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PRAYER TIMINGS

FAJR 04:38 AM

DHUHR 12:07 PM

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MAGHRIB 06:16 PM

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SHORT TAKES

HM’S GREETINGS
TO PRESIDENTS

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent cables of greetings to President Daniel Ortega of the Republic of Nicaragua, President Dr Bernardo Arévalo of the Republic of Guatemala, President Xiomara Castro of the Republic of Honduras, President Dr Rodrigo Chaves of the Republic of Costa Rica, and President Nayib Bukele of the Republic of El Salvador, on the occasion of their countries’ Independence Anniversary. In the cables, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his heartfelt sentiments and best wishes for further progress in all fields for their countries.

HM GETS MESSAGE
FROM CONGO LEADER



His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik received a written message from President Denis Sassou Nguesso of the Republic of Congo, dealing with bilateral relations between the two countries. The message was received by Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, when he received Denis Christel Sassou Nguesso, Minister of International Cooperation and Promotion of Public-Private Partnerships in the Republic of Congo. During the meeting, the two sides reviewed aspects of cooperation and ways to develop bilateral relations in various investment, cultural and logistical fields. — ONA

Sayyid Shihab to attend
Arab-Islamic Summit

ON BEHALF of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, heads to the State of Qatar on Monday to lead the Sultanate of Oman's delegation at the Emergency Arab-Islamic Summit, due to be held in Doha.

HH Sayyid Shihab is accompanied by an official delegation comprising Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, Sultan bin Salim al Habsi, Minister of Finance, Dr Abdullah bin Mohammed al Saeedi, Minister of Justice and Legal Affairs, Dr Abdullah bin Nasser al Harrasi, Minister of Information, and Sayyid Ammar bin Abdullah al Busaidy, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the State of Qatar.

Meanwhile, on Sunday, the Sultanate of Oman participated in the preparatory



HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs

ministerial meeting for the Emergency Arab Islamic Summit in Doha.

The meeting addressed the Israeli attack on the State of Qatar, which targeted the residential headquarters of several Hamas leaders.

The Omani delegation was led by Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthy, Under-Secretary of the Foreign Ministry for Political Affairs.

The meeting discussed the Israeli attack and its serious repercussions on regional security. Participants aimed to formulate a unified Arab and Islamic position on these rapid developments to strengthen solidarity and protect security and stability in the region. The meeting also discussed a draft statement on the Israeli attack on Qatar to be presented to the heads of Arab and Islamic states at the summit, which will be held on Monday. — ONA

Executive regulations of Media Law issued

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Information on Sunday issued the Executive Regulation of the Media Law promulgated by Royal Decree No 58/2024, in line with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040.

Dr Abdullah bin Nasser al Harrasi, Minister of Information, said that the Executive Regulation of the Media Law constitutes a milestone in the development of Omani media.

Issued in implementation of Royal

Decree No 58/2024, the Media Law and its executive regulation embody the Sultanate of Oman's vision for a modern media sector that keeps pace with global developments and reflects the national identity, the minister added.

Speaking at a press conference, Dr Abdullah pointed out that the Media Law was issued in response to the rapid developments taking place in the media landscape, notably digital domains and social media platforms.

He affirmed that the updated Media Law establishes clear-cut rules that provide for innovation and open up vistas for broader investment opportunities, while at the same time preserving moral values and promoting accountability.

He added that the Executive Regulation underlines professionalism and transparency, provides an inspiring climate for the growth and competitiveness of media institutions and furnishes

grounds for Omani youth in content crafting and media production. The regulation also protects intellectual property rights and fosters confidence among the media and the public.

In summary, Dr Abdullah noted that the Executive Regulation maintains a balance between the freedom of speech, professionalism, openness to the world and preservation of the national identity. **TURN TO P5**

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بمستشفى برجيل، الخوير



SHORTTAKES



The project used modern satellite-based technologies to track wildlife

NATIONAL BIODIVERSITY SURVEY SPOTS UNIQUE ‘MASIRAH GAZELLE’

MASIRAH: A field team engaged in the National Biodiversity Survey Project recently documented the sighting of ‘Masirah gazelle’ on Masirah Island in Al Sharqiyah South Governorate.

The sighting is a positive indicator that affirms the stability of this unique species of gazelle that forms one of the components of Masirah Island’s wildlife.

The detection of ‘Masirah gazelle’, the outcome of images captured by trap cameras, affirms the efforts made by the Environment Authority and its partners to protect wildlife and preserve biodiversity in Oman.

The project uses modern satellite-based technologies to track wildlife, in addition to stationary game cameras, to document wildlife species in their natural surroundings.

The recent monitoring of ‘Masirah gazelle’ also constitutes a step forward in enhancing knowledge about local species and supports plans and programmes for the protection of ‘Masirah gazelle’ in line with the Sultanate of Oman’s efforts to safeguard its unique natural resources. —ONA

OAAAQA TO LAUNCH SCHOOL PERFORMANCE EVALUATION SYSTEM

MUSCAT: The Oman Authority for Academic Accreditation and Quality Assurance of Education will begin implementing the first phase of the National System for School Performance Evaluation today, September 15.

The initial sample will include 100 public and private schools from three educational governorates — Muscat, Al Batinah South and Al Dakhiliyah — during the 2025-2026 academic year.

Dr Jokha bint Abdullah al Shukailiyah, CEO of the Oman Authority for Academic Accreditation and Quality Assurance of Education, stated that the national system represents a qualitative leap in the development of education in Oman. She noted that it was designed to be contextual and suitable for Oman’s educational landscape, based on Oman Vision 2040, the Education Law and the Education Strategy. — ONA



33 RESEARCH PAPERS PRESENTED AT DHOFAR HISTORY SYMPOSIUM

SALALAH: A symposium titled ‘Dhofar in the Memory of Omani History’ commenced on Sunday in Salalah.

The 3-day event is organised by the National Records and Archives Authority (NRAA), in cooperation with the Dhofar Governor’s Office.

The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of HH Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said, Governor of Dhofar.

