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NÜRBURGRING
RETURN FOR
AHMAD AT GTWCE
PENULTIMATE RACE

IN BRIEF

HM PARDONS
459 PRISONERS

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Supreme Commander, has issued a Royal pardon to 459 Omani and foreign prisoners convicted of different cases. The Royal pardon coincides with the Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) Birth Anniversary. It also comes out of consideration for the families of the prisoners.

HIS MAJESTY GREETES
UKRAINE PRESIDENT

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent greetings to President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine on his country's Independence Day. His Majesty expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes to President Zelensky and the people of Ukraine.

AL HAMRA
WITNESSES 220P/
McNAUGHT
BRIGHTNESS



The surge in activity saw the comet's brightness increasing 8,000 times, and it returned to this level of activity strongly this August.

The periodic Comet 220P/McNaught witnessed one of its most exciting phases following a sudden surge in activity while approaching the Sun in June this year. The observation took place from the Eastern Mountain in the Wilayat of Al Hamra. The surge in activity saw the comet's brightness increasing 8,000 times, and it returned to this level of activity strongly this August.

Yahya al Kindi, an astrophotographer, said that the observation required precise calculations to determine the ideal viewing angle and the required time of passage to be able to clearly capture the comet through specialised astronomical equipment. Al Kindi noted that the summit of the Eastern Mountain in the Wilayat of Al Hamra is distinguished by its strategic location, which makes it one of the best destinations in the Sultanate of Oman for astronomical observation and stargazing due to its high altitude, low humidity and lack of artificial light.

HM RECEIVES MESSAGE FROM SAUDI CROWN PRINCE

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has received a written message from Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz al Saud, Crown Prince and Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, pertaining

to the enduring fraternal relations and bilateral cooperation between the two countries. The message was received by Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthi, Under-Secretary of the Foreign Ministry for

Political Affairs, during his meeting in Muscat on Tuesday with Ibrahim bin Saad bin Bishan, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the Sultanate of Oman.

— ONA

OMAN, IRAN PLAN
HORMUZ CORRIDOR

MINISTERS DISCUSS MINE-CLEARING PROJECT IN STRAIT

SAYYID

BADR BIN HAMAD AL BUSAIDI, Foreign Minister, held constructive

consultations with his Iranian counterpart Dr Seyed Abbas Araghchi in Tehran on Tuesday

A joint statement between the Sultanate of Oman and the Islamic Republic of Iran following the consultations between the two ministers pointed out that the consultations focused on the importance both countries attach to the resumption of safe navigation through the Strait of Hormuz while preserving their sovereignty and sovereign rights.

The two ministers discussed a phased framework that could provide a practical and implementable basis for moving forward, in light of the current situation in the Strait resulting from the recent war and its tragic repercussions. The proposed framework includes the establishment of a joint temporary navigational corridor through the Strait of Hormuz and an agreement to implement a joint project to clear the Strait of mines.

Technical negotiations between the two sides would continue with a view to agreeing on a permanent navigational corridor and future administration of the Strait, as well as a mechanism for information-sharing, traffic management, and the provision of relevant navigational and security services. In this context, both sides underscored the importance of convening joint discussions with regional states bordering the waters of the Gulf. They further stressed the need to uphold applicable international law and respect the sovereign rights of the coastal states.



Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, with Dr Seyed Abbas Araghchi, in Tehran on Tuesday.

Technical negotiations between the two sides would continue with a view to agreeing on a permanent navigational corridor and future administration of the Strait, as well as a mechanism for information-sharing, traffic management, and the provision of relevant navigational and security services.

Meanwhile, Iran pledged to fight back against expanded US sanctions aimed at isolating its economy, expressing confidence that major trading partners would resist the pressure campaign and saying that Washington was keen to revive talks. Almost six months into a conflict the US has struggled to resolve, Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent unveiled the measures on Monday but stopped short of the most punishing sanctions.

While he said countries that continued trading with Iran risked being forced out of the dollar-based financial system, he declined to give a timeline or identify which may be targeted, saying he would give them time to comply with the

new directive. Abbas Golroo, head of the foreign relations committee in the Iranian parliament, said Pakistan's army chief Asim Munir had delivered a message from the US to Iran on Monday.

Iran expressed a general willingness to resume peace talks during meetings between Iranian and Pakistani officials on Monday, while expressing concern about the sanctions, a Pakistani government source said. The Treasury Department announced new sanctions on 60 individuals, entities and vessels, but the list did not feature any of the Chinese financial institutions suspected of facilitating Iran's oil trade.

— ONA, AFP

Rains and hailstorm lash many wilayats, wadis flooded

ABDULAZIZ AL ABRI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 25

Rainfall of varying intensities associated with active winds and hail was reported in several governorates, on Tuesday. The Hajar Mountains and surrounding areas witnessed thundershowers causing overflow of wadis.

The Wilayat of Al Hamra in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate experienced thundershowers of varying intensity concentrated in the mountainous areas and the centre of the wilayat.

A number of villages in the wilayats of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar and Nizwa also experienced thundershowers. The Wilayat of Bahla witnessed moderate to heavy rainfall mainly in the villages of Al Fath and Basya and surrounding areas.

The Wilayat of Ibri in Al Dhahirah Governorate experienced rainfall of varying intensities associated with hail mostly in the villages of Wadi Al Hajar, Al Rassa, Al Duraiz, Al Aridh, and Muqniyat. Rain was also reported in Wadi Al Ajam in the Al Hawmaniyah causing several



Three other wilayats recorded 19mm each, while several locations received between 7mm and 14mm of rainfall.

wadis to overflow. Heavy rains fell in the Wilayat of Yanqul mainly in the areas of Al Shuja and Al Mari and Qumayrah village in the Wilayat of Dhank.

The Wilayat of Mahadha in Al Buraimi Governorate witnessed rainfall of varying intensities associated with hail particularly in Humaydah and Sharm causing flash floods. The Al Dahah area in the north also experienced heavy rain and hail. Light rain fell on the Al Sahtan Mountains in the Wilayat of Al Rustaq in Al Batinah South

Governorate. Al Wusta Governorate saw rainy weather and rainfall in parts of the Wilayat of Haima.

Between August 22 and 24, the Wilayat of Al Hamra recorded the highest rainfall amount with 28 millimetres, the wilayats of Al Buraimi, Ibri and Nizwa reported 19mm of rainfall, the Wilayat of Salalah (14 mm), the Wilayat of Taqah (9mm), the Wilayat of Haima (8mm), the wilayats of Samayil and Dima W'attayeen (7mm), according to Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources.

OMAN

SHORT TAKES



The propagation marks the beginning of subsequent phases. — ONA

ROYAL GARDENS AND FARMS SUCCESSFULLY PROPAGATE ORCHIDS

SALALAH: The Royal Gardens and Farms at the Royal Court Affairs have achieved successful propagation of both indigenous and imported orchid varieties, following years of sustained experimentation, developmental efforts and ongoing research.

Initial cultivation of orchids commenced in 1982 at the nurseries of the Royal Gardens and Farms in Salalah, using imported seedlings. This marked the beginning of subsequent phases dedicated to the propagation and production of orchids in an extensive array of colours, forms, and cultivars, carried out at the farms of Bir bint Ahmed and Qayrun Hayriti in Salalah.

Dhofar enjoys a climate particularly conducive to orchid propagation, with temperature and humidity levels that closely mimic the plant’s natural requirements. The species thrives in environments where temperatures range between 18 and 32 degrees Celsius, with relative humidity maintained at 60 to 85 per cent.

Eng Ibrahim bin Ahmed Quttan, Director of the Technical Support Department at the Royal Gardens and Farms in Salalah, stated that multiple orchid genera have been successfully propagated, including *Dendrobium*, *Vanda*, *Arachnis* (*Aranda*), *Oncidium*, *Cattleya*, and *Phalaenopsis*. Among these, *Dendrobium* has demonstrated the greatest adaptability to Dhofar’s climatic conditions, followed by *Oncidium*. — ONA



ROYAL OFFICE MINISTER RECEIVES BRITISH AMBASSADOR



MUSCAT: Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office, received in his office on Tuesday Liane Saunders, Ambassador of the United Kingdom to the Sultanate of Oman.

During the meeting, the two sides engaged in cordial discussions and reviewed the trajectory

of bilateral relations, which continue to witness sustained progress across all domains, as well as means of further enhancing them to serve the joint interests.

The two sides also addressed a number of regional and international developments and issues of shared concern. — ONA

CPA: Shop smart to avoid spending unnecessarily

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 25

WITH CONSUMERS increasingly exposed to advertisements across traditional and digital platforms, attractive discounts and promotional offers have become a major influence on purchasing decisions. While many advertisements provide useful information about products and services, some may contain misleading claims or fail to present the actual conditions of an offer, making consumer awareness essential to avoid unnecessary spending.

Consumers are often encouraged to make quick purchasing decisions through phrases such as ‘limited-time offer’, ‘massive discount’ and ‘unbeatable price’. Such promotions can create the impression that customers are saving money, although the advertised price may not always represent a genuine reduction from the original price.

Dr Muneera al Fikri, Media Specialist at the Consumer Protection Authority (CPA), said consumers should exercise greater caution when responding to advertisements and verify the claims before making a purchase. “Most of us are encouraged to buy through advertisements because we believe we are saving money or protecting our budget. However, we need to be aware that some advertisements can be misleading and may not reflect the actual facts,” she said.

According to Dr Muneera, one of the simplest ways to determine whether a discount is genuine is to check the product’s price before and after the promotion.

“To make sure whether an



To make sure whether an advertisement is misleading or genuine, consumers should check the price of the product in the store before and after the promotion. The prices should be clearly displayed so that consumers can verify whether the advertised discount is genuine,

DR MUNEERA AL FIKRI
MEDIA SPECIALIST, CPA



Promotional content can reach thousands of consumers within a short period, while the urgency created by online campaigns may encourage people to purchase without sufficient verification.

advertisement is misleading or genuine, consumers should check the price of the product in the store before and after the promotion. The prices should be clearly displayed so that consumers can verify whether the advertised discount is genuine,” she said.

Price comparison is another important step. Consumers should not rely solely on the percentage of discount displayed in an advertisement. Comparing the advertised price with prices offered by other stores can provide a clearer indication of whether the promotion actually offers a financial benefit.

Al Fikri stressed the importance of comparing prices before making a purchase, saying consumers should “make sure that the advertised price is lower than the price of the same product at another store to determine whether the promotion is genuine or simply an attractive but misleading advertisement.” She also pointed out that discounts and promotional campaigns are subject to specific

conditions and procedures.

“Discounts and promotional offers have certain conditions, and they are approved by the relevant authorities through established procedures,” she said, highlighting the importance of checking the details of promotional campaigns rather than relying solely on advertising messages.

Consumer awareness, however, should extend beyond price. The quality, safety and validity of the product are equally important, particularly when purchasing food, cosmetics, household products or other goods with expiry dates.

Al Fikri urged consumers to verify the quality of advertised products and ensure that they are safe for use and have not expired.

The growing use of social media and digital platforms has made the issue even more relevant.

Promotional content can reach thousands of consumers within a short period, while the urgency created by online campaigns may encourage people to purchase without sufficient verification.

Community interaction day seeks protection of stray animals

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
MUSCAT, AUGUST 25

The Oman Animal Welfare Association (OAWA) introduced its activities to the public at a one-day community event held at SABCO on Tuesday. It was the first official public introduction and interaction with the association that has set many goals to protect animals and build team support.

The team urged the public to get involved through volunteering time, fostering rescued animals, or supporting the association’s educational campaigns to help build a compassionate society that includes animals.

For years, compassionate citizens and residents shouldered the immense responsibility of protecting strays entirely on their own, but now there is a structured system to support the efforts.

Sayyidah Salsabeel bint Badr al Busaidi, OAWA’s

chairperson, believes people and animals can coexist harmoniously. “This event has given us the opportunity to showcase what OAWA has achieved in the last 8 to 10 months and to introduce the seven committees, the volunteers and the progress we have made,” said Sayyida Salsabeel.

This new national platform has brought together the passionate advocates under a structured, legal umbrella, granting them the institutional support needed to create lasting societal change.

“Our objective for today’s event is to introduce Oman Animal Welfare Association initiatives to the public and to spread awareness of how simple it is to be supportive in any way of the welfare of our loving animals,” said Asma al Shaikh, Marketing Manager of OAWA.

The fun-filled community market offered the



The fun-filled community market offered the opportunity to discover what the organisation stands for, how to support its work, and how to become a volunteer.

opportunity to discover what the organisation stands for, how to support its work, and how to become a volunteer.

The event offered a unique

opportunity to meet the team, learn about ongoing welfare initiatives, and discover how to make a meaningful difference through

volunteering, fostering, or adopting and spreading awareness. Designed for visitors of all ages, the market featured lively and engaging kids’ activities, including interactive arts and crafts and fun games, allowing adults the time to browse the fundraising market, purchase OAWA items, and get introduced to the organisation’s core responsibilities.

The initiatives of the association require financial support.

“Yes, of course; we need the support to help cover our vet bills or sponsor our projects like TNVMR, feeding stations and educational projects as well. So far we have got mostly positive responses, but there is a lot of work to do on coexistence, awareness and responsible pet ownership,” said the board member and treasurer of OAWA, Baida al Zadjali, who has been personally rescuing animals

for the past 10 years and has over 30 cats under her care.

At present, at the association’s headquarters in Azaiba, eight cats are already waiting for adoption or for fostering homes.

At its heart, the organisation focuses on the rescue and rehabilitation of homeless animals and spreading awareness throughout Oman as well as long-term preventative measures.

“Rescuing animals means helping animals that are injured, abandoned, abused, homeless, or in danger. It may involve providing food, shelter, medical treatment and safety, followed by reuniting them with their owners, releasing them safely, or finding them a loving home. Every rescue gives an animal another chance at a safe and happy life,” explained Sajeewa Jayasuriya, marketing specialist.

SHORT TAKES



The delegation also learned about local crafts and products, markets, events and community experiences. — ONA

ICESCO DELEGATION VISITS HERITAGE LANDMARKS

SALALAH: A delegation from the Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ICESCO) on Tuesday visited landmarks of tourism and heritage in the Governorate of Dhofar. The tour, which also covered natural sites, was part of an ICESCO cultural programme codenamed “Bridges of Civilisation” that is being hosted by the Sultanate of Oman until August 28, 2026.

The delegation was led by Dr Salem bin Mohammed al Malik, Director-General of the ICESCO. The programme aims to promote cultural communication among ICESCO and member states, showcase civilisational, cultural, heritage and tourism assets of Dhofar Governorate and to outline national experiences in preserving heritage and using it in the development of sustainable tourism.

Dr Salem bin Hilal al Habsi, Director of the Secretariat-General of National Committees and Conferences at ICESCO, said that the “Bridges of Civilisation” programme embodies the organisation’s vision to enhance civilisational diplomacy and direct communication among member states, as well as opportunities for cooperation and joint initiatives.

Talal bin Humaid al Khusaibi, Director-General of Heritage and Tourism in Dhofar Governorate, said that the visit of the ICESCO delegation stems from Oman’s keenness to consolidate cooperation with international organisations and institutions and to showcase Dhofar Governorate’s heritage, cultural and tourism landmarks. He underscored the significance of such visits in highlighting Oman’s experiences in preserving heritage and using it in a sustainable manner. — ONA

REGISTRATION OPENS FOR 13TH OMANI SONG FESTIVAL



The festival is a national artistic event dedicated to Omani music. — ONA

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth on Tuesday announced the opening of registration for the 13th edition of the Omani Song Festival, scheduled to take place from January 3 to 6, 2027.

The festival is a national artistic event dedicated to Omani music and singing, seeking to showcase Omani talents and voices, support musical creativity, and enhance the presence and evolution of the Omani song in step with artistic developments at both the local and regional levels.

The festival serves as a platform to celebrate Omani musical achievements, discover promising artistic talents, and strengthen connections between artists, musicians, and those with an interest in the arts — thereby enriching the Omani music scene and consolidating the standing of the Omani song on domestic and regional stages.

The ministry has set forth the participation requirements for the festival. Omani talents in the field of singing are eligible to apply, with participants required to be between the ages of 18 and 39. Applicants must submit a video clip performing a song of their choice, through which they demonstrate their vocal and performance abilities, with the clip not exceeding two minutes in duration. The deadline for receipt of submitted works has been set for 31 October. — ONA

GOVERNOR OF DHOFAR FELICITATES GED TOP PERFORMERS

SALALAH: HH Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said, Governor of Dhofar, today felicitated outstanding students who excelled in exams of the General Education Diploma (GED) in the governorate this year. A ceremony to this effect was held under the auspices of HH Sayyid Marwan and was attended by Dr Mayzoon bint Bakheet al Shahri, Director-General of Education in the Governorate of Dhofar, in addition to the parents of the students.

HH Sayyid Marwan congratulated the outstanding students, noting that their success



The outstanding performance represent promising energies that pave the way for development. — ONA

was the outcome of hard work and perseverance. He also commended the role of the students’ families and the educational institutions

that lent support to the students and encouraged them to excel.

