

O M A N
Observer
D A I L Y

SUNRISE 05:28 AM

PRAYER TIMINGS

FAJR 04:02 AM

DHUHR 12:18 PM

ASR 03:37 PM

MAGHRIB 07:02 PM

ISHA 08:23 PM

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SWIATEK DESTROYS ANISIMOVA TO WIN FIRST WIMBLEDON TITLE

INBRIEF

HM SENDS GREETINGS TO MONTENEGRO

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Jakov Milatovic of Montenegro on the occasion of his country’s National Day. His Majesty expressed his sincere wishes for this friendly country to achieve further progress and development at various levels. — ONA

COUNCIL CONCLUDES SESSION, ADVANCES 14 DRAFT LAWS

MUSCAT: Pursuant to the Royal Orders of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the State Council adjourned its second regular session of the eighth term. Khalid bin Ahmed al Saadi, Secretary-General of the State Council, confirmed that this session had seen intense legislative activities with the State Council discussing 14 draft laws and amending several existing laws spanning various sectors including economy, education, health and technology. The discussion of the draft laws comes within the framework of the State Council’s efforts to enhance the investment environment and improve social services. SEE ALSO P2

TOURISM GENERATES RO 2.7 BILLION IN GDP



MUSCAT: Oman’s tourism sector contributed RO 2.7 billion to the country’s GDP in 2024, up from RO 2.3 billion in 2018. Total tourism consumption reached RO 1.02 billion, while direct tourism value added grew by 5.3 per cent to RO 1.09 billion. This underscores the sector’s expanding impact on the national economy and its role in job creation and diversification. Salim bin Mohammed al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism, attributed the strong performance to government policies, infrastructure improvements, and promotional campaigns. Oman welcomed 3.8 million visitors last year. SEE P15

Sayyid Theyazin flags off training for students

MUSCAT: HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, launched the second edition of the Military Discipline Programme for school students, set to take place in Dhofar Governorate from July 13 to August 6. The programme, overseen by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth with support from various military, security and relevant government institutions, aims to achieve its intended objectives and national goals. HH Sayyid Theyazin emphasised that the programme aligns with



national efforts to hone youth skills and channel their energies towards nation-building. This year, he said, it targets 850 students from across the Sultanate of Oman through an integrated training programme in Dhofar, focusing on reinforcing values of citizenship, identity and self-discipline via cultural, training and sports activities. These initiatives, affirmed HH Sayyid Theyazin, reflect the objectives of Oman Vision 2040 in empowering Omani youth as a national priority and enhancing their active role in development. “The successes of

the first edition — evident in the heightened awareness, discipline and responsibility among students — serve as strong motivation to further develop this second edition into a model training programme. It aims to prepare a generation capable of facing future challenges.” The ministry reaffirmed its commitment to initiatives that invest in youth potential and instil a spirit of dedication and belonging, supporting Oman’s ongoing development and prosperity under the wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik. — ONA

KHAREEF RUSH TESTS OMAN’S TOP CLASS ROADS

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, JULY 12

AS the annual monsoon transforms southern Oman into a green paradise, the country’s most iconic road — stretching over 1,000 kilometres from the capital Muscat to Salalah — is once again under the spotlight. Known for its engineering excellence and desert vistas, the route is a vital national artery connecting the nation’s northern and southern regions. But with record numbers of travellers using the road during summer, officials are warning that good infrastructure alone cannot prevent road accidents. Oman is widely recognised for the quality of its road network. In the 2025 World Population Review, the country ranked eighth globally — ahead of France and Japan — and second in the Arab world, scoring 5.96 out of 7 for road infrastructure. These high marks reflect a decade of sustained investment in highways, including the Sultan Taimur bin Faisal Road, Sultan Turki bin Said Road and dual-lane corridors across mountainous terrain. Still, the journey from Muscat to Salalah, remains challenging. The route spans vast deserts and rugged mountains; and during the Khareef Dhofar Season — when Dhofar Governorate becomes a rare oasis of rain, mist and greenery — traffic volumes surge dramatically.



The Arqut-Sarfait road in Dhofar

Record traffic on the scenic Sultan Said bin Taimur (Muscat–Salalah) road underscores the need for caution, despite world-class infrastructure

Ali al Balushi, an operations supervisor at a tour company in Muscat, said his company operates daily trips between Muscat and Salalah during summer. He noted that it is the busiest season of the year and that drivers are required to rest every four hours. He explained that the company uses GPS to monitor driver speeds, but ultimately, accidents occur due to human error and reckless behaviour, not the condition of the roads. To reduce fatigue-related incidents, the authorities encourage

travellers to plan regular stops along the route. The Wilayats of Adam, Haima and Thamrait serve as practical points for refuelling, rest and safety checks before entering the mountain roads leading into Salalah. In response to the growing risks during peak months, the Royal Oman Police and the Ministry of Health have stepped up safety operations this year. These include mobile ambulance units, additional traffic patrols and checkpoint enforcement in areas known for speeding and dangerous overtaking. TURN TO P2

Gaza truce talks stall over Israel withdrawal; 17 killed in aid hub

GAZA: Talks aimed at securing a ceasefire in Gaza are stalling over the extent of Israeli forces’ withdrawal from the Palestinian enclave, Palestinian and Israeli sources familiar with the negotiations in Doha said on Saturday. The indirect talks over a US proposal for a 60-day ceasefire are nonetheless expected to continue, the sources said. In Gaza, medics said 17 people trying to get food aid were killed on Saturday when Israeli troops opened fire, the latest mass shooting around a US-backed aid distribution system that the UN says has resulted in 800 people killed in six weeks.



A man carries a bag of flour at a UN World Food Programme (WFP) warehouse on Al Jalaa street in Gaza City on Saturday. — AFP

Witnesses who spoke to Reuters described people being shot in the head and torso. The Israeli military said its troops had fired warning shots, but that its review of the incident had found no evidence of anyone hurt by its soldiers’ fire. Delegations from Israel and Hamas have been in Qatar for a week in a renewed push for an agreement which envisages a phased release of hostages, Israeli troop withdrawals and discussions on ending the war. US President Donald Trump, who hosted Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu over the past week, had said he hoped for a deal soon. But the Israeli and Palestinian

sources described longstanding issues that remain unresolved. A Palestinian source said that Hamas had rejected withdrawal maps which Israel had proposed that would leave around 40 per cent of Gaza under Israeli control, including all of the southern area of Rafah and further territories in northern and eastern Gaza. Two Israeli sources said Hamas wanted Israel to retreat to lines it held in a previous ceasefire before it renewed its offensive in March. The Palestinian source said matters regarding aid and guarantees on an end to the war were also presenting a challenge. — AFP

OMAN

SHORT TAKES



EXIT AT BURJ AL SAHWA R/A CLOSED FOR MAINTENANCE

MUSCAT: As part of ongoing road maintenance works in Muscat Governorate and in cooperation with the Royal Oman Police, Muscat Municipality has announced the complete closure of the exit at Burj Al Sahwa Roundabout leading from Sultan Qaboos Street towards the Wilayats of Al Seeb, Barka and Suhar.

The closure will begin on Sunday evening, July 13 and continue until August 14, 2025. The work aims to repair a damaged section of the street in the tunnel area. Muscat Municipality has urged all road users to exercise caution and adhere to traffic instructions during this period.



AL SHARQIYAH NORTH WITNESSES HEAVY RAINFALL

DIMA W'ATTAYEEN: Heavy to moderate rains fell in the Wilayats of Dima W'attayeen and Al Mudhaibi in Al Sharqiyah North Governorate causing flooding of wadis.

Several villages along the eastern Al Hajar Mountains range and the villages of Mas, Al Subul, Naqsi, Mahlah and Jabal Qa'bat in In the Wilayat of Dima W'attayeen, experienced heavy to moderate rainfall. The rains flooded the wadis of Naqsi, Ham and Al Rayhani among other wadis. The villages of Al Rawdah, Al Wariyah, Al Misfah and Baad as well as a number of villages in the Niyabat of Samad Al Shaan in the Wilayat of Al Mudhaibi, witnessed heavy to medium rainfall. As a result, some wadis overflowed including Baad and Al Wariyah wadis, Al Jarda wadi, Al Rak wadi, Al Rawdah wadi. — ONA

Khareef rush tests Oman's top class roads

FROM PAGE 1

The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology has designated the Sultan Said bin Taimur (Nizwa-Salalah) highway as a strategic national corridor. The road is seen as a vital connector not only for tourism, but also for economic integration between Oman's northern and southern regions.

To ease pressure on the current road, Oman is undertaking one of the largest highway construction programmes in the region. The centrepiece of this effort is the new Sultan Said bin Taimur (Salalah Highway), which will extend 717 km and become the country's longest expressway.

In parallel, the government is finalising the dualisation of Sultan Said bin Taimur Road, a segment known for long desert stretches and limited overtaking zones. The upgrade is being completed in three phases, covering nearly 400 kilometres and valued at over RO 250 million. The improvements include expanded lanes, roadside lighting, flood drainage systems and improved signage for safer navigation.

Inside Salalah itself, Dhofar Municipality is moving ahead with a set of urban road projects to accommodate seasonal traffic and long-term growth. These include the dualisation of Sultan Qaboos Road, the construction of the Ittin Tunnel and the redevelopment of several interchanges and feeder roads, including the coastal route to Al Mughsail.

The total value of these city infrastructure upgrades exceeds RO 34 million.

Despite all these infrastructure gains, officials continue to stress that the most significant safety factor is still driver behaviour. Oman's roads are among the world's best, but every safe arrival still depends on what happens behind the wheel.

MoHT CELEBRATES TABSEEL SEASON AT AL MIRANI FORT

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabiyousef

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MoHT) under the auspices of Mahmoud bin Yahya al Thuhli, Governor of Al Sharqiyah North, celebrated the Tabseel season — a cherished part of Oman's agricultural and social heritage at Al Mirani Fort on Saturday.

Tabseel marks the harvesting, cooking and transformation of dates into traditional products rich in nutritional and economic value. Beyond being an agricultural practice, it embodies traditions of collective work and commercial exchange, particularly in Oman's interior regions.



The event featured a creative representation of Tabseel across four interactive stations.

Al Mirani Fort, a prominent historical landmark overlooking the Sea of Oman, was chosen deliberately for this event. "Omani forts have always symbolised the

deep connection between coast and interior, sea and palm groves, trade and heritage", said Safa al Balushi, Creative Director at Al Mirani Fort. "Tabseel season is a living expression of this bond, as dates were historically stored, sold and transported from oases to the coasts for maritime trade".

The event featured a creative representation of Tabseel across four interactive stations. At Martyrs' Square, visitors witnessed a live simulation of the stages of Tabseel — from harvesting to sorting and cooking. This was complemented by learning sessions from the 'Bsour' company, showcasing innovative contemporary products derived from dates.

Council wraps up session, advances 14 draft laws

PURSUANT to the Royal Orders of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the State Council adjourned its second regular session of the eighth term.

Khalid bin Ahmed al Saadi, Secretary-General of the State Council, confirmed that this session had seen intense legislative activities with the State Council discussing 14 draft laws and amending several existing laws spanning various sectors including economy, education, health and technology. The discussion of the draft laws comes within the framework of the State Council's efforts to enhance the investment environment and improve social services.

Al Saadi added: "The State Council's standing committees have also seen remarkable activities holding several meetings, studying priority topics and making important recommendations that were submitted to the plenary sessions for discussion and decision-making. During the second regular session of the eighth term, the State Council held 8 plenary sessions, during which it discussed 18 topics, which constituted the official framework for exercising the council's legislative powers.



KHALID BIN AHMED AL SAADI
Secretary-General of the State Council

During the second regular session of the eighth term, the State Council's standing committees held 72 main meetings and 90 subcommittee meetings.



During these sessions, the council discussed a number of draft laws including draft laws on Electronic Transactions, Public Health, Financial Law, Individual Income Tax and Regulating, Transferring and Transplanting Human Organs and Tissues".

Within the framework of constructive cooperation between the State Council and the Majlis Ash'shura, the two chambers held two joint sessions to discuss the articles of disagreements on a number of draft laws. The discussions resulted in full consensus on the disagreement clauses which resulted in the completion of the draft laws, he said.

The State Council's office held 6 meetings during which it discussed sixty topics and took 45 decisions, mostly relating to plenary

session arrangements, committee coordination, member proposals and the management of the council's administrative affairs, Al Saadi said.

During the second regular session of the eighth term, the State Council's standing committees held 72 main meetings and 90 subcommittee meetings. The committees hosted 45 officials from the public and private sectors, he said.

The State Council participated in a number of international meetings, most notably the meetings of the Gulf Legislative Councils, the Arab Parliament, the Union of Parliaments of Member States of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the parliaments of neighbouring countries and regional organisations, Al Saadi concluded.

— ONA

Retailers in Oman told to use approved standard bags

VINOD R NAIR
MUSCAT, JULY 12

The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) has authorised shopping centres and retail stores to offer single-use bags free of charge as part of the basic service offered to consumers, provided they comply with approved specifications and technical regulations and are environment-friendly and of a suitable size that meets usage requirements.

Many commercial establishments provide additional bag options at reasonable and disclosed fees to consumers, while ensuring that the option of a free bag is neither removed nor replaced, as it constitutes part of the basic service, the statement said.

The bag provision policy must be communicated at points of sale to enhance transparency and prevent consumers from bearing unjustified costs, in line with best practices adopted in certain commercial activities.



From July 1, Oman implemented the third phase of its nationwide single-use plastic bag ban

MoCIIP and the Consumer Protection Authority (CPA) said that this directive comes within the framework of their mandate to regulate commercial activities and ensure that establishments adhere to standards that guarantee consumer protection and enhance the quality of services provided, in a manner that achieves a balance between the interests of the merchant and the rights of the consumer. The

decision is also based on the role of authorities in ensuring the provision of goods and services of appropriate quality and is keen to promote the principle of consumer rights protection and ensure service provision by approved standards.

MoCIIP and the Consumer Protection Authority (CPA) added that this directive falls within their jurisdiction to regulate commercial activities and ensure that establishments

comply with standards that safeguard consumer rights and enhance the quality of services provided, thereby achieving a balance between the interests of traders and the rights of consumers.

From July 1, Oman implemented the third phase of its nationwide single-use plastic bag ban, expanding it to the retail and food sectors. The Environment Authority (EA) confirmed that this new phase will include fruit and vegetable shops, grocery stores, packaging units, candy factories, bakeries, sweet shops, gift stores and outlets selling bread, pastries and confectionery.

Businesses in these categories must now switch to eco-friendly alternatives like reusable cloth or paper bags. The plastic bag ban was first launched on July 1, 2024, targeting pharmacies, hospitals and clinics. The second phase followed in January 2025, affecting textile stores, eyewear shops, mobile phone vendors, furniture stores and household goods outlets.

SHORT TAKES



Musandam Governorate honoured at the WSIS 2025 in Geneva

MUSANDAM HONoured AT WSIS FOR SMART LIGHTING

GENEVA: Musandam Governorate was honoured at the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS 2025) in Geneva, organised by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), for its innovative smart street lighting project utilising Internet of Things (IoT) technologies. The project was recognised as one of the best entries for its sustainability and practical applicability.

The WSIS competition’s supervisory committee and judging experts praised the project as a practical model that can be replicated in diverse urban environments, thanks to its technical innovation and alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Amna bint Mohammed al Shihiyah, Director of the Information Technology Department at the General Directorate of Administrative and Financial Affairs in Musandam Governorate, explained that the project is built on an integrated technical framework. It involves installing smart sensors and devices in lighting poles that collect data on natural light intensity, pedestrian and vehicle movement, weather conditions and the condition of the fixtures themselves. — ONA



Ambassador Aryal distributes certificate to a participant

NEPAL EMBASSY HOSTS LITERATURE, LABOUR EVENT

MUSCAT: The Embassy of Nepal in Muscat organised a special Literature and Labour Awareness Programme in collaboration with the International Nepali Literature Society, Oman. The event took place at Nepal House and aims to raise awareness on labour-related issues through literary expression, while celebrating and promoting the richness of Nepali language, literature and culture in honour of Adikabi Bhanu Bhakta Acharya, Nepal’s first poet.

In his welcome address, Ambassador Aryal paid tribute to Bhanu Bhakta, highlighting his immense contributions to Nepali literature. He also underlined several important topics related to labour awareness, including the importance of preparing essential documents and promoting safe practices for foreign employment.

About 18 participants shared their original works, each receiving a certificate of appreciation and a token of gratitude for their valuable contributions. The programme was jointly conducted by Bishesh Kumar Sah, Deputy Chief of Mission at the Embassy of Nepal and Bikash Ghale, representative of the International Nepali Literature Society, Oman.

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, JULY 12

As temperatures soar during the summer months, the Sultanate of Oman faces increased risks of skin diseases, especially among children, the elderly and those with sensitive skin. In response, the Ministry of Health has issued a comprehensive awareness bulletin outlining common seasonal skin conditions and practical steps for prevention.

One of the most frequent issues is sunburn, which causes redness, pain and peeling from excessive sun exposure. The Ministry recommends using sunscreen with an SPF of at least 30, avoiding sun during peak hours and wearing protective clothing and hats.

Heat rash is another common concern, appearing as red, itchy bumps in sweat-prone areas. Preventive measures include taking regular showers, wearing light, loose

cotton clothing and allowing the skin to breathe.