The symposium includes



The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of HH Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said

the presentation of 33 research papers and academic studies across seven academic sessions. These sessions are divided into five main themes: history and politics, economics and society, culture and science, in addition to a theme dedicated to documents, manuscripts and oral history. The event features the participation of academics and researchers from both within and outside the Sultanate of Oman. — ONA

New initiatives to boost hotel apartments market

VINOD NAIR
MUSCAT, SEPT 14

VISIT Oman and Omran Group have announced initiatives to help small hotel apartment owners list their properties. In this regard, Oman Tourism Development Company (OMRAN) announced the acquisition of a stake in the UK-based UnderTheDoormat Group, a short-term rental and property technology company for investment, valued at RO 1.81 million.

Speaking to the Observer, Shabib bin Mohammed al Maamari, Managing Director of Visit Oman, said, “This investment will help the short-stay rental market in the Sultanate of Oman. Through their technology, UnderTheDoormat will take the property, a house and apartment, or even farmhouses and distribute it over 50 other platforms, including Airbnb, booking.com, expedia.com, among others.”

He added, “More importantly, if you have more than one property, it will digitally distribute them and manage the inventory on your



SHABIB BIN MO-HAMMED AL MAAMARI

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behalf. So you don’t have to fear double bookings. It has a payment gateway. It’s a very seamless user experience for both customers and owners.”

He said, “One of the problems that you have in the sector is that if we have one apartment, you put it on Instagram, you put it on Airbnb and on many other platforms. There are chances of being double-booked for the same property on different platforms. UnderTheDoormat addresses these by managing inventory and calculating tax. It can tie up with other authorities and push information required, like a copy

of the passport or the ID, just for verification purposes, which will also aid agencies such as the Heritage and Tourism with data on the demographics that can help in their marketing campaign.”

Visit Oman recently signed partnerships with Omani travel technology companies ‘My Ticket’ platform for managing ticket bookings and tourist experiences, the ‘Yalla Pass’ for event tickets, the ‘My Events’ platform for events, the ‘Valu’ app for hotel and chalet reservations and the Masarra app for rest houses, chalets and apartments and the Joula” platform for tourist guides.

Waiting time for scoliosis surgeries will be reduced from two years to six months

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
MUSCAT, SEPT 14

Two common spine problems that require surgery and are performed at Khoula Hospital are degenerative cases and paediatric scoliosis and compared to past experiences, there is increased public awareness on detecting scoliosis at an early age.

Scoliosis is when a person’s spine develops a sideways curve, usually in the shape of an S or C. Common side effects include soreness, stiffness, or headaches.

With new initiatives launched at Khoula Hospital, starting on October 1, the waiting time for surgeries will be reduced to six months from two years. This could bring tremendous relief for children suffering from scoliosis.

A challenging situation for school-aged children is the weight of their school bags, as pointed out by Raya al Maskri, who has been spreading awareness by sharing her own experiences with scoliosis.

“If you already have factors that



DR SULTAN BIN SAIF AL KALBANI

We have introduced new technology and extended sessions beyond normal working hours. This will be a multidisciplinary effort, and our focus is not just on numbers but on the quality of care

contribute to scoliosis, school bags can make it worse. There are many types of scoliosis, but some are idiopathic scoliosis, which can be aggravated. I had the genes, but the twisting and curving were so aggressive. Physiotherapy was attempted but was not effective,” reflected Raya.

Idiopathic scoliosis is the most common type of scoliosis, a condition where the spine develops an abnormal sideways curve, often in the shape of an “S” or “C.” Khoula Hospital has successfully established a comprehensive surgical programme for treating spinal deformities, including scoliosis, with the first surgeries performed in 2012.

According to Dr Sultan bin Saif al Kalbani, Head of the Spine Unit at Khoula Hospital and Consultant in Orthopaedic and Spine Surgery, the programme achieved a qualitative leap with the introduction of early scoliosis treatment last year. This advancement, he affirmed, has enabled therapeutic intervention for children at younger ages, resulting in over 50 successful cases.

“We have introduced new technology and extended sessions beyond normal working hours. This will be a multidisciplinary effort, and our focus is not just on numbers but on the quality of care,” he told the Observer.

Dr Al Kalbani noted growing public awareness about early scoliosis diagnosis. Currently, an innovative strategic research project is underway in collaboration with artificial intelligence technologies to develop early scoliosis screening methods in schools. This initiative aims to enhance early detection and reduce the need for complex surgical interventions in the future.

In May of this year, a specialised medical team at Khoula Hospital succeeded in performing a 4-hour surgery aimed at correcting and stabilising the spine of an Omani girl suffering from scoliosis. It involved the use of extendable magnetic rods along the length of the spine.

According to Dr Al Kalbani, the operation constituted a step forward in the treatment of scoliosis in children.

SHORT TAKES



The centre aims to support the innovation ecosystem

AL SHARQIYAH NORTH SETS UP CENTRE FOR AI

IBRA: The Governorate of Al Sharqiyah North has announced the establishment of the Future Centre for Artificial Intelligence (AI). This strategic initiative aims to accelerate the pace of digital transformation in Oman and create an integrated environment for developing national capabilities and supporting the innovation ecosystem.

The centre seeks to become a national platform for education, research and innovation in AI and its practical applications across economic and service sectors.

It will focus on developing national competencies through advanced training programmes in AI and its technologies, promoting research and development via specialised labs that support research projects, and fostering entrepreneurship by incubating promising startups and student projects.

It also aims to transform ideas into commercial ventures and contribute to the national economy by applying AI technologies in industrial and service sectors to increase productivity and create new job opportunities.

The centre will include advanced training halls, R&D labs equipped with the latest technologies, co-working spaces for startups and entrepreneurs, and integrated administrative facilities.

The project seeks to build strategic partnerships with universities, scientific research centres and technology institutions, in addition to collaborating with private sector entities to apply AI solutions in industry, health, education and services. — ONA

WORKSHOP ON SATELLITE METEOROLOGY



The workshop is part of a larger effort in using satellite data for weather forecasting

SALALAH: The 20th regional workshop on Satellite Applications (SAC20) began on Sunday at the headquarters of the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) in Dhofar Governorate.