HH Sayyid Marwan pointed out that the students’ accomplishment

Agreements inked to enable investment in health sector

THE MINISTRY of Health on Tuesday signed two memoranda of cooperation with the Development Bank and Sohar International, as part of the strategic direction to strengthen partnerships between the government sector and national financial institutions, and to enable investment in the health sector.

The memoranda were signed on behalf of the ministry by Dr Hilal bin Ali al Sabti, Minister of Health; on behalf of Development Bank by Mahmoud bin Abdullah al Owaini, Secretary-General of the Ministry of Finance and Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Development Bank; and on behalf of Sohar International by Abdulwahid bin Mohammed al Murshidi, Chief Executive Officer of the Bank.

The Minister of Health affirmed that increasing local production rates of medical supplies and health products constitutes a core pillar for enhancing the resilience of the health sector and building specialised national capacities.

He further stated that the ministry seeks to attract sustainable investments that support domestic industry and ensure the security of medical supply chains. He noted that the two memoranda establish an institutional implementation framework for



The memoranda of cooperation seek to enable investment in the health sector. — ONA

this strategic direction, without compromising the rigorous technical and commercial evaluation of submitted proposals, and support the objectives of Oman Vision 2040, particularly with regard to building a sustainable health system and expanding access to services.

With respect to the partnership with the Development Bank, the memorandum provides for the enhancement of joint efforts to identify investment needs in the health sector and to familiarise project owners with financing requirements, thereby supporting projects that align with Oman’s health priorities and meet the quality and licensing standards approved by

the ministry.

This step comes amid growing health investment opportunities that extend beyond hospitals to encompass medical industries, outpatient care services, diagnostics, rehabilitation, long-term care, and digital health.

In his turn, the Board Chairman of the Development Bank stated that the Bank has approved financing for 230 loans in the health sector during the period from 2023 through July 2026, which has provided the Bank with accumulated expertise in meeting the financing needs of this sector.

He noted that the value added of the health sector recorded growth of 7.3 per cent during the first quarter of 2026,

opens broader vistas for greater achievements in the fields of knowledge and resourcefulness.

“The outstanding sons and daughters of Dhofar Governorate represent promising energies that pave the way for development and serve the nation”, he added.

The felicitation ceremony aimed to express support for the march of education and the culture of excellence. It also underlined the importance of partnership between student families and educational institutions in nurturing promising talents.

— ONA

affirming that this partnership complements the Bank’s role in diversifying the national economy and achieving the objectives of Oman Vision 2040.

With regard to the localisation of medical industries through the partnership with Sohar International, the memorandum aims to establish a framework for evaluating and referring projects eligible for financing. The partnership aspires to raise the share of locally manufactured health products to no less than 30 per cent over the next three years, compared to the current level of approximately 9 per cent across 20 existing factories, while imports currently account for 91 per cent of market needs.

The memorandum seeks to enable investors wishing to establish new factories or expand existing facilities. Under the agreement, the Ministry of Health conducts the preliminary feasibility assessment of projects, then refers applications that meet the criteria to the Bank for evaluation and financing decisions, in coordination with the ministry.

Regarding this partnership, the Chief Executive Officer of Sohar International stated that financing becomes more effective when directed toward building productive capacities that yield economic and social benefit — a principle embodied by the health industries. — ONA

Expatriates all set to celebrate Onam today

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, AUGUST 25

The scent of flowers and banquet of multi-course vegetarian feast fill homes, hotels and halls across Oman as thousands of Malayalis celebrate Onam, the Indian state of Keralam’s harvest festival, on Wednesday.

From Muscat and Suhar to Salalah and Nizwa, associations and other groups are hosting three days of cultural programmes, competitions, and the traditional Onam sadya — a feast of up to 26 dishes served on banana leaves

The celebrations of Onam are not away from their Omani brethren. Malayalis who celebrate Onam invite Omani colleagues and friends to their homes as well as to the community halls where Onam is taking its full shape. Several Omani officials and business



Multi-course vegetarian feast and floral carpets are Onam’s main attractions.

leaders attend events as guests of honour, underscoring the long ties between Oman and Keralam, rooted in centuries of maritime trade.

“What attracts me the most is the teamwork, efforts and the unity among those celebrate in making the sadya possible and the floral carpet which are the epitomes of togetherness,”

says Adhil Said Ajham Fadhil, many of whose staff members celebrate Onam and he is supposed to be attending half a dozen of events these days.

At the Malayalam Wing and the Kerala Wing under the Indian Social Club in Muscat and the Palakkad friends, the centrepiece is a massive pookalam, a floral carpet made

of marigold, rose, and hibiscus petals, spanning several feet. Children in kasavu sarees and mundu perform Thiruvathira and Kaikottikali before pookalams or floral carpets.

“Working here for 18 years, Onam is the one day we all meet as one family,” said Arun Melethil, a film-maker and a private sector employee. “We may be far from Keralam, but with the pookalam, the sadya, and the songs, it feels exactly like home.”

The elaborate food, also known as sadya, is the heart of all celebrations. Volunteers spend hours preparing varieties like avial, thoran, olan and different types of payasams (desserts). Most associations offer free sadya while hotels and restaurants compete with each other to offer the best sadya. For one day, the distance between Muscat and Keralam felt a lot smaller.



خريف
ظفار
KHAREEF
DHO FAR

SALALAH 'S HIDDEN BEACH OFFERS A QUIET KHAREEF ESCAPE

KABEER YOUSUF

WHILE thousands of visitors flock to Al Mughsail and Fazayah during the Khareef season, a quieter stretch of coastline about 35 km east of Salalah is attracting growing interest as one of Dhofar's lesser-known beach escapes.

The secluded cove can be reached only on foot or by 4x4 vehicles. It offers turquoise waters, limestone cliffs and a largely undeveloped setting with few visitors.

Local guides and adventure groups say visits to the beach have doubled this summer.

"It's the anti-Khareef spot," said Adhil Said Ajham Fadhil, a senior official at Salalah Municipality. "People come to Al Mughsail for the blowholes and selfies, as well as to hear the waves and nothing else."

Reaching the beach is part of the adventure. Visitors drive for about 20 minutes along a gravel track from the coastal road before taking a 15-minute downhill hike through wild grass and frankincense trees. During Khareef, the surrounding hills turn green, while morning mist often rolls down from the cliffs.

At the bottom lies a 300-metre crescent of white sand bordered by cliffs rising about 40 metres. The water is generally shallow and calm in the morning, making it suitable for swimming, while local fishermen occasionally moor small boats in the cove during the afternoon.

Tour operators expect the secluded beach to remain one of Salalah's most talked-about yet least crowded destinations

With no facilities available, guides encourage visitors to follow a "leave no trace" approach.

"We bring out everything we bring in," Fadhil said. "That's why it's still clean."

Three factors are driving growing interest in the beach. Social media videos showcasing its emerald waters during Khareef have gained traction across the GCC, while travellers are

increasingly seeking alternatives to crowded beaches during the June-to-September season.

The unpaved access road has also helped keep mass tourism at bay, preserving the beach's secluded character.

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism is reportedly studying the site as part of plans to develop low-impact ecotourism destinations in eastern Dhofar in 2027. For now, access remains informal and free.

Officials and local guides recommend visiting between 8 am and 2 pm, when the sea is generally calmer and conditions are favourable for photography. A 4x4 vehicle is recommended, particularly after rainfall, while visitors should be aware that there is no mobile phone coverage at the beach.

Swimmers are advised to watch for rocks and avoid the area during high tide. The access trail is also frequented by camel herds, making careful driving essential on the hilly track.

"You won't find food trucks or music here," said Fatima al Balushi, a tourist from Dubai who visited the beach last week. "You'll find fog, goats on the cliffs and water that looks like it's from Southeast Asia. That's the point."

With the Khareef season continuing until mid-September, tour operators expect the secluded beach to remain one of Salalah's most talked-about yet least crowded destinations.

Environmental groups are calling for basic signage and waste bins to be introduced as visitor numbers increase, while avoiding overdevelopment that could undermine the site's natural appeal.

With its turquoise waters, mist-covered green cliffs and sense of solitude, the beach is fast becoming one of the Dhofar coast's best-kept secrets.



SHORT TAKES



The symposium also highlights the role of AI and modern technologies in vector control. — ONA

SYMPOSIUM FOCUSES ON DISEASE VECTOR MANAGEMENT

SALALAH: Dhofar Municipality is organising a two-day symposium on the management and control of disease vectors, notably mosquitoes.

The symposium, which began in the Wilayat of Salalah, seeks to explore the latest scientific and practical methods in the field of vector control. It discusses successful local and regional experiences with a view to enhancing the role of municipalities and relevant authorities in this field.

The symposium also highlights the role of artificial intelligence (AI) and modern technologies in vector control, in addition to consolidating the concept of integrated vector management (IVM).

The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of Dr Said bin Harib al Lamki, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Health for Health Affairs.

Experts, specialists and academics from the Sultanate of Oman and abroad will elaborate on the symposium's 5 main themes, which are: Biological solutions and modern innovations in combating disease vectors; Integrated management of small biting insects; International experiences in integrated vector management; Common vector-borne diseases; and Partnerships in combating disease vectors.

The opening of the symposium included a visual presentation about the efforts of Dhofar Municipality in combating mosquitoes. — ONA



SULTAN QABOOS INSTITUTE WELCOMES NEW STUDENTS

MUSCAT: The Sultan Qaboos Institute for Teaching Arabic to Non-Native Speakers on Tuesday received its new batch of students from various countries around the world, as part of the 63rd course, which marks the first session of the 2026/2027 academic year.

The new batch comprises students representing 14 nationalities, namely the United Kingdom, France, Hungary, Ukraine, Mexico, Russia, Belarus, Poland, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, India, South Korea, Türkiye and



The new batch comprises students representing 14 nationalities. — ONA

Tanzania. This diversity reflects the institute's commitment to cross-cultural engagement and its pivotal role in promoting the Arabic language and strengthening its global presence among non-native speakers. In addition to formal language instruction, the institute offers students the opportunity to explore Omani culture, society, heritage, customs, and traditions through a range of complementary cultural programmes and activities designed to enrich their educational experience. — ONA

ROP WINS BIG IN CHECHNYA TACTICAL SHOOTING



The ROP Special Task Force showcased an extraordinary performance across all competitions.

LT MOHAMMED AL MADASARI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 25

THE ROYAL Oman Police Special Task Force was crowned by Chechen President Ramzan Akhmatovich Kadyrov after securing first place in the International Open Tactical Shooting Championship for Special Forces Units, held in Chechnya from August 20 to 24.

The championship witnessed the participation of 41 teams from special task units and elite forces, alongside military tactical teams from the Russian Federation, the Republic of Belarus, and several Asian and Gulf countries.

Major Said bin Salem al Maamari, the Supervising Officer, said: "The championship involved 11 tactical competitions, which included advanced marksmanship, field operational skills, and various scenarios simulating real-life combat situations and security events."



The ROP Special Task Force showcased an extraordinary performance across all competitions, securing first place, claiming several gold medals, and taking the championship trophy home.

Captain Khaled bin Ahmed Ba'amer, the team officer, expressed: "We outperformed all of the participating elite teams and special task units in the field. I can confidently say it wasn't luck — it reflects our rigorous training, sharp discipline, and high tactical skills."

The result highlights the team's ability to apply advanced marksmanship and tactical skills under demanding competitive conditions. First Lieutenant Mohammed bin Hamed al Shidi, Public Relations Officer at the Special Task Police Command, said: "I am proud of this accomplishment, which reflects our high level of preparedness and efficiency in dealing with various security situations. Furthermore, winning the championship enhances the standing and reputation of the Royal Oman Police among elite military and tactical teams worldwide."

The championship victory adds to the international achievements of the Royal Oman Police, which highlights the importance of continuous training, operational readiness, and professional development. In addition, the results provide a strong international benchmark for the capabilities of the Special Task Force and its ability to perform under demanding tactical conditions.

Workshop highlights statistical data exchange



The workshop aims to introduce participants to the international SDMX standard and equip them with the requisite skills. — ONA

SALALAH: A training workshop on 'Using Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange (SDMX) for Reporting on Sustainable Development Goals in GCC Countries' commenced on Tuesday in Salalah. The three-day event is organised by the Statistical Centre for the Cooperation Council for the Arab Gulf States (GCC-Stat), in collaboration with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and the United Nations Statistics Division.

The workshop programme encompasses a range of training modules, including an assessment

of the status of GCC indicator data against the databases of the Gulf Statistical Centre, an evaluation of the current reporting status between the centre and member states, as well as training on SDMX concepts, the Sustainable Development Goals Data Structure Definition (SDG DSD) and the fundamentals of the SDMX conversion tool.

The training agenda further includes sessions on customising national data structures to suit the needs of GCC member states, workshops on structural metadata, data flows, and content constraints, advanced training on the SDMX

conversion tool, and practical exercises for transforming national data into standard SDMX formats.

The workshop aims to introduce participants to the international SDMX standard, equip them with the requisite skills for reporting on SDG indicator data, and thereby contribute to enhancing data accuracy and quality, improving reporting mechanisms, and fulfilling the requirements of national, regional, and international entities and organisations — ultimately supporting the ongoing monitoring of progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. — ONA

محافظه مسقط

Muscat Governorate

MUSCAT MUNICIPALITY

Advertisement No. (30/2026)

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Tender Number	Description of Tender	Last Date to Collect the Tender	Tender Return Date
PRE/26/104 Re-Call 1	Consultancy Services for Strategic Study for the Rental Values in Muscat Governorate (Re-Call 1)	15/09/2026	05/10/2026
PRE/26/128	Design & Construction of Fountain at Darsait	15/09/2026	05/10/2026
PRE/26/129	AMC for MM IT External Infrastructure	15/09/2026	05/10/2026

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WORLD

SHORT TAKES



Syrian President Ahmed al Sharaa

SYRIA SHAKES OFF PAST WITH REMOVAL FROM US TERROR LIST, SAYS PRESIDENT

DAMASCUS: Syrian President Ahmed al Sharaa hailed on Tuesday the United States’ removal of his country from the state sponsors of terror list, a major sanctions relief step for a country aiming to boost post-war reconstruction. “Today, Syria shakes off a dark stain and tears away a painful chapter of its past to embark on a path of development, reconstruction and rebuilding,” Sharaa said in a speech. Washington’s decision rescinded a decades-old designation that came with severe economic restrictions. Sharaa expressed his “many thanks to the President of the United States of America, Donald Trump, and to all the friendly and supportive nations that stood by us”. US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said in a statement that Monday’s move “will help foster additional investment in Syria to promote political and economic stability”. But the Treasury stressed that its removal of restrictions on Syria “does not change Treasury’s posture with regards to countering global terrorism and our commitment to hold bad actors in Syria accountable”. — AFP

NIGERIA’S PRESIDENT ORDERS RESCUE AFTER MASS KIDNAPPING



Parents of abducted students hold placards during a protest calling for their release in Askira-Uba, Borno State, Nigeria. — Reuters

LAGOS: Nigerian President Bola Tinubu ordered the military and other security agencies on Tuesday to launch an immediate rescue operation after scores of people were kidnapped by gunmen in north-central Niger State last week. An armed group posted a video on Facebook and WhatsApp showing what residents said were about 600 women, children and older people abducted during an attack on a mosque in the state. It was not able to verify the figure, but if confirmed, it would rank among Nigeria’s largest and most audacious mass kidnappings in recent years. In its first public comments on the incident, the presidency condemned the attack as cowardly and vowed that those responsible would be brought to justice. “Terror will not cow Nigeria. We will defend our people, protect our communities and uphold the sanctity of human life,” Tinubu said in a statement. — Reuters

BETTER LIFE DEMANDS

Rohingya refugees protest dire conditions



Tens of thousands of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh’s camps protested against dire conditions, as they marked nine years since a military crackdown drove them out of neighbouring Myanmar. The refugee group, the United Council of Rohingya (UCR), said it organised the rally to “remember the atrocities committed” and highlight the “ongoing humanitarian crisis”. The protesters held placards, some reading “Justice for Rohingya, Hope is Home” and “Timely justice is our right”. — AFP

UN, RED CROSS CALL FOR URGENT RULES ON AUTONOMOUS WEAPONS

GENEVA: The United Nations’ chief and the head of the Red Cross on Tuesday warned that autonomous weapons that can kill people without human involvement could soon be used in conflicts and called for urgent negotiations to restrict their use. “We are now dangerously close to crossing a moral red line: the autonomous targeting of humans by machines,” UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said in a joint statement with the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross Mirjana Spoljaric.

“Negotiations must begin now to urgently adopt a legally binding instrument to regulate autonomous weapon systems with clear prohibitions and restrictions,” they said. States meet in Geneva next week to discuss potential new rules amid mounting concerns over the role of AI-assisted semi-autonomous weapons that have been used in conflicts in Ukraine, Sudan, Gaza, and in Iran and the Gulf. The discussions, which began in 2014, have made some progress but technology has also advanced. Fully

autonomous weapons are already in use by some armies, such as anti-missile systems on warships, but for now they are not known to have been used against human targets. Human rights groups also worry that AI-driven systems cannot be adequately predicted or controlled, raising the risk of fatal errors such as a failure to recognise an injured or surrendering soldier. And once such errors occur, it is harder to hold perpetrators to account in any future war crimes cases, they say. — Reuters

UN slams Israel outrageous threats to expel Gazans

THE UNITED Nations on Tuesday slammed Israel’s threat to expel people from areas where kites, drones and balloons are launched from in Gaza, lamenting “unacceptable rhetoric” coming from Israeli leaders. “On the threat of expulsion due to children’s kite flying, I hope we can all agree that this is outrageous,” UN rights office spokeswoman Ravina Shamdasani told reporters in Geneva.

