). The second game will be played in the northern Queensland city of Mackay on Friday. — AFP



South Africa's Keshav Maharaj celebrates a wicket.

Gill, Bumrah in India's Asia Cup squad, Jaiswal and Iyer ignored

**NEW DELHI:** Defending champions India named top order batter Shubman Gill and pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah in their Twenty20 squad on Tuesday for next month's Asia Cup in the United Arab Emirates.

Opener Yashasvi Jaiswal and middle order batter Shreyas Iyer, however, could not make the cut in the 15-member squad led by Suryakumar Yadav.

India's Test captain Gill has not played a T20 International since July last year when he was Suryakumar's deputy on the tour of Sri Lanka.

"That's where we started a new cycle," Suryakumar, who took over T20 captaincy from Rohit Sharma after India won the 20-over World Cup title last year, told reporters.



Indian captain Suryakumar Yadav (L) and Ajit Agarkar, chairman of selection committee, attend a press conference to announce T20 squad for upcoming Men's Asia Cup, in Mumbai on Tuesday. — AFP

"After that he got busy with all the Test series and he didn't get an opportunity to play T20s because he was busy playing Test cricket and Champions Trophy.

"So he's there in the squad and we're happy to have him."

India also included Bumrah, whose workload has been a major concern for the team think-tank, which played him in three of the five Tests in England earlier this year.

With three opening options in Gill, Abhishek Sharma and Sanju Samson — India could not accommodate Jaiswal. "With regard to Yashasvi, it's just unfortunate again," chief selector Ajit Agarkar said. "There's Abhishek Sharma, what he's done over the last year or so, plus he can bowl a little bit, he

gives us that option if required.

"One of these guys was going to miss out, Yashasvi just has to wait for his chance."

Samson and Jitesh Sharma are the two wicketkeepers in the side, which also includes left-arm wrist-spinner Kuldeep Yadav.

India begin their Group A campaign against hosts United Arab Emirates in Dubai before meeting arch-rivals Pakistan at the same venue four days later. — Reuters

**India squad:** Suryakumar Yadav (captain), Shubman Gill, Hardik Pandya, Arshdeep Singh, Abhishek Sharma, Tilak Varma, Shivam Dube, Axar Patel, Jitesh Sharma (wk), Jasprit Bumrah, Varun Chakravathy, Kuldeep Yadav, Harshit Rana, Rinku Singh, Sanju Samson (wk).

SPORTS

22ND TITLE

ALCARAZ WINS CINCINNATI OPEN AS SINNER RETIRES

CINCINNATI: Carlos Alcaraz won the ATP Cincinnati Open title on Monday after defending champion Jannik Sinner retired due to illness in the first set.

World number one Sinner came into the final feeling unwell and lost the first seven points of the match before throwing in the towel at 5-0 down in a game played in 30-degree Celsius heat.

Sinner will now focus on recovery with the US Open starting on Sunday. The Italian is due to take part in the US Open's revamped mixed doubles on Tuesday, but his participation in that draw is now in serious doubt.

"I'm disappointed, I didn't feel great from yesterday," Sinner said afterwards. "During the night, I thought I would recover a bit better, but it was not the case.

"I just tried to go out for the fans, trying to give (them) a match - that's the reason why I went on the court.

"But it was not meant to be for me today. But I don't want to take anything away from Carlos. He had a great week, great, great tournament again."

Sinner said he is now pointing to the final Grand Slam of the season.

"The main focus, obviously, is for the US Open. Recovery is the most important. And then we see," he said.

Despite the temporary health setback, Sinner is pleased with his showings in 2025.

"I feel like it's an incredible season," he said.

"We'll keep going, keep pushing. I have some points to improve if I want to go far in US Open.

"It was a good test this week, trying to understand where my level is."

Sinner lasted for just 22 minutes, calling for the doctor after losing the fifth game and shortly after going to shake hands with Alcaraz.

ALCARAZ EYES NEW YORK

It was the second match in a row Alcaraz had won over an ailing opponent, following his win over Alexander Zverev in the semifinals.

Jannik Sinner has withdrawn from the US Open mixed doubles event, where he was going to partner Katerina Siniakova. Danielle Collins and Christian Harrison replaced the Sinner-Siniakova partnership in the draw and will play Belinda Bencic and Alexander Zverev in the first round.

Alcaraz won his 22nd career title as he claimed his 17th victory in a row at the Masters 1000 level.

He now leads Sinner 9-5 and lost to the Italian in their last match, the Wimbledon final last month.

"Obviously, it's not the way that I wanted to win the final," the Spaniard said.

"First of all, I just want to wish Jannik a speedy recovery. Hopefully, in a few days he's going to be okay to prepare and practice well to the US Open.

"For myself, I'm just really, really happy to be able to leave the with trophy, since I just lost that final in 2023 (to Novak Djokovic). I just wanted really, really badly

this, this trophy, so I'm just really proud and happy to be able to lift it."

Former Open winner Alcaraz, who was upset in the second round a year ago, is looking forward to a more respectable showing in New York.

"I'm feeling a lot of confidence. New York is a place that I love playing...it is where I got my first Grand Slam.

"I appreciate the love and the support that I received there every year... last year it was disappointing, the level that I played there.

"So this year, I really want to show my really good tennis, my best tennis, try to go as far as I can, enjoy as much as I can." — AFP



Carlos Alcaraz (ESP) poses with the Rookwood Cup after his match against Jannik Sinner (ITA) during the Cincinnati Open at the Lindner Family Tennis Center. — **Imagn Images**



Iga Swiatek (POL) poses with the Rookwood Cup after defeating Jasmine Paolini (ITA) during the Cincinnati Open at the Lindner Family Tennis Center. — **Imagn Images**

Swiatek beats Paolini to take WTA Cincinnati title

IGA

Swiatek filled in a piece of her career tennis puzzle on Monday as she won the ATP-WTA Cincinnati Open for the first time with a 7-5, 6-4 defeat of Jasmine Paolini.

The final, lasting for just under two hours, featured 16 break-point chances, with the Polish winner converting on six of 10 while Paolini struggled to make the most of her break opportunities.

The six-time Grand Slam singles champion's 11th career win at the WTA 1000 level has left her within striking distance of the all-time record of 13 titles held by Serena Williams. Swiatek won the Cincinnati without dropping a set.

"It's always tough in Cincy," Swiatek told the Tennis Channel after her maiden win in Cincinnati.

"This gives me a boost of confidence. "I'm happy with the work we've been doing. (The team) had to convince me to play in a different way. I'm now happy with that process; it all feels even better after the match. I'm glad I finished in straight sets."

The 24-year-old backed up her

”

I'm happy with the work we've been doing. (The team) had to convince me to play in a different way. I'm now happy with that process; it all feels even better after the match. I'm glad I finished in straight sets.

IGA SWIATEK, WTA Polish second seed

breakthrough Wimbledon trophy with the Midwest honours and now heads to the last Grand Slam of the season at the US Open with a major confidence boost after the 24th title of her career.

Swiatek is due to partner Norway's Casper Ruud in the US Open's revamped mixed doubles starting on Tuesday.

The Pole said she is relishing that challenge on the slower courts of Flushing Meadows. "I'm a good player. I can play on any surface," she said.

"They are slowing down the courts every year, kind of, so I'm not sure how it is now there. But tennis is all about adjusting."

Swiatek also climbed to within 500 points of current WTA number one Aryna Sabalenka, with the lead at the top of the table likely to be in play at the Open when it begins on Sunday.