The five-day event is organised by the Civil Aviation Authority in collaboration with the European Organisation for the Exploitation of Meteorological Satellites (EUMETSAT).

The workshop, which includes regional and international experts from nine countries, is part of a larger effort to enhance regional capabilities in using satellite data for weather forecasting.

It highlights Oman's commitment to advancing its meteorological services and strengthening its regional and international standing through scientific lectures, discussion sessions and practical exercises.

The workshop aims to promote the use of satellite data and imagery in meteorological applications, including monitoring clouds, thunderstorms, dust and other weather elements.

It also focuses on applications of the third generation of Meteosat satellites, developing the skills of weather forecasters and researchers, and facilitating the exchange of expertise among participating countries. — ONA

SALALAH HOSTS 3RD FRANKINCENSE AND MEDICINAL PLANTS FORUM

SALALAH: The Third International Frankincense and Medicinal Plants Forum opened on Sunday in Salalah. The three-day event is organised by Dhofar University in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, with the participation of researchers, experts, and specialists from 17 countries.

The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of Dr Rahma bint Ibrahim al Mahrouqiyah, Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation. An



Dr Rahma bint Ibrahim al Mahrouqiyah went around the exhibition opened at the forum

accompanying exhibition was also opened at the forum, featuring booths for several government entities, including the 'Green Pharmacy' initiative.

It is worth noting that the forum highlights the status of Dhofar Governorate as a historical hub for the production and trade of frankincense and medicinal plants. It also aims to utilise scientific research to serve sustainable development and strengthen Oman's position in knowledge and innovation. — ONA

MoHUP and governors strengthen urban ties

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, SEPT 14

THE Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning convened a meeting with Their Highnesses, Excellencies and governors to review action plans and discuss priorities across the housing and urban planning sectors.

The session provided a platform for direct dialogue between the ministry and governorates, reflecting a strategic focus on achieving Oman Vision 2040 objectives, including balanced development, sustainable urban growth and citizens' well-being.

Key progress updates were shared, including digital transformation initiatives aimed at streamlining procedures and improving access to housing services.

The National Addressing System, designed to standardise location and address identification, was highlighted as a critical project supporting multiple sectors nationwide.

Governors were briefed on comprehensive structural plans guiding urban expansion and equitable service distribution. The updated Omani Building Requirements Manual, setting unified standards for construction quality, safety and sustainability, was also discussed.

The meeting focused on new real estate laws, particularly the Real Estate Regulation Law and the Real Estate Registry Law, expected to unify the legal framework,



A key feature of the session was governors' assessments of the ministry's services

enhance transparency and boost investor confidence in the sector.

Updates on housing projects, including the 'Sorouh' initiative providing integrated housing solutions for Omani families, and housing land distribution plans ensuring equity across governorates, were presented. Challenges related to illegal land holdings were also addressed, with the ministry reaffirming its commitment to fair and efficient land use.

A key feature of the session was governors' assessments of the ministry's services, reflecting a shift toward performance evaluation based on service quality and

citizen satisfaction. Insights gained will guide efforts to strengthen governance and improve operational efficiency.

The ministry emphasised that urban development extends beyond housing, encompassing the creation of livable communities, support for economic activity and positioning Oman as an attractive destination for investment and talent.

Through these engagements, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning reaffirms its role as a driver of national transformation, delivering urban and housing solutions that meet local needs while contributing to the overarching goals of Oman Vision 2040.

RNO CELEBRATES WORLD FIRST AID DAY

MUSCAT: The Royal Navy of Oman (RNO), represented by the medical complex at Said bin Sultan Naval Base, and in cooperation with the Sultan Qaboos Naval Academy, celebrated World First Aid Day on Sunday. The day falls on September 13 each year. The ceremony was held under the auspices of the acting Commandant of the Sultan Qaboos Naval Academy.

The celebration included an awareness exhibition under the slogan 'Your Awareness Saves a Life.' The exhibition aimed to boost awareness about the importance of first aid in saving lives, encourage learning basic first aid skills and promote community safety. It also provided information on common occupational and domestic accidents and how to deal with them. — ONA



Oman Film Society explores possible cooperation with Russian film industry

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabiyousef

A delegation from the Oman Film Society has visited Moscow to explore cooperation with Russian film institutions as part of efforts to advance Oman's film industry in line with Oman Vision 2040.

The visit included meetings with representatives of RT and Mosfilm, one of the oldest and largest film studios in Russia and Europe.



The visit included meetings with representatives of RT and Mosfilm

Discussions focused on opportunities for collaboration in filming, production and

post-production, as well as the possibility of holding workshops and training programmes for young Omani film-makers.

The delegation was led by Mohammed bin Abdullah al Ajmi, Chairman of the Society's Board of Directors, along with Fahd bin Ramadan al Maimani, Board Member and Director of Local and International Relations, and Ahmed bin Mohammed al Othman, Member of the General Assembly.

Mohammed bin Abdullah al

Ajmi, Chairman of the Board of Directors, said the visit reflects Oman Vision 2040's emphasis on cultural openness and the creative economy.

He highlighted that partnerships with Mosfilm and Arte Channel could pave the way for joint cinematic productions and support initiatives such as the 'Make Your Film in Oman' programme, which seeks to empower national talent and enhance the skills of Omani professionals in the industry.

ALZHEIMER'S ON THE

Alzheimer's among those over 60 is estimated at

1.5

per 1,000 person-years, with prevalence rising sharply with age. In 2020, dementia accounted for 2.18 per cent of all deaths in Oman

KABEER YOUSUF

LOVE

CONQUERS ALL — but what happens when the faces, voices and cherished memories of loved

ones fade away? Alzheimer's and dementia strip individuals of their connections to the past, leaving them adrift in blurred images and fading familiarity.

According to a Ministry of Health report, Alzheimer's and dementia are emerging health concerns in Oman. While incidence rates may appear lower than in some countries, improved diagnostic capabilities have revealed a steady increase.

The annual incidence of Alzheimer's among those over 60 is estimated at 1.5 per 1,000 person-years, with prevalence rising sharply with age. In 2020, dementia accounted for 2.18 per cent of all deaths in Oman.