Tinea versicolor, a fungal infection causing scaly, itchy patches, can also spread in hot weather. To prevent it, the Ministry advises minimising sweating, wearing cotton clothes, avoiding skin oils and using antifungal shampoo when needed.

Sun-induced allergies can cause itchy rashes in some individuals after sun exposure. Those affected

are advised to avoid sunlight, use appropriate sunscreen and consult a dermatologist if symptoms arise.

Conditions such as ulcers and eczema often worsen during summer due to dryness, resulting in cracked, itchy skin. The Ministry recommends frequent moisturizing, bathing in lukewarm water, avoiding harsh soaps and wearing cotton clothing to reduce irritation.

Dr Mona Mohammed, general practitioner, noted that high

temperatures and humidity create ideal conditions, especially as outdoor activities increase.

“Many cases we see could be easily prevented by using sunscreen, maintaining personal hygiene and ensuring proper ventilation”, she said. She also advised individuals with chronic conditions like eczema or psoriasis to stick to their treatment plans and consult their dermatologist promptly if symptoms change.

OMAN, BULGARIA TO BOOST ECONOMIC TIES

SOFIA: The Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Bulgaria discussed strengthening economic and investment cooperation between the two countries, leveraging experiences in creating investment-friendly environments, designing investor incentives, economic planning and promoting innovation in economic analysis and studies.

This came during meetings held by Dr Said bin Mohammed al Saqri, Minister of Economy, with several Bulgarian officials in Sofia.

In his meeting with Tomislav Donchev, Deputy Prime Minister



Dr Said bin Mohammed al Saqri, Minister of Economy, holds talks with Bulgarian officials

and Minister of Innovation and Growth, Al Saqri reviewed the development of bilateral relations and the opportunities presented by economic and investment

coordination. During his meeting with Petar Dilov, Minister of Economy and Industry, Al Saqri discussed cooperation mechanisms in economic and industrial policies, digital transformation programmes, best practices in export support policies and the promotion of industrial investment.

The Minister of Economy and Yulian Balchev, Secretary-General of the Bulgarian Investment Agency, also exchanged insights on attracting foreign investment, investment incentives and the competitiveness of the investment climate. — ONA

Child Care Centre focuses on growth, integration

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, JULY 12

THE Child Care and Youth Homes Centre is the only centre in the Sultanate of Oman dedicated to caring for children and youth without family care. Under the Ministry of Social Development (MoSD), the Centre continues to provide advanced and diverse services to this important group, while constantly improving and introducing new initiatives.

The Centre implements a wide range of programmes and activities designed to develop children and youth, address their needs and build their personalities. These efforts instill core values, develop skills and talents, enhance self-confidence and promote active integration into society through participation in various community events.

For 2025, the Centre’s annual plan includes 43 approved programmes, of which 22 have been implemented and completed. Additionally, 32 extra programmes have been carried out in cooperation with civil society organisations.

A major milestone was the



The Centre continues to provide advanced and diverse services to children and youth

The Centre’s mission is to find families for children deprived of family care and to help them determine their future

implementation of the alternative family system in 2010, tailored to Omani social customs and Islamic values. The Centre is operated by qualified national staff and continuously adapts its care model to ensure a nurturing environment.

Salah al Daihani, Assistant Director, explained: “As part of

community integration efforts, the MoSD has established youth integration homes for male children aged 14 and above, located outside the Centre. This encourages coexistence with their peers without discrimination, fosters a sense of independence, builds self-confidence and promotes responsibility”.

The Centre’s core mission is to find families for children deprived of family care and to help them determine their future, enabling them to build lasting relationships in a family environment. According to the latest statistics, 83 children and young women currently reside within the Centre, while 77 young men live in youth homes outside the Centre.

The Centre actively supports higher education, with 18 young men and women currently enrolled in various university programmes. It also works to secure job opportunities tailored to each individual’s interests and qualifications, ensuring a sustainable future. To date, 49 young men and women have been successfully employed in both public and private sectors.

RG0 'S MUSIC BAND DAZZLES AT THE BASEL TATTOO FESTIVAL

BASEL: The Royal Guard of Oman’s (RGO) music band on Saturday conducted a concert at the 2025 Basel Tattoo festival held in Basel, Switzerland, as part of the international festival, which continues until July 21.

The participation came as a response to an official invitation from the Swiss Ministry of Defence reflecting the deep historical relations and cultural cooperation between the two friendly countries.

Brigadier General Ramis bin Jumaan al Awairah, Director-General of Music at the RGO, said: “The participation aimed to highlight the civilised and cultural image of the Sultanate of Oman. The Sultanate of Oman sees culture and arts as a means of spreading messages of peace



BRIGADIER GENERAL RAMIS BIN JUMAAN AL AWAIRAH

and cultural communication”.

The concert received a standing ovation from attendees and organisers who applauded the mesmerising performance of the RGO’s music band, which reflected the advanced and professional level of military music in the Sultanate of Oman. — ONA



RGO music band conducted a concert at the 2025 Basel Tattoo festival in Basel

MoH warns of summer skin risks, issues awareness bulletin

SPOTLIGHT



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AWAY ON HOLIDAY?

KEEP YOUR HOME SAFE



Notice and agenda of the General Meeting of the holders of Mandatory Convertible Bonds with the value of OMR 13,367,308.500 (to be referred to as the "Bonds" and the holders of such Bonds to be referred to as "Bondholders") issued by Oman International Development and Investment Company SAOG (the "Company").

The agent of the Bondholders, Muscat Clearing & Depository SAOC ("MCD"), has the pleasure to invite all Bondholders to attend the General Meeting ("GM") of the Bondholders scheduled to be held virtually through the electronic platform for general meetings accessible through the MCD's website (www.mcd.om), on 29 July 2025 at 15:00.

In the event the required quorum is not met to hold the first meeting, the second meeting shall take place on 30 July 2025 via the same electronic platform set out above at www.mcd.om to discuss the following agenda items:

- To approve the amendment of the Conversion Ratio of the Mandatory Convertible Bonds issued on 27 May 2024 with the value of OMR 13,367,308.500 (the **Bonds**) so that each Bond will be mandatorily converted to 0.35 equity shares at the fixed price of 286 baiza per share (**Reserved Matter**).
- To approve certain amendments to the Conditions of the issuance and rights inherent in the Bonds within the Declaration of Agency, as are necessary or desirable to implement and give effect to proposal item 1 and to ensure compliance with the relevant laws (specific amendments are more particularly detailed in the attachments hereto).
- To approve the sale of the balance of the aggregate fractional entitlement of the shares collated by the Issuer on the open market and the subsequent deposit of the sale proceeds into the accounts of shareholders in the investor protection account in the unclaimed fund of the Financial Services Authority, upon mandatory conversion.

In accordance with the Declaration of Agency, the agreements and the Financial Services Authority Rules Governing General Meetings through electronic means, please note the following:

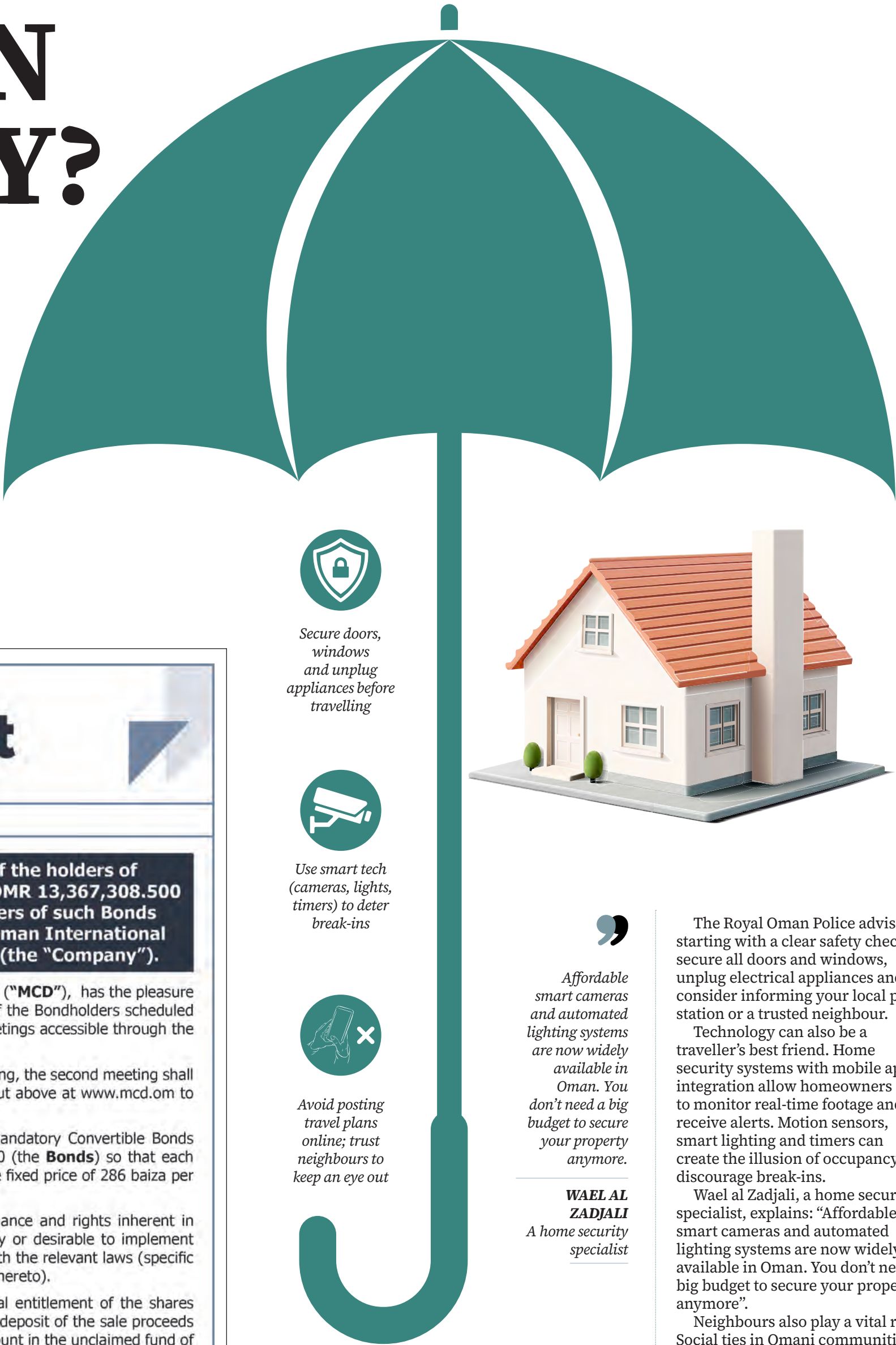
- Only a juristic / corporate entity may appoint a natural person to act on its behalf in connection with the meeting and any adjournment of the meeting, provided that the authorisation should be made in writing using the proxy form available at MCD or the Company and must be submitted electronically not less than 48 hours before the scheduled time of start of the meeting, i.e. by 15:00 on 27 July 2025 and the proxy should have an Investor Number from the MCD in order to vote.
- The voting on any of the items on the agenda shall begin through the online MCD platform from 15:00 on 26 July 2025 and until the voting is completed on the day of the meeting.

The specific amendments are more particularly detailed in attachments hereto which will be circulated to the Bondholders and will be available at the offices of the Company and the Bondholders' Agent from the date of this notice to the conclusion of the Meeting (or any adjourned Meeting).

For any inquiries, please contact Mr. Abdullah Al-Mandhari at MCD on +968 24822267 or Abdullahm@mcd.om

Transforming Businesses

to Enrich Societies



Secure doors, windows and unplug appliances before travelling



Use smart tech (cameras, lights, timers) to deter break-ins



Avoid posting travel plans online; trust neighbours to keep an eye out



Affordable smart cameras and automated lighting systems are now widely available in Oman. You don't need a big budget to secure your property anymore.

WAEEL AL ZADJALI
A home security specialist

BALQEES AL ORAIMI

MANY

Omanis and residents are preparing to jet off for holidays, family visits, or medical trips abroad. But amidst the excitement of booking flights and packing suitcases, one crucial question arises: Is your home safe while you're away?

Leaving a house unattended for weeks makes it vulnerable to burglary, electrical faults and accidents such as water leaks or fires. Authorities and security experts urge travellers to take preventive measures before heading out.



The Royal Oman Police advises starting with a clear safety checklist: secure all doors and windows, unplug electrical appliances and consider informing your local police station or a trusted neighbour.

Technology can also be a traveller's best friend. Home security systems with mobile app integration allow homeowners to monitor real-time footage and receive alerts. Motion sensors, smart lighting and timers can create the illusion of occupancy and discourage break-ins.

Wael al Zadjali, a home security specialist, explains: "Affordable smart cameras and automated lighting systems are now widely available in Oman. You don't need a big budget to secure your property anymore".

Neighbours also play a vital role. Social ties in Omani communities are strong and a friendly neighbour can act as a trusted guardian. "I always let my neighbour know when I'm away", says Abdullah Salim from Muscat. "He checks the house and clears any papers or flyers left outside the door".

To avoid drawing attention to an empty home, experts advise against announcing travel plans on social media — especially with specific dates. They also recommend switching off gas and water valves; and using timers to keep lights on and mimic daily life.

Whether you're gone for a weekend or a month, the message is clear: protecting your home while on holiday is not just about locks — it's about smart planning, community trust and staying vigilant. After all, the only thing better than a great vacation is coming back to a safe and secure home.

SHORT TAKES



ROP URGES CAUTION FOR KHAREEF TRIPS

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabiyoucef

The Royal Oman Police (ROP) have called motorists for prioritising safety and security of oneself as well as of others while visiting Dhofar Governorate during the Khareef Dhofar Season as chances of accidents are high due to climatic conditions.

Drizzles, reduced visibility, night driving, driving when fatigued, reckless driving and using mobile phone while driving have all taken a toll on the lives of many, according to the ROP.

“The Khareef Dhojar Season in Dhojar Governorate is a magical time when the mountains turn green, the skies pour gently and families head out to enjoy nature at its finest. However, accidents and other mishaps due to recklessness of may be one person, are seemed turning happy occasions into tragic moments”, an official from the ROP said.

"Every year during this season, we witness heartbreaking tragedies on the roads to Salalah, especially the stretch from Adam to Haima and Thamrait. This route, while scenic, is also incredibly dangerous. Motorists need to take extra caution while driving through this areas, chances of accidents are high".

“Most of the accidents on this road are preventable and when accidents happen, timely medical care can be a challenge depending on the location. Sometimes, the only hope is an airlift and unfortunately, not everyone makes it in time”, he adds.

Some tips for the drivers to follow are:

1. The particular stretch of the road is mostly single-lane with no proper dividers.
2. Since speed limits are not clearly enforced, it is always advisable to maintain a moderate speed.
3. Avoid driving at night and never attempt to drive while tired.
4. Be aware that camels are frequently known to cross the roads. Drivers should always be on the lookout for them.
5. Sandstorms, unpredictable weather, and even cyclones are reported in these areas.

Youth Complex reinvents as regional hub for events

KAUSHALENDRA SINGH
@patkaushal

The Sultan Qaboos Youth Complex for Culture and Entertainment continues to shape Salalah's identity as a major event and cultural destination, with record-breaking activity during the 2025 Khareef Dhofar Season. Evolving beyond its original mandate, the Complex now serves as a dynamic hub for creative expression, sports and youth engagement — attracting international attention.

Once celebrated for its architectural charm and scale, the Complex has matured into a symbol of Salalah's inclusive and modern cultural landscape. Since its inauguration in November 2016, the Complex has hosted thousands of events and its popularity is now reaching new heights – particularly among regional event planners and international cultural delegates.

“Every year, we are witnessing increased interest from international organisations looking to host conferences, festivals and workshops here”, said Saada bint Said Salim al Azriyah, Head of the Women’s Activities Department at the General Directorate of Culture, Sports and Youth in the Dhofar Governorate.

“During Khareef Dhofar Season 2025, we were operating at near full capacity with bookings ranging from tech symposiums to heritage festivals. The global buzz around

AWASR, DHOFAR MUNICIPALITY PARTNER TO BOOST SMART INFRASTRUCTURE

SALALAH: In a strategic move to accelerate digital transformation and strengthen digital infrastructure in Dhofar Governorate, Awsar has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Dhofar Municipality on July 10. The agreement outlines joint efforts to study and implement a range of advanced technology and service projects designed to enhance quality of life and improve public service efficiency across the region.

The MoU was formalised in Salalah by Dr Ahmed bin Mohsin al Ghassani, Chairman of Dhofar Municipality and Eng Adnan



*Dr Ahmed bin Mohsin al Ghassani
and Eng Adnan bin Mohd al Alawi*

Under this partnership, Awasr and Dhofar Municipality will collaborate on several initiatives, including the provision of managed

'Return of the Past' for Khareef Season launched

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, JULY 12

WITH a refreshed design that embraces heritage and Omani identity, Dhofar Municipality has launched the 'Return of the Past' event in the Al Saadah area, as one of the key attractions of the Khareef Dhofar Season 2025.

The event runs from July 10 to August 31, offering an immersive cultural experience that revives the essence of traditional Omani life from Dhofar's diverse environment and across the Sultanate of Oman.

'Return of the Past' brings to life the memory of Dhofar – its people, culture and customs – through a faithful recreation of the governorate's three traditional settings: the urban, rural and Bedouin environments. The event presents these lifestyles in engaging ways that connect younger generations to their heritage, bridging the past and present.

