

IN BRIEF

HM’S GREETINGS TO JAMAICA

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to Dr Patrick Allen, Governor-General of Jamaica on his country’s Independence Anniversary. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his best wishes to the Governor-General and the people of his country. His Majesty also wished Jamaica further progress, growth and the realisation of further achievements.

AUSTRIA, SLOVAKIA HIT NEW HEAT RECORDS



A woman holds a drink on the street of Eisenstadt, Austria, on Wednesday. — AFP

Austria and neighbouring Slovakia on Wednesday set new temperature records as a sweltering heatwave batters central Europe. A high of 41.2°C was recorded at Bad Deutsch-Altenburg in eastern Austria, the GeoSphere Austria national weather agency said in a statement, breaking a previous record of 41°C set on Tuesday in the capital Vienna. In Slovakia, 41.4°C was measured in the southwestern village of Kamenica nad Hronom, beating a previous high of 41.3°C set in the same village in June, the Slovak Hydrometeorological Institute (SHMU) said in a statement. The records come during an exceptional spell of hot weather and low rainfall across central Europe which had already seen several local records broken.

RUSSIAN STRIKES ON KYIV KILL 17 IN UKRAINE

Russian missile and drone strikes killed at least 17 people and wounded dozens more in Kyiv and the surrounding region overnight, authorities said on Wednesday. Kyiv was unable to shoot down any of the missiles launched by Russia, whose intensifying attacks have prompted Kyiv to plead for more US-made Patriot interceptors. Russia has significantly upped its attacks on the Ukrainian capital in recent months, typically firing salvos of hard-to-intercept ballistic missiles in short blitzes that rock buildings and send booms echoing across the city. **DETAILS ON P7**

Arts and recreation fields most promising sectors

SALALAH: The labour market laboratories, organised as part of the activities of the third edition of the Labour Forum, adopted a road map to enhance governance, develop arts, entertainment, and recreation sector, elevate the labour market system, raise the efficiency of legislation and policies, and foresee the future of economic sectors.

The concluding ceremony was held in the presence of Dr Mahad bin Said Baowain, Minister of Labour. Speaking on the occasion, the minister emphasised that the arts, entertainment, and recreation sector is considered one of the promising economic sectors due to its major investment opportunities that contribute in diversifying

the national economy, opening new employment horizons, and enhancing added value, in alignment with the targets of Oman Vision 2040. He said that developing this sector requires an integrated regulatory framework that keeps pace with the nature of its activities, enhances its operational efficiency and competitiveness, and ensures

the sustainability of its growth. He pointed out that the sector is directly linked to commercial, financial, and investment aspects, targeting regional and global markets, which necessitates developing its legislative and regulatory ecosystem and strengthening integration among relevant government entities. — ONA

Trump tells Iran to open Strait of Hormuz

Deal to reopen the waterway expected ‘soon’

US President Donald Trump said a deal to reopen the Strait of Hormuz could come very soon but warned Iran it would get “hit very hard” if negotiations fell through. Transit of the waterway, a key conduit for global oil and gas supplies, has been a sticking point in talks and led to renewed fighting following an April ceasefire. Iran has tightened its grip on Hormuz and wants to control the strait and charge tolls - powers it did not exercise before the war began on February 28. Trump said on Tuesday a deal with Iran to reopen Hormuz could happen “tomorrow or the next day,” telling reporters in California that negotiators “had a very good day.” Earlier, he struck a more threatening tone. “The strait is going to be open very soon, or they’re going to get hit very hard - and then the strait’s going to be open,” Trump said in an interview with Fox News. “All you can do is fight your way out.” US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent told CNBC earlier “there is a chance we may have a deal” by Wednesday or Thursday. Underlining the volatile situation, one crew member was listed missing on Tuesday on a merchant ship hit by a projectile in Hormuz, while an Indian ship in the Red Sea sank following an unattributed attack.



People walk near a billboard depicting Iran's late Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, on a street in Tehran, Iran. — Reuters

In what has become a regular pattern, Trump last week threatened to hit Iran “very hard”, potentially with attacks against civilian infrastructure, only to pull back, hinting a deal was near. Iran’s foreign ministry has denied negotiations with Washington, even as Trump insisted they were happening. Qatar, which has been mediating negotiations, said that diplomatic efforts were ongoing but that no direct Iran-US talks were planned. Washington’s diplomatic goals include reopening Hormuz and the denuclearisation of Iran, which Trump accepted could “take a little while.” The president previously called Tehran “duplicitous” for saying it was not negotiating, adding that a US counter-blockade of Iranian ports would remain “unless a Deal, or Total Surrender, is accomplished.” More than five months into a war that has cost Washington billions of dollars, Iran remains able to fire missiles and drones at US and allied targets in the region, as well as at commercial shipping. Early on Tuesday, Britain’s maritime security agency UKMTO said an unnamed cargo vessel had been struck by an “unknown projectile” in the Strait of Hormuz. Iran continues to impose an effective blockade on the strait and insists ships coordinate crossings with it. — AFP

Unesco adopts ‘Cultural Property’ initiative at Bahla Fort site

PARIS: The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (Unesco) has adopted the ‘Cultural Property’ initiative for pottery, copper, metal, and woodworking crafts submitted by the Bahla Volunteer Team, a local community organisation, at the historic Bahla Fort site in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate. The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MoHT) participated in the initiative for the first time in cooperation with the Oman National Commission for Education, Culture and Science, as part of the World

Heritage Volunteers (WHV) 2026 campaign under the slogan ‘Working on the Future,’ organised by the Unesco World Heritage Centre. This step reflects the role of the Sultanate of Oman in preserving and managing registered World Heritage sites of Outstanding Universal Value. The World Heritage Volunteers initiative was established in 2008 within the framework of the World Heritage Education Programme to promote a culture of volunteerism and engage youth and community institutions in protecting and promoting heritage globally.



The implementation of the initiative submitted by the Bahla Volunteer Team will begin from September 3 to 13.

Its membership comprises 200 organisations from 84 countries and more than 10,000 national and international volunteers. The Sultanate of Oman’s participation in this initiative marks it as the second country in the Arab region after the Kingdom of Morocco, owing to its significant role in preserving global cultural heritage. The initiative represents a model of partnership between the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism and local community institutions in line with the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the

World Heritage Convention, thereby enhancing community participation in protecting and managing sites of Outstanding Universal Value and embodying the concept of effective partnership in heritage conservation. This participation aims to highlight the Sultanate of Oman’s efforts in preserving World Heritage, as well as preserving traditional craft knowledge and skills and transmitting them to future generations — particularly in pottery, copper and metalworking, **TURN TO P2**

OMAN

SHORT TAKES



SEMINAR
DISCUSSES BOOSTING
VOLUNTARY, HUMAN
RIGHTS WORK

TAQAH: Oman Human Rights Commission, in collaboration with the Social Development Committee and the Omani Women's Association in the Wilayat of Taqah, organised on Wednesday a seminar titled ‘Together We Strengthen Humanitarian and Rights Work to Serve the Community in the Sultanate of Oman’.

The seminar aimed to highlight the integration between rights-based frameworks and voluntary humanitarian efforts, while reinforcing the principles of sustainable development.

The seminar featured a series of working papers on ‘The Role of Oman Human Rights Commission in Protecting and Promoting Human Rights in the Sultanate of Oman’, ‘Taqah Charity Team – A Journey of Giving and Sustainable Humanitarian Impact’, and ‘Voluntary Work and Its Impact on Promoting Human Rights and Community Service’.

The seminar also featured a panel discussion during which participants exchanged views and insights on challenges facing voluntary teams, mechanisms for electronic integration between service institutions, and the promotion of rights-based concepts among priority care groups. — ONA

UNESCO’S ‘CULTURAL
PROPERTY’ INITIATIVE
AT BAHLA FORT SITE

FROM PAGE 1

And woodworking crafts, as these crafts constitute true pillars for the artistic, technical, economic, and social sustainability of society.

Moreover, this participation also aims to involve youth in preserving world heritage through tangible on-site projects, enabling them to learn essential preservation and maintenance skills and techniques, building their capacities as future decision-makers and active global citizens, strengthening sustainable cooperation between community institutions and the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, raising awareness among youth, volunteers, and relevant entities regarding the need to protect and promote world heritage, and identifying best practices by developing non-formal education tools to facilitate the involvement of community stakeholders in world heritage education. The implementation of the initiative submitted by the Bahla Volunteer Team will begin from September 3 to 13 at the Bahla Fort site. It is organised by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism in cooperation with the Ministry of Education — represented by Oman National Commission for Education, Culture and Science — and the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, with the participation of the SMEs Development Authority ‘Riyada’ and the Bahla Volunteer Team, as well as international and local volunteers representing several countries, thereby enhancing cultural exchange and the sharing of expertise and experiences in heritage preservation.

Ali bin Said al Adawi, Acting Director of the Bahla Fort site, said that the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism’s participation in the World Heritage Volunteers 2026 initiatives, “Working for the Future,” contributes to raising awareness among youth, volunteers, and stakeholders about the need to protect World Heritage, highlighting Oman’s efforts in this area and establishing crafts as cultural property that must be preserved from extinction. Al Adawi added that participating projects must be located at a site inscribed on the World Heritage List or the Tentative List, build effective partnerships with the local community and relevant entities to enhance project impact and the sustainability of its outputs, include awareness activities and workshops, have a legally registered applicant in the country, and be implemented on a non-profit basis. — ONA

EXHIBITION SEEKS TO PROMOTE WOMEN’S ENTREPRENEURSHIP

SUHAR: Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) branch in Al Batinah North Governorate is hosting the first edition of an exhibition codenamed ‘Makers’ that features the business initiatives of Omani women entrepreneurs.

The exhibition is organised by the OCCI Businesswomen’s Committee in the governorate and will run until August 8. The exhibition, which seeks to promote women’s



The event keeps pace with women's passion to see their visions realised.

entrepreneurship, provides a platform that brings together Omani women's projects under one roof. It aims to showcase local products and services, enhance opportunities for establishing partnerships and open up new vistas of marketing in a manner that supports the growth of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and augments their contribution to economic development.

Me’aad bint Khamis al

Shidi, Head of the OCCI Businesswomen’s Committee in Al Batinah North Governorate, said that the exhibition constitutes a podium for highlighting the efforts of women who turned their ideas into activities with an impact.

The event keeps pace with women’s passion to see their visions realised in the form of projects that cater to the needs of society, she added. — ONA

136 free stalls support
home-based businesses

STAFF REPORTER
SALALAH, AUGUST 5

DHOFAR MUNICIPALITY has allocated 136 free stalls to home-based businesses and traditional artisans at Al Furdhah Market, part of the Return of the Past festival during Khareef Dhofar Season 2026, in an initiative aimed at supporting household enterprises and preserving traditional crafts by providing free retail space to display and market locally made products.

The market is one of the festival’s main heritage attractions. Designed to reflect the architectural character and atmosphere of old Dhofar, it offers visitors an opportunity to experience aspects of traditional life while exploring authentic local crafts and products.

The stalls feature a wide range of Omani products, including frankincense, incense and perfumes, traditional men's turbans and shawls, women's traditional clothing, Omani khanjars (traditional curved daggers), pottery, handmade crafts, leather goods such as handbags, wallets and key holders, as well as children's clothing and items for weddings and special occasions.

Providing the stalls free of charge helps reduce participation costs for home-based businesses, expands their access to customers during the peak tourism season and contributes to safeguarding traditional crafts by encouraging their continued practice and transmission to future generations.

Badr al Balushi, one of the participating artisans, said his first participation came through an invitation from the Small



The market is one of the festival’s main heritage attractions.

and Medium Enterprises Development Authority. He said he was proud to contribute to promoting Oman’s traditional craftsmanship.

Al Balushi said the craft of making khanjars, swords, walking sticks and silverware had been passed down through his family, adding that he began learning the trade at the age of 10. He noted that the Omani khanjar attracts strong interest from visitors to the Sultanate of Oman, particularly from GCC and other Arab countries, as a symbol of Omani identity.

He added that miniature khanjars, swords and walking sticks are especially popular with children and visitors looking for traditional souvenirs.

Fatima, a visitor from Kuwait, said the market had introduced her to Omani culture for the first time, adding that she purchased

several locally made products, including cotton garments and frankincense.

Jassim al Shuhi, a visitor from Musandam Governorate, praised the variety of traditional products on display, saying the market highlights the skills of Omani artisans and the contribution of home-based businesses to preserving the country’s cultural heritage. He added that supporting traditional crafts and providing marketing opportunities helps ensure their sustainability and passes these skills on to future generations.

Al Furdhah Market continues to welcome visitors daily as part of the Return of the Past festival, combining heritage and shopping while providing home-based businesses and artisans with an opportunity to present their products to thousands of visitors during the Khareef season.

‘Anees’ empowers tourism ambassadors

SIHAM AL SAIDI
SUHAR, AUGUST 5

In an evolving tourism landscape where authentic visitor experiences have become as valuable as destinations themselves, the youth initiative ‘Anees’ is redefining how young Omanis contribute to the country’s tourism sector. Established as a non-profit initiative under the umbrella of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, ‘Anees’ aims to equip young people with the knowledge, skills, and values needed to create meaningful tourism experiences while strengthening community engagement and sustainable development.

Launched in Al Batinah North, the initiative targets young people aged 18 to 30, while also opening many of its activities to wider community participation. Built on the belief that youth are the driving force behind national development, ‘Anees’ seeks to transform passionate young Omanis into tourism ambassadors capable of showcasing Oman’s rich heritage, culture, and natural assets.

Speaking to the Observer, Ahmed bin Salim al Thuhli, Founder of ‘Anees’, said the initiative was



Our ambition is to expand ‘Anees’ across all governorates of Oman, enabling young people to collaborate with communities, government entities, and the private sector to develop tourism experiences that celebrate local identity while contributing to Oman Vision 2040

AHMED BIN
SALIM
AL THUHLI

created with a vision that extends beyond conventional tourism promotion. “We believe tourism begins with people before places. A memorable destination is created by the quality of the experience visitors receive and the stories they take home. Through ‘Anees’, we aim to empower young Omanis to become confident tourism ambassadors who proudly represent our heritage, values, and hospitality,” he said.

Al Thuhli added that the initiative seeks to establish a nationwide network of youth capable of creating innovative tourism experiences rooted in authenticity and sustainability.

“Our ambition is to expand ‘Anees’ across all governorates of Oman, enabling young people to collaborate with communities, government entities, and the private sector to develop tourism experiences that celebrate local identity while contributing to Oman Vision 2040 and the country’s economic diversification goals,” he added.

The initiative traces its origins to a volunteer programme, where its founders recognised an opportunity to combine tourism, entrepreneurship, language skills,

and community service into a sustainable social project. What began as an idea has since evolved into a platform dedicated to developing tourism competencies, promoting volunteerism, and encouraging innovation within the sector.

Unlike traditional tourism training programmes, ‘Anees’ focuses on designing visitor experiences rather than simply promoting destinations. Participants explore concepts such as sustainable tourism, the Purple Economy, community value creation, and destination storytelling. Through interactive workshops, field visits, teamwork, and practical challenges, participants learn how to transform local resources into authentic tourism experiences that reflect Omani identity while supporting economic and social development.

The programme also introduces participants to experience design methodologies, visitor journey mapping, and community-based tourism planning. As a final challenge, teams develop integrated tourism concepts, presenting innovative ideas that could be adapted into future tourism products.

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SHORT TAKES



35 students conclude Arabic language course in Manah

MANAH: The Sultan Qaboos Institute for Teaching Arabic to Non-Native Speakers on Wednesday held a ceremony at its headquarters in the Wilayat of Manah, Governorate of Al Dakhiliyah, to mark the conclusion of its 62nd course.

The 7-week course included an academic and cultural programme that was attended by 35 male and female students representing 17 countries of the world.

The ceremony also included a poem in Persian translated into Arabic and the screening of a film titled “Harvest of the Course” that outlined salient features of the 62nd course — its educational programmes, its cultural activities and its field trips that enriched the experience of the students.

Suleiman bin Said al Siyabi, Director of Administrative and Financial Affairs at the Sultan Qaboos Higher Centre for Culture and Science, distributed certificates to the students of the 62nd course and the language partners. — **ONA**

Municipality warns against unauthorised car sale displays



MUSCAT: Muscat Municipality has urged residents to display vehicles for sale only in designated and approved locations. The municipality said vehicles displayed in unauthorised areas negatively affect the appearance of neighbourhoods, obstruct the smooth flow of traffic and prevent the optimal use of public facilities.

Under the municipality’s enforcement procedures, a warning sticker will first be placed on the violating vehicle, and its owner will be given a specified period to remove it. Regulatory action will be taken if the owner fails to respond.

The municipality said compliance with the rules would help preserve public facilities and contribute to a better quality of life.

RESTORATION WORKS ON AL SADD TOWER COMPLETE

AL AWABI: The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism has completed the restoration works on Al Sadd Tower in the Wilayat of Al Awabi, Al Batinah South Governorate, as part of its ongoing efforts to preserve historical landmarks and safeguard their architectural value. This initiative aims to ensure the sustainability of these structures as civilisational witnesses embodying the historical depth and cultural legacy of the Sultanate of Oman.

Situated along the main road of Al Awabi, Al Sadd Tower was



The restoration works encompassed structural reinforcement of the tower.

constructed atop a rocky outcrop using stone and clay, featuring a circular design that reflects the traditional architectural characteristics.

The restoration works encompassed structural reinforcement of the tower, strengthening of wall foundations, enhancement of stone base elements, crack treatment, and the reconstruction of sections of the walls using stone and saruj (traditional lime-based mortar), thereby preserving the authenticity and architectural character. — **ONA**

Dhofar’s verdant nature refreshes visitors’ spirits

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
MUSCAT, AUGUST 5

SALALAH, ESPECIALLY during Khareef season, is a joyous destination. The greenery is charming to the eyes, but there could be more to it.

The Environment Authority highlighted Dhofar as a vibrant green lung. And this is why: over 4,500 km of plains and mountains are transformed into a green carpet.

According to the Environment Authority, “Each square metre of vegetation produces approximately 130 grammes of oxygen daily.” This translates to the production of hundreds of thousands of tonnes of oxygen during the season, enhancing life and biodiversity.