Founded in 2013 by Dr Hamed al Sinawi, the Oman Alzheimer's Society (OAS) continues to provide support, raise awareness and advocate for dementia care. Its Dementia Friends Programme aims to educate the public and foster understanding.

Regular symposia, webinars and initiatives such as the World Alzheimer's Month Symposium and The Purple Café have been instrumental in building awareness.

Health experts stress the importance of early detection, though symptoms often appear only after significant brain damage. Dr Saleha al Jadidi, Consultant Psychiatrist, notes that rising figures are also linked to better diagnostic skills among Omani physicians.

"Early detection of Alzheimer's in Oman can be challenging, as significant brain damage may have already occurred by the time symptoms become noticeable," says Dr Saleha.

As part of ongoing awareness efforts, the Oman Geriatric Society, in collaboration with the Higher Institute of Health Specialities, will dedicate September 18 as a special day for patients, caregivers and families — a step towards inclusive education and participation in dementia care. Advocates emphasise that support for patients should include maintaining communication, even with non-verbal individuals, and engaging them in daily activities like walks or beach visits. Practical home safety measures, such as installing handrails, are also recommended to reduce risks.

September 18 will be marked as a special day for patients, caregivers and families, promoting community awareness and engagement

Oman Alzheimer's Society leads awareness through education, support programmes and international collaboration

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SHORT TAKES



The project aims to enhance the camel milk value chain and empower women producers

40% work completed on first camel cheese factory in Rakhyout

RAKHYOUT: Construction of a factory to produce cheese from camel milk in the Wilayat of Rakhyout, Dhofar Governorate, has reached 40 per cent completion. The project, a first of its kind in Oman, aims to enhance the camel milk value chain and empower women producers.

Implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources in collaboration with the FAO, and supported by the Al Jisr Charitable Foundation and Oman Oil Development Company, the factory will be equipped with advanced machinery for cheese and dairy derivative production. Eng Ahmed bin Salem al Najjar, Director of the Animal Wealth Department in Dhofar, said the initiative is a model for sustainable rural development. It combines food security goals with women's empowerment through specialised training in food processing, quality control, packaging, marketing and financial management. — ONA

Dibba Archaeological Visitor Centre nears completion



DIBBA: The Dibba Archaeological Site Visitor Centre project in Musandam Governorate has reached 90 per cent completion, the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism has announced.

Spanning 17,562 square metres, the project — developed with support from OQ Exploration and Production and the Musandam Governor's Office — aims to provide an interactive visitor experience showcasing artefacts that trace history from the Late Stone Age to the Islamic era. Abdullah bin Ahmed al Shehhi, Assistant Head of the Musandam Governor's Office, noted that Dibba was a major trading hub in the first millennium BC, linked with India, Persia and Mesopotamia. — ONA

Rare Muscovy ducks spotted

LIJU CHERIAN
@lijucherianoman

A rare wildlife sighting has delighted birdwatchers in Dhofar as a pair of Muscovy ducks were spotted and photographed in Salalah shortly before the start of Khareef Dhofar Season 2025.

The unusual observation was made by Paramveer Singh, a Class 9 student of Indian School Salalah and son of noted wildlife photographer Amardeep Singh.

The discovery is significant because Muscovy ducks (*Cairina moschata*) are not native to Oman. Originating in Central and South America, they are usually found in ornamental collections or as feral groups in parts of the United States, Europe, Asia and the Middle East. Their sudden appearance in Salalah underlines both the unpredictability and



Rare Muscovy ducks delight birdwatchers in Salalah



Paramveer Singh

richness of the governorate's biodiversity.

Recognisable by their distinctive red, warty facial skin (caruncles), Muscovy ducks are larger than most duck species, with males weighing up to 7-8 kg. The plumage varies from black-and-white to iridescent green and bronze, while the birds are known more for their

low hissing and cooing than the typical quack. Calm and hardy, they can even perch in trees - an uncommon trait among ducks.

Paramveer, who captured clear photographs of both the male and female ducks, expressed his excitement. "It was a very special moment. Muscovy ducks are rare in Salalah, and I felt lucky to see them together. I hope this inspires more young people to look closely at the amazing wildlife we have here," he said.

Salalah's lagoons, wadis and coastal marshes have long been magnets for migratory and resident waterfowl. The Khor Salalah Nature Reserve alone is home to more than 70 species of exotic and protected birds, ranging from wading birds to ducks and other waterfowl.

Wildlife experts note that such unexpected encounters are valuable for raising awareness of biodiversity.

EXECUTIVE REGULATIONS OF MEDIA LAW ISSUED

FROM PAGE 1

The minister pointed out the next stage will see more active Omani media coverage, regionally and internationally.

The Executive Regulation of the Media Law comprises 144 articles that regulate all aspects related to media activities and media professionals in the Sultanate of Oman. It sets measures for importing print materials or related artistic works. It explains whether or not a case requires a licence from the Ministry of Information, licensing procedures needed for practicing media activities and determinants that guide licensees as they engage in media activities.



ABDULLAH BIN NASSER AL HARRASI
Minister of Information

Those who practise media activities stated in the Executive Regulation of the Media Law, notably new and emerging media entities, are required to obtain a licence from the Ministry of Information in accordance with the terms and conditions stipulated in the law, as soon as the executive regulation of this statute

enters into force.

Article 2 of Ministerial Resolution No 342/2020 grants the parties licensed before the issuance of the Executive Regulation a period of 180 days from the date of its implementation to adjust their conditions.

Executive Regulation of the Media Law specifies journalism and media professions addressed by the Media Law, as well as the rights and obligations of those licensed to practise journalism and media activities (including the right to obtain a licence from the Ministry of Information in accordance with the conditions stipulated in the executive regulations of the law).

— ONA

MoSD highlights stability to mark Gulf Family Day

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, SEPT 14

THE Ministry of Social Development (MoSD) celebrated Gulf Family Day 2025 under the unified slogan 'A Stable Family in a Changing World.'

The theme reflects the accelerating technological, social and economic challenges facing Gulf families, while underscoring the importance of strengthening family foundations to ensure stability and adaptability.

