

OMAN

دولة

DAILY

Observer

SUNRISE 05:49 AM

PRAYER TIMINGS

FAJR 04:29 AM

DHUHR 12:06 PM

ASR 03:34 PM

MAGHRIB 06:23 PM

ISHA 07:53 PM

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SLEEP BETTER,
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RAHMAN AL RAHMAN

...of the Sultanate of Oman and the Government of the Kingdom of Bahrain on the elimination of double taxation and the prevention of tax evasion with respect to Income Tax.

Article (1) ratifies the abovementioned agreement in accordance with the version attached to this decree.

Article (2) says that this decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from the date of issue.

Royal Decree No 63/2025 ratifies an agreement signed in the City of

INBRIEF

HM’S GREETINGS TO SAN MARINO

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to Captains Regent Denise Bronzetti and Italo Righi of the Republic of San Marino on their country’s National Day. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his heartfelt sentiments to the Captains Regent and the people of their country.

HM’S CONDOLENCES TO SUDAN LEADER

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of condolences to Lieutenant General Abdel Fattah al Burhan, Chairman of the Transitional Sovereignty Council in the Republic of Sudan, on the victims of the landslides that took place in Tarseen village, west of Sudan. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sympathies to the Chairman of the Transitional Sovereignty Council, families of the victims and the people of Sudan. His Majesty also prayed to Allah the Almighty to rest the deceased souls in peace in paradise and to grant their families the fortitude to bear the loss.

FIELD EXERCISE ‘ SHIELD 30 ’ HELD



The Sultan Qaboos Military College at the Royal Army of Oman Academy on Tuesday conducted a field exercise 'Shield 30' for its officer cadets. The exercise took place in the Royal Army of Oman training grounds in Dhofar Governorate.

OMAN, TÜRKIYE REVIEW RELATIONS

Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, on Tuesday had a telephone conversation with Hakan Fidan, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye, during which they discussed a number of issues related to bilateral cooperation, as well as consultations on regional and international developments. The minister praised Türkiye’s stance opposing Israel’s inhumane and illegal policies against the Palestinian people in Gaza and the occupied territories. The two sides agreed to enhance joint coordination to support security and stability, expressing their hope for continued efforts by the international community to take practical and proactive measures to achieve justice and peace.

VINOD NAIR
MUSCAT, SEPT 2

Oman Tourism Development Company (Omran Group) announced a series of strategic investment partnerships on Tuesday with local and international institutions as part of the group’s 20th anniversary celebrations, held under the auspices of Salim bin Mohammed al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism. Speaking on the occasion, Hashil

bin Obaid al Mahrouqi, CEO of Omran Group, highlighted the group’s focus on building a broad network of local and international partnerships, particularly with institutions specialising in tourism investment and urban development. He said the projects to the tune of RO 3 billion will include advancing tourism experiences at Majlis al Jinn, Ras Al Shajar Cave, Al Hoota Cave, Four Seasons project in Bandar Al Rowdha, Opera District development, the second phase



The Omran Group is focusing on building a broad network of local and international partnerships.

of Madinat Al Irfan, and the agro-tourism project in Salalah, which will include the plantation of 1,000 coconut trees and papaya trees of five different varieties. Azzan bin Qassim al Busaidy, Chairman of Omran Group, said the group will continue to shape the future of the tourism sector in close collaboration with the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism and other entities, further enhancing Oman’s global tourism standing. Abdulsalam bin Mohammed

al Murshidi, Chairman of Oman Investment Authority, said: “This occasion marks an important milestone in measuring the impact of the authority’s economic diversification efforts through Omran Group, by launching strategic investments in the tourism sector — one of the most promising sectors with wide-ranging economic and social returns — and by developing plans to further strengthen this impact in future planning stages.” SEE ALSO P13

Decree amends public utility status of rail project

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on Tuesday issued three Royal Decrees. Royal Decree No 61/2025 amends Royal Decree No 3/2015 on ascribing the public utility status to the project of implementation of the first phase of the railway line from Al Buraimi Governorate to the Wilayat of Suhar. Article (1) stipulates that the memo and masterplan attached to Royal Decree No 3/2015 shall be replaced with the memo and

masterplan attached to this decree. Article (2) cancels all that contradicts this decree or contravenes its provisions. Article (3) says that this decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from the date of issue. Royal Decree No 62/2025 ratifies an agreement signed in the City of Muscat on January 15, 2025, between the Government of the Sultanate of Oman and the Government of the Kingdom

of Bahrain on the elimination of double taxation and the prevention of tax evasion with respect to Income Tax. Article (1) ratifies the abovementioned agreement in accordance with the version attached to this decree. Article (2) says that this decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from the date of issue. Royal Decree No 63/2025 ratifies an agreement signed in the City of

Muscat on May 27, 2025, between the Government of the Sultanate of Oman and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran on the reciprocal promotion and protection of investments. Article (1) ratifies the abovementioned agreement in accordance with the version attached to this decree. Article (2) says that this decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from its date of issue. — ONA

IRAQI PRIME MINISTER ARRIVES TODAY ON VISIT

MOHAMMED

Shia’ al Sudani, Prime Minister of the Republic of Iraq, will arrive in the Sultanate of Oman on Wednesday, on an official visit lasting two days, during which he will conduct official talks with His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik. The visit comes within the context of the distinguished ties and the relations of cooperation between Oman and Iraq. During his visit, the Prime Minister of Iraq will be accompanied by an official delegation comprising senior officials from the Iraqi government. The relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Iraq continue to witness cooperation across various fields, particularly in the economic and commercial sectors, bringing mutual benefits to both countries and their peoples.

VOLUME OF TRADE The trade volume between Oman and Iraq reached RO 239 million during the first half of 2025, marking a 1.2-per cent increase compared to the same period in 2024, which recorded RO 156 million. According to statistics released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information, the value of Omani exports to Iraq in the first half of 2025 amounted to approximately RO 32 million, while Omani imports from Iraq stood at RO 206 million. The statistics also indicated that



Mohammed Shia’ al Sudani

The trade volume between Oman and Iraq reached RO 239 million during the first half of 2025, marking a 1.2 per cent increase compared to the same period in 2024

the number of visitors from Iraq to Oman during the first seven months of 2025 reached 11,558. The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion reported that the number of Iraqi companies investing in Oman during the first half of 2025 stood at 1,304, with a total capital of approximately RO 94.3 million and an Iraqi contribution rate of 68.2 per cent.

Key Omani exports to Iraq during the first half of 2025 included electrical cables, gold jewellery and marble, while natural gas, petroleum gas and propane gas mixtures topped imports from Iraq. The two countries are linked by several agreements, most notably Economic and Trade Cooperation Agreement, the Air Services Agreement and an agreement to establish a free trade zone. Faisal bin Abdullah al Rawas, Chairman of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), stated that the visit of Mohammed Shia’ al Sudani, Prime Minister of the Republic of Iraq, to the Sultanate of Oman reflects the depth of relations and cooperation between the two countries in various fields, particularly the economic sector. It also signals both nations’ aspirations to expand economic cooperation and integration, enhancing the role of the private sectors in both countries in strengthening partnerships. In a statement to Oman News Agency (ONA), he added that the visit represents a significant opportunity to maximise economic and trade relations between the two countries, especially as the private sectors in Oman and Iraq have broad prospects for cooperation and partnership in diverse fields, including energy, mining, petrochemicals, trade, transportation, logistics, tourism, food industries and agriculture. — ONA

Omran announces tourism projects worth RO 3 billion

OMAN

SHORT TAKES



The Summer Programme concluded under the auspices of Jamal bin Hassan al Mousawi.

MUSIC SUMMER PROGRAMME CONCLUDES

MUSCAT: The Muscat Music and Arts Academy Summer Programme 2025 concluded at the National Museum, featuring 32 trainees under the auspices of Jamal bin Hassan al Mousawi, Secretary-General of the National Museum.

Officials, parents and arts enthusiasts attended the closing ceremony.

Yahya bin Abdullah al Dhanki, Director of the Academy, highlighted that the two-month programme offered theoretical and practical music lectures, group workshops, and training activities aimed at honing skills, enhancing cultural identity and preserving Omani musical arts.

The programme strengthens collaboration with public and private sectors, develops the cultural scene and provides platforms for emerging talent to express creativity in an integrated educational environment. Designed for children aged three and above and young adults, the initiative fosters self-confidence through artistic performances while connecting the arts with national cultural institutions. — ONA

OPAZ SHOWCASES INVESTMENTS AT PHARMACONEX



CAIRO: The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) has showcased investment opportunities in the pharmaceutical sector to international companies participating in the Pharmaconex 2025 exhibition, currently being held in Cairo.

OPAZ delegation at the exhibition comprises specialists from OPAZ, the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn), Salalah Free Zone, Sohar Free Zone and Khazaen Economic Zone.

OPAZ pavilion at Pharmaconex 2025 focuses on investment opportunities in the pharmaceutical industry in the Sultanate of Oman's economic, industrial and free zones. It also outlines the accomplishments made by companies operating in the sector and their key products. — ONA

LABOUR MINISTRY HOSTS SESSION ON PERFORMANCE IN AL SHARQIYAH SOUTH

SUR: The Ministry of Labour on Tuesday organised a forum titled ‘The Importance of the National Strategy for Professional Standards in Enhancing Professional Performance’ at Sur Municipality.

The forum aimed to highlight the pivotal role of the National Strategy for Professional Standards in improving performance efficiency, enhancing the quality of training and qualification, and ensuring national cadres are ready to enter the job market according to clear and specific standards for each profession.

The forum included detailed



The forum aimed to enhance the quality of training and qualification

presentations on the working mechanism of the National Strategy for Professional

Standards.

This strategy is based on developing integrated professional standards in cooperation with specialised authorities and the private sector, and linking them to a professional licensing system that boosts the reliability and qualification of workers in the market.

The forum also reviewed the sectors targeted in the current phase, presented data on the number of standards developed and outlined the ministry's future plans to gradually expand its scope to include all vital sectors. — ONA

Drive to plant more trees to curb desertification

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, SEPT 2

THE Sultanate of Oman is actively fighting against desertification and drought through afforestation as part of its strategic vision to protect the environment, conserve nature, preserve natural resources and ensure the rational use of limited water resources.

The agricultural sector plays a key role in achieving this diversification by supporting local production and developing infrastructure that promotes sustainability across Oman's governorates as part of ongoing efforts.

In an interview, Saif al Tobi, an aquaculture supervisor in the Environment Authority (EA), stated, “The Sultanate of Oman is making numerous efforts to reduce the risks of drought and soil desertification in cooperation with relevant authorities. The EA is working in coordination with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, and Muscat Municipality to implement joint initiatives and projects in this field.” Al Tobi added that several initiatives have been implemented to combat drought and desertification, including the National Initiative for Planting Ten Million Trees, launched in early 2020.

This initiative aims to plant wild trees, mitigate desertification, limit land degradation, preserve plant biodiversity, and conserve Omani trees and wild plants through propagation and expansion due to their environmental, economic and cultural importance.

Several nurseries have been established to propagate wild



The initiative aims to plant wild trees, mitigate desertification, limit land degradation and preserve plant biodiversity.



SAIF AL TOBI
Aquaculture supervisor in the Environment Authority

plants in all governorates. These nurseries are the primary funders of desertification control projects and aim to conserve Omani plant species. The EA affirms that the implementation of the national initiative to plant ten million trees is a continuation of its efforts to raise awareness and educate the community about the conservation of trees and wild plants, as well as to increase green areas. Through this initiative, the EA also seeks to expand efforts and partnerships between government institutions, the private sector, the local community, and individuals to preserve the natural environment and achieve sustainable development.

According to the EA, the focus is on tree types with multiple uses, including Ghaf, Samr, Rak, Sidr, Shu, Salm, Sidaf and Arta. Nurseries

in Dhofar Governorate have also focused on Dhofar plants such as Saqout, Qaydayt, Taiq, Tashqout and Arir, given their importance in supporting desertification control projects, as well as their medicinal and social significance.

The Sultanate of Oman's efforts to sustain natural resources have focused on developing comprehensive national strategies. Oman, represented by the EA, has emphasised the importance of preserving and maintaining natural resources to ensure their sustainability, protect the environment from all factors contributing to desertification, and limit the spread and exacerbation of this negative phenomenon, given its direct impact on the balance of ecosystems resulting from numerous climatic factors and human activities.

Pakistan explores widening of business opportunities with Oman

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabiyousef

The Oman Pakistan Business Forum, organised by the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, emphasised the need to strengthen cooperation and joint investments between the private sectors of the two neighbouring countries. The focus is on projects that support economic diversification by creating a favourable and attractive investment environment, while also exploring opportunities to enhance the investment climate.

During the forum, which included a visiting Pakistani business delegation, discussions were held on cooperation and investment opportunities in various sectors such as food security, information technology, communication, education, textiles, health, construction, travel, tourism,

automobiles, import and export, and sports goods.

Key attendees included Eng Hamoud bin Salem al Saadi, Second Deputy Chairman of the OCCI and Committee Chairman, Naveed Safdar Bokhari, Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to the Sultanate of Oman, and Saquib Fayyaz Magoon, Senior Vice-President of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) and Head of the Pakistani delegation, along with several Omani and Pakistani business leaders.

Eng Al Saadi stated, “With this forum, we aim to strengthen cooperation and partnership between Oman and Pakistan, opening up new economic, trade and investment opportunities. This forum represents a continuous avenue for cooperation between the two countries, which share deep historical ties.”



He emphasised the importance of expanding cooperation with Pakistan, particularly in sectors that support economic diversification. He noted that the forum provides a platform for exchanging expertise, showcasing investment opportunities, and developing

joint projects to enhance the competitiveness of both countries' private sectors.

While Saquib stressed the significance of enhancing cooperation and joint investment between the private sectors of both countries in projects that

support economic diversification, Bokhari highlighted the historical relations between Oman and Pakistan and the potential for strengthening trade and investment partnerships, emphasising the strategic partnership between the two countries and the opportunities available across various economic sectors.

Aman Paracha, Vice-President of FPCCI, presented on Pakistan's economy, promising investment sectors, government incentives, and partnership opportunities between Oman and Pakistan's private sectors.

The forum also included bilateral meetings between business leaders from both countries to explore ways to strengthen partnerships, exchange expertise and discuss joint investment opportunities in promising sectors, aiming to enhance economic and trade cooperation between Oman and Pakistan.

SHORT TAKES



Digital Learning Week will discuss how to utilise these technologies in a fair and ethical manner. — ONA

OMAN PARTICIPATES IN UNESCO DIGITAL WEEK

PARIS: The Sultanate of Oman participated in the Digital Learning Week 2025, organised by Unesco at its headquarters in Paris. The theme for the event is: “AI and the future of education: Disruptions, dilemmas and directions”.

Majid bin Said al Bahri, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Education for Administrative and Financial Affairs and head of the Omani delegation, affirmed that participating in such international platforms allows for the exchange of expertise and visions on the future of education. He highlighted Oman’s commitment to keeping pace with technological developments and leveraging them to serve sustainable development goals and enhance the efficiency of the national education system.

Digital Learning Week will discuss how to utilise these technologies in a fair and ethical manner. The goal is to ensure the improvement of education quality and the achievement of digital equity, without compromising human values or human effectiveness in educational decision-making. This comes amidst the rapid transformations in the education sector due to the increasing integration of artificial intelligence technologies.

The dialogue sessions and academic discussions during the week will address challenges facing education systems, such as digital surveillance, systemic biases and the decline of human accountability linked to AI ethics. They will also review future trends that could reshape education to be more inclusive and sustainable. — ONA

ARAB ASSOCIATION FOR PROSECUTORS MEET IN SALALAH



Public prosecutors and attorneys general from Gulf and Arab nations attended the meeting. — ONA

SALALAH: The Supreme Judiciary Council, represented by the Public Prosecution, hosted the fifth annual meeting of the Arab Association for Prosecutors in Dhofar Governorate on Tuesday.

The event was attended by a number of public prosecutors and attorneys general from Gulf and Arab nations.

The meeting addressed several key themes, most notably enhancing Arab judicial cooperation to ensure its effectiveness in combating crime, especially cross-border offences. It also focused on exchanging criminal expertise and unifying perspectives to address shared challenges posed by rapidly evolving crime patterns and methods.

The meeting also honoured a number of distinguished professionals from the public prosecutions and attorney general offices of member states. Assistant Public Prosecutor Fathiya al Habsi, Director-General of Execution and Follow-up of Judgements, received the annual award from the Sultanate of Oman.