Swiatek had stalled twice at the last two editions at the semifinal stage and now has only the Canadian tournament, where she has not reached the final at a 1000 event.

"Today was tough, we were both

tight, but that happens in a final," Swiatek said. "I was glad to close it out in the end. "Not everything was perfect, but mentally I was there to play my best tennis. We did a lot of mental work. I was really composed and consistent about how I thought about my game."

Swiatek began on the wrong foot as she lost serve to trail 0-3. But the situation was only temporary as the former number one immediately began her turnaround.

The Pole answered immediately with two breaks of serve and moved to a 5-3 lead

But Paolini earned another break in the 10th game, saving a Swiatek set point to square the final at five-all.

Paolini dropped serve for 5-6, giving her opponent the chance to produce a love game and claim the opener 7-5 after just under an hour on court.

The second set was a roller coaster, with the pair twice swapping breaks of serve before Swiatek salvaged a pair of break points to lead 5-3 and then serving out the winner two games later.

— AFP

BUSINESS

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SHORTTAKES

DUQM SUMMER  
SERIES SPOTLIGHTS  
SUPPLY CHAIN  
RESILIENCE IN OMAN

BUSINESS REPORTER  
AL DUQM, AUG 19

The third session of the Duqm Summer Series took place yesterday at the SEZAD Head Office where participants examined how global supply chains are being recalibrated by tariffs, geopolitics and evolving trade patterns.

The discussion was led by Saad Bait Nasib, Commercial Director at ASYAD Ports & Free Zones who outlined both the risks and the opportunities created by these dynamics.

Bait Nasib began with the wider economic backdrop. Tariffs have re-emerged as a central feature of Washington's economic strategy, with recent measures described as the steepest in a century. Such

policies carry consequences well beyond the US, influencing costs across global supply networks and testing the resilience of smaller enterprises. MSMEs, lacking the buffers to absorb higher costs or re-route flows, often face the toughest challenges. In a world where disruption in one hub can quickly cascade across others, resilience has become as important as efficiency.

The discussion then turned to opportunity. As companies pursue near-shoring and new trade alignments, Oman's geographic position stood out as a clear advantage. Al Duqm's location on the Indian Ocean offers direct access to growth markets in Africa and Asia, while Free Trade Agreements provide a framework for reduced costs and predictable market entry.



SAAD BAIT NASIB

Commercial Director at ASYAD Ports & Free Zones

Oman allows H2 investors  
to sell surplus power

CONRAD PRABHU  
MUSCAT, AUG 19

INVESTORS in the third round of Oman's green hydrogen auction will be permitted to sell surplus renewable electricity into the market, a significant incentive unveiled by Hydrom, the master planner of the Sultanate of Oman's hydrogen strategy.

The measure is part of a new package designed to boost the commercial viability of Round 3 projects, centred on a 300 km² land block near the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD).

Hydrom Managing Director Abdulaziz al Shidhani said the change will improve project economics and bankability.

"We believe that once the targets set for the production of hydrogen are met, then investors have the flexibility to sell surplus power to the market and improve the project economics", he stated.

Unlike Rounds 1 and 2, which restricted developers to using renewables exclusively for hydrogen production, Round 3 developers will be able to monetise excess green electricity, creating an additional revenue stream.

The move also dovetails with the Authority for Public Services Regulation's push to liberalise Oman's power market,



We believe that once the targets set for the production of hydrogen are met, then investors have the flexibility to sell surplus power to the market and improve the project economics.

ABDULAZIZ  
AL SHIDHANI

Hydrom  
Managing  
Director



The measure is part of a new package designed to boost the commercial viability of Round 3 projects, centred on a 300 km² land block near the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD).

including options for bilateral trading between generators and consumers.

The updated framework spans the development phase, the first 15 years of operations and surplus power sales.

"We believe that these incentives... will incentivise people to be more focused on their development activities and leverage the opportunity to get their projects operational by the end of 2032", added Al Shidhani.

Other concessions include a 50% reduction in fees during development, a cut in royalty rates from 3% to 1% and an additional five-year tax holiday for projects

starting operations by 2032. Land allocation and production requirements have also been made more flexible, with options for both large and mid-sized developers, as well as phased development.

Al Shidhani stressed that the enhancements reflect Hydrom's commitment to regulatory clarity and enabling infrastructure: "Since the beginning, Hydrom has been focused on an approach based on regulatory clarity and agility, supported by a policy framework that addresses not only hydrogen production, but also the readiness of the wider ecosystem and common-use infrastructure".

Omani startup charts growth with AI-powered food supply platform

JOMAR MENDOZA  
MUSCAT, AUG 19

Oman's food and beverage (F&B) sector is witnessing the rise of a new player that blends technology with sustainability. ZabonEx, the Muscat-based startup using predictive analytics to help businesses "sell more and waste less", has set its sights on becoming a regional force.

Co-founder Hatim Moosa al Abri said the company is now moving swiftly to capitalise on its recent \$100,000 pre-seed funding round led by Future Fund Oman and ITHCA Group. The investment, secured last month, represents not just a financial boost but also validation of the company's vision to address one of the region's pressing challenges — food waste.

"We'll use this investment to speed up — without losing discipline", Hatim explained. "On the technology side, we're improving prediction accuracy, adding plug-



ZabonEx founders Hatim Moosa al Abri and Almuhammad al Balushi

and-play integrations with common POS and ERP systems; and automating model updates so customers don't need extra IT work. On market reach, we're turning successful pilots in Oman into repeatable playbooks and scaling them across the GCC".

SMARTER FORECASTING

Founded by Hatim alongside Almuhammad al Balushi, ZabonEx offers a

SaaS platform designed for F&B producers, distributors and retailers. The system connects to a customer's sales and stock data, predicts demand at the product and outlet level; and provides clear order recommendations.

The approach is distinctive. While many forecasting tools focus on broad trends, ZabonEx drills down to fine-grained, daily insights, taking into

account product shelf life, minimum delivery volumes and logistics routes.

"Where we stand out is in our ability to deliver daily, actionable recommendations with very fast setup", Hatim noted. "We also offer human-in-the-loop controls and an optional computer-vision add-on that improves on-shelf and expiry data. It's about making technology practical, not complicated".

SCALING BEYOND OMAN

Having proven its concept in Oman, ZabonEx is preparing to scale regionally, starting with Saudi Arabia and the UAE, followed by Qatar and Bahrain. These markets, Hatim explained, share a similar retail structure and an urgent focus on food security.

"The challenges are around change management, data differences and longer sales cycles. We address these through short pilots that prove impact quickly,

bilingual products in Arabic and English; and strong local partnerships". This expansion strategy mirrors the startup's emphasis on building secure, cloud-aligned solutions.

SUSTAINABILITY

At its heart, ZabonEx is not just about operational efficiency but also about environmental and social impact. Food waste is a global problem, with the UN estimating that one-third of all food produced is lost or wasted. In the GCC, where food imports dominate, waste reduction is directly tied to national food security.

By helping businesses order with more precision, ZabonEx contributes to reducing expiries, minimising returns and ensuring better shelf availability. "This directly supports Oman Vision 2040 and regional priorities on food security and sustainable consumption", Hatim said. "At ZabonEx,

success means less waste and more sales. This funding helps us deliver that faster across the region, while we build strong data systems so the benefits keep growing over time".