But could it also be a feel-good factor visitors to Salalah experience? Visitors to Salalah prefer to stay outdoors as much as possible. The residents also see a shift in lifestyle every Khareef season. Traditionally, people enjoyed living in tents during the season. “We found it to be rainy in the plains, and the mountains were cool,” said a visitor to Salalah.

Shafeer V K has been to Salalah many times, but this was the first trip for his family, and they chose to go by road. “By the time we reached Thamrait, we could see the weather difference. In four days, we visited many



Visitors to Salalah prefer to stay outdoors as much as possible.

historical and archaeological sites and natural wonders. The breathtaking experience was Wadi Darbat. We were immersed in nature and enjoyed watching birds. Another pleasant surprise

for the family was the coconut street. The coconut groves depict the uniqueness of Dhofar.”

So can all this greenery be beneficial for health? In Japan, forest bathing, or shinrin-

yoku, is very popular. It is a Japanese mindfulness practice from the 1980s that involves quietly immersing your senses in a natural environment. It is not about hiking but a slow, intentional way to absorb the forest atmosphere.

Phones have to be on silent mode, and one has to walk at a slow pace, inhaling phytoncides released by the trees. According to the experts, this increases immunity, and the whole process helps in reducing the levels of the stress hormone cortisol. But you should practice it for at least 20 minutes.

Dr Hamed al Sinawi, Senior Psychiatrist, explained, “The time of Khareef in Salalah provides the perfect chance for a form of therapy known by psychologists as nature therapy.” This term refers to the practice of spending time in natural environments to improve mental, emotional, and physical health.

According to research, nature therapy helps lower stress hormones, reduce blood pressure, and boost mood by engaging our senses in the greenery and the waterfalls.

He pointed out that regardless of one’s age or physical abilities, the Khareef provides different activities ranging from hiking to sitting by the wadis or gathering with friends and family in the open spaces away from digital screens.

‘Kids Time’ at Awqad Park: Family destination that boosts Khareef

SALALAH: Public parks and gardens rank among the premier destinations attracting families and visitors during Khareef Dhofar Season, offering a diverse array of entertainment, educational, and cultural activities catering to all age groups. These initiatives are part of Dhofar Municipality’s ongoing efforts to deliver high-quality experiences that enrich the season and enhance its touristic allure.

In this context, Ameen al Amri, Head of the Subcommittee for Parks and

Recreational Areas Events at Dhofar Municipality, stated that Awqad Park, which hosts the ‘Kids Time’ activities, stands as one of the flagship recreational and educational projects of the season. The park has been meticulously designed to offer an integrated experience that seamlessly combines learning and entertainment within an interactive environment tailored for children and their families.

He explained that this year’s park features the “Children’s University” activity, through



The initiatives are part of Dhofar Municipality’s ongoing efforts to deliver high-quality experiences that enrich the season and enhance its touristic allure. — **ONA**

which children engage in a simulated university experience spanning eight academic faculties.

The journey begins with registration and admission, followed by familiarisation with academic systems and

study methodologies, before progressing through both theoretical and practical components, culminating in an official graduation ceremony where participants receive a certificate of programme completion.

Elaborating on the university concept, Al Amri noted its direct integration with the interactive cities dispersed throughout the park, where children apply their acquired knowledge in practical, profession-simulating environments. For instance, graduates of the

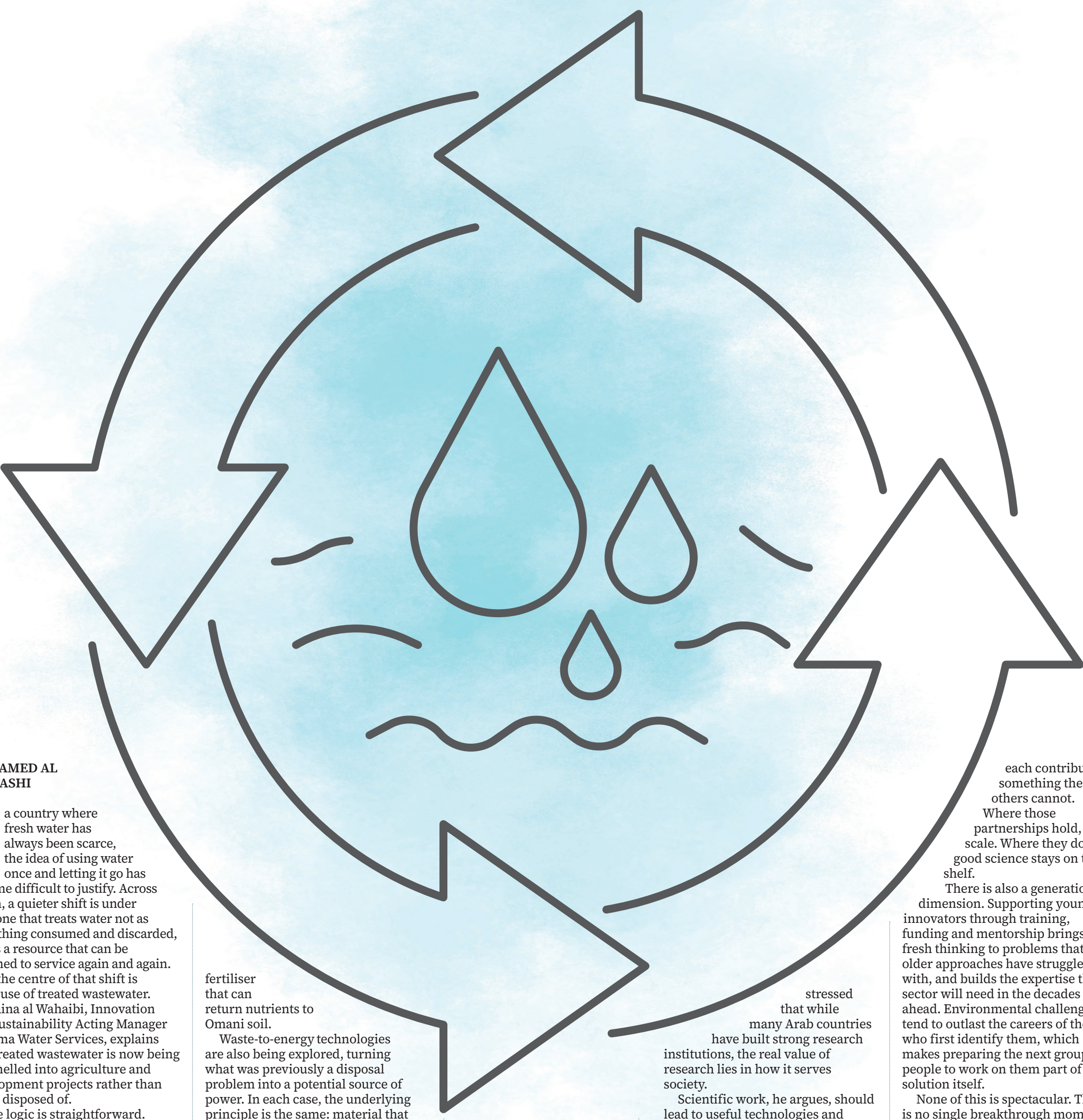
Faculty of Media transition to the Talent and Media City, where they engage in hands-on experiences including news broadcasting, on-camera presentations, and work within miniature studios specifically designed to suit children.

He added that graduates of the Faculty of Arts participate in diverse activities encompassing theatre, singing, painting, and face painting, while the Engineering City, affiliated with the Faculty of Engineering, offers interactive programmes and games.

— **ONA**

SPOTLIGHT

FROM WASTE TO RESOURCE



MOHAMED AL BATTASHI

In a country where fresh water has always been scarce, the idea of using water once and letting it go has become difficult to justify. Across Oman, a quieter shift is under way, one that treats water not as something consumed and discarded, but as a resource that can be returned to service again and again.

At the centre of that shift is the reuse of treated wastewater. Buthaina al Wahaibi, Innovation and Sustainability Acting Manager at Nama Water Services, explains that treated wastewater is now being channelled into agriculture and development projects rather than being disposed of.

The logic is straightforward. Every cubic metre of treated water put back to work is a cubic metre that does not need to be produced through desalination, a process that consumes significant energy and carries both environmental and financial costs.

Extending the life of water this way strengthens water security while easing pressure on the systems that produce it.

The thinking does not stop at water itself. Al Wahaibi points to efforts to convert wastewater sludge, a byproduct that would once have been sent to landfill, into organic

fertiliser that can return nutrients to Omani soil.

Waste-to-energy technologies are also being explored, turning what was previously a disposal problem into a potential source of power. In each case, the underlying principle is the same: material that leaves one process becomes the input for another.

This approach has a name, the circular economy, but its appeal in Oman is practical rather than theoretical. In a region facing rising demand on limited natural resources, closing loops is simply more efficient than opening new ones.

Getting from good idea to working system, however, remains the harder part of the story. Prof Abdelmajid Ben Amara, Secretary-General of the Federation of Arab Scientific Research Councils,

each contributing something the others cannot. Where those partnerships hold, ideas scale. Where they do not, good science stays on the shelf.

There is also a generational dimension. Supporting young innovators through training, funding and mentorship brings fresh thinking to problems that older approaches have struggled with, and builds the expertise the sector will need in the decades ahead. Environmental challenges tend to outlast the careers of those who first identify them, which makes preparing the next group of people to work on them part of the solution itself.

None of this is spectacular. There is no single breakthrough moment in a story about sludge becoming fertiliser or treated water reaching a field. But the cumulative effect is significant. Each reused drop reduces the burden on desalination plants, each tonne of sludge diverted from landfill returns something useful to the ground, and each partnership that survives the journey from research to reality makes the next one easier.

In a country that has never been able to take water for granted, treating it as too valuable to use only once may be the most sensible innovation of all.

stressed that while many Arab countries have built strong research institutions, the real value of research lies in how it serves society.

Scientific work, he argues, should lead to useful technologies and systems that address environmental and development problems, rather than ending its life as an academic publication.

That gap between the laboratory and the landscape is where much of the work now sits. A treatment process that performs well in a controlled setting still has to prove itself across seasons, soil types and operating conditions.

Turning a promising result into infrastructure requires research centres, government bodies and private companies to move in the same direction at the same time,

The logic is straightforward. Every cubic metre of treated water put back to work is a cubic metre that does not need to be produced through desalination, a process that consumes significant energy and carries both environmental and financial costs.

SHORTTAKES



The forum includes an intensive training programme on the use of Statistical Analysis Software (SPSS) and its applications.

RIA TO LAUNCH 5TH RESEARCH SKILLS FORUM

MUSCAT: Acting in partnership with the Arab Open University, the Research and Innovation Authority (RIA) will organise the 5th Research Skills Forum from August 8 to 20, 2026.

The forum will see the participation of 100 male and female postgraduate researchers from higher education institutions in the Sultanate of Oman.

Titled “Advanced Analysis of Statistical Data”, the 5th edition of the forum seeks to enable participants to use modern statistical methods in a manner that ameliorates the quality of research outputs and enhances opportunities for the publication of research papers in peer-reviewed scholarly journals. The forum includes an intensive training programme on the use of Statistical Analysis Software (SPSS) and its applications. The programme also covers mechanisms for importing data from electronic questionnaires, in addition to exploring the role of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies in advanced statistical analysis.

The forum aims to provide researchers with advanced skills that keep pace with the goals of Oman Vision 2040, which places education, research and innovation among its national priorities. — ONA

House of honey in Al Hamra enriches tourist experience



Ali bin Mohammed al Abri, the founder, noted that the apiary was established in 2015, coinciding with the rising number of visitors to Misfat Al Abriyeen.

AL HAMRA: The tourism sector in the Sultanate of Oman has witnessed remarkable engagement from the youth, leveraging local resources to deliver innovative tourism experiences that reflect the nation's cultural identity. Numerous youth-led projects have succeeded in presenting tourism models that seamlessly blend recreation and entertainment with the preservation of cultural heritage.

In a move that further enriches the tourism experience, “Al Misfah House of Honey”, in the village of Misfat Al Abriyeen in the Wilayat of Al Hamra, has emerged as a distinctive attraction that introduces visitors to Oman’s heritage in beekeeping and authentic local products.

With the growing tourist footfall in Misfat Al Abriyeen, the establishment has become an essential stop on visitors' itineraries, offering insights into traditional mountain beekeeping

practices and showcasing the superior quality of Omani honey. Through an interactive experience that underscores the deep connection between this heritage and Oman's natural environment, the project significantly enhances the appeal of rural tourism across the Sultanate of Oman. Ali bin Mohammed al Abri, the founder, noted that the apiary was established in 2015, coinciding with the rising number of visitors to Misfat Al Abriyeen.

The primary objective was to familiarise tourists with the traditional beekeeping heritage of mountainous regions through comprehensive explanations of breeding and production methods, alongside a curated display of Omani honey products.

Al Abri further explained that the apiary currently houses approximately 340 beehives, encompassing both modern hives, wooden boxes, and traditional palm-trunk hives — a model that harmoniously blends

ancestral and contemporary beekeeping techniques. The facility offers a diverse range of natural honey varieties, including Samr (Acacia) honey, Sidr (Ziziphus) honey, and herb honey, in addition to distinctive seasonal productions. Annually, beehives are transported to Dhofar Governorate during the flowering season of frankincense trees in April to produce Omani frankincense honey, which enjoys strong demand among visitors.

Additionally, a number of hives are relocated to Ras Al Hadd in the Wilayat of Sur for the production of mangrove honey, renowned for its superior quality and unique flavour profile.

In 2025, the project underwent significant product development with the introduction of an array of naturally flavoured honey varieties, including thyme, clove, ginger, rose, saffron, and cinnamon – aimed at diversifying visitor options and catering to a wide spectrum of palates. — ONA

Shrimp farming project in Shinas 80% complete

THE COMPLETION rate of construction work in the first phase of the whiteleg shrimp farming project in the Wilayat of Shinas, Al Batinah North Governorate, has reached 80 per cent. Spanning an area of 100,000 square metres, it carries a construction cost of approximately RO 5 million, with shrimp production in the first phase expected to reach nearly 5,000 tonnes, according to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources.

The ministry confirmed that the ponds have been prepared and are currently in the finishing phase, along with the commencement of constructing nursery ponds, shrimp broodstock ponds, and administrative offices. It pointed out that the project, implemented by Blue Aqua International Gulf Company, will contribute to producing larvae of various shrimp species in demand locally and globally. This will enhance the local economy by creating direct job opportunities for Omani youth and providing indirect employment generated by operational processes and the supply chain. The project will also provide an ideal environment for transferring knowledge and modern technology



The completion rate of construction work in the first phase of the whiteleg shrimp farming project in Shinas has reached 80 per cent. — **ONA**



DR ISSA BIN
MOHAMMED
AL FARSI

Director of the
Aquaculture
Development Department
at the Ministry of
Agriculture, Fisheries
and Water Resources

in aquaculture, enhancing human resource efficiency in this promising sector.

Dr Issa bin Mohammed al Farsi, Director of the Aquaculture Development Department at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, said that the total plot area of the project reaches 288,478 square metres, with an overall construction cost reaching approximately RO 23.5 million. The total area for all phases covers 28 hectares, with annual production upon operation expected to reach 7,500 tonnes, making it one of the largest aquaculture projects in the Sultanate of Oman.

He said: "The project is

expected to provide 62 direct job opportunities and 124 indirect job opportunities. It will also contribute to supplying shrimp broodstock instead of importing them from abroad and creating aquaculture technologies that can be manufactured locally, in addition to introducing new shrimp species previously not present in the Sultanate of Oman.” The Director of the Aquaculture Development Department explained that the project includes a research and development centre and provides water recirculation technologies used in aquaculture, which helps increase biosecurity. Additionally, the project utilises high and advanced technologies in aquaculture, thereby reducing reliance on human labour in operations.

He indicated that the whiteleg shrimp farming project in the Wilayat of Shinas is considered one of the largest aquaculture projects in the Sultanate of Oman, featuring a shrimp hatchery, shrimp nursery ponds, shrimp grow-out ponds, a water treatment unit, a live feed production unit, a research and development centre, and water recirculation units, in addition to administrative offices and worker accommodation for the project. — ONA

Announcement of an Electronic Auction for the Sale of Used Vehicles

The Ministry of Finance is pleased to announce an electronic auction for the sale of used government vehicles. The auction will be conducted through the Mzadcom Smart Auction Solutions at (www.mzadcom.om), as per the following details:

Auction	Quantity	Preview Location	Preview Date & Time	Auction Period
Used vehicles	15 vehicles	Ministry of Finance Warehouse, Ghala Industrial	2-4 August 2026 8:00 am - 2:00 pm	Opens: 11 August 2026 Closes: 12 August 2026

Those wishing to participate in the electronic auction shall comply with the following conditions:

- ❶ Register on the website of Mzadcom Smart Auction Solutions (www.mzadcom.om).
- ❷ Bidders must pay a security deposit of **OMR1,000** before participating in the electronic auction.
- ❸ Bidder shall pay the total value of the vehicles via the website **within five working days** from the date of the auction award.
- ❹ Bidder shall also pay Value Added Tax (VAT) at 5% and an auctioneer's commission of 1.5% of each vehicle's value.
- ❺ Bidder is required to pick up the purchased vehicle **within five working days** after paying the purchase value. In case the vehicle is not picked up, the Ministry shall not be responsible for any loss, damage, or destruction that may occur to the vehicle.
- ❻ If a bidder fails to pay the purchase value or transfer the vehicle within the specified period, the security deposit shall be confiscated.
- ❼ Mechanical condition of the vehicle, vehicle safety driving on the road, or the possibility of it being licensed by the Royal Oman Police will not be guaranteed in any way, as well as the Ministry is not obligated to guarantee any defects in the vehicles being sold, and the buyer must inspect the vehicles to verify their condition.
- ❽ Bidders can inspect the vehicles during the period starting from **2-4 August 2026** at the Ministry of Finance Warehouse in Ghala Industrial, from 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.



- | All vehicles are sold as is.
- | The Ministry of Finance reserves the right to delay or cancel the auction without justification.
- | Security deposits will be refunded if the auction is not awarded to the bidder.

- For further details, please visit (www.mzadcom.om) or contact (76767470).
- For inspection of the vehicles, please contact Mzadcom at (9297011-76767470), or contact the Administrative Affairs Department – Ministry of Finance during official working hours at (24746131-24746112).