On the sidelines of the meeting, a specialised seminar on digital currency crimes will be held, focusing on investigation mechanisms for digital currency cases and evidence preservation, with member states sharing their experiences in this field.

Holding this meeting in Oman underscores the active role Oman has played since joining the Arab Association for Prosecutors on November 16 2022. — ONA

OMAN BACKS PALESTINE AT OIC EXECUTIVE SESSION IN DAKAR

DAKAR: Represented by the State Council, the Sultanate of Oman took part in the 54th meeting of the Executive Committee of the Parliamentary Union of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), held in Dakar, Republic of Senegal.

Mohammed bin Salim al Harthy, Member of the State Council, headed the Omani delegation at the meeting.

The session was opened by Malick Ndiaye, President of the National Assembly of the Republic of Senegal.



Mohammed bin Salim al Harthy, Member of the Council, headed the Omani delegation

The session saw the election of the Parliamentary Union’s vice-presidents (Arab and Asian sides),

discussed follow-up reports and reviewed the schedule of upcoming panel meetings.

The representatives of participating delegations discussed major issues and challenges facing the Islamic world, notably the Palestinian cause.

They stressed the need to rally efforts to halt Israel’s ongoing aggression against the Palestinian people and its breach of international law. They also called for practical steps to establish peace and stability in the Middle East region. — ONA

BACK TO SCHOOL

ENSURE A SAFE JOURNEY

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, SEPT 2

BEHIND the joy and excitement of back to school lies a growing concern among parents and society because each year, tragic accidents claim the lives of innocent children due to negligence or failure to follow simple safety instructions.

At the outset of this academic year, the Ministry of Health renewed its call to parents through its awareness campaign titled ‘For a Safe School Journey’ to play an active role in instilling safe practices in their children during their daily commute to and from school. The campaign comes at a critical time when traffic congestion typically increases, raising the likelihood of errors or violations with potentially dire consequences. The ministry’s message was not just a set of formal recommendations but a clear call that children’s lives are a trust, and their protection begins with simple daily behaviours that can shield them from serious dangers.

The campaign emphasised the importance of teaching children to wait for the bus in safe areas away from the street, and to board or alight only after the vehicle has come to a complete stop. It also highlighted the need to avoid risky habits practised by some students, such as sticking their heads or hands out of windows or engaging in disruptive behaviour that may distract the driver and endanger everyone on board.

Responsibility, however, does not rest on the student alone. The driver plays a pivotal role in ensuring safety. Adhering to traffic rules, maintaining composure on the road, and ensuring students board and disembark in an orderly manner are all crucial elements of a safer journey. The presence of a supervisor on some buses



In the first week of the school year, an atmosphere of excitement was observed among students.

further enhances safety, helping to maintain order inside the bus and assisting younger children, particularly those in early grades.

In the first week of the school year, an atmosphere of excitement was observed among students carrying their school bags with bright faces, while parents carefully accompanied their children to bus stops, ensuring drivers adhered to the necessary procedures. The Royal Oman Police also intensified its presence around schools to regulate traffic and reduce congestion, which poses an additional challenge at such times. Yet all these efforts remain limited in impact if each individual does not fulfil their role in the safety equation.

Abdullah al Muqbali, father of two

elementary school students, said that what worries him most is his children’s daily bus ride. He explained that from day one, he constantly reminds them to rush when getting off the bus, as their safety is his top priority.

He added that parents’ role is no less important than that of drivers or schools, because real responsibility begins at home, by instilling proper habits in children. He stressed that dedicating a few moments each day to accompany a child when boarding the bus in the morning or receiving them in the afternoon creates a sense of security, prevents risks and helps build positive habits that will stay with the child even when parents are not present.

Hackathon empowers youth in digital governance

SALALAH: The ‘Govern It Smartly’ Hackathon kicked off on Monday, September 1, at the Sultan Qaboos Youth Complex for Culture and Recreation in Salalah.

The 48-hour event is organised by the State Financial and Administrative Audit Authority, in cooperation with Dhofar Municipality, bringing together young innovators and digital enthusiasts to design smart solutions that strengthen governance and transparency in investment management across the governorates.

The launch ceremony was held under the auspices of Zahra bint Mohammed Redha al Lawatiyah, Deputy Chairman for Audit of Authorities, Investments, and Companies, in the presence of Dr Ahmed bin Mohsin al Ghassani, Chairman of Dhofar Municipality.

Al Lawati, in her speech, emphasised the importance of fostering innovation in governance and harnessing youth potential to develop digital solutions that



‘Govern It Smartly’ Hackathon kicked off in Salalah on Monday

consolidate transparency and efficiency in managing local investments.

Aligned with the Royal Directives and Oman Vision 2040, as well as the System of Governorates (Royal Decree No 36/2022), the hackathon seeks to advance economic decentralisation, promote accountability and transform winning projects into practical, sustainable solutions. It also aims to reinforce the country’s

global standing in governance, local administration and community participation.

A number of youth teams from diverse fields - technology, management, and finance - are competing in the hackathon. Participants expressed enthusiasm to showcase innovations that enhance investment management and described the platform as an inspiring opportunity to exchange expertise and sharpen

skills in digital transformation and entrepreneurship.

Throughout the event, teams will be guided by carefully selected mentors and evaluated by experts using transparent criteria, ensuring a fair, competitive environment.

The process is designed to help participants refine their ideas into implementable solutions that deliver lasting impact on governance and development.

12:00



SLEEP BETTER, PHONE-FREE



BALQEES AL ORAIMI

THE mobile phone has become more than just a tool — it’s a constant companion in modern life. From work to news, entertainment to social media, our devices rarely leave our side. Increasingly, they’ve entered the most private of spaces: the bedroom.

At first glance, keeping a phone by your bedside may seem harmless. But research shows that this habit can have a profound impact on both sleep quality and overall well-being. Experts say that removing the device from the bedroom could be one of the simplest, yet most powerful, steps toward healthier living.

Dr Noura al Sawaai, a sleep medicine specialist, warns: “Keeping your phone by the bedside prevents the brain from entering deep sleep. Notifications, alerts, and the blue light emitted from the screen keep the mind partially awake — even while you’re asleep.”

Many patients struggling with insomnia or poor sleep admit they cannot resist checking their phones at night, disrupting the body’s natural cycle and leaving them drained the next day.

The culprit lies in the blue light from phone screens, which tricks the brain into believing it’s still daytime. This delays melatonin production, the hormone responsible for regulating the sleep-wake cycle.

“When melatonin is delayed, the body falls into confusion,” explains behavioural health specialist Dr Zainab Mohammed. “People find it harder to fall asleep at the right time and wake up feeling unrested.”

Beyond light exposure, phones are also a source of psychological stress — whether it’s late-night work emails, social media updates, or breaking news. Each alert can fuel anxiety and disrupt the calm needed for rest.

For Mariam al Balushi, the change



Phone light and notifications disrupt melatonin production and prevent deep rest

Restful sleep strengthens immunity, boosts focus, and lowers risk of chronic diseases

Phone-free nights encourage family conversations and emotional bonding

was transformative: “I used to stay up late scrolling through the news. Once I left my phone in the living room, I fell asleep faster and woke up with more energy.”

Experts emphasise that breaking the habit doesn’t require drastic measures. Putting the phone in another room an hour before bed, reading a book, listening to calming music, or practicing breathing exercises can all prepare the body and mind for sleep.

Dr Al Sawaai notes the broader benefits: “Good sleep strengthens immunity, boosts mood, sharpens concentration, and increases productivity. Poor sleep, on the other hand, raises the risk of high blood pressure, memory lapses, and chronic disease.”

Interestingly, technology can also help if used wisely. Sleep apps, calming sounds, and settings such as ‘Do Not Disturb’ or airplane mode can reduce disturbances. Still, experts agree that the most effective solution is to keep the phone out of the bedroom entirely.

The benefits extend beyond health. Without phones in the bedroom, couples and families often rediscover the value of quiet conversations before bed. Social worker Mohammed al Ghailani shares: “When my wife and I decided to leave our phones in the living room, we found ourselves talking more and planning our days together. It brought us closer as a family.”

In a fast-paced, tech-driven world, small lifestyle changes can yield big results. As Dr al Sawaai concludes, “No one can dictate how another person should sleep. But once people realise that a simple act — like leaving the phone outside the bedroom — leads to better rest and balance, they’ll be motivated to sustain it.”

Keeping the phone out of the bedroom isn’t just a wellness trend. It’s a conscious investment in better sleep, stronger health, and a deeper human connection.

SHORT TAKES



The meeting reviewed engineering designs and technical specifications.

DEVELOPMENT PROJECT OF WAKAN VILLAGE DISCUSSED

NAKHAL: A meeting of the Committee for the Development of Wakan Village in the Wilayat of Nakhal, Al Batinah South Governorate, was held on Tuesday to discuss final details related to the project of the road leading to the village and to review plans for a tourist cable car system.

The meeting was chaired by Eng Masoud bin Said al Hashmi, Governor of Al Batinah South, in the presence of Shaikh Khalifa bin Saleh al Busaidy, and a number of officials from various government entities in the governorate.

Wakan Village has received Royal directives for its development as a tourist destination due to its natural beauty, elevated location and distinguished tourism status, making it a prominent year-round attraction for visitors.

The meeting reviewed engineering designs and technical specifications proposed for the new road leading to the village, in addition to discussing developmental aspects and supporting services. These improvements are expected to facilitate visitor access and enhance mountain tourism infrastructure in the region.

Discussions also covered studies related to the cable car project and implementation mechanisms aimed at providing a comprehensive and unique tourism experience while preserving the village’s captivating mountainous landscape. — ONA

INDIAN NAVY DELEGATION VISITS MARITIME SECURITY CENTRE



MUSCAT: A delegation from the Indian Navy, led by Commodore Kartik Srimal, visited the Maritime Security Centre (MSC) on Tuesday.

Upon the delegation’s arrival at the centre, they were received by Commodore Adil bin Hamoud al Busaidy, Head of the Maritime Security Centre (MSC).

During the visit, the visiting delegation was briefed about the MSC’s role in maintaining maritime security in Oman. The delegation also toured the centre’s facilities and viewed its various technologies and equipment. — ONA

SULTAN QABOOS INSTITUTE WELCOMES NEW BATCH OF ARABIC LEARNERS

MANAH: The Sultan Qaboos Institute for Teaching Arabic to Non-Native Speakers welcomed a new cohort of Arabic language learners, comprising 46 students from 17 countries around the world.

The countries represented include Russia, Belarus, France, Germany, Hungary, Poland, Spain, India, Malaysia, Japan, South Korea, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Türkiye, Thailand and Canada.

The orientation programme began with an introductory day, featuring meetings with academic and administrative staff, as well as coordinators of the cultural



The institute is a leading destination for Arabic language learning.

programme designed for the students. This was followed by a comprehensive tour of the institute’s facilities and services, aimed at providing an integrated learning

environment and introducing the institute’s cultural, civilisational and humanitarian role, along with the elements that make it a leading destination for Arabic language learning.

In addition to Arabic language lessons, the academic programme includes a variety of cultural and educational activities, such as cultural evenings and lectures, educational trips to historical and natural sites, Arabic calligraphy classes, and a language partner programme that enhances opportunities for linguistic and cultural interaction with the local community. — ONA

Oman’s postal network doubles in five years

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, SEPT 2

OMAN’S postal sector is undergoing a remarkable transformation, becoming one of the key pillars of the country’s digital shift and logistics-driven economy.

The Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) has announced that the number of postal company branches across Oman reached 282 by the end of 2024, reflecting an increase of more than 140 branches in just five years.

This surge highlights both the rapid development of the sector and the growing demand for postal and delivery services, driven by the rise of e-commerce and modern business needs. Statistics underline the scale of this growth. In 2020, Oman had 141 postal branches. The number dipped slightly in 2021 to 140, before beginning an upward trajectory with 215 branches in 2022, 255 in 2023 and finally 282 in 2024.

This steady increase reflects the dynamism of Oman’s market and the country’s ability to attract investments into the logistics and postal industry, supported by regulatory frameworks that foster competitiveness and innovation.

Postal services in Oman have also evolved far beyond the traditional role of delivering letters and parcels. Today, they stand at the heart of the digital economy, providing essential support for entrepreneurs, small and medium-sized enterprises, and the wider community. With the expansion of e-commerce, companies have been pushed to establish more branches and introduce new services, including drone-based deliveries, express courier solutions, real-time shipment tracking and



Postal expansion positions Oman as a regional logistics hub

user-friendly digital applications. These innovations not only enhance customer satisfaction, but also empower businesses to grow and reach wider audiences.

For entrepreneurs, the change has been significant. “Running an online business a few years ago was challenging because of delivery delays,” says Ahmed al Dawoodi, owner of a small e-commerce store. “Now, with more postal branches and faster services, I can reach customers across Oman quickly, helping me expand my business.”

Residents, too, have felt the difference. “Postal services in Oman are now comparable to many advanced countries,” says Muscat resident Maria Spenser. “I can order a package on my phone and track it until it arrives at my doorstep. It’s a major improvement in service quality.”

The expansion of postal branches represents more than just a numerical achievement. It is part of a national strategy to position Oman as a regional logistics hub, capitalising on

The number of postal company branches across Oman reached 282 by the end of 2024

‘Scale’ award for start-ups launched

MUSCAT: Ithmaar Properties has launched the second edition of the Scale Award for Emerging Technology Companies, reaffirming its commitment to supporting start-ups and strengthening the innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem in the Sultanate of Oman.

Organised in collaboration with strategic partners from both public and private sectors, the award underscores the importance of partnerships in stimulating promising economic sectors and creating new opportunities for entrepreneurs.

It provides an integrated platform for emerging technology companies, offering technical and advisory support, financing opportunities, and access to investors and experts in local and regional markets.

The award process includes several phases, starting with open



The Scale Award plays a pivotal role in empowering emerging technology

registration and nominations by relevant authorities, followed by the selection of top projects to present

their proposals before a judging panel during the exhibition.

The initiative culminates in honouring winners and offering continued support and guidance to accelerate their market growth.

Eng Said bin Abdullah al Mandhari, CEO of Ithkaa Group and Secretary General of the award, said the Scale Award plays a pivotal role in empowering emerging technology companies and promoting an innovation-driven business environment.

He stressed that strong partnerships between the public and private sectors form the backbone of the award’s objectives. He further highlighted Ithmaar Group’s commitment to fostering pioneering ideas and transforming them into competitive, growth-oriented projects that contribute to the goals of Oman Vision 2040. — ONA

Tender at
Buraimi Industrial City

مدائن
madayn

The Public Authority for Industrial Estates (MADAYN) is pleased to announce a tender in Buraimi Industrial City for investors, contractors and developers to construct and develop an integrated fuel station.

Opportunity Number	Project Name	Last Date of Buying	Date of Submission	Fee (R.O)
1/2025	Constructing and Developing an Integrated Fuel Station	25/09/2025	30/10/2025	20

The following procedures apply:
1. Tender Documents can be obtained from Madayn Support Department at Buraimi Industrial City (Tel: 25657768 / 25657764) during official working hours, against non-refundable fee as mentioned above.
2. Completed bids according to the terms of the tender document shall be deposited in the Bid Box at Buraimi Industrial City administration office before 12 pm on the specified date.
3. For further inquiries, please contact us at, 25657756, 25657779.

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WORLD

FLOODSDISASTER



Women gather along the side of a flooded street in Sudan's capital Khartoum. — AFP

LANDSLIDE FLATTENS SUDAN VILLAGE, KILLS OVER 1,000

KHARTOUM: Rescue teams were struggling to reach a remote mountain village in Sudan's Darfur region on Tuesday after a devastating landslide buried almost the entire community, killing more than 1,000 people. Heavy rain triggered the disaster on Sunday, flattening the village of Tarasin in the Jebel Marra range, the rebel Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (SLM) faction, which controls the area, said in a statement, adding that there was only one survivor.

"Initial information indicates the death of all village residents, estimated at more than 1,000 individuals, with only one survivor," the faction led by Abdulwahid al Nur said, calling the landslide "massive and devastating". The group appealed to the United Nations and other aid organisations for help in recovering the dead still buried under mud and debris.

"This is beyond our capacity," Nur said. "Masses of mud fell onto the village. Our humanitarian teams and local residents are trying to retrieve the bodies, but the scale of the disaster is far greater than the resources available to us," he said.

The African Union urged Sudan to "silence the guns" and allow aid delivery to victims of the deadly landslide. "In these painful circumstances, the chairperson of the Commission... calls on all Sudanese stakeholders to silence the guns and unite in facilitating the swift and effective delivery of emergency humanitarian assistance to those in need," the bloc said in a statement.