Visitors can explore the traditional souq corridors featuring handmade crafts and artisan products created by



The site hosts daily performances of the traditional Al Bara'a dance by local folk troupes

'Return of the Past' in Al Saadah presents lifestyles in engaging ways that connect younger generations to their heritage, bridging the past and present

skilled local hands. A popular corner offers authentic Omani dishes in a nostalgic setting that recalls the aromas and ambience of the past. The site also includes a village theatre that hosts daily performances of the traditional Al Bara'a dance by local folk troupes, alongside evening gatherings and interactive displays.

This year, the event also features the participation of several governorates, including Al Batinah North, Al Sharqiyah North & South and Al Dakhiliyah, each showcasing their cultural heritage throughout the season. Live performances

building smart infrastructure and achieving balanced urban and digital development”.

Eng Adnan bin Mohammed al Alawi, CEO of Awasr, added: “We are confident that this collaboration will yield transformative projects benefitting citizens, residents and tourists, while fostering smart, tech-enabled communities”.

Eugen Comendant, Chief Commercial Officer at Awars, also noted: "Providing managed Wi-Fi in parks and tourist destinations is a significant step in elevating the user experience in public spaces and creating new opportunities for digital engagement. This initiative not only supports infrastructure growth but also fosters interactive tourism promotion and safe, connected environments".



سلطنة عُمان
وزارة النقل والاتصالات وتقنية المعلومات
Sultanate of Oman
Ministry of Transport, Communications and
Information Technology



إعلان مناقصة Tender Notice

The Internal Tenders Committee at the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology invites for the Following Tenders:

TENDER NUMBER	TENDER NAME	DATE OF PUBLISHING	LAST DATE TO PURCHASE TENDER DOCUMENT	SUBMISSION DATE	COMPANIES WHO SHOULD PARTICIPATE IN THIS TENDER	DOCUMENT PRICE
118/2025/ MTCIT	MTCIT STAND COMEX DESIGN AND BUILD (2025)	10-7-2025	17-7-2025	10-7-2025	EXPERIENCED COMPANIES AND REGISTERED WITH THE PROJECT, TENDERS AND LOCAL CONTENT AUTHORITY (EXCELENCE & FIRST& SECOND & THIRD & FOURTH CLASSES)	(25/-) TEWENTY-FIVE OMANI RIALS (LOCAL AND REGIONAL COMPANIES) (10/-) TEN OMANI RIALS (SMEs) NON-REFUNDABLE

Interested Companies registered with the Projects, Tenders and Local Content Authority may obtain Tender documents from the E-Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of documents. Tenders should be submitted online on given website.

CORRESPONDANCE:

- Tender Inquiry: All correspondence pertaining to the TENDER Inquiry must be online at e-Tendering System. (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>)
- E-Tendering System Inquiry: All correspondence pertaining to the e-Tendering System technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number:
Tel: +968 24402200, e-mail: etenderhd@gstb.gov.om

INTERNAL TENDERS COMMITTEE

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WORLD

SHORT TAKES



Australian PM Anthony Albanese arrives at Shanghai Pudong International Airport in Shanghai. — Reuters

AUSTRALIA PM IN CHINA TO BOOST TRADE TIES

BEIJING: Anthony Albanese arrived in Shanghai on Saturday to kick off his second visit to China as Australian prime minister, seeking to bolster recently stabilised trade ties even as geopolitical tensions remain high. “Trade is now flowing freely, to the benefit of both countries and to people and businesses on both sides,” Albanese said ahead of the trip.

The Australian leader said upon arrival that “the full range of issues” would be on the table during discussions with Chinese leaders including President Xi Jinping, making the visit a tricky balancing act as economic and security priorities compete. “We cooperate where we can, we disagree where we must, and we’re able to have those honest conversations about some of the disagreements that are there,” Albanese said.

Beijing’s foreign ministry said earlier this week that ties between the countries “have continued to improve and grow”. “China hopes that through this visit, the two sides will strengthen communication, enhance mutual trust (and) expand practical cooperation,” ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning said. — AFP

LAVROV MEETS KIM, PRAISES ‘INVINCIBLE BROTHERHOOD’



North Korean leader Kim Jong Un shakes hands with Russian FM Sergei Lavrov during a meeting in Wonsan. — Reuters

SEOUL: Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov met North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in the coastal city of Wonsan on Saturday, where he described the two nations’ relations as “an invincible fighting brotherhood”, Russia’s foreign ministry said. The ministry quoted Lavrov as saying that the visit represented the continuation of “strategic dialogue” between the two sides inaugurated by Russian President Vladimir Putin’s visit to North Korea last year. Putin said that he hoped for more direct contacts in future.

Relations between the two countries deepened during the conflict in Ukraine. Thousands of North Korean troops were deployed during the months-long campaign to oust Ukrainian forces from Russia’s Kursk region, while Pyongyang has also supplied Russia with munitions. Lavrov also met with his North Korean counterpart.

“We exchanged views on the situation surrounding the Ukrainian crisis ... Our Korean friends confirmed their firm support for all the objectives of the special military operation, as well as for the actions of the Russian leadership and armed forces,” TASS reported Lavrov. — Reuters

WAVES OF DISPLACEMENT

Hundreds of Myanmar troops, civilians flee



More than 500 civilians and soldiers fled conflict in Myanmar and crossed into Thailand on Saturday after an assault by ethnic fighters on a military base. Saturday’s attack by the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) targeted a military base in Kayin state at around 3 pm local time. “The Myanmar soldiers attempted to resist and called for supporting firepower to defend their position but were ultimately unable to hold the line,” it said. — AFP

IRAN TO WORK WITH IAEA, BUT INSPECTIONS MAY BE RISKY

DUBAI: Iran plans to cooperate with the UN nuclear watchdog despite restrictions imposed by its parliament, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi said on Saturday, but stressed that access to its bombed nuclear sites posed security and safety issues. The new law stipulates that any future inspection of Iran’s nuclear sites by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) needs approval by the Supreme National Security Council, Iran’s top security body.

“The risk of spreading radioactive materials and the risk of exploding leftover munitions ... are serious,” state media cited Araqchi as saying. “For us, IAEA inspectors approaching nuclear sites has both a security aspect ... and the safety of the inspectors themselves is a matter that must be examined.”

While Iran’s cooperation with the nuclear watchdog has not stopped, it will take a new form and will be guided and managed through the Supreme National Security

Council, Araqchi told Tehran-based diplomats. “The IAEA’s requests for continued monitoring in Iran will be ...decided on a case-by-case basis by the Council with consideration to safety and security issues,” Araqchi said.

Iran will not agree to any nuclear deal that does not allow it to enrich uranium, Araqchi reiterated. Araqchi said Iran was carefully considering the details of any renewed nuclear talks with the US. — Reuters

Fuel to AI flight engines cut off just before crash

FUEL control switches to the engines of an Air India flight that crashed shortly after takeoff, killing 260 people, were moved from the “run” to the “cutoff” position moments before impact, a preliminary investigation report said on Saturday. The report, issued by India’s Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB), did not offer any conclusions or apportion blame for the June 12 disaster, but indicated that one pilot asked the other why he cut off fuel, and the second pilot responded that he had not. The Boeing 787-8 Dreamliner was headed from Ahmedabad in western India to London when it crashed, killing all but one of the 242 people on board as well as 19 people on the ground.



A firefighter stands next to the crashed Air India Boeing 787-8 Dreamliner, in Ahmedabad. — Reuters file photo

In its 15-page report, the investigation bureau said that once the aircraft achieved its top recorded speed, “the Engine 1 and Engine 2 fuel cutoff switches transitioned from RUN to CUTOFF position one after another with a time gap of 01 sec”. “In the cockpit voice recording, one of the pilots is heard asking the other why did he cutoff. The other pilot responded that he did not do so,” it said. The aircraft quickly began to lose altitude.

The switches then returned to the “RUN” position and the engines appeared to be gathering power, but “one of the pilots transmitted ‘MAYDAY MAYDAY MAYDAY’”, the report said. Air traffic controllers asked the pilots what was wrong, but then saw the plane crashing and called emergency personnel to the scene.

Civil aviation minister Ram Mohan Naidu Kinjarapu told reporters that investigators probed in a “mature, transparent” way. “This is a preliminary report. We want the final report to come in, so let us wait for it,” he said. Earlier this week, specialist website The Air Current, citing multiple sources familiar with the probe, reported it had “narrowed its focus to the movement of the engine fuel switches”, while noting that full analysis will “take months — if not longer”. It added that “the focus of the investigators could change during that time”.

The Indian agency’s report said the US Federal Aviation Administration had issued an information bulletin in 2018 about “the potential disengagement of the

fuel control switch locking feature”. Though the concern was not considered an “unsafe condition” that would warrant a more serious directive, Air India told investigators it did not carry out suggested inspections as they were “advisory and not mandatory”. Air India was compliant with all airworthiness directives and alert service bulletins on the aircraft, the report said.

The investigations bureau said there were “no recommended actions to B787-8 and/or GE GENx-1B engine operators and manufacturers”, suggesting no technical issues with the engines (GE) or the aircraft (Boeing).

The bureau said the investigation was ongoing, and that additional evidence and information had been “sought from the stakeholders”. — AFP



620 RUSSIAN BARRAGES HIT UKRAINE

KYIV: Russia fired more than 620 drones and long-range missiles overnight killing four people, Ukraine said on Saturday, calling for fresh sanctions on Moscow to halt its wave of record barrages. “Twenty-six cruise missiles and 597 attack drones were launched, of which more than half were ‘Shaheds’,” Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said.

The Ukrainian air force said it had downed 319 drones and 25 missiles, adding that one missile and about 20 drones hit “five locations”. Zelensky said the strikes had killed at least two people and wounded 20 in the southwestern Chernivtsi region, far from the front lines. — AFP

ENERGY COOPERATION

Azerbaijan offers gas supply to Syria



Azerbaijan will send its gas to Syria in a bid to address the country’s energy shortages, Baku said as President Ilham Aliyev hosted Syria’s new leader Ahmed al-Sharaa. Ahmed al-Sharaa visited Azerbaijan and held talks with Aliyev, the presidency said. “The importance of cooperation between our countries, particularly in the energy sector, was highlighted at the meeting, and it was reported that Syria is currently facing a serious energy problem,” it said. — AFP

HISTORY NEW PAGE

Erdogan hails Kurdish PKK disarmament



Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan on Saturday called for full support of the disarmament of Kurdish militants that began with a handover of the first batch of weapons by Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) forces. “Today is a new day; a new page has opened in history. Today, the doors of a great, powerful Türkiye have been flung wide open,” Erdogan said. “I hope that our parliament will support this process with the broadest possible participation.” — Reuters

The New York Times

Earth is spinning faster and days are getting shorter



JACEY FORTIN

The author is a national reporter for The New York Times

It wouldn't be summer without the stretched out days. The dawns break early and the dusks come late, affording more time for lazy beach trips and long barbecues under the slow curve of the sun. But when it comes to the full astronomical day — a single rotation of planet Earth in which the hour hand moves twice around a standard clock — some of this year's shortest are happening in July and August. This week has seen the shortest days of the year so far. According to data posted on Friday from the US Naval Observatory and the International Earth Rotation and Reference Systems Service, Wednesday's rotation was about 1.34 milliseconds less than 24 hours. More quick spins are expected later this month and in early August, according to predictions from the website Time and Date. This isn't completely out of the ordinary: Our world's spins have been faster than usual lately. The average day has mostly shortened over the past decade, and within the past five years or so, the full rotation has clocked in at a hair less than 24 hours more often than not. Factors driving the change include movements at Earth's core, atmospheric changes and the moon's position. But long-term trends do not suggest that the days will shorten in perpetuity. In fact, it is just the opposite. For many millennia, the days have been growing longer. A Tyrannosaurus

rex that lived 70 million years ago would have experienced an average daily rotation of about 23 1/2 hours, studies have found. The lengthening trend is expected to continue, said Clark R. Wilson, a research professor at the Center for Space Research at the University of Texas at Austin, though the process is so slow as to be "well beyond human time scales." The main reason has to do with energy lost from the tides. The moon's gravitational tug is responsible for tidal changes on Earth. Tidal currents heat the ocean very slightly, dissipating energy, which slows the rotation of Earth and lets the moon move farther away as time passes. Or, to put it in physicists' terms, the moon and Earth can be thought of as a single system whose total angular momentum — a measurement of its rotation — is constant. As the moon expands its orbit, and its angular momentum increases, Earth's angular momentum must decrease. Therefore, the days grow longer. But that is a process that takes billions of years and is complicated by short-term fluctuations. Centuries of data show that the speed of Earth's rotation has never been steady. There have been slow periods, like the early 1990s or 1970s, when the length of a day regularly surpassed 24 hours by more than 2 milliseconds. And there have been faster periods, like now. Many factors within and above Earth drive

The main reason has to do with energy lost from the tides. The moon's gravitational tug is responsible for tidal changes on Earth. Tidal currents heat the ocean very slightly, dissipating energy, which slows the rotation of Earth and lets the moon move farther away as time passes

these changes, and they can change from day to day or decade to decade. Movement of materials within the Earth, from the core to the mantle to the crust, can affect rotation speeds. Weather and long-term climate shifts can, too. "It's an extremely difficult problem, to untangle the different contributing factors," said Surendra Adhikari, a geophysicist at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory. All together, they create a sort of interference pattern that explains why the length of an Earth day has been wobbly for as long as humans have been able to measure it. Adhikari has also contributed to research showing that recent human-driven climate change could become a key driver of longer days. When ice melts into the sea, it spreads water away from the poles and toward the Equator. That makes the planet more oblate, which can slow its rotation — much like a spinning ice skater who rotates more slowly when his arms are spread out, and spins more quickly when he pulls his arms close. "All these effects interact in complex ways," said Nick Stamatakos, the head of the Earth Orientation Department at the US Naval Observatory. "And since the Earth is quite large and complex, and the changes we need to measure are very small, our ability to predict Earth motion is very challenging."

After Texas disaster, Trump shifts his tone on FEMA



LUKE BROADWATER

The writer covers the White House for The New York Times

JUST days into his second term, President Donald Trump said he was going to recommend that the Federal Emergency Management Agency "go away," dismissing the agency as bloated and ineffective. Kristi Noem, the secretary of homeland security, was even blunter during a March Cabinet meeting, when she said point-blank: "We are going to eliminate FEMA." But now, as the administration contends with the deadly flooding in Texas, Trump and his aides are no longer speaking about a wholesale demolishing of the agency. With the nation's attention focused on the need for the federal government to effectively respond to disasters, White House officials are emphasising instead their plans to overhaul the agency, saying that was the intent all along. "We want FEMA to work well," Russell Vought, the director of the Office of Management and Budget, told reporters on Friday. "And, you know, the president is going to continue to be asking tough questions from all of his agencies." The whipsawing remarks have added to a sense of confusion about the future of FEMA, which is struggling with the loss of top officials, including the departure of Cameron Hamilton as its acting director in May. Hamilton was pushed out of the job after he told members of Congress that the agency was vital to communities "in their greatest times of need," shortly after Noem testified that "FEMA as it exists today should be eliminated." FEMA, established in 1979 by President Jimmy Carter, coordinates the federal response to disasters, serving as a backstop for states if they cannot meet the needs on the ground.

In his criticism of the agency, Trump has argued that states, not the federal government, should take the lead in responding to disasters, which is how the system currently works. His exact position on what should be the fate of FEMA has been hard to nail down. At some points, the president has talked about doing away with it. During a trip to hurricane-ravaged North Carolina in January, Trump attacked the agency relentlessly. He said FEMA was "not doing their job" and described it as a "disaster." At other times, he and his Cabinet officials have described shrinking FEMA or changing its role. In late January, he signed an executive order that created a review council to assess FEMA and recommend improvements. At a Cabinet meeting this week, Noem had also changed her tune, telling the president that the agency was working efficiently in its response to the Texas floods. "We're cutting through the paperwork of the old FEMA, streamlining it much like your vision of how FEMA should operate," Noem said. And during a visit to the disaster zone in Texas on Friday, Trump suggested the agency was already on a better path, thanks to his hires. "We have some good people running FEMA," the president said. "It's about time, right? We get some good ones. They failed us in North Carolina, but when we got in on Jan. 20, they fixed it up in no time." The White House maintained on Friday that Trump's plan had always been to reform the agency. "The president's goal has always been to turn FEMA into a more efficient and productive agency that actually empowers states from the ground up, rather than bogging them down," said the White House press secretary,



President Donald Trump and first lady Melania Trump greet first responders in Kerrville, Texas.