BUILDING THE BACKBONE

With its strong investor backing, growing team and scalable product, ZabonEx is positioning itself as what Hatim calls the "intelligence backbone" of the food supply chain in the Middle East. The company's next chapter is clear: deepen its roots in Oman, expand into neighbouring markets and continue refining its predictive engine to make smarter business decisions easier for F&B companies of all sizes.

As Oman sharpens its focus on entrepreneurship and digital innovation under Oman Vision 2040, Omani startups like ZabonEx are proving that local ideas can tackle global problems — while creating growth opportunities across the region.

ADVERTORIALS

SHORTTAKES



The event, attended by HH Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said, Governor of Dhofar, brought together valued clients and selected industry partners for an evening of connection and appreciation.

NBO HOSTS DINNER FOR SADARA PRIORITY BANKING CLIENTS IN SALALAH

**SALALAH:** The National Bank of Oman (NBO) hosted an exclusive networking dinner for its Sadara Priority Banking clients at Al Baleed Resort Salalah by Anantara, reaffirming its commitment to offering premium experiences tailored to high-net-worth individuals.

The event, attended by His Highness Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said, Governor of Dhofar, brought together valued clients and selected industry partners for an evening of connection and appreciation.

Faisal bin Hamad al Wahaibi, General Manager & Chief Retail & Digital Banking Officer at NBO, commented, “Our Sadara Priority Banking clients are at the core of NBO’s vision for excellence.

This gathering in Salalah reflects our commitment to not only delivering bespoke financial solutions but also creating opportunities for meaningful engagement. We deeply value the trust our clients place in us and remain dedicated to providing exceptional service that meets their evolving needs”.

Through Sadara Priority Banking, NBO enhances the financial well-being of its high-net-worth clients by offering tailored benefits, including comprehensive wealth management, personalised solutions designed around individual aspirations and the support of a dedicated relationship manager.

For more information on NBO’s Sadara Priority Banking, please visit the NBO website or contact the Call Centre at 24770000.

CHINA PLEDGES TO ADDRESS INDIA’S RARE EARTH NEEDS

**NEW DELHI:** China has promised to address India’s needs for rare earths, fertilisers and tunnel boring machines, a top Indian official and a source said on Tuesday, as the neighbours work to rebuild ties after a 2020 border clash.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi is visiting India for the 24th round of border talks with National Security Advisor Ajit Doval and is also scheduled to meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi, ahead of Modi’s trip to China for the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation summit.

“There has been an upward trend. Borders have been quiet. There has been peace and tranquillity”, Doval told Wang at the start of the talks. “Our bilateral engagements have been more substantial”. Wang said the “stable and healthy development of China-India relations is in the fundamental interests of the two countries’ people”, according to a readout from China’s foreign ministry.

He added that the two sides “should enhance mutual trust through dialogues and expand cooperation” and aim for consensus on border control and demarcation negotiations.

An Indian source said Wang assured Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar that China is addressing India’s requirements for key strategic items, including rare earths and industrial machinery. It was not immediately clear if this included faster export licences or blanket exemptions for India, or whether the agreements would cover specific timelines.

China has previously committed to speeding up export licenses for Europe and the US, but rare earth magnet exports to India remain down 58% from January levels. China’s exports of rare earths and related magnets rose in June as the commerce ministry worked through a backlog of applications.

India has the world’s fifth-largest rare earth reserves, at 6.9 million metric tons, but has no domestic magnet production and relies heavily on imports from China to meet its industrial and technological needs. — Reuters

NAMA DHOFAR CONNECTS RURAL AREAS TO MAIN GRID IN NET-ZERO PUSH

**QASIM AL MAASHANI**  
SALALAH, AUG 19

Nama Dhofar Services has completed awarding all tenders to connect rural areas powered by diesel generation plants to the main electricity grid in Dhofar Governorate, in a move seen as a major milestone towards Oman’s Net-Zero 2050 target.

The initiative, announced by Chief Operations Officer Imad Said Ausanajali, forms part of a broader strategy to phase out diesel-fuelled generation and cut carbon emissions. The projects are expected to improve service reliability and ensure safe, sustainable power



By shifting rural supply to the national grid, Nama Dhofar Services is advancing sustainability goals while reducing reliance on costly diesel fuel.

supply for local communities.

“This milestone marks a major step in our journey towards reducing carbon emissions,

enhancing reliability and service quality; and ensuring sustainable energy access”, Ausanajali said.

By shifting rural supply to the national grid, the company is advancing sustainability goals while reducing reliance on costly diesel fuel.

The move also supports Oman Vision 2040, which prioritises cleaner energy and long-term environmental stewardship.

Dhofar has relied on small-scale diesel power stations for remote areas for decades. Integrating these communities into the main grid will not only lower emissions but also provide more stable electricity to support local development.

Experience luxury in the Lincoln Nautilus

**STEP** into a new level of refined journeys with the Lincoln Nautilus, where bold design meets serene sophistication. With its sleek, contemporary profile, the Nautilus commands attention from every angle.

The striking Lincoln signature grille flows seamlessly into a sculpted rear fascia, punctuated by an elegant full-width light bar and newly designed tail lamps.

A restyled rear spoiler adds a subtle athletic edge while improving aerodynamics, blending form and function in true Lincoln fashion.

The Reserve trim elevates the experience further, featuring striking 21” bright machined aluminium wheels with premium-painted pockets that deliver undeniable curb appeal and an upscale, dynamic presence.

Inside, the Nautilus transforms every drive into an escape. As you open the door, ambient lighting softly glows to welcome you, both inside and out, setting a calming tone before the journey even begins.

Acoustic side glass insulates the cabin from outside noise, creating a tranquil space where serenity takes the wheel.

Lincoln’s commitment to comfort shines through in every detail. Seats are upholstered in plush materials that balance luxury with support.

The available ultra comfort front seats, developed with orthopaedic input, offer 22-way adjustability, lumbar massage; and heating and cooling functions. Whether commuting in traffic or embarking on a long



Power meets efficiency with an advanced 8-speed automatic transmission featuring SelectShift and Auto Start-Stop, offering responsiveness while optimising fuel consumption.

road trip, these seats ensure you arrive refreshed and relaxed.

A newly designed steering wheel, wrapped in supple Wollsdorf leather with refined European stitching, provides a sportier, tactile grip, making every drive more engaging.

At the heart of the cockpit sits a vibrant 11.1-inch LCD capacitive touchscreen, offering crisp visuals and intuitive swipe controls for navigation, entertainment and vehicle settings, all within easy reach.

Thoughtful innovations like the vertical push-button gear

selector, seamlessly integrated into the instrument panel, simplify interaction while freeing up cabin space. Each button features a distinct texture, allowing drivers to operate controls without taking their eyes off the road.

Under the sculpted hood, the Nautilus delivers performance with an available 2.0-litre turbocharged engine producing 250 horsepower and 380 Nm of torque.

Whether navigating city streets or exploring rugged terrain, the intelligent all-wheel-

drive system adapts to changing conditions. Combined with adaptive suspension and AWD disconnect technology, the Nautilus ensures a ride that is smooth, agile and composed on every surface.

Power meets efficiency with an advanced 8-speed automatic transmission featuring SelectShift and Auto Start-Stop, offering responsiveness while optimising fuel consumption.

Safety remains at the forefront with the Lincoln Co-Pilot360™ suite of driver-assist technologies.