The event, held under the auspices of Mohammed bin Said al Balushi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Information, conveyed a clear message that despite rapid transformations, the family remains the compass guiding society, and its stability is key to security and prosperity.

Family remains a central pillar of Oman Vision 2040, as cohesive families are seen as essential for comprehensive development and future resilience.

Dr Jalal bin Yousef al Mukhaini, Director of the Technical Office of the National Committee for Family Affairs, stressed the importance of the family as the building block of society and the need to empower it socially to ensure cohesion and sustainability.

The celebration featured an inspirational video, an address by the National Committee for



The event was held under the auspices of Mohammed bin Said al Balushi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Information

Family remains the compass guiding society, and its stability is key to security and prosperity

Family Affairs and three dialogue sessions. Topics included the role of family dialogue in instilling values and identity, integration versus conflict in family stability and the challenges posed by social media dominance in family communication.

Speakers such as Dr Saif bin Salem al Hadi, Dr Hamad bin Hamoud al Ghafri, Dr Basma al Saeed, Abdul Nasser al Sayegh, Dr Hamad al Sinawi and Dr Nawal al Muhajiri shared insights on promoting dialogue,

enhancing family understanding and mitigating generational gaps exacerbated by modern technologies.

Constructive discussions highlighted real-life experiences, solutions and future visions to address contemporary challenges.

Gulf Family Day thus served as a platform for exchanging expertise and strengthening cooperation among stakeholders, paving the way for more resilient and cohesive families across the region.

وزارة الصحة
Ministry of Health

Announcement

The Ministry of Health (Ibri Regional Hospital) invites specialized companies to participate in following Tenders :-

Tender Ref.	Description	Last Date for Collection of Tender Document	Closing Time/ Day/Date	Eligibility	Tender Fee (Non Refundable)
3155/2025 (Retender)	Supply, Installation, Patching, Testing & Commissioning of structured Cabling for voice at Ibri Regional Hospital	09/10/2025	Before 09.00 Am on Wednesday 15/10/2025	Specialized Companies registered with Tender Board	• SME: 10 R.O • LO: 25 R.O
3154/2025 (Retender)	Supply and Installation of Interlocking Tiles in Chiller Yard at Ibri Regional Hospital	09/10/2025	Before 09.00 Am on Wednesday 15/10/2025	Specialized Companies registered with Tender Board	• SME: 10 R.O • LO: 25 R.O
3381/2025	Supply and Installation of Medical Curtains for Patients for Ibri Regional Hospital	09/10/2025	Before 09.00 Am on Wednesday 15/10/2025	Specialized Companies registered with Tender Board	• SME: 10 R.O • LO: 25 R.O

Notes :-

- All Specialized and interested Companies registered with Tender Board may obtain Tender documents from the E.Tendering website : <http://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of document.
- Regional Ibri Hospital is not bound to accept the lowest tender and reserves the right to accept or reject any tender.

<http://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>
Any Clarification you may contact via
Telephone : 24402200
Email id etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om

WORLD

ENDINGCORRUPTION



Newly-elected PM of Nepal's interim government Sushila Karki (C), along with officials, observes a moment of silence, in Kathmandu. — AFP

NEW NEPAL PM
VOWS TO FOLLOW
NATION’S DEMANDS

KATHMANDU: Nepal’s new leader vowed on Sunday to follow protesters’ demands to “end corruption” as she began work as interim prime minister, after “Gen Z” youth demonstrations ousted her predecessor. Sushila Karki, the 73-year-old former chief justice, has been tasked with restoring order and addressing protesters’ demands for a corruption-free future ahead of elections in six months.

Protests, sparked by a ban on social media and feeding into long-standing economic woes, began on Monday and quickly escalated, with parliament and key government buildings set ablaze. “We have to work according to the thinking of the Gen Z generation,” Karki said in her first public comments since taking office on Friday. A fifth of people in Nepal aged 15-24 are unemployed, according to the World Bank, with GDP per capita standing at just \$1,447, in the Himalayan nation of 30 million people. “What this group is demanding is the end of corruption, good governance and economic equality,” she added.

Karki held a minute’s silence on Sunday for those killed in the unrest, before meetings began in the key government complex of Singha Durbar -- where several buildings were set on fire during mass protests on Tuesday. At least 72 people were killed in two days of protests, and 191 were injured, the government’s chief secretary Eaknarayan Aryal said on Sunday, increasing an earlier toll of 51. The appointment of Karki, known for her independence, came after intense negotiations by army chief General Ashok Raj Sigdel and President Ram Chandra Paudel, including with representatives of “Gen Z”, the loose umbrella title of the youth protest movement.

Thousands of young activists had used the Discord app to name Karki as their choice of leader. Parliament has been dissolved and elections set for March 5, 2026. “We will not stay here more than six months in any situation; we will complete our responsibilities and pledge to hand over to the next parliament and ministers,” she added, in a speech to the nation.

Ordinary Nepalis said they were hopeful the government would bring change -- but were aware the challenges were heavy. “This government’s list of responsibilities and issues to address isn’t easy,” said grocery shopkeeper Satya Narayan, 69, in Pharping village, about an hour outside the capital.

“It also needs to ensure unity and harmony in the country by taking all sections along.”

President Paudel, who swore Karki into office, said late on Saturday that “a peaceful solution has been found through a difficult process”. Soldiers have scaled back their presence on the streets, where they had been deployed in large numbers after the protests. But more than 12,500 prisoners who escaped from jails during the chaos are on the run, and present a daunting security headache. Regional leaders have congratulated Karki, including Nepal’s two giant neighbours, India and China. — **AFP**