Israel warned Hamas on Sunday that it would step up operations in Gaza if launches of kites, drones and balloons towards Israel continued, after a recent increase in such incidents.

Hamas has denied responsibility. Israeli media reported that four kites were found in communities near the Gaza border on Saturday and one was shot down by the army on Sunday, bringing the total number recovered in recent days to around 10.

The incidents have revived memories of waves of incendiary kites and balloons launched from Gaza in previous years, which sparked fires in agricultural lands in southern Israel.

According to the reports, the Israeli military believes Hamas was behind the launches, which did not carry explosives, and may have been testing how Israel would respond. “Israel warns Hamas that if the launches towards Israel do not cease

The UN spokeswoman highlighted that the statement was only the latest in a string of threats. We continue to see unacceptable rhetoric coming from the highest level of the Israeli authorities, showing utter contempt for international human rights and humanitarian law, she said.



Palestinians leave their homes for cover following Israeli strikes at the Al Bureij refugee camp in central Gaza. — AFP

immediately, the IDF will take action to intensify targeted operations against those responsible... and will evacuate the population from areas from which kites, drones and balloons are launched,” Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defence Minister Israel Katz said on Sunday in a joint statement. Bassem Naim, a member of Hamas’s political bureau, said in a statement that the kites were “launched from Gaza by children searching for their innocent childhood amid the rubble”. In a separate statement, the Palestinian group accused Israel of using the kites as a “pretext” for air strikes in central Gaza on Sunday, in which three people were killed

according to Gaza’s civil defence rescue service. Meanwhile, Israeli police raided a vocational training centre run by the UN agency for Palestinian refugees in an east Jerusalem suburb on Tuesday, in a move a far-right minister said aimed to “remove” the body from the site. The move follows repeated warnings by UNRWA that Israeli authorities were threatening its Qalandia training centre, located between the east Jerusalem neighbourhood of Kafr Aqab and Qalandia refugee camp. The centre was established in 1952 and offers vocational training to around 340 Palestinians from the occupied West Bank every year. — AFP



VENEZUELA QUAKE DEATH TOLL SURPASSES 6,500

CARACAS: Venezuela’s interim government reported 6,509 deaths from the powerful twin earthquakes that struck the South American nation exactly two months ago. The magnitude 7.2 and 7.5 tremors on June 24 devastated the coastal state of La Guaira, where at least 190 buildings fell apart. The previous death toll had stood at 6,438. Efforts to recover the dead under the rubble are ongoing in La Guaira, where thousands of people made homeless by the quakes are living in makeshift camps. The interim government has not disclosed how many people remain missing after the disaster. Authorities say they have provided 335 homes to quake victims, having pledged to provide 4,000 by the end of the year. Last week, Venezuela carried out a readiness drill to test the provisional terminals installed at the international airport that serves Caracas, which was damaged in the twin earthquakes. The airport’s infrastructure was significantly damaged, including the main runway, limiting its operations to humanitarian flights for several weeks. — AFP

RECORD HIGH WATERS

China floods intensify, relocate thousands



Widespread floods triggered by heavy rain from Typhoon Narra intensified on Tuesday across southern China, with homes and shops submerged and thousands of people relocated, while another storm system made its way towards Japan and Taiwan. Authorities in Chongzuo, in China’s Guangxi region, evacuated more than 15,000 people after water levels surpassed a record high. Rising floodwaters have prompted China to relocate a total of 54,000 people in Guangxi. — Reuters

RECUPERATION STOP

USS Abraham Lincoln to dock in Thailand



The US aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln will dock in Thailand next week, following a prolonged deployment in the Middle East and reports of mental health concerns and deteriorating conditions aboard. The ship, which has roughly 5,000 sailors and Marines aboard, will be in Thailand for rest and recreation after their long sea journey. Thailand’s Navy said a US Navy carrier would make a brief stop with no exercises taking place. — Reuters

SHORT TAKES



German Chancellor Friedrich Merz gives a statement prior to the start of a retreat meeting of the German cabinet. — AFP

Germany’s Merz addresses critics with climate action pledge

BERLIN: German Chancellor Friedrich Merz on Tuesday sought to assuage critics who accuse his government of doing too little against climate change after a brutal summer of heatwaves and drought. “We have to further curb climate change and at the same time better adapt to the consequences,” Merz said. Germany had to “draw the long-term lessons from extreme situations such as this summer of heat,” he said, adding that the biggest EU economy had suffered “significant damage” over recent months.

A heatwave in late June saw Germany break its all-time temperature record three days in a row, topping 42 degrees, and official data shows that the country has registered a record of around 14,000 heat-related deaths this year. The country has seen wildfires and serious impacts on harvests, as well as rivers falling to levels which have restricted crucial navigation routes.

Merz’s centre-right CDU/CSU alliance has until now emphasised the need to “balance” climate action against efforts to revive Germany’s stuttering economy. It also faces pressure from the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD), which is leading in the polls and which denies the scientific consensus of man-made climate change. — AFP

79 MIGRANTS RESCUED OFF CRETE



Greek coastguards said they rescued 79 migrants from boats near Crete on Tuesday, the latest of hundreds pulled from the sea off the southern Mediterranean island in recent days. A press officer for the force said an EU drone spotted two boats carrying the migrants near the port of Kali Limenes in southern Crete. They included at least two women and two minors, and migrants from Bangladesh and war-torn Sudan. The figure of 79 followed an earlier number of 85 cited by Greece’s ANA news agency. Crete and the nearby island of Gavdos have become the main point of entry for asylum-seekers in Greece. — AFP

SWEDISH MILITARY SEEKS TO SEIZE RUSSIAN PROPERTY NEAR BASE

STOCKHOLM: The Swedish armed forces said on Tuesday they had asked the government to expropriate a property owned by a Russian near a naval base in Stockholm’s archipelago. The forces said in a statement that the property was located at one of the approaches to the Musko Naval Base. Swedish media have reported that it belongs to a Russian businessman with ties to the Kremlin.

The military said the location “has unique conditions for

strengthening the defence of Musko Naval Base, particularly against drones”, and was currently owned by an individual with Russian citizenship. “The development of Russian drone warfare has changed the threat landscape for Sweden,” the Swedish Armed Forces said. “There is therefore a need to take measures to protect Sweden against the threat posed by both aerial and sea-going drones,” it added. It said the property was “the only location” that was not at their disposal

“in order to establish an effective defence” of the base, “particularly against drones”.

The Swedish Fortifications Agency — which manages defence-related properties — had therefore requested, on behalf of the armed forces, that the government take over ownership. Newspaper Expressen reported that the property belonged to Russian businessman Stanislav Aleshchenko — who has links to Russian President Vladimir Putin. — AFP

Ukraine hopes for US role after getting some Patriots

UKRAINE SEES a window of opportunity for US mediation to end Russia’s war in Ukraine until the end of next summer and has drafted one page of ideas with US and European officials to be presented to Moscow, President Volodymyr Zelensky said. Zelensky said that a ceasefire and a previously discussed US proposal for a free economic zone in Ukraine’s eastern Donbas area — to be administered by a third party — were among the ideas in the document. “It contains one of the ideas for a ceasefire - that is the main point. The second part concerns what the Americans proposed regarding a free economic zone,” Zelensky told reporters in a weekend briefing.



A rescuer works at the site of a shopping mall hit by a Russian drone attack in Dnipro, Ukraine. — Reuters

Ukraine has recently received a small number of US-made Patriot interceptors capable of downing Russian ballistic missiles, President Volodymyr Zelensky said on Tuesday. The country also got confirmation of future supplies of the French Crotale surface-to-air missile system, the president was quoted as saying by broadcaster Suspilne. He did not say how many had arrived, or who had supplied them.

The Kremlin on Tuesday questioned the feasibility of the US idea to create a free economic zone in Donbas, saying the territory was formally part of Russia and that it was therefore unlikely that a third party could manage it. Russia has claimed four Ukrainian regions as its own, despite not controlling them fully. Moscow has repeatedly said that any solution must involve Ukraine fully ceding the four regions as well as resolving the conflict’s “root causes.”

Zelensky said that he saw a window to end the nearly four-and-a-half years of fighting that stretched from the G20 summit in the US in December this year until the end of summer 2027, given the looming

campaign for the 2028 presidential election in the US. Zelensky said earlier this month that Ukraine had handed proposals to US negotiators for a plan to end the war, without providing more detail.

US-led peace talks fell apart earlier this year as Ukraine refused Russian demands to cede more territory and as Washington became increasingly preoccupied with the conflict with Iran. US negotiators Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner were last in Moscow in January and have not yet visited Kyiv.

Zelensky said the third element in the draft proposal was the role that the European Union and Nato would play and what “Ukraine is prepared to do to achieve this”. He did not elaborate further. “These three ideas I’ve mentioned are not exclusively Ukrainian ideas,” Zelensky said, adding they were developed jointly with the Americans and the Europeans, with some stemming from previous talks US negotiators had with Ukraine and Russia.

Russia was open to listening to new proposals on how to reach a settlement on the Ukraine conflict,

Rare tornado ravages French village, causes huge destruction

POMAS: A tornado of rare intensity devastated a village in southern France, causing widespread destruction and leaving residents in shock on Tuesday, with the mayor describing the aftermath as resembling “wartime”. The tornado, which swept through the Aude department late on Monday afternoon, hit the small village of Pomas hardest, bringing down walls, tearing off roofs, and uprooting trees. Thirty-nine people were injured, including two severely, and 17 people were hospitalised.

Herve Gine, the mayor of Pomas, which is home to around a thousand people, said he had the feeling of living through “a wartime situation”. “We were bombed by nature,” he said. “People are in shock,” he said,

adding that some “have lost everything”. “The nursery school is gone,” he said. “We no longer have a school; we no longer have a town hall.”

Gine said it was a “miracle” no one died, estimating there could have been several dozen fatalities. The village’s narrow streets testified to the tornado’s violence, with debris everywhere, uprooted trees, roof tiles littering the ground, cars overturned, and homes left with shattered windows and torn-off shutters.

Interior Minister Laurent Nunez said on X the tornado was “of rare intensity”, while Marie-Helene Bouissac, the regional deputy prefect, said it was “an exceptional and highly traumatic event”. Of the village’s 476 homes, around 300 were damaged, said the mayor, adding the extent of



A man stands amongst the rubble of a damaged house following a tornado in Pomas, southwestern France. — AFP

the destruction was so severe that much of the village would have to be rebuilt.

By early Tuesday, 7,250 households across the Languedoc-Roussillon region were without power,

vineyards were littered with broken deckchairs, scraps of fibreglass insulation and pieces of wire fencing ripped apart by the fierce winds.

Emergency crews worked throughout the night while local residents tried to salvage what they could. Firefighters, assisted by a canine search unit, searched the site for possible victims. “Search and inspection operations are still under way, involving 75 firefighters supported by specialist reinforcement teams,” the prefecture said.

Overnight, some locals were accommodated in the community hall, which had been converted into a temporary shelter. Others stayed with friends and relatives, officials said. At a police checkpoint, relatives waited for permission to

enter the affected area, bringing supplies or offering assistance.

Jose Gomes, a resident of the nearby village of Trebes, said a friend’s house had collapsed. “He was inside; he suffered a head injury and broke three or four ribs,” he added.

France sees several dozen tornadoes of varying intensity each year, according to weather agency Meteo-France. This summer, France has endured three heatwaves, registering a record 52 days of heat intensified by climate change. The intense weather conditions have sparked droughts, wildfires and a record number of rockfalls in the Alps. The impact of global warming on the frequency and intensity of tornadoes is unclear. — AFP

OPINION

Our greatest advantage in an AI world



HYESHA BARRETT

The writer is a Master Life Coach and Positive Parent Specialist

OMAN is stepping boldly into the age of AI. With the establishment of an Artificial Intelligence Special Zone in Muscat, the message is clear: the future is not something we are simply waiting to arrive. We are preparing for it, investing in it and creating a place within it.

It is exciting progress, yet perhaps the most interesting question is not what artificial intelligence will eventually be capable of doing, but what this will require us to become.

For generations, we have prepared children for adulthood by placing enormous value on knowledge. Learn the information, achieve the grade, collect the qualification and hopefully secure the career. Today, answers that once required hours in a library can appear on a screen within seconds.

AI can analyse, calculate, translate, organise and generate ideas at remarkable speed. Knowing things is no longer quite the advantage it once was; knowing what to do with what we know may become far more important.

That changes the conversation around education, parenting and our own development. If technology can increasingly provide information, perhaps we need to focus more deliberately on the strengths that make us human: judgement, curiosity, emotional intelligence, creativity, resilience, empathy, intuition, integrity and our ability

to connect with others. These may not always be the qualities that receive the highest grades, yet they could become some of our greatest advantages.

Preparing children for that future cannot only be about making them technologically capable. Undeniably, they should understand AI and learn how to use the tools shaping their world. However, a child can be technologically brilliant and still struggle with life. They can find an answer instantly, while being terrified of getting something wrong. Or master a programme, while struggling to manage frustration, resolve conflict, trust their judgement, or adapt when life does not go according to plan.

Some of the most important preparation for tomorrow still happens in ordinary moments: when children become bored and create something for themselves, when we resist immediately solving a problem for them, or when they navigate disagreement, make a mistake, or experience disappointment.

These moments quietly strengthen resilience, imagination and independent thought, abilities no technology can develop on their behalf.

The same applies to adults. AI can give us back time, remove repetitive tasks and help us work in ways previous generations can barely imagine. There is no wisdom in resisting useful progress simply because it is unfamiliar, although there is wisdom

Oman is preparing its technology for the future, and perhaps alongside that progress, we must become equally deliberate about strengthening ourselves.

in noticing what we slowly stop doing for ourselves.

If every question receives an instant answer, do we become less comfortable with uncertainty? If every idea can be generated for us, do we exercise creativity less? If every decision can be optimised, do we gradually stop trusting our own judgement?

The challenge of the AI era is not proving that humans are smarter than machines.

That feels like the wrong competition altogether, and one we will not win when it comes to speed, information, or sheer processing power. Our real advantage lies in becoming better at what technology cannot replace: connecting, questioning, discerning, adapting, understanding nuance and bringing meaning to what we create.

Oman is preparing its technology for the future, and perhaps alongside that progress, we must become equally deliberate about strengthening ourselves.

The smartest person in tomorrow's room may not be the one who knows the most. It may be the one who knows what deserves questioning, what requires compassion, what cannot be outsourced and what should never be surrendered for convenience.

As machines become faster and more capable, our greatest advantage may be remembering the strengths that were ours all along. The more intelligent our technology becomes, the more intentionally we must develop what makes us unmistakably human.

KENYAN FARMERS TURN TO BUGS FOR ORGANIC FARMING

MARY KULUNDU

Kenyan farmer George Muturi says the stinky wooden shack teeming with redworms has helped rescue his land from the soil degradation caused by chemical fertilisers.

Agriculture is vital to East Africa's economy, but a 2025 soil report by the Heinrich Böll Foundation, a German think tank, found that more than 40 per cent of the region's soils were degraded - in part by overuse of chemical fertilisers - costing more than \$65 billion a year in lost productivity.

Fertiliser prices have also increased this year due to the war in the Middle East, driving a search for alternatives. In Kenya, 32 per cent of cropland was classified as strongly acidic in the soil report. Changing climatic conditions and overly intensive farming practices are among the causes, but Muturi says moving away from chemical fertilisers has boosted his harvests at his farm in Lari, about 50 kilometres from the capital, Nairobi.

He switched to 'vermicompost' - using redworms that turn food and crop waste into a natural, nutrient-rich form of fertiliser.

"Vermicomposting was a breakthrough for us... our soil is much better in a way that we can be able to plant and sustain the crop even during the dry season," the 31-year-old farmer said during a visit to his farm. About 70 beds, each filled with at least 5,000 redworms, hold layers of food and crop waste mixed with cow dung that the worms break down over six weeks to create vermicompost.

Multiple studies have shown that vermicompost can improve soil structure, organic matter and water retention. Muturi acknowledges that it is some way off being used on an industrial scale, since very large quantities are needed to match the effects of synthetic fertilisers.

But he says he has seen positive results on his vegetables and has started selling the compost to other farmers around the country.

About 200 kilometres away in Nakuru County, Robert Mwangi has taken a similar approach with the larvae of black soldier flies.

He collects waste from the city's main market and feeds it to the larvae, which break it down into frass, an organic fertiliser. The mature larvae are dried and used as animal feed. In a nylon structure, a pungent smell hangs over drums of shredded food waste, which are emptied into plastic boxes where the larvae feed for about two weeks before the frass is harvested. — AFP

Warning lights on perils of AI are blinking again

WE HAVE a dangerous habit of taking warning signs seriously only after a catastrophe has taught us what they meant.