Trump and his aides are no longer speaking about a wholesale demolishing of the agency. With the nation's attention focused on the need for the federal government to effectively respond to disasters, White House officials are emphasising instead their plans to overhaul the agency

Karoline Leavitt. "The Trump administration's response to the tragic floods in Texas was swift and successful because President Trump allowed state and local officials who are actually on the ground to lead. Further changes to FEMA will be determined and announced in the near future." On Friday, Vought said that FEMA had \$13 billion in its reserves and that Texas would get "anything it needs" to deal with the aftermath of the devastating floods. Officials said more than 170 people in Texas were still missing. Twenty-seven campers and staff members were reported dead, and several were still missing at Camp Mystic, a girls summer camp on the banks of the Guadalupe River. Even as White House officials trumpeted the federal response, there have been indications that FEMA was slow to activate certain teams that coordinate response and search-and-rescue efforts, as The New York Times previously reported. A policy put in place in

June by Noem requires all expenses over \$100,000 — including the deployment of search-and-rescue teams — to be approved directly by her. FEMA also failed to answer nearly two-thirds of calls to its disaster assistance line two days after the flooding, the Times reported, after the agency fired hundreds of contractors at call centers. The administration defended its response and said the changes it planned to make would help fulfill its mission. "Federal emergency management will shift from bloated, D C-centric dead weight to a lean, deployable disaster force that empowers state actors to provide relief for their citizens," said Tricia McLaughlin, a spokesperson for the Department of Homeland Security. Andrew Morris, a professor of history at Union College, said that for decades the federal government's role in providing emergency relief to states after disasters was an uncontroversial, bipartisan issue.

OPINION

The psychology of decision-making



DR HAMED
AL SINAWI

The writer is a senior consultant psychiatrist at SQU Hospital

A friend recently shared with me his experience helping his son make a critical decision: choosing a wife. The young man, after not meeting the woman of his dreams on his own, decided to consult his parents to recommend a future wife for him. He gave this mother a short list of preferences — age, employment and general lifestyle compatibility. The parents, while preferring that their son take full ownership of such a life-altering choice, were mindful that such a decision can be challenging, especially when the young man kept talking about the failed marriages of his friends. This situation reminded me of a book titled ‘How to Decide’ by Annie Duke. The author argues that most people don’t have a specific method for making decisions; some simply go with their gut feeling, or use a pros and cons list, to decide on something. In reality, emotional decisions — like marriage — require both structure and self-awareness. One of the book’s key messages is that every decision has a range of possible

outcomes, such as good, bad, ugly, or anything in between. However, our perception of how that outcome was achieved changes in retrospect, so we often mistake a good outcome for a good decision. This is called ‘resulting’, which assumes that success means we chose well and failure means we didn’t. But in reality, a thoughtful decision can lead to a poor outcome due to factors beyond our control, just as a reckless decision can, by chance, work out well. The young man’s fear made him focus on failed relationships he’d seen, forgetting that those outcomes didn’t necessarily mean the decisions behind them were wrong. Another important point the author emphasises is that uncertainty is part of every major decision. Rather than waiting for perfect clarity, which may never come, we must gather what information we can, define our values and then make the best choice possible under the circumstances. The young man had already taken a helpful step by listing his priorities. The next step is

Most people don’t have a specific method for making decisions; some simply go with their gut feeling, or use a pros and cons list, to decide on something

to rank them: Which qualities are essential and which are negotiable? What would he be willing to compromise on if other values were strongly met? The book also encourages the use of a ‘decision group’ — a small, trusted circle that can provide input, challenge assumptions and prevent emotional bias. The young man’s parents acted in this capacity. Their role wasn’t to decide for him, but to reflect back his own thoughts, provide perspective and help him avoid the trap of letting fear take charge of his life. Finally, the book reminds us that the best decisions don’t promise certainty; they simply improve our odds. By thinking clearly, reflecting honestly and consulting wisely, we set ourselves up not for perfection, but for resilience, so we can live with our choices, regardless of the consequences. In my opinion, whether you are choosing a spouse, a job, or a new path in life, you will not be able to eliminate risks, but you can improve how you navigate them. And that, more than anything, is the mark of a wise decision-maker.

Aboriginals win bid for Unesco listing of ancient site

MARIE-MORGANE LE MOEL

A delegation of Australia’s Aboriginal people that travelled to Paris to campaign for UN backing to protect a heritage site they say is threatened by harmful mining were ‘overjoyed’ as the ancient site was recognised on the coveted list. The World Heritage Committee at Unesco, the United Nations’ cultural organisation, had been deliberating since the start of the week on what sites to include in the latest edition of the body’s world heritage list. Among the dozens of sites under consideration was Murujuga, a remote area in the state of Western Australia that according to estimates houses around one million petroglyphs — carvings that could date back 50,000 years. “It’s possibly the most important rock art site in the world”, said Benjamin Smith, a rock art specialist at the University of Western Australia. “We should be looking after it”. The site is located on the Burrup peninsula, home to the Mardudunera people and under threat from nearby mining developments. “This is a momentous day for our old people and our future generations, to have Murujuga’s outstanding universal heritage values recognised by the world”, delegation leader Raelene Cooper said in a statement following the announcement, adding the group was “overjoyed”. Making the Unesco’s heritage list often sparks a lucrative tourism drive and can unlock funding for the preservation of sites. It does not in itself trigger protection for a site, but can help pressure national governments into taking action. “It’s absolutely crucial that the Australian government takes it more seriously and regulates industrial pollution in that area more carefully”, Smith said. Giant mining corporations have been active in the resource-rich Pilbara region for decades. Australian company Woodside Energy operates the North West Shelf, an industrial complex that includes offshore platforms, undersea pipelines and hydrocarbon processing facilities. The project consistently ranks among Australia’s five largest emitters of greenhouse gas, according to figures from the country’s Clean Energy Regulator. “These carvings are what our ancestors left here for us to learn and keep their knowledge and keep our culture thriving through these sacred sites”, said Mark Clifton, a member of the three-person delegation meeting with Unesco representatives. Environmental and indigenous organisations argue the presence of mining groups has already caused damage with industrial emissions. They are “creating hundreds of holes in the surface. And that is causing the surfaces with the rock art to break down”, Smith said. — AFP

Killing fields of Gaza: A lesson in hypocrisy

As a citizen of the UK I write this with profound dismay. My country once stood against Hitler’s tyranny, sacrificing thousands of young lives to halt the Nazi machinery of genocide. Our WW2 soldiers, many not yet twenty, now lay dead on the fields of Normandy, their white gravestones stretching to the horizon. Under Starmer’s government my country now participates in the very same genocidal acts by supplying arms to the Israeli Zionists. This is not only a betrayal of the Palestinian people but a desecration of the memory of those who died to stop such horrors. If Starmer and his ministers possessed a shred of conscience, they would walk among the graves at Normandy and confront the reality of their current participation. Let us be clear: Zionism is not Judaism. An ideology that has far more in common with Nazism than its adherents admit. The Zionist-Nazi Pact of 1933 — the Haavara Agreement — was a marriage of convenience, serving both the Nazis and the Zionists. The Zionists ignored the plight of ordinary Jews. Only the wealthy escaped to Palestine in exchange for ninety per cent of their assets. The poor were abandoned to the death camps. Over six million Jews and many million non-Jews perished at the hands of Nazis and their Zionist collaborators. Yes, Zionists. They aided the Nazis in evading trade embargoes and many fought alongside the Nazis and Italian Fascists in WW2. Among the fallen in Normandy are young Jews who died fighting both Nazism and the very ideology now murdering children in Gaza. In 2025, as bombs rain upon Gaza, the world indulges in a grotesque exercise of hypocrisy. The killing of Palestinians finally reached such a scale that international bodies could not ignore it, yet diplomacy continued to churn out words and those who could, did nothing to stop



A child stands at the site of an overnight Israeli air strike on a house in Gaza City. — Reuters



KARIM
EASTERBROOK

The author is Former School Principal Cambridge UK

it. Between October 2023 and May 2024, Israeli forces killed at least 34,568 Palestinians and wounded 77,765 more — over five per cent of Gaza’s population. Fourteen thousand five hundred of the dead were children, more than in all the world’s conflicts over the previous four years combined. Twenty-five thousand tonnes of explosives — equivalent to two nuclear bombs — were dropped on Gaza. The ICJ declared the allegations of genocide “plausible” — a word that speaks volumes in its ambiguity. Amnesty International stated unequivocally that Israel “committed genocide”. Legal scholars concurred. Yet, in a display of pure Orwellian doublethink, the United States described these allegations as “unfounded”. The same US that claim to uphold human rights continue to arm Israel, a lesson in hypocrisy. The mechanics of genocide proceed in plain sight: hospitals, schools and water systems are systematically destroyed. Starvation

is wielded as a weapon and entire towns and their inhabitants have been destroyed. Survivors speak of an apocalypse, of being made subhuman and the language of extermination is now routine among Israeli officials. The Zionists, like their former Nazi allies to justify murdering Jews, have dehumanised their Palestinian victims. Unlike the Nazi genocide, the genocide in Gaza is “live-streamed”, documented, analysed and condemned, yet uninterrupted. The international system, designed to prevent such horrors, is ignored. Legal judgments are made but never enforced. Moral pronouncements are rendered meaningless by political expediency. The Palestinian struggle is the latest chapter in a long Zionist settler-colonial project of ethnic cleansing which started in 1948. But still the killing continues, shielded by the same powers that once swore “never again”. The truth is not hidden but rendered irrelevant, discarded by those with the power to ignore it.

Mad Jack: The Story of the ‘Other’ Churchill.



RAY PETERSEN

The writer is a media consultant

BRITISH statesman Winston Churchill was scorned by the Germans and adored by the British during World War II. A hero! But another of the same name, yet unrelated, was also brave, colourful and heroic! This is a ‘Boys Own’, story if ever there was one.

‘Fighting Jack’, or ‘Mad Jack Churchill’, was born John Malcolm Thorpe Fleming Churchill, of English/Irish descent, in Colombo, Ceylon, now Sri Lanka, in 1906, the son of a prominent civil servant and was educated at King William’s College, on the Isle of Man. An impetuous youth, he swam and surfed, rode motorbikes, hunted, with guns, bows and arrows, was musically inclined playing several instruments and dabbled in amateur theatre, which remarkably, at 17, led to him being cast as an archer in the 1924 adventure movie, starring Douglas Fairbanks Jr, ‘The Thief of Baghdad’. Later, Churchill attended Sandhurst Military College, graduating in 1926. His first wartime experience came soon after, in Burma, now Myanmar, where, as a young officer in the 2nd Battalion of the Manchester Regiment, Churchill’s bravery was mentioned in military dispatches. Even so, he left the army to try a career in journalism as a newspaper editor in exotic Nairobi, Kenya. He enjoyed the lifestyle but was always looking for ‘different’ things to do.

He worked for a time as a male model, which was unheard of at the time and playing the bagpipes, claimed second place in the ‘Aldershot Tattoo’, of 1938, which was quite an achievement. He also represented Great Britain with a meritorious 26th placing, in the World Archery Championships of 1939.

The outbreak of war later that year saw Churchill eagerly return to the military and the legend of ‘Fighting Jack Churchill’ gained prominence as the beleaguered British Expeditionary Force retreated in disarray towards Dunkirk. War correspondents wrote of Churchill, “sword in hand, charging elite German troops, terrified of having their limbs cleaved, who turned and ran when he shot one of them through the heart with his bow and arrow”. At L’Epinette, when the retreating British forces were surrounded.

Historian Christian Ord wrote of Churchill being inspirational to an army of tired, disheartened soldiers, with their backs to the sea at Dunkirk, uncertain of rescue. Yet, as they sank exhausted onto the sands as night fell, amidst the ignominy of retreat, a sword wielding Bowman and piper became legend and breathed new life into an army with its tail between its legs.

His heroism recognised with the award of the Military Medal, Churchill then joined the elite Commandos in 1941 and at Vagsoy, in Norway in 1941, when their landing craft hit the beach, Churchill marched ashore at the head of his company, playing the

John Churchill was undoubtedly bold and brave, yet historians agree, while maybe reckless, he was never careless, with every action, every command, every word, considered and thoughtful.

bagpipes. Inspiring his men and terrifying the Germans. The fight lasted less than 10 minutes, with most of the enemy killed and no British casualties. The few Germans left alive reported a ‘mad swordsman’ they couldn’t kill and the legend of ‘Mad Jack’, spread further.

Churchill led a similar seaborne landing at Catania in Sicily, marching up the beachhead at the head of his men playing his bagpipes, bullets flying all around, then, handing his ‘pipes’ to one of his men, he drew his sword and charged like a man possessed, at the enemy observation post, which they captured and took more than forty prisoners. Churchill was awarded a Distinguished Service Order for bravery and the legend grew even more.

As the war neared its end, Churchill was captured in Yugoslavia, then, flown to Berlin (the Germans thought he was related to Churchill), he tunnelled his way free but was soon recaptured and moved to a POW camp in Austria, from which incredibly, he escaped and made his way back to Italy, a trek of more than a thousand miles.

‘Mad Jack’, or ‘Fighting Jack’, Churchill was undoubtedly bold and brave, yet historians agree, while maybe reckless, he was never careless, with every action, every command, every word, considered and thoughtful. How then, has history forgotten such a genuine hero.

His life was, a story, of which it’s been said, was “the best movie never made”.

DANES RELUCTANT TO EMBRACE RETIREMENT AT 70

CAMILLE BAS-WOHLERT

On paper, Kirsten Evans is among the first group of Danes who have to wait until age 70 to retire with a full pension, but she has no intention of waiting that long.

Denmark’s parliament in May adopted a law raising the retirement age to 70 by 2040, from the current age of 67.

But Evans, a 53-year-old bank employee with a solid financial footing, said she plans to retire around 65 or 66 — even if it means she won’t earn a full pension. “I think 70 is old”, she said. “You want to benefit on the other end and still have a good life afterwards”, she said.

As many Western countries grapple with how to stretch pensions to cover ageing populations, Denmark indexed the official retirement age to life expectancy in 2006 and has revised it every five years.

In 2030, the retirement age will increase to 68 and in 2035, it will rise to 69.

But those born after December 31, 1970 — including Evans — will have to wait until age 70.

Few people actually work to the legal retirement age in Denmark.

In 2022, when the official retirement age was 67, the actual average retirement age was around 64, according to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

About 20 per cent of retirees in Denmark retire because they can’t find a job or are too sick to continue, according to Aske Juul Lassen, an ethnologist at the University of Copenhagen who specialises in senior working life.

“For those 20 per cent, it makes a big difference whether the retirement age rises again”, he said, stressing that “inequities are rising with age”.

The gap risks widening between those able to retire early thanks to strong finances and others, said Damoun Ashournia, chief economist at the Danish Trade Union Confederation.

“Very few people actually retire at the official retirement age. But that is not an opportunity our members have”, Ashournia said.

Camilla Rasmussen, a 37-year-old union member who works as a gastroenterology nurse at a Copenhagen hospital, is convinced that she will not be physically able to work until age 70.

“That would be really hard for me, walking 10,000 steps every day”, she said.

“Already today, we see that two-thirds of our members have retired prior to the official retirement age. And that’s due to them being worn out and doing hard physical work”, Ashournia said.

Denmark’s pension system is made up of several parts. There is a universal public pension, currently set at 7,198 kroner (\$1,130) per month, plus two complementary employer-funded pensions invested in pension funds—one mandatory and one optional. — AFP

Will Syria normalise relations with Israel?

THE possibility of peace between Syria and Israel has returned to the surface after many years of silence. The two countries have been enemies for more than seven decades and their relationship has always been full of conflict, mistrust and political disputes. But after the fall of Bashar al Assad’s government and the formation of a new government in Damascus, there are now signs that Syria might be ready to change direction and open a new page with Israel.

Since the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, Syria and Israel have fought in several major wars, especially in 1967 and 1973. Syria never recognised Israel and both countries have no diplomatic relations. One of the biggest problems between them is the Golan Heights, a mountainous area that Israel occupied in 1967 and later annexed in 1981. Most countries around the world did not recognise this annexation. Peace talks were attempted in the 1990s but failed mainly because of disagreement on the future of the Golan Heights.

In December 2024, the Assad regime collapsed. A new transitional government led by Ahmed al Sharaa came to power. Al Sharaa has shown a more practical and flexible approach than his predecessor. He has spoken about rebuilding the country, improving foreign relations and even considering dialogue with Israel.

According to media reports, Syria and Israel have started direct talks. The US supports this new development. Some American officials believe that Syria could join the Abraham Accords, the same agreement that helped Israel to normalise relations with the UAE, Bahrain, Morocco and Sudan. It is reported that US President Donald Trump encouraged Syria to take this step during his visit to Saudi Arabia earlier this year.

However, many difficulties stand in the way.

The Golan Heights remains the biggest obstacle. Some Israeli news



Israeli army humvee vehicles move during a military drill in Golan Heights. — AFP file photo



BADR AL DHAFRI

The writer is head of proofreading and translation at Oman Daily Observer

reports have suggested that Syria might be ready to quietly accept the loss of the Golan in exchange for other benefits. But such a decision could create a lot of anger inside Syria and in the wider Arab world. For its part, Israel says it will not return the Golan under any condition.

Another big issue is Iran. Israel wants all Iranian forces and militias like Hezbollah to leave Syria. This is an important condition for Israel. On the other hand, Iran has had a strong presence in Syria for years, especially during the civil war. Even if the new Syrian leadership wants to move away from Iran, doing so completely will not be easy.

There are reports that Türkiye is working on a defence agreement with the new Syrian government. Israel is not happy with this and has increased its air strikes in Syria to stop any Turkish military expansion near its borders.

Meanwhile, Gulf countries such as Saudi Arabia and the UAE are following the situation closely. Saudi Arabia may see Syrian-Israeli talks as a positive signal for its own

possible future steps with Israel. The UAE is already playing an active role in supporting the talks.