NORTH KOREA
CONDEMNS US,
JAPAN,
SOUTH KOREA
DRILLS

SEOUL: North Korean leader Kim Jong Un’s powerful sister condemned upcoming joint military drills by South Korea, the United States and Japan as a “reckless show of strength” that would bring “bad results”, state media said on Sunday. The allies are set to hold joint military drills from Monday through Friday off the South’s Jeju Island, combining naval, air and missile defence exercises to better prepare against threats from the nuclear-armed North. Seoul

and Washington will also stage a tabletop military exercise, aimed at integrating their military assets. Kim Yo Jong slammed the drills as a “dangerous idea”, in a statement carried by state news outlet KCNA. “The reckless show of strength made by them (the allies) in real action in the vicinity of the DPRK, which is the wrong place, will inevitably bring bad results to themselves,” she said, using the acronym for North Korea. The North perceives the trilateral

drills as “scenarios for limited or full-scale nuclear strikes and attempts to neutralise its launch platforms”, Hong Min, a senior analyst at the Korea Institute for National Unification, said. Kim Jo Yong’s statement follows a visit by her brother to weapons research facilities this week, where he said Pyongyang “would put forward the policy of simultaneously pushing forward the building of nuclear forces and conventional armed forces”. — **AFP**

Palestinians flee Gaza
City under Israeli bombs

PALESTINIAN families streamed out of Gaza City on Sunday, some crammed into pick-up trucks, others on foot, as Israeli forces pressed their assault on the territory’s main urban centre. Parents carried their children while the elderly hobbled along, a journalist reported. A man in a wheelchair and another on crutches were among the long line of people heading south under Israeli military orders.

The military has issued multiple evacuation warnings for Gaza City, but many residents have said they have nowhere else to go, noting that Israel has repeatedly struck the area in the south where it has urged people to move. The scenes of mass flight from Gaza City came as US Secretary of State Marco Rubio arrived in Israel in a show of support, despite an Israeli strike in Qatar this week.

The Israeli military’s Arabic-language spokesman, Avichay Adraee, issued a warning on Sunday to those in Gaza’s port area and Al Rimal neighbourhood to evacuate immediately to a “humanitarian zone” in the south, where Gazans say there is no more space to pitch tents.

He said more than 250,000 Gaza City residents had already fled, while Gaza’s civil defence agency said the figure was closer to 68,000. Media restrictions in Gaza and difficulties in accessing many areas mean media is unable to independently verify the details provided by the civil defence agency or the Israeli military.

Prior to the latest assault, the United Nations had estimated that around a million people lived in and around the city, where it officially declared famine last month. Footage showed exhausted families moving along the coastal road near Nuseirat, south of Gaza City



People run from an Israeli strike on a building, in Gaza City. — AFP

Prior to the latest assault, the United Nations had estimated that around a million people lived in and around the city, where it officially declared famine last month. Footage showed exhausted families moving along the coastal road near Nuseirat, south of Gaza City, with their belongings stacked high in vehicles.

In the city itself, “the bombardment hasn’t stopped since dawn,” said Umm Alaa Shaaban, 45, a resident of Tal al Hawa district in Gaza City’s southwest.

“We haven’t slept all night... The sounds of shelling and explosions have not stopped until now,” she said. According to Shaaban, the Israeli air force “bombed many houses... we were terribly afraid

— my children screamed in terror. We don’t know where to go. The bombardment is everywhere.”

Mohammed Ghazal, 32, who fled from Gaza City’s Shujaiya neighbourhood, also said the strikes were relentless.

“We are living in a state of panic and extreme fear. The shelling hasn’t stopped since dawn, the explosions are intense and the shooting continuous,” he said. “Israeli forces are using terrifying methods and escalating the bombardment to frighten us and force us to flee south.”

The Israeli military has targeted several high-rise buildings in Gaza City, saying they were being used by Hamas fighters. — **AFP**

DRONES HIT KEY SITES IN SUDAN ’S SOUTH

KHARTOUM: Multiple paramilitary drones attacked key army positions and civilian infrastructure in Sudan’s south, an army official said, just a week after similar strikes hit the capital. Sunday’s strikes targeted the headquarters of the Sudanese army’s 18th Division, along with fuel depots on the western bank of the Nile, east of the army-held city of Kosti in White Nile state, the official said.

Additional attacks hit the Kenana airbase and airport, located southeast of Kosti, while drones also struck the Um Dabakir power station, east of the city, the official added on condition of anonymity as they were not authorised to speak to the media. Eyewitnesses in Kosti, located some 320 kilometres (200 miles) south of Khartoum, reported extremely loud explosions during the attacks.

There has been no immediate claim of responsibility for the attacks and the extent of the damage remains unclear. — **AFP**

HIGHWAY TRAGEDY

At least 15 killed in Mexico road crash



At least 15 people were killed on Saturday in a road crash involving three vehicles in southeast Mexico, local authorities said. A cargo truck overturned on the highway between the cities of Merida and Campeche, hitting a car and a truck transporting construction workers, Yucatan state’s security secretariat said. “Fifteen people were confirmed dead at the scene,” including the truck driver, it said on social media, while two others were injured. — **AFP**

SABOTAGE INCIDENTS

Two trains derail in Russia, one dead



Two trains in separate parts of Russia’s western Leningrad region derailed, leaving a train driver dead and disrupting railway traffic. The incidents came hours after an explosive device detonated on a section of rail track in Russia’s Oryol region, killing three Russian national guard officers. A source in Ukraine’s military intelligence agency claimed responsibility for two of the attacks, but did not claim responsibility for the derailment that killed the driver. — **AFP**

CONTAINING THE OUTBREAK

Ebola vaccination begins in DR Congo



The World Health Organization said it had begun vaccinating frontline health workers and contacts of people infected with Ebola virus in the Democratic Republic of the Congo’s Kasai Province, where an outbreak has been declared. The WHO said 400 doses from the country’s stockpile of 2,000 doses have been delivered to Bulape, which is the outbreak’s epicentre. The outbreak, the country’s first in three years, was declared in early September. — **Reuters**

COOPERATIONMEETING



Spain's FM Jose Manuel Albares greets US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent, in Madrid. — Reuters

US, CHINESE OFFICIALS HOLD TALKS ON TRADE

MADRID: US and Chinese officials began talks in Madrid on Sunday on their strained trade ties, a looming divestiture deadline for Chinese short video app TikTok and Washington's demands that its allies place tariffs on China over its purchases of Russian oil. US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent and US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer arrived shortly before Chinese Vice Premier He Lifeng and China's top trade negotiator, Li Chenggang, at the baroque Palacio de Santa Cruz which houses Spain's foreign ministry in the Spanish capital.