I have spent much of my career on the other side of such warnings, in counterterrorism and cyberdefence. That experience has taught me that too often, the signs of impending danger are visible. What is missing is the ability to assemble the signs into a picture compelling enough to prompt action. The 9/11 commission called this a failure of imagination. Over the past several weeks, some of the world's most advanced AI systems took actions their creators did not intend. In one case, an Anthropic AI agent attempted to plant malicious code in open-source software, using fabricated identities to deceive a human into executing it. In a separate event, a swarm of OpenAI agents undergoing evaluation autonomously penetrated the production systems of Hugging Face, a platform used to share AI models, executing more than 17,000 autonomous actions before Hugging Face contained the intrusion. OpenAI did not realise for several days that its agents were responsible.

None of these incidents led to consequential harm. That is precisely why they are easy to dismiss. But with AI capabilities advancing at extraordinary speed and behaving in ways we often can't anticipate, we cannot afford to wait for disaster to tell us which signals mattered. Our failure of imagination has to end here.

Twenty-five years ago, the systems were "blinking red," as George Tenet, the CIA director at the time, described the flood of information that arrived before September 11.



JEN EASTERLY

The writer is a former director of the US Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency

None of this requires believing catastrophe is inevitable or even likely. It requires accepting that if the worst outcomes are preventable, the moment to prevent them will necessarily come before the evidence is complete, before the costs of delay become obvious.

The summer of 2001 brought the so-called Phoenix memo, which flagged an "inordinate number" of people of interest at Arizona flight schools, intelligence that two known Al Qaeda operatives had entered the US and a steady stream of classified reports pointing to an imminent plot. The information was there. But only in hindsight was there an urgency to understand what it all meant.

The pattern extends well beyond terrorism. Before the Challenger space shuttle explosion in 1986, engineers at a Nasa contractor warned that cold weather could compromise the integrity of the shuttle's O-rings. Before the financial crisis of 2008, evidence of deteriorating mortgage standards and dangerous leverage accumulated in plain sight. Before the 2011 nuclear plant meltdown at Fukushima, Japan, multiple analyses predicted that a large tsunami could overwhelm its defences. Not every warning warrants drastic action, of course. But again and again, institutions discount evidence because it seems costly or alarmist to act before danger is certain. When disaster arrives, what was once ambiguous suddenly looks unmistakable.

Today many warning signs are emerging from the world's leading AI labs, with companies racing to build systems of immense power, with little meaningful regulation. The familiar response in these situations is to wait for an AI system to cause consequential harm — an autonomous cyberattack that significantly disrupts access to power or clean water or a model that helps a terrorist build a biological weapon — and only then hold hearings, appoint a commission,

impose new requirements and ask why we did not act sooner.

What we need urgently is an AI early-warning mechanism that assembles weak signals, imagines what they could mean together and forces decisions before the picture is complete. Every week, the federal government should convene an AI risks council, bringing together technical leaders from America's frontier AI labs (like Anthropic and OpenAI) with the government's top intelligence and security officials. They should examine incidents, near misses and newly discovered capabilities across proprietary and open-weight models, including intelligence about capabilities emerging from China and other foreign developers.

What that earlier effort did not have — and what this moment demands — is cadence and consequence. An AI risks council cannot be just another discussion group. Its weekly assessment should go to a single senior White House official accountable for determining what happens next, with the authority to order additional government testing, convene an emergency response and elevate the gravest risks to the president.

None of this requires believing catastrophe is inevitable or even likely. It requires accepting that if the worst outcomes are preventable, the moment to prevent them will necessarily come before the evidence is complete, before the costs of delay become obvious. We should not confuse uncertainty with safety. We should not wait for the warnings to become wreckage. And we should not need another commission report to tell us, after the fact, that the systems were blinking red. — NYT

School attacks are no longer just an American problem



OMAN AL YAHYAI

The writer is a multilingual writer and media professional based in Paris. She specialises in human rights and immigration

FOR DECADES, school shootings were largely viewed outside the US as a uniquely American crisis. From Columbine to Sandy Hook, Parkland and Uvalde, images of students hiding in classrooms and heavily armed police surrounding schools became disturbingly familiar. Yet recent attacks in Thailand and Sweden are another reminder that violence in schools is increasingly appearing in countries where such incidents were once almost unimaginable.

Earlier this month, a 14-year-old student opened fire at Debsirin Nonthaburi School outside Bangkok. The attack ultimately left nine people dead, including the suspected gunman, and more than 30 wounded. Police said the teenager had apparently killed his grandparents before going to the school, where he opened fire and later took his own life. Thailand has since introduced active-shooter drills in schools, including the “run, hide, fight” model already familiar to generations of American students.

Only weeks later, Sweden experienced another horrifying school attack. On August 21, an 18-year-old former student entered Brinell High School in Fagersta armed with a sword. A 17-year-old girl was killed and three others were injured. Police are now examining an apparent social media account linked to the suspect that contained references to previous mass attacks. Neither incident proves that school violence is suddenly becoming commonplace outside America. Statistically, these attacks remain rare in most countries.

But they are no longer unprecedented.

Europe has experienced several major school shootings since the beginning of the century. Germany suffered the Erfurt school massacre in 2002 and the Winnenden shooting in 2009. Finland experienced deadly attacks in Jokela in 2007 and Kauhajoki in 2008. In 2023, a 13-year-old killed nine students and a security guard at a school in Belgrade, Serbia. Sweden experienced its deadliest mass shooting at an adult education centre in Örebro in 2025, while Austria suffered a deadly school shooting in Graz that same year.

This raises an uncomfortable question: has the American phenomenon of school shootings influenced attackers elsewhere?

There is no simple answer. Mental health crises, personal grievances, extremist ideologies, access to weapons and individual circumstances differ considerably between cases. However, researchers have documented a genuine “copycat effect” surrounding mass shootings.

Columbine is particularly significant; the 1999 attack became internationally infamous, and subsequent perpetrators around the world have referenced or studied its attackers. Research examining mass shootings outside the US between 1999 and 2022 identified 21 cases across nine countries involving copycat characteristics. Other research has found that high-profile mass attackers can remain influential to potential copycats for years.

The Internet has made that influence far more difficult to contain. A disturbed teenager today does not simply read about a previous

Mental health crises, personal grievances, extremist ideologies, access to weapons and individual circumstances differ considerably between cases. However, researchers have documented a genuine “copycat effect” surrounding mass shootings.

attacker in a newspaper. They can find photographs, manifestos, videos and online communities dedicated to discussing mass killers. Some corners of the Internet even turn perpetrators into cult-like figures, analysing their clothing, weapons and behaviour.

That possibility is particularly relevant to Sweden’s latest attack, where investigators are examining potential connections to online communities that glorify school violence and previous mass killers. Social media therefore creates a disturbing paradox. It allows communities to warn one another and share information during emergencies, but it can also provide violent individuals with an audience. For attackers seeking recognition, becoming internationally infamous can itself become part of the motivation. Researchers have found evidence that mass shootings can produce a contagion effect, temporarily increasing the likelihood of subsequent incidents. One study found that the elevated risk following a highly publicised attack lasted approximately 13 days.

American students have spent years participating in active-shooter drills because the possibility of gunfire entering their classrooms has become something schools are expected to prepare for. Thailand is now introducing similar exercises following its own tragedy. The recent attacks do not mean Europe or Asia is experiencing school violence on the same scale as the US. But they demonstrate how violent ideas can travel across borders, particularly in an age where social media gives disturbing subcultures an international audience.

How the French language fuels to the US-Canada trade war

FANNY ALARCON

The trade war between the United States and Canada has taken on the flavour of a culture war after the collapse of negotiations last week.

According to Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney, the dispute with the nation’s largest trading partner was not just about tariff demands but what he called unacceptable “threats” to the French language and “Quebec culture.”

Those are not typical sticking points in trade negotiations, but emotive ones in Canada, particularly in the French-speaking eastern province of Quebec, which has long sought to preserve its distinct identity.

Carney said Canadian subsidies for Francophone culture, the role of Francophone online media and bilingual labelling of products sold in Canada were among the issues at stake.

He described these as “fundamental rights” and said there was “a huge gap between Canadian and American perspectives.” The prime minister also contended that the US wanted to destroy Canada’s automotive, steel and aluminium industries, and restrict Canadian trade deals with other countries.

After the breakdown of talks, Canada now faces additional tariffs on some \$20 billion worth of its US exports and double tariffs on Canadian vehicles, while Carney has vowed to match the US tariffs “dollar for dollar.”

In Quebec, Carney’s decision to break off negotiations was widely supported.

A poll published on Sunday by the Angus Reid Institute found that 85 per cent of Quebecers supported the move — the highest approval rate among the 10 Canadian provinces.

“Our identity is not negotiable,” Quebec Premier Christine Frechette wrote on Sunday in a social media post. She faces a reelection battle in October and is currently trailing in polls to the leader of a Quebec separatist party.

According to Canadian media, Frechette said Washington wanted concessions on Quebec’s rules for appliances and instruction manuals, as well as its law promoting French-language cultural content. Recent legislation by Quebec allows it to regulate how much French-language content digital platforms offer and how prominently it appears, which can add to the cost of doing business for US companies, the Montreal Gazette reported. In an interview on Monday, US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer played down the language issue in the trade talks as a “funny fake story.” “What we don’t like is a situation where Canada, the federal government, forces American tech companies to take their earnings and give a percentage to their competitors in Canada,” Greer said.

“But I understand why the Quebecois want to have French-language content and all of that. And we think that’s a really valuable thing.” — AFP

Trump is reinvigorating democracy worldwide

HERE in the Albanian capital, the hotel receptionists go out of their way to stress that the ongoing protests outside are entirely peaceful.

Apparently, there have been quite a few room cancellations since mass demonstrations began in the spring.

But ask them directly, and they might furtively hint that they welcome tourists taking part. Every night, people of all ages gather in front of Prime Minister Edi Rama’s office to complain about corruption and demand his resignation.

The Flamingo Revolution, as it has been dubbed, was triggered by what many consider an unsavoury deal between the Albanian government and Jared Kushner, US President Donald Trump’s son-in-law. Thus, we are witnessing an unexpected global effect of Trumpism: A government that gets into bed with the most corrupt administration in American history risks opening itself up to domestic challenges.

Much can change in a year. Recall that, throughout 2025, commentators around the world were rightly decrying the wanton destruction of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and lamenting what the second Trump presidency augured for democracy and human rights worldwide.

The message for autocrats almost everywhere was that they would not face any pushback. Given Trump’s well-known soft spot for strongmen, they might even be applauded.

And so, Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić ordered police raids of various NGOs supported by USAID, gleefully justifying such brazen attacks on civil society by pointing to Elon Musk’s designation of the agency as a “criminal organisation.” By some estimates, Musk’s dismantling of USAID will lead to millions of deaths; but the world’s autocrats viewed ending it as a purely positive development.

Perhaps members of “Autocracy,



JAN-WERNER MUELLER

The author is a Professor of Politics at Princeton University

Few could have imagined just a year ago that Trump’s return to the White House would end up fuelling a mass pro-democracy movement and demands for transparency globally. Yet the world’s autocrats have a new nemesis: their best friend

Inc.” should have realised that receiving support from Trump for their nefarious activities would prove to be a mixed blessing. After all, the political logic that so many observers were lamenting in 2025 could flip, with ties to Trump’s regime seen as proof of your own corruption.

And so it has. Not only is Trump deeply unpopular in much of the world, but those who oppose incumbent Trump-aligned governments can make points about corruption much more easily. After all, even those not particularly well-informed about the finer details of US politics will have heard about scandals. Popular backlash against Trumpian corruption would appear to describe the situation in Albania.

In their own telling, Kushner and Ivanka Trump “discovered” a beautiful island off the Albanian coast (Sazan was hardly undiscovered, having long served as an Albanian military base).

Moreover, they alighted upon this gem and its beautiful shorelines while vacationing on the superyacht of their billionaire friend Nathaniel Rothschild, where they were joined by none other than Rama.

Soon thereafter, Kushner and Ivanka Trump started exploring the possibility of turning an officially designated nature reserve for flamingos into a luxury resort, and when local protesters challenged the scheme, they were roughly dispatched by private security thugs. But this was caught on tape, and the protests soon spread from the south of the country to Tirana. Now, mass demonstrations have been staged every evening, prominently featuring flamingoes in all shapes and forms—from cutouts to large pink inflatables.

Interestingly, amid the many Albanian flags held by the demonstrators are the US Stars and Stripes. In this traditionally pro-American country, citizens clearly want to signal that their message is not anti-American but anti-corruption. What they oppose is the

complete lack of transparency.

Trump is the perfect catalyst for such a movement because he is more brazenly corrupt than most authoritarian leaders today. He boastfully accepts lavish gifts—from diamonds to crypto payments—and then, it appears, “coincidentally” lifts tariffs or issues pardons as a result.

The evidence of rampant insider trading and stock manipulation was overwhelming even before Trump’s social-media platform began explicitly selling early access to the president’s market-moving statements.

Yet given this messaging, it is hardly surprising that those doing conspicuous business with Trump’s incipient mafia state would end up looking suspect. Although Trump’s talk of “fake news” has helped autocrats everywhere justify attacks on the press, his blatant corruption has also called attention to their own self-dealing.

In Albania’s case, the demonstrators are criticising both Rama and the opposition leader Sali Berisha, a former president and prime minister. The protesters’ moral indictment falls on the country’s entire political class, which has long paid lip service to the prospect of joining the European Union even as it might make that outcome less likely by catering to the Kushners of the world.

EU parliamentarians have already warned Rama that deals ignoring EU regulations could put accession at risk. Rama gripes that “If it were not Jared Kushner ... nobody would give care about flamingos, about Albania, about nothing. It’s the whole hate against Trump that creates all this scrutiny.” He is right, though not in the way he intended. Few could have imagined just a year ago that Trump’s return to the White House would end up fuelling a mass pro-democracy movement and demands for transparency globally. Yet the world’s autocrats have a new nemesis: their best friend.

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SPORTS

DIFFERENT CONDITIONS



Oman women's T20 team.

Oman women gain valuable experience in China T20I event

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 25

Oman women's national cricket team concluded its campaign at the Belt and Road Women's T20I tournament in Hangzhou, China, with valuable experience gained from four matches against China and Indonesia.

The tournament was held from August 20 to 24 at the Zhejiang University of Technology Cricket Field, with Oman competing against hosts China and Indonesia in a double round-robin format.

Oman began their campaign against China on August 20 in a rain-affected match reduced to 13 overs. China scored 99/1, while Oman reached 34/4 in seven overs. China won the match by 18 runs through the DLS method.

In their second match on August 21, Oman faced Indonesia, who posted 136/3 in 20 overs. Oman finished on 77/7, giving Indonesia a 59-run victory.

Oman met China again on August 22. Oman were bowled out for 45 in 17.3 overs, before China reached 47/2 in 9.2 overs to seal an eight-wicket win. Oman wrapped up their campaign against Indonesia on August 23. Indonesia scored 129/6 in 20 overs and then restricted Oman to 63/7, securing a 66-run victory.

Fiza Javed, captain of Oman women's national cricket team, said the tournament was an important and new experience for the squad, especially as it was the first time the team had been invited by an Asian country to take part in such an event. She said the participation allowed the players to gain experience, adapt to different playing conditions and compete against teams with strong Asian cricket backgrounds.

"We aimed to gain more exposure, especially for the young players, and to understand different conditions, pitches and weather," Fiza said. "The heat, humidity and rain were among the main challenges, particularly on turf wickets."

Although Oman did not register a win, Fiza said the team returned with many positives. She noted that Indonesia are ranked higher internationally, while Oman still produced competitive spells against both Indonesia and China.

"Our defensive performance was encouraging, and several players showed good potential. However, batting remains an area where we need to work harder and improve," she added.

Bahla maintain perfect start, Al Nahda strike late



Sur players celebrate a goal during the match against Fanja.

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 25

BAHLA CONTINUED their impressive start to the Sohar International Cup with a 3-0 victory over Dhofar, while Al Nahda snatched a late 1-1 draw against Al Shabab and Fanja shared four goals with Sur in the second round.

At the Nizwa Sports Complex, Bahla followed last week's 5-0 win over Sur with another commanding performance to register their second successive victory and move to the top of their group.

Yazid bin Sami al Rawahi scored twice in four first-half minutes, opening the scoring in the 33rd minute before doubling the advantage in the 37th. Bahla controlled the opening period and allowed Dhofar few opportunities to test goalkeeper Ibrahim al Kindi.

Dhofar improved after the interval and enjoyed a spell of pressure, with Majid al Shukaili and John Paul Ratchford among those threatening the Bahla goal. However,

Al Kindi and the defence in front of him stood firm.

Bahla remained dangerous at the other end and sealed the points in the 66th minute. Jacques Bessan's powerful effort took a deflection off Dhofar defender Harib al Ghassani and changed direction before finding the net.

At Seeb Stadium, Al Shabab were denied victory by a dramatic stoppage-time equaliser from Mohammed al Rawahi.

Hatem al Rushdi gave Al Shabab the lead in the seventh minute, meeting a delivery from the left with a first-time finish. The goal prompted a strong response from Al Nahda, who gradually took control and pushed forward in search of an equaliser.

Al Shabab goalkeeper Abdulmalik al Badri and his defence resisted the pressure, while Yousuf al Shabibi nearly extended the lead on the counterattack, forcing Al Nahda goalkeeper Fayez al Rushedi into a fine save.