Clean energy investors relieved by tax rule changes



The changes require developers of large array arrays and wind farms to complete physical work rather than simply show that they have invested capital.

— Reuters

guidelines were better than expected.

The MAC Global Solar Energy index (SUNIDX) was up 4% in mid-day trade, with top gainers including residential solar

company Sunrun (RUN.O), up 9% and panel manufacturer First Solar (FSLR), up 8.6%.

“Although it creates some complications, it is manageable”, Raymond James analyst Pavel

Molchanov said in an email.

Some in the industry had feared that project developers would have to incur a large percentage of project costs to be eligible for the credits, or that they would have a narrower timeline to claim subsidies after starting construction.

The Treasury Department left the 4-year window unchanged for projects that start construction before the credits expire.

The One Big Beautiful Bill Act requires projects to begin construction by July of next year or enter service by the end of 2027 to qualify for a 30% tax credit, with additional bonuses that can increase the subsidy.

Under previous law, the credits were available through 2032. — Reuters

SHORTTAKES



Blockchain-based stablecoins—typically pegged to a fiat currency and offering faster and cheaper transactions—are gaining momentum worldwide.

— Reuters

JAPAN STARTUP TO ISSUE FIRST YEN-PEGGED STABLECOIN

TOKYO: Japanese startup JPYC said it will issue the first stablecoin pegged to the yen later this year after receiving a licence this week.

The stablecoin, called “JPYC,” will be fully convertible to the yen and backed by domestic savings and Japanese government bonds (JGBs), the company’s CEO Noritaka Okabe told a news conference.

“Initially, we expect demand to come from institutional investors, hedge funds and family offices in Japan”, he said.

“Eventually, we aim to have JPYC used overseas as digital yen and delivered to people across the world”. JPYC, which plans to issue the stablecoin around autumn, said it would not charge transaction fees. Instead, the more stablecoins it issues, the more JGBs it will hold and it would earn money from the interest on those holdings.

Blockchain-based stablecoins — typically pegged to a fiat currency and offering faster and cheaper transactions — are gaining momentum worldwide.

In the US, President Donald Trump in July signed federal rules and guidelines for stablecoins to facilitate their use in everyday payments and settlements.

Financial companies from Bank of America to Fiserv are preparing to launch their own dollar-backed crypto tokens, although experts warn the path forward may not be simple.

In contrast, in mainland China, where crypto trading is banned, regulators have asked big local brokers to halt publication of research endorsing stablecoins to curb domestic investor interest.

— Reuters

Oman’s non-oil exports drive economic growth

SIHAM AL SAIDI  
SUHAR, AUG 19

OMANI products are gaining a stronger foothold in international markets, with recent figures showing steady growth in exports and rising global demand. Al Batinah North Governorate, with its strategic location and world-class logistics facilities, is emerging as a driving force in this momentum.

At a recent forum organised by the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), Al Batinah North branch, business leaders, government officials and logistics experts gathered to discuss how ports and maritime shipping can unlock greater opportunities for national exports.



The event underscored SOHAR Port and Freezone’s role as a gateway to global markets and a pillar of Oman’s trade competitiveness.

exports stood at RO 23 billion, marking a 10% growth from 2023. This positive trend continued into 2025, with exports valued at RO 10.683 billion by mid-year.

Al Batinah North Governorate itself reported remarkable progress, with exports climbing to RO 676 million , a 37% increase while container traffic through SOHAR Port and Freezone grew by 15% in 2024.

The forum in Al Batinah North Governorate was notable not only for its high-level discussions but also for the strong turnout of entrepreneurs, business owners and representatives of various companies and institutions.

Their presence reflected a growing awareness within the community about the importance of exports and logistics in strengthening the national economy. For many entrepreneurs, the gathering offered a valuable opportunity to learn how Omani products can expand into global markets; and how small and medium enterprises can benefit from improved shipping and trade facilities.

Participants from larger companies emphasised that meetings of this kind are essential for building stronger partnerships between the public and private sectors.

They noted that by working together, businesses and institutions can play a vital role in boosting Oman’s competitiveness and ensuring that the benefits of trade extend across different segments of society.

The involvement of logistics and shipping firms further highlighted how closely connected infrastructure and trade are.

Their contributions underscored the readiness of the sector to support exporters and create an environment that allows Omani goods to move more efficiently to international markets.

Overall, the diverse participation at the forum demonstrated how collective engagement and rising awareness can accelerate efforts to achieve sustainable economic growth in the Sultanate of Oman.

The forum concluded with a call for greater integration between government entities, logistics providers and exporters, to strengthen Oman’s global presence and cement its role as a competitive player in international trade.

SoftBank’s Son backs Tan with \$2-bn Intel investment

TOKYO: When Lip-Bu Tan stepped down from the SoftBank Group board in 2022 at a time when the Japanese company was grappling with soured investments, his parting message offered advice on how Masayoshi Son’s conglomerate could strengthen its business.

Three years later, a resurgent SoftBank has made a show of support by taking a \$2-billion stake in Intel as Tan, now the storied American company’s CEO, seeks to turn around the embattled chipmaker.

Tan took Intel’s top job in March and is driving restructuring at the company, which lost out to Nvidia in artificial intelligence



SoftBank CEO Masayoshi Son

chips and whose foundry business is struggling. “This is really a vote of confidence of Masa in the turnaround materialising over the coming years,” said Rolf Bulk, an analyst at New Street Research.

“For Intel, the investment makes it more likely that SoftBank could be a potential client to Intel in the future.” The two men have a long-standing relationship.

“Masa and I have worked closely together for decades, and I appreciate the confidence he has placed in Intel with this investment,” Tan said in a statement. In addition to his time on SoftBank’s board, Tan became chairman of chip startup SambaNova, which received backing

from SoftBank’s Vision Fund.

“Masa is brilliant; he’s a visionary. But he still needs people to provide safeguards, give him advice, and make him even more successful,” Tan wrote in his statement on leaving the SoftBank board.

Son, 68, is known as a savvy political operator, appearing publicly with U.S. President Donald Trump twice in the months following the presidential election.

He has close relationships with leading tech entrepreneurs such as Jensen Huang, CEO of Nvidia, in which SoftBank has a stake.

Last week Tan, 65, met with Trump, who days earlier had called on him to resign due to his ties to

Chinese firms. Washington is in talks to take a 10 per cent stake in Intel, Bloomberg has reported.

“SoftBank’s investment helps but it is not what is going to move the dial for Intel,” said Amir Anvarzadeh of Asymmetric Advisors.

Son is making splashy investments again after some underperforming tech bets forced a period of retrenchment, with the conglomerate pursuing a \$500 billion US data centre venture with OpenAI, the maker of ChatGPT.

SoftBank has acquired a former electric vehicle factory from Foxconn in Ohio as it looks to advance its Stargate data centre project.

— Reuters

TOY INDUSTRY

Labubu maker records 400% profit surge



China’s Pop Mart reported nearly 400% first-half profit growth, driven by strong global demand for its Labubu dolls and a strategic expansion into higher-margin overseas markets. Revenue surged 204%, exceeding analysts’ forecasts. Shares have risen more than 200% this year, making Pop Mart more valuable than Barbie-maker Mattel and Hello Kitty owner Sanrio.

— Reuters

SEAFOOD EXPORTS

India shrimp farmers hit by Trump tariffs



India’s top shrimp exporters are struggling after the US imposed tariffs of up to 50%, forcing farmers to consider alternatives like fish farming or vegetable sales. Exporters have slashed prices, cutting profits, while high costs for loans, feed and electricity persist. Ecuador could gain market share in the US and Indian producers seek new markets.