Images the SLM published on its website appeared to show huge sections of the mountainside collapsed, burying the village under thick mud and uprooted trees. Footage showed people standing on jagged rocks as they searched for those buried beneath the mud. The SLM controls parts of the Jebel Marra range and has mostly stayed out of the conflict, but hundreds of thousands of people have fled into SLM-held territory to escape the violence.

Jebel Marra is a rugged volcanic range stretching about 160 kilometres (100 miles) southwest of North Darfur's besieged state capital El Fasher, which the RSF is pushing to capture after besieging it for more than a year. The area is prone to landslides, particularly during the rainy season which peaks in August. A 2018 landslide in nearby Toukoli killed at least 20 people.

Since April 2023, Sudan has been ravaged by a war that erupted from a power struggle between army chief Abdel Fattah al Burhan and his former deputy, RSF commander Mohamed Hamdan Daglo.

The disaster also comes during Sudan's rainy season, which often renders mountain roads impassable. In Sudan's main war zones like Darfur, infrastructure was already fragile after more than two years of fighting.

Burhan's forces retook central Sudan in a series of offensives earlier this year, leaving the RSF in control of most of Darfur and parts of Kordofan in the south. The paramilitaries have moved to set up a rival government in the territories they still control. — AFP

MORE THAN 200,000 SYRIAN REFUGEES RETURN FROM LEBANON

BEIRUT: More than 200,000 Syrian refugees have returned to their homeland from neighbouring Lebanon this year following the fall of longtime ruler Bashar al Assad, a United Nations official said. Lebanese authorities recently introduced a plan offering \$100 in aid and exemptions from fines for refugees leaving the country, provided they pledge not to return as asylum-seekers. "Since the beginning of this year, we're looking at about 200,000 Syrians that

have gone back, most of them on their own," said Kelly Clements, deputy high commissioner at the UN refugee agency (UNHCR). "That number is increasing very quickly," she said in an interview.

While many Syrians are heading back to Hama, Homs and Aleppo, most refugees remain in Lebanon where humanitarian needs remain high amid shrinking aid budgets. Clements stressed the UNHCR was not encouraging returns, describing it as "an individual

choice for each family to make". Lebanese authorities estimate that the country hosts about 1.5 million Syrian refugees. The United Nations says it has registered more than 755,000.

UNHCR support for returnees includes small-scale housing repairs, cash assistance and core relief items, though more intensive reconstruction is beyond the agency's capacity. About 80 per cent of Syrian housing was damaged during the civil war. — AFP

Afghan toll tops 1,400 as fresh quake rattles region



Afghans walk past damaged houses, in Kunar province, Eastern Afghanistan. — AFP

A fresh 5.2-magnitude earthquake hit the east of Afghanistan on Tuesday, jolting a region still struggling with the aftermath of a powerful quake at the weekend that killed 1,400 people. The epicentre of the tremor was close to where a magnitude 6.0 earthquake hit late on Sunday, devastating remote areas in mountainous provinces near the border with Pakistan. The "quake was felt in the same areas which were affected in Kunar (province) in the first earthquake," Ehsanullah Ehsan, the disaster management spokesman in the hard-hit province, said. "These aftershocks are constant, but they have not caused any casualties yet."

The quake was reported by the US Geological Survey late on Tuesday. The number of victims from Sunday's earthquake has mounted steadily, with 1,411 people dead and 3,124 injured in Kunar alone, chief Taliban government spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said on Tuesday, making it one of the deadliest to hit the country in decades. Another dozen people were killed and hundreds were injured in neighbouring Nangarhar province.

The devastation could affect "hundreds of thousands", said Indrika Ratwatte, the United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator for Afghanistan. Rescuers searched through the night and all day for survivors in the rubble of homes flattened in Kunar, where more than 5,400 houses were destroyed, government spokesman Hamdullah Fitrat said on X. Many of the worst-affected areas were still unreachable

Rescuers searched through the night and all day for survivors in the rubble of homes flattened in Kunar, where more than 5,400 houses were destroyed. Many of the worst-affected areas were still unreachable by road

by road, but emergency facilities were being set up and multiple countries had announced they would provide aid, Fitrat said.

The European Union said it was sending 130 tonnes of emergency supplies and providing one million euros (\$1.2 million) to help victims of the deadly quake. The bloc has become one of the key aid donors to Afghanistan after the United States — previously the country's largest aid provider — cut all but a slice of its assistance after President Donald Trump took office in January. The aid cuts risk impeding the response to the earthquake, sector experts said, in a country already facing one of the world's worst humanitarian crises after decades of conflict. "The scale of need far exceeds current resources," the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies said in a statement, noting that funding

cuts had hit humanitarian air services, "limiting access to remote communities".

Emergency workers struggled to reach mountainous areas, and villagers joined the rescue efforts, using their bare hands to clear debris from mud and stone homes built into steep valleys. Obaidullah Stoman, 26, who travelled to the village of Wadir to search for a friend, was overwhelmed by the level of destruction. "I'm searching here, but I didn't see him. It was very difficult for me to see the conditions here," he said. "There is only rubble left." The dead, including children, were wrapped in white shrouds by villagers who prayed over their bodies before burying them.

The earthquake epicentre was about 27 kilometres from Jalalabad, according to the USGS, and struck just eight kilometres below the Earth's surface. — AFP



VIETNAM MARKS 80 YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE

HANOI: Vietnam held its largest-ever public celebrations on Tuesday to mark 80 years since the declaration of independence, with legions of lock-stepped patriots marching under fluttering flags. Around 40,000 troops and civilians began parading in the capital Hanoi after dawn, feting the date when communist revolutionary Ho Chi Minh declared a "Democratic Republic of Vietnam" free from French rule in 1945. Tanks, drones and missile batteries filed through the streets as helicopters and planes streaked above crowds.

Hanoi's top leader To Lam marked the top of the parade with a speech as China's number-three official -- National People's Congress Chairman Zhao Leji -- looked on, alongside influential former Cambodian prime minister Hun Sen and Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel. "In this sacred moment, we respectfully remember our ancestors," Lam said. "Our nation has overcome countless difficulties and challenges. Our country has transformed from a colony into an independent and unified nation, steadily advancing towards modernity and deep integration." — AFP

ANGER AGAINST POLICE

20 people missing after Indonesia protests



At least 20 people are missing after violent protests, sparked by lavish perks for Indonesian lawmakers that have widened to include anger against police. The Commission for the Disappeared and Victims of Violence (KontraS) said 23 reports of missing persons had been received. "After the search and verification process, 20 missing persons remain unfound," it said. The 20 were reported missing in the cities of Bandung and Depok. — AFP

SAFETY UPGRADE

ChatGPT to provide new parental controls



American artificial intelligence firm OpenAI said that it would add parental controls to its chatbot ChatGPT, a week after an American couple said the system encouraged their teenaged son to kill himself. "Within the next month, parents will be able to... link their account with their teen's account" and "control how ChatGPT responds to their teen with age-appropriate model behaviour rules," the generative AI company said in a blog post. — AFP

LEGAL ORDER

Türkiye court ousts leadership of opposition



A Turkish court on Tuesday dismissed the main opposition CHP party's leadership in Istanbul over alleged irregularities in its 2023 congress, court documents showed. The court cancelled the outcome of the provincial congress, throwing out CHP's Istanbul provincial leader Olgur Celik, along with 195 of the party's leadership and delegates. The ruling effectively suspends "all decisions taken at the Istanbul provincial congress" of CHP on October 8, 2023. — AFP

SHORT TAKES



Chaikasem Nitisiri, Pheu Thai party's remaining prime ministerial candidate, arrives at the party's headquarters, in Bangkok. — Reuters

PHEU THAI PARTY TO DISSOLVE PARLIAMENT

BANGKOK: Thailand's ruling Pheu Thai party is still seeking to form the next government but is prepared to dissolve parliament, a senior party official said on Tuesday, a move that could trigger a general election. In a sign of deepening political turmoil as two rival camps vied to form the next government, Pheu Thai Secretary General Sorawong Thienthong said the party was weighing its options between nominating its own candidate Chaikasem Nitisiri for the premiership, or calling a new election.

Sorawong's remarks came as People's Party, the biggest force in parliament, met for a second day to discuss who it might back to form the next government, either Pheu Thai, or Bhumjaithai, a renegade party that quit the governing coalition in June and is mounting its own challenge. "If the People's Party have the decision to vote for Anutin, we will proceed with the process," Sorawong told reporters, referring to Bhumjaithai's leader Anutin Charnvirakul. There are conflicting opinions among law experts in Thailand as to whether a caretaker government has the authority to seek house dissolution. — Reuters

TRUMP TO END CRIME IN CHICAGO



US President Donald Trump vowed on Tuesday to quickly resolve what he called "the crime problem" in Chicago, hinting at sending troops into what he branded the "most dangerous city in the world." "I will solve the crime problem fast, just like I did in DC," Trump posted on his Truth Social platform, referring to his deployment of National Guard reservists to the US capital beginning last month. "Chicago is the worst and most dangerous city in the World, by far," he said. — AFP

JAPAN SECOND RULING PARTY OFFERS TO QUIT OVER VOTE DEBACLE

TOKYO: The number two in Japan's ruling party offered to quit on Tuesday following July's disastrous upper house election, even as Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba clung on. The July 20 election saw Ishiba's Liberal Democratic Party led coalition lose its majority, months after also being forced into a minority government in the lower chamber. "I wish to resign from my position as secretary general to take responsibility for the election results," Hiroshi Moriyama told a

party meeting to review the election outcome.

Ishiba, who only took over as LDP chief and prime minister last year, must now decide on Moriyama's fate.

Ishiba himself has so far defied calls from some within the LDP to quit, and on Tuesday he reiterated that he still had work to do. "Nearly one-tenth of workers — close to seven million people — are living at or near the minimum wage," Ishiba said. "I will make appropriate

decisions at an appropriate time. But first and foremost, I believe this means dedicating all my efforts to fulfilling what the people truly want me to accomplish," he said.

"I won't run away from taking responsibility," he also said. "I have no intention at all to cling onto my position." Two other top LDP officials — general council chairperson Shunichi Suzuki and policy chief Itsunori Onodera — have also conveyed to Ishiba their intentions to quit. — AFP

Putin: Russia not against Ukraine's EU membership

RUSSIAN

President Vladimir Putin said on Tuesday that Moscow had never opposed Ukraine's potential membership of the European Union, and that he thought it was possible to find a consensus on ensuring the security of both Russia and Ukraine. US President Donald Trump said after his summit with Putin in Alaska last month that he thinks Putin is "tired" of the war in Ukraine but that it remains to be seen if peace can be secured to end Europe's deadliest conflict since World War Two. Ukraine and the leaders of Western European powers have said they do not believe Putin is serious about peace in Ukraine, and have warned that if Russia wins the Ukraine war then Putin could attack Europe and the US-led Nato military alliance.



People attend a memorial service in Independence Square, in Kyiv. — Reuters

In some of his most dovish remarks since the Alaska summit, Putin, speaking in China, pushed back against those claims, which he cast as "horror stories" and "hysteria" pumped up by incompetent people seeking to cast Russia as an enemy. Putin said Russia had been forced to act in Ukraine by what he cast as the West's attempt with the help of Nato to try to absorb the entire post-Soviet space.

"As for Ukraine's membership of the EU, we have never objected to this," Putin told Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico at talks in China. "As for Nato, this is another issue... Our position here is well known: we consider this unacceptable for ourselves." A potential security guarantee for Ukraine — backed by the United States and Western European powers — is one of the toughest parts of any future peace settlement, according to diplomats and officials involved in discussions.

Ukraine says that it is not for Russia to decide what Kyiv can or cannot join, while Nato says that Russia can have no veto over membership of the alliance which was formed in 1949 to counter the threat from the Soviet Union.

Putin said that he had discussed Ukraine's security at his August 15 summit with Trump. "There are options for ensuring Ukraine's security in the event of an end

to the conflict," Putin said. "And it seems to me that there is an opportunity to find consensus here."

Russia, Putin said, was ready to cooperate with the United States at the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, Europe's largest nuclear plant. Russia took control of it in March 2022, shortly after its invasion of Ukraine. "We can cooperate with American partners at the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant," Putin said, adding that the issue had been discussed indirectly with Washington and that he was even prepared to work with Ukraine at the plant.

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz said on Tuesday that he would suggest Geneva as a venue for Ukraine-Russia ceasefire talks at a Thursday meeting of some 30 countries to discuss post-war guarantees for Ukraine. "Geneva would be a suitable venue for a ceasefire agreement," Merz said at a news conference alongside Swiss President Karin Keller-Sutter. "The day after tomorrow, I will once again propose to the so-called 'coalition of the willing' that an invitation (to Geneva) be extended," he said.

The "coalition of the willing" put together by France and Britain has held talks for months to try to define plans for what countries could contribute militarily for Ukraine to deter Russia from attacking it

again once there is a final truce. France will host a mostly virtual meeting on Thursday to discuss the latest efforts to provide Ukraine with security support once there is a peace agreement and to denounce what Ukraine's allies see as Moscow's unwillingness to negotiate.

Meanwhile, Serbia hopes for an improvement in cooperation with Russia and has no plans to join Western sanctions against Moscow, President Aleksandar Vucic said on Tuesday.

Both Vucic and Russian President Vladimir Putin were taking part in a regional security summit in Beijing with which China hopes to counter Western influence in global affairs. "Cooperation at the highest level with Russia is very important for Serbia, especially in the fields of energy and Russian gas supplies," Vucic said at the televised beginning of his meeting with Putin.

Serbia wants to join the European Union, but Russia, a traditional Slavic and Orthodox Christian ally, remains its biggest gas supplier.

Pro-Russian sentiments also run high in the Balkan country. Russia's Gazprom and Gazpromneft own Serbia's NIS oil company, which operates Serbia's only oil refinery. "Gas purchases are very important for us," Vucic told Putin. — Reuters

North Korean leader Kim arrives in Beijing by train for rare visit

BEIJING: North Korean leader Kim Jong Un arrived in Beijing on Tuesday, the official Korean Central News Agency said, ahead of a massive military parade on Wednesday. He arrived at 4:00 pm at Beijing Railway Station and was greeted by Cai Qi, China's number five-ranked official, and Foreign Minister Wang Yi, KCNA reported.

Earlier on Tuesday, journalists saw a train flying North Korea flags and believed to be carrying Kim approaching the station. Kim will join Chinese President Xi Jinping, Russia's Vladimir Putin and two dozen other leaders at the huge spectacle to mark 80 years since the end of World War II. China will showcase its military prowess with troops marching in formation, flypasts and other high-tech fighting gear at the showpiece extravaganza centred on Beijing's Tiananmen Square.

South Korea's Yonhap news

agency also reported the special armoured train's arrival in the capital. Kim appeared to be accompanied by his daughter Kim Ju Ae, South Korea's National Intelligence Service said in a statement to reporters. It is only Kim's second reported trip abroad in six years and first to China since 2019.

China has touted the parade as a show of unity with other countries, and Kim's attendance will be the first time he is seen with Xi and Putin at the same event. Photos released by KCNA showed Kim outside his olive-green train with Foreign Minister Choe Son Hui and close aide Jo Yong Won. Another pictured Kim grinning inside his lavish, wood-lined train carriage in front of a North Korean flag and national emblem.

Security around Beijing has tightened in recent days and weeks, with road closures, military



A motorcade believed to be carrying North Korean leader Kim Jong Un leaves Beijing Railway Station. — Reuters

personnel stationed on bridges and street corners, and miles upon miles of white barriers lining the capital's wide boulevards. Art installations with flowers, doves and an emblem

showing the Great Wall of China with "1945-2025" have cropped up around the city, and on Tuesday Chinese flags flew in residential neighbourhoods.

Officials have been tight-lipped over the list of hardware to be displayed at the parade, but military enthusiasts have already spotted significant new systems, including what is rumoured to be a gigantic laser weapon. Millions of Chinese people were killed during a prolonged war with imperial Japan in the 1930s and 40s, which became part of a global conflict following Tokyo's attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941.

Wednesday's event caps a bumper week of diplomacy for President Xi, who on Sunday and Monday hosted a slew of Eurasian leaders for a summit in the northern port city of Tianjin aimed at putting China front and centre of regional relations. The club of 10 countries — named the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) — touts itself as a non-Western style of collaboration in the region and seeks to be an alternative to traditional alliances. — AFP

OPINION

Gifts and talents neglected become curses and sorrows



HYESHA BARRETT

The writer is a Master Life Coach and NLP Practitioner

and every one of us carries gifts: natural abilities that shape how we see and interact with the world. Some of these show up in childhood, perhaps as a natural performer, a sharp memory, a knack for solving problems, or a love of creating. Other gifts emerge later, when life gives us the space to explore. Whether discovered early or late, these gifts need to be expressed. For left unused, they rarely fade quietly. Instead, they turn inwards, becoming sources of frustration, regret or even a sense of emptiness.