WORLD

SHORT TAKES



PKK officials convicted of serious crimes would not benefit from protections or suspended sentences.

Türkiye unveils draft law to reintegrate PKK militants

ANKARA: Türkiye’s ruling alliance submitted a draft law to parliament on Wednesday meant to achieve peace with the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) in part by protecting many former militants from prosecution and suspending prison sentences for some others.

The draft law marks a leap towards ending an insurgency that has killed more than 40,000 people since 1984, sown deep discord at home and fuelled violence across borders in Iraq and Syria.

It aims to end the decades-old conflict in part by facilitating the return to Türkiye of potentially thousands of former PKK militants and civilians from hideouts in northern Iraq.

It is backed by a majority of lawmakers and is expected to pass the assembly later this week, but polls show some scepticism that it will bring lasting peace. Türkiye’s national security council would verify the group’s disarmament and a committee including the vice-president, some ministers and the head of the MIT intelligence agency would oversee the militants’ surrender and disarmament under the bill.

The committee would inform a parliamentary commission on the proceedings of the process.

The bill would suspend prison sentences for those convicted of PKK membership or aiding the group, according to the text seen by Reuters. It also legally protects militants who were not involved in killings and who return to Türkiye within six months of the law passing parliament. — **AFP**

Team reaches camp with body of climber killed in avalanche



NIRMAL PURJA

SKARDU: A search team has transported the bodies of renowned climber Nirmal Purja and three of his team members to the base camp of the mountain on which they were killed by an avalanche, the Alpine

Club of Pakistan said on Wednesday.

The avalanche struck on July 30, cutting off contact with the 10-member international expedition led by 43-year-old British-Nepali climber Purja on Broad Peak, one of the world’s highest mountains. His company confirmed there were no survivors.

“On behalf of the Alpine Club of Pakistan, it is announced with great sadness to confirm that, following an exceptionally challenging and technically demanding recovery operation on Broad Peak, the bodies of Nirmal Purja, Zhong Wang, Nima Sherpa, and Kilu Sherpa have been successfully recovered and have now arrived safely at Base Camp,” the ACP posted on social media, referring to a Chinese mountaineer and two other Nepali climbers. “We remain committed to supporting all possible efforts to locate and recover them, whenever conditions allow, so that they too may be returned home to their loved ones,” it added. The remains of three other members of the team — an American woman, an Omani woman and a Nepali man — had already been flown off the mountain to Skardu. — **AFP**

ISRAEL RESUMES LEBANON STRIKES AS TALKS UNDERWAY IN ROME

JERUSALEM: Israel’s military resumed strikes on southern Lebanon on Wednesday despite ongoing talks, blaming a ceasefire violation by Hezbollah as Beirut said at least one person was killed.

The fresh strikes and a first evacuation warning in weeks came as Lebanon and Israel were holding US-sponsored talks in Rome aimed at putting an end to hostilities, with Beirut seeking Israel’s phased withdrawal from the south.

“In response to a blatant

violation of the ceasefire by the Hezbollah terrorist organisation, the IDF has begun conducting precise strikes in southern Lebanon,” the military said in a statement, shortly after telling residents to evacuate the town of Mansouri in the south. Lebanese state media said one person died and 11 were wounded in a separate strike. At US-sponsored talks in June, Israel and Lebanon agreed to a framework deal that involves the disarmament of Hezbollah,

a gradual withdrawal of Israeli forces from Lebanon’s south and the deployment of the Lebanese army to the region, starting in test areas known as “pilot zones”.

This week’s negotiations, which are scheduled to run until Thursday, are the seventh round of Washington-mediated talks. The UN’s humanitarian agency said more than 800,000 people displaced by earlier fighting in Lebanon had begun heading back home following the recent lull in violence. — **AFP**

Netanyahu: Israel didn’t agree to Gaza plan of US

PRIME

MINISTER Benjamin Netanyahu has said Israel did not agree to the US-backed plan for Gaza, even after receiving assurances that an Israeli pullout would only happen after Hamas disarms.

In a video posted to his social media accounts on Tuesday night, Netanyahu said the team of US President Donald Trump “believes that they can bring about the disarmament of Hamas and the demilitarisation of Gaza”.

“We are checking this. They sent us a draft - we did not agree to it, it is not our draft. We sent our comments,” he said.

Netanyahu met with the US-backed Board of Peace on Monday and received guarantees that the Israeli army would only be required to leave its current positions in Gaza after Hamas disarms.

But pressure has been growing on the premier from the right flank of his ruling coalition to reject the deal.

Two far-right ministers requested a new vote on the plan on Tuesday, saying it does not reflect what had originally been discussed.

Israel’s security cabinet, in which the two ministers sit, already voted in favour of the proposal, which would see, among other things, the deployment of international peacekeeping troops in the Gaza Strip.



Ibrahim al Dabba, head of the Beekeepers Cooperative in the Gaza Strip, tends to beehives with his sons on the roof of a destroyed building in Gaza City’s Tel Al Hawa neighbourhood, where the displaced family has taken refuge, on Wednesday. — **AFP**

Pressure has been growing on the premier from the right flank of his ruling coalition to reject the deal

Netanyahu had moved to convene his security cabinet on Tuesday, but the meeting was postponed to Thursday, Israeli media reported, amid primary voting in his Likud Party ahead of October 27 elections, in which he faces a tight race.

The request from Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich and Settlement Minister Orit Stroom to hold a new vote should be viewed merely “as a campaign move” to put pressure on Netanyahu, according to Tal Elovits, a researcher at Israeli think tank Molad.

“The Israeli right-wing has always tried to postpone a scenario in which this conflict becomes an

international conflict. Obviously, the IDF’s behaviour will be different once you have soldiers from Kosovo, from Indonesia” and other countries, Elovits said, referring to Israel’s military.

However, Israel has no concrete possibility of tearing up the US-sponsored plan, given the country’s isolation in the international arena, Elovits added.

“Netanyahu has no other option besides listening to his only friend left in the diplomatic community,” he said, referring to Trump.

“Netanyahu is not a very active player here - he’s an active player maybe in trying to block some ideas, but Israel is not putting anything on the table.”

US pressure on Israel to curb attacks in Gaza ahead of a partial withdrawal under the plan appears to be yielding results.

According to reports in Haaretz and other Israeli media, troops have been instructed to seek authorisation from the Chief of Staff for strikes, unless they are in “immediate danger” - a change of policy from previous directives, under which attacks only required approval from the head of the regional command.

Israel’s military, when questioned, referred AFP to the “political echelon” for a response. A spokesperson for Netanyahu declined to comment. — **AFP**

CHINA LAUNCHES SATELLITES FROM SEA



People watch a Smart Dragon-3 (SD-3) carrier rocket carrying Oriental Smart Eye hyperspectral satellites 01 and 02 in Shandong province, China, on Wednesday. Weighing around 300 kg each, the satellites each carry a hyperspectral imager featuring 22 calibrated spectral bands, a spatial resolution of 5 metres and an imaging swath of 300 km. Together, the pair is designed to provide global revisit coverage every five days, according to the developer. The two OSE satellites can not only capture images, but also interpret what they observe.

Unlike conventional optical imaging, hyperspectral observation records a detailed spectrum for each image pixel. These “spectral fingerprints” can help distinguish materials and measure properties, including vegetation chlorophyll and moisture, water quality, soil organic matter and mineral composition. The satellites also carry onboard AI computing modules with computing capacity of up to 400 trillion operations per second. The modules are designed to perform in-orbit processing, including anomaly detection, surface-feature identification, intelligent compression and feature extraction, instead of transmitting all raw imagery to the ground for processing. — **Reuters**

FACEBOOK CURB

Meta apologises for restricting Modi’s post



Meta Platforms’ Chief Global Affairs Officer Joel Kaplan apologised to India’s information technology minister for briefly restricting a post by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in July, he said in a statement on Wednesday.

“I apologised to the minister on behalf of Meta for the error restricting PM Modi’s post,” Kaplan said. Last month, India’s information and technology ministry summoned Meta executives after Facebook briefly restricted a post by Modi.

RETURNING HOME

Hasina says ban on her party should be lifted



Bangladesh’s former prime minister Sheikh Hasina said on Wednesday that the ban on her Awami League party should be lifted and reiterated that she would return to her country in December. Hasina’s comments were made during a media interaction hosted by the Foreign Correspondents’ Club of South Asia in New Delhi - on the second anniversary of her ouster in 2024.

Hasina had been expected to address the event virtually by video but delivered only an audio message.

RESPONSE PLAN

WHO chief in DR Congo for talks on Ebola



World Health Organization Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus has arrived in the Democratic Republic of Congo for a meeting with President Felix Tshisekedi, as the Ebola epidemic intensifies, the UN agency said on Wednesday.

DR Congo declared its 17th Ebola outbreak on May 15 and at the weekend the WHO warned that it was spreading at an “exceptional” pace, urging a scaling-up of the health response.

SHORTTAKES



The SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket carrying Starlink satellites is seen over Sebastian Inlet after launching from Cape Canaveral, Florida, US. — Reuters

SpaceX rocket stage believed to have slammed into Moon

NEW YORK: A four-tonne piece of a SpaceX rocket was believed to have unintentionally crashed into the Moon on Wednesday, a collision that posed no danger to Earth but is expected to leave behind a lunar crater.

While there is not yet official confirmation that the Falcon 9 upper stage struck the lunar surface, it had been expected to make impact at approximately 06:35 GMT.

NASA and its Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter probe and South Korea's Pathfinder Lunar Orbiter were planning to take images of the site after impact, but it may take days to receive that information.

Scientists and amateur stargazers alike had been looking forward to observing the sunlit plume of rubble and debris created by the smash.

"It might be possible for folks with a telescope to observe the plume of ejecta created by the impact," said Benjamin Fernando of Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico, the lead author on a recent paper on the anticipated impact.

"It is unclear how bright it will be, which is one of the reasons why we are looking to study this event," the researcher told AFP before impact.

Assuming all of the propellant is spent, authors of the paper estimate the spacecraft weighs approximately 4,000 kg.

It was expected to slam into the Moon's northern hemisphere near the Einstein Crater, at some 8,690 km per hour. — AFP

PHOTO HOT AND DRY



A 'No Fishing' sign is pictured in the dried up Falmer Pond in Falmer, East Sussex, south of London on Wednesday. England and Wales both experienced the "driest July on record", the UK Met Office weather agency said on August 5, based on provisional figures. — AFP

Russian missile strikes kill 17 people in Ukraine

RUSSIA FIRED dozens of ballistic missiles at Kyiv and the surrounding region on Wednesday, killing at least 17 people and destroying warehouses and logistics centres of major retailers, Ukrainian officials said, as a shortage of air defence missiles leaves Ukraine vulnerable.

Multiple explosions ripped through the area during the night, and fires lit up the dark skies over the Ukrainian capital, which has come under missile attack every three to four days in recent weeks as Russia has escalated its air war. "Ballistic missile interceptors could have saved the lives of those killed today," President Volodymyr Zelensky said on Telegram, urging Ukraine's foreign allies to replenish its supplies of interceptors. Deliveries of air defence missiles were three times smaller than in 2025, he added.

Ukrainian air defences downed nearly 90 per cent of the 115 drones launched by Russia but failed to intercept a single one of the 24 ballistic missiles and four Zircon cruise missiles, the air force said. Russia's Defence Ministry said it had struck seven logistics centres in Kyiv and the region, accusing them of being used to store or distribute dual-use goods and drone components.

For months, Ukraine has suffered from a critical shortage of air defence missiles for US Patriot systems, the only weapon in its arsenal capable of downing Russia's ballistic missiles, which travel at many times the speed of sound. Since the Iran war broke out in February, Patriots earmarked for Ukraine have been diverted to the US military and US allies in the Gulf. Russia, meanwhile, has intensified its ballistic strikes on Kyiv and other Ukrainian cities as its advances on the frontline have slowed considerably this year.

BODIES SCATTERED

Officials said more than 40 people were injured in the attack. At a commuter station in the Kyiv suburb of Brovary, seven bodies were scattered across the platform. The body of an eighth victim lay in the bushes nearby, Reuters TV images showed. "People missed their last train. For now, we know of eight dead," said Volodymyr Bigun, head of Brovary's local administration, adding that five logistics warehouses had been hit in



Firefighters work at a site of a Russian missile strike in Kyiv region on Wednesday. — Reuters

For months, Ukraine has suffered from a critical shortage of air defence missiles for US Patriot systems, the only weapon in its arsenal capable of downing Russia's ballistic missiles, which travel at many times the speed of sound.

the district, including food retailer Fozzy. "The enemy continues to hit civilian infrastructure."

Both Russia and Ukraine deny targeting civilians in the war triggered by Russia's attack on Ukraine in February 2022. As Kyiv aims to bring the war back to Russia, Ukraine hit a logistics hub of Russian online retailer Wildberries overnight, adding to more than a dozen it has damaged recently.

DAMAGED WITHIN MINUTES

Epicentr, Ukraine's largest home improvement and DIY retail chain, said two key logistics facilities and a factory were destroyed within minutes during the attacks, and it was still assessing the full scale of the damage.

"This is a deliberate attack on Ukrainian manufacturing, logistics, jobs and the country's ability to recover," Epicentr said in a statement. Food retailer Silpo said on Facebook at least six of its employees had been killed and two distribution centres set ablaze by the strikes.

Iryna Chechotkina, co-founder of leading online retailer Rozetka, said she watched overnight as the work of her entire life went up in flames after

strikes by three ballistic missiles.

"How did I feel that night? Devastation and pain," she said on Facebook. "A feeling that I must carry on despite everything. ROZETKA is still operating."

Ukraine's economy has proved remarkably resilient over more than four years of war, backed by billions in financial aid from Western partners. But this year the business losses are piling up. The Kyiv regional military administration said 13 warehouses were damaged in Wednesday's attack, as well as a manufacturing facility and four private homes, and dozens of vehicles.

Prime Minister Sergii Korotshuk, who took office last month in a reshuffle, said the government would call an emergency meeting with businesses to work out how to secure smooth operations of logistics and trade companies.

Kyiv sought more PAC-3s, the newest type of Patriot interceptor missile. The United States is pressing ahead with talks to allow Ukraine to make Patriot missiles, even after President Donald Trump cast doubt on such a deal, four sources familiar with the discussions said. — Reuters

Ceuta seeks transfer of unaccompanied migrant minors to Spain

MADRID: Spain's Ceuta, still reeling from a rush of 72,000 migrants arriving on its shores in one week, is seeking the transfer of hundreds of unaccompanied minors still in the enclave to mainland Spain, local leaders confirmed on Wednesday.

Though the vast majority of migrants have since returned to Morocco, roughly 1,100 unaccompanied minors who arrived before and during the influx - and cannot be summarily deported - remain, according to local government.

Many are lodged in makeshift accommodation in warehouses or sleeping on the streets as Ceuta's reception centres struggle to cope.

About 75 people died during last week's border rush into one of the European

Union's two land borders with Africa, which triggered alarm across the bloc and revived memories of its 2015-16 migration crisis.

While regional governments are obliged to assist overstretched territories in emergencies, tensions are rising between Spain's conservative Popular Party and far-right Vox — who jointly run four regions — over whether to comply with the law. Vox's leader has said "not one euro" of Spanish money should go to the migrant minors.

Even if regions accept them, experts warn that the process of identification and relocation could take months, requiring individual interviews, reports and contact with countries of origin to rule out returning



A woman sits by a barbed-wire fence as relatives and friends wait for the return of people who had previously crossed into Ceuta, at Morocco's Bab Sebta border crossing on the outskirts of Fnideq. — AFP

them to their families.

"We are crying out for help and assistance," Ceuta's local government head Juan Jesus Vivas told Spanish broadcaster RTVE on Wednesday. "This is

an absolutely unsustainable situation."

MIGRATION EMERGENCY

Under a reform to Spanish immigration law implemented in 2025,

after a surge of migration overwhelmed reception centres in the Canary Islands, unaccompanied minors must be redistributed from overstretched territories within 15 days of their case file being completed.

Disagreements on the policy prompted Vox to abandon five regional coalition governments it ran together with the PP in 2024 after the latter backed a Socialist-government plan to relocate 400 minors from the Canary Islands to the peninsula. Since the reform, 719 minors have been transferred from the Canary Islands to mainland Spain, according to government data released in April 2026, and more than 400 minors arriving in Ceuta have been relocated to other regions.

The issue threatens to once again drive a wedge between the two parties, who have entered coalitions in four regions this year that they hope will serve as a blueprint for persuading voters to hand them control of the national government following an election due next year.

It could also further strain Spain's relationship with conservative-run European countries such as Italy, which suspended passport-free Schengen travel arrangements with Spain for a month after the Ceuta border rush. After initially stating that migrants should all be sent back, the PP's Alma Ezcurra told Spanish radio station Onda Cero on Wednesday that due process must first be followed to identify those suspected to be minors. — Reuters

OPINION

Nadhira and the arithmetic of ascent



RUMAITHA
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The writer is environmental strategist and advocate for sustainable development

BEFORE EVERY mountain, there is the private arithmetic of what can be carried. Crampons, ice axe, ascender, down mitts: each must justify its weight. Higher up, excess becomes consequence. And yet the heaviest things arrive without being packed: the names we have been given, the selves we have learned to perform and the opinions of people who will never climb beside us. A mountain measures its height in meters. The person climbing it measures the same distance in what she leaves behind.

At base camp, the subtraction is physical. A tent zip becomes a door; wind against nylon keeps the clock. Higher, food is a negotiation with the body; sleep breaks into hours that never meet; warmth retreats into your gloves. Sentences spend oxygen, leaving only necessary words. Company becomes a headlamp, footsteps behind you and a hand upon your shoulder. Comfort goes, then vanity and language, until the need to be understood falls away.

Eventually, even the audience cannot follow. There is no mirror, yet everything reflects you: ranges beyond sight, clouds beneath your feet, sunrise spilling over a world older than your name. God’s creation

looks back, revealing both your smallness and a self found nowhere else. Your body wears every layer it owns, yet your soul stands naked and bare.

When Khalid al Siyabi, the first Omani to reach Everest, introduced me to Nadhira, mountains became our shared language. I told her that climbing was my meditation. She nodded, smiling in agreement and we simply clicked.