— Reuters

GARMENT SECTOR

India suspends cotton import duty



India has suspended its 11% cotton import duty until September 30, signalling willingness to address US tariff concerns while easing pressure on its garment sector. US tariffs of up to 50% have hit Indian exporters, causing order cancellations, rising costs and competitiveness challenges versus Bangladesh, Vietnam and China. Officials said the duty waiver could be extended to support trade.

— Reuters

OPINION

Small fiscal reforms can deliver big results

ANA MARÍA IBÁÑEZ & MARTA RUIZ-ARRANZ

**OUTDATED** and inefficient tax and fiscal systems are holding back development; and driving up deficits and debt across Latin America and the Caribbean.

While some call for painful austerity measures, small-scale fixes like digitalisation and well-designed delivery mechanisms offer a more politically viable path.

Despite progress in many areas, persistent weaknesses in tax collection and public spending continue to hurt economic growth. Government revenues and spending have remained close to pre-pandemic averages, leaving countries with limited fiscal space.

Public debt rose from 45% of GDP in 2014 to 60% in 2024, pushing interest payments to 2.7% of GDP — roughly equal to the investment needed to close the region's infrastructure gap.

Tax systems collect too little revenue and distort labour markets, while government spending is often inefficient. Wasteful spending amounts to 4.6% of GDP. Weak fiscal systems also hinder efforts to reduce inequality, with regressive VAT and high informality sometimes exacerbating poverty.

Still, governments can make progress through incremental improvements. Digitalising tax systems, using data analytics, piloting targeted subsidies and strengthening budget frameworks improve efficiency and credibility.

For example, after El Salvador introduced electronic invoicing, VAT revenue rose

Despite progress in many areas, persistent weaknesses in tax collection and public spending continue to hurt economic growth.

from 3.5% of GDP in 2017 to 8.7% in 2023, generating \$1 billion in additional revenues. In Honduras, modernisation increased electronic filings from 50% to 95%, raising tax revenues by three percentage points of GDP.

On the spending side, reforms have curbed waste. Chile's digital procurement system, ChileCompra, improved transparency, while Argentina replaced electricity subsidies with targeted assistance, saving \$6 billion — nearly 1% of GDP — while protecting low-income households.

Such measures may not make headlines, but they build trust in governance. When citizens see taxes collected fairly and spent wisely, they are more likely to support ambitious reforms, laying the groundwork for sustained and equitable growth.

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HONG KONG DEVELOPERS FACE MOUNTING DEBT PRESSURE



CLARE JIM & SELENA LI

*Hong Kong's debt-laden developers and their creditors are set to face intensifying pressure as bond maturities jump nearly 70% next year amidst falling sales and valuations in the property sector.*

Road King last week became the first Hong Kong-based developer to default on bond coupons since China's property debt crisis began in 2021, following Emperor International's loan default earlier this year. Analysts warn that weak prospects in commercial property and fewer financing options mean more developers may struggle to repay debt. Property and related sectors account for about a quarter of Hong Kong's GDP, raising risks for both the economy and banks such as HSBC.

Bond maturities for local developers will climb to \$7.1 billion in 2026 from \$4.2 billion this year, LSEG data shows. S&P Global's Edward Chan said more small-sized developers could default within 12-24 months as banks cut exposure.

Office and retail valuations have fallen over 50% from 2019 peaks, leaving developers under pressure. More fire sales could further depress prices and hurt even stronger players.

Among the most exposed, New World Development faces \$168 million in repayments next year and \$630 million in 2027, while Lai Sun Development has \$524 million due in 2026.

New World, with \$23 billion in debt, narrowly avoided default in June with an \$11.2 billion refinancing deal.

Banks are also feeling the strain. Hang Seng Bank booked a \$2.5 billion charge on commercial real estate in the first half, up 224% year-on-year. Parent HSBC tripled the value of loans with significant credit risk to \$18.1 billion by June.

Still, Hong Kong's central bank chief Eddie Yue stressed the banking system remains "well-capitalised" and able to withstand volatility. Market observers say some banks are avoiding seizing assets or recalling loans to prevent worsening the downturn. — Reuters

From bargaining to smart phones: Rethinking money

**MOBILE** wallets are reshaping how Omanis spend, but only financial literacy can ensure this transformation leads to empowerment, not risk.

Oman's cashless era is here. Mobile wallets are transforming how people shop, save and send money from the souq to their smartphones. However, as transactions become faster and easier, the real question is whether financial literacy can keep pace with this convenience.

It begins with a tap: no coins, no banknotes, no receipt, just a quiet confirmation tone from your phone. The transaction is over before you've even registered for it. Oman's cashless era is not approaching; it is here. According to the Central Bank of Oman, mobile payment transactions surged from 4.9 million in 2022 to 40 million in 2023, a dramatic 700 per cent leap valued at approximately RO 1.44 billion. That surge was only the beginning. Today, mobile wallets are widely used for everyday needs, from paying utility bills and sending remittances to, increasingly, small purchases in places like Muttrah's markets.

This shift is not just technological; it is psychological. When money moves without changing hands, spending can feel less tangible.

The "cashless effect", identified by behavioural economists, shows that people are more likely to spend when the payment process is frictionless. A seamless tap replaces the tactile pause of handing over banknotes or scanning. That ease is attractive, but it can quietly erode financial discipline. Frequent small purchases, made without thought, can accumulate into a larger financial burden by month's end.

Culturally, the change is visible in the souqs. Bargaining in Muttrah or Nizwa has always been about more than price; it is a social ritual, built on the rhythm of conversation and the physical exchange of notes.

Mobile wallets, with their quiet efficiency, alter that rhythm. The act of counting cash, a moment when both buyer and seller reflect on value, is being replaced by an instant transfer. The tradition of negotiation remains, but the texture of the exchange feels different in a world where money is invisible.

Younger generations, raised in a digital-first world, are often the most enthusiastic adopters. But their comfort with technology does not always translate into sound money management. A recent study of rural Omani millennials found that trust, perceived security and confidence with technology strongly shape attitudes towards mobile wallet use,



Mobile wallets are widely used for daily needs



DR SUAAD JASSEM

The writer is an Assistant Professor of Accounting and Auditing, at the Finance and Accounting Department - College of Banking and Financial Studies

According to the Central Bank of Oman, mobile payment transactions surged from 4.9 million in 2022 to 40 million in 2023, a dramatic 700 per cent leap valued at approximately RO 1.44 billion.

reinforcing the need to combine adoption with targeted education. Older generations, too, face adjustments as they move away from familiar cash-based systems towards digital platforms that require new habits and security awareness.

Yet the technology that enables overspending can also strengthen financial control if used consciously.

Modern mobile wallets offer real-time transaction alerts, automated expense categorisation, monthly summaries and savings goal trackers. Many users are discovering that these features can act as a personal finance dashboard in their pocket. But awareness is key: a tool is only as effective as the person using it. Without the literacy to interpret and respond to the information provided, these functions remain untapped potential. Financial literacy in this context means more than knowing how to pay. It is the ability to set realistic budgets, track spending, plan for savings and safeguard funds from fraud. It includes security practices such as enabling biometric authentication, recognising phishing scams and avoiding insecure networks for transactions.