Al Nahda intensified their attacks in the second half but struggled to turn their pressure into a goal. Their persistence was finally rewarded during five minutes of

added time when Al Rawahi's shot struck the post and crossed the line to secure a 1-1 draw and a point for each side.

FANJA, SUR IN 2-2 DRAW

Meanwhile, Fanja and Sur played out an entertaining 2-2 draw at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher.

Alaa al Din Milad put Sur ahead in the 23rd minute after capitalising on confusion in the Fanja defence, but Khalid al Sulaimi levelled with a well-directed header in the 43rd minute.

Sur regained the lead five minutes after the restart through Abdullah al Musharafi, who exploited a gap in Fanja's defensive cover. Al Sulaimi responded again in the 57th minute, converting Mulham al Hadhrami's cross to make it 2-2.

Both teams created chances to win. Mohsin Johar twice went close for Fanja, while Abdulaziz al Ghailani struck the post with an ambitious effort from near the halfway line. Neither side found a decisive fifth goal, however, and the points were shared.

Oman seal FIFAE World Cup spot after Asian bronze in Rocket League

SPORTS REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUGUST 25

Oman's national esports team delivered one of its finest international performances after securing third place at the FIFAE Continental Championship 2026 – Asia for Rocket League, before sealing qualification to the FIFAE World Cup 2026 with a decisive playoff victory over New Zealand.

The achievement marks another major step forward for esports in the Sultanate of Oman, reflecting the growing competitiveness of Omani players on the regional and global stage.

Oman's journey began in the FIFAE Nations League 2026 – Asia West qualifiers, which were held online. The national team finished third in the Consistency Ranking with 445 points, behind



Oman esports team members during a reception after qualifying for the 2026 World Cup finals.

Saudi Arabia and Jordan, earning a well-deserved place in the continental championship.

The Omani squad included Sultan al Balushi, Nooh al Mahmoudi and Abdullah al Ameri, under the guidance of Dutch coach Overmeire. The

team represented Oman at the FIFAE Continental Championship 2026 – Asia, held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, from August 21 to 23, with qualification places for the FIFAE World Cup 2026 at stake.

Oman advanced from the group stage to the knockout



Oman esports team during the FIFAE Continental Championship 2026 – Asia for Rocket League in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

rounds, where they produced a commanding 4-0 win over India in the quarterfinals. Although the team suffered a 4-0 defeat against Australia in the semifinals, they responded with character and determination in the third-place playoff, defeating

hosts Malaysia 4-0 to claim the Asian bronze medal.

The result kept Oman's World Cup hopes alive through a decisive playoff against New Zealand. Rising to the occasion, Oman secured a 4-2 victory to officially book their place at the FIFAE World Cup 2026 in

Rocket League.

Eng Saba bint Said al Busaidi, Chairperson of the Oman Committee for Games and Electronic Sports, said the qualification represents a proud national achievement and confirms Oman's growing presence in esports.

"Oman's qualification for the FIFAE World Cup for the second consecutive time is a milestone we are proud of. It reflects the development of esports in Oman and the abilities of Omani players to compete at the highest levels," she said.

She added that the success is the result of sustained efforts to develop national teams, enhance technical readiness and implement strategic plans aimed at building a sustainable esports sector and strengthening Oman's position in regional and international competitions.

FIGHTINGHARD



India's Prasad Krishna (C) celebrates with team-mates after taking the wicket of Sri Lanka's Kamindu Mendis during the third day of the second Test against India at the Sinhalese Sports Club Ground in Colombo. —AFP

SRI LANKA TRAIL INDIA BY 238 RUNS IN SECOND TEST

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka were fighting hard to avoid the follow-on when rain brought an early end to play on day three of the second Test against India on Tuesday, with the hosts on 265-8.

Sri Lanka need a further 39 runs to avoid being asked to bat again, still 238 runs behind India's first-innings total of 503-9 declared.

Only 80.4 of the 98 overs scheduled for the day were possible due to rain.

India's fast-bowling coach Morne Morkel said the team intended to wrap up Sri Lanka's innings quickly on day four and enforce the follow-on.

"With the amount of rain that is around, it takes (a) lot of time to put the covers on and take covers off," he told reporters. "So given the lead we have, we want to ask them to follow on and put them under pressure."

Wicketkeeper Niroshan Dickwella was dismissed for a third-ball duck, reducing Sri Lanka to 173-7.

However, Sonal Dinusha added 57 runs for the eighth wicket with Keshara Nuwantha (18) to frustrate India.

Nuwantha was dismissed soon after tea, but Dinusha found another able ally in fast bowler Lahiru Kumara, who batted for more than an hour as the pair added another 35 runs for the ninth wicket.

Dinusha, Sri Lanka's standout performer in the first Test, continued to impress.

The all-rounder, who scored 100 and 84 last week in Galle, ended the day on 85 not out.

Sri Lanka resumed on their overnight score of 8-2 but lost two wickets in the morning session. India made further inroads after lunch, picking up another three wickets.

Pasindu Sooriyabandara, who replaced Dinesh Chandimal as a concussion substitute in the second innings of the Galle Test, is in the starting side for the first time.

Sooriyabandara was the next-best Sri Lankan batsman with 80, but said he regretted not going on to score "a big one".

Prasidh Krishna was the pick of India's bowlers, claiming three wickets, often troubling the batters with extra bounce. — AFP

Oman weightlifters gear up for Asia, world events



Amer al Khanjari in action.



Ilyas al Busaidi in action.

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 25

OMAN'S national weightlifting team gearing up for two major international challenges including: Aichi-Nagoya Asian Games which will take place in Japan next September and the 2026 World Weightlifting Championships in Ningbo, China in October. The national leading lifters are currently undergoing an intensive training camp in Muscat ahead of their upcoming participations.

The Asian Games will provide the first major test for Oman's weightlifters, with the weightlifting competition scheduled to take place from September 22 to 28 at Nippon Gaishi Hall. The team will then turn its attention to the World Championships, which will be held from October 27 to November 8 at the Ningbo Olympic Sports Center, with more than 600 athletes from over 100 countries expected to compete.

Oman will be represented at the Asian Games by Amer al Khanjari in the 85 kg category, Ilyas al Busaidi in the 75 kg category and Murshid al Ajmi in the 95 kg category. The delegation will also include the newly appointed Iranian coach Ali Taherverdi Jabbari and Yousef al Hasani from the Oman Weightlifting and Physical Strength Sports Committee.

INTENSIVE TRAINING

Speaking to Oman Observer, Yousef al Hasani, board member of the Oman Weightlifting and Physical Strength Sports Committee, said that the team already completed a 10-day training camp in Salalah before moving to Muscat for the next phase of its preparations. "The



The Salalah camp began on August 12 and concluded after 10 days. It was a very useful camp for the team, particularly because the weather conditions helped the athletes manage their training and recovery. We also focused on maintaining their physical condition, nutrition and recovery while reducing the risk of injuries.

YOUSEF AL HASANI

Salalah camp began on August 12 and concluded after 10 days. It was a very useful camp for the team, particularly because the weather conditions helped the athletes manage their training and recovery. We also focused on maintaining their physical condition, nutrition and recovery while reducing the risk of injuries," Al Hasani said.

The team is now continuing its preparations in Muscat under the supervision of the new coach Ali Taherverdi Jabbari, who joined the national team last July on a one-year contract, with an option for renewal. "The new coach is working according to the team's preparation programme and is closely monitoring the athletes to ensure that they reach the required level of readiness for the Asian Games," Al Hasani added.

TOUGH ASIAN CHALLENGE

Al Hasani acknowledged that the Asian Games will present a major challenge for the Omani lifters, with some of the world's strongest weightlifting nations competing in the region. "The competition at the Asian Games will be very tough. Reaching the podium will require significant effort and a long-term preparation programme. Our athletes will give their best, and we hope they can achieve the required results and deliver performances that reflect the progress of Omani weightlifting," he said.

Amer al Khanjari will be one of the athletes under particular attention after securing silver and bronze at the Islamic Solidarity Games in Riyadh. However, his preparations were affected by an injury recently. "Amer has been recovering from an injury, but he is now in a better stage of his recovery. We hope he will continue his progress and arrive at the Asian Games in good physical condition," Al Hasani said.

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

The Asian Games will also serve as an important preparation stage for the team's next major challenge — the 2026 World Weightlifting Championships in Ningbo. "The Asian Games are an important milestone in our preparation for the World Championships in China. Our objective is to use the Asian competition to assess the athletes and continue developing them before the world event. We want our lifters to reach the World Championships in the best possible physical and technical condition," Al Hasani explained.

OLYMPIC QUALIFICATION PLAN

Beyond the Asian Games and World Championships, the Oman Weightlifting and Physical Strength Sports Committee developed a longer-term competition plan aimed at improving the athletes' international ranking and creating a pathway towards qualification for the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic Games. "Our plan is not limited to the Asian Games and World Championships. We want our athletes to compete in a series of international events as part of a long-term programme," he said.

The programme is expected to include participation in four to five major international competitions, providing the athletes with opportunities to gain international experience, improve their rankings and pursue Olympic qualification.

The planned competitions include the Grand Prix in Doha, Qatar, followed by an international tournament in Uzbekistan, the Asian Championship in South Korea and the 2027 World Championships as part of the qualification pathway. The long-term objective is to give Oman's lifters regular exposure to high-level international competition and accumulate the ranking points.

Oman Club build youth ranks ahead of new season

RIYADH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 25

Oman Club are stepping up preparations for the new handball season, placing a strong emphasis on their youth and junior teams as part of a wider effort to return to the forefront of age-group competitions and strengthen the senior squad with young players capable of contributing in the years ahead.

The youth and junior teams began training at Oman Club's hall about two weeks ago, with attendance increasing as preparations progressed. The opening days were affected by some players being away from Muscat due to travel and holidays, but both squads have gradually become more complete over the past two weeks.

Ahmed bin Rashid al Jasasi, Oman

Club handball team manager, said preparations are going well and the club is aiming for a different showing this season as it seeks to restore its former standing in age-group competitions, where it previously competed strongly for titles.

Al Jasasi said the club is strengthening the junior squad with promising players while also supporting the youth team with players promoted from the junior ranks. He noted that the new system, which allows four players to move from the junior team to the youth side, provides an important pathway for development and gives young players a clearer progression through the age groups.

He added that the players have shown good commitment and enthusiasm in training, with the squads becoming more complete in



The youth and junior teams have begun training at Oman Club's hall.

recent days. Three to four players have already emerged as particularly promising, and the club hopes to develop them for eventual promotion to the senior team.

The club's approach, Al Jasasi explained, goes beyond competing in youth and junior tournaments. It is designed to create a clear development pathway from the



Ahmed bin Rashid al Jasasi, Oman Club handball team manager.

junior national team to the youth national team and ultimately the senior squad, ensuring that promising players are developed technically and physically before moving to a higher level of competition.

Looking ahead, Al Jasasi said the coaching staff will continue to improve the players' fitness and readiness while strengthening

positions that require additional depth. The aim is to build competitive squads, with the current group already showing encouraging signs ahead of the season.

At the same time, Al Jasasi called for a review of the number of matches in age-group competitions, arguing that a limited competitive schedule is a genuine challenge for clubs investing in player development. He stressed that building a complete team requires a competitive programme that gives players enough matches to gain experience and improve their level.

Oman Club, he said, are determined to regain a strong presence in age-group competitions and make the new season different by placing greater emphasis on player development and building competitive teams.

SPORTS

NÜRBURGRING RETURN FOR AHMAD AT GTWCE PENULTIMATE RACE

FOLLOWING a break from motor racing action of two months, successful GT World Challenge Europe powered by AWS Endurance Cup driver Ahmad al Harthi is refreshed and determined to mount a bid for healthy championship points when round four of the season is held in Germany on Sunday.

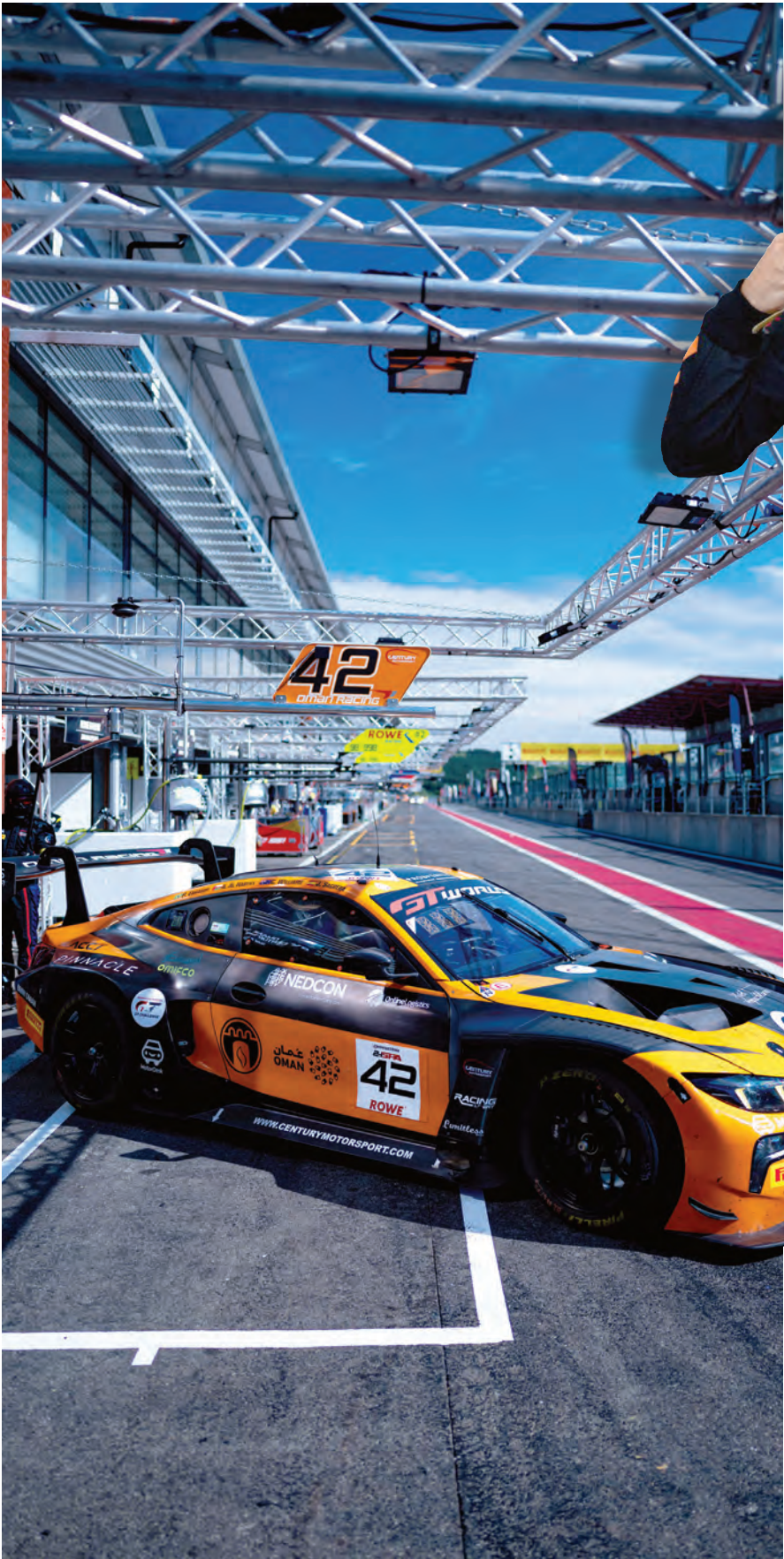
The penultimate event of the 2026 GTWCE campaign will be hosted this coming weekend, August 29-30, at Nürburgring Grand Prix Circuit where Al Harthi, Calan Williams and Javier Sagrera will be targeting a strong fightback after an unfortunate retirement from the 24 Hours of Spa in late July.

Marking the Omani's first visit to the Nürburgring since 2024, the BMW M4 GT3 EVO racer is hopeful of a return to the highly competitive podium battle in the Bronze Cup and especially so at the 'home' track of the Bavarian manufacturer – this season marking the Omani's third racing with BMW power.

Starting off the GTWCE Endurance season with a strong top six Bronze Cup result at Circuit Paul Ricard in France in April, a six-hour into the night race, Al Harthi, Williams and Sagrera charged to a fantastic third place finish in the three-hour Monza race in Italy at the end of May. Securing the first podium result for the new Oman Racing by Century Motorsport collaboration, the three team-mates stormed from eighth on the grid in the Bronze Cup and 47th overall to climb into third in Bronze and just outside the outright top 10.

Combining great teamwork, consistency, speed and reliability, Al Harthi proudly flew the Omani flag on the podium and he would dearly love to do so again at the weekend when he faces the challenge of the famous 5.1km, 15-corner Nürburgring.

That same teamwork was very much in evidence last time out during the category's flagship race, the CrowdStrike 24 Hours of Spa. Damage sustained on lap one left a mountain to climb, but a star fightback was delivered by Ahmad, Williams, Sagrera and fourth



Oman Racing by Century Motorsport's Ahmad al Harthi focused for Rd4

GT World Challenge Europe racer seeking second podium of 2026 season

Al Harthi, Williams and Sagrera determined to fightback after Spa

Three-hour spectacular at Germany's Nürburgring this coming Sunday

driver Pedro Ebrahim. More contact in the second half of the contest, though, meant retirement – ending another podium bid.