She told me about Kilimanjaro; altitude sickness turned her back, but she wanted to climb it again. I gave her Damavand and the snowstorm that sent us down. We found solace in the attempts; a mountain can refuse its summit and still return something essential.

Since Broad Peak, I have been awake into the early hours, slowly becoming a keyboard warrior. The screen gives grief something to do: correct this fact, answer that stranger, refuse the sentence reducing her life to whether she should have gone. Grief, unable to change what happened on the mountain, has been trying to change what is said about it, keeping other people’s conclusions from standing as the last words spoken about her. Setting the record straight was the last loyalty available to me.

Perhaps I persist because Nadhira once

Nadhira understood what they had missed and wrote: “The idea we must be rid of once and for all is other people’s opinion of what we do, especially in the fields where our presence is not expected. There are many girls who need to hear from you.”

entered the noise for me. Years ago, during a live feed, I urged girls to name their accomplishments; years in male-dominated fields had taught me how easily women’s work is taken for granted. The comments recast purpose as competition, a chase for fame and an obsession with titles. Nadhira understood what they had missed and wrote: “The idea we must be rid of once and for all is other people’s opinion of what we do, especially in the fields where our presence is not expected. There are many girls who need to hear from you.”

Her first sentence released me from the chorus; her second turned that freedom into a responsibility. She once stood in a comment section for me and I have spent this week standing in one for her.

Yesterday, on the third day of her funeral, Nadhira’s name travelled from mouth to mouth in prayer. Here was an ascent no mountain could measure, love lifting what grief could no longer hold. I believe those prayers know their way towards heaven, that the distance between the living and the dead belongs only to time and that reunion waits beyond it.

Until then, her words remain my instruction: “There are many girls who need to hear you.”

TOTAL ECLIPSE GIVES SCIENTISTS CHANCE TO PROBE SUN’S MYSTERIES

FREDERIC BOURIGAULT AND DANIEL LAWLER

Scientists plan to use a total solar eclipse that will be visible in Spain next week as a rare chance to learn more about the stormy, unpredictable nature of our star. When the Moon blots out the Sun on August 12, teams will leap into action studying its magnetic field, atmosphere and furious weather that sometimes causes disruptions back here on Earth. There is a long history of using eclipses to make scientific breakthroughs. It was while watching an eclipse on May 29, 1919, on the West African island of Principe that British astronomer Arthur Eddington confirmed Albert Einstein’s theory of relativity.

He achieved this by observing the effect of a light-bending phenomenon called gravitational lensing on stars that became visible while the Sun’s dazzling light was obscured.

More than a century later, scientists will watch a total solar eclipse lasting one minute and 40 seconds appear across a swathe of northern Spain next week. “Our work aims to understand the physical mechanisms underlying the Sun’s activity,” Allan Sacha Brun, an astrophysicist at France’s Atomic Energy Commission (CEA), said.

Every day, specialists are working on models aiming to explain solar activity, allowing them “to put the Sun back into context within its evolutionary timeline, from its birth to its death,” he added. The Sun is constantly spewing out matter and charged particles, sometimes unleashing full-blown solar storms that shoot out giant explosions of plasma and other matter.

When these materials slam into Earth’s magnetic shield, they can knock out satellites, threaten astronauts and create colourful auroras in the skies of northern and southern latitudes.

“These phenomena follow a regular cycle, peaking every 11 years,” Brun said. “In 2024, the Sun reached the peak of its 25th cycle.”

Next week, CEA scientists will focus on the Sun’s corona, the outermost layer of its atmosphere.

“We’re incredibly lucky: the Moon is 400 times smaller than the Sun – but it’s also 400 times closer to us,” Brun said. This coincidence means the Moon blocks out the Sun’s light, but still lets scientists see what is happening in its atmosphere.

The Sun’s corona extends out for 10 million kilometres and is a million times less intense than its surface, which is called the photosphere. But the corona can still reach up to two million degrees Celsius. — **AFP**

5 myths about abuse that put children at great risk

WHEN PEOPLE hear the phrase child abuse, they often imagine severe physical violence or abuse.

While these are undoubtedly serious forms of maltreatment, they represent only part of the picture. Every day, many children experience neglect, emotional abuse or repeated physical punishment that goes unnoticed because of misconceptions deeply rooted in our communities.

These misconceptions do more than shape opinions; they delay recognition, discourage reporting and leave vulnerable children without the protection they need. Here are five common myths that deserve to be challenged.

Myth 1: Child abuse only refers to physical abuse

One of the most widespread misconceptions is that child abuse is synonymous with physical abuse. As a result, physical abuse, emotional abuse and neglect often receive less attention despite their profound consequences.

Research consistently shows that all forms of child maltreatment can have lifelong effects, increasing the risk of depression, anxiety, chronic diseases, poor academic achievement and difficulties in forming healthy relationships. A child does not have to suffer the abuse to experience serious and lasting harm.

Myth 2: Child abuse only happens in disadvantaged families

Many people assume that abuse occurs mainly in low-income or socially disadvantaged households. This belief is misleading and potentially dangerous.

Child abuse can occur in families of every socioeconomic background. In fact, studies suggest that cases involving affluent families may be less likely to be identified or reported



Every child deserves to grow up in a safe, supportive environment



DR ZEINAB
AL AZRI

The writer is Assistant Professor, College of Nursing, SQU

When communities understand that abuse can take many forms, occur in any family and often remains hidden, they become better equipped to act.

because professionals or community members hesitate to question families with higher social status or influence. Every child deserves the same level of protection, regardless of their family’s income, education or reputation.

Myth 3: If a child is being abused, they will tell someone

This is perhaps one of the most damaging myths.

Many children never disclose physical abuse or they do so only after months or years. Fear, shame, guilt, loyalty to family members and concern about not being believed often prevent children from speaking out. Younger children may lack the language to explain what has happened, while adolescents may worry about the consequences for themselves or their families.

Silence should never be interpreted as evidence that abuse has not occurred.

Myth 4: Physical punishment is simply part of good parenting.

In many cultures, physical punishment is still viewed as an acceptable way to discipline children. However, decades of research have shown that corporal punishment does not improve long-term behaviour. Instead, it is associated with increased

aggression, poorer mental health and weaker parent-child relationships.

Positive discipline is not about being permissive; it is about setting clear boundaries while treating children with dignity and respect. Protecting children and teaching them appropriate behaviour are goals that can—and should—go hand in hand.

Myth 5: Reporting child abuse is interfering in family matters.

Some people hesitate to report suspected abuse because they believe family issues should remain private. Others worry about damaging relationships or making the situation worse. In reality, reporting suspected abuse is not about judging families—it is about protecting children. Early intervention can prevent repeated harm, connect families with appropriate support services and ultimately improve outcomes for both children and care-givers. Remaining silent may unintentionally allow abuse to continue.

A SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

Protecting children is not solely the responsibility of child protection agencies. Parents, teachers, healthcare professionals, social workers, neighbours and the wider community all play an essential role in recognising warning signs and ensuring that children receive help when they need it. The first step toward better protection is replacing myths with evidence. When communities understand that abuse can take many forms, occur in any family and often remains hidden, they become better equipped to act.

Every child deserves to grow up in a safe, supportive environment. By challenging misconceptions and promoting informed action, we can move closer to a society where no child suffers in silence and every child has the opportunity to thrive.

Censorship and echo chamber effects



SONIA AMBROSIO

The writer is a journalist, academic and researcher in media studies

KILLING one piece at a time, the terrible downfall of reporting on real events. Country after country is tightening its rules on what can be said about events, history, leaders, political difficulties, or financial situations.

Global freedom of expression is facing a significant decline as governments increasingly criminalise independent reporting, promote content removal to suppress unflattering narratives and penalise independent speech under the pretext of combating misinformation.

Real-world insights are increasingly subject to approval and monitoring by artificial intelligence. Comedy, literature, photographs, films, news and editorials are all under scrutiny.

Under the guise of defending society, intellectual radicalism thrives. It grows by employing the language of public welfare, safety and protection.

It is widely recognised that governments impose restrictions on writers, artists and influencers mainly to control narratives. The stifling of creativity occurs when people limit themselves to information already tailored for public consumption. Within a communication-controlled social construction, critical thinking is constrained by a pre-approved framework.

This phenomenon parallels the way political, economic and religious systems are socially constructed. It has become audacious for writers to explore and represent current

sentiments and concerns as intellectual friction diminishes. Critical thinking fails when intellectual friction is eliminated, or opposing viewpoints are discouraged.

Critical thinking depends on the ability to ask questions freely and it is effective only when individuals feel empowered to inquire. The prevalence of information overload, the existence of social media echo chambers and educational systems that favour memorisation contribute to a culture of compliance.

Lost in thought, I reflect on the impact of literary figures like Victor Hugo, Émile Zola and Honoré de Balzac. They were accomplished poets, journalists and novelists, whose celebrated works, such as ‘Les Misérables’, ‘The Hunchback of Notre-Dame’ and ‘The Human Comedy’ (among others), map out the birth of modern capitalism, the rise of influencer culture, debt and speculative bubbles.

Their works mirror issues related to economic inequality, institutional corruption and flaws within legal frameworks.

The societal observations of Hugo, Zola and Balzac offer valuable insights for analysing the challenges we face.

There is a decline in intellectual engagement. Societal apathy is on the rise. Social ills are dusted off, coinciding with the decline of investigative journalism and the erosion of whistleblowing frameworks. Journalists avoid hard questions!

Scholarly research reveals a growing trend of censorship from technical, legal and political viewpoints. Concerns about national security and cybersecurity are often used to

The stifling of creativity occurs when people limit themselves to information already tailored for public consumption

justify heightened control, especially over social media platforms.

The dynamics of ‘civic-guise’ censorship manifest through various patterns, often justified by a perceived moral duty to protect the public from misinformation, hate speech and radicalisation.

Within an overall scenario, governments are tightening censorship of real-world events by exploiting geopolitical conflicts and technological regulations.

Narratives are being crafted to fit frames of influence, the right to choose and perceived existential threats.

According to Reporters Without Borders, authorities worldwide are transitioning from simply blocking websites to implementing deep infrastructure control, engaging in aggressive surveillance and imposing criminal penalties for online speech.

The situation in the Middle East and Gulf countries is deteriorating rapidly, with pre-publication review rules that prevent journalists and individuals from sharing alleged sensitive photos, videos and other content. Censorship rewards mediocrity by favouring predictable ideas over innovative ones. It fosters echo chambers in which intellectuals engage only with approved or socially safe opinions to avoid punishment. And so, self-censorship increases and citizens lose their ability to read with comprehension, analyse and debate.

When individuals lose trust in mainstream channels, they often retreat into online echo chambers.

Factories shed workers in Bangladesh garment sector

SHEIKH SABIHA ALAM

Garment worker Mosammat Aklima found out in a text message that she had become one of thousands laid off in the latest wave of cuts to hit Bangladesh's once-booming export industry.

The news appearing on her mobile that July evening confirmed the end of her eight years' employment at Lithe Garments factory, a major manufacturer in the country's industrial heartland.

She was among 3,000 people laid off in one go, a sign of the industry's struggle with slowing exports, weak customer demand and stiff competition from rivals India and Vietnam.

"I am three months pregnant now. It is not possible to find a new job", said Aklima, 27. "I will now dip into my savings, borrow some money. I don't know what's next", she said in the garment hub of Gazipur.

Aklima earned \$250 a month, roughly matching the income of her husband, who works at another garment factory.

With her redundancy, their son and elderly parents must now rely on a single wage. The layoffs are part of a wider downturn in an industry that accounts for around 80 per cent of Bangladesh's export earnings.

About 400 of the roughly 4,000 apparel factories in the country have shut over the past two years, eliminating tens of thousands of jobs, according to the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association.

Some of them had to shut down because they could not survive with exports declining in the "highly competitive" global market, BGMEA president Mahmudul Hasan Babu said.

The closures have fuelled concern over the future of a sector that employs more than 4.5 million people, most of them women.

While US tariffs are similar for apparel exporters across Asia, analysts say Bangladesh faces a greater challenge in Europe, its largest market, where India and Vietnam have gained ground through free-trade agreements.

The pressure could intensify as Bangladesh is set to lose the duty-free preferential market access it enjoys in Europe and other countries because its status as a least-developed country is scheduled to expire in 2029.

"If Bangladesh fails to strike free-trade agreements after the end of the preferential trade regime, the country may risk losing competitiveness", said Dhaka University professor Selim Raihan.

European Union apparel imports fell during the first five months of the year, with those from Bangladesh recording the sharpest decline among major suppliers, Eurostat data shows. — **AFP**

Reading Sabteħ-Ceuta through Camus

THE DEFINING feature of contemporary geopolitics is no longer power. It is paradox. Wars continue without decisive victories.

Allies increasingly compete while rivals quietly cooperate. Migration has become both a humanitarian tragedy and an instrument of statecraft. Security, energy and trade now overlap in ways that defy traditional geopolitical categories. In such a world, Albert Camus's philosophy of the absurd offers an unexpectedly powerful guide to understanding international affairs.

The recent Morocco-Spain standoff over Sabteħ-Ceuta is a case in point. It is often portrayed as a dispute over migration, sovereignty or border security. It is all of these. But at a deeper level it is a tragedy of geography — one that exposes the limits of ideology and the enduring tension between power, justice and human dignity.

Born in Algeria, Camus belonged to both Europe and North Africa, yet fully to neither. He experienced colonialism, the struggle for independence and the violence that accompanied both. Unlike many of his contemporaries, he refused ideological certainty. He distrusted every political cause that demanded human lives in the name of historical justice.

His often-misunderstood remark during the Algerian War still resonates: "Between justice and my mother, I choose my mother". It was not a rejection of justice. It was a rejection of abstract justice when it ceases to recognise human reality.

Sabteħ-Ceuta embodies precisely this dilemma.

Spain invokes sovereignty, territorial integrity and European law. Morocco invokes history, decolonisation and territorial justice. The European Union prioritises border security. Migrants seek dignity, safety and opportunity. Each position contains truth. None contains the whole truth.

Camus would urge us to resist turning this complexity into a



AHMED AL MUKHAINI

The author is a policy analyst

contest of heroes and villains.

His philosophy begins with what he called the absurd: the collision between humanity's search for certainty and a world that refuses to provide it. Geopolitics often unfolds in much the same way.

Geography is indifferent. The Mediterranean does not recognise political maps. It neither distinguishes Europe from Africa nor chooses between competing historical claims. Those are political constructions imposed upon an indifferent landscape.

Sabteħ-Ceuta is therefore less an anomaly than a geopolitical paradox. A European city stands on African soil. A colonial legacy coexists with contemporary international law. A humanitarian corridor doubles as a security frontier. A local border incident reverberates through Brussels, Washington and Nato headquarters. These contradictions cannot be permanently resolved. They can only be managed.

Camus also warned against ideologies claiming to possess final answers. Whether colonialism, revolutionary violence or totalitarian politics, he believed certainty often becomes the enemy of humanity.

That warning remains remarkably relevant. To portray Morocco as entirely justified ignores Spain's legitimate security concerns. To portray Spain as entirely justified overlooks the unresolved historical questions surrounding Sabteħ-Ceuta and Melilla. To reduce migration solely to border enforcement ignores the human desperation that compels people to risk everything for a better future. Each narrative illuminates one part of reality while obscuring another.

Here Camus unexpectedly converges with realpolitik. Both reject comforting illusions. Realpolitik rejects moral illusions about power; Camus rejects philosophical illusions about certainty. Together they remind us that sound statecraft begins by seeing the world as it is before imagining what it ought to become.

The recent Morocco-Spain standoff over Sabteħ-Ceuta is a case in point. It is often portrayed as a dispute over migration, sovereignty or border security

SPORTS

OREGON26



The championships are being staged at the renowned Hayward Field from August 5 to 9.

AL JABRI READY FOR WORLD U20 100M CHALLENGE IN US

SPORTS REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUGUST 5

Oman’s promising sprinter Ahmed al Jabri will take on some of the world’s leading young athletes when he competes in the men’s 100m at the World Athletics U20 Championships Oregon 26 in Eugene, United States, on Thursday.

The championships are being staged at the renowned Hayward Field from August 5 to 9, bringing together emerging athletics talents from across the globe.

According to the official start list, Al Jabri will compete from lane six in Heat 6, scheduled to begin at local time 12:14 pm (11:14 pm Oman time). He will line up against athletes from the United States, Australia, Malaysia, Trinidad and Tobago, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Monaco and Bermuda.

The top three athletes from each heat, along with the three fastest remaining runners across the eight heats, will qualify for the semifinals.

Al Jabri enters the championship with a personal and season’s best of 10.69 seconds, achieved during the Asian U20 Athletics Championships in Hong Kong in May. That performance saw the young Omani improve his previous personal best of 10.80 seconds and advance to the semifinals of the continental competition. He is accompanied by Dr Ali al Marzouqi, Vice-Chairman of the Oman Athletics Association, who heads the administrative delegation and is overseeing the support provided to the athlete during the global championship. Al Marzouqi has previously served as the administrative supervisor of Oman’s athletics delegations at international competitions.

VALUABLE OPPORTUNITY

Al Marzouqi said Al Jabri’s appearance at the World U20 Championships represented an important step in the development of Omani athletics and formed part of the association’s long-term plan to prepare athletes capable of competing at world and Olympic level.

“Our presence at this global event reflects the association’s determination to represent Oman at the highest international level,” he said.

“This participation is not simply about being present. It provides Ahmed with a valuable opportunity to compete against some of the world’s best young sprinters and benefit from a highly competitive environment.”

Al Jabri underwent an intensive preparation programme ahead of the championship, with training focused on improving his starting reaction, acceleration, maximum speed and technical balance throughout the different phases of the race. His programme also included performance analysis and specialised physical conditioning to ensure he arrived in Oregon in the best possible shape.

The Omani sprinter will be aiming to produce a strong performance and improve his personal best while gaining further experience at the highest level of international junior competition.

His appearance in Oregon also underlines the Oman Athletics Association’s efforts to provide talented young athletes with greater international exposure and establish a clear pathway towards the senior national team.

Oman gain vital lessons from Pakistan U20 series



Oman’s national men’s hockey team concluded a five-match international test series against Pakistan U20. — OHA

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 5

OMAN’S national men’s hockey team concluded a five-match international test series against Pakistan U20 with encouraging progress, ending the programme with two successive draws as preparations intensify for the 20th Asian Games Aichi-Nagoya 2026.