When we don't use our natural strengths, it creates an inner tension. The brain is wired for growth and mastery, so when those drives are blocked, it interprets the neglect as loss. Over time, this can show up as low motivation, anxiety, or even physical stress responses. Someone with a talent for leadership who stays silent in meetings may feel drained, or a creative person in a repetitive job will struggle with burnout. We may blame external circumstances, but deep

down, it's often the quiet ache of our unused potential.

Why do we neglect our gifts in the first place? Sometimes it's fear: of failure, of rejection, of not being "good enough." Other times, it's conditioning. Many of us were taught to prioritise stability over passion, or to silence parts of ourselves that didn't fit expectations. There's also the weight of responsibility: jobs, families, and daily survival often take precedence. Over time, the parts of us that once brought joy are placed on the shelf, waiting.

However, waiting has consequences. Unused talents don't disappear, they distort. The energy that once fuelled creativity or innovation doesn't vanish; it turns into restlessness, irritability, or envy. We see others using their gifts and feel a sting inside - not because we resent them, but because they mirror what we've buried in ourselves. This is where neglected gifts become curses. Instead of uplifting us, they haunt us with the reminder of what could have been.

The hopeful truth is that the brain

Honoured gifts, no matter how modestly, become a source of energy and joy. The choice is always there: to carry the weight of what is left unused, or to take even the smallest step toward using what has been given to us

is remarkably adaptable. Studies on neuroplasticity show that even dormant skills can be reawakened. Picking up an old instrument, revisiting a sport, or relearning a language doesn't just stir memories: it reignites neural pathways, creating new motivation and confidence. In other words, it's never too late!

The key is to start small. Always. You don't have to make a dramatic leap into a new career or lifestyle. A few minutes every day engaging with what you once loved can shift how you feel about your entire life.

Neglected gifts become sorrows because they remind us of our disconnection from ourselves. Honoured gifts, no matter how modestly, become a source of energy and joy. The choice is always there: to carry the weight of what is left unused, or to take even the smallest step toward using what has been given to us.

So, what talent is waiting quietly inside you? What would it mean for your life if you gave it space again?

AGEING UK NUCLEAR PLANTS TO RUN LONGER: OPERATORS

Two British nuclear power plants nearing the end of their lifespan will run for an extra year, its operators announced on Tuesday, helping with UK energy security and net-zero targets.

The Heysham 1 plant in northwest England and the Hartlepool facility in the northeast will continue generating energy until March 2028, an increase of one year, main operator EDF said in a statement.

The French company's announcement was confirmed by its British partner Centrica following 'positive inspections'.

"A further year of operation for these two stations has the potential to power more than four million homes," said Mark Hartley, managing director of EDF's nuclear operations.

"It secures employment ... for more than 1,000 people who work at those sites, and it supports the UK's ambitions to have a clean, secure electricity supply," he added.

Centrica said the stations reduced fossil fuel needs, while "supporting the UK's ambitions to have a clean, secure energy supply".

There is no change to the expected closure in March 2030 of two other plants, Heysham 2 and Torness.

Britain's fifth nuclear plant, Sizewell B, could keep operating until 2055, EDF noted on Tuesday.

The facilities will eventually be replaced by new nuclear power plants.

The UK government in July gave Sizewell C the final go-ahead after reaching a deal with investors, aiming to bolster net-zero and energy security goals. The plant is not expected to start generating electricity until the late 2030s.

EDF is involved in constructing Sizewell C and another new UK plant, Hinkley Point C.

The UK has refocused on shoring up nuclear power since the start of the war in Ukraine, in the name of energy security and faced with a fleet of ageing power stations.

Prime Minister Keir Starmer's government has also pledged by 2035 to reduce UK greenhouse gas emissions by 81 per cent on 1990 levels, under plans to reach net-zero by 2050.

The use of nuclear energy as an alternative to fossil fuels is highly controversial, however, with many environmental groups warning about safety risks and the disposal of nuclear waste.

This move underscores the importance of nuclear energy in achieving the UK's decarbonization goals. With the planned closures of newer plants like Hinkley Point C delayed, extending the operational lives of existing facilities like Heysham 1 helps maintain a stable and low-carbon electricity supply. The extension also secures employment for over 1,000 staff and contractors, supporting the local economy and preserving valuable nuclear expertise in the region. — AFP

No debate about genocide here, no response either

AS debate boils over allegations of genocide in the Gaza Strip, there's another place where all sides in the United States seem to agree a genocide is underway — yet largely ignore it.

That's Sudan, probably the site of the world's worst humanitarian crisis today. Famine was officially declared there last year; the United Nations reports that some 25 million Sudanese face extreme hunger and at least 12 million have had to flee their homes because of civil war. Tom Perriello, who was the US special envoy for Sudan until this year, said he believes that the death toll by now has exceeded 400,000.

In January, the Biden administration officially declared the killing in Sudan to be a genocide. In April, the Trump administration also characterised the slaughter as a genocide, and the State Department confirmed that it views the situation in Sudan as a genocide.

So there is bipartisan agreement in the US that Sudan is suffering both genocide and famine — and also, apparently, a bipartisan consensus to do little about it. The Biden administration was too passive, and now so too is the Trump administration. President Donald Trump is actually slashing assistance this year to Sudan, increasing the number of children who will starve.

Whatever you think of the humanitarian crisis in Gaza — and I've been unsparing in my criticism of Israel's actions and America's complicity in the bombing and starvation there — we should recognise our collective failure to address this other crisis with an even higher death toll. Neither should be seen as a distraction from the other; we have the moral bandwidth to be appalled by the enormous suffering in Sudan and in Gaza alike. This failure is global. Arab and African countries have done more to aggravate the suffering in Sudan than to ease it. The UN in 2005 declared a "responsibility to protect" civilians suffering atrocities, but that lofty language seems a substitute for



A woman comforts her malnourished son at a hospital in Omdurman, on the western side of Khartoum. — NYT



NICHOLAS D KRISTOF

The writer is a journalist and political commentator

Sudan is undergoing the world's worst humanitarian crisis today. Famine was officially declared there last year; the United Nations reports that some 25 million Sudanese face extreme hunger and at least 12 million have had to flee their homes because of civil war

action rather than a spur to it.

Survivors describe ethnic cleansing of almost unimaginable savagery. On the Sudan-Chad border last year, a woman named Maryam Suleiman said that in her village, an Arab militia lined up all the men and boys older than 10 and massacred them. The lighter-skinned gunmen targeted her Black African ethnic group, she said, quoting a militia leader as saying, "We don't want to see any Black people." The racist massacres are an echo of the Darfur genocide of two decades ago in western Sudan. One difference is that this time there is far less interest, and a complete failure of political will to respond.

It is "a Gaza — which is horrible enough — writ still larger," said Anthony Lake, who was national security adviser to President Bill Clinton and later led UNICEF. "And largely off camera." The killing and starvation in Sudan are results of a two-year struggle between two warring generals. One faction is the Sudanese armed forces and the other is a militia called the Rapid Support Forces. Both have behaved brutally, starving civilians and impeding humanitarian efforts to

aid the hungry. Aid workers say that while both sides have committed war crimes, the Rapid Support Forces are responsible for the worst atrocities, such as the burning of entire villages and the slaughter of civilians. World leaders will gather at the UN in September to repeat platitudes about making the world a better place. One test of their sincerity is what they will do for the major Sudanese city of El Fasher, besieged by the Rapid Support Forces and facing starvation. Sudan watchers fear that if El Fasher falls, the Rapid Support Forces will engage in mass killings, as they have elsewhere.

"Here in El Fasher, we are starving," Avaaz Sudan Dispatch, a newsletter that follows Sudan, quoted a civilian in the city as saying. "The responsibility is not just on those holding the guns. It's in the world. The Arab countries. The African Union. Europe. The so-called international community. All of them.

"We know they can help," the civilian continued. "We know they have the power to airdrop food. They have planes. They have supplies. But they are choosing not to."

— The New York Times

Dreaming of a world free from illness...



SAMUEL KUTTY

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

CAN we dream of a world that is free from the fear of illness? This vision of a human life free from the scourge of disease is likely as old as humanity itself!

While humans, on average, live longer than before, we now experience certain illnesses at unprecedented levels — including soaring rates of diabetes, obesity, and various infectious, chronic, and mental disorders. The fact is that most of us are sicker than ever.

It’s undeniable that global life expectancy saw a remarkable rise throughout the 20th century, growing from around 46 years in 1950 to 73.2 years in 2023. However, a report from the McKinsey Health Institute suggests that this trend does not have to continue in the same way.

The report states that the proportion of people’s lives spent in poor or moderate health has remained unchanged at 50 per cent, emphasising, lives lived in poor or moderate health has remained unchanged at 50 per cent.

As researchers point out, daily psychosocial stressors such as financial worries, heavy workload, job insecurity, relationship problems, personal conflict, or the pressures of looking after an ailing parent, child or partner can lead to early death.

Chronic stress can cause depression, diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease and stroke. It also suppresses immunity and lowers the body’s ability to both fight and

recover from illnesses.

Close to three in four deaths worldwide were caused by non-communicable diseases such as heart and lung conditions, stroke, cancers and diabetes, with high blood pressure, bad nutrition and tobacco use being the top three causes of illness and death worldwide.

However, climate change poses a fundamental threat to human health. It impacts the physical environment as well as all aspects of both natural and human systems, including social and economic conditions and the functioning of health systems.

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines health as a state of complete well-being, not merely the absence of disease. Although there are varying degrees of health and illness, it is generally accepted that most people experience some form of health issue, whether physical or mental.

“Weather and climate hazards affect health both directly and indirectly, increasing the risk of death, non-communicable diseases, the emergence and spread of infectious diseases, and health emergencies,” WHO said in a recent report.

Data from the global agency indicates that two billion individuals do not have access to safe drinking water, and 600 million experience foodborne illnesses each year. Children below the age of five represent 30 per cent of fatalities caused by foodborne illnesses. Climate stressors heighten the risks of diseases transmitted through water and

Climate change poses a fundamental threat to human health. It impacts the physical environment as well as all aspects of both natural and human systems, including social and economic conditions and the functioning of health systems

food. Climate change affects the availability, quality, and variety of food, thus exacerbating food and nutrition emergencies.

The problem is that diseases progress faster than we do. Contagious illnesses have greatly influenced the health of numerous people. They also negatively impact the economies of many nations, possibly leading to a cycle of poverty.

Employing human-like rational abilities from artificial general intelligence, we foresee a breakthrough designed to revolutionise medicine and pharmaceutical development. Artificial intelligence is rapidly transforming the healthcare sector, generating hope for eventually overcoming serious diseases.

We live in a world with abundant and reachable healthcare, where remedies are available for every disease, and where the origins of illnesses are comprehended, with prevention woven into our everyday practices.

Nonetheless, the desire for an entirely disease-free world will continue to be just a dream, even though our scientists will succeed in eradicating various diseases soon, similar to their achievement 35 years ago when they declared the elimination of the fatal smallpox.

Simultaneously, we must recognise the dedication of healthcare workers worldwide who strive tirelessly, frequently in challenging and hazardous conditions, to address the most urgent health issues facing the world.

FRENCH COLONIAL LEGACY FADES AS VIETNAM FETES INDEPENDENCE

TRAN THI MINH HA & THEO MATTIOLO

Crispy banh mi baguettes, grand colonial facades, and chattering Francophone schoolchildren are lingering reminders of the French presence that once dominated Vietnam.

But there are darker legacies too - in the notorious prisons that enforced foreign rule, and memorials to those slain fighting for independence. As Vietnam marked the 80th anniversary of the declaration of independence from its European ruler with a grand parade on Tuesday, 24-year-old Huynh Nhung came to the capital, Hanoi, to take it all in.

“There are both good and bad sides,” she said, touring Hoa Lo Prison - now a memorial partly dedicated to France’s brutal treatment of Vietnamese colonial dissidents.

“France left a lot of pain for the country,” she said, a few days before the event.

But when 40,000 soldiers and civilians begin marching, her thoughts will turn away from France’s “story of the past” and towards Vietnam’s eight decades of self-definition.

“Vietnam doesn’t need to cling to another country or rely on another power to lead the nation,” she said.

French Indochina was officially established in 1887 and eventually encompassed all of modern-day Vietnam, as well as neighbouring Cambodia and Laos. A communist insurgency led by Ho Chi Minh ousted the colonial administration and declared independence on September 2, 1945.

Some French influence remains woven into the fabric of Vietnam’s daily life.

Banh mi — a delicacy fusing the imported French baguette with local Asian meat and vegetable fillings — is one of the nation’s most popular day snacks. But 43-year-old Nguyen Thi Van, hawking the sandwiches in Hanoi’s “French Quarter”, said she “never really thought about the origins” of the cuisine. “It’s just always been there since my childhood,” she shrugged.

The capital’s streets, lined with colonial mansions that once housed French administrators, are now festooned with the red flags of independent communist Vietnam.

When soldiers goose-step down them, Carlyle Thayer - Emeritus Professor at Australia’s University of New South Wales - anticipates little thought will be spared for France.

“I expect Vietnam’s leaders will express pride in Vietnam’s achievements over the last eight decades,” he said, predicting “minimal reference to French colonialism”.

There are still pockets of French influence in Vietnam, enough to tantalise some schoolchildren into imagining a Francophone future. — AFP

Afghan quake comes at ‘very worst moment’

AFGHANISTAN

was already facing severe

crises when it was rocked by another devastating earthquake, but this time, there are fewer resources to muster after foreign funding was slashed to the bone this year.

Less international aid “means fewer ambulances, fewer doctors, fewer nurses, fewer midwives” to send into the battered farming communities of Afghanistan’s mountainous east, said Arthur Comon, deputy director of operations at the non-governmental group Premiere Urgence Internationale (PUI).

The humanitarian sector has issued repeated calls since the start of the year for help in Afghanistan, which faces soaring poverty, worsening drought and the mass return of migrants expelled from neighbouring countries.

The 6.0-magnitude earthquake that struck around midnight on Sunday killed more than 1,400 people and injured over 3,000, a toll that was still rising. It hit “in the very worst moment”, said Rahmat Nabi Shirzad, communications officer for the UK-based NGO Islamic Relief in Afghanistan.

“The impact of these global cuts to humanitarian aid is very clear,” especially in health services for the hardest-hit province of Kunar, said Shirzad, who was also on the ground after deadly earthquakes in Herat in 2023 and Paktika in 2022. Compared to the support provided after those disasters, the resources for Kunar are “not at that level”.

“This earthquake is a crisis within a crisis,” United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Afghanistan Indrika Ratwatte said.

“Survivors now face overcrowded clinics, long waits and severe shortages of doctors and medicines - just when emergency trauma care is needed most.”

Funding cuts forced the closure of 400 health facilities, Ratwatte said.

The United States had been



An injured Afghan man sits after getting first aid in Dara Noor, in Jalalabad, Afghanistan, on Tuesday. — Reuters

Afghanistan’s main donor, providing \$3.71 billion in aid since the Taliban takeover in 2021. It cut all but a sliver of funding in January.

“The Americans had put the country on a drip feed, and then pulled it out before the patient was healed,” said a source at a French NGO. “The earthquake is now ravaging a population that was already bled dry.”

Beyond Washington, the UN said in June that it was drastically scaling back global humanitarian aid due to the “deepest funding cuts ever”.

Afghanistan’s aid had already been dwindling as donors hesitated, in part due to the Taliban’s restrictions on women.

A senior official in the Taliban’s information and culture ministry called on the international community to help. “We are providing basic services... but the rehabilitation of those impacted and reconstruction of their homes is not in the capacity of the Islamic Emirate alone,” said Atiqullah Azizi.

Half of Afghanistan’s 48 million people are already in need of humanitarian aid, one in five goes hungry, and 3.5 million children under five are acutely

malnourished, according to the UN.

The earthquake is “a key moment to see how donors react”, International Rescue Committee’s Vice-President of Emergencies Bob Kitchen said.

PUI’s Comon said it was “unlikely” that new funding would be secured for the post-earthquake response beyond perhaps only “small top-ups to cover the most urgent needs”.

The French NGO, which closed 60 health centres and laid off 480 staff this year after the US cuts, has deployed mobile clinics in the quake-hit provinces but fears for the long term.