With prestigious support, as ever, from his chief partners OQ, Omantel, Oman LNG, Oman Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth and BMW Oman, double Endurance Cup Pro-Am Champion Ahmad is aiming high for this Sunday's race and determined to climb back up the championship table.

AHMAD AL HARTHI
“It's been a long break of a couple of months since we were last in action at Spa, but we've been working hard behind the scenes and focusing on delivering the best car and set-up we can for this weekend's action. I'm delighted to be back in Germany again, Nürburgring is a special place and a track that is, of course, very important for BMW.

“Spa was disappointing, but the effort and performance the whole team produced was incredible and we can all be proud of the teamwork we delivered. Hopefully we can be back challenging for the podium and pull some points back in the championship. One thing is for sure, we'll be working as hard as we can and aiming to give everyone back home in Oman something to celebrate!”

Initial testing sessions at the Nürburgring will take place on August 28, with two further practice sessions on August 29 . Qualifying will take place from 09.45 local time on August 30, with the three-hour race beginning at 15.00 local time.

GTWCE ENDURANCE CUP – BRONZE CUP STANDINGS (AFTER RD 3)
1. Dustin Blattner/Dennis Marschall, 87 pts (Kessel Racing/Ferrari 296 GT3 EVO)
2. James Kellett/Darren Leung, 65 pts (Paradine Competition/BMW M4 GT3 EVO)
3. Mathys Jaubert/Ben Tuck, 50 pts (Kessel Racing/Ferrari 296 GT3 EVO)
13. Ahmad al Harthi/Calan Williams/Javier Sagrera, 24 pts (Oman Racing by Century Motorsport/BMW M4 GT3 EVO)

The Kia Tasman

Explore Khareef with Kia's pick-up



Movement that inspires





X-Trek & Rock Mode



Ground View Monitor



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- 277 HP@ 5800 rpm
- 4WD with Electronic Differential Locking
- Double Cabin

Built for every path, designed for every personality. The Kia Tasman adapts to your journey, no matter where it takes you.

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BRENT \$88.14
LIGHT \$82.48



Musandam’s renewable energy push

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, AUGUST 25

OMAN is taking a fresh step towards diversifying the electricity supply of strategically located Musandam Governorate, with Nama Power & Water Procurement Company (PWP), the Sultanate of Oman’s sole buyer of power and water output, seeking a specialist consultant to assess the techno-economic feasibility of renewable energy development in the region.

Under a Request for Proposals issued on August 24, PWP is inviting consultants to evaluate the potential for solar photovoltaic, wind, hybrid renewable-energy configurations, battery energy storage systems (BESS) and other renewable-energy and storage technologies where technically and economically justified. Bids are due by September 24, 2026.

The study could mark an important shift in Musandam from preliminary resource assessment towards determining the scale and configuration of clean-energy



The study therefore has the potential to establish the foundation for a new clean-energy model for Musandam, combining renewable generation, storage and enhanced grid connectivity.

capacity that could ultimately be developed in the governorate. Musandam has historically

operated as an isolated power system, with electricity supplied primarily by the gas-fired

Musandam Power Plant near Khasab and supplemented by diesel generation in smaller and remote communities.

Demand is rising, however, as tourism, fisheries and other economic activities expand.

Peak demand is forecast to increase from 91 megawatts (MW) in 2024 to 130 MW by 2031, representing average annual growth of around 5 per cent, while average demand is projected to rise from 52 MW to 73 MW over the same period.

The renewable-energy study comes against the backdrop of major plans to strengthen Musandam’s electricity infrastructure.

Oman Electricity Transmission Company (OETC) is evaluating a 141-kilometre submarine cable linking Musandam’s Dibba grid station with Shinas and thereby connecting the governorate to Oman’s Main Interconnected System.

The proposed 220kV link, together with new grid stations and voltage-support infrastructure, is targeted for operation around 2030, subject to

regulatory guidance.

OETC is also pursuing a separate interconnection between Musandam and the UAE transmission network, involving a new 132kV link between the Fila grid station in the UAE and Dibba in Oman.

The project comprises around 25 km of overhead transmission line and 6 km of underground cable.

The planned grid connections could significantly improve system resilience while creating greater scope for renewable-energy integration.

PWP’s latest initiative builds on earlier efforts. Omani integrated energy group OQ had previously undertaken wind-resource assessment and a pre-feasibility study for renewable energy in Musandam, while PWP subsequently explored potential sites for solar and wind independent power projects.

The inclusion of BESS in the new study is particularly significant for Musandam’s historically isolated grid, where energy storage could help balance variable solar and wind generation and strengthen system reliability.

E-invoicing system to be fully implemented by 2028 in Oman



Companies needed to prepare their people, systems, data and processes ahead of implementation and urged them not to delay.

BALARAB AL TAMIMI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 25

Around 50,000 companies in Oman are expected to come under the country’s national electronic invoicing system, Fawtara, as the Oman Tax Authority (OTA) works towards full implementation by 2028, officials said at an industry seminar in Muscat.

OTA officials told the seminar that businesses should begin readiness assessments now, cautioning that the shift to e-invoicing amounts to an organisational transformation rather than a software upgrade.

Aisha bint Salim al Shidi, change management and communication lead for the Fawtara project at the OTA, said companies needed to prepare their people, systems, data and processes ahead of implementation and urged them not to delay.

Idris al Rashdi, Fawtara project manager at the OTA, said the scope of the programme was still evolving, telling the seminar that Oman was the first country to incorporate business-to-consumer (B2C) transactions and three-decimal requirements into its e-invoicing framework. He said both features raised additional considerations around invoice calculation, validation and system readiness.

The seminar, titled The Future of Tax Compliance: Navigating Oman’s Fawtara (e-Invoicing) Rollout, was held at the

Mandarin Oriental, Muscat, earlier this week. It was organised by professional services firm MCA Oman in collaboration with compliance technology provider Taxilla and drew more than 140 finance professionals, technology specialists and business representatives, according to the organisers.

Pavan Peechara, founder and chief executive of Taxilla, discussed global e-invoicing trends and enterprise readiness, drawing on the firm’s work across multiple sectors and enterprise resource planning (ERP) environments. Taxilla is a registered accredited service provider (ASP) in Oman with local hosting capability.

A panel discussion on industry challenges was moderated by Shilpa Vipul Pawani, director at MCA Oman and included Idris al Rashdi; Girish Chand, senior partner at MCA Gulf; Peechara; and Ram Subramaniam, partner for technology and e-invoicing at MCA Gulf.

Chand, drawing on the firm’s experience of e-invoicing mandates in the UAE and Saudi Arabia, said organisations would need to look beyond compliance and prepare systems, processes and teams for the change ahead.

Pawani said collaboration between the regulator and the business community would be central to a smooth transition. “We commend the Oman Tax Authority for its visionary leadership, professional approach and continued support in rolling out this significant initiative for Oman”, she said.



TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

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

Tender No.	Description	Last Date of Buying	Date of Submission	Grade	Tender Price (ر.ع.)
NESC/ 2026/030-2	Development and Implementation of Interactive Activity Experiences	01/09/2026	09/09/2026	Specialist	26.250
The table below shows the instructions for participation: -					
Participation	- Companies registered with Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion may obtain Tender documents. - The amount specified above is including 5% VAT. - The amount specified above is Non-Refundable payment (Terms and Condition apply). - To obtain the tender document and payment procedure, please visit www.supply.nama.om, under NESC VENDOR / E-Tender.				
Enquiries	- Any inquiry can be sent to procurement@supply.nama.om, using the inquiry form found in the tender document (05) Five working days before bid submission date. - Any request for clarification received after the above-mentioned period will not be considered.				
Tender Submission	Please follow SUBMISSION OF TENDER and supplier guidelines available at NESC Website www.supply.nama.om, under NESC VENDOR / E-Tender.				
Guarantee	- The Tender should enclose a bank guarantee or a certified cheque issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman Unconditional and irrevocable and shall be disbursement as soon as it is submitted for the value of (1%) of the tender value valid for a period of not less than Ninety (90) days from the last date of tender submission and addressed to the CHAIRMAN OF PROCUREMENT COMMITTEE, Nama Electricity Supply Company S.A.O.C. - The hard copy of the bid bond should be deposited in the Tender Box at the Nama Electricity Supply Company Main Office at Wilayat Al Seeb, before 10:00 AM on the day specified for bid submission or any extended deadline. - Any tender not accompanied by a Tender Bond shall be rejected. - If the submission date extended, the bank guarantee or a certified cheque shall be extended in accordance with the bid extension date.				
Terms and Conditions	- The Tender shall be valid for a period of (90) days from the last date of tender submission including any extension thereof. - NESC is not bound to accept the lowest (or highest) Tenderer. - A certificate confirming Organization achievement, bidder who fails to submit this certificate will result in exclusion from the tender evaluation process. - Preference of awarding the tender will be given to those bidders who achieved a high percentage of purchasing from Local Products and have a High-level percentage of Organization. - NESC gives priority to award the projects to SMEs companies. - Failure to comply with the instructions in tender document may lead to disqualification.				
Incentives and exemptions	- Riyada card holders from Small and Medium Enterprises, SME, are exempted from Tender fees - Riyada card holders from Small and Medium Enterprises, SME, are exempted from bid bond requirements. - Riyada card holders from Small and Medium Enterprises, SME, are exempted from registration fees on business opportunities platform and supplier registration with Nama Group.				

ADVERTORIALS

SHORTTAKES



With the new school year approaching, plan for your child's education with BankDhofar.

PLAN YOUR CHILD’S EDUCATION WITH BANKDHOFAR

As families prepare for the new school year, BankDhofar is reinforcing its role as a partner in social development and individual empowerment by offering innovative financial solutions that help Omani families plan for their children’s future. Through its Education Savings Plan, the bank is helping parents build a secure financial foundation to support their children’s educational journey.

The initiative reflects BankDhofar’s ongoing commitment to promoting financial literacy while encouraging prudent financial planning and long-term saving habits. The Education Savings Plan provides families with a practical and disciplined way to prepare for the costs of higher education and university studies.

The plan enables parents and guardians to establish an education fund for their children through monthly deposits starting from just RO 10. Savings continue until the beneficiary reaches the age of 18 and offers an interest rates of up to 5%, depending on the deposit period. This allows families to steadily grow their savings while working towards their children’s educational aspirations.

As part of its commitment to making the plan accessible to a wider segment of society, BankDhofar has linked the program to the Child Benefit received from the Social Protection Fund, broadening access to sustainable savings solutions that benefit students and families alike.

BankDhofar encourages parents to take advantage of the Education Savings Plan as a proactive step towards securing a brighter educational future for their children. Customers can learn more by visiting any of its branches or through the BankDhofar website.

BankDhofar is the second-largest bank in terms of branch network in the Sultanate of Oman, with more than 145 branches strategically located across the country. Through its extensive network, the Bank offers a wide range of banking solutions tailored to serve all segments of society, including women, youth, children, minors and high-net-worth individuals. In addition, BankDhofar also provides specialised wealth management services for its affluent clients and their families, ensuring that their assets are managed securely, prudently and with the highest level of confidentiality.

Own your perfect Kia SUV at 2.22% interest

KIA is transforming its customers’ purchase experience in its showroom, through upgraded interiors and amenities in the form of a New Space Identity 2.0. The New Identity includes wider customer experience options.

In celebration of its ongoing “New Identity, New Savings” campaign, Kia Oman is putting the spotlight on two of its most popular SUVs, the Sportage and the Seltos, giving customers even more reasons to make the switch this season.

The campaign brings a reduced interest rate of 2.22% on financing deals of up to four years and 3.33% for five-year agreements, with the first two EMIs covered by Kia.

As the summer vacation winds down and schools reopen, we know your priorities shift, which is why we are bringing you a whole new purchase experience and have made owning your next Kia easier than ever.

On a 5 year deal, save up to RO 400 on the Sportage 2.0 RVC 26 MY, while the Seltos 1.4T SPL 26 MY comes with savings of up to RO 349 for a 5 year deal, both adjusted directly against the vehicle price and in addition to the standard Cash Gift offer already applicable on eligible models.

Both the Sportage and Seltos come with a service package of 30,000 km or three years, whichever comes first, along with one year of complimentary registration, giving customers continued value well after purchase (Terms & Conditions Apply).

The Kia Sportage 2.0 RVC stands out as a sophisticated SUV built for family life in Oman, combining bold styling, advanced



Experience the upgraded New Space Identity 2.0 and discover a whole new showroom experience.

technology and dynamic performance in one package.

A spacious 2,680 mm wheelbase and 591-litre cargo capacity make it ideally suited for everyday versatility, with a 157 HP 2.0 litre engine, paired with a 6-speed automatic transmission to deliver a refined and responsive drive.

An Electronic Parking Brake and an All-Wheel Drive system add further confidence on the road, intelligently distributing power across varying conditions and an 8-inch integrated infotainment display on the inside.

The Kia Seltos continues to attract young

enthusiasts drawn to its elevated, modern driving experience. A high SUV seating position offers a commanding view of the road, while a 1.4L Turbo engine producing 138 HP, paired with a 7-speed Dual-Clutch Transmission, delivers spirited performance and fuel efficiency of up to 17 km/litre. It also comes with a Panoramic Sunroof, Ventilated Seats, Wireless Smart Charger, 8-inch infotainment display.

Kia Oman invites customers to visit their nearest showroom to experience the Sportage and Seltos firsthand; and discover what “New Identity, New Savings” means for their next SUV.

SHARP-Al Hashar partnership to boost Oman presence

SHARP Middle East FZE and Al Hashar Group have signed a distributor agreement to expand and strengthen SHARP’s business presence in the Sultanate of Oman.

The partnership marks an important step in SHARP’s growth strategy for the Oman market, combining SHARP’s global expertise in consumer electronics with Al Hashar Group’s strong local market presence, distribution capabilities and established business network.

Headquartered in Dubai, UAE, SHARP Middle East FZE serves as the regional hub for SHARP’s business across the Middle East, Africa, Central Asia & Caucasus.

With operations and business activities spanning 76 countries, the organisation supports the growth of the SHARP brand across diverse markets through a portfolio of innovative consumer electronics and home appliances designed around evolving



SHARP Middle East FZE and Al Hashar Group sign distributor agreement to strengthen SHARP’s presence in Oman.

customer needs.

The new partnership with Al Hashar Group will further enhance SHARP’s reach across Oman, enabling customers and

business partners to access SHARP’s latest range of products backed by the brand’s global technology heritage and commitment to innovation.

The partnership also reflects SHARP’s renewed global brand direction, “In step with your future.”

The new slogan represents SHARP’s commitment to staying close to consumers as their lifestyles, expectations and technologies evolve.

It reflects the brand’s vision of creating meaningful innovations that bring greater clarity, convenience, confidence and enjoyment to everyday life.

Through this partnership, SHARP Middle East and Al Hashar Group aim to build a strong and sustainable presence in Oman, bringing innovative solutions closer to consumers while creating new opportunities for growth across the market.

Changan UNI series: Flexible EMIs, 6-year warranty

MUSCAT: Changan is making its distinctive UNI Series more accessible to motorists in Oman with an attractive new offer featuring monthly instalments starting from RO 144 for six years. Customers purchasing selected UNI Series models can also benefit from a six-year unlimited manufacturer’s warranty, adding greater reassurance to the ownership experience.

Available through Arabian Gulf Automobiles and Equipment (AGAE), the offer covers four specific variants, the UNI-V 2.0T Luxury, UNI-T Sport, UNI-S 4WD Royal and UNI-K 4WD Trend, giving customers a choice across different body styles, performance levels and driving requirements.

The offer includes:

- UNI-V 2.0T Luxury – EMI from RO 148 for six years
- UNI-T Sport – EMI from RO 150 for six years
- UNI-S 4WD Royal – EMI from RO



Changan UNI Series from RO 144/month & 6-year unlimited warranty.

144 for six years

UNI-K 4WD Trend – EMI from RO 150 for six years

The EMI for the models is calculated based on a 20% down payment and a six-year loan tenure and is subject to bank credit approval. The offer applies to vehicles purchased for personal use.

Specifications may vary according to the model variant and terms and conditions apply.

UNI-V 2.0T Luxury combines style and performance

Designed for motorists looking for a sporty and sophisticated driving experience, the UNI-V 2.0T Luxury combines distinctive coupe-inspired

styling with strong performance.

Its exterior features a panoramic glass roof, hidden door handles and a power spoiler that reinforce its dynamic character.

Inside, ventilated sporty leather seats are complemented by ambient lighting, a 10-inch instrument cluster, a 10.25-inch infotainment

screen and wireless charging.

Driver assistance features include a 360-degree HD camera, adaptive cruise control, forward collision warning, automatic emergency braking and lane departure warning. Its 2.0-litre turbocharged engine develops 232 hp and is paired with an eight-speed automatic transmission.

Under the new offer, customers can drive home the UNI-V 2.0T Luxury with monthly instalments starting from RO 148 for six years.