Inside Syria, things are more complicated. The country is still weak and recovering from many years of war. The new leadership is not yet strong or fully in control of all parts of Syria. Many Syrians have been raised with anti-Israel views and normalisation could face strong public opposition.

Because of all this, a full peace treaty is unlikely in the near future. However, smaller steps may be possible. For example, Syria and Israel could sign a security agreement or a non-aggression deal. This could include Israeli demands to stop the presence of Iran and Türkiye in southern Syria, while Syria would want Israel to stop its air strikes.

Even if full normalisation is still far away, the recent talks show that both countries are at least willing to communicate. This is a new development after so many years of silence.

The road to peace is still long and full of challenges. But the change in Syrian leadership, the interest of regional powers and international support are giving hope that something new might happen.

SPORTS

SHORTTAKES



Oman will conclude their participation with a match against the UAE

OMAN FALL TO SAUDI ARABIA IN GULF QUALIFIERS

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, JULY 12

The Oman national U-16 basketball team suffered another defeat in the Gulf qualifiers for the Asian Championship, losing to their Saudi counterparts with a score of 41-88. The match took place last night at the Bahrain Basketball Association court in Um Al Hassam, Bahrain.

Both teams began the match with relative caution, but the Saudi team quickly imposed their fast-paced offensive style, capitalising on several errant passes by the Omani team. Despite efforts from Sidam al Sheezawi and Adam al Hinai to penetrate the defense, defensive errors disrupted the team’s rhythm, ending the first quarter with Oman trailing 11-22.

The second quarter saw improved offensive performance from Oman, with more varied shooting attempts from outside the paint and a gradual reduction in the score gap. Al Mulhim al Obaidani stood out with his active movements under the basket, while Adam al Hinai maintained composure in shooting. The first half ended 30-40 in favor of Saudi Arabia.

However, Oman entered the second half with a noticeable drop in focus, leading to more intercepted passes and rushed offensive plays. The Saudi players exploited the open spaces with quick counterattacks, significantly widening the score gap. Offensive solutions were absent for Oman, and the quarter ended in a harsh 34-72 deficit.

In the final quarter, passing errors and easy turnovers continued from the Omani players, while the Saudi team maintained physical dominance and strong defensive organisation. The Omani coach tried rotating in several substitutes to spark energy, but the Saudi team continued to control the tempo and increase their scoring tally. The game concluded with a heavy 41-88 loss, Oman’s heaviest defeat in the qualifiers so far.

On the scoring front, Adam al Hinai led Oman with 13 points, followed by Sidam al Sheezawi and Al Mulhim al Obaidani with 10 points each. For Saudi Arabia, Abdulrahman Adel scored 17 points, Hussain al Majid added 14, and Zaidan Ghadeeb contributed 12 points.

Oman will conclude their participation in the Gulf qualifiers with a match against the UAE, which will determine the last place in the tournament. The team hopes to secure a positive result to restore some pride after a series of defeats.



Oman hunting for historic maiden Fifa WC appearance

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, JULY 12

AS the highly anticipated draw for the Playoff Round of the AFC Asian Qualifiers – Road to 26 approaches, the Oman national football team are preparing for a monumental opportunity to secure their first-ever qualification to the Fifa World Cup. The Asian Football Confederation (AFC), in a recent update on its official website, highlighted that Oman and Indonesia are the only two teams among the playoff contenders aiming to book a historic debut appearance at the Fifa World Cup. Meanwhile, Iraq and the United Arab Emirates will seek their second-ever qualification, and Qatar and Saudi Arabia will aim to make back-to-back appearances in the prestigious global event.

The draw for the decisive stage of the Asian qualifiers for Fifa World Cup 2026 will take place on Thursday at 11:00 am (Oman time). Based on the latest Fifa Men’s World Rankings published on June 13, Oman will be placed in Pot 3, alongside Indonesia. Qatar and Saudi Arabia, designated as host nations for the two playoff groups will occupy Pot 1 while Iraq and UAE teams are positioned in Pot 2.

The playoff format will see the six teams split into two groups of three, with only the group winners progressing directly to the Fifa World Cup 2026, which will be co-hosted by Canada, Mexico, and the United States. Each group will compete in a single round-robin format, hosted in centralised venues by the Qatar Football Association and the Saudi Arabian Football Federation, both of whom were confirmed as Host Member Associations last month.

These Playoffs represent the final pathway for six Asian teams after they



Oman has been drawn into Group A alongside hosts Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan

secured third or fourth place in their respective groups during the third round of AFC qualifiers. Oman, Indonesia, Iraq, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE will now battle for Asia’s remaining two direct berths. The journey does not end for group runners-up, as they will face off in a two-legged knockout round scheduled for November 13 and 18. The winner of that matchup will advance to the Fifa Intercontinental Play-Off Tournament, where one final qualification spot will be contested globally. A separate draw will be held after the group stage to determine the home team for each leg of this knockout encounter.

Oman’s national team, led by head coach Rasheed Jaber, will head into the Playoffs with determination and national pride. By end of August, Oman team will take part in the CAFA (Central Asian Football Association) Nations League 2025, a friendly international tournament which is scheduled from August 26 to September 9, co-hosted by Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.

Oman has been drawn into Group A alongside hosts Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkmenistan, while Group B featured Iran, Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Malaysia. Attendance in this friendly event is part of the team’s ahead of the main assignment in Asian qualifiers – Road to 26.

MoCSY concludes two-day workshop for club leaders

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, JULY 12

The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth (MoCSY) concluded the activities of the specialised workshop titled “Preparing Annual Plans and Budgets for Sports Clubs,” which was held over two days in Muscat, with the participation of 45 administrators representing various sports clubs across the Sultanate of Oman.

The workshop is part of the Ministry’s ongoing efforts to strengthen institutional work within sports clubs and to equip their administrative and financial staff with scientific and professional tools that enhance performance sustainability and support the development of the national sports system.

The workshop focused on enabling participants to prepare realistic, executable operational plans and financial budgets based on clear methodologies aligned with Oman Vision 2040 and the national sports strategy. It aimed to embed principles of governance, transparency, and integrity, while also linking plans to long-term national goals. In addition, it sought to enhance participants’ abilities to tackle the administrative and financial challenges faced by sports clubs.

The workshop combined theoretical foundations



The workshop focused on enabling participants to prepare realistic, executable operational plans and financial budgets

with practical applications, including intensive hands-on sessions where participants worked on developing realistic plans based on their clubs’ internal conditions and needs. The sessions covered stages of strategic planning, principles of budget formulation tied to operational goals, and a review of key audit observations and recurring challenges within club management. These components offered participants a valuable opportunity to build applied skills and deepen their understanding of regulations governing administrative and financial work.

The workshop was delivered by a distinguished group of experts and specialists, including Dr Mubarak al Rahbi

from the State’s Financial and Administrative Audit Institution, who highlighted the importance of integrity in protecting public funds. He stressed that strengthening oversight contributes to building trust within sports institutions and addressed the significance of commitment and transparency. Dr Al Rahbi noted that some violations observed in clubs are often due to a lack of awareness, rather than intentional misconduct.

Khalifa al Issai, Adviser for Private Entities at the Office of the Under-Secretary for Sports and Youth, gave comprehensive lectures on the legal and regulatory frameworks for planning and budgeting. He emphasised that this workshop falls within the

Ministry’s strategy to activate the Oman Sports Strategy and implement administrative governance concepts in practice. He also highlighted the importance of such workshops in building a strong knowledge base among club administrations and adopting best practices to create a more professional and efficient working environment.

Dr Ali al Issai, a specialist in institutional strategic planning, focused during his sessions on the importance of aligning annual club plans with the overarching objectives of Oman Vision 2040. He explained that building a comprehensive strategic plan requires an in-depth understanding of a club’s internal reality, along with a careful analysis of its strengths and weaknesses. He stressed the need for clear performance indicators that enable ongoing evaluation and improvement.

The workshop saw strong engagement from participants, who praised the scientific and practical value of the content provided. Mohammed al Saadi, Treasurer of Al Musannah Sports Club, stated that the workshop was rich and highly beneficial. It contributed to strengthening transparency and governance concepts and connecting operational planning with strategic club goals.

SHORTTAKES



Spain's Salma Paralluelo with Italy's Cecilia Salvai. — Reuters

SPAIN BEAT ITALY 3-1 AS BOTH QUALIFY FOR QUARTERS

BERN, Switzerland: Spain cruised to a 3-1 win over Italy on Friday that sees both sides through to the knockout stages at the Women's Euros, with the Spaniards topping Group B to set up a showdown with hosts Switzerland, while the second-placed Italians will meet Group A winners Norway. Spain finished top of the group with a perfect nine points from their three games, with the Italians second on four points, one ahead of already-eliminated Belgium, who beat Portugal 2-1 to snuff out their chances of advancing. The swashbuckling football of the Spaniards has singled them out as the team to beat in Switzerland but once more they got off to a sluggish start before saving the day with some outstanding attacking play. The Italians almost took the lead in the 10th minute when captain Elena Linari smacked a powerful header off the crossbar and seconds later they did score through Elisabetta Oliviero.

Italy worked the ball in from the left flank and Martina Piemonte found enough space to squeeze off a shot that Spain's Mariona Caldente tried to control, but she only succeeded in teeing up Oliviero to slam home the ball.

That jolted Spain into life and they levelled four minutes later as the reigning world and Nations League champions began to dominate possession, Athenea del Castillo working the ball in from the right before playing a brilliant one-two in a tight space with Alexia Putellas and firing into the net. Patri Guijarro put Spain 2-1 up in the fourth minute of the second half and the Italians struggled to get out of their half for much of the rest of the game, with Esther Gonzalez sealing the deal for Spain with a stoppage-time goal to make it 3-1. Guijarro declared herself pleased with the business-like way Spain had secured the group win, even if there were things that could be improved.

"I'm happy for the three victories. The match was difficult (but) we are first in the group and now let's go for the quarter-finals," she said.

"They played very well. Those balls that we lost, there was a lot of space, so we have to run back as quickly as possible, we have to be more on top of the pressure after losing (the ball)."

Spain will take on Switzerland in Bern next Friday, while Italy meet Norway in Geneva on Wednesday. — Reuters



India's KL Rahul. — Reuters

Rahul scores ton as India close in on England's total

KL RAHUL made exactly 100 but England still slowed India's charge on the third day of the third Test at Lord's with two key wickets either side of lunch.

India were poised to bat through Saturday's morning session without losing a wicket.

But in the last over before lunch, Rishabh Pant was run out for a typically dynamic 74 by England captain Ben Stokes's direct hit as he tried to get Rahul, 98 not out at the interval, back on strike to complete his century before the break.

Rahul did get to a hundred, his second century in a Test at Lord's, but was out edging off-spinner Shoaib Bashir to slip off the next ball he faced.

India still reached tea on 316-5, just 71 runs behind England's first-innings 387 featuring a century from star batsman Joe Root.

Ravindra Jadeja was 40 not out and Nitish Kumar Reddy unbeaten on 25.

Jadeja, however, was reprieved on 23 when Bashir was unable to hold a difficult, low return catch off

India were in complete command until Pant's rush of blood saw him run out by Stokes's direct hit on the stumps from cover-point

a fierce drive. There was a worrying moment for India when Reddy, on 24, was floored by an 88 mph bouncer from Stokes that reared off the pitch and seamed back into the grille of his helmet, defeating the batsman's attempted to sway out of the way.

But, following a concussion check, Reddy was passed fit to bat on. India scored 103-1 off 22.3 overs in the morning session, but only managed 91-1 in 25.3 overs between lunch and tea as the match head towards a second-innings shoot-out. On another hot and energy-sapping day at Lord's, India resumed on 145-3. Rahul was 53 not out with wicketkeeper Pant, off the field for much of England's innings following a finger injury, unbeaten on 19.

There had been joyous scenes at Lord's on Friday when Jofra Archer marked his return to Test cricket following more than four years of injury-induced exile with a third-ball dismissal of Yashasvi Jaiswal.

But Archer's first ball on Saturday was glanced fine for four by left-hander Pant as the express fast bowler strayed in line.

Three balls later, Pant carved Archer over the infield as he played

an 87 mph delivery on a good length in front of square for four.

Rahul then drove first-change Brydon Carse for four and later glanced, square-cut and clipped the fast bowler for three more elegant boundaries in successive deliveries.

Pant who scored twin hundreds in India's defeat in the first Test and a quickfire 65 in a series-levelling win at Edgbaston, completed a 55-ball fifty in style by hooking all-rounder Stokes for six.

India were in complete command until Pant's rush of blood saw him run out by Stokes's direct hit on the stumps from cover-point.

Pant's exit ended a fourth-wicket stand of 141 with Rahul after they had come together with India faltering at 107-3.

After lunch, Rahul's quick single saw him to a 176-ball hundred, including 13 fours — his 10th century in 61 Tests and second at Lord's after the 33-year-old's 129 in 2021. But Rahul's next ball proved his undoing when, pushing forward to a well-flighted Bashir delivery, he edged a simple catch to Harry Brook at slip, with India then 254-5.

The five-match series is tied at 1-1. — AFP

Sinner mauls Djokovic to reach first Wimbledon final

LONDON: Jannik Sinner crushed Novak Djokovic in the Wimbledon semi-finals to set up the latest instalment of his gripping rivalry with defending champion Carlos Alcaraz in Sunday's final.

The world number one is through to his fourth successive Grand Slam title match — and his first at the All England Club — after a 6-3, 6-3, 6-4 demolition on Centre Court on Friday. The 23-year-old will be desperate to avenge his painful French Open defeat against world number two Alcaraz after squandering three championship points in last month's epic Roland Garros final.Sinner and Alcaraz are the undisputed new kings of men's tennis, claiming the past six majors between them.

Defeat on a baking Centre Court

means seven-time champion Djokovic, who was apparently not 100 per cent fit, must wait for another shot at a record 25th Grand Slam title.

It is the first time he has failed to reach the Wimbledon final since 2017 and he has come up short in his bid to equal Roger Federer's men's record of eight Wimbledon titles.

"It's a tournament I always watched when I was young on the television and I would have never imagined that I can play here, you know in the finals, so it was amazing," said Sinner.

"From my side, I served very well today, I felt great on court, I was moving really well today.

"We saw in the third set that he was a bit injured. He's been in a very difficult situation but I tried to stay



Jannik Sinner. — Reuters

calm, to play the best tennis I can."

Italy's Sinner was still wearing a white protective sleeve after injuring his elbow in a nasty fall against Grigor Dimitrov in his fourth-round match. Djokovic also came into the contest, watched by Hollywood star Leonardo DiCaprio, with questions over his fitness after tumbling to the turf late in his quarter-final victory against Flavio Cobolli.

Top seed Sinner broke Djokovic in the third game, unleashing a barrage of relentlessly accurate groundstrokes to wear the sixth seed down.

The Serb, 38, wilted under the onslaught in the ninth game as Sinner converted his third set point.

Sinner did not let up at the start of the second set, breaking for a 2-0 lead to tighten his grip on the match.

Djokovic was struggling to gain a foothold but held for 3-1 to roars from the crowd, desperate to witness a classic battle.

Chants of "Nole" rang around the stadium as fans tried to lift Djokovic but he was powerless to prevent Sinner opening up a 5-2 lead.

He saved a set point on his own serve but that merely delayed the inevitable as Sinner wrapped up the set with only 69 minutes on the clock. Djokovic received treatment from the trainer between sets on the upper part of his left leg, apparently on the area he hurt in the match against Cobolli.

He broke for the first time in the match as he suddenly found a new gear, but was pegged back to 3-2 and roared in frustration at the changeover. — AFP



Poland’s Iga Swiatek celebrates with the trophy after winning the women’s singles final at Wimbledon against Amanda Anisimova of the US. — Reuters

SWIATEK DESTROYS ANISIMOVA TO WIN FIRST WIMBLEDON TITLE

IGA SWIATEK demolished Amanda Anisimova 6-0, 6-0 in the most one-sided women’s Wimbledon final for 114 years to win her sixth Grand Slam title on Saturday.

The Polish eighth seed, who has now won all six major finals in which she has competed, was in charge from the first point and wrapped up victory in just 57 minutes.

It is the first time a woman has won a final at Wimbledon without dropping a game since 1911.

And Swiatek, 24, is just the second player in the Open era to win a major title without losing a game in the final after Steffi Graf beat Natalia Zvereva at the 1988 French Open.

“It seems super surreal,” said Swiatek, who is the first Wimbledon singles champion from Poland in the Open era.

“I didn’t even dream, for me it was way too far. I feel like I am already an experienced player after winning the Slams before but I never expected this one.

“This year I really, really enjoyed it and feel I improved my form here.

“I am always going to remember the opening of champagne bottles between serves. It is a sound that will keep me awake at night.”

Swiatek, who reached the final of the grass-court tournament at Bad Homburg two weeks ago, has looked increasingly strong while the top seeds tumbled at the All England Club.

She lost just one set in her run to the final.

US 13th seed Anisimova was expected to prove a stern test after ousting world number one Aryna Sabalenka in the semi-finals, but Swiatek performed a brutal demolition job.

Anisimova made a nervous start in hot conditions on Centre Court, with Catherine, Princess of Wales, watching from the Royal Box.

She was broken in the first game, soon slipping 2-0 behind and the signs looked ominous.

The American appeared to have found her feet in her next service game but the merciless Swiatek refused to give ground and recovered to move 3-0 ahead when Anisimova double-faulted.