“It’s been a long time since the general public lost interest in Afghanistan,” the staff member said, adding that he hopes for aid from the European Union but expects little from the Americans, who are “completely out of the picture”.

UN agencies have launched fundraising appeals, and an initial \$5 million has been released from the emergency response fund.

But even before the earthquake, the UN estimated it had only \$606 million available for its operations across Afghanistan out of the \$2.79 billion required.



CLAIRE GOUNON

The writer is AFP journalist in Afghanistan

SPORTS

SECOND TRIUMPH



Team UAE’s Australian rider Jay Vine celebrates winning the tenth stage of the Vuelta a Espana cycling tour, a 168 km race between Sendaviva Natural Park in Arguedas and El Ferial Larra Belagua in Isaba. — AFP

VINGEGAARD TAKES VUELTA RED AS VINE WINS STAGE 10

JONAS VINGEGAARD claimed the overall Vuelta a Espana lead on Tuesday while Jay Vine earned stage 10 victory for his second triumph of the race. Two-time Tour de France winner Vingegaard overhauled Torstein Traen’s lead to head the general classification by 26 seconds from the Norwegian, with Joao Almeida third and trailing the Dane by 38 seconds.

Vine put in an unmatched performance on the final climb to finish ahead of Spanish Movistar riders Pablo Castrillo and Javier Romo.

Attackers tried their best to escape at the start of the 175 kilometre run from the Sendaviva nature park to the Larra-Belagua ski resort near Spain’s border with France, but were not allowed to break free.

A mass crash in the bunch affected Spaniard Raul Garcia Pierna, who withdrew from the race.

Vine carved out a few seconds on the pack but was caught 75 kilometres in as the peloton persisted for two intense hours.

Finally a large break formed over halfway through the race, earning three minutes on the peloton.

Almeida’s team-mate Juan Ayuso made headlines during the rest day on Monday as his split with Team UAE at the end of the season was made public. The Spaniard was criticised by Almeida for not showing solidarity last week but led out for the Portuguese to help the peloton cut down the gap up the road. With Almeida driving on, followed by Vingegaard and Tom Pidcock among others, the red jersey-wearing Traen was dropped. — AFP

Oman earn comeback victory over Kyrgyzstan



The win put Oman in a strong position ahead of their final group match against Turkmenistan on Friday.

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, SEPT 2

OMAN’S national football team delivered top show at Jar Stadium in Tashkent, as they battled from behind to snatch a 2-1 victory over Kyrgyzstan in their second Group A match of the Central Asian Football Association (Cafa) Nations Cup. Essam al Subhi emerged as the star of the match, scoring twice in the stoppage time to overturn a first-half deficit and keep Oman firmly in contention for a place in the knockout stage.

The game started with both sides eager to stamp their authority early on. Oman, guided by Portuguese coach Carlos Queiroz, showed composure and tactical discipline, but it was Kyrgyzstan who found the breakthrough in the 23rd minute. Kozobayef pounced on a loose ball inside the penalty area, slotting it past goalkeeper Ibrahim al Mukhaini to give his team the advantage. Despite Oman’s attempts through Jameel al Yahmadi and Mohammed al Ghafri, the Kyrgyz defense stood resilient, and the first half closed with Kyrgyzstan ahead 1-0.

As the second half unfolded, Oman



Essam al Subhi emerged as the star of the match, scoring twice in the stoppage time.

pressed harder in search of the equaliser. Coach Queiroz made few substitutions as Mohsin al Ghassani, Salah al Yahyaiei, Ahmed al Khamisi and Fayez al Rushaidi entered the match. Midfielders Abdullah Fawaz and Nasser al Rawahi dictated the tempo, while Musab al Maamari and Ahed al Mashakheyi worked tirelessly to build attacking momentum.

In the dying minutes, a perfectly delivered cross from Abdullah Fawaz found Essam al Subhi, who powered a header past the Kyrgyz goalkeeper to bring Oman level. Just five minutes later, deep into stoppage time, substitute Mohsin al Ghassani whipped in another inch-perfect cross, and once again it was Essam al Subhi who rose highest, sending his header into the net for the winning goal.

The remarkable turnaround secured Oman three crucial points and lifted them to four points in the group standings, following their 1-1 draw against hosts Uzbekistan in the opening match.

The win put Oman in a strong position ahead of their final group match against Turkmenistan on Friday. The hosts Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan played late on Tuesday. The tournament third-place playoff and championship final are scheduled on next Monday.

Liverpool sign Newcastle striker Isak in British record deal

LONDON: The summer-long transfer saga involving Alexander Isak reached a conclusion on Monday as he finally got his wish for a move to Liverpool from Newcastle United as the English champions agreed a British record fee to sign the forward on a long-term deal.

Isak’s stand off with Newcastle has dominated the start of the season but the impasse was broken with Liverpool paying a reported 125 million pounds for the 25-year old Swede.

The fee eclipses Chelsea’s up front 107 million pounds paid for Enzo Fernandez and the 100 million plus 15 million in add ons they splashed out for fellow midfielder Moises Caicedo.

“It’s been a long journey to get here. But I’m super-happy to be a part of this team, this club and everything it stands for,” Liverpool’s new number nine Isak told the club’s website. “It’s something I’m proud of and I’m really looking forward to it. I’m happy it’s done and that I can get back to work.”

Isak arrived at Newcastle three years ago from Real Sociedad and proved a huge hit with his goals twice helping the north-east club qualify for

Swedish international moves for 125 million pounds

Transfer on deadline day ends long-running saga

Isak “super-happy” to join English champions



Sweden’s Alexander Isak during training. — Reuters

the Champions League and end a 70-year domestic trophy drought in last season’s League Cup final.

His cult status on Tyneside rapidly deteriorated though as the Swede made clear that he wanted to leave and was effectively frozen out, playing no part in Newcastle’s opening games of this season and not even training with the first team.

Newcastle confirmed his departure in a terse 37-word statement on Monday.

Isak’s capture takes Liverpool’s close-season spending above 450 million pounds after they smashed the club’s transfer record for a second time, having signed Germany’s Florian Wirtz in a deal that could eventually rise to 116 million pounds.

While Liverpool’s forward line is still led by Kop idol Mohamed Salah, and new signing Hugo Ekitike has hit the ground running, the sale of Luis Diaz, Darwin Nunez and the tragic death of Diogo Jota left manager Arne Slot’s options limited. So the arrival of a player who Newcastle captain Bruno Guimaraes described last season as the ‘best striker in the world’ will be a massive boost to Liverpool’s hopes of

winning back-to-back titles for the first time since 1984.

“I think I have a lot to give, I think I have a lot to improve. I’m a striker but I always want to give as much as possible to the team, mainly goals but much more than that as well,” Isak, who has 52 caps, said. “I want to win everything. Yeah, (as simple as that).”

ELITE CLUB

When Newcastle beat Liverpool 2-1 to win the League Cup in March, with Isak scoring their second goal at Wembley, his popularity with the Toon Army looked unshakeable.

Forwards are revered like nowhere else at St James’ Park and Isak had joined an elite club that included the likes of Jackie Milburn, Malcolm MacDonald, Alan Shearer and Peter Beardsley.

With 62 goals in 109 appearances, including 54 in 86 in the Premier League, Isak’s numbers compared favourably with the very best that had donned the famous black and white stripes. He scored 23 league goals last season to guide Newcastle back to the Champions League with a fifth-placed finish. — Reuters

TRI-SERIES



RASHID SETS T20I RECORD AS AFGHANISTAN BEAT UAE

SHARJAH: Ace spinner Rashid Khan became the highest wicket-taker in Twenty20 internationals as he helped Afghanistan beat United Arab Emirates by 38 runs in Sharjah on Monday.

The wily 26-year-old took 3-21 — reaching 165 wickets in his 98th T20I — to derail UAE from 90-2 to 150-8 in 20 overs after setting them 189 to win in the tri-series match.

Afghanistan’s total of 188-4 was built around a brilliant 40-ball 63 from Ibrahim Zadran and a 40-ball 54 by Sediqullah Atal as they came back after losing to Pakistan in their first game.

UAE captain Muhammad Waseem scared Afghanistan with a rapid-fire 37-ball 67, comprising six maximums and four boundaries in his 23rd T20I half-century.

But Waseem’s departure sparked a collapse as Rashid dismissed Ethan D’Souza (12), Asif Khan (one) and Dhruv Parashar (one) to overhaul New Zealand pacer Tim Southee’s T20I record of 164 wickets in 126 games.

Afghanistan owed their total to Zadran and Atal as they added 84 for the second wicket after being put in to bat.

Atal’s maiden T20I fifty had four boundaries and three sixes, while Zadran knocked four sixes and three hits to the rope.

Karim Janat hit two sixes and as many boundaries in his 10-ball 23 not out while Azmatullah Omarzai’s undefeated 12-ball 20 contained two sixes.

Muhammad Rohid and Saghir Khan grabbed two wickets apiece for UAE.

Pakistan, who won both their matches in the tri-series, face Afghanistan on Tuesday.

All three teams play each other twice with the top two disputing the September 7 final. — **AFP**



Sinner, Swiatek roll into US Open quarters



Japan’s Naomi Osaka returns a shot to USA’s Coco Gauff during their Round of 16 match on day nine of the US Open tournament in New York City. — **AFP**

NAOMI OSAKA delivered a statement win at the US Open by thrashing home favourite Coco Gauff in the last 16 on Monday as Jannik Sinner and Iga Swiatek charged into the quarterfinals.

The Japanese star powered past third seed Gauff 6-3, 6-2 in a highly-anticipated but lopsided fourth-round showdown of former US Open champions on the Labour Day holiday in New York.

Osaka broke in the very first game in front of an expectant Arthur Ashe Stadium crowd and was untouchable on serve in a ruthless display against a misfiring Gauff, who hit 33 unforced errors. “This is my favourite court in the world and it means so much to me to be back today,” said Osaka, who looks primed for a tilt at a fifth Grand Slam.

“This is kind of uncharted territory at this point of my career,” added Osaka. “I’m just enjoying it. I’m having fun.”

The 27-year-old, a two-time US Open champion, is enjoying her deepest run at a major since winning her second Australian Open title in 2021.

It has been a painstaking climb back towards the top of the game for Osaka, who returned to tennis last year following the birth of her daughter in 2023. “I was in the stands two months after I gave birth watching Coco and I just really wanted an opportunity to come out here and play,” said Osaka, who also beat a 15-year-old Gauff at the US Open in their first meeting in 2019.

Osaka plays Czech 11th seed Karolina Muchova in Wednesday’s quarterfinals.



Canada’s Felix Auger-Aliassime celebrates after winning the Round of 16 match against Russia’s Andrey Rublev in New York City. — **AFP**

Muchova beat Ukrainian 27th seed Marta Kostyuk 6-3, 6-7 (0/7), 6-3 and is seeking a third straight semifinal at Flushing Meadows.

Reigning men’s champion Sinner obliterated the unpredictable Alexander Bublik 6-1, 6-1, 6-1 in just 81 minutes to start the night session. Bublik, the only player to beat Sinner this season aside from Carlos Alcaraz, had not dropped serve all tournament but was broken eight times by the world number one. “He had a very tough match the last match, today he didn’t serve as well as he usually serves, and I broke him

early,” said Sinner. “Overall, I’m very happy.”

Bublik smiled as he embraced Sinner at the net after the defeat, and could be heard telling the Italian: “You’re so good, this is insane.”

He advances to an all-Italian match-up with 10th seed Lorenzo Musetti, who demolished unseeded Spaniard Jaume Munar 6-3, 6-0, 6-1 to reach his first US Open quarterfinal.

SWIATEK ‘IN THE ZONE’

Swiatek brushed off Russian 13th seed Ekaterina Alexandrova 6-3, 6-1 in barely an hour to extend her Grand Slam winning streak to 11 matches as she targets a second US Open crown. “I felt like in the beginning she played fast but later on I felt in my bubble, in the zone,” said Swiatek.

The Polish second seed faces Amanda Anisimova in a repeat of the Wimbledon final, which Swiatek won 6-0, 6-0. The American thumped Brazilian 18th seed Beatriz Haddad 6-0, 6-3. Men’s eighth seed Alex de Minaur sealed his passage to the quarterfinals with a 6-3, 6-2, 6-1 win over Swiss qualifier Leandro Riedi.

De Minaur put the world number 435 to the sword with eight breaks as he swept into a sixth Grand Slam quarterfinal. He has never made it past the last eight though.

The Australian next meets Canada’s Felix Auger-Aliassime, who defeated Andrey Rublev 7-5, 6-3, 6-4 to reach his first Grand Slam quarterfinal in three years. Auger-Aliassime’s best run at a Grand Slam came when he advanced to the semifinals of the US Open in 2021. — **AFP**

Australian pacer Starc retires from T20 internationals

SYDNEY: Prolific Australian fast bowler Mitchell Starc announced his immediate retirement from T20 international cricket on Tuesday, saying he wanted to focus on his Test and ODI career.

“Test cricket is and has always been my highest priority,” the 35-year-old said in a statement, ruling himself out of the T20 World Cup in February-March.

“I have loved every minute of every T20 game I have played for Australia, particularly the 2021 World Cup,” he added.

Starc, who played 65 matches for his country in the shortest format, was part of the Australia side that

lifted the world title that year.

His 79 wickets in T20Is make him the second-highest for Australia after Adam Zampa.

Starc steps away with a busy schedule to come, including a home Ashes series starting later this year and a one-day World Cup on the horizon. “Looking ahead to an away Indian Test tour, the Ashes and an ODI World Cup in 2027, I feel this is my best way forward to remain fresh, fit and at my best for those campaigns,” said Starc.

“It also gives the bowling group time to prepare for the T20 World Cup in the matches leading into that tournament,” he added.



Australia’s Mitchell Starc bowling during the ICC men’s T20 World Cup 2022 match against Sri Lanka at Perth Stadium. — **AFP**

His announcement came as Australia named their squad for an upcoming T20 series against New Zealand.

Cricket Australia CEO Todd Greenberg said “to allow the next crop of fast bowlers a clear path to the T20 World Cup early next year is another example of putting team first”.

“It’s important to Mitch at this time of his career to make decisions which allow him to extend his Test and ODI careers as long as possible, which we fully support,” he added.

In July, Starc produced a devastating opening spell as the West Indies were demolished for

27, the second-lowest score in Test history. Starc also reached the landmark of 400 Test wickets.

“Mitch should be incredibly proud of his T20 career for Australia,” chair of selectors George Bailey said.

“He was an integral member of the 2021 World Cup winning side and, as across all his cricket, had a great skill for blowing games open with his wicket-taking ability,” Bailey said.

“We will acknowledge and celebrate his T20 career at the right time, but pleasingly he remains focused on continuing to play Test and ODI cricket for as long as possible,” he added. — **AFP**

SPORTS

LEG INJURY

Spain’s Ruiz ruled out of WC qualifiers



MADRID: Paris Saint-Germain midfielder Fabian Ruiz will miss Spain’s upcoming 2026 World Cup qualifiers against Bulgaria and Turkey with a muscle injury, the Spanish football federation (RFEF) said on Monday. The 29-year-old arrived for international duty with “muscle discomfort in his left leg” after PSG’s 6-3 victory over Toulouse on Saturday. The RFEF said he left Spain’s training camp after medical tests.

DEADLINE DAY

Kolo Muani completes Spurs loan move



LONDON: Tottenham on Monday announced the signing of Randal Kolo Muani on a season long loan from Paris Saint Germain. The 26-year-old forward joined PSG from Eintracht Frankfurt early in the 2023/24 campaign but has struggled to convince in Paris. He spent the second half of last season on loan at Juventus and scored 10 goals in 22 appearances for the Italian club. “I’m really happy and very proud to be at such a great club,” Kolo Muani said.

LA LIGA RETURN

Sanchez joins Sevilla from Udinese



ROME: Former Arsenal and Barcelona star Alexis Sanchez has joined Sevilla from Udinese, the Spanish club said on Monday. The announcement came just hours after Udinese said he was leaving the Serie A club by mutual consent. After a career playing for “a good part of the most important clubs in the football panorama”, Sanchez will “bring his experience and goal scoring sense” to Sevilla, the La Liga outfit said about the 36 year old.