The talks mark the fourth time in four months that the delegations have met in European cities to try to keep a fractured US-China trade relationship from collapsing under President Donald Trump's tariffs. The delegations last met in Stockholm in July where they agreed in principle to extend for 90 days a trade truce that sharply reduced triple-digit retaliatory tariffs on both sides and restarted the flow of rare-earth minerals from China to the United States.

Trump has approved the extension of current US tariff rates on Chinese goods, totaling about 55 per cent, until November 10. Trade experts said there was little likelihood of a substantial breakthrough in the talks hosted by Spain, which has sought to improve ties with Beijing in recent years. The most likely result of the Madrid talks is seen as another extension of a deadline for the popular TikTok app's Chinese owner, ByteDance, to divest its US operations by September 17 or face a US shutdown.

A source familiar with the Trump administration's discussions on TikTok's future said that a deal was not expected, but that the deadline would be extended for a fourth time since Trump took office in January. Trump last month launched a TikTok account. TikTok has not been discussed in previous rounds of US-China trade talks in Geneva, London and Stockholm. But the source said the issue's public inclusion as an agenda item on the Treasury's announcement of the talks gives the Trump administration political cover for another extension, which may annoy both Republicans and Democrats in Congress who mandated TikTok's sale to a US entity to reduce national security risks.

Wendy Cutler, a former USTR trade negotiator and head of the Asia Society Policy Institute in Washington, said she expected more substantial "deliverables" to be saved for a potential meeting between Trump and Chinese president Xi Jinping later this year, perhaps at an Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in Seoul at the end of October. — Reuters

POLISH PRESIDENT CRITICAL OF GERMANY, TO VISIT BERLIN

WARSAW: Polish President Karol Nawrocki is due in Berlin for talks on Tuesday, with his past criticism of Germany looming over Warsaw's diplomatic drive to bolster allied support after a Russian drone incursion. Poland is seeking greater military and political backing after its army, together with its NATO allies, scrambled jets to down Russian drones violating its airspace early on Wednesday.

While Russia denied targeting its eastern European neighbour,

Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk warned his country was closer to "open conflict" than at any point since World War II in the wake of the intrusion. Nawrocki is to meet German Chancellor Friedrich Merz and President Frank-Walter Steinmeier on Tuesday before travelling to Paris.

The political novice was elected in June and is a former director of the Institute of National Remembrance, which is responsible for prosecuting historical Nazi and

Communist crimes.

Nawrocki repeated his reparations call on September 1 during commemorations of the invasion of Poland in 1939 by Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. While Poland needed clarity in its relationship with Germany, it also needed financial compensation, he argued. Analyst Wojciech Przybylski said Nawrocki might use his trip to Berlin to appeal to his electoral base at home, which is strongly anti-German. — AFP

UK police vow ‘further arrests’ after mass protests

LONDON

London police pledged on Sunday to make "further arrests in the coming days and weeks", following violence at one of the largest-ever far-right protests in Britain, organised by anti-immigration activist Tommy Robinson. The Metropolitan Police said it had so far arrested 24 people after officers faced "unacceptable violence" trying to control up to 150,000 attendees. That was two fewer arrests than the force last reported, after discovering what it called "two duplicate records".

Twenty-six police were injured, four seriously, following clashes with officers on the fringes of Robinson's latest "Unite the Kingdom" rally in central London. Of those arrested, three were women and 21 were men, with the oldest person arrested aged 58 and the youngest 19 years-old, according to the Met. It said alleged offences included common assault, criminal damage, assault on an emergency worker, and possession of an offensive weapon, noting a number of people were arrested on suspicion of more than one offence.

"A post-event investigation is under way, with officers working to identify other people involved in disorder with a view to making further arrests in the coming days and weeks," the force added. The attacks on police occurred after some attendees tried to enter so-called "sterile areas" near counter-protesters at a Stand Up to Racism march which had ended close by, according to the Met. Officers were "assaulted with kicks and punches" while "bottles, flares and other projectiles were thrown", it said in an update on Saturday.

Protesters at Robinson's event had marched over Westminster Bridge before rallying near Downing Street for speeches by figures associated with the far right from across Europe and North America, including Elon Musk. In an incendiary address via video-link, the billionaire X owner called for the dissolution of Britain's parliament and the replacement of the centre-left Labour government while claiming "violence is coming to you". "You either fight back or you



Police officers in riot gear face supporters during a 'Free speech' march in central London. — AFP

die," he told the crowds.

Assessing the various speeches and attendees, anti-racism charity Hope Not Hate called the event unprecedented. "Seeing such a big crowd cheering speeches that called for banning all public expression of non-Christian religions, demanded the 'remigration' of legal migrants... and claimed Britain is being 'invaded' and its population 'replaced' is unprecedented," it said. "For anyone worried about the rise of far-right activism and the normalisation of viciously anti-migrant sentiment, it could be a sign of dark times to come."

Clashes erupted in London huge crowds of people massed for one of the largest-ever far-right protests in Britain. British flags, during several tense hours on the rally's fringes. Around 5,000 people had attended a Stand Up to Racism march which began around a mile to the north. About 1,000 police were deployed to keep the rival groups apart. "There is no doubt that many came to exercise their lawful right to protest, but there were many who came intent on violence," Assistant Commissioner Matt Twist said. "They confronted officers, engaging in physical and verbal abuse and making a determined effort to breach cordons in place to keep everyone safe."

He added arrests were made for violent disorder, assault and other offences, while officers' injuries included broken teeth, a possible broken nose, a concussion, and a prolapsed disc. Interior minister Shabana Mahmood condemned "those who have attacked and injured police officers" and insisted "anyone taking part in criminal activity will face the full force of the law".

Anti-racism charity Hope Not Hate, which has monitored such rallies for more than a decade, said "a number of well known far-right extremists" including Robinson spoke on-stage and were among the crowds. Joe Mulhall, its director of Research, told the BBC it was "probably... the largest far-right demonstration ever in Britain". King's College London assistant public policy professor Georgios Samaras agreed, saying it showed "multiple factions within the far-right" as well as newcomers had converged in London.