At 4-0 down Anisimova was facing a first-set wipe-out but she was powerless to halt the rampant Swiatek, who sealed the first set 6-0 in just 25 minutes.

The American won just six points on her serve in the first set and committed 14 unforced errors.

An increasingly desperate Anisimova could not stem the tide in the second set, double-faulting again in the third game to give her opponent game point and then netting a backhand.

The crowd got behind her but to no avail as Swiatek kept up her level, serving out to win and celebrating before consoling her devastated opponent.

Swiatek is Wimbledon’s eighth consecutive first-time women’s champion since Serena Williams won her seventh and final title at the All England Club in 2016. — AFP

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STEADY PRODUCTION



Oman produced 67.7 million tonnes of minerals and exported 36 million tonnes.

Oman maintains stable energy output and advances green projects

MUSCAT: Oman’s Ministry of Energy and Minerals reported steady oil and gas production in 2024 while advancing renewable energy and green hydrogen initiatives. Crude oil and condensate reserves reached 4.825 billion barrels, with natural gas reserves at 23.3 trillion cubic feet.

The country operated 475 production fields — 400 oil and 75 gas — and drilled 73 exploratory wells. Daily oil output averaged 992,600 barrels, with exports totalling 308.4 million barrels at an average price of \$80.79.

Natural gas production averaged 149.2 million cubic metres per day, including 117.5 million from non-associated sources. LNG exports reached 12 million tonnes via 181 shipments.

Oman also exported 122 million barrels of petroleum products, mainly gas oil, jet fuel and naphtha, with only 2 million barrels imported — showcasing stronger local production capabilities.

The ministry signed eight hydrogen production agreements and reported 2.4 terawatt-hours of renewable electricity generated, contributing to the total electricity output of 49.1 terawatt-hours.

Major solar projects — including Manah 1 and 2 — will add 1,000 megawatts by 2026, reducing emissions by 1.4 million tonnes annually.

In mining, Oman produced 67.7 million tonnes of minerals and exported 36 million tonnes. Investment in strategic projects like Al Ghuzayn and Al Wash-hi copper developments reflects growing confidence in the sector. — ONA

Strategy unlocks \$1.8 bn in energy sector contracts

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, JULY 12

OMAN’S In-Country Value (ICV) strategy delivered strong results in 2024, driving job creation and deepening economic localisation across the energy and mining sectors, according to the Ministry of Energy and Minerals’ annual report.

The Ministry confirmed that spending on small and medium enterprises (SMEs) reached \$1.8 billion last year — accounting for 17.2% of total procurement in the energy sector. The overall ICV rate across the sector stood at 31.9%, underscoring efforts to retain more value within Oman’s economy and promote domestic supply chains.

Employment growth was a key outcome. The oil and gas sector achieved a national Omanisation rate of 89%, employing over 17,900 Omanis in 2024.

Leading operators such as Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) and Daleel Petroleum surpassed the 90% mark, collectively hiring more than 1,400 Omanis during the year.

The mining sector also expanded its local workforce, reaching a 23% Omanisation rate, with approximately 900 Omani employees across its activities.

Strategic projects such as



The oil and gas sector achieved a national Omanisation rate of 89%, employing over 17,900 Omanis in 2024.

the Al Ghuzayn and Al Wash-hi copper developments are contributing directly to employment, with the former alone committing to 50 Omani jobs in its first phase.

“These figures reflect a deliberate shift from extractive revenue to inclusive economic impact,” the report stated, noting that localisation targets are now embedded in major energy and mineral contracts.

To formalise these gains, the ministry launched the “Majd” programme in 2024 as a unified platform for ICV across the energy and minerals value

chain.

It also introduced the ICV Certificate system — currently in pilot phase and set for full rollout in 2025 — aimed at rewarding companies that demonstrate high local content performance with bidding privileges.

As part of the broader strategy, 23 specialised service contracts — including leak detection, oil tank cleaning and hydrogen sulfide handling — were awarded to local firms, boosting SMEs participation in technical and industrial services.

Since the inception of Oman’s ICV policy in 2013, over 100 local workshops and industrial facilities have been established, and more than \$400 million in localisation opportunities have been implemented.

The report concluded that the combination of targeted policies, procurement reform and national workforce integration is positioning Oman to transition towards a more sustainable, diversified and resilient energy economy — core pillars of Oman Vision 2040.

Renewables share of Oman’s total power output climbs to 11.5%

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, JUL 12

THE contribution of solar and wind capacity to Oman’s total electricity generation more than doubled to approximately 11.5 per cent during the first five months of this year (January–May), up from around 4.88 per cent at the end of December 2024.

According to Nama Power and Water Procurement Company (PWP), the sole procurer of electricity and water capacity in the Sultanate of Oman, renewable energy — predominantly from solar sources — accounted for 1.88 terawatt-hours (TWh) during the January–May 2025 period. This compares with total renewable output of 2.4 TWh for the whole of 2024.

Furthermore, around 89,840 households were supplied with clean electricity during the five-month period, resulting in annualised emissions reductions of approximately 617,300 tonnes, Nama PWP added.



Also on the anvil is a series of new solar IPPs, aggregating around 4,500 MW in capacity.

This rapid increase in renewable generation supports the Omani government’s strategy to achieve a clean energy share of around 30–40 per cent of total generation capacity by 2030, rising to 60–70 per cent by 2040.

The target is for 100 per cent clean energy generation capacity

by 2050.

Currently connected to the national grid are the following utility-scale renewable energy projects: Dhofar I Wind Farm (50 MW), Ibri II Solar IPP (500 MW), and the Manah 1 and Manah 2 Solar IPPs (1,000 MW combined).

Next to join the grid is the Ibri

III Solar IPP (500 MW), which is currently in early development.

In the next phase of renewable energy development, Oman is shifting its focus to wind power, with five wind farms — together representing over 1 gigawatt (GW) of capacity — currently under competitive tendering, overseen by Nama PWP.

These projects are planned for Jaalan Bani Bu Ali, Duqm, Mahout, Dhofar and Sadah.

The total investment in these Independent Power Projects (IPPs) is estimated at around RO 450 million (approximately \$1.2 billion).

Also in the pipeline is a series of new solar IPPs, aggregating around 4,500 megawatts (MW) in capacity and requiring an estimated investment of \$2.8 billion.

At least four new solar projects are envisioned for implementation over the next six years.

The largest of these is the so-called ‘Solar PV IPPs 2030’ — a mega-project comprising one

or more developments with a combined capacity of 3 GW. A Request for Proposals (RfP) for this groundbreaking scheme — estimated to cost between \$1 billion and \$1.5 billion — is expected to be issued in Q1 2027, with commercial operations anticipated by Q1 2030.

Preceding this is the ‘Solar PV IPPs 2029’ initiative, centred on the development of a 1-GW capacity PV project, with a projected investment of \$600–800 million. It is slated to begin operations in Q1 2029.

Additionally, Sinaw in Al Sharqiyah North Governorate is expected to host a 250–300 MW solar PV project, valued at around \$200–250 million.

The plant is scheduled to come online by Q2 2028. Recently, Nama PWP launched a competitive tender for a 280-MW solar IPP at Al Kamil W’al Wafi in Al Sharqiyah South Governorate. Estimated at \$200–250 million, this project is expected to be operational by Q1 2028.

ADVERTORIALS

PREFERREDSTOPOVER



The campaign highlights various natural attractions and leisure options available in Duqm.

DUQM SEZ LAUNCHES ‘MAR ALAINA’ TOURISM PROMOTION CAMPAIGN

MUSCAT: The Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD) has launched the fourth edition of its “Mar Alaina” campaign, as part of its ongoing efforts to promote the rich tourism offerings of Duqm in Al Wusta Governorate and to reinforce its position as a preferred stopover for travellers heading to or returning from Dhofar during the khareef (monsoon) season.

The campaign aims to enrich the tourist experience by highlighting the natural attractions and entertainment options available in Duqm and Al Wusta Governorate more broadly. It encourages travellers to stop and explore Duqm’s landmarks instead of simply passing through on their way to other destinations.

The tourism route from Muscat to Duqm and then to Salalah is one of several that boost the tourism sector by enabling residents, expatriates and tourists to discover numerous scenic spots along the Arabian Sea.

Mustafa bin Mohammed al Balushi, Head of Communication and Media at SEZAD, stated that the campaign – first launched in 2022 – has successfully enhanced Duqm’s standing as a promising destination on Oman’s tourism map.

He noted that this year’s edition aims to attract a broader audience by offering diverse activities, events and comprehensive tourism experiences that merit multi-day stays. He emphasised that SEZAD is an ideal location to stop over for several days either en route to Dhofar or on the return trip.

Al Balushi added that in recent years, Duqm has witnessed remarkable developments in its tourism infrastructure, including facilities, services, hotels, restaurants, parks and roads. The city now offers over 2,500 hotel rooms spread across four- and three-star hotels as well as hotel apartments.

Additionally, camping options are available through the Duqm Beach Park, which is equipped with necessary amenities.

The campaign targets various groups including families and travel groups heading to Dhofar from northern and central Oman, tourists from GCC countries, youth, nature and adventure enthusiasts, and social media influencers. Al Balushi affirmed that Duqm offers enriching experiences for every category.

Running until the end of September, the campaign includes poetry evenings, a kite festival, a charitable kitchen event and children’s shows held at the new Duqm Park in Sai Commercial District. Participating hotels will also offer special deals and discounts for travellers.

HOTEL REVENUES TOP RO 128 MILLION BY MAY 2025

MUSCAT: Revenue from Oman’s three- to five-star hotels rose by 18.5% to RO 128.4 million by the end of May 2025, up from RO 108.4 million in the same period of 2024, according to NCSI data.

The boost came from an 8.6% rise in hotel guests, reaching around 990,240 compared to 911,830 in 2024.

Occupancy also improved to



The boost came from an 8.6% rise in hotel guests, reaching around 990,240 compared to 911,830 in 2024.

58.3%, from 50.8% a year earlier.

Guests from Oceania saw the highest growth at 57%, followed by Africa (47.5%), the Americas (20.5%) and Europe (20.1%).

GCC visitor numbers rose 13%, Asians by 3.8% and Omanis by 1.1%.

However, guests from other Arab nations declined by 3.1%, totalling 39,218. — ONA

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The Chery Arrizo 6 Pro is a statement of sophistication, power and innovation.

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Multiple airbags, a reinforced high-strength body and a smart braking system provide peace of mind on every journey.

In Oman, Chery vehicles are distributed by New World Autos.

DOUBLETREE BY HILTON MUSCAT QURUM CELEBRATES 2ND ANNIVERSARY

MUSCAT: This month, DoubleTree by Hilton Muscat Qurum proudly marks its 2nd anniversary, celebrating two years of warm welcomes, unforgettable stays and exceptional service in the heart of Oman’s capital.

Since opening its doors in July 19, 2023, the hotel has become a cherished destination for both business and leisure travellers, offering signature Hilton hospitality. From the moment guests receive the famous DoubleTree cookies upon check-in to the room service and relaxation experiences, the hotel has consistently aimed to exceed expectations.

“We are incredibly grateful to all our guests and the local community for their continued support and trust,” said Rami, General Manager of DoubleTree by Hilton Muscat Qurum. “This milestone



The hotel has become a cherished destination for both business and leisure travellers.

is a reflection of our team’s dedication to creating memorable experiences every day.”

To thank guests and celebrate this special occasion, the hotel is rolling out exclusive anniversary promotions and rates throughout July 2025. Whether planning a relaxing weekend getaway, a business stay, or a family escape, guests can enjoy unique packages and added benefits during this celebratory month.

With a commitment to delivering heartfelt hospitality and consistently high standards, DoubleTree by Hilton Muscat Qurum looks forward to welcoming guests old and new as it enters its third year with renewed passion and purpose.

For more details on anniversary promotions or to make a reservation, visit hilton.com, e-mail reservations.qurum@hilton.com or call +968 2254 0000.

Meethaq Islamic Banking awarded pioneer in digital Islamic banking title

MUSCAT: Reaffirming its leadership in delivering Sharia-compliant banking and financial solutions, Meethaq Islamic Banking from Bank Muscat has been awarded the Pioneer in Digital Islamic Banking for 2025 title at the OER DX Live Conference and Awards event, organised by Oman Economic Review.

The event was held under the auspices of Shaikh Suba’a bin Hamdan al Saadi, Secretary-General of the Secretariat-General of National Celebrations.

Ali bin Ahmed al Lawati, Assistant General Manager, Meethaq Corporate Banking, received the award on behalf of Meethaq Islamic Banking, alongside officials from various institutions and practitioners from the digital banking industry.

On this occasion, Ali bin Ahmed al Lawati expressed his pride in the recognition Meethaq has gained with this prestigious award. He stated: “This accolade reaffirms Meethaq’s pioneering role in the country’s Islamic



Meethaq has significantly contributed to reshaping the Islamic banking landscape in Oman.

banking sector by offering comprehensive solutions that meet the varied requirements of customers.

“Meethaq has significantly contributed to reshaping the Islamic banking landscape in

the Sultanate of Oman, evident in the trust and strong uptake from customers for Meethaq’s Sharia-compliant financial solutions.

“Meethaq continues to uphold its excellence and innovation by delivering distinguished and forward-thinking Islamic banking solutions aligned with aspirations and financial goals of Meethaq’s institutional and individual customers.”

Meethaq provides a full suite of Sharia-compliant banking products and financing solutions designed to serve the needs of individuals, SMEs and corporate entities. All offerings are subject to the regulatory framework of the Central Bank of Oman and undergo thorough Sharia audit and supervision by Meethaq’s Sharia Supervisory Board to ensure full compliance with Islamic jurisprudence.

The Sharia-compliant offerings for retail customers include deposit products such as savings accounts, current accounts, children’s

savings accounts, fixed deposits and Meethaq’s structured savings plans.

On the financing front, Meethaq offers a range of Islamic finance facilities, including personal finance, auto finance, home finance, and funding for travel, education, marriage and personal purchases.

For its SMEs and corporate customers, Meethaq offers a variety of commercial banking solutions, including current accounts, project finance, short-term and long-term financing facilities, trade finance based on “Ijarah” and large-scale project financing.

All these offerings are structured in accordance with Islamic financial principles.

In addition, Meethaq has upgraded its digital platforms thereby individual and corporate customers may avail a suite of Sharia-compliant solutions and services, aiming to offer them an exceptional banking experience. Meethaq operates the largest branch network in the Islamic banking sector in Oman.

BUSINESS

SHORTTAKES



Accommodation demand rose in key governorates like Dhofar, Musandam and Al Dakhiliyah, boosting investment in tourism facilities.

OMAN’S TOURISM SECTOR GENERATES RO 2.7 BILLION IN GDP

MUSCAT: Oman’s tourism sector contributed RO 2.7 billion to the country’s GDP in 2024, up from RO 2.3 billion in 2018, according to the National Centre for Statistics and Information. Total tourism consumption reached RO 1.02 billion, while direct tourism value added grew by 5.3 per cent to RO 1.09 billion.

This underscores the sector’s expanding impact on the national economy and its role in job creation and diversification.

Salim bin Mohammed al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism, attributed the strong performance to government policies, infrastructure improvements and targeted promotional campaigns.

Oman welcomed 3.8 million visitors last year — 68.2 per cent overnight guests and 31.8 per cent same-day visitors — who spent RO 989 million, with an average per capita spend of RO 253.8.

The UAE accounted for over half of incoming tourists, followed by Europe (16 per cent) and Asia (13.2 per cent). Leisure tourism led the way, followed by visits to family and friends. The average stay was 5 to 6 nights, generating 14.8 million tourist nights.

Accommodation demand rose in key governorates like Dhofar, Musandam and Al Dakhiliyah, boosting investment in tourism facilities.

Oman also recorded 8.1 million outbound tourists who spent RO 1.8 billion. This points to potential for boosting domestic tourism to retain spending within the national economy. — ONA

IMPORT PRICES RISE 1.3% IN Q1 2025

MUSCAT: Oman’s general import price index rose by 1.3% in Q1 2025 compared to the same period in 2024, according to the National Centre for Statistics and Information.

The largest year-on-year increases were in oils, fats and waxes (16.8%), followed by food and live animals (5.6%), and beverages, tobacco, machinery, and transport equipment (each up 2.7%).

Conversely, prices fell for mineral fuels and lubricants (-7.1%), miscellaneous manufactures (-5%), chemicals (-1.2%) and manufactured goods classified by material (-1.1%). Non-edible raw materials excluding fuels dipped slightly by 0.9%.

Compared to Q4 2024, the overall index rose sharply by 9%. Machinery and transport equipment saw the highest increase (30.4%), followed by mineral fuels (29.1%).

In contrast, prices for miscellaneous products dropped 17.2%, manufactured goods fell 3.9%, oils and fats declined 3.2%, and food items decreased by 1.1%. Beverages and tobacco saw a minor fall of 0.3%. — ONA

OMAN RAMPS UP INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY PROTECTION

MUSCAT: Oman’s Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion has reaffirmed that intellectual property (IP) plays a key role in advancing economic and scientific development.

The protection of IP rights is seen as vital for stimulating innovation and enhancing the competitiveness of the national economy, in line with

Oman Vision 2040.

In 2024 and the first half of 2025, the National Intellectual Property Office saw a notable rise in IP registrations: 1,253 patent applications, 19,884 trademark applications, 48 industrial design applications and 246 copyright filings. This reflects growing awareness of IP’s importance in

safeguarding rights and supporting the business ecosystem.