SEASON 2025 - 2026

PROGRAMME HIGHLIGHTS



SINDBAD:
THE OMANI SAILOR

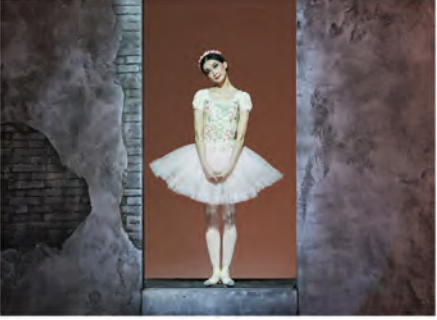
OPERA BY HISHAM GABR
LIBRETTO BY NADER SALAH EL DIN
WORLD PREMIERE
A Royal Opera House Muscat production,
in collaboration with Műpa Budapest

FRI 3 OCT 7:00PM
SUN 5 OCT 7:00PM



RABEH SAQER

THU 13 NOV 7:00PM



COPPÉLIA

Ballet by Charles Nutter and Léo Delibes
BY THE ‘ASTANA OPERA’ BALLET
COMPANY AND ORCHESTRA
CONDUCTED BY RUSLAN BAIMURZIN
CHOREOGRAPHY BY ROLAND PETIT

THU 4 DEC 7:00PM
FRI 5 DEC 7:00PM



CINDERELLA ON ICE

A Mesmerising Fairytale in a World
of Snow and Ice

THU 1 JAN 7:00PM
FRI 2 JAN 7:00PM
SAT 3 JAN 4:00PM



TOSCA

Opera by Giacomo Puccini
WITH THE ORCHESTRA AND CHORUS
OF AZERBAIJAN STATE ACADEMIC
OPERA AND BALLET THEATRE

THU 29 JAN 7:00PM
SAT 31 JAN 7:00PM



THE LION KING
LIVE IN CONCERT

WITH THE ARMENIAN STATE
SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
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FRI 13 FEB 7:00 PM
SAT 14 FEB 4:00PM



DON PASQUALE

Opera By Gaetano Donizetti
WITH THE OVIEDO FILARMONÍA, AND
CHOIR 1685 OF THE GIUSEPPE VERDI
CONSERVATORY OF RAVENNA

THU 9 APR 7:30PM
SAT 11 APR 7:30PM



ESTAMPAS FLAMENCAS

THE BALLET NACIONAL DE ESPAÑA

THU 7 MAY 7:30PM
FRI 8 MAY 7:30PM



ABEER NEHME

THU 14 MAY 7:30PM
FRI 15 MAY 7:30PM

Man City sign
goalkeeper
Donnarumma
from PSG as
Ederson exits



Italy’s Gianluigi Donnarumma during training in Coverciano, Italy. — Reuters

MANCHESTER

CITY confirmed the signing of Italy goalkeeper

Gianluigi Donnarumma from Paris Saint-Germain on Tuesday after selling the long-serving Ederson to Fenerbahce. Donnarumma, 26, has penned a five-year deal at the Etihad for a reported fee of £26 million (\$35 million). Donnarumma, who will wear the 99 shirt, was an integral part of the PSG team that won the Champions League last season, and was in goal for Italy when they won Euro 2020. But his omission from PSG’s Super Cup squad made it clear he was surplus to requirements in Paris after the club signed Lucas Chevalier from Lille. “To have signed for Manchester City is such a special and proud moment for me,” said Donnarumma, whose signing was announced a day after the summer transfer window closed. “I am joining a squad packed with world-class talent and a team led by one of the greatest managers in the history of football in Pep Guardiola. This is a club every player in world football would love to join.” Donnarumma, who stands 1.96 metres (six feet, five inches) tall, started his career at AC Milan, where he made his debut as a 16-year-old, before signing for PSG in 2021. He has made 412 club appearances and won 74 international caps. City’s director of football Hugo Viana said Donnarumma’s arrival was a huge boost for the club, who have started the season poorly. “Gianluigi’s pedigree, quality and record speaks for itself, and we are all absolutely thrilled he has joined us here at City,” he said. “He has accumulated a wealth of top-level experience and knows what is required to achieve success on a sustained level.” City called the departing Ederson, signed by Fenerbahce for reported fee of about £12 million, “one of the most successful players in the club’s history”. With his superb distribution, the Brazilian goalkeeper was instrumental to Guardiola’s possession-based philosophy, but there were growing doubts last season about his shot-stopping. “You helped us make history,” City posted on social media, with pictures of Ederson celebrating trophies including the Champions League in 2023. Ederson, 32, also won six Premier League titles and two FA Cups and kept 122 clean sheets in 276 league appearances. “Playing for City has been the most special time of my life and I will always be a fan of this special club,” said Ederson, who played 372 times for the club. — AFP



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rohmuscat.org.om

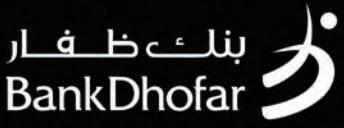


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SHORTTAKES



Oman's strong showing reflects 'solid fundamentals and reforms under Oman Vision 2040'

OMAN EQUITIES LEAD GCC IN AUGUST AS REGION SLIPS ON OIL WEAKNESS

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, SEPT 2

Oman's stock market was the best performer in the Gulf last month, even as most regional markets lost ground due to weaker oil prices, a new report by KAMCO Invest showed.

The Muscat Stock Exchange rose 5.2% in August, lifting its overall gains this year to 9.9% — the highest among all GCC markets.

The index closed the month at 5,029.9 points, with the market valued at \$36.4 billion. Investors traded about \$1.3 billion worth of shares.

Other Gulf markets did not fare as well. Saudi Arabia fell 2.0% in August and is down 11.2% since the start of the year.

Abu Dhabi also dropped 2.7%, while Dubai, Kuwait, Qatar and Bahrain each posted small declines. Overall, the MSCI GCC index, which tracks the region, lost 2.3% in August.

Some sectors continued to do well despite the downturn. Basic materials gained 6.0%, petrochemicals rose 4.0% and energy stocks added 2.0%. But banks and financials (–2.9%), healthcare (–3.9%) and consumer companies (–2.7%) dragged markets lower.

The pressure came mainly from oil.

Brent crude fell 6.1% in August, reversing gains from July as investors worried about weaker demand.

KAMCO Invest said Oman's strong showing reflects “solid fundamentals and reforms under Oman Vision 2040”, adding that Muscat remains one of the most resilient markets in the region.

Omran unveils major tourism projects

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 2

In line with its ongoing commitment to support the tourism sector and expand opportunities for growth, the Omran Tourism Development Company (Omran Group) has announced a series of strategic investment partnerships with leading local and international institutions.

The announcements formed part of the Group's 20th anniversary celebrations, held under the auspices of Salim bin Mohammed al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism and attended by ministers, dignitaries, partners, investors and leading figures from Oman's tourism sector. The ceremony also showcased progress on major developments and strategic collaborations that Omran Group is advancing across its integrated tourism complexes.

These included luxury hospitality projects, innovative visitor experiences and new partnerships aimed at strengthening tourism infrastructure, expanding accommodation options and creating broader opportunities to explore Oman's natural beauty, heritage and leisure offerings.

The new agreements underscored Omran Group's comprehensive strategy to enhance the tourism sector and diversify the integrated visitor experience in Oman. They spanned several key focus areas, including new business pathways to support the sector's digital transformation, the empowerment of national enterprises and the sustainability of the tourism value chain. Highlights included the announcement of an agreement with VA Group to develop a mixed-use project at the Port



The event showcased design models for a number of projects, including Madinat Al Irfan, the Port Sultan Qaboos Waterfront, the upcoming Four Seasons Resort and the Opera District development.

The new agreements underscored Omran Group's comprehensive strategy to enhance the tourism sector and diversify the integrated visitor experience in Oman

Sultan Qaboos waterfront, as well as three new partnerships under the Yiti Integrated Tourism Development: two mixed-use projects with VA Group and Aurelian Group; and a luxury resort under the global Nobu brand with Enevória Development.

In addition, a partnership was announced with Oman Agriculture Development Company to develop Janaen Salalah the first integrated agri-tourism project of its kind in Oman.

The event also unveiled design models for a number of projects, including Madinat Al Irfan, the Port Sultan Qaboos Waterfront, the upcoming Four Seasons Resort and the Opera District development.

The event featured the unveiling of the design model for the upcoming Club Med Resort in Musandam Governorate, the first of its kind for the global brand in Oman and the wider region.

The project introduces a new dimension to luxury hospitality and further strengthens Musandam's appeal as a distinctive destination. Updates were also shared on projects under

development such as Santani Jabal Shams Resort, which focuses on luxury wellness and health tourism and Alie Nivas Musandam Resort, blending premium hospitality with pristine natural surroundings. Together, these projects expand Omran Group's hospitality portfolio and diversify Oman's accommodation offering.

Abdulsalam bin Mohammed al Murshidi, Chairman of Oman Investment Authority, said: “This occasion marks an important milestone in measuring the impact of the Authority's economic diversification efforts through Omran Group, by launching strategic investments in the tourism sector — one of the most promising sectors with wide-ranging economic and social returns — and by developing plans to further strengthen this impact in future planning stages.

Azzan bin Qassim al Busaidy, Chairman of Omran Group, affirmed that the Group will continue to shape the future of the tourism sector in close collaboration with the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism and other government entities, further enhancing Oman's global tourism standing. He stressed that Omran Group remains committed to actively contributing to Oman Vision 2040 while aligning with the National Tourism Strategy.

Hashil bin Obaid al Mahrouqi, CEO of Omran Group, highlighted the Group's focus on building a broad network of local and international partnerships, particularly with institutions specialising in tourism investment and urban development. He noted that this approach is matched with enhanced infrastructure, diversified tourism experiences and new investment flows that reflect growing international confidence in Oman's investment climate.

Omran invests in London’s UnderTheDoormat on 20th anniversary

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, SEPT 2

Omani state-owned Omran Group's decision to acquire a stake in UnderTheDoormat Group, a London-based property technology and luxury home-management operator, positions its sizable portfolio of hotel rooms and apartments across Oman for entry into the global rentals market.

UnderTheDoormat's tech-based business model maximises the value of residential assets by transforming vacant or underutilised properties into professionally managed, high-quality accommodation. For property owners such as Omran,



UnderTheDoormat is a London-based property technology and luxury home-management operator

this provides a secure revenue stream and the assurance of expert oversight, while guests gain a trusted alternative that combines the flexibility of a private home

with the consistency of hotel-grade standards.

Unlike Airbnb's marketplace model, UnderTheDoormat Group positions itself as a premium hospitality operator, managing luxury homes on behalf of owners with a focus on quality, compliance and consistency.

Its proprietary tech platform, TrustedStays, supports this model by connecting accredited short-term rentals with the global distribution system and corporate travel market.

Together with UnderTheDoormat's full-service property management offering and Hospiria, a fully integrated SaaS property management system, the Group covers the

entire short-term and flexible rental value chain.

On September 2, 2025, international travel news platform Skift reported that UnderTheDoormat had secured a \$7 million funding round led by Omran Group, with London-based Smedvig Capital and other existing investors also participating.

This latest round brought UnderTheDoormat Group's total funding to \$18 million.

The announcement coincided with Omran Group's 20th anniversary celebrations, underscoring its commitment to global partnerships that advance Oman's tourism sector.

The investment builds on an earlier collaboration between

Omran and UnderTheDoormat Group. Ahead of the Fifa World Cup in Qatar in November 2022, Visit Oman — the official B2B gateway for tour operators, travel agents and tourism partners — signed an agreement with UnderTheDoormat to facilitate government-approved short-term rentals in Oman.

Under this arrangement, integrated tourism complexes and other licensed hospitality projects were enabled to access the international rental market through UnderTheDoormat's Hospiria platform, connecting homes, villas and apartments with travellers seeking short-term accommodation via an officially sanctioned channel.

ADVERTORIALS

SHORTTAKES



BUY YOUR FAVOURITE MITSUBISHI NOW AND PAY AFTER THREE MONTHS

MUSCAT: General Automotive Company, the exclusive distributor of Mitsubishi Motors in Oman, has announced a special seasonal offer designed to make owning a Mitsubishi more rewarding than ever.

With a focus on both flexibility and peace of mind, the offer combines financial ease with long-term value, giving customers every reason to drive home their favourite Mitsubishi today.

For a limited time, customers in Oman can own a brand-new Mitsubishi with the peace of mind of 0% interest financing for up to 3 years or choose the freedom of a three-month EMI holiday.

Adding even more value, Mitsubishi Oman is offering free insurance and registration, free service for two years or 30,000 km and the assurance of a six-year unlimited mileage warranty and roadside assistance.

This programme is designed not just to make owning a Mitsubishi easier, but to make every journey more rewarding.

It's about giving customers the confidence to enjoy life's adventures, whether that means exploring Oman's rugged landscapes, heading out on family road trips, or simply driving with ease in the city, without the stress of upfront financial commitments.

With this initiative, Mitsubishi Oman continues to reaffirm its promise of delivering vehicles that combine performance, durability and comfort with ownership solutions that fit modern lifestyles.

This exclusive offer is available across Mitsubishi's full range, allowing customers to choose the vehicle that suits their lifestyle best.

From the sleek and spacious Outlander to the rugged Montero Sport built for adventure, each model combines reliability with refinement.

The bold new XForce stands out in the compact SUV segment with its stylish design and agility, while the Xpander offers space and practicality for families.

The L200 continues to be a dependable partner for heavy-duty performance; and the ASX and Eclipse Cross deliver sporty, dynamic driving experiences for urban explorers.

Customers can explore the full range of Mitsubishi vehicles and take advantage of these limited-time offers by visiting their nearest Mitsubishi showroom in Al Athaiba, Al Maabela, Barka, Suhar, Nizwa, Ibri, Sur, Jaalan Bani Bu Ali, or Salalah. For more details, call or WhatsApp 24500500.

NATIONAL FINANCE CHAMPIONS OMAN'S GREEN FUTURE WITH SUSTAINABLE FINANCE OFFERING

MUSCAT: Reflecting its long-term commitment to sustainability and alignment with the goals outlined in Oman Vision 2040, the Sustainable Finance offering from National Finance — the Sultanate of Oman's leading finance company — is purposefully designed to empower both individuals and corporates in their transition towards environmentally responsible practices.

This product offering stands as a key milestone in the company's broader sustainability strategy, which seeks to drive meaningful impact through sustainability-linked projects and the advancement



of community welfare initiatives.

National Finance's Sustainable Finance offering is a meticulously crafted solution that promotes environmental stewardship and inclusive economic growth by

encouraging the adoption of eco-friendly alternatives.

For individuals, it provides tailored financing options for the purchase of Electric Vehicles (EVs) and hybrid vehicles, supporting efforts to reduce personal carbon footprints.

Additionally, individuals can benefit from financing on solar energy integration in homes, home water recycling systems and Smart home systems.

For corporate customers, the offering extends to financing sustainability-linked businesses and projects focused on environmental conservation and social impact.

MHD ACERE rolls out exclusive Hongqi summer offer in Oman

MOHSIN

Haider Darwish LLC (MHD ACERE), the exclusive distributor of Hongqi in Oman, is delighted to announce the launch of its much-anticipated Hongqi Summer Offer.

This special promotion is designed to reward customers choosing the brand's popular models — Hongqi Ousado, HS3 and HS5 — with a choice of exceptional rewards, reaffirming Hongqi's mission of combining luxury, innovation and customer-centric value.

Hongqi, a prestigious name in the automotive industry, continues to inspire discerning drivers in Oman with its refined lineup that includes the Ousado, Hongqi HS3, HS5, HS7, H6 and H9.

Each vehicle is a symbol of Hongqi's commitment to delivering unparalleled craftsmanship, advanced technology and performance, redefining the driving experience in the Sultanate of Oman.

Customers purchasing a Hongqi Ousado, HS3, or HS5 can choose one of three exclusive rewards:

- 1.iPhone + Travel Credit
- o Hongqi Ousado 1.5T: Apple iPhone 16 Pro + holiday stay or travel credit worth RO 300.
- oHongqi Ousado 2.0T, HS3, HS5: Apple iPhone 16 Pro Max + holiday stay or travel credit worth RO 500.

2.0% Finance — easing ownership with flexible payment options.

3. Trade-in Support — Customers can bring their current vehicles for a third-party valuation.

On verification, MHD ACERE will add a fixed RO 1,500 to the valuation



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amount, which will be adjusted exclusively against the down payment of the new Hongqi vehicle.

In addition to these rewards, Hongqi's signature 7-7-7 package remains standard:

- 7 years unlimited mileage warranty
- 7 years / 105,000 km service package
- 7 years roadside assistance

The offer is valid from August 10, 2025 to October 9, 2025 and applies to retail customers purchasing Hongqi Ousado, HS3 and HS5 for personal use, subject to stock availability.

Commenting on the launch of the campaign, Mr Mohsin Hani al Bahrani, CEO of MHD ACERE, said:

“At MHD ACERE, we believe that owning a Hongqi should be more than just about driving a car — it should be about enjoying a truly rewarding journey.