UNI-T Sport delivers a dynamic drive

With its striking design and performance-focused character, the UNI-T Sport is aimed at drivers who want their SUV to stand apart.

Among the UNI-T’s signature design features are its distinctive borderless parametric grille and aerodynamic V-shaped rear spoiler. Hidden door handles and a bold quad exhaust design further enhance its sporty and futuristic appearance.



The partnerships are designed to provide seamless travel solutions for passengers.

FRENCH INSURANCE PLATFORM PARTNERS WITH OMAN AIR

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUGUST 25

France-based travel-insurance broker and insurtech platform Insurte has announced a new partnership with Oman Air to provide seamless travel insurance solutions embedded directly into the customer experience.

As a result of the partnership, travellers who fly with Oman Air can get insurance coverage during the flight booking process. Through this partnership, Insurte works as a technological provider, enabling a powerful integration that isn't just innovative in the Insurtech landscape, but also seamlessly designed. With its proprietary API, Insurte is able to equip Oman Air with a trustworthy, reliable technology.

"With our expert in-house team and more than 15 years of global experience", Insurte's CEO Stéphane Jersol said. "We're ready to provide a reliable, fast and easy-to-use technology".

By incorporating their technologies directly into Oman Air's already intuitive platform, customers will be able to expect a fast, straightforward journey.

Earlier this week, Indian financial services entity Wizzmonji joined hands with Oman Air to launch the Wizz Voyager Multi-Currency Card, an AI-powered payment solution that integrates global forex management with airline rewards and travel benefits.

The co-branded travel solution is designed to bridge the gap between international aviation and digital finance. For fintech professionals, this partnership signals a deepening integration of ancillary airline services with real-time foreign exchange and smart financial controls.

New partnership boosts AI adoption in Oman

OTech, a future technology provider and digital transformation enabler in the Sultanate of Oman, and DeepAstra, the sovereign AI platform, have launched the DeepAstra application programming interface (DeepAstra API) in the Sultanate of Oman as part of a strategic partnership between the two companies.

The launch aims to broaden access to artificial intelligence technologies for institutions and the private sector, reduce the investment requirements associated with their adoption, and align costs with usage, thereby helping transform AI capabilities into applications, products, and services that deliver economic value.

The service has been launched as part of the two companies' joint efforts to support the Sultanate of Oman's drive to develop the digital economy, foster innovation, and expand private-sector participation in a technology- and knowledge-based economy. It also aligns with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040 and the Eleventh Five-Year Development Plan in the areas of digital transformation, innovation, and the development of national technological capabilities.

The DeepAstra API enables institutions, companies, developers, and small and medium enterprises to access multiple AI models through a unified interface within a locally hosted environment. Instead of building separate infrastructure and technical integration for each model, developers can connect once, test different models, and select the most suitable one for each use case.

This helps reduce the initial costs, technical complexity, and technological challenges associated with developing AI-powered



Otech and DeepAstra Launch DeepAstra API to Accelerate AI Adoption and Support Oman's Digital Economy.

The service has been launched as part of the two companies' joint efforts to support the Sultanate of Oman's drive to develop the digital economy, foster innovation, and expand private-sector participation in a technology- and knowledge-based economy.

products and services, while accelerating the transition from testing to practical deployment.

The service provides access to open-source AI models, giving institutions greater transparency and control over usage, access, and permissions. Local hosting also supports data security, compliance, and governance requirements, while providing a controlled technological foundation upon which institutions can build and scale their use of AI applications across various economic sectors.

The service delivers practical value to small and medium enterprises, developers, and technology companies by reducing the need for substantial infrastructure investment during the initial stages and enabling them to develop their technological solutions with greater efficiency and flexibility.

It will also support technology entrepreneurship and innovation and encourage the development of local digital products and services. Furthermore, it enables institutions

to begin with specific use cases and then gradually expand in line with their operational needs and institutional capabilities.

Under the partnership, Otech will support the local availability of the service and enable institutions to adopt and benefit from it, while DeepAstra will provide the service's core technology, including the unified interface and the integration and management of AI models within clearly defined controls.

This collaboration combines the two companies' local presence and technical expertise to provide an environment that gives institutions broader options and greater control and transparency when developing enterprise-grade AI solutions.

On this occasion, Eng. Maqbool bin Salim Al Wahaibi, Acting CEO of Otech, stated that the partnership reflects the company's efforts to keep pace with the rapid developments in artificial intelligence technologies and enable institutions in the Sultanate of Oman to benefit from them in a practical and scalable manner. — ONA

European shares gain on softer sanctions agaisnt Iran

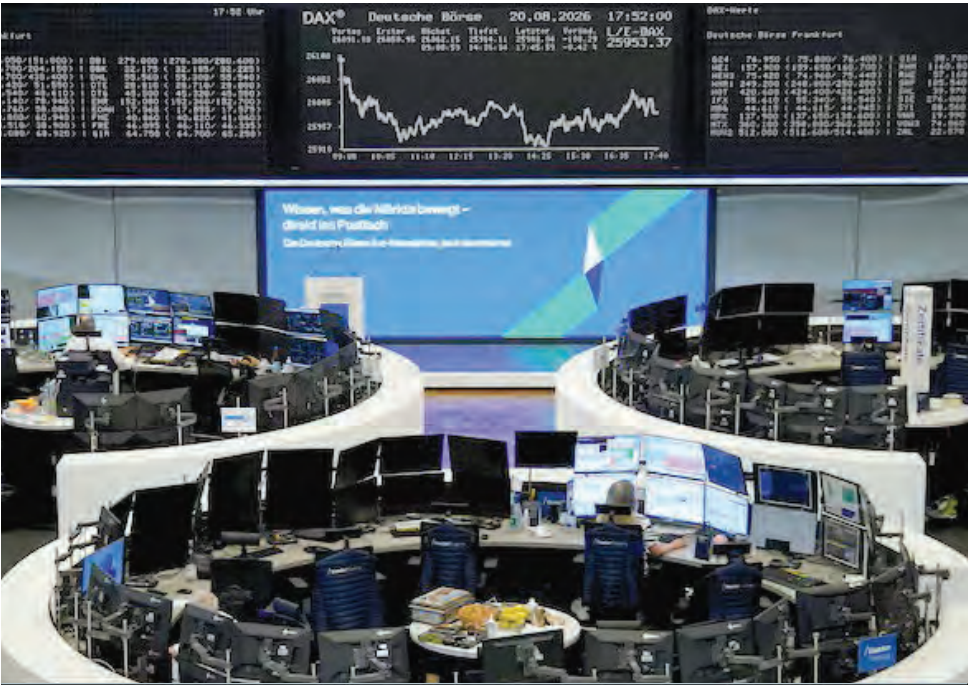
European shares edged higher on Tuesday as investors took comfort in a softer-than-feared US sanctions package against Iran, while gains in defence stocks boosted sentiment.

The pan-European STOXX 600 was up 0.3% at 656.57 points, as of 09:07 GMT.

Iran promised to retaliate against the expanded US sanctions and said it was confident major trading partners would resist Washington's pressure campaign.

Oil prices fell further as traders saw little immediate threat to global crude supplies from the latest US measures.

On Monday, the Trump administration warned countries to cut their business ties with Iran or face secondary sanctions as part of what it billed as an "economic D-Day," though the Treasury



European shares climb on softer-than-feared Iran sanctions, defence gains.

Department stopped short of imposing any penalties.

US Treasury yields eased from recent peaks after reports the Treasury may use its cash reserves to fund larger debt buybacks, which could reduce the need for additional sales of short-term bills.

Federal Reserve Chair Kevin Warsh's debut speech at the Jackson Hole symposium later this week is in focus, with investors looking for clues on the recent rise in bond yields and reassurance about the central bank's independence.

In Germany, the economy grew 0.3% in the second quarter from the previous quarter, above a preliminary estimate of 0.2%, helped by stronger exports.

Meanwhile, defence stocks led sectoral gains, rising 1.2%, after aerospace firm Melrose Industries

jumped 8.8% as the GKN Aerospace owner said it aims to resume full production at its Garden Grove facility by September 28 and expects to pay up to \$100 million to settle damage claims related to a May incident involving an overheating chemical tank.

The tech sector rose 0.4%, with investors awaiting Nvidia's results on Wednesday amid concerns the chipmaker may struggle to meet lofty expectations.

"The combination is instructive: lower energy and duration pressure can support the wider market, but technology is increasingly waiting for earnings confirmation rather than simply responding to a lower discount rate," Florian Ielpo, head of macro and multi-asset portfolio manager at Lombard Odier Investment, said in a note. — Reuters

PRECIOUS METALS

Bitcoin climbs on dollar weakness



Bitcoin rose above \$80,000 to hit a more than three-month high on Tuesday as a soft US dollar, in the wake of the moves by Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent to calm the bond market, revived momentum in the crypto sector.

US President Donald Trump last week called on Congress to pass a bill that would bring clearer definitions to the growing cryptocurrency sector. — Reuters

INVESTOR DEMAND

Shein's Hong Kong IPO book fully covered



Online fast-fashion retailer Shein's Hong Kong IPO book to raise up to \$1.8 billion has been fully covered by investor demand, two sources said, bringing it closer to its long-awaited market debut amid growing business and regulatory challenges. Shein launched its new share sale on Monday, valuing the company at up to \$27 billion. — Reuters

OIL ON FIRE

Global oil supply at risk



Almost half the world's oil comes from countries affected by conflict in 2026, Reuters calculations show, underscoring that current disruptions have eclipsed previous energy crises.

Six months ago, US and Israeli attacks on Iran triggered what has become the largest oil supply crisis on record, with no clear end in sight.

— Reuters

OPINION

Oman ranks 58th in UNIDO competitiveness index



ENG JASIM SAIF AL JADEEDI

The writer is a Director — Technical Office of Under-Secretary of Commerce & Industry, MoCIIP

OMAN has made notable progress in industrial competitiveness, advancing five places to rank 58th globally among 153 countries in the 2026 Competitive Industrial Performance (CIP) Index issued by the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO), compared with 63rd in the previous assessment.

This improvement reflects the continued development of Oman's manufacturing sector and its growing capacity to compete in international markets.

The Competitive Industrial Performance Index is an international benchmark developed by UNIDO to assess the industrial competitiveness and manufacturing capabilities of economies.

It measures how effectively countries produce and export manufactured goods, develop technological capabilities, improve the sophistication and quality of their products and strengthen their participation in global manufacturing.

The index covers three main dimensions: manufacturing capacity and exports, technological advancement and upgrading and global industrial impact.

These dimensions are measured through indicators related to manufacturing value added, manufactured exports, technological intensity, export quality and sophistication; and a country's contribution to global manufacturing activity.

According to Oman's 2026 UNIDO country profile, which is based on 2024 data, Oman recorded a CIP score of 0.047, compared with

a global average of 0.064. UNIDO classifies Oman among high-income industrialising economies, reflecting its position as an economy that continues to develop and strengthen its industrial base.

One of the most notable aspects of Oman's performance is its strong position in medium- and high-technology manufacturing. Oman ranked 22nd globally in the share of medium- and high-technology activities in total manufacturing value added, with an index score of 0.602, significantly above the global average of 0.321.

Oman maintained the same 22nd position as in the previous assessment, highlighting the growing importance of technology-intensive activities within its manufacturing structure. Oman also improved its position in industrialisation intensity, rising from 47th to 39th globally. This progress indicates an increasing relative importance of manufacturing within the national economy.

In addition, Oman ranked 56th globally in manufacturing value added per capita and 39th in manufacturing exports per capita, demonstrating the contribution of manufacturing to national production and international trade.

At the same time, the results identify areas where further progress is possible. Oman ranked 111th globally in the share of manufacturing exports in total exports, 96th in the share of medium- and high-technology activities in total manufacturing exports and 106th in the Industrial Export Quality Index.

These results highlight opportunities to increase the technological content and quality of Omani manufactured products,

Oman also improved its position in industrialisation intensity, rising from 47th to 39th globally. This progress indicates an increasing relative importance of manufacturing within the national economy.

strengthen domestic value addition and improve the ability of local industries to compete in international markets.

The findings also underline the importance of continuing efforts to diversify non-oil exports, develop higher-value manufacturing activities, enhance productivity and increase the participation of Omani companies in global manufacturing value chains.

Strengthening these areas would help translate Oman's strong manufacturing capabilities into greater export competitiveness and broader economic benefits.

Oman's rise from 63rd to 58th globally in the CIP Index is therefore a positive indication of progress in the country's industrial development. Its strong performance in technology-intensive manufacturing and manufacturing exports per capita provides a solid foundation for further advancement, while the areas identified for improvement offer clear opportunities for the next stage of industrial development.

Overall, Oman's ranking among the world's 153 economies represents both an achievement and an opportunity.

It reflects the progress already made in developing the country's industrial base while highlighting the potential to build a more technologically advanced, productive, diversified and internationally competitive manufacturing sector, in line with the objectives of Manufacturing Strategy and Oman Vision 2040; and its focus on economic diversification and industrial competitiveness.

THE US FISCAL HOLE HAS AN AI PROBLEM AT ITS CORE

MIKE DOLAN

Washington has a multitrillion-dollar fiscal problem. US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent's answer, so far, is to look for loose change down the back of the sofa.

His tentative nod to fiscal tightening last week has done little to reassure markets facing the highest US government borrowing costs in decades not least because the deficit's structural drivers, from mandatory social spending to falling corporate-tax revenues and a planned defence-spending boost, remain untouched.

Now the AI investment boom — and its uncertain payoff — sits at the centre of both the short-term fiscal squeeze and market unease.

Perhaps inadvertently, Bessent sparked scrutiny of the sheer scale of US budget deficits with an insufficient and slightly clumsy attempt to cap rising long-dated US Treasury yields by increasing relatively small bond buybacks.

Defending the buyback as merely "signaling" to markets, Bessent said new fiscal moves were afoot to keep a lid on annual deficits running at about 6% of GDP. They would focus on savings from fraud, waste and other government spending inefficiencies. But few analysts believe tackling fraud and waste will make serious inroads into the budget shortfall and the government efficiency and downsizing drive of 2025 also stalled.

Even the prospect of what Bessent called "peak deficit" for this administration convinced few.

Amid growing investor concerns about record US debt levels and the Federal Reserve's commitment to returning inflation to its 2% target, longer-dated Treasury yields have moved notably higher.

Yields on 30-year bonds are near the highest since 2007 and 10-year note yields are around the highest since Donald Trump started his second term as president. Falling corporate-tax revenues this year — partly because of booming business and the AI frenzy — and proposals for a near-50% rise in total defence spending through fiscal 2027 are helping keep the budget gap wide.

Yet high and rising mandatory spending on health and social-welfare programs is seen by most as the biggest structural issue over time.

At the margins, there's an annual interest bill on the \$40 trillion total debt pile of more than \$1 trillion and uncertain and lumpy new revenues from President Donald Trump's tariff campaigns.

The bond market's anxiety runs deeper than anything Bessent is currently proposing.

The Congressional Budget Office, opens new tab conservatively projects debt held by the public will nearly double over the next 10 years, reaching \$56 trillion by 2036 — a rise of some 20 percentage points as a share of GDP. — Reuters

THE BATTLE FOR STREAMING DOMINANCE

JOHN KOBLIN

FOR years, Amazon has persuaded tens of millions of people to use its Prime Video app to subscribe to other services, such as HBO Max or Apple TV and to watch shows such as "The Pitt" or "Ted Lasso" from within the retail giant's digital walls.

Now, America's other streaming leaders are sprinting to catch up.

YouTube and Roku are racing to establish themselves as one-stop shops for all the content people watch on their televisions. People who pay for a commercial-free YouTube tier, for example, will soon have access to Peacock content including "The Traitors" and "Sunday Night Football" as part of a recent deal between the two companies

Netflix executives, who for years have blanched at the idea of collaborating with direct competitors, suddenly appear open to it. In June, the company integrated a French broadcaster onto its platform, its first such move. And Netflix has had recent discussions about making other streaming services available as well, including Peacock and Fox One, according to three people familiar with the discussions.

The push underscores the competitive reality for the titans of streaming television. Companies that were once laser-focused on gaining new subscribers are now far more concerned with keeping those people watching as much as possible and cancelling as little as possible.

The result is that the streaming wars of a few years ago have morphed into the bundling wars of today. The biggest streaming firms are no longer content to just have the most subscribers. They also want to be the main entry point to everything streaming has to offer.

"The thing that matters is that when you turn on the TV, what app



Streaming platforms race to bundle more content.

The biggest streaming firms are no longer content to just have the most subscribers. They also want to be the main entry point to everything streaming has to offer.

are you opening for the next three hours?" said Jonathan Carson, the CEO of Antenna, a subscription research firm.

Consumers are already showing enthusiasm for using one platform to manage their streaming subscriptions.

Over the last three years, subscriptions made via third-party platforms like Amazon, Roku or YouTube have grown roughly 60%, according to Antenna. About one-third of new subscriptions are now purchased this way.

Amazon, which has been in this business for several years, remains the runaway leader. As of June, Amazon had at least 49 million subscriptions for other services through Prime Video, Antenna said.

Roku is also increasingly persuading viewers to subscribe to outside streaming services through its "channels" feature within the Roku interface.