In many Omani households, money management has long been a family affair. Savings were often pooled for weddings, home building, or education, while remittances from abroad played a crucial role in supporting relatives. Mobile wallets now facilitate such transfers faster and more seamlessly, but they also alter the psychology of saving. What once required visible discipline — envelopes of cash set aside, or trips to remittance counters can now be handled instantly with a few clicks. That convenience is powerful, but it also risks reducing the sense of deliberation that once shaped collective financial choices.

Industry research into small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Oman has revealed that while mobile payments can enhance efficiency, challenges such as high transaction fees and authentication issues still deter some businesses. These findings highlight an important

lesson: financial literacy is not only for consumers, but also for the entire economic ecosystem, ensuring that all participants can effectively and sustainably adopt digital tools.

Oman Vision 2040 places digital transformation at the heart of national progress and the rise of mobile wallets fits squarely within this agenda. The next step is aligning this digital leap with a parallel leap in capability. Educational institutions can integrate digital budgeting into curricula, using anonymised mobile payment data to teach real-world financial skills.

Trust is central to sustained adoption. Users must believe their money and personal data are secure. This requires clear communication about fees, robust data protection policies and visible measures to prevent fraud. Service providers who combine technological efficiency with customer education are building not just client bases, but long-term confidence in the digital financial system. The responsibility is shared. Fintech innovators must design systems that encourage positive financial behaviours. Regulators must ensure that rapid innovation is matched by strong consumer protection and literacy initiatives. Individuals must recognise that while digital payments make spending easier, they do not make money limitless. When these elements align, mobile wallets can be more than a payment method; they can be a driver of personal empowerment and national economic resilience. The speed of change presents both promise and risk. Technology adoption occurs quickly; developing the habits of using it wisely takes time. Oman is advancing rapidly towards a fully cashless environment, but the question is whether the country will also become fully literate in managing money in that environment. The danger is not in technology itself, but in the gap between capability and convenience.

The cashless present is shaping the future. Each tap is more than a purchase; it is a choice, a habit in the making and a small step in one direction or another. Technology will not make that choice for us. It will only make our chosen path easier to follow, whether it leads towards financial confidence or financial vulnerability. The opportunity before Oman is to ensure that this transformation is not just about speed and efficiency, but about building a society prepared to thrive in a world where money moves invisibly, but consequences remain very real.

BUSINESS

S&P Global on Monday affirmed its 'AA+' credit rating on the US, saying revenue from President Donald Trump's tariffs will offset the fiscal impact of his recent tax-cut and spending bill.

Trump signed the massive package, dubbed the 'One Big Beautiful Bill Act', into law in July. The bill delivered new tax breaks and made Trump's 2017 tax cuts permanent.

"Amid the rise in effective tariff rates, we expect meaningful tariff revenue to generally offset weaker fiscal outcomes that might otherwise be associated with the recent fiscal legislation, which contains both cuts and increases in tax and spending," S&P said in a statement.

"At this time, it appears that meaningful tariff revenue has the potential to offset the deficit-

SEP AFFIRMS US ' AA+ ' CREDIT RATING,  
CITES TARIFF REVENUE



raising aspects of the recent budget legislation."

The US reported a \$21 billion jump in customs duty collections from Trump's tariffs in July, but the government budget deficit still grew nearly 20% in the same month to \$291 billion.

Since returning to power in January this year, Trump has

launched a global trade war with tariffs targeting individual products and countries.

The president has set a baseline tariff of 10% on all imports to the US, along with additional duties on certain products or countries.

S&P said the outlook on the US rating remains stable.

The ratings agency expects the Federal Reserve, which Trump has often criticised for not cutting rates quickly, "to navigate the challenges of lowering domestic inflation and addressing financial market vulnerabilities."

It projected the country's general government deficit to average 6.0% of GDP during the 2025-2028 period, down from 7.5% in 2024, and from an average 9.8% of GDP in 2020-2023.

Peer Moody's downgraded the US sovereign debt rating in May, citing rising debt. — Reuters

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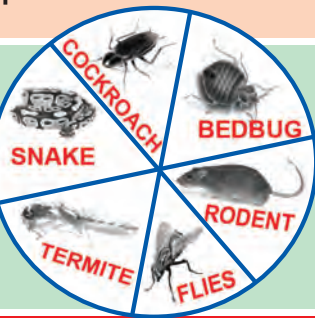
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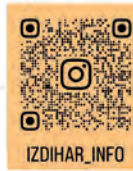
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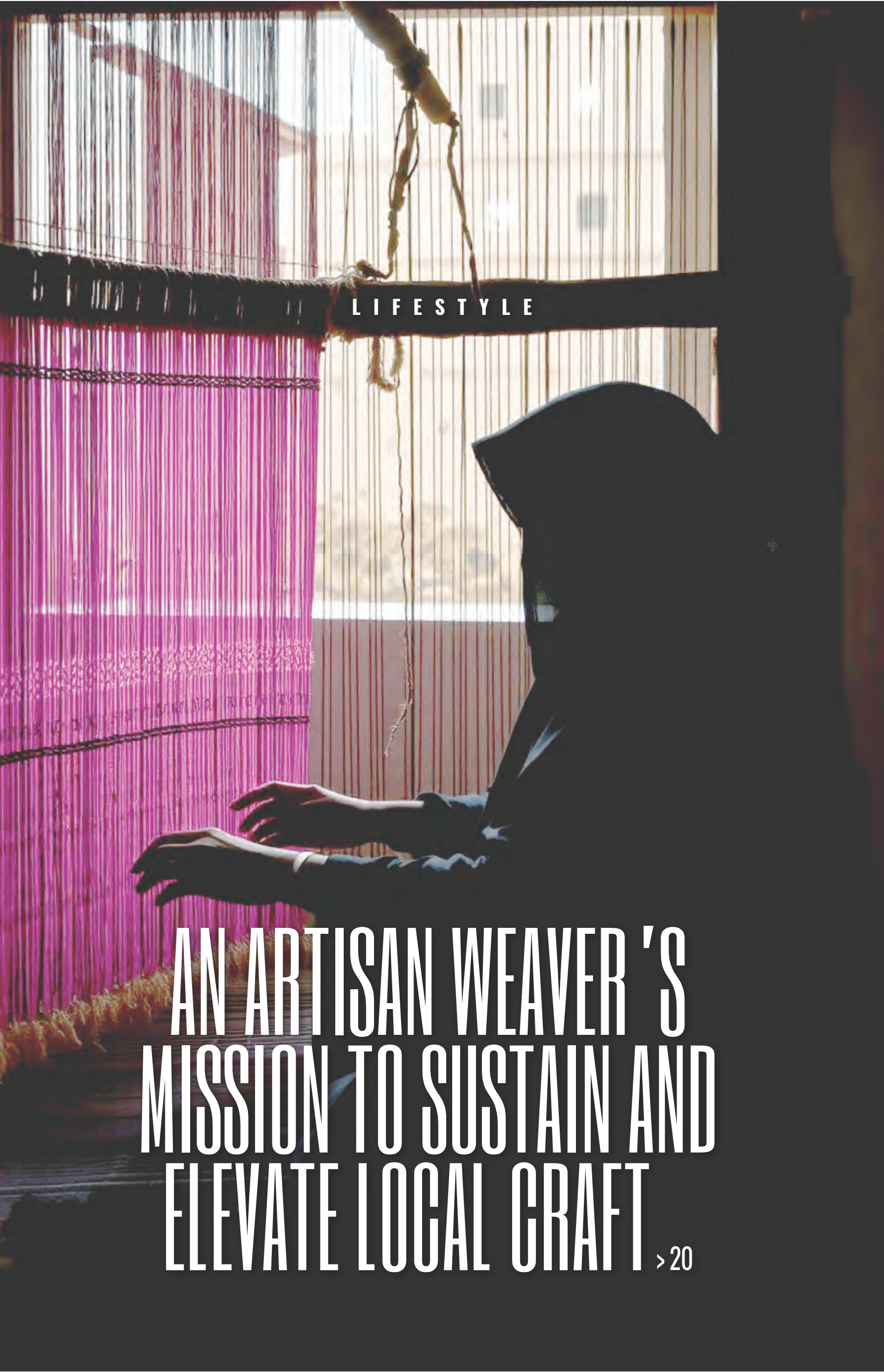