The matches, played from July 28 to August 4 at the Hockey Oman and Ahli Sidab grounds, provided the national side with a demanding competitive test against one of Asia’s strongest junior teams.

Pakistan U20 won the opening three encounters 3-0, 3-1 and 4-2, but Oman responded positively as the series progressed. The hosts held their opponents to a 2-2 draw in the fourth match before completing the programme with another spirited 3-3 draw.

The improvement in the final two games reflected Oman’s growing cohesion, sharper attacking play and greater defensive organisation. The series also gave the coaching staff an opportunity to assess the players’ physical condition, test different tactical approaches and identify areas requiring further attention before the final phase of preparations.

The concluding match was attended by Eng Sami bin Abdullah al Khanjari, Consul-General of the Sultanate of Oman in Karachi, who met the national team players



Oman and Pakistan players in action during the series. — Abdulwahid al Hamadani

and wished the squad and its technical and administrative staff success in their forthcoming assignments.

Oman player Akram Ashour said the series came at an important stage of the team’s preparations and delivered significant technical benefits.

“Facing Pakistan was a strong test because of their speed, organisation and high technical level. Our performance improved from one match to the next, and the players worked hard to implement the coaching staff’s instructions,” he said.

Ashour added that the camp also helped restore understanding among the players, particularly with several members returning to the squad after a period of absence. He stressed that the team would

continue working to reach peak readiness and produce a performance worthy of Oman at the Asian Games.

COLLECTIVE PERFORMANCE

His teammate Aseel al Nuaimi said the back-to-back fixtures helped the players adapt to the physical and mental demands of tournament competition.

“The results were not the main objective. The priority was to improve our collective performance, assess the players and correct the mistakes that appeared in the opening matches,” Al Nuaimi said.

He added that Oman’s ability to recover from three defeats and earn two draws demonstrated the players’ fighting spirit, commitment and growing confidence against high-tempo opposition.

Pakistan U20 player Mohammad Abdullah Farooq also praised the competitive standard of the series, describing it as a valuable experience for both teams. He said the matches allowed the players to test attacking and defensive plans in conditions similar to official competition. Farooq commended Oman’s development and the hospitality and organisation provided during the tour. He expressed hope that cooperation between the two sides would continue, including the possibility of Oman playing future friendly matches in Pakistan.

Oman will now build on the gains from the series as the team moves towards its final camps ahead of the Asian Games in Japan.

Sufyan to lead all-Omani squad at Asian Games

MUSCAT: Oman Cricket on Wednesday unveiled its squad for the forthcoming Asian Games in Japan, where the Sultanate will script another chapter in its sporting history with an all-Omani team competing on one of Asia’s biggest multi-sport stages for the first time.

Led by captain Sufyan Mehmood, Oman earned their place at the continental showpiece after an outstanding qualifying campaign, underlining the rapid growth of cricket in the Sultanate and setting up an opportunity to challenge the region’s elite.

Oman secured qualification after an impressive campaign in the Asian Games Qualifier in Singapore, becoming one of four nations to book a place at the Games alongside Nepal, Malaysia and Hong Kong.

They will now join automatic entrants India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan and hosts Japan in the 10-team men’s



Oman men’s cricket team for the Asian Games 2026.

cricket competition.

The tournament draw has placed Oman in Group B alongside Malaysia and Hong Kong, while Group A comprises Afghanistan, Japan and Nepal.

The top two teams from each group will advance to the quarterfinals, where they will be joined by seeded giants

India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. The group-stage matches will be played on September 24, 25 and 26.

Describing the occasion as a landmark achievement for Omani cricket, Duleep Mendis, Chief Development Officer of Oman Cricket, said the team’s qualification was a proud moment for the nation.

“It is a historic occasion for our all-Omani team to represent the nation at the continental level. They have made us proud by qualifying in Singapore, and we hope they advance from their group to the quarterfinals of the Asian Games, where the heavyweights of Asian cricket will be waiting,” Mendis said.

“We wish them the very best and under the able captaincy of Sufyan, we are hopeful of a good show,” he added.

OMAN SQUAD: Sufyan Mehmood (captain), Muzaffar Shiralkar, Mohammed Ali al Balushi, Zubair al Balushi, Shuaib al Balushi, Nawed al Balushi, Wasim al Balushi, Ahmed al Zadjali, Sameer Othman, Waheed al Balushi, Faris al Balushi, Mohammed Osman, Issa Rahim al Balushi, Abdul Jalil and Qais al Balushi.

Support staff: Head coach – Sultan Ahmed; assistant coach – Parviz al Balushi; manager – Said Haider al Balushi; physiotherapist – Saravanan T.

EMERGING TALENTS



The Khareef Champions Boxing Camp will be organised by Oman Boxing Club in Salalah from August 10 to 17.

KHAREEF CHAMPIONS BOXING CAMP IN SALALAH FROM AUG 10

SPORTS REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUGUST 5

Around 30 boxers aged 15 and above are preparing to take part in the Khareef Champions Boxing Camp, organised by Oman Boxing Club (OBC) in Salalah from August 10 to 17 in cooperation with the Oman Martial Arts and Self Defence Committee.

The camp is designed as an integrated development programme aimed at identifying emerging talent and improving the participants' technical, physical and mental abilities. It will provide young boxers with a professional training environment built around discipline, fitness, confidence and competitive spirit under the supervision of specialised coaches.

The programme also seeks to create a clear development pathway for promising boxers, enabling them to advance towards higher competitive levels and potentially represent their clubs and national teams in the future.

Training will include morning and evening sessions, fitness and endurance work, technical and tactical exercises, sparring, and guidance on nutrition and recovery. The varied programme is intended to improve physical readiness, defensive and attacking skills, ring movement and decision-making under pressure.

Safety will remain a central part of the programme. Participants will undergo the required medical examinations, while qualified technical, administrative and medical personnel will be available throughout the camp. Training and competitive bouts will consider each boxer's age, weight, experience and physical level, with approved protective equipment required during the sessions.

The OBC have announced the selected participants in two groups. The Under-18 list contains 15 names, while 12 boxers were selected in the 18-and-above category. An orientation session for participants and the parents of minors will be held on August 5 to explain the programme and complete the required agreements and consent documents. August 8 has been set as the deadline for submitting an approved medical report ahead of the group's departure for Salalah on August 10.

The camp will conclude with a competitive Fight Night on August 17, giving the boxers an opportunity to apply the skills acquired during the programme and allowing coaches to assess their technical and physical progress.



Oman have been drawn in Group E alongside Saudi Arabia, hosts Qatar and Hong Kong for the AFC U20 Asian Cup China 2027 Qualifiers.

Coach Al Azzani names 26 for Oman U20 test against Syria

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 5

OMAN'S NATIONAL under-20 football team will begin a new domestic training camp in Muscat on Thursday as preparations intensify for the AFC U20 Asian Cup China 2027 Qualifiers.

National coach Hamad al Azzani has selected a 26-player squad for the camp, which will continue until August 17 and feature two international friendly matches against Syria on August 13 and 16.

The two encounters will provide the coaching staff with an important opportunity to assess the players under competitive conditions, evaluate their technical and physical readiness and refine the tactical approach ahead of the continental qualifiers. The possibility of arranging additional friendly matches during the camp is also being considered.

The squad comprises Al Mutasim al Maqbali, Yazan al Khaldi, Al Waleed al Rashdi, Ali al Alawi, Abdullah al Saadi, Ibrahim al Shamsi, Al Hassan al Qasimi, Fahad Bait Rabia, Ahmed al Amrani, Abdulrahman al Busaidy, Issam al Mukhaini, Mudathir al Batrani and Al Waleed al Buraidi.

Also included are Hassan al Hinai, Ahmed al Fahdi, Ibrahim al Tamimi, Khalil Arafah, Ziyad al Faraji, Abdullah al Oraimi, Hussam al Naabi, Mohammed al Sameen, Muzn al



Oman U20 players battle for possession during the 2-1 friendly defeat to Al Shabab.

Hinai, Abdulaziz al Manwari, Abdulmunim al Habsi, Sulaiman al Kharousi and Ahmed al Rawahi. The upcoming camp represents another important stage in Oman's extensive preparation programme, which has included both domestic and overseas camps and a series of international and local friendly matches.

Oman have previously faced Iraq, Bahrain, Tajikistan and Egypt twice each, providing Al Azzani and his technical staff with opportunities to assess the squad's progress against teams with different playing styles.

The young Red Warriors have also played several friendlies against domestic clubs. Those matches allowed the coaching staff to test different combinations, increase the

players' competitive minutes and evaluate their ability to implement the technical and tactical work covered during training.

The two matches against Syria are expected to serve as one of the final major tests before Oman travel to Doha for the qualifiers. The coaching staff will focus on strengthening coordination between the different departments of the team, addressing shortcomings identified in previous matches and finalising the squad for the Asian assignment.

OMAN IN GROUP E

Oman have been drawn in Group E alongside Saudi Arabia, hosts Qatar and Hong Kong. They will open their campaign against Qatar at Abdullah bin Khalifa Stadium on August 31 before meeting Saudi Arabia at Hamad bin Khalifa Stadium on September 3.

Their final group match against Hong Kong, China will take place at the same venue on September 6.

The Oman Football Association has continued to support the technical and administrative teams by providing camps and friendly matches in line with the coaching staff's requirements, with the aim of ensuring the players reach the qualifiers in the best possible condition.

Al Azzani and his staff will be looking to use the remaining preparation period to sharpen the team's tactical identity and improve consistency as Oman target a strong showing and positive results in Doha.

Oman Cricket turns to mental conditioning in push for next level

MUSCAT: Oman Cricket (OC) has made a significant investment in the mental side of the game ahead of a crucial international season. Renowned Indian mental conditioning and peak performance coach Dr Swaroop Savanur recently completed an intensive five-day high-performance programme designed to help the Sultanate's cricketers cope with pressure, build resilience and unlock their full potential.

The programme conducted specifically for the senior men's team comes as Oman prepare for the ACC Premier Cup and the remaining ICC Cricket World Cup League 2 series, with qualification for next year's Asia Cup and the ICC Cricket World Cup Qualifier firmly in their sights. He also conducted a group

workshop with the women's national teams as well as the U19 boys' and girls' squads.

For Dr Swaroop, the assignment addressed what he described as the team's "missing link". "The mental part of the game has been the missing link," he said. "When I first spoke to head coach Sulakshan Kulkarni and the management, the agenda was very clear — to help the players perform better and go to the next level. We devised a structured plan to make mental conditioning an integral part of their preparation."

Widely regarded as one of India's leading mental conditioning and peak performance coaches, Dr Swaroop has worked with the BCCI ecosystem, domestic champions Vidarbha, Punjab



Kings IPL team, Indian national football team, IPL players and several elite athletes across sports, helping teams build the mindset needed to excel under pressure. He believes one of the biggest misconceptions in modern sport is that mental conditioning is merely psychology. "Unfortunately, many people think the mental aspect is psychology. For me, it is training. You train your mind just as you train your

batting, bowling or fielding. Players need the right tools and routines to switch on when it matters most. One of the biggest achievements over these five days was removing the myths around mental training and reducing the resistance towards working on this aspect of the game. The players opened their minds and embraced the process."

The workshop centred on three key areas — changing players' approach

towards mindset training, developing customised mental preparation plans ahead of major tours, and helping individuals deal effectively with pressure, expectations and setbacks through practical exercises and match simulations.

"There is nothing wrong with pressure, expectations or even failure," Dr Savanur said. "The important thing is how you deal with them. We spent time working individually with players, discussing different match situations and creating practical responses. I am happy with what we have achieved in just five days because the players have understood how mental conditioning can become part of their daily routine."

What impressed him most, however, was the potential

within the Oman camp.

"I saw a deep desire throughout the team to improve and go beyond where they are today. The players have the skills to beat the best and compete at the highest level. What they perhaps lack is consistent exposure against stronger opposition. Our objective is to add peak-performance strategies and mental tools that will help bridge that gap."

Dr Savanur believes Oman should set their sights much higher. "There is absolutely no reason why Oman cannot be among the top four Associate Nations."

He identified three areas that could define Oman's progress over the coming years — belief, pushing beyond comfort zones and responding positively under pressure.

SPORTS

SOLIDSTART



Aryna Sabalenka plays a shot against Moyuka Uchijima (JPN) during second round play at Sobey's Stadium. — **Imagn Images**

SABALENKA TOPS UCHIJIMA IN WTA TORONTO OPENER

TORONTO: World number one Aryna Sabalenka returned to her hard court comfort zone with a 6-3, 6-3 victory over Japanese qualifier Moyuka Uchijima in the WTA 1000 in Toronto on Tuesday.

It was a solid start for Sabalenka in her bid to bounce back after falling in the quarterfinals at Roland Garros and in the round of 16 at Wimbledon. The Belarusian star has dominated on hard courts this year and on Tuesday notched her 24th win in 25 matches on the surface. The lone defeat was her loss to Elena Rybakina in the Australian Open final.

Now she's eyeing a North American hard court run that could include a three-peat at the US Open, the final Grand Slam of the year that starts on August 30 in New York.

"I'm happy with the performance, I'm happy with the fight," Sabalenka said after her second-round opener. "I knew going into this match I might struggle a little bit after a little break, but I was ready for that. I'm happy that mentally and physically I was ready to go."

In the third round she'll face China's Zhang Shuai, who was leading Jelena Ostapenko 6-0, 4-0 when the Latvian retired from their match.

Former world number one Iga Swiatek survived some nervy moments to launch her US Open build-up with a 6-0, 6-3 victory over Sara Bejlek.

In her first match since her Wimbledon title defense ended with a third-round exit, Poland's seventh-seeded Swiatek was rolling through the first nine games, appearing in total control with a double-break for a 3-0 lead in the second.

But her Czech opponent dug in and disrupted Swiatek's rhythm, winning two straight games before Swiatek pulled off a great escape — fending off nine break points in a 22-minute sixth game to hold serve for a 4-2 lead. "I'm happy that I stayed in the game and stayed solid because I felt at the end it got pretty physical," Swiatek said.

Swiatek has slipped from third in the world at this time last year to her current eighth.

In fact, Swiatek has yet to reach a Tour-level final this season. She'll continue her quest to change that when she takes on Switzerland's Viktorija Golubic, a 5-7, 6-2, 6-3 winner over Croatian Donna Vekic.

Eighth-seeded American Amanda Anisimova reached the third round by walkover when scheduled opponent Lanlana Tamarudee of Thailand withdrew because of illness. Ninth-seeded Ukrainian Elina Svitolina rallied from a set and a break down to beat Spain's Jessica Bouzas Maneiro 6-7 (5/7), 7-6 (7/4), 6-4. — **Reuters**



Chelsea's Moises Caicedo (C) and Juventus' Fabio Miretti compete for the ball during their friendly match at Kai Tak Stadium in Hong Kong. — **AFP**

Alonso hails Mudryk's return in 1-0 loss to Juve

MANAGER XABI Alonso hailed Mykhailo Mudryk's "emotional" return from a doping ban as the winger played for Chelsea for the first time in nearly two years in a 1-0 friendly defeat to Juventus in Hong Kong on Wednesday.

The Ukrainian international came on as a substitute for Nicolas Jackson in the 82nd minute, drawing applause from his teammates and loud cheers from Chelsea fans in the 43,575 crowd at Kai Tak Stadium.

Mudryk had not played since November 2024 because of a doping ban, but won permission to resume his football career on Friday after winning an appeal.

Despite a lively cameo on the left side, he was unable to stop Juventus taking the spoils courtesy of a wonderful second-half strike from Kosovo international Edon Zhegrova.

"Really pleased for him. It was emotional for everyone from the club to see him back," Alonso told reporters.

"He was thrilled, for sure. After such a long period, to be back on the pitch, it was a great feeling for him."

Neither side could find the breakthrough in a drab first half as two experimental line-ups struggled to create clear-cut chances.

Danny Welbeck could have scored a goal on his Chelsea debut but the veteran England striker failed to direct a flicked header on target after 11 minutes.



Chelsea's Jamie Gittens (L) and Juventus' Andrea Cambiaso compete for the ball during their friendly match at Kai Tak Stadium in Hong Kong. — **AFP**

ZHEGROVA STUNNER Juventus came closest a few minutes before half-time when midfielder Jeremie Boga took aim from just outside the penalty area and forced Blues keeper Robert Sanchez into a diving save.

Early in the second period a long ball from Chelsea skipper Moises Caicedo put full-back Marco Palestra in on goal but his tame shot could not beat Mattia Perin.

Juventus finally broke the deadlock with a moment of magic in the 68th minute, Kenan Yildiz squaring for Zhegrova who curled a stunning strike into the top corner from

outside the box.

Both sides rang the changes but Chelsea could not find a cutting edge.

"I think we started pretty well. The first 30, 35 minutes, we have played with good control, we have created a few chances," Alonso said.

"And the second half, there were many changes. The game was not that controlled and stable with all the substitutions.

"Unluckily, we didn't get to win, but for sure, it's the process, it's minutes for everyone."

Chelsea left both Cole Palmer and Levi Colwill out of the matchday squad, with Alonso saying England playmaker Palmer had suffered some discomfort after getting a knock in Saturday's match against Tottenham in Sydney.

The Spanish coach said it was not a recurrence of the groin injury that sidelined him for much of last season, adding that he should be available for the next friendly.

Chelsea play Italian giants AC Milan in Jakarta on Saturday, before rounding off pre-season with games against Malaysia's Johor Darul Ta'zim and Spain's Real Sociedad.

They face Fulham at Craven Cottage in their opening league game on August 24.

Juventus travel to Australia for friendlies against fellow Italians Inter Milan and Palermo before kicking off the Serie A season with a trip to Frosinone on August 23. — **AFP**

Rugby makes Sports Spark debut, introduces game to 500 children

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 5

Rugby has made its first appearance at Sports Spark 2026 through a training programme aimed at introducing children to the sport, its basic rules and fundamental skills, attracting a strong turnout during the first two weeks.

The fourth edition of Sports Spark, presented by Sohar International in strategic partnership with the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, is being held at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC) until August 15. The event features more than 20 sports and recreational activities in indoor, air-conditioned halls.

The children's summer

camp, which began on July 19, will continue until August 13.