The increase is attributed to streamlined digital services, regulatory reforms and awareness campaigns. Patent applications cover key sectors such as energy, green hydrogen, AI, robotics and pharmaceuticals, reflecting national innovation priorities. — ONA

Oman forecasts 2.2% economic growth in 2025

OMAN’S economy is expected to grow by 2.2% in real terms by the end of 2025, up from 1.7% in 2024, according to the Ministry of Economy’s “Economic Forecasts for 2025” report, marking the final year of the Tenth Five-Year Plan.

Inflation is projected to reach around 1.3%, remaining within the plan’s target range, thanks to government subsidies and stable global commodity prices.

The GDP at constant prices is forecast to rise from RO 38.3 billion in 2024 to RO 39.2 billion by the end of this year, supported by a 1.3% rebound in oil activities. Oil’s GDP contribution is expected to edge up to RO 12 billion, while non-oil sectors are projected to grow by 2.7%, contributing RO 28.6 billion.



The GDP at constant prices is forecast to rise from RO 38.3 billion in 2024 to RO 39.2 billion by the end of this year.

exports, real estate pressures and weak consumption.

Despite this, MENA’s outlook remains relatively positive, with regional growth set to reach 3% in 2025, driven by recovering GCC economies and growing non-oil investments in diversification and renewables.

Trade policy changes in the US are a potential risk.

Washington’s planned 10% tariff on all imports, plus additional “reciprocal” duties on around 90 countries, may

impact global trade flows.

Although GCC states may see minimal direct impact, indirect effects such as supply chain disruptions and oil price volatility could pose challenges.

For Oman, the US remains a key trading partner, with historical data showing a US trade surplus except during 2020-2022.

New global tariffs could still indirectly affect Oman through shifts in partner markets and weaker global oil demand.

Rising US inflation may

also delay interest rate cuts, potentially increasing imported inflation for Oman.

Nonetheless, Oman’s strategic location, robust infrastructure and free zones position it well to benefit from shifting global supply chains.

Re-exports and foreign investment in economic zones could increase, especially as European firms consider relocating operations in response to tariff changes. — ONA

OMAN AND PHILIPPINES EXPLORE INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

CEBU: The Oman-Cebu Investment Forum, held in Cebu City, Philippines, highlighted promising avenues for trade, investment and bilateral cooperation between the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of the Philippines.

Organised by Oman’s Foreign Ministry, the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and local authorities in Cebu, the forum focused on strengthening ties between the two countries.

In his opening remarks, Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, called for transforming the long-standing friendship between Oman and the Philippines into strong trade and investment partnerships.

He underscored the potential for cooperation in diverse sectors including green and renewable energy, logistics, tourism, real estate, food production,



This inaugural edition of the Oman-Cebu Investment Forum aimed to deepen cultural, commercial, tourism and investment relations between the two nations.

healthcare, artificial intelligence, robotics, IT and data centres.

Sayyid Badr also acknowledged the

Filipino community in Oman, noting that approximately 50,000 Filipinos live and work in the Sultanate of Oman, where they enjoy a safe and respectful environment.

He described this as a strong humanitarian link that could serve as a springboard for broader cooperation beyond the labour sector.

This inaugural edition of the Oman-Cebu Investment Forum aimed to deepen cultural, commercial, tourism and investment relations between the two nations.

It also provided a platform to exchange ideas and foster economic partnerships between public and private sector stakeholders from both countries. The forum was also attended by Dr Mahad bin Said Baowain, Minister of Labour, along with senior officials and business representatives from both sides. — ONA

TOP CONTRIBUTOR

US customs duties top \$100 bn for first time



US customs duty collections surged again in June as President Donald Trump’s tariffs gained steam, topping \$100 billion for the first time during a fiscal year and helping to produce a surprise \$27 billion budget surplus for the month, the US Treasury reported.

The budget data showed that tariffs are starting to build into a significant revenue contributor for the federal government. — Reuters

FLOATING LEVEL

Russian oil price cap 15% below global price



The European Commission proposed on Friday a floating price cap on Russian oil of 15% below the average market price of crude in the previous three months, EU diplomats said.

The European Union and Britain have been pushing the Group of Seven nations to lower the cap for the last two months after a fall in oil futures made the current \$60 a barrel level largely irrelevant. — Reuters

ASSET CLASS

Crypto investors look ahead to policy wins



Crypto investors are betting that a slew of long-sought policy wins for the industry, expected next week, could invite new investment in the asset class.

Those hopes helped propel bitcoin to another high on Friday.

The House of Representatives will debate a series of crypto bills to provide the digital asset industry with the US regulatory framework it has long demanded. — Reuters

OPINION

Oman’s return to investment grade is a national milestone



QASIM AL MAASHANI

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

THERE are few moments in a nation's economic journey that genuinely signal a turning point. Oman's recent upgrade by Moody's to investment grade status — after nearly a decade below that line — is one of those moments.

On July 11, 2025, Moody's Investors Service officially lifted Oman's sovereign credit rating from Ba1 to Baa3, restoring the country's position among the world's most trusted borrowers.

For the average citizen, that may sound technical. But for those tracking Oman's economic transformation over the past few years, it reads like a stamp of international confidence — earned through persistence, policy reform and national vision.

Unlike flashy economic turnarounds that make headlines with sudden oil booms or mega projects, Oman's comeback has been quiet, deliberate and disciplined. Since the oil price crash of 2014, which rattled public finances across the Gulf, Oman has been steadily fixing its house — reducing debt, rationalising spending and making every rial count.

By the end of 2024, Oman had cut its public debt ratio to 35.5% of GDP, down from 37.5% just a year before — and significantly below the alarming levels of the early 2020s. More importantly, the government's grip on public spending has tightened.

Public expenditure, which averaged 41% of GDP between 2016 and 2020, now sits at a leaner 29%.

Even more impressive is the drop in Oman's fiscal break-even oil price — the point at which oil revenues cover government spending. From a risky \$84 per barrel just a few years ago, that number has fallen to \$70.

That shift means Oman is less vulnerable to sudden oil market swings — a critical safeguard in a turbulent global economy.

And the results don't stop there. The cost of debt servicing, which used to consume 9% of total revenues in 2021, was reduced to 7.2% in 2024. Meanwhile, real GDP grew by 1.7%, inflation stayed under control at 0.7%, and the country recorded both a fiscal surplus (2.8% of GDP) and a current account surplus (2.1%).

These are not abstract achievements. They are the tangible outcomes of a government choosing the long road over the easy one — resisting quick fixes and instead building economic resilience brick by brick.

Moody's didn't simply reward good numbers. The upgrade reflects a deeper shift: a belief that Oman's economic direction is sustainable and credible. That belief matters. Credit ratings influence how much governments pay to borrow money, how foreign investors assess risk and how global markets perceive long-term economic health.

Being rated investment grade means Oman is once again seen as a safe, stable and forward-looking country — not just within the Gulf, but on the international stage.

The recognition also brings renewed investor interest. From sovereign bond markets to foreign direct investment, Oman is now better placed to secure funding

Unlike flashy economic turnarounds that make headlines with sudden oil booms or mega projects, Oman's comeback has been quiet, deliberate and disciplined. Since the oil price crash of 2014, which rattled public finances across the Gulf, Oman has been steadily fixing its house — reducing debt, rationalising spending and making every rial count.

on more favourable terms — essential for pushing forward with large-scale infrastructure, energy transition and industrial diversification plans.

It would be easy to attribute this upgrade to a good year of oil prices or a temporary fiscal surplus. But that would miss the larger picture. Oman's return to investment grade is rooted in Vision 2040, the national blueprint launched to steer Oman towards a more diversified, competitive and inclusive economy.

That vision has translated into real policy — from restructuring public finances and reforming state-owned enterprises, to promoting SMEs, tourism, logistics, green hydrogen and technology. The fruits of these efforts are now beginning to show — not just in the rating agencies' assessments, but in the underlying fundamentals of the economy.

In fact, the Moody's report echoes a message Omani policymakers have been emphasising for years: fiscal discipline, when paired with strategic diversification, works.

It strengthens credibility, lowers risk and creates space for long-term growth.

Despite this success, Oman cannot afford to let its guard down. Moody's made clear that the road ahead will require continued fiscal prudence and faster progress in reducing reliance on oil revenues. The non-oil primary deficit — a key measure of underlying sustainability — still needs attention.

Likewise, non-oil growth must become more robust to cushion any future shocks. This is where the next chapter begins.

TRUMP TACO TRADE CONTAINS SEEDS OF OWN UNRAVELLING

NEIL UNMACK

TACOS can be tasty and satisfying, but tend to come apart if eaten too eagerly. Something similar may be happening in global stock markets, where hopes that Donald Trump will always chicken out from imposing high tariffs – the so-called TACO trade – have propelled stocks to record highs. It’s an unstable equilibrium.

Trump’s 35% threatened tariff on Canada capped off a week of more-aggressive-than-expected announcements: a mooted 50% levy on copper imports, and a potential 200% charge on drugs.

Markets have drawn the same conclusion as before: that Trump will bark loudly, but his tariffs will not bite enough to derail the economy. The S&P 500 is now at a record level. The Russell 2000 Index, which contains smaller companies more directly exposed to the US economy, is above where it was on April 2 when the president announced country-specific reciprocal levies.

The TACO trade is more than a bet on Trump psychology. There are good reasons why chickening out could be the most likely outcome.

The United States is not in a position to quickly fire up copper mines, or smartphone manufacturing plants, and so may settle for lower tariffs. If its key trading partners end up somewhere close to the April 2 10% “baseline” level, the economic impact may be modest.

Yet the TACO trade implies a seductive predictability, and Trump is anything but. His previous actions during his first presidency, which include hyping dubious remedies for Covid-19, show that policy errors are a feature of his government.

His most recent announcements, including a 25% levy for Japan, suggest tariffs will end up higher than the baseline 10%. And the confidence created by the TACO trade may now be creating a risky logic.

On Thursday, Trump said that buoyant stock markets proved his tariffs had been “well received”, rather than damaging the economy, implicitly giving him a green light to proceed with more damaging levies.

Yet markets are far from pricing in the true impact of a trade war. So far, the US has barely concluded any trade deals, meaning more extreme negotiation and threats may be coming. Moreover, the impact of tariffs announced to date on US consumer prices will only start to be felt this month.

Stock prices in some of the most affected sectors look complacent. In Europe, drugmakers Novartis, AstraZeneca, Sanofi and GSK are on average trading at 11.8 times forward earnings, above their 11.3 times level at the start of the year, as per LSEG data. — Reuters

Circular economy & local added value in Oman

THE Sultanate of Oman is now in full acceptance of the circular economy concept which is known as a restorative and regenerative system which looks at waste as a potential resource.

This shift is reflective of the Oman Vision 2040, which is the country's holistic development plan focusing on economic diversification, sustainability, human capital development, education, social equality, innovation and a healthy environment.

The circular economy is supportive of these objectives by transforming waste into business opportunities that bolster the economy while creating domestic jobs, conserving resources and mitigating environmental damage.

Oman's circular economy initiatives are already yielding some local results which include, amongst others, more than 2,300 direct jobs. These initiatives include Waste-to-Energy projects, PET recycling, water reuse and SMEs participation.

Also observed are the import substitution of recycled materials, the development of innovation ecosystems, and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. The circular model is thus not only an environmental imperative, but a key driver of local value creation.

This paper adds to the discussion of Oman's circular economy which is still emerging, the key national institutions such as be'ah, the flagship infrastructure and recycling projects, and their role in local value creation aligned with Oman Vision 2040.

OMAN'S STRATEGIC FOUNDATIONS FOR CIRCULARITY

The Oman Vision 2040 focuses on transitioning the Sultanate of Oman into a diversified, sustainable, knowledge-driven economy. It fosters private-sector leadership and enhances human capital and economic conserves environmental diversifies.

The circular economy provides a



Modern engineered landfills in Oman

leading investments towards circular economy infrastructure. The most prominent example is be'ah – Oman Environmental Services Holding Company – responsible for the solid waste management system of the country.

be'ah's mandate also focuses on lowering waste generation, increasing recycling and reducing reliance on landfills.

Currently, be'ah oversees more than 10 operated engineered landfills that include the major facilities in Barka and Suhar.

There is a waste-to-energy plant in Barka that is under construction which is expected to process 4,500 tonnes of municipal solid waste daily and provide electricity to the national grid.

In partnership with Sultan Qaboos University, a pilot biogas plant has been started with the treatment of organic waste from households and farms.

Such initiatives not only provide clean energy, but also promote technological and workforce innovations.

Another crucial component is treated wastewater. Oman reused about 51 per cent out of 96 million cubic metres of treated wastewater in 2023, particularly in industrial and agricultural sectors.

This substitution also reduced CO₂ emissions by almost 291,000 tonnes. Oman is also working on expansion plans that will increase the tertiary treatment of water to one million cubic metres daily by 2040.

CONCLUSION

There are clearly defined environmental rationales, but also strategic economic drivers behind Oman's transition towards a circular economy. With the right policies and innovative ideas coupled with strong institutional frameworks and local entrepreneurship focused on infrastructure, Oman can convert waste into a strategic resource for building a sustainable and resilient economy.



DR HILAL AL SAWAI

The writer is local content, sustainability and innovation expert.

practical framework to advance all these pillars in parallel.

The government has established a National Local Content Policy (2024–2030) which focuses on increasing the in-country value for all economic activities. The policy aligns well with circularity as it promotes local supply chains, prefers SMEs for government contracts and encourages sourcing of materials and services domestically.

The rest of the industrialised zones (Suhar, Duqm, Salalah and Al Mazunah) are strategically positioned to integrate recycling, repurposing and green manufacturing. Along with ESG (Environmental, Social, Governance) frameworks introduced by the Oman Investment Authority, there is strong institutional support for a circular transition.

Oman's geographic and demographic characteristics also offer advantages. The arid land, abundant solar radiation, and young, educated people are well positioned to innovate in water reuse, renewable energy, composting and low-waste agriculture.

INFRASTRUCTURE & INSTITUTIONAL SYSTEMS

Oman is one of few countries

BUSINESS

ASYAD GROUP ACHIEVES 55% PROFIT GROWTH, EXPANDS GLOBAL REACH

MUSCAT: Asyad Group recorded substantial progress in 2024, achieving 55 per cent growth in net profit and expanding its operations globally.

According to its annual report, the group's revenues rose by 6 per cent year-on-year to RO 493 million (\$1.28 billion), with net profit reaching RO 52.8 million (\$137.3 million).

This growth was driven by Asyad's first international acquisition and expansion into over 90 markets, underscoring its ambition to become a global logistics powerhouse.

The group's ports reported a 12 per cent increase in general cargo handling and a 38 per cent rise in container handling.

Port of Salalah's capacity was raised to 6.5 million TEUs, while plans to expand Suwaiq Port and study investments in Sultan Qaboos Port are underway.

Free and economic zones attracted RO 2.41 billion in

This growth was driven by Asyad's first international acquisition and expansion into over 90 markets, underscoring its ambition to become a global logistics powerhouse.



The group's ports reported a 12 per cent increase in general cargo handling and a 38 per cent rise in container handling.

investments — a 133 per cent jump from 2023 — bolstered by the launch of the Muscat Airport Free Zone.

Asyad's maritime fleet now includes over 90 vessels serving 200 international ports.

Carbon emissions were reduced by 6 per cent and 232 ship repair projects were completed at Asyad Drydocks.

Logistics operations grew following the acquisition of SkyBridge Shipping Solutions, boosting freight volumes by 349 per cent at sea, 198 per cent by land and 160 per cent by air.

Preparatory work began on the Hafeet Rail project — a joint Omani-Emirati initiative — while the group expanded warehousing from three to 11 locations.

In 2024, Asyad recruited 122 Omani seafarers and created 619 new jobs, reinforcing its commitment to national employment and capacity building. — ONA

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SRI LANKAN Male — (CGMA ACMA+ CPA+BBA) Asst. Finance Manager/ Chief Accountant, 12+ Experience in Oman & GCC, Expert in Finan. Reporting (MIS), VAT, Audit, Cashflow, Budget, AR AP Recon, IFRS, Payroll, Banking. Contact: 78773250. Email: ali.mohamedown@gmail.com

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

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

CHIEF accountant, MBA finance, 9+ years experience in financial statements, auditing, budgeting, VAT, tax, fixed assets, reconciliation, payroll. Seeking a full-time or part-time position in a senior role. Contact: akramhaniffa@yahoo.com / 93988825.