This Summer Offer reflects our gratitude to our customers by giving them not only the joy of driving one of the most luxurious and innovative vehicles, but also the added value of lifestyle rewards, finance ease, or trade-in support.

Our aim is to make every Hongqi ownership experience as extraordinary as the vehicles themselves”.

For more information or to schedule a test drive, please visit Hongqi Showroom at Al Athaiba or contact: 80080777.

Bank Muscat to showcase digital banking innovations at Comex 2025

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, has announced its participation in the 34th edition of COMEX, which will be held from September 8-11, 2025 at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre. This year's edition will be attended by more than 300 local and international organisations, government entities and corporates.

Bank Muscat will showcase its long-standing journey in advancing digital banking services, beginning with the optimisation of internal processes and culminating in a diverse array of products and services that deliver direct benefits to customers.

The COMEX Global Technology Exhibition serves as a premier platform for cutting-edge technology, offering local and international companies and institutions the opportunity to showcase their latest advancements



in innovation. This exhibition also acts as a vital forum for professionals and enthusiasts in artificial intelligence and

cybersecurity, featuring a range of engaging activities, including specialised workshops focused on advanced technologies.

Bank Muscat participates annually in the COMEX Global Technology Exhibition, viewing it as an invaluable opportunity to highlight its pioneering role in advancing digital banking services.

This event allows the Bank to introduce visitors to the mechanisms behind the major platforms and devices they use daily, enhancing their understanding and simplifying complex underlying processes.

The Bank's stall is thoughtfully designed to showcase its expertise and illuminate the key services developed to enhance customer experience and facilitate seamless financial transactions, wherever they are.

Digital transformation has significantly advanced financial inclusion. In parallel, the Bank's recent developments over the past few years have enabled customers to access services more quickly

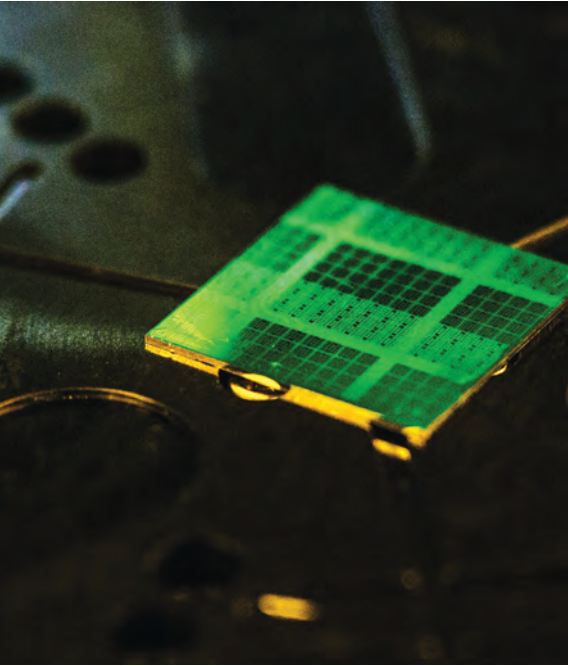
and conveniently through Internet Banking, Mobile Banking and a dedicated Contact Centre, as well as over 900 ATMs and CDMs across the country.

These enhancements have provided corporates with the tools to streamline transactions, boost productivity, reduce data entry errors and improve security, delivering tangible benefits for customers.

Bank Muscat's many achievements have been well recognised over the past four decades. Recently, the Bank received the Best Bank in Oman Award from Global Finance and was named the Best Digital Bank in Oman by Euromoney.

The Bank will continue to provide all support to both companies and institutions by providing the best technology-based services that are in line with its customer-centric vision.

SHORTTAKES



A semiconductor chip diced from a wafer is seen at the Inter-university Semiconductor Research Centre at Seoul National University in Seoul. — AFP

INDIA TO START COMMERCIAL CHIP PRODUCTION BY 2025

NEW DELHI: India will begin commercial semiconductor production by the end of 2025, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Tuesday, touting his nation as a future “global hub” for chip innovation.

Prime Minister Modi, speaking in New Delhi at the launch of the annual Semicon India conference, said test chips from Micron and Tata were already being produced.

“Commercial chip production will begin this year”, he said.

“This reflects how rapidly India is advancing in the semiconductor sector”.

India’s semiconductor market has surged from \$38 billion in 2023, to \$45-\$50 billion in 2024-2025, with government targets of \$100-110 billion by 2030.

The country is currently developing 10 semiconductor projects worth \$18 billion in investments, including two new 3-nanometre design facilities — among the most advanced — in Noida and Bengaluru.

“Our journey began late, but nothing can stop us now”, Modi said.

India says it has an edge in three areas — producing components for semiconductor equipment, supplying critical materials such as chemicals and minerals; and services ranging from research and development, to artificial intelligence, big data and cloud computing.

The world’s most populous nation also claims a “human capital” advantage, Modi said, noting that “20 per cent of the global talent in semiconductor design talent comes directly from India”.

The announcement comes after Japan pledged to boost investment in India to 10 trillion yen (\$68 billion), including semiconductor and AI cooperation, during Modi’s visit to Tokyo last week.

India, the world’s fifth largest and fastest-growing major economy, has been battered by the fallout from US President Donald Trump’s punishing 50 per cent tariffs and is seeking new avenues of growth.

With international chip demand surging but supply chains concentrated in a handful of regions, India says it is building a “complete ecosystem” covering design, manufacturing and packaging to become both “self-reliant and globally competitive”.

“Today’s India inspires confidence in the world”, Modi was quoted as saying, in a government briefing note on the industry this week. “When the chips are down, you can bet on India”. — AFP

REVIVAL PHASE

Syria resumes oil exports after 14 years



Syria exported 600,000 barrels of heavy crude from Tartus, its first official shipment since 2010, an energy ministry official said. The cargo was sold to B Serve Energy after US sanctions were lifted in June, following the fall of Bashar al Assad. The new government is seeking to revive the energy sector and has signed an \$800 million deal with DP World to develop a terminal at Tartus. — Reuters

US TARIFFS IMPACT

India set for record cotton procurement



India may buy a record 14 million bales of cotton from farmers in the new season, as domestic prices face pressure from cheaper imports and slowing demand following US tariffs on textile exports, industry officials said. The state-run Cotton Corporation of India (CCI), which purchased 10 million bales in 2024/25, said it is ready to buy all supplies farmers bring at the support price. — Reuters

INVESTOR CAUTION

France’s bond yields hit 16-year highs



France’s 30-year government bond yields climbed to 4.513%, their highest since 2009, amidst fiscal concerns and political uncertainty. Prime Minister François Bayrou is negotiating with parties to prevent a government collapse, while the far-right National Rally prepares for snap elections. The yield gap with German bonds widened to 80 bps, reflecting investor caution. — Reuters

Markets steady ahead of US jobs data, Fed outlook

STOCKS were muted, the dollar steadied near five-week lows and gold climbed to fresh record highs on Tuesday, as investors awaited a string of economic data this week that could reinforce expectations of a Federal Reserve rate cut in September.

Markets are pricing in an 89 per cent chance of a 25-basis-point cut later this month, but the strength of upcoming US data will determine whether the Fed might consider a larger move. The spotlight is on Friday’s nonfarm payrolls report, preceded by job openings and private payroll figures, which will offer a clearer picture of the labour market — now at the centre of policy debate.

“While an outsized 50 bps cut in September is not the base case, it cannot be ruled out altogether if the August jobs data shows exceptional weakness”, said Vasu Menon, managing director of investment strategy at OCBC Bank.

The US inflation report, due September 11 — just a week before the Fed’s policy meeting — will also prove decisive.

The prospect of lower borrowing costs has kept Wall Street near record highs, with global equities also gaining in recent weeks. On Tuesday, MSCI’s broadest index of Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan was flat. Nasdaq futures slipped 0.1 per cent, while European futures edged down 0.07 per cent. With US markets closed on Monday for a holiday, Asian trading lacked clear direction.

“It is all about gauging whether the Fed remains ahead of a possible slowdown in the US economy, or if it’s behind the curve”, said Kyle Rodda, senior market analyst at



While an outsized 50 bps cut in September is not the base case, it cannot be ruled out altogether if the August jobs data shows exceptional weakness

Capital.com. Chinese equities, buoyed by a recent AI-driven rally, pulled back as investors booked profits. The blue-chip CSI300 index dropped 0.9 per cent after touching a three-year high earlier in the session, while Hong Kong’s Hang Seng eased 0.6 per cent after a 2 per cent surge on Monday.

In currencies, the dollar regained some ground ahead of the European open. The euro slipped 0.16 per cent to \$1.1692, while sterling fell 0.17 per cent to \$1.3526.

The yen weakened 0.3 per cent to 147.70 per dollar after Bank of Japan Deputy Governor Ryozi Himino signalled caution on further tightening amidst global uncertainty.

The dollar index was up 0.2 per cent at 97.847, though still close to Monday’s five-week low. Yields on 10-year US Treasuries rose 2.4 basis points to 4.249 per cent.

Political tensions around Fed

independence also weighed on sentiment. Reports that President Donald Trump is seeking to fire Fed Governor Lisa Cook have raised concerns over future appointments. Cook is expected to challenge the dismissal on Tuesday.

Trump has long criticised Fed Chair Jerome Powell for not cutting rates, recently targeting costly renovations at the Fed’s Washington headquarters. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent reiterated that the Fed should remain independent, but acknowledged it had “made a lot of mistakes”.

In commodities, gold surged on the weaker dollar and rate cut outlook, touching a record high of \$3,508.5. Oil prices rose amidst fears of supply disruptions from the Russia-Ukraine conflict. Brent crude gained 0.4 per cent to \$68.44 a barrel, while US West Texas Intermediate jumped 1.42 per cent to \$64.92. — Reuters

Gold rushes to new high as Asia stocks mixed



Gold bullion can be seen after being removed from casts at the ABC Refinery smelter in Sydney on April 29, 2025. The price of gold hit a record high above \$3,500 on September 2, 2025, signalling investors are seeking out safe havens in the face of global economic uncertainty. (Photo by DAVID GRAY / AFP)

accelerated this year amidst US debt concerns, ratings downgrades, trade tensions and

geopolitical risks”, she said. On equity markets, Tokyo, Seoul and Jakarta were all up, while

Hong Kong and Shanghai turned negative after early gains. On the Hang Seng, Alibaba was down slightly a day after rocketing almost 20 per cent following bumper results and a surge in AI revenue.

“While US giants face mounting questions around AI monetisation and stretched valuations, Chinese firms are showing tangible earnings lift from AI and cloud”, Charu Chanana at Saxo Markets said.

The Japanese corporate world was, meanwhile, rocked by the shock resignation of the CEO of drinks giant Suntory over an illegal drugs probe.

Oil prices moved higher ahead of a weekend OPEC+ meeting to decide on output for October.

The cartel is expected to keep supplies unchanged. — AFP

OPINION

Cyprus steps up desalination to ease water crisis

MICHELE KAMBAS & YIANNIS KOURTOGLOU

SAINT Nicholas church in the hills above Limassol, normally submerged in the Kouris Reservoir, offers a stark glimpse of the worsening water crisis in Cyprus. The belfry is fully exposed and the building is surrounded by parched earth.

Lying at the far east of the Mediterranean, Cyprus has always lived with drought. But climate change has turned dry spells into a permanent challenge and authorities are increasingly turning to desalination to meet rising water needs.

Annual rainfall has dropped an estimated 15 per cent in the past 90 years, while temperatures in Nicosia have risen 1.8 degrees Celsius in the past century — double the global average according to official data.

As of September 1, the island’s reservoirs were just 14.7 per cent full.

Demand for water has surged three-fold since 1990 because of population growth and a surge in tourism, leaving Cyprus with a constant water deficit.

The country has a population of just under

1 million and nearly 3 million tourists visit annually.

In 2023 the deficit reached 66 million cubic metres — more than 26,000 Olympic-sized pools — said Yianna Oikonomidou, senior executive engineer at the water development department.

“It really shows how big the problem is and why we are trying to cover this deficit with non-conventional sources such as desalination and also re-use of treated water which fully aligns with the principles of a circular economy”, she said.

Desalination was first introduced in Cyprus in 1997 and now covers about 70 per cent of drinking water needs.

Mobile plants from the UAE were installed this summer, with authorities planning more next year. Ultimately, the government wants desalination to meet all household and business needs.

“Our aim is to end reliance on weather”, said Maria Panayiotou, minister for Agriculture, Environment and Natural Resources. The present administration, she said, adopted a policy to keep desalination units running whatever the season.

“Rain or no rain, Cyprus must cover its needs in water supply and we can do that only by utilising technology available to us,

Fishermen have complained of depleted stocks and ‘no life’ in areas where brine from desalination is discharged

improving our networks and developing a water conscience to minimise wastage”.

But as the desalination plants hum along the coast, some criticise the reliance on seawater. “It is very expensive... and if you are not careful, can cause a lot of damage”, warned MP Charalambos Theopemptou, chair of parliament’s Environment Committee.

He said fishermen have complained of depleted stocks and “no life” in areas where brine from desalination is discharged. The Agriculture Ministry insists monitoring has found no adverse impact.

Scientists warn the island faces deeper risks. Farming practices, including growing water-intensive crops, are hastening desertification.

“Apart from Troodos and Pentadaktylos (mountain ranges), all other areas are potentially desertified”, said Michael Loizides, a chemical and environmental engineer at the AKTI Project and Research Centre. His group is involved in an EU-funded pilot seeking sustainable ways to prevent land degradation, such as composting to restore soil and improve water retention.

“Cyprus is in a devastating situation. This means we have to be creative and innovative”, he said. — Reuters

NEXT-GEN AI TECHNOLOGY ‘REVOLUTIONISING’ STROKE CARE IN UK

An artificial intelligence tool which quickly analyses brain scans of stroke patients has helped boost chances of full recovery since being launched across England, the public health service said on Tuesday.

The technology analyses brain scans to diagnose the type and severity of the stroke and “helps doctors make faster decisions about the right course of treatment”, National Health Service (NHS) England said in a press release on Tuesday.

It was rolled out in over 100 NHS stroke centres last year and has “potentially helped thousands of patients fully recover from a stroke since”.

The AI technology can crucially reduce the time between a patient being admitted to hospital to receiving life-saving treatment by 60 minutes, according to early-stage analysis.

It has also been shown to triple the likelihood of recovery without disability, from 16 per cent to 48 per cent, according to the health service.

“This AI decision support technology is revolutionising how we help people who have been affected by a stroke”, said NHS England’s National Clinical Director for Stroke, David Hargroves.

“It is estimated a patient loses around two million brain cells a minute at the start of a stroke, which is why rapid diagnosis and treatment is so critical”, Hargroves added.

With around 38,000 stroke-related deaths a year, the medical condition is the fourth leading cause of death in the United Kingdom.

According to the government, in June the UK co-founded an international network of health regulators focusing on AI-use, with the hope of getting “trusted AI tools safely into clinics faster”.

Prime Minister Keir Starmer’s government hopes the technology can help it deliver on election promises to overhaul the ailing public healthcare system and cut patient waiting lists.

Early trials show that hospitals using the technology are seeing shorter patient stays and more precise interventions, helping to alleviate pressure on emergency services. NHS officials also emphasized that the integration of AI supports medical staff rather than replacing them, acting as a critical tool in enhancing overall patient care.

Experts believe this innovation could set a global benchmark for digital healthcare, with the potential to expand to other acute conditions in the future. — AFP

Rethinking global progress in an age of economic crisis

NOWHERE is the impact of recent crises — the lingering economic consequences of Covid-19 and the global spillover effects of Russia’s war in Ukraine — being felt more acutely than in the developing world.

People in poor countries are struggling to cope with higher food and fuel prices and unsustainable debt, while schoolchildren are still suffering from learning loss caused by the pandemic. In many places, economic growth has stalled.

Compounding these challenges, the effects of climate change are becoming even more pronounced, with floods, droughts and crop failures threatening lives and livelihoods.

And as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) warned in its most recent report, the world must act immediately to ward off some of the more catastrophic consequences of global warming, which would hit the poorest and most vulnerable the hardest.

The global ‘polycrisis’ poses an unprecedented threat to economic development. Creating a more resilient, sustainable and prosperous future for all now requires redefining the fundamentals of growth to address new transnational threats. Responsiveness, innovation, international cooperation and private-sector partnerships matter more than ever.

The World Bank, already the largest provider of finance for climate action in developing countries, is strengthening its operating model to respond rapidly to these changed circumstances.