The Oman Rugby Committee's participation in the summer programme is part of its efforts to broaden the game's participation base, reach younger age groups and raise public awareness of rugby while providing children with an opportunity to experience the sport in a structured training environment.

Mohammed al Hashami, assistant coach of the Oman national rugby team, said the sport's first participation at Sports Spark had received an enthusiastic response.

The programme welcomes five groups each day, with every group taking part in a 45-minute training session.



Young participants learn the basic skills of touch rugby during Sports Spark 2026 at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre.

Training is held daily from 9 am to 1.30 pm and targets children aged between eight and 14. Each group comprises between 12 and 18 players, although the participants may vary from one day to another.

Al Hashami explained that the sessions focus on touch rugby, a non-contact version of the sport in which players

stop their opponents by touching them rather than through physical tackles and collisions. This makes it suitable for introducing children to the game's fundamental skills in a safe training environment.

The sessions introduce participants to rugby's basic rules while developing skills such as carrying

and passing the ball, teamwork, movement and communication through simplified exercises suited to their ages and physical abilities.

At least 500 children have so far been introduced to rugby and learned its basic principles and rules, Al Hashami said, adding that the main objective was to promote the game among younger age groups and strengthen its presence within the community.

"We have completed two weeks of the programme, with another two weeks remaining. The turnout has been strong since the beginning, and we aim to use this opportunity to introduce rugby to as many children as possible and give them a

clear understanding of its rules and basic skills," he said.

Around 95 per cent of the participants are Omani, reflecting the interest of families in giving their children opportunities to explore new sports and benefit from organised programmes during the summer holiday.

The programme welcomes both boys and girls, although boys currently account for the majority of participants.

Two teams comprising children with Down syndrome and autism have also taken part, reflecting the programme's inclusive approach and its commitment to making sport accessible to different groups within the community.

MUSCAT
STOCK
EXCHANGE
7,349.101

BUSINESS

CRUDE OIL
OMAN \$79.16
BRENT \$80.41
LIGHT \$76.17



Oman-Nepal business forum seeks to deepen private sector cooperation

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 5

AN Omani-Nepalese Business Forum opened in Muscat on Wednesday, bringing together business leaders from both countries to strengthen commercial ties and explore new trade and investment opportunities.

Organised by the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), the forum focused on fostering direct engagement between the private sectors of Oman and Nepal. Discussions centred on opportunities in food security, water and beverages, handicrafts and traditional industries. Salim bin Said al Alawi, Director General of the International Cooperation Sector at OCCI, said direct engagement between business leaders is the first step towards identifying opportunities, exchanging expertise and building sustainable partnerships that add value to the national economy. He said the forum provides a



Oman and Nepal strengthen private sector ties through business discussions focused on trade, investment and new partnership opportunities

platform to promote technology transfer and investment in water management, food production and processing, logistics and trade, while supporting broader economic development and sustainability goals.

Bishesh Kumar Sah, Chargé d’Affaires at the Embassy of Nepal in Muscat, highlighted the importance of economic forums in opening new channels for trade and investment, enhancing the

presence of products and services in both markets; and encouraging joint ventures. He noted that the Nepalese delegation is in Oman to engage with local businesses and identify potential areas of collaboration.

Among the participating Omani entrepreneurs, Ahmed al Siyabi, a businessman in the automotive lubricants sector, expressed optimism about securing new commercial opportunities.

“Through our discussions with the Nepalese side, we have identified opportunities in the lubricants sector as well as in agriculture, particularly involving modern technologies that could be applied in Oman”, he said.

The forum also featured presentations highlighting the investment potential of both countries.

Shurooq bint Hamad al Farsi delivered a presentation titled Exploring the Omani Market from a Private Sector Perspective, outlining Oman’s economic strengths, strategic location and investment climate.

She highlighted the Sultanate of Oman’s position as a gateway linking Gulf markets with Asia and Africa through direct access to the Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean, providing efficient connectivity to major markets including India, China, South Korea, Pakistan, Singapore and Africa.

Al Farsi also noted that Oman’s free trade agreement with the United States offers investors a competitive advantage in

accessing the American market.

Govinda Prasad Ghimire, President of the Federation of Exporters and Entrepreneurs of Nepal and head of the Nepalese trade delegation, called for long-term strategic partnerships between the two countries’ private sectors to diversify trade, encourage joint investment and strengthen value chains in promising industries.

He showcased a range of Nepalese export products with potential in the Omani market, including handcrafted jewellery, specialty coffee and tea, organic vegetables and spices, cardamom, ginger, pepper, herbal products, natural supplements, essential oils, honey, and health and wellness products.

On the sidelines of the forum, business-to-business meetings enabled companies from both countries to explore potential partnerships, identify areas of mutual interest and discuss opportunities for joint ventures and investment projects.

Fitch retains ‘BBB-’ rating for Energy Development Oman

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, AUGUST 5

Global credit ratings agency Fitch Ratings has affirmed Energy Development Oman (EDO) at an investment-grade ‘BBB-’ with a Stable Outlook, underscoring the strategic importance of the state-owned energy company to Oman’s economy and its pivotal role in the Sultanate of Oman’s oil and gas sector.

The affirmation reflects EDO’s resilient cash generation, low leverage and large-scale upstream operations, while also recognising the company’s close ties to the Omani government, which remains its sole shareholder.

“The rating is constrained by that of its sole shareholder, the government of Oman, due to their strong links”, Fitch said, adding that EDO nevertheless benefits from “strong and resilient cash flow generation” supported by contracted gas sales, a flexible royalty regime and a prudent dividend policy.

Established in 2021 as part of Oman’s fiscal transformation programme, EDO holds the government’s interest in Petroleum Development Oman (PDO), the country’s largest oil and gas producer. Through its stake in PDO, EDO has become the backbone of Oman’s hydrocarbon industry, with Block 6 – PDO’s flagship concession – accounting for the majority of the Sultanate of Oman’s oil and gas production.

PDO operates the vast onshore Block 6 concession, covering more than 24 per cent of Oman’s land area and is responsible for producing the bulk of the country’s crude oil and natural gas. Fitch expects production attributable to EDO’s interest in PDO to average more than 850,000 barrels of oil equivalent per day through 2029, highlighting the scale of its operations.

The ratings agency said EDO’s role extends beyond energy production. Much of the gas produced through PDO is supplied to the domestic market, supporting power generation and industrial development, while the company remains one of Oman’s largest employers.

Fitch also highlighted the government’s continued support for EDO through a flexible fiscal framework, including



Through its stake in PDO, EDO has become the backbone of Oman’s hydrocarbon industry.

royalties linked to oil prices and dividend arrangements designed to preserve cash flow during weaker market conditions.

“We expect the government to continue providing support, due to EDO’s pivotal role within Oman’s infrastructure and economy”, the agency said.

The report noted that EDO’s financial strength has remained intact despite higher capital expenditure and substantial royalty and tax payments. It expects the company’s leverage to remain comfortably below one times EBITDA through 2029, supported by disciplined financial management and robust operating cash flows. Fitch also observed that EDO’s operations have not been materially affected by the ongoing Middle East conflict, noting that the company is not reliant on the Strait of Hormuz for exports.

Looking ahead, the agency said EDO is evaluating new gas developments that could be integrated with LNG export infrastructure, potentially enabling direct gas exports. While these projects have not yet been incorporated into Fitch’s rating assessment, they could further strengthen the company’s long-term growth prospects if sanctioned.



TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

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

Tender No.	Description	Last Date of Buying	Date of Submission	Grade	Tender Type	Tender Price (ر.ع.)	Bid Bond (ر.ع.)
NESC/ 2026/025	Leasing of a New Office Location for the call center of Nama Electricity Supply Company	19/08/2026	22/09/2026	Specialized Companies	Public	105	1000

The table below shows the instructions for participation: -							
Participation	- Local companies registered with The Ministry of Commerce, The Industry and Investment Promotion may obtain Tender documents. - The building proposed for lease shall be located within a maximum distance of (40) kilometers from the headquarters of Nama Electricity Supply Company (NESC). - The amount specified above is including 5% VAT. - The amount specified above is Non-Refundable Payment (Terms and Condition Apply) - To obtain the tender document and payment procedure, please visit https://supply.nama.om, under NESC vendor /E Tender.						
Enquiries	- Any inquiry can be sent to Tender@supply.nama.om, using the inquiry form found in the tender document (05) Five working days before bid submission date. - Any request for clarification received after the above-mentioned period will not be considered.						
Tender Submission	Please follow SUBMISSION OF TENDER and supplier guidelines available at NESC Website https://supply.nama.om, under NESC vendor / E Tender						
Guarantee	- The Tender should enclose a bank guarantee or a certified cheque issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman Unconditional and irrevocable and shall be disbursement as soon as it is submitted valid for a period of at least ninety (90) days from the last date of tender submission and addressed to the CHAIRMAN OF MINOR TENDER COMMITTEE, Nama Electricity Supply Company S.A.O.C. - The hard copy of the bid bond should be deposited in the Tender Box at the Nama Electricity Supply Company Main Office at Wilayat Al Seeb, before 10:00 AM on the day specified for bid submission or any extended deadline. - Any tender not accompanied by a Tender Bond shall be rejected.						
Terms and Conditions	- The Tender shall be valid for a period of (90) days from the last date of tender submission including any extension thereof. - If the submission date extended, the bank guarantee or a certified cheque shall be extended in accordance with the bid extension date. - NESC is not bound to accept the lowest (or highest) Tenderer. - The Omanization certificate achievement is obligatory , bidder who fails to submit this certificate will result in exclusion from the tender evaluation process. - Preference of awarding the tender will be given to those bidders who achieved a high percentage of purchasing from Local Products and have a High-level percentage of Omanization - NESC gives priority to award the projects to SMEs companies. - Failure to comply with the instructions in tender document may lead to disqualification.						
Incentives and exemptions	- Riyada card holders from Small and Medium Enterprises, SME, are exempted from Tender fees - Riyada card holders from Small and Medium Enterprises, SME, are exempted from bid bond requirements. - Riyada card holders from Small and Medium Enterprises, SME, are exempted from registration fees on business opportunities platform and supplier registration with Nama Group.						



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ADVERTORIALS

SHORTTAKES



From summer camps to family adventures: making the most of Dubai days together

MUSCAT: Summer holidays bring a welcome change of pace, but for many mums they also mean balancing children’s endless energy with a little well-deserved time to recharge.

In Dubai, that balance comes naturally, with experiences designed for every member of the family. While children immerse themselves in summer camps or exciting activities, mums can enjoy a slower morning filled with wellness, great food and shopping before everyone comes together for an evening of shared experiences.

It’s this flexibility that makes Dubai such an appealing summer destination for families across the GCC. Whether you’re travelling for a long weekend or an extended holiday, every day can be tailored around what matters most: quality family time, memorable experiences and moments to yourself.

CHILDREN AT SUMMER CAMP

If the children are happily settled into a summer camp, the morning becomes a chance to focus on your own wellbeing. For those looking to start the day with energy, MOTION Cycling’s candlelit 45-minute rides combine music, coaching and a full-body workout in studios at Business Bay and Mercato Mall. CRANK, in Alserkal Avenue, is known for its high-energy cycling, strength and conditioning classes, with an infectious atmosphere.

If the morning calls for something slower, Paus Club on Al Wasl Road provides a calmer alternative. Begin with yoga or Pilates before settling into its healthy café for breakfast or a matcha. It’s the kind of place where mornings unfold at a slower pace, encouraging you to linger a little longer before the day begins. Women-only classes are also available for those who prefer them.

A MOMENT TO RECHARGE

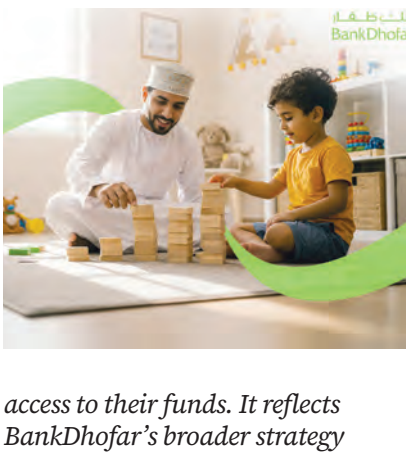
A few uninterrupted hours can make all the difference during a family holiday and Dubai’s wellness scene is filled with opportunities to relax and reset.

Contrast Wellness specialises in restorative experiences, including sauna sessions, ice baths, red-light therapy and massage across several locations. For those looking to invest in skincare, Biolite in Umm Suqeim focuses on advanced dermatology, while SKIN111 at Palm Jumeirah Mall combines aesthetic dermatology with personalised wellness treatments. Whether you choose a facial, an IV therapy session or simply a professional skincare consultation, these moments of self-care help you return to the day feeling refreshed.

BANKDHOFAR
DELIVERS
ENHANCED
SAVINGS VALUE
THROUGH ITS
HIGH YIELD
ACCOUNT

BankDhofar’s High Yield Savings Account continues to strengthen its position as one of the preferred savings solutions among the bank’s discerning clientele in Oman, offering a compelling combination of competitive returns, liquidity and digital convenience.

Designed to meet the evolving financial expectations of both Omani nationals and expatriates, the account enables customers to earn attractive returns on their savings while retaining unrestricted



access to their funds. It reflects BankDhofar’s broader strategy of delivering value-driven retail banking solutions that combine performance with everyday usability.

A key distinguishing feature of the High Yield Savings Account is its competitive interest structure, which has positioned it among the more rewarding savings products in the local banking market. Interest is calculated on a daily basis and credited monthly, allowing customers to benefit from compounding returns over time.

National Finance strengthens sustainability focus with ESO

AS part of its ongoing commitment to cultivating a workforce that is empowered and equipped to advance sustainable development, National Finance, the Sultanate of Oman’s leading finance and leasing company, recently hosted an awareness session for employees in collaboration with the Environment Society of Oman (ESO). The session highlighted plastic-free living and best environmental practices.

The lecture was delivered by Ahmed al Zadjali from the ESO, who led an engaging awareness session highlighting the importance of adopting a plastic-free lifestyle and embracing sustainable daily habits. The session also featured an interactive workshop that raised employees’ awareness of sustainability and environmental responsibility, reinforcing their active role in protecting the environment and supporting sustainable development goals.

Building on its long-standing commitment to sustainability and corporate social responsibility, National Finance has made significant progress through its ‘Be Green’ initiative, which aims to embed environmentally responsible practices into employees’ daily routines and promote a culture of sustainability across the



organisation. The initiative has delivered tangible results, including a 19 per cent reduction in petrol consumption and a 12 per cent decrease in water usage in 2025. The company also replaced 720,000 plastic bottles with sustainable glass alternatives, demonstrating the tangible impact of its ongoing commitment to sustainability.

Commenting on the initiative, Tariq bin Sulaiman al Farsi, Chief Executive Officer at National Finance, remarked, “At National Finance, we recognise the importance of raising environmental awareness and

encouraging environmentally responsible practices among our employees. Our collaboration with the Environment Society of Oman reflects our ongoing commitment to fostering a culture of sustainability across the organisation. We believe that even small, conscious actions can lead to meaningful and lasting environmental impact. Initiatives like this play an important role in empowering our employees to support the Sultanate of Oman’s sustainability ambitions and Oman Vision 2040.”

Bank Muscat transforms Khareef season experience

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, continues to offer interactive activities and exclusive banking promotions as part of its Khareef Dhofar campaign.

The innovative “Khareef Portal” interactive screens have attracted significant interest and engagement from visitors across all segments of society, delivering a unique experience that connects the Governorates of Muscat and Dhofar through a live, real-time broadcast between the bank’s booths at Oman Mall and Uptown Salalah. The initiative has enabled visitors at both locations to



experience the atmosphere of the Khareef Dhofar Season and follow activities taking place simultaneously.

The launch of the interactive screens reflects Bank Muscat’s commitment to leveraging

modern technology to enhance visitor experiences while showcasing the Sultanate of Oman’s rich tourism attributes.

Alongside the interactive activities, Bank Muscat’s sales team continue to welcome

visitors, answer their enquiries and introduce them to the bank’s key banking solutions, products and exclusive promotional offers.

These include special offers as part of the bank’s loyalty programme, Bank Muscat Rewards, when customers use Bank Muscat credit cards at restaurants and cafés with a Bank Muscat POS machine across Dhofar Governorate.

Valid until August 31, the Food & Beverage (F&B) offer allows customers to earn up to twice as many reward points, encouraging customers to make the most of their credit cards during the Khareef Dhofar season.

Toyota GR Yaris: Motorsport DNA, everyday thrill

Toyota GR Yaris, the rally-bred high-performance hatchback, continues to turn heads on the roads of Oman, bringing genuine motorsport DNA to everyday driving. Developed with the expertise of the TOYOTA GAZOO Racing World Rally Team, the force behind Toyota’s five consecutive FIA WRC manufacturers’ championships, the GR Yaris stands as the brand’s first model built with a “motorsport-first” approach, refined through the rigorous demands of the Super Taikyu Series and the Japanese Rally Championship to deliver unmatched confidence and control on every road.

POWER BUILT FOR THE WIN

Under the hood lies a 1.6-litre inline



three-cylinder turbo engine (G16E-GTS) that delivers 296 hp and 400 Nm of torque. Drivers can choose between two transmission options — an 8-speed Direct Automatic

Transmission (DAT) for rapid, seamless shifting, or a 6-speed intelligent manual transmission (iMT) for a more direct, mechanical connection. Power is managed by

the GR-FOUR full-time 4WD system with an electronically controlled multi-plate clutch and three selectable modes, ensuring optimal traction and stability across diverse road surfaces.

AERO PERFORMANCE PACKAGE

The Aero Performance Package enhances aerodynamic efficiency through six precision-engineered components, including a ducted aluminium hood for improved cooling, a front lip spoiler to reduce lift, front winger ducts to sharpen steering response, a variable rear wing for high-speed stability, rear bumper ducts to minimise drag and a fuel-tank undercover that smooths underbody airflow.

A DRIVER-FOCUSED COCKPIT, BUILT LIGHT

Inside, the GR Yaris features a driver-focused cockpit available in a sporty Black x Red theme or a minimalist Full Black option. Its lightweight body, featuring an aluminium hood, doors and rear hatch, along with a carbon-fibre-reinforced plastic (CFRP) roof, ensures a low centre of gravity and superior handling.