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# ART/LIFE



L I F E S T Y L E

## AN ARTISAN WEAVER'S MISSION TO SUSTAIN AND ELEVATE LOCAL CRAFT > 20

LIFESTYLE

Watchmaker  
Swatch apologises  
for ‘slanted eye’  
ad after online  
backlash in China



SWISS WATCHMAKER Swatch issued an apology at the weekend and pulled ads featuring images of an Asian male model pulling the corners of his eyes up and backwards in a “slanted eye” pose.

The images for the Swatch Essentials collection were widely condemned online in China, where many comments said they appeared to mimic racist taunts about Asian eyes.

Shares in the company slipped by as much as 2.7% in early trading on Monday before paring losses somewhat.

“When I saw this news, I was quite shocked. Swatch has been in the Chinese market for many years and I feel like most people are familiar with the brand”, said 23-year-old student Justin Zhao. “I don’t know why they did it. They were able to somehow release this after going through numerous approvals”.

In an apology posted in both Chinese and English on its official account on the Weibo social media platform on Saturday, Swatch said that it had “taken note of the recent concerns” and removed all related materials worldwide.

“We sincerely apologise for any distress or misunderstanding this may have caused”, the statement said. It also posted the same apology on Instagram.

Swatch Group did not immediately respond to a Reuters request for further comment.

The criticism over the advert is the latest setback for a firm whose shares have fallen by more than half since early 2023 and now faces a 39% tariff on its exports to the United States.

Swatch, which also makes Omega, Longines and Tissot watches, relied on China, Hong Kong and Macau for around 27% of group sales last year.

Revenue for the watchmaker slumped 14.6% to 6.74 billion Swiss francs (\$8.4 billion) in 2024, hit by a downturn in demand in China, where Swatch said it was seeing “persistently difficult market conditions and weak demand for consumer goods overall”.

Peter Xu, a fashion influencer in China with over seven million Weibo followers, said he believed the controversy would impact Swatch’s business in China, but given the speed of the apology, the fallout was likely to be relatively short-term.

“It was pretty stupid to release images like those ones”, he said. — Reuters

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



TRAVEL

People walk past a field of summer cypress (front) and sunflowers (back) at Hitachi Seaside Park in Hitachinaka, Ibaraki prefecture. — AFP



MUSIC

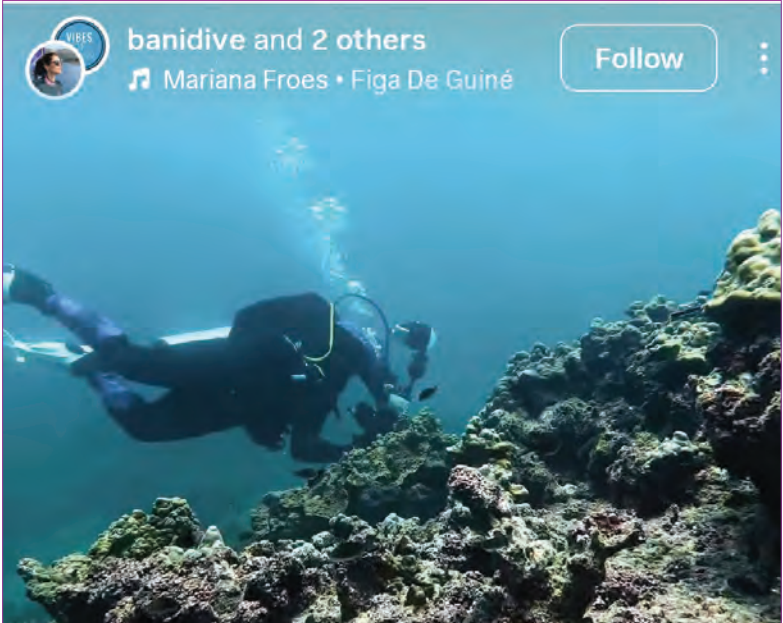
Conan Gray performs on the ‘TODAY’ show as part of the Citi Concert Series in New York City. — Reuters



AUCTION

A gallery assistant poses with a set design used in the TV series Downton Abbey, during a press preview for the Downton Abbey farewell exhibition. — AFP

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Fans descend on Dublin as Oasis return to Ireland after 16 years



TENS OF thousands of Oasis fans will descend on Ireland’s capital for the first of two sold-out gigs at the country’s largest stadium.

The 90s Britpop superstars will perform to 80,000 people at Croke Park on Saturday and Sunday nights.

After an ‘in-demand’ dynamic pricing model left a poor taste for some fans last year, ticket-holders will roll with it and enjoy the music in temperatures of up to 24 degrees Celsius.

Health officials have advised revellers to wear their bucket hats, with high UV levels amidst warm and dry sunny spells in Dublin on Saturday.

The band’s first gig in the country since 2009, the Dublin leg of the reunion world tour will hold a special meaning for once-feuding brothers Noel and Liam Gallagher.

The Mancunian brothers have spoken about their ties to Ireland through their Irish-born parents, Peggy and Thomas.

The support acts for the Dublin dates are Richard Ashcroft from The Verve and Cash, formed by John Power after he left The La’s.

The setlist includes crowd-pleasing hits such as Cigarettes & Alcohol, Wonderwall and Don’t Look Back in Anger.

Fans have also been treated to favourites including Acquiesce, Some Might Say and Morning Glory — before a crescendo of Don’t Look Back in Anger, Wonderwall and Champagne Supernova.

Oasis announced their reunion tour in August last year, 16 years after their dramatic split in 2009, when Noel quit following a backstage brawl at the Rock en Seine festival in Paris.

The highly anticipated 41-date run has already seen the band play Cardiff, Manchester, London and Edinburgh before taking them halfway across the world to major cities, including in the United States, Canada, Mexico, Australia and Japan. — PA Media/dpa



‘Mamma Mia!’ is back on Broadway. But did it ever really leave?

**ABBA** jukebox musical “Mamma Mia!” is back on Broadway, but don’t call it a revival. No, this is “a return engagement” of the initial New York staging, which closed 10 years ago. You might interpret that move as a reluctance by the show’s producers to spend financial and creative capital on a new version when they can bank on audiences eager to see the ur-feel good show in its original state. Or you could see it as the closest we may ever come to a real-life time loop.

Whether it’s successive generations discovering, like clockwork, Abba’s music or the unsinkable “Mamma Mia!” itself, anything related to the Swedish quartet seems to reset every time the world appears ready to move on. Even the band’s name is a palindromic perfect circle with no end or maybe no escape.