When assessing low-income countries’ prospects, the numbers speak for themselves. In developing economies, growth over the remainder of this decade is projected to be one-third lower than it was in the 2000s.

Recent crises have thrown tens of millions of people back into poverty. Instead of meeting the Sustainable Development Goal of ending extreme poverty by 2030, the current rate of progress implies that nearly 600 million people will still be living on less than \$2.15 a day.



ANNA BJERDE

The writer is Managing Director of Operations at the World Bank

The current rate of progress implies that nearly 600 million people will still be living on less than \$2.15 a day



The longer-term picture is equally bleak: Covid-related education shocks could cost today’s students in low- and middle-income countries up to 10 per cent of their future earnings.

To reverse the losses of recent years and get developing countries back on track, we need to help governments achieve macroeconomic stability and develop business environments that are conducive to private-sector investment.

Rolling out investment-ready capital projects that will underpin a more sustainable future, including in renewable energy and climate-resilient infrastructure, is also essential. And support for building strong and adaptive public-health, education and social-welfare systems is needed to mitigate the impact of future crises.

The past three years have demonstrated the importance of scaling up crisis preparedness and improving response times. The World Bank Group has provided a financing package of \$170 billion for the 15 months ending in June 2023 to help countries address the effects of multiple overlapping crises.

Critically, this has included support for strengthening social-

protection systems and food & nutrition security in some of the world’s most vulnerable countries.

Since February 2022, the World Bank has mobilised more than \$23 billion in financial support for Ukraine.

Targeted funds also play a crucial role in mitigating future disasters.

The World Bank’s new Pandemic Fund, for example, will help low- and middle-income countries boost capacity in essential areas like disease surveillance, laboratories, the public-health workforce and community engagement, as well as emergency communication, coordination and management.

Challenges that are fundamentally transnational or global in nature — particularly climate change — are driving the biggest shifts in development policy. Besides greater resources, progress will require fostering a knowledge-sharing culture, so that countries can quickly learn from one another and make better decisions under conditions of great uncertainty.

Careful planning is also needed to ensure that projects will strengthen long-term resilience and are scalable through private-sector investment.

@Project Syndicate, 2025

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Newrest Wacasco (Oman) is seeking a dynamic and experienced **Business Development Manager** for Facilities Management Segment. The successful candidate will be responsible for developing and implementing growth strategies, managing client relationships, and overseeing daily facilities management operations to ensure company profitability. Hard and soft maintenance services are at the heart of this expertise, while complying with Group standards and expected quality.

SCOPE & GENERAL PURPOSE:

(1) To guarantee to reach the objectives on the market segment responsible for developing the assets of the company through the signature of new contracts that are not only the results of opportunities, but also the results of a systematic approach.

(2) In charge of management and the supervision of our facilities management segment as well as of the standardization and of the deployment of the company FM processes.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Ensure the knowledge, the analysis and the synthesis of the market segment are accurate. Identifies the areas of lack of knowledge of the market, and with lucidity, take actions to fill these areas
- Responsible for the elaboration of the Development Strategy on this segment. Focuses on acquiring new clients and growing the business through strategic planning and execution
- Identifying new market opportunities, developing and implementing business development strategies, building and maintaining client relationships, and managing the integrated sales process
- Ensure the implementation of MSOP and the response to Invitation to Tenders
- Dealing with clients, managing, and monitoring of Facility management project(s)
- In regards of the marketing tools required for successful sales conclusion, he/she recommends and/or coordinates with the group resources for offer deployment and local market adjustments
- Ensure self-awareness of company QHSE policies & procedures and follow them

PROFILE COMPETENCY REQUIREMENTS:

- Bachelor's degree in engineering or related field.
- Experience in Facilities Management and Business Development. Knowledge of the catering sector is a plus
- Minimum 5 years in FM within an international group
- Project management and good organizational skills
- Computer literate (word, excel, power point, outlook)
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L I F E S T Y L E

AT THE FOREFRONT OF OMAN'S GROWING ADVENTURE SCENE FOR WOMEN > 20

DISCOVERY

Italy exhibition explores how sound helps us to savour food



AN EXHIBITION in northern Italy is expanding traditional ideas about taste by exploring how sound influences the way people experience their food.

Hosted at the MUSE science museum in Trento, Food Sound examines how auditory cues — from the crunch of an apple to the sizzle of a pan — affect appetite, perception of flavour and emotional response.

“If neuroscience has transformed fields from psychology to economics, it’s also reshaping how we understand cooking and food”, said Patrizia Famà, director of the museum’s Office of Public Programmes.

Visitors are guided through mock-ups of trattorias and dining pods, learning how the brain processes sound and how acoustics can influence food choices.

One interactive display invites guests to select food based solely on sound.

“Food perception is the ultimate multi-sensory experience, engaging all five senses”, said Massimiliano Zampini, a researcher at the University of Trento and a member of the exhibition’s scientific committee.

Zampini and Charles Spence, an experimental psychologist at Britain’s Oxford University, were among the first to study how sound — often overlooked in discussions of taste — affects flavour and emotional response.

In a landmark experiment in 2004, they found that potato chips were perceived as being both crisper and fresher when either the overall sound level was increased, or when just the high frequency sounds were selectively amplified.

The idea for the exhibition came to creator Vincenzo Guarnieri after overhearing children describe a visit to a potato chip factory.

“They said the fryers sounded like other children crying. That moment struck me and I realised sound could be a powerful tool to raise awareness about food”, Guarnieri said.

The exhibition runs until January 11, 2026. — Reuters

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



FASHION

A model prepares backstage of Ruban fashion show during the Moscow Fashion Week in Moscow, Russia. — AFP



FILM

French actor Benjamin Voisin attends the photocall of the movie “L'Etranger” (The Stranger) presented out of competition at the 82nd International Venice Film Festival. — AFP



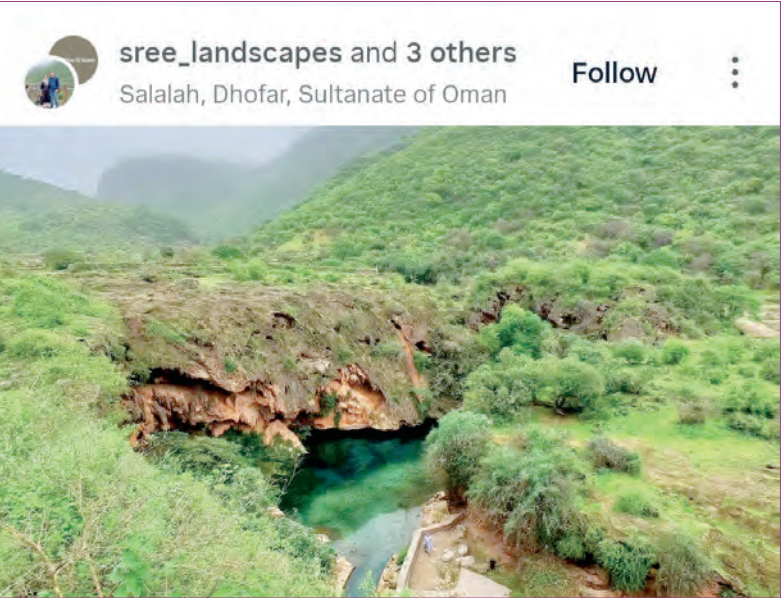
MUSIC

Role Model performs on the ‘TODAY’ show as part of the Citi Concert Series in New York City. — AFP

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Bulgarian village draws Chinese tourists for its famed yoghurt



EVERY YEAR, hundreds of Chinese tourists visit the Bulgarian mountain village of Momchilovtsi to celebrate a festival dedicated to the region's renowned yoghurt. Well-known for its health benefits, Bulgarian yoghurt has gained immense popularity in China, attracting visitors eager to taste the authentic product. The festival features traditional folk performances with singers and bagpipers in embroidered costumes, set against the backdrop of the late summer sun in the Rhodope Mountains near the Greek border. Local producers, many of whom speak some Chinese, offer samples and sell various dairy products, highlighting the region's rich tradition of fermented dairy. Chinese visitors, like 37-year-old Ge Lin, express their enthusiasm for Bulgarian yoghurt, which has been imported to China since 2009 thanks to a local dairy company branded Mosilian. This product is now widely available in Chinese supermarkets. The

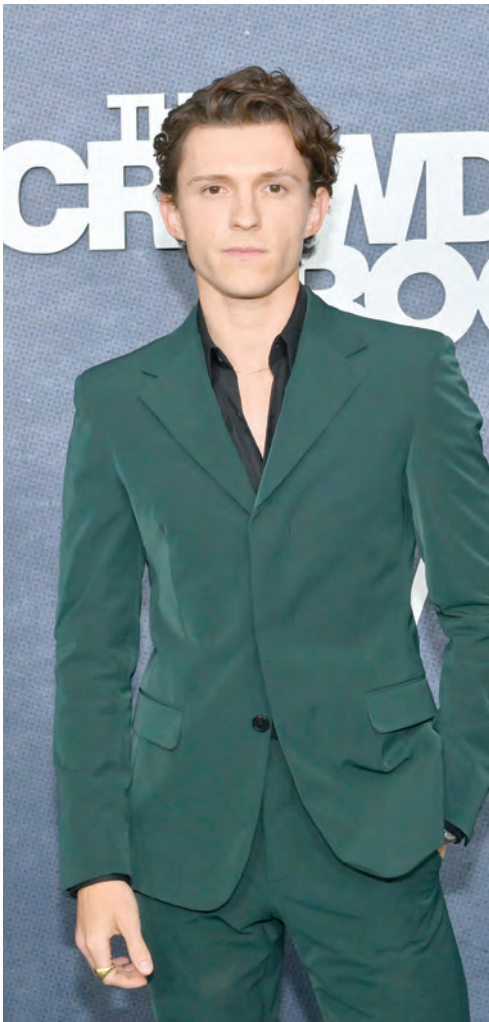
popularity of Bulgarian yoghurt traces back over a century, when scientists Stamen Grigorov and Élie Metchnikoff discovered its health benefits, associating it with increased longevity among Bulgarian peasants. Scientific research supports these claims, emphasizing the probiotic properties of Lactobacillus bulgaricus and other unique bacteria found only in Bulgarian yoghurt. Professor Penka Petrova from the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences highlights its health-promoting qualities, including boosting immunity and longevity. Local farmers note the seasonal variations in yoghurt flavor, influenced by the diet of cows and sheep. For lifelong resident Mitra Pareva, yoghurt has been a daily staple, reinforcing its cultural and health significance in Bulgaria. The festival continues to celebrate this age-old tradition, bridging cultural and scientific appreciation across borders. — Reuters



Nolan's 'Odyssey' script is 'best I've ever read', says Tom Holland

WITH “The Odyssey” and a new “Spider-Man” film, next summer looks set to be the summer of Tom Holland — and the famously boyish and ebullient star can hardly contain his excitement. First up will be Christopher Nolan's epic adaptation of “The Odyssey”, out mid-July. Holland plays Telemachus, the son of the saga's hero Odysseus and a key character in the Ancient Greek saga. “The script is the best script I've ever read”, Holland, who recently wrapped filming in locations around the Mediterranean, said. The movie is Nolan's follow-up to “Oppenheimer” and again boasts an A-list cast, including Matt Damon, Anne Hathaway, Robert Pattinson, Charlize Theron — and Zendaya, Holland's fiancée. “Chris [Nolan] is a real collaborator. He knows what he wants... but it is not an environment where you can't pitch ideas or build characters in certain ways”, enthuses Holland. The two Brits have not worked together before, but have plenty in common.

Nolan directed the Batman “Dark Knight” trilogy. They stand alongside Holland's “Spider-Man” movies among the superhero genre's most successful and beloved movies. Just days before Holland spoke to AFP, photos circulated of him shooting an action sequence for “Spider-Man: Brand New Day” in Glasgow, with the Scottish city standing in for New York. For Holland, donning the Spidey suit for his seventh overall Marvel movie, it still “feels like the first time”. “Yesterday, I was on top of a tank driving down the high street in Glasgow, in front of thousands of fans and it was awesome”, he said. “It was so incredible, it was exciting and exhilarating and it felt fresh”. The film is due out late July, just two weeks after “The Odyssey”.



“TOXIC” TECHNOLOGY Holland's take on Peter Parker — aka Spider-Man — has always stood out from previous versions for its especially playful, youthful energy. Those qualities are also central to “Never Stop Playing”, a new campaign and short film fronted by Holland for The LEGO Group, which warns that children today feel pressured into growing up too fast. “With screens and phones and iPads and Instagram and all these sorts of toxic pieces of technology, it was really nice to be a part of something that is a tangible product”, says Holland. Holland, 29, says his generation is lucky to have grown up at the dawn of social media, when the technology was less pervasive and destructive than it is now. “I think that it puts young



people under a certain amount of pressure, to maybe not necessarily be themselves, but be versions of themselves that the internet want them to be”, he says. “By the time my peers are having kids, we'll understand the dangers of social media and kids living in the spotlight”. ZENDAYA Holland's engagement to “Spider-Man” co-star Zendaya drew global headlines earlier this year, after she was spotted wearing a giant, gleaming engagement ring to the Golden Globes. As for the topic of children, “I haven't embarked on that part of my life yet”, Holland says. “But keeping a keen eye on the access young people have on the internet is very important. I'll definitely be buying them LEGO before I'm buying them a phone”, he says. For now, Holland is excited to keep imbuing his Spider-Man with that youthful vigour, which “really is just who I am — it's kind of like a heightened version of myself”. “It's very important to never lose that eagerness to play”, he says. As Holland has grown older and become more famous, “I've become slightly more introverted and kind of yearn for a bit more of a private life at times”, he reflects. “But I think that kid in me will always be there.” — AFP



AT THE FOREFRONT OF OMAN'S GROWING ADVENTURE SCENE FOR WOMEN

BY LIJU CHERIAN

IN A WORLD where exploration often feels reserved for the young and the fearless, women across the globe are defying convention, finding joy and empowerment in the great outdoors. This spirit of adventure is alive and thriving even in the challenging landscape of Oman, where rugged mountains, vast deserts and shimmering coastlines form a dynamic tableau of natural wonder. Among those leading the charge is Hamda al Saadi, a licensed tour guide and passionate explorer from the Sultanate of Oman, whose story embodies the transformative power of adventure — especially for women.

Hamda's journey is a testament to how the trails and terrains of Oman are more than just scenic landscapes; they are gateways to confidence, resilience and community. In a society historically

rooted in tradition, she is reshaping perceptions, encouraging women to step beyond societal boundaries and embrace nature's call.

Her work goes beyond guiding tourists — she empowers local women, helping them discover their own courage in experiencing what her homeland has to offer. Remarkably, she is also part of a growing movement of women across Oman who are finding unconventional, yet fulfilling, career paths in outdoor tourism and adventure guiding.

More women today are stepping into roles as trip organisers, outdoor instructors and adventure consultants, breaking stereotypes and fostering a new wave of female leadership in the country's tourism sector.

Oman's landscapes, often perceived as formidable,

The country is witnessing a quiet but powerful shift — more women are stepping into roles that were once considered unconventional, especially in adventure tourism.

From women-led eco-tourism initiatives to climbing groups and cultural organisations, the movement is gaining momentum. These women are not only finding alternative careers that allow them to connect with nature and local communities but are also inspiring others to follow suit.

It's a growing movement aimed at breaking stereotypes, fostering economic independence and creating opportunities for women to lead, guide and teach in outdoor environments.

Hamda's story resonates far beyond Oman's borders. As a woman carving her path in the predominantly



male-dominated tourism industry, she embodies a powerful message: adventure is for everyone. Her leadership has inspired many women to venture into unfamiliar terrains, both literally and metaphorically, discovering strengths they never knew they possessed.

Her advocacy is rooted in the belief that exploration fosters resilience and self-awareness. “When we trek through rugged mountains or walk along silent coastlines”, she says, “we learn not only about the world but also about ourselves”. With each journey, Hamda nurtures a new generation of explorers — female and male alike — affirming that leadership in adventure knows no gender.

Her commitment extends to sustainable tourism, championing practices that respect Oman's environment and support its communities. She promotes eco-friendly travel, advocates for responsible interaction with nature and encourages the sharing of traditional crafts and local cuisine. Her approach ensures that every adventure leaves a positive legacy, balancing the thrill of exploration with the preservation of Oman's priceless heritage.

For Hamda, Oman is more than just a destination; it is a living testament to resilience, heritage and beauty. Her love for her homeland is palpable and her work serves as a heartfelt invitation to the world to appreciate its wonders. Through her efforts, she hopes to inspire others — especially women — to step into nature's embrace, find their voice and craft their own stories of adventure.