Safety is supported by Toyota Safety Sense, which includes the Pre-Collision System (PCS), Dynamic Radar Cruise Control (DRCC), Lane Tracing Assist (LTA), as well as Blind Spot Monitor (BSM) and Rear Cross-Traffic Alert (RCTA).

SELECTIVEGROWTH

‘LIVE THE VIBE’
SUMMER CAMPAIGN
GOES NATIONAL

BALARAB AL TAMIMI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 5

This year’s edition of the “Live The Vibe” summer campaign has expanded beyond tourism promotion into an integrated shopping, entertainment and leisure drive, with the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion supervising retail discounts and promotional events staged in partnership with the private sector.

Amal al Fahdi, Head of the Commercial Licensing Section at the ministry, said the campaign, launched by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism in previous years to invigorate the summer tourism season has entered a new phase of institutional integration in its current edition, adding



AMAL
AL FAHDI

commercial and marketing events, offers, discounts and prizes to its programme.

“We look forward to it becoming an annual initiative”, Al Fahdi said. According to the official, the ministry oversees the events accompanying the campaign and the discounts and offers presented by commercial establishments, while coordinating with government entities and the private sector; and encouraging shopping malls and tourism and entertainment venues to take part. The goal, she said, is an integrated experience combining shopping and entertainment that helps energise commercial activity and stimulate the local economy. The campaign features live entertainment, family events, children’s activities, interactive workshops, competitions, draws and prizes, alongside offers and experiences from participating entities. Promotional discounts will cover most retail sectors, Al Fahdi said, with the campaign targeting citizens, residents and visitors alike.

What distinguishes this year’s edition, she said, is a new concept uniting shopping, entertainment and tourism in a single experience, making visits to malls and tourism facilities more varied and enjoyable. On the expected economic impact, Al Fahdi said the campaign should lift footfall at shopping centres and participating establishments, stimulate consumer spending and raise occupancy rates at tourism and entertainment facilities.

She added that it strengthens the competitiveness of local markets, gives the private sector a platform for innovative offers and supports economic activity in the governorates by encouraging visitors to explore new destinations.

JAPAN’S
NIKKEI
RISES
3.66%
ON THE
BACK OF
AI SURGE

TOKYO: Japan’s Nikkei index rose more than three per cent to close at a two-week high today, as artificial intelligence-related shares surged in line with their US counterparts, while investors rushed to buy stocks with strong outlooks.

The Nikkei gained 3.66 per cent to 66,300.44, its highest closing level since July 23, while the broader Topix index rose 2.13 per cent to 4,046.17. The S&P 500 and the Dow Jones both closed at record highs on Tuesday.

Shares of chip-testing equipment maker Advantest and chipmaking equipment manufacturer Tokyo Electron rose 8.77 per cent and 3.26 per cent, respectively, tracking the



Philadelphia Semiconductor Index, which climbed 6.6 per cent overnight. The US semiconductor index rose for a fourth consecutive session after falling 20.6 per cent in July. Shares of Murata

Manufacturing, a leading producer of multilayer ceramic capacitors used to regulate power in AI servers, jumped 9.82 per cent. Fanuc shares rose 4.41 per cent, while bank stocks also advanced, with Mitsubishi UFJ Financial Group and Mizuho Financial Group gaining 2.05 per cent and 4.17 per cent, respectively.

Among the stocks that bucked the trend, shares of Fast Retailing, the owner of the Uniqlo brand, fell 2.33 per cent, while shares of air-conditioner manufacturer Daikin Industries dropped 6.31 per cent, putting the greatest downward pressure on the Nikkei. — ONA

AI data centres drive
Siemens Energy growth



Energy, opens new tab reported record

third-quarter sales, margins and orders on Wednesday, driven by demand for gas turbines from expanding AI data centres in the United States and power plant projects in the Middle East.

Those trends, along with governments increasingly turning to gas to cut emissions, have fuelled demand for power plants and related equipment in what some industry executives have described as a “super cycle”.

“We’re at the start of this major wave of electrification. And we’re seeing the share of electricity in total energy demand rise steadily”, Siemens Energy CEO Christian Bruch said.

“And that, of course, is driving demand for our products”, he added, noting that data centre operators and Middle East customers accounted for about half of third-quarter gas turbine orders.

Alongside US rival GE Vernova



(GEV.N), opens new tab, Siemens Energy’s shares have risen nearly sevenfold over the past two years, helped by soaring demand for turbines and grid equipment used to power data centres needed for AI.

AI DATA CENTRE BOOST

Siemens Energy and GE Vernova have benefitted from a boom in energy-hungry data centres, which are needed for AI technology and require power

infrastructure, including gas turbines, to get electricity.

Its struggling Siemens Gamesa division, long a drag on group performance, also posted its first quarterly operating profit in almost four years, helped by cost cuts and higher capacity utilisation.

Shares in Siemens Energy, which makes products ranging from gas and wind turbines to converter stations and electrolysers, were up 1.1% at

08:35 GMT.

“I am very pleased with the strong results. In particular, the upturn in gas service orders has been a pleasant surprise and reinforces the long-term growth outlook”, said Jasmin Wolfram of Siemens Energy shareholder Union Investment.

Third-quarter sales rose 18.5% to €11.45 billion (\$13.20 billion), beating a company-compiled analyst forecast of €11.22 billion. Profit before special items more than tripled to €1.62 billion, also ahead of the €1.38 billion consensus estimate.

Siemens Energy now expects to hit the upper end of its 10-12% margin target for 2026.

In addition to data centre expansion, the Iran war has boosted demand for power equipment among Middle East governments seeking to strengthen energy security as the conflict highlights the vulnerability of infrastructure.

GE Vernova also pointed to data centre-related orders as the main driver of quarterly results last month, though losses at its wind business weighed on performance. — Reuters

Total GCC bottled water market reaches \$7.55 Billion in 2024

MUSCAT: The size of the bottled water market in the GCC countries reached approximately \$7.55 billion in 2024, continuing its growth at an annual rate of 11 per cent, driven by increased demand for bottled water, rising health awareness and expanding investments in this sector.

Data from the GCC Statistical Centre (GCC-Stat) indicated that in the field of water resources management, the volume of collected treated wastewater increased by 98.4 per cent in 2024. This indicator reflects the progress made by GCC countries in water reuse and supporting circular economy applications, thereby contributing to preserving water resources and enhancing environmental sustainability.

Desalinated water production



in GCC countries also rose by 4.8 per cent compared to 2023, underscoring the continued reliance on desalination technologies as one of the most vital strategic sources to meet the growing demand for water, particularly in light of limited natural water resources.

GCC TREND

On the other hand, the annual rate of groundwater abstraction recorded a decrease of 3 per cent over the past nine years, coinciding with an increase in the share of renewable water to 25.5 per cent in 2024, reflecting a GCC trend towards sustainable water resources management and reducing pressure on groundwater reserves.

Regarding natural resources, rainfall rates in GCC countries increased by 43.8 per cent in 2024

compared to the long-term average for the period (1980–2009).

WATER SECURITY

This presents opportunities to enhance water security through expanding rainwater harvesting projects, recharging groundwater aquifers and increasing the utilisation of conventional water resources. Collectively, these indicators confirm the continued adoption by GCC countries of integrated water management policies based on diversifying supply sources, enhancing reuse, developing desalination technologies and preserving natural resources, thereby supporting the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals and enhancing the region’s ability to face water scarcity challenges. — ONA

GLOBAL MARKETS

Asia stocks gain, oil falls on tech optimism



Asian stock markets jumped on Wednesday as robust earnings and renewed appetite for tech propelled Wall Street to record highs, while hopes for progress on opening the Strait of Hormuz pushed oil prices and bond yields lower. More evidence of the vast sums being spent on AI capex helped lift Japan’s Nikkei 3.5%, while South Korea continued its wild swings with a rise of 4.3%. — Reuters

CURRENCY BOOST

India forex reserves hit three month high



India’s foreign exchange reserves rose to a near three-month high of \$692.9 billion as of July 31, data from the Reserve Bank of India showed on Wednesday.

Reserves jumped nearly \$10.5 billion compared to the previous week, in their biggest surge since the week ended January 30. — Reuters

PRECIOUS METALS

Gold hits one-month high on softer dollar



Gold rose for a third straight session on Wednesday, hitting a one-month peak on a softer dollar and lower oil prices, while investors awaited US jobs data for clues on the interest-rate outlook. Spot gold climbed 2.4% to \$4,175.53 per ounce by 06:40 GMT, its highest since July 7. US gold futures rose 2% to \$4,235.30. The US dollar traded subdued, making greenback-priced metals more attractive to holders of other currencies. — Reuters

OPINION

The case for Oman’s Labour Office in the Philippines



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

SINCE the early 1970s, the Sultanate of Oman, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries and several other Arab states have relied heavily on expatriate workers to support their businesses, government institutions, households and farms. This dependence has continued despite sustained efforts to increase the employment of national citizens. In some GCC countries, expatriates account for more than 90 per cent of the total population.

The Philippines is among the leading countries that train and prepare their workforce for overseas employment, particularly in the Gulf region. Filipino men and women are employed in a wide range of occupations and are present in many Omani and Gulf companies as well as in private households. Given the scale of this labour migration, both sending and receiving countries face numerous challenges, making it essential to establish government institutions dedicated to protecting the rights of both workers and employers while facilitating recruitment, deployment and repatriation procedures.

Recently, the Oman’s Ministry of Labour inaugurated its representative office in the Republic of the Philippines as part of the government’s efforts to strengthen the labour recruitment system and enhance the efficiency and reliability of pre-departure procedures.

The flow of expatriate workers from

various nationalities continues to grow. According to the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI), the number of expatriate workers in Oman reached approximately 1.81 million in May 2025. The total number of non-Omani residents, including family members, stood at around 2.3 million, representing more than 43 per cent of the country’s total population, which stood around 5.3 million.

Among expatriate communities in Oman, the Philippines ranks fifth in terms of workforce size by position 45,000 residents while Bangladesh occupies the first position with approximately 627,000 residents, followed by India with around 506,000, Pakistan with about 321,000, while the remaining expatriate population comes from various other countries.

Expatriate workers contribute significantly in many fields and services, including household work and private caregiving. However, the large expatriate workforce also presents several economic, demographic, administrative and social challenges. Demographically, the high proportion of expatriates affects population balance, increases pressure on public services in densely populated areas and contributes to illegal employment and challenges related to education, cultural integration and social values.

Recognising both the benefits and challenges of expatriate labour, Oman and other GCC countries continue to pursue

Among expatriate communities in Oman, the Philippines ranks fifth in terms of workforce size by position 45,000 residents while Bangladesh occupies the first position with approximately 627,000 residents, followed by India with around 506,000, Pakistan with about 321,000, while the remaining expatriate population comes from various other countries

a balanced approach that maximises the economic advantages of foreign workers. This strategy includes increasing workforce localisation across economic sectors, attracting highly skilled foreign professionals, reducing dependence on low-skilled labour, expanding the use of digital transformation, artificial intelligence and automation and investing in the education and training of national talent in line with the needs of the future economy.

There is no doubt that establishing representative labour offices in major labour-sending countries will strengthen labour market governance by ensuring a better balance between economic development requirements, employment opportunities for citizens and long-term social and demographic stability.

The decision by the Ministry of Labour to establish a representative office in the Philippines, with plans to expand to other labour-exporting countries, reflects its commitment to strengthening its international presence and deepening cooperation with government agencies and vocational training organisations. These partnerships are expected to support human capital development initiatives, facilitate the exchange of expertise and best practices in skills development and workforce qualification and ensure that Oman’s labour market remains aligned with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040 and the country’s future economic aspirations.

MIDWEEK BRIEF: AI JOBS, THE FED AND K-SHAPED INFLATION

MIKE DOLAN

This week’s market headlines blared earnings season cheer, a historic intervention to prop up Japan’s yen and the ebb and flow of the Iran war. But strategists looking beyond the noise are tracking deeper shifts: AI-driven job displacement, Kevin Warsh’s Fed task forces and how inflation differs for the rich and poor.

While everyone marvels at the scale of the AI investment frenzy this earnings season, its flipside is also under the microscope. One big concern is the speed at which generative AI and a blizzard of sector-specific applications will displace workers rather than simply assist them. Relatively low US unemployment and weekly jobless claims suggest that’s not a major factor yet.

But Wall Street bank Morgan Stanley has devised a way to keep tabs on the trend via its “AI disruption tracker,” which sifts through data on AI adoption, company briefings, employment surveys and raw jobs data. Its conclusion: the impact is small but increasingly visible. In the first half of this year, unemployment continued to rise in occupations with high AI exposure, while jobless rates in low- and medium-exposure occupations largely stabilised.

“After adjusting for differences in cyclical behaviour, unemployment in highly exposed occupations now runs roughly 0.5 percentage point above what aggregate labour-market conditions would normally predict, compared with approximately 0.3 percentage points at the time of our previous report (in April),” the bank’s strategists wrote.

With the Federal Reserve’s next meeting more than six weeks away, this month’s annual Fed symposium in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, will grab the spotlight. Investors are eager for clues on how new Chair Kevin Warsh’s task forces on Fed reform will pan out. These five study groups will look at the central bank’s communications, balance sheet policy, data analysis, productivity and inflation frameworks. A host of prominent economists and former policymakers will join them, including former Reserve Bank of India Governor Raghuram Rajan, former Bank of England Governor Mervyn King and former Central Bank of Brazil Governor Arminio Fraga.

But one name among the luminaries catches the eye: former Bank for International Settlements (BIS) chief economist William White. White is widely credited with warning of the 2007-2008 banking crash, stressing to central bankers that overly lax monetary policy was hopelessly inadequate to rein in the speculative mortgage and credit bubbles that eventually brought the global economy to its knees. Simply meeting targets of 2 per cent missed the bigger issue of broader monetary stability, he argued and speculative asset behaviour was as much a factor for central banks to consider.

Economic backdrop gives new PM ‘room to manoeuvre’

ANDY Burnham took office of UK prime minister against the third-strongest economic backdrop of any predecessor in the past 50 years, according to analysis. A study by the consultancy Public First and business coalition Prosperity Alliance found only Tony Blair and Theresa May came to power with the economy in a better state.

It measured Burnham’s first-year forecasts against his 13 predecessors’ first years on GDP growth, inflation, unemployment, borrowing and real wage growth. Economist at Public First, Scott Corfe said this backdrop would “give a Burnham government more room for manoeuvre than many of its predecessors.”

Inflation – the rate at which prices increase – is currently 2.8 per cent, far below the 11 per cent peak seen in 2022, but still above the Bank of England’s target of 2 per cent.

However, the central forecast used in the analysis predicted that, in Burnham’s first year, inflation is set to meet that target.

That matches the rate recorded under Blair and ranks Burnham second among 12 prime ministers. Only Boris Johnson, whose first year coincided with lockdowns cutting inflation to 1 per cent, enjoyed a lower rate. Harold Wilson and Margaret Thatcher inherited double-digit inflation in the 1970s and 80s.

Meanwhile, unemployment – at 4.9 per cent – is set to fall by half a percentage point in Burnham’s first year. The rate has fallen for two consecutive quarters from a recent peak of 5.2 per cent at the end of last year.

But Burnham faces a separate challenge – a record 1.1 million young people aged 16 to 24 are not in education, employment or training, according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS), the first time that figure has passed a million since 2013.

Public sector net borrowing – the gap between what the government spends and what it raises in tax – is



Britain’s Prime Minister Andy Burnham has a selfie taken during a visit to a family centre in Sheffield, South Yorkshire. — AFP



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The writer is our foreign correspondent based in the UK

forecast to dip 0.7 percentage points of GDP during Burnham’s first year.

That ranks Burnham fifth out of 13 prime ministers on this measure. Gross domestic product (GDP) growth – the rate at which the economy expands each year – is forecast to hit 1.6 per cent. Corfe said “the economy would be growing” but he cautioned that “this would be a story of stabilisation rather than boom.”

“Growth would remain lacklustre, real wage gains limited and public confidence in the economy exceptionally weak,” he added.

Early as it is, in his time in office, trade union officials put in an issue for the new PM to deal with. They call for the immediate repeal of the threshold for votes in a ballot for strike action.

General secretary of the NASUWT teachers’ union, Matt Wrack, said the 50 per cent threshold for a strike to be legal had always been used as a tool of union-bashing.

He said: “MPs are not elected on a 50 per cent turnout threshold. Councillors are not. The prime minister is not. If Westminster elections were held to the same

standard imposed on workers, half the Cabinet would not be in office today and Labour would have far fewer MPs.

“The International Labour Organisation’s Freedom of Association Committee has been clear that requiring over half of all eligible workers to vote before a strike can be declared is ‘excessive’ and designed to hinder the right to strike, particularly in large workplaces.

“The consequences are felt most sharply in sectors like education, where the workforce is overwhelmingly female. The threshold suppresses the voice of women who are already fighting for fair pay, safe conditions and dignity at work.”

Wrack said that after 14 years of Conservative governments using the law to weaken trade unions, Labour had promised a New Deal for Working People and the repeal of the Trade Union Act 2016, including the 50 per cent turnout threshold, adding: “For many in the trade union movement, these pledges were one of the strongest arguments for a Labour vote: the opportunity to actually repeal undemocratic and anti-labour laws.”