Similarly, the echo-y title of the musical is made up of just three letters forming an infinite hall of mirrors. An appropriate image, because since its world premiere in 1999 in London — where it has been playing since — “Mamma Mia!” has been an everlasting part of the pop-culture landscape.

From a wider angle, the show’s influence reverberates all over commercial theatre, where it ushered in the modern era of jukebox musicals, which for the most part used to be revues organised around a genre, a scene or a musician — think “Buddy: The Buddy Holly Story”, “Smokey Joe’s Cafe” or “Jelly’s Last Jam”. With “Mamma Mia!” came story-driven books, as well as an often close collaboration with the songs’ creators (a trend illustrated by the artistic and commercial successes of the Alicia Keys musical, “Hell’s Kitchen” and “& Juliet”, featuring the music of Swedish songwriter and producer Max Martin).

It feels as if at any given minute “Mamma Mia!” is playing somewhere in the world, on land or on sea. The immersive spinoff “Mamma Mia! The Party”, which is quite popular in Britain, has further



reinforced the image of “Mamma Mia!” as a beloved escape hatch from any gray day. The 2008 film version was the highest-grossing adaptation of a Broadway musical until Jon M Chu’s “Wicked” came along and even the misfire of a sequel, “Mamma Mia! Here We Go Again” (2018), did not inflict a mortal wound to the brand.

Now it is back at the Winter Garden, where “Mamma Mia!” had its Broadway opening in 2001 and where the 25th-anniversary North American tour is making a pit stop before heading to Wilmington, North Carolina, in March. (Shows picking up where they left off is a bit of a thing on Broadway this fall, with the “Beetlejuice” tour also having a layover, possibly because some hard-core fans said the title three times). Despite being slightly downscaled for the road — most notably in a set that feels a little flimsy — this is a fine iteration of “Mamma Mia!” It certainly is sprightlier than it

was the last time I saw the show, dejectedly limping towards the end of the first Broadway run. The band, under Will Van Dyke’s direction, was percolating with precise energy at the performance I attended and the cast members had a spring in their step moving through Phyllida Lloyd’s staging and Anthony Van Laast’s choreography.

Now, if we must, a quick plot recap for those who have somehow avoided the “Mamma Mia!” orbital pull. On the eve of her wedding, 20-year-old Sophie (Amy Weaver) lures three men to the Greek island where she lives so she can suss out which one is her dad. Her mother, Donna (Christine Sherrill), isn’t thrilled to see her old flings resurface, but at least she gets moral support from her besties, Rosie and Tanya (the scene-stealing Carly Sakolove and Jalynn Steele, both in great comic form).

Of course, it’s possible to nitpick. A quarter-century in and some plot points will never make sense. (Where and how did Sophie meet her two best friends again?) And though Sherrill is a powerful belter, she has a certain steeliness that saps Donna’s 11 o’clock number, “The Winner Takes It All”, from the required pathos and vulnerability.

As sunny as the musical is, its score is by a band that came from the “melancholy belt, sometimes mistaken for the vodka belt”, as Abba’s Benny Andersson put it in 2010 during his acceptance speech at the band’s induction to the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame. The secret sauce of many of the songs is that they are dopamine hits with a blue chaser.

“Mamma Mia!” is based on Abba material, so it reflects that band’s style and the musical’s very structure also nods to the famous circular name: The show starts with Sophie wistfully warbling a snippet of “I Have a Dream” and returns to that song at the end. Or rather at the fake end, because after the curtain call comes a stand-alone encore (a move later imitated in jukeboxes like “Tina: The Tina Turner Musical”). You think it’s over, but it’s not, because nothing ever really ends in the Abbaverse. — NYT

FEATURES



The course was intensely focused on teaching every nuance of the handloom craft and she dedicated herself fully to mastering these traditional techniques. Her passion for weaving grew as she extended her training, eventually establishing a modest workshop within her home. Her days were split between intensive training sessions and practical work at her loom, a process that exemplifies sustained dedication.

Her portfolio of woven items includes traditional head coverings called sabaiyat, mats, tablecloths, belts and the distinctive sashes worn with the national khanjar. Each piece reflects meticulous craftsmanship, with geometric patterns that echo the artistry woven into Oman's cultural identity. Tahira's creations are more than mere textiles; they are tangible links to the past, symbols of Omani heritage in a rapidly changing world.



One of Tahira's most notable achievements was her daring attempt to construct a wooden handloom — revered as a rare feat across Oman. After numerous trials, her success garnered recognition from the Training Centre, which produced a short film celebrating her achievement. Today, she owns several types of looms and has become an influential figure in her community and beyond, even competing in the Sultan Qaboos Award for Craft Excellence with her woven belts and reaching the final stages.

Her efforts have been acknowledged not just locally but internationally. Tahira participated in the World Crafts Council Award of Excellence in Iran, where she was honoured for her wall hangings. Her talent and dedication earned her multiple awards, such as the Best Home Project in the Entrepreneurship Award and recognition by the Ministry of Social Development on Omani Women's Day. In 2023, she was awarded a special accolade in the Al Roya Economic Award for her work in home-based crafts.

Beyond her craft, Tahira plays a nurturing role as a mentor. She has supervised ten trainees, providing them with looms and guidance; and she has specifically worked with individuals with disabilities, encouraging their creative development. Her contributions extend into education, having conducted workshops at the Oman Across Ages Museum as part of the "Craft" programme and authored a detailed manual for hand

weaving.

In weaving her stories, Tahira employs traditional tools — handlooms, cotton and zari threads — staying true to the roots of her craft while finding innovative ways to keep it relevant. She also possesses a rare finesse for maintaining and repairing looms herself, ensuring the longevity of her tools and skills.

Yet her journey was not without hardship. Securing a loom initially proved difficult, a challenge faced by many artisans in Oman. Nonetheless, her perseverance paid off, inspiring others in her community. She advocates for the younger generation to embrace traditional crafts, warning that without continual practice, innovation and transmission, these vital aspects of cultural identity risk fading away.

Oman's cultural landscape has historically been shaped by movements like the Arts and Crafts Movement in Britain, which emphasised the importance of handcrafted goods and their cultural value.

The movement influenced many artisans worldwide, including Oman's, fostering a sense of pride and a collective effort to preserve traditional arts. Today, the government actively supports such initiatives through funding, recognition programmes and educational campaigns aimed at revitalising local crafts.



Nevertheless, artisans face common hurdles — access to quality raw materials, modern market channels and the high costs of equipment. These challenges threaten the sustainability of their craft, making dedicated advocates and government support crucial. Tahira's story exemplifies how individual commitment, paired with supportive policies, can keep cultural professions alive.

Her work underscores the importance of initiatives like the government-funded training programmes, which provide artisans with resources, exposure and platforms to showcase their skills. These efforts are vital because they help preserve traditional knowledge while encouraging innovation to adapt these crafts to contemporary tastes.

# AN ARTISAN WEAVER 'S MISSION TO SUSTAIN AND ELEVATE LOCAL CRAFT

ARWA AL HASHIMI

**IN THE** quiet town of Samayil, a place steeped in history and traditional craftsmanship, Tahira bint Ali al Diriyah stands as a beacon of cultural preservation. Her work in hand weaving is not only a testament to individual skill but also a vital effort in safeguarding Oman's rich heritage, especially amidst the larger context of the nation's cultural revival and the ongoing challenges faced by artisans today.

Tahira's journey began in 2014 when she enrolled in a rigorous two-year programme at the Training and Textile Production Centre in Samayil.