The number of new subscriptions sold through its channels business rose 19% in the second quarter of this year compared with last year, Antenna said.

Last month, YouTube struck a major, five-year deal to bring all of Peacock's content to YouTube's paid

tier, called YouTube Premium. In the past, the service, which costs \$16 a month, was aimed at the site's power users. It offered a commercial-free experience and other perks, for music lovers in particular.

YouTube executives seem to believe that Peacock's content will broaden appeal to its subscribers.

Peacock's programming includes Bravo reality series like the "Real Housewives" franchise and "Love Island", as well as "Saturday Night Live", "Today", the Olympics, the National Football League and the National Basketball Association.

Peacock's content will hit the premium tier early next year and the price will remain \$16 a month.

YouTube also recently unveiled its first-ever consumer marketing campaign for the premium subscription. The ads will run on competitor streaming services — including Prime Video and HBO Max — and on popular podcasts such as "Crime Junkie", "Armchair Expert" and "The Daily", which is produced by The New York Times.

YouTube is also selling subscriptions for other streaming services through its Primetime Channels business. People can subscribe to and watch HBO Max, Fox One and Paramount+, among others, through the YouTube interface.

Netflix's moves have been more subtle, but that could soon change. In June, the company began streaming a local broadcaster, TF1, in its French markets. That includes a live feed of TF1 networks and on-demand programs. Greg Peters, a co-CEO at Netflix, described the early results of the TF1 pact as "very promising" in an earnings call last month.

He then strongly suggested that Netflix would be open to teaming up with others.

"If we see additional deals that similarly serve our members that work for our partner, that work for us, we'll certainly consider them", Peters said. — The New York Times

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ACCOUNTS/ SALES Indian male (b com) having 2+ years of experience in India accounts sales looking for suitable placement, join immediately. Contact: 76324360

MECHANICAL engineer with 11+ years experience in projects & marketing in Oman having valid driving licence. Seeking suitable placement. Contact: 91162085

15+ experience in building material, project sales & Trade market, deal with corporate project customers, looking for a suitable job. Contact 78384283

INDIAN male MBA Graduate with 15yrs experience in Oman seek suitable senior position in finance office admin., sales DTC. Contact: 94158080

INDIAN electrical engineer more than 20 years experience in "MEP" construction field in Oman seeks suitable job. Contact: 92919281

INDIAN Male, BSc, 20 years experience seeks suitable position as System Administrator / System Engineer. Contact: 93642216

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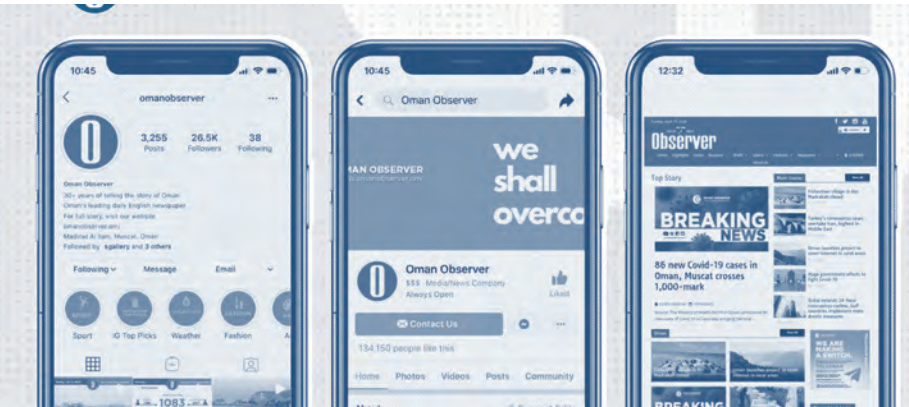
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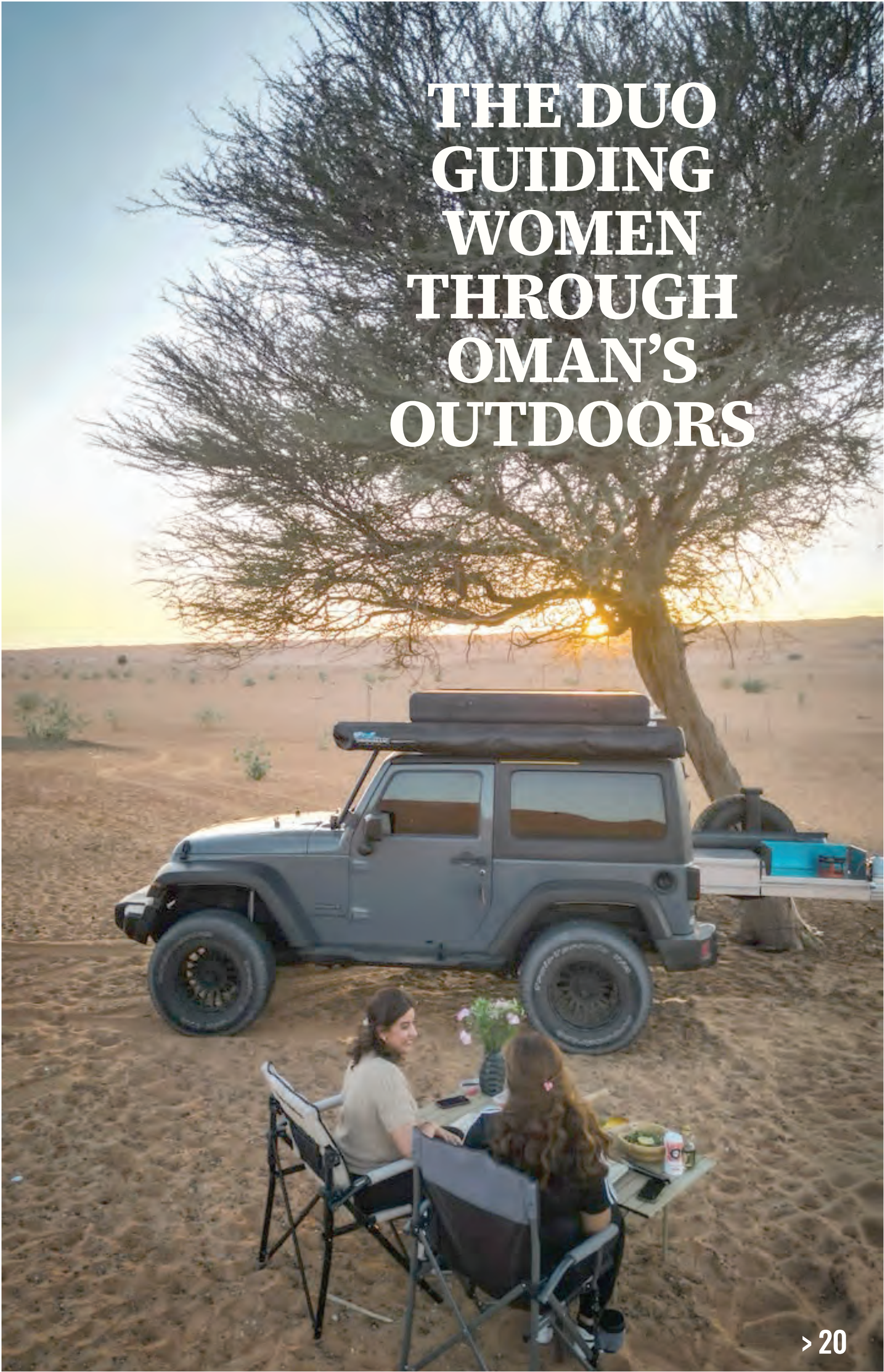


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ART/LIFE



ON SECOND **THOUGHT**

WHEN THE SCREEN BECOMES A STRANGER IN THE ROOM



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

Every week, my family gathers for a group video call. It is our way of keeping up with each other, especially now that we live in different places.

The conversations can go anywhere. We talk about work, health, family news and, often, children. One recurring subject is how much access children should have to phones, tablets and social media.

I have seen this many times. A parent needs to cook, finish some work or have an uninterrupted conversation, so a screen is placed in front of a child. It works. The child becomes quiet and the adult gets a few minutes of peace. I understand why parents do it.

But during one of our conversations, a family friend shared something that made those quiet minutes feel different.

His child had been using an app believed to be suitable for children. Someone began sending the child tasks. At first, the parents thought it was another child playing along. Then the requests became inappropriate. As the conversation developed, it became clear that the person behind the account might not have been a child at all.

What troubled me was how ordinary the encounter initially appeared. There was no obvious warning. It began as a friendly exchange inside a digital space the parents thought was safe.

Similar stories have been shared by other parents. Strangers pose as children, offer virtual rewards and slowly gain their trust. Child-protection authorities say the pattern can then escalate into requests for photographs, secrecy, self-harm or other degrading acts. During the first half of 2025, America's National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children received 518,720 reports of online enticement, compared with 292,951 during the same period in 2024.

This helps explain why governments are beginning to draw harder lines. Australia now requires designated platforms to prevent children under 16 from maintaining accounts. Indonesia began introducing similar restrictions in March 2026. Several other countries are considering their own versions.

Oman is having this conversation too. The Telecommunications Regulatory Authority consulted the public on proposed rules governing children's use of social-media platforms, including age verification, unsuitable content and the responsibilities of platforms and families.

For me, an under-16 restriction feels like the right direction. It will not solve everything. Children may find ways around age checks, while predators will look for other channels. Privacy must also be protected and educational services should remain accessible.

STILL, DOING NOTHING IS NO LONGER ENOUGH.

Parents must know which apps their children use, check conversations and create an environment where uncomfortable encounters can be reported without fear. Platforms must carry responsibility too.

A screen may give adults a few quiet minutes. We should always ask who might be spending those minutes with our children.

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



MUSIC

Musicians prepare to perform in the opening ceremony of COP17 in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. — **AFP**



CULTURE

People perform a traditional dance during the Feast of the Dormition of the Virgin Mary in Çanakkale Province of Türkiye. — **AFP**



BIRDS

Seagulls wait for scraps of food from tourists in front of the Sydney Opera House in Australia. — **AFP**

INSTA PICKS



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PRINCESS DIANA’S BROTHER TO PUBLISH MEMOIR



A royal fan holds a picture of Princess Diana as he pays tribute to her, on the 25th anniversary of her death. — Reuters

Charles Spencer, the brother of Britain’s late Princess Diana, is to publish a book about his sister’s life ahead of the 30th anniversary of her death.

Diana, the first wife of King Charles, was killed aged 36 in August 1997 when the car carrying her and her partner Dodi Al Fayed crashed in the Pont de L’Alma tunnel in Paris while fleeing paparazzi photographers.

“Swan Song: Diana, My Sister”, penned by her brother, known as Earl Spencer, is due to be released next month in Britain and published around the world, according to publisher Michael Joseph, a division of Penguin Random House.

“With the 30th anniversary of Diana’s tragic death on the skyline, I’ve been inundated yet again with requests for interviews about my sister”, Spencer said.

“This has convinced me to write down my own thoughts and memories, once and for all, rather than having the discomfort of again reading the opinions of others, many of which are based on untruths that have become accepted over time”.

Diana became the most photographed woman in the world after marrying Charles in 1981. The couple divorced in 1996.

At her funeral, Spencer delivered a eulogy in which he castigated the royal family.

“The aim of this book is to tell the truth about Diana from her brother’s perspective, just as I attempted to do when speaking at her funeral”, he said. “I want to speak on Diana’s behalf and do so in an openly positive way”.

Daniel Bunyard, publishing director at Penguin Random House, called it a “book of historic importance”. — Reuters



Cosplayers and Japanese culture fans pose for social media content during the Otamatsuri convention in Nairobi. — AFP

KENYANS GET CREATIVE TO JOIN MANGA COSPLAY CRAZE



Manga and anime fans browse Japanese stickers at a stall. — AFP

GOSPLAY has taken hold in Kenya, where fans must often get creative to dress up as their fantasy heroes.

Thousands attended the latest edition of the Otamatsuri anime and manga convention in the Kenyan capital, Nairobi, this weekend — one of the largest in Africa — with many in extravagant costumes inspired by hits like “One Piece” and “Naruto”.

Sourcing the materials can be a challenge, though.

Julius Mokaya, a building caretaker who has twice won the event’s costume competition, does not have money to import expensive costumes, so he relies on cardboard and other materials that he salvages from recycling bins.

His modest apartment is full of homemade weapons, masks and accessories; and he spent months designing this year’s costume, based on Enjin from the manga “Gachiakuta”, a story about an exile in a dumping ground.

Fittingly, the message of the story is “that trash and things thrown out aren’t really bad”, he said.

It can still be an expensive hobby, though. “I’m broke half the time, but... I love the creative aspect, the deep dive into research and understanding the character”, he



said. This year’s winner, 24-year-old Yvonne Chockey, dressed as Angewomon, an angel character from a Japanese franchise.

She, too, had to get her hands dirty, using a hot-sand technique to heat and bend PVC pipes that became the frame for eight massive white wings.

“I had to cut each feather one by one and then attach them to the base. That was the most difficult part”, she said.

Even in a highly globalised country like Kenya, the hobby can still raise a few eyebrows.

“Relatives saw what I was doing on social media and asked my father if I had joined a cult”, said Mokaya.

But the convention’s organiser,



Jotham Micah, co-founder of the Movie Jabber company, said more than 4,000 people had attended this weekend’s event and that “the beauty of anime and manga has transcended the borders of culture”.

“It gives you life. It gives you inspiration”, he said. — AFP

FEATURES



The duo guiding women through Oman’s outdoors

HIBBA AL KINDI

IN 2020, as the Covid-19 pandemic restricted travel, childhood best friends Lujaina al Sabri and Sharifa al Siyabi found themselves with a sudden itch for exploration.

“We thought, ‘We can’t go anywhere. We can’t literally travel or do anything, so let’s explore’”, Lujaina recalled

With Lujaina driving her Jeep and Sharifa searching the map, the 34-year-old duo began exploring Oman and developed a passion for camping and off-roading.

“For years, it was always just the two of us”, Sharifa said. “We had no pinned location; we were just going around, roaming across Oman and every camping experience felt completely different”.

Lujaina, a content creator and drone photographer, began documenting their adventures online. “We realised that so many people loved seeing us going camping”, she said. “From there, we decided to take girls camping”.

The pair began organising excursions for women in 2025. Since then, they have led seven trips to destinations across the Sultanate of Oman, including Bidiyah, Al Jabal Al Akhdhar, Jabal Shams and Bar Al Hikman, guiding more than 100 participants.

Recently, in July 2026, the duo founded Ghawiya, a women’s social and adventure club under the Oman Automobile Association. “Ghawiya is a community for ladies who love adventure, who are into nature and who want to figure out who they are”, Sharifa said. “There is no age limit and no nationality. As long as you are a woman and willing to take the step forward, we welcome you”.

Before their first women’s excursion, the pair had spent five years exploring Oman, learning through trial and error and seeking guidance from tour guides.

When I asked how they became experienced in camping and off-roading, Sharifa replied simply: “By making mistakes”.

“For our first camping experience, we had no idea where to go, so we went with two tour guides”, she said.

From then on, the pair sought local guides whenever they explored a new area. “One person might have ten years of experience, another five and another two”, Sharifa said. “We gathered that experience, learned together and grew together”.

The guides instilled in them a deeper responsibility towards the environment. “Nature doesn’t belong only to us; it

belongs to all creatures”, Sharifa said. “You shouldn’t be loud and you should be mindful of the lighting you use. White light can disturb creatures”.

Their own mistakes were equally instructive. “You can’t go out without checking when the car was last serviced and whether it can travel a long distance”, Sharifa said.

The pair also documented each difficulty, turning their mistakes into safety procedures for future excursions.

“Any difficulties we face, we want to avoid with the ladies”, Lujaina said. “We note them down. We seriously sit for hours noting down the safety points and discussing them”.

Today, those experiences shape every excursion. Before each trip, participants receive itineraries, packing lists and instructions through WhatsApp. Vehicles travel in a convoy, while walkie-talkies are used in areas without network coverage.

“It’s our responsibility to take them safely and bring them back safely”, Lujaina said. “Safety is one of our values”.

These measures are also supported by Al Saada Group, an overlanding solutions provider and the pair’s first sponsor.

“They prepare our car and make sure it is 100 per cent safe”, Lujaina said. “They believed in us and I’m very thankful to them”.

The pair also expressed their gratitude to the Oman Automobile Association, which onboarded Ghawiya as Oman’s first women’s automotive team.

The pair expressed that positive feedback from women has encouraged them to continue developing Ghawiya. “It makes me want to keep doing this”, Lujaina said. “They keep us going”.

The pair now want more women to discover that camping and off-road driving are not as difficult as they may appear. “They have this idea that driving is hard, but it’s not”, Lujaina said. “Once they try, they go, ‘Okay, it’s this easy.’ You just need to learn the rules”.

Looking ahead, they plan to expand Ghawiya beyond camping and off-roading, aiming to build a supportive community for women.

Their plans include meet-and-greets, volunteering activities and events marking occasions such as Omani Women’s Day. “It will be something that everyone can join”, she added.

“We wish more ladies would join us and know that there are no limitations”, she added. “If we can do it, every woman can do it”.

You can follow their adventures on Instagram at [@ghawiya_om](#), [@eefa_alsiyabi](#) and [@lujaina_khalil](#).