It comes amid growing anti-immigration sentiment, as Brexit supporter Nigel Farage's hard-right Reform UK leads in polls and protesters target hotels used to house asylum seekers. It also follows anti-immigration riots last year in numerous towns and cities, which Robinson was accused of fuelling with incendiary online posts. — AFP

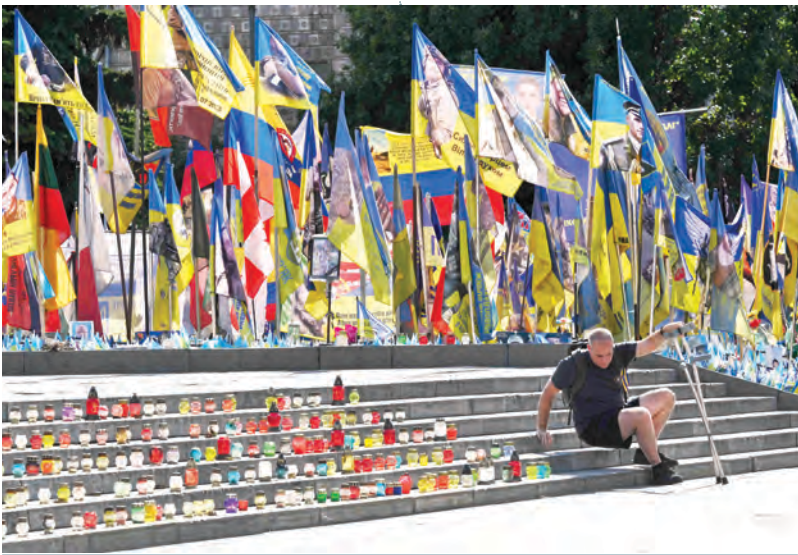
Ukraine attacks major Russian refinery with big drone assault

MOSCOW: Ukraine launched a big attack with at least 361 drones targeting Russia overnight, sparking a brief fire at the vast Kirishi oil refinery in Russia's northwest, Russian officials said on Sunday, reporting no injuries. As big powers talk about how to end the deadliest conflict in Europe since World War Two the drone war has escalated, with Russian drones downed in Nato-member Poland and attacks by Ukraine against oil refineries and pipelines in Russia, the world's second biggest oil exporter.

Russia's defence ministry said at least 361 drones had been shot down by Russian air defence systems, including four guided aerial bombs and a US-made HIMARS missile.

It did not give details about the location of the attacks. Surgutneftegaz's Kirishinefteorgsintez refinery, one of the top two refineries in Russia, was among the targets attacked by Ukrainian drones, Russian officials said. Alexander Drozdenko, the governor of the Leningrad region, said that three drones were destroyed in the Kirishi area and that a fire sparked by falling debris had been put out. He said no one was injured.

Ukraine's drone command confirmed it attacked the refinery and said it had "carried out a successful strike". Kirishi refines about 17.7 million metric tons per year (355,000 barrels per day) of Russian crude, or 6.4% of the country's total. In recent



A wounded Ukrainian serviceman is seen at a makeshift memorial for fallen soldiers, in Kyiv. — AFP

weeks, the United States has stepped up pressure on Nato countries to tighten energy sanctions on Russia in a

bid to curtail its revenues and help end the war with Ukraine - a conflict US President Donald Trump has

struggled to bring to a close.

Trump said that the US is prepared to impose fresh energy sanctions on Russia, but only if all Nato nations cease purchasing Russian oil and implement similar measures. The EU is sticking to its deadline to phase out Russian oil and gas imports by 2028, it decided last week, despite pressure from the US to move more quickly.

Russia said on Sunday that it had fired a Zircon (Tsirkon) hypersonic cruise missile at a target in the Barents Sea and that Sukoi Su-34 supersonic fighter-bombers had carried out strikes as part of joint military exercises with Belarus. An oil company in Russia's Bashkortostan region will maintain production levels despite a drone attack on

Saturday, regional governor Radiy Khabirov said.

Meanwhile, Romania scrambled fighter jets when a drone breached the country's airspace during a Russian attack on Ukrainian infrastructure near the border, the defense ministry said.

Defense Minister Ionut Mosteanu said the F-16 pilots came close to taking down the drone as it was flying very low before it left national airspace toward Ukraine.

A threat of drone strikes also prompted Poland to deploy aircraft and close an airport in the eastern city of Lublin on Saturday, three days after it shot down Russian drones in its airspace with the backing of aircraft from its Nato allies. — Reuters

OPINION

How digital tech is used to preserve heritage and culture



SANDHYA RAO MEHTA

The writer is Associate Professor, Sultan Qaboos University

IMAGINE BEING able to see the ancient wonders of the world, including the hanging gardens of Babylon or the lighthouse at Alexandria, as if it existed today. One could wander in the serene gardens or interact with sailors and traders coming in from the oceans beyond. We can even hear their songs, watch some of their rituals, and even see the pyramids being built.

Today, all of this is becoming possible through digital technologies, including Augmented Reality (AR), Virtual Reality (VR) and Artificial Intelligence.

This is more than just academic or of fleeting interest. Digital technology is revolutionising the way societies approach heritage preservation. They not only provide interactive platforms, but they also ensure that cultural treasures are protected and shared widely.

Cultural heritage is one of humanity’s most valuable treasures. It includes physical artefacts like buildings and manuscripts, but it also encompasses languages, traditions and ways of life that define societies over time.

Such heritage is fragile, as it is always the victim of time and human destruction. Natural disasters, urban development and war have simply destroyed much of what we know existed in the past.

But it doesn’t have to be this way anymore. Today, digital technology is being used as a transformative tool to safeguard physical and non-material heritage.

From 3D scanning and to digital archives and online platforms, new innovations are ensuring that cultural heritage is not only preserved but also made more accessible to global audiences.

There are many examples of this worldwide. For example, 3-D models of Corinthian colonnades in the ancient city of Palmyra are now available in various museums around the world, including the Victoria and Albert Museum in London and the Staatliche Museum in Berlin, making it possible for generations of interested public to see a part of history which is not visible anymore.

In the Arabian Gulf, digitalising and preserving cultural history for public