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

INDIAN male (MBA, Marketing) with 5 years Oman experience in sales construction chemicals (Projects). Valid Oman D/L seeks job in sales. Contact: 96906235

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

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

WAREHOUSE FOR RENT

EXPERIENCED accountant with expertise in accounting, administration and documentation. Proficient in Tally and MS Office. Contact: + 968 72806772

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

WAREHOUSE for rent in Misfah. Contact: 79939666, 99888390

LOOKING for part time OR full time Accounts/Finance job. 20yrs experience in Muscat. Upto finalization & Audit. Please contact: 92065499

SENIOR engineer 20+yrs exp in Elec. & Mech. projects in design, supervision & execution. Available with NOC, OSE membership & D/L. 99148940, jobluk.om@gmail.com

FLAT for rent 3BKH 18 Nov Street, Ghubrah. Contact: 92470065, 92408308

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SIT. WANTED

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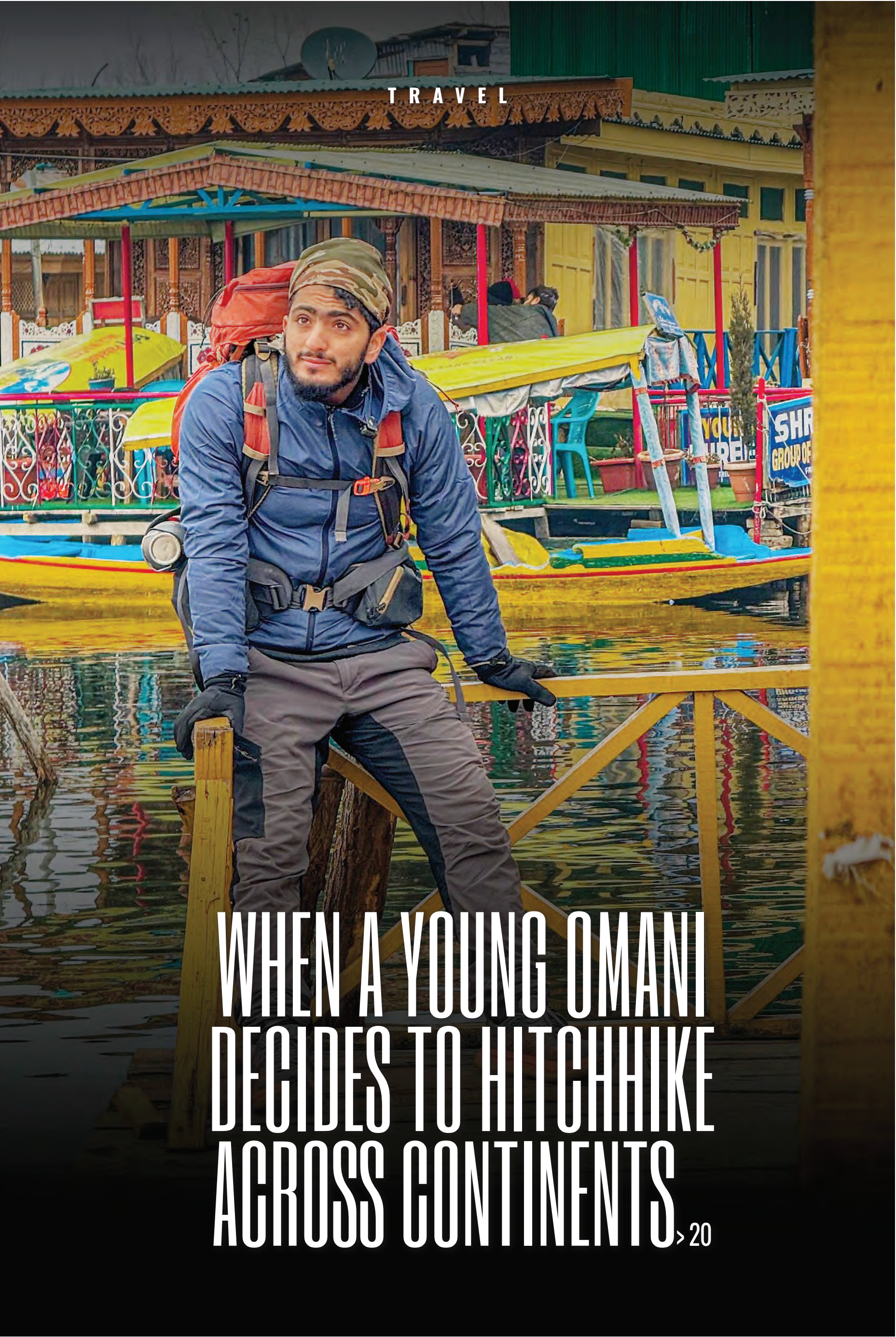


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ART/LIFE



WHEN A YOUNG OMANI DECIDES TO HITCHHIKE ACROSS CONTINENTS_{>20}

ENTERTAINMENT

Justin Bieber releases first new album in four years called 'Swag'



SINGER JUSTIN Bieber has released his first new album in four years called “Swag”. The 21-track seventh LP was released in a surprise drop on Friday and sees the singer reflect on his experiences as a husband and father, following online speculation around his marriage to Hailey Bieber.

It comes after the 31-year-old began to post teasers on Instagram last night as mysterious billboards were erected in locations around the world, with the new album described as “some of his most personal music yet”.

In May this year, Hailey, who is the daughter of US actor Stephen Baldwin and has been married to Bieber since 2018, told Vogue that postpartum life had been “very difficult”, describing constant Internet rumours as a “crazy life to live”.

She said giving birth to the couple’s son, Jack Blues Bieber, in August last year was one of the “hardest things” she has ever done after going through an 18-hour labour.

Track titles on the new record include “Therapy Session”, “Dadz Love” and “Devotion”.

“Swag” follows 2021’s “Justice” album, which featured singles “HoldOn”, “Peaches” and “Anyone”, and was made in collaboration with Carter Lang, Dylan Wiggins, Daniel Caesar, Dijon, mk.gee, Daniel Chetrit, Eddie Benjamin and Knox Fortune.

The record is being released on the Def Jam Recordings label.

The Canadian singer began his career in his early teens.

He is best known for songs such as “Baby”, “What Do You Mean” and “Sorry”.

Bieber has been nominated for 23 Grammy Awards and has won two, for best country duo/group performance for “10,000 Hours” with Dan + Shay and best dance recording for “Where Are U Now”, recorded with EDM duo JackU, composed of DJs Skrillex and Diplo.

Bieber also recently launched his clothing and lifestyle brand SKYLRK. —PA Media/dpa

QUICK FEATURES



FASHION

A model presents a creation for Germanier during the Women's Haute-Couture Fall/Winter 2025-26 collection show in Paris. — AFP



ENTERTAINMENT

US actor David Corenswet attends the World premiere of “Superman” at the TCL Chinese Theatre in Hollywood, California. — AFP



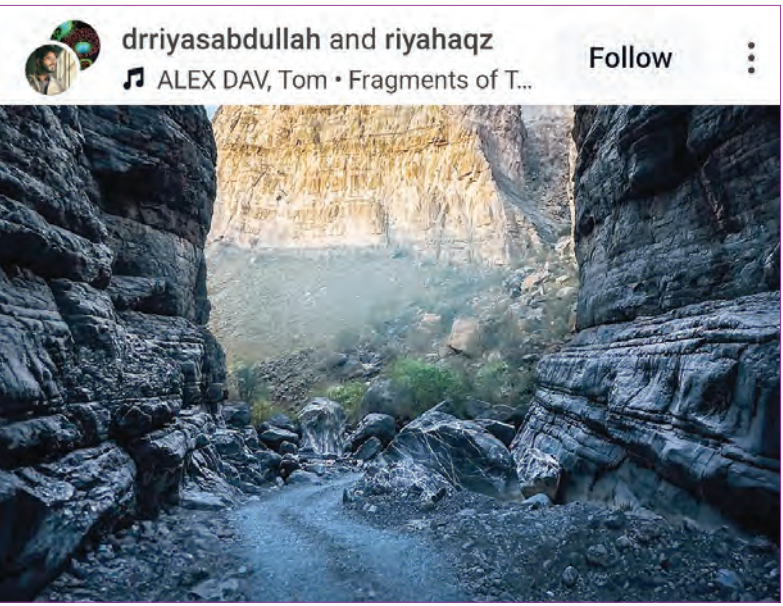
MUSEUM

A handler organises the juvenile Ceratosaurus nasicornis skeleton during the press preview of Sotheby's Natural History auction in New York City. — AFP

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



Underwater Chameleon



Beauty of Remote Places

SHARE A SLICE OF YOUR LIFE

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Rubik’s Cube owner loses trademark battle with Greek rival



RUBIK’S CUBE owner Spin Master Toys UK on Wednesday lost its battle against a Greek rival as Europe’s second-highest court annulled trademarks related to the shape of the iconic puzzle. Invented by Hungarian professor Erno Rubik in 1974, the multicoloured cube puzzle is popular among young and old, with hundreds of millions sold worldwide. The brand was acquired by Canadian children’s entertainment company Spin Master in 2021. Spin Master took its case to the Luxembourg-based General Court after Greece’s Verdes Innovations SA in 2013 asked the EU trademark office to invalidate several trademarks registered by Spin Master’s predecessor between 2008 and 2012. The European Union Intellectual Property

Office (EUIPO) backed Verdes, saying Rubik’s Cube trademarks had been registered contrary to EU law. The Greek company makes puzzle cubes under the V-CUBE brand. The Luxembourg-based General Court backed EUIPO. “The General Court confirms the annulment of trade marks consisting of the shape of the ‘Rubik’s cube,’” judges said. “As the essential characteristics of that shape are necessary to obtain a technical result, it should not have been registered as an EU trade mark,” they said. Spin Master Toys, which can appeal to the Court of Justice of the European Union, Europe’s highest, did not immediately reply to an emailed request for comment. The case is T-1170/23 Spin Master Toys UK v EUIPO - Verdes Innovations. — Reuters



A life dedicated to healing, heritage and natural wisdom

BY YERU EBUE

I HEARD of her death. But nobody can say for sure what caused it. Someone who adored her said she died with a broken heart, after losing her own daughter. I’ve always thought of her as my second mother. In those brief moments — hellos and texts that took weeks to reply — I was happy to imagine her somewhere, living her best life. Dr MaryAnn James [Roberta] was far from fragile. I met her at over 60, yet she had so much life in her, it was like talking to someone my age. She was a fascinating person, and for years she worked in Oman’s wellness world, partnering with one of Oman’s most respected families to bring beautiful wellness programmes to the country. The first time I met her, she took me to a stunning desert resort. She promised it had one of the most magical spas the country would ever know. During that visit, we discussed many things — how Oman’s seasons are, how nature heals us, how the punishing summer makes way for the green khareef, which renews the soul, and how khareef is followed by winter. She believed that healing — be it physical, mental, or spiritual — comes from understanding and harnessing the interconnectedness of the mind, body and spirit. Her approach was rooted in tradition yet presented with a modern awareness, emphasising natural therapies, herbal ingredients and holistic wellness. She often referenced regional treasures such as frankincense, Oman’s Rehan and date fruits, highlighting her pride in local resources and her deep desire to promote indigenous knowledge. Her focus was on gentle, natural methods that not only healed but also inspired wonder about the traditions and ingredients of the region. She wanted her readers and clients to feel both informed and motivated to pursue healthier lifestyles — nurturing themselves with organic farming, reflections and natural therapies. She talked about science and myths, swapping between facts and legends with ease. Using stories from myths and legends, she brought them to life. She loved Oman. She had lived in Sweden and the UK,



found peace in the Himalayas, but Oman — the desert — she loved it like an oryx staring into the endless land, still finding reasons to appreciate its quietness and calm. In the five years I knew her, she taught me more about Oman than my own friends. She teased me about the real location of Diana’s Point and said fossils should be highlighted more in Al Jabal Al Akhdhar tourism plans. She genuinely believed that Oman was the best place in the world to heal because of its natural healing elements, like Rehan, frankincense and date fruits, and she promoted their uses passionately. She could switch topics easily, and her memories were as clear as if she were still young. She showed me Oman’s biggest mushroom factory, told me about harvesting the best dates during the full moon. We spent nights in Al Jabal Al Akhdhar talking about how to grow the wellness scene. One day, she picked me up in a golf cart and encouraged me to try playing. With her encouragement, I did something I would normally dismiss as boring.

She built a wellness pyramid in Oman — such an old idea now, almost forgotten. But at its peak, she led some media inside a tunnel, into the heart of this pyramid. Inside, she told us to sit on a yoga mat, and under a faint light streaming from above, she showed us the magic of natural Botox — lifting and glowing with just her hands. It was intense and unforgettable; different from anything else. Her practice was about harmonising the body naturally, emphasising herbal remedies and harnessing the healing power of regional treasures like frankincense and Rehan, which she believed carried ancient secrets and profound benefits. She had a gift with words. Even in chaos, she was a calm force. I invited her to write as a lifestyle columnist for Oman Observer, where she shared her thoughts on the magic of Oman’s humble herbs, holistic wellness and secrets from a moonlit garden. Her writings reflected her deep care and dedication — her wish that everyone approached health with kindness, patience and respect for nature’s gifts. Now she’s gone, keeping more secrets inside herself, only sharing what she chose. Her columns remain as her last gift — a window into her knowledge and kindness. I’ve always wondered about her. I like to think she’s still alive somewhere — perhaps in the Himalayas, tending her herbs in a garden, as vibrant as ever. She was full of kindness and wisdom, showing us that the world has so much to give if only we listen, and if only we let it heal us naturally. I promised I would visit her someday. She promised she’d come to Oman soon. Neither happened. Many who loved her in Oman don’t even know she has passed. So I am writing this tribute — because if anyone deserved to be remembered, it’s her. I thought I knew her well, but I realise I didn’t know everything. And if the world forgets Dr MaryAnn James Roberta, at least in my heart, she will stay alive. One day, I will find her quiet place in the Himalayas. I will look at those mountains she loved. I will visit the spots she recommended. But just as she lived a life filled with purpose and meaning, I hope mine will also be meaningful, extraordinary and unforgettable.

FEATURES



WHEN A YOUNG OMANI DECIDES TO HITCHHIKE ACROSS CONTINENTS

BY SIHAM AL SAIDI

A LONE MAN stands on the edge of a dusty desert road, sunlight blazing overhead. His thumb is up, an offering of trust to a passing vehicle. As the car slows, he steps forward, eyes filled with quiet determination. This is Mohammed al Busaidy, the first Omani to hitchhike across the world, taking the road less travelled — one that demands courage as much as curiosity.

What makes his journey unforgettable isn't just the miles driven or the countries crossed. It's the moment of genuine human connection — be it a handshake in a remote desert, a shared meal in a crowded Indian kitchen, or a stranger's simple act of kindness that breaks down cultural barriers instantaneously. It's in these brief encounters that Mohammed's story finds its most compelling chapter: the profound power of trust, empathy and open hearts.

Mohammed's journey didn't start in an airport or on a tourist trail. It began on an unassuming road in Oman, but it soon expanded into a worldwide quest to understand what connects us all beyond borders. With little more than a backpack and his thumb, he ventured into places where most hesitated to go — places that challenged every notion of safety and comfort.

His goal was never just sightseeing; it was about feeling the world deeply, embracing its raw truth and sharing those stories.

His journey led him through India, a landscape of relentless energy and vivid colour. Riding overcrowded trains, sleeping on the floor and eating from pots that seemed to hold the weight of entire families, he learned endurance from those who had little yet shared everything. He recalls an encounter in Kerala when locals insisted he drink hot water amidst the tropical heat. To many, that might seem odd, but for the people there, it was a gesture of care — an expression of hospitality rooted in tradition. "They believe hot water is good for your health," he explains. "It's not just about healing; it's about showing concern. That's something I won't forget."

In the desert sands of Saudi Arabia, the environment shifts, but the generosity endures. One evening, a man pulled over in his car and beckoned him inside. Without questions, without negotiation — just an invitation to be a guest. The heat was punishing, the landscape indifferent, yet in that moment, human kindness triumphed over circumstances. It was a reminder that sometimes, the simplest act — offering someone a ride — can carry as much meaning as the destination.

Throughout the year, Mohammed didn't confine himself to simply passing through. He committed to working a different job every month — each a deep immersion into the local way of life. From harvesting crops in Morocco to serving coffee in Karnataka, each role expanded his understanding of resilience and dignity. "Whether digging in a field or cleaning hotel rooms," he says, "I saw dignity in labour. People have a quiet strength that often goes unnoticed, but it's universal."

His desire to chase challenges extended to his quest for Oman's most legendary creature — the Arabian Cobra, a fiercely venomous snake revered and feared

in his homeland. For months, he searched rugged deserts, slept out in the wilderness, even caught the snake in the southern mountains. The risk was high, the adventure even higher. But for Mohammed, such pursuits celebrate life's unpredictability — and teach patience, humility and respect for nature's raw power.

Every country offered a new lesson in culture and tradition. In Africa, he joined tribal ceremonies, learning dances and rituals that have survived centuries. In Southeast Asia, he cooked local dishes with families, witnessing traditions vanish under modern currents. His goal is not just to observe these customs but to truly feel them. "I don't want to just see the world," he explains. "I want to live it, to understand its soul."

Throughout his travels, Mohammed has documented these connections on social media, drawing tens of thousands of followers. For him, the act of sharing isn't about boasting; it's about reminding others of humanity's collective kindness.

Through stories, videos and photographs, he highlights how strangers become friends, strangers' kindness outweighing differences in language, religion, or background. "Adventure isn't about adrenaline," he often says. "It's about empathy — listening to stories, sharing meals, sleeping outside, trusting the world."

Mohammed's journey persists. Every roadside encounter, every small village, every night under the stars is a reminder of what travel offers beyond sights and destinations: connection, understanding and a glimpse into the human spirit's resilience.

As he stands once more on a dusty roadside, thumb raised, gazing at the horizon, Mohammed al Busaidy exemplifies that the greatest travel is not measured in miles, but in moments that make us human. An odyssey of one life, one story at a time — an inspiring testament to the idea that the journey itself is the destination.