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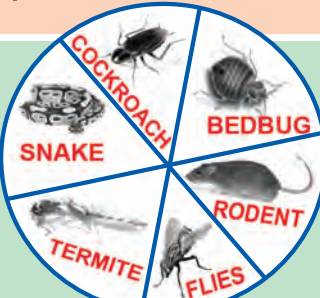
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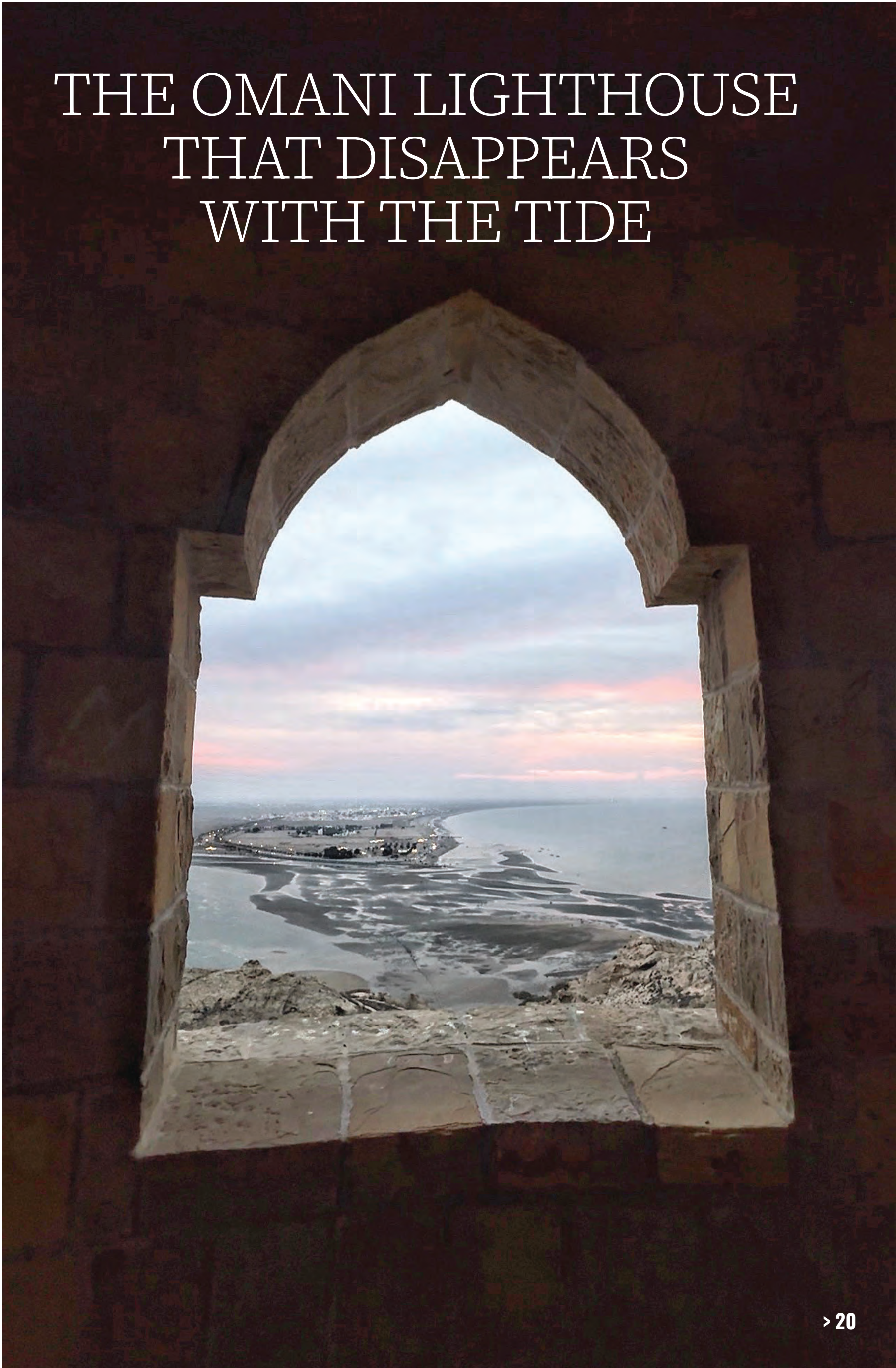


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HEALTH

DON'T LET THE HEAT STOP YOUR FITNESS



CHAAMUNDEESWARI
The author is a Fitness Coach at Fit in2 Fitness with Chaamu

Summer in Oman is known for its bright sunshine and soaring temperatures. During the hottest months, many people reduce their physical activity because exercising outdoors can be uncomfortable and, at times, unsafe. As a result, fitness routines are often put on hold until the weather becomes cooler.

However, our health does not need to take a summer break. The answer is not to stop exercising, but to adapt our routines and exercise smarter.

For those who enjoy walking, jogging or cycling, the timing of the activity can make a significant difference. Exercising early in the morning or after sunset, when temperatures are lower, is safer and more comfortable. Strenuous outdoor exercise during the hottest hours of the day should be avoided as excessive heat can increase the risk of dehydration and heat-related illness.

On particularly hot days, indoor spaces can provide an effective alternative. A living room, apartment gym, workplace fitness room or local gym can become the perfect place to stay active. Maintaining movement does not require complicated equipment or lengthy workouts. A simple 20-minute routine can include five minutes of gentle stretching, 10 minutes of brisk walking, stair climbing, squats, wall push-ups or dancing, followed by five minutes of deep breathing and light stretching.

Even a short routine can help improve circulation, maintain muscle strength and reduce stress. What matters is making movement a regular part of the day rather than believing that exercise is only worthwhile when it is intense or time-consuming.

In Oman's climate, hydration must also be viewed as an essential part of fitness. Water should be consumed regularly throughout the day rather than only when thirst begins. Anyone exercising outdoors should carry a water bottle and take breaks whenever necessary.

The summer holidays can also offer opportunities to make physical activity part of family life. Families can visit indoor sports facilities, take evening walks when the weather cools or plan weekend outings to beaches, parks or the mountains during suitable hours. These activities encourage movement while allowing families to spend quality time together.

Many people believe that missing a few workouts means they have failed, but fitness is built through consistency, not perfection. Even 20 minutes of movement each day is better than doing nothing at all. Summer may change where and when we exercise, but it does not have to determine whether we exercise.

The weather should not decide our health goals. By adjusting our routines, staying hydrated, choosing cooler hours and continuing to move, we can remain active throughout the summer. A little activity each day can be enough to keep us on the path towards a healthier lifestyle.

QUICK FEATURES



FESTIVAL

Hot-air balloons flying in the sky during the International Cantoya Festival in Patzcuaro, Michoacán State, Mexico. — **AFP**



MOVIE MAGIC

A movie prop is seen during a press preview for an upcoming Propstore LA movie memorabilia auction, at BADD House in West Hollywood, California. — **AFP**



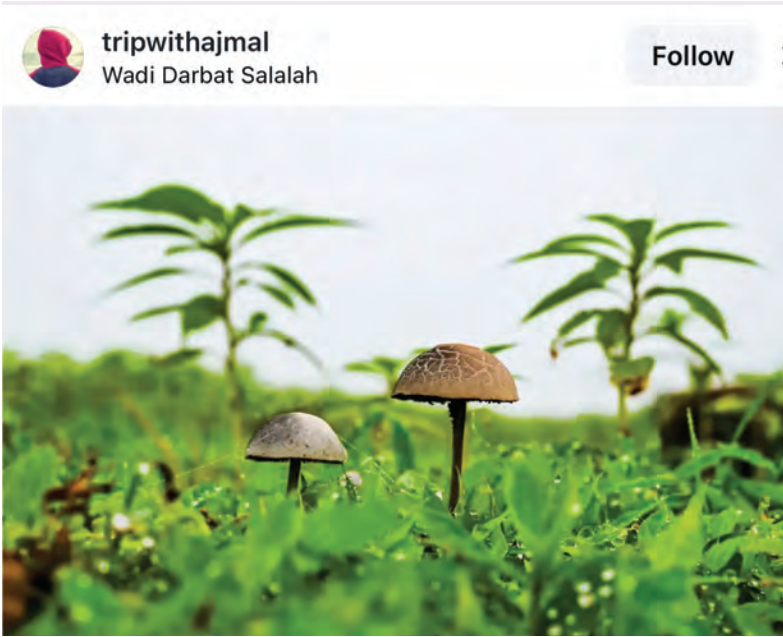
DANCE

A dancer warms up backstage at the Artscape Theatre in Cape Town ahead of the 13th South African International Ballet Competition. — **AFP**

INSTA PICKS



“Scops Owl”



“Just two little guys enjoying the morning dew”

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BTS WITHDRAWS FROM 2027 GRAMMYS



It marks the first time the South Korean group has opted out of the awards. — Reuters

K-pop group BTS said last week that they will not submit music for consideration at the 69th Annual Grammy Awards in February 2027, citing dissatisfaction with the Recording Academy’s new best Asian pop music performance category.

It marks the first time the South Korean group has opted out of the awards. The seven members shared the decision on Instagram.

“We have decided not to enter the Grammys this year. I hope that music can be heard and loved for what it is, rather than being divided by region or language”, they wrote.

Announced on June 16, the category recognises Asian pop performances originating from or widely recognised within Asian markets, including K-pop, J-pop and C-pop, featuring the meaningful use of one or more Asian languages.

The Recording Academy did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

BTS returned from a hiatus following the members’ completion of military service with their comeback album “ARIRANG” on March 20. The album topped the Billboard 200 for two consecutive weeks, setting a new record for a K-pop act.

Tickets for the group’s South Korean concerts sold out rapidly during the January presale, while the North American and European legs of the tour sold out within hours, according to Hybe, the agency managing BTS.

In May, BTS won artist of the year at the 52nd American Music Awards, beating Taylor Swift and other major artists. The group also received two additional awards.

BTS consists of RM, Jin, Suga, J-Hope, Jimin, V and Jungkook. — Reuters

RETURNING TO ‘TED LASSO’ AFTER BREAK ‘EFFORTLESS’

WITH World Cup excitement still reverberating, Apple TV’s football comedy hit “Ted Lasso” is returning after a three-year hiatus and according to the cast, they needed no warm-up to get back on the pitch.

“It felt completely and utterly... effortless. Just ridiculously effortless”, Hannah Waddingham said at a press event alongside costars Jeremy Swift and Juno Temple ahead of Season 4’s premiere on Wednesday.

“I think we’ve always felt like a family from day one on this”, added Waddingham, the award-winning British actress who plays Rebecca Welton, the ruthless president of the fictional professional English soccer club AFC Richmond.



“Ted Lasso” star and co-creator Jason Sudeikis has won four Emmys so far for the show. — AFP

Swift, who portrays team executive Leslie Higgins, chimed in that the cast “hit the ground running” when filming resumed.

The new season of ‘Ted Lasso’ which stars Jason Sudeikis in the title role, shifts the action to the optimistic American coach’s (and Sudeikis’s own) native Kansas, where he has been invited to helm a second-division women’s team.

The trip allowed the actors to better understand Sudeikis’s inspiration when he co-created the show, one of Apple TV’s most successful series, said Temple, who plays the charismatic model-turned-publicist Keeley Jones.

“It felt like a really, really special way to come back again, to be slightly out of our comfort zone”, said the English actress. “That was great”. “It was vital to have this kind of beautiful vacation together in a place that’s both very important to Ted and very important to Jason”, Temple said, describing it as “such a fun experience for all three of us”. “Ted Lasso” debuted on Apple TV in 2020 and became the platform’s flagship series.

In a teaser for its highly anticipated return, Sudeikis and Brendan Hunt appeared in character as Lasso and his assistant Coach Beard during the halftime show of last month’s World Cup final between Argentina and Spain.

In the skit, Sudeikis acted as if he were sending pop superstar Justin Bieber into the match as a substitute.

The location shift in the new season has allowed the series to bring back familiar faces including Sudeikis, Waddingham, Temple, Swift, Hunt and Brett Goldstein, who plays AFC Richmond captain Roy Kent.

But it also offers the bandwidth to introduce new characters, bringing fresh tension and comedic drama.

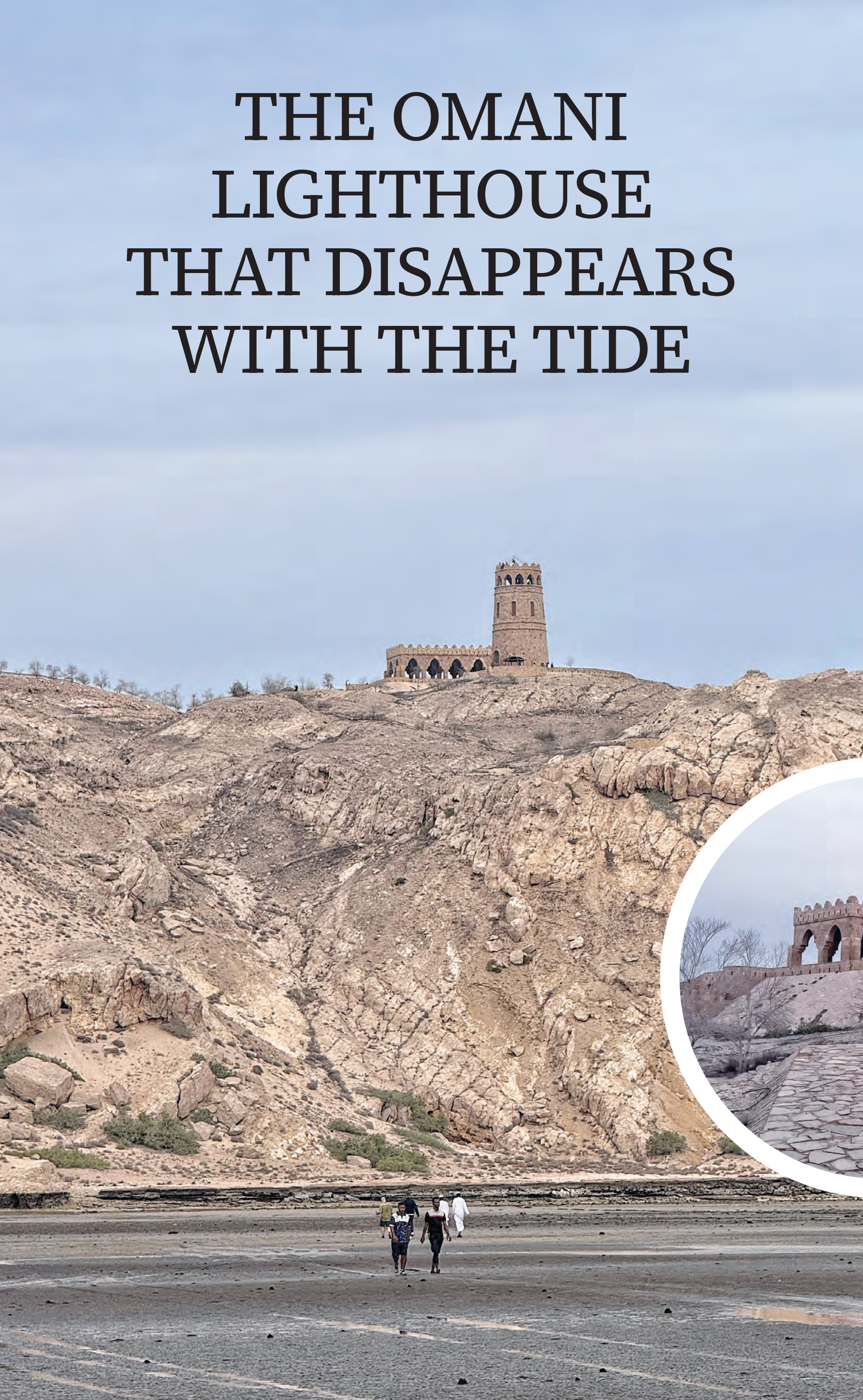
The focus will be on the up-and-coming team, the challenges it faces and the roster of players jockeying for influence and pitch time.

Faye Marsay, who steps into the cleats of the sharp-tongued centre back Lizzie, said she felt it was appropriate to use the hit series as a “platform to shine light on the problems in women’s sport and the things that we need to do better”. The show is not “shoving anything down anyone’s throat”, she said, but it is exposing challenges for women athletes including motherhood and equal treatment.

“I think we do it in a kind of subtle and graceful way”. Apple TV will release weekly episodes of “Ted Lasso” until the season finale premieres on October 7. — AFP



English actress Faye Marsay. — AFP



AS THE SEA
RETREATS, IT
REVEALS THE PATH
TO AL SAWADI'S
ENCHANTING
LIGHTHOUSE,
ONLY TO RECLAIM
IT AGAIN WITH
THE RISING
TIDE, TURNING A
HIDDEN COASTAL
LANDMARK INTO A
FLEETING SECRET



IDRIS AL BALUSHI

ON the coast of Al Sawadi in Barka, a striking lighthouse rises from a rocky island, offering visitors a view that feels almost too beautiful to be real. But reaching it requires more than simply following a road. The path to the lighthouse appears and disappears with the tide, turning an ordinary coastal visit into an elusive adventure.

The story of this hidden coastal landmark recently captured widespread attention after Omani blogger @Eatwithzara shared her visit on social media, introducing the lighthouse to many people who had never heard of it before.

What fascinated viewers was not only the beauty of the lighthouse, but the unusual story behind reaching it. The route connecting it to the mainland becomes accessible only when the tide is low. As the sea rises, the water floods the path, making the lighthouse temporarily inaccessible.

“The story of this lighthouse is closer to magic than reality”, says @Eatwithzara. “The road leading to it disappears as the sea level rises, meaning you can only visit it during certain periods”.

Her post drew attention to the lighthouse's unusual access, with people fascinated by the idea that the sea can effectively erase the road at certain times of the day, transforming the destination into an elusive coastal attraction.

“The most beautiful view is from the top of the lighthouse. The scenery is, to put it simply, incredible”, she says.

Yet the beauty comes with a warning. Visitors must carefully plan their return, particularly if they intend to stay until sunset.

“Make sure you return before sunset so the sea does not rise and the road disappears on you”, she says. Social media influencers Omar al Kindi and Mohammed al Balushi have also highlighted the unusual experience, describing the lighthouse as a spectacular destination surprisingly close to Muscat.

“This tourist island is close to Muscat”, they say. “You can reach the island and then find yourself unable to leave”.

According to the influencers, visitors need to arrive during low tide to walk across to the lighthouse and enjoy the panoramic views. Sunset, they add, offers one of the most memorable experiences, with the lighthouse overlooking the surrounding sea and rocky landscape.

For Salman al Zadjali, a resident of Al Batinah South Governorate who lives relatively close to Al Sawadi, the story itself has become one of the lighthouse's biggest attractions.

“Visitors are always fascinated by the story of this lighthouse and become excited to go as soon as they learn about the challenge and the fact that the road leading to it is accessible only for a limited period each day”, he says.

He adds that visitors frequently praise the views from the top, describing the experience as something resembling a story from a novel or a remarkable travel tale.

Perhaps that is what makes the Al Sawadi Lighthouse so captivating. Beyond its striking views, it offers an experience shaped by the rhythm of the sea. The road appears when the tide retreats, opening the way for visitors to explore the island before disappearing beneath the water once again. For those who make the journey at the right moment, the lighthouse offers more than a beautiful view, it offers the rare feeling of discovering a place that the sea itself keeps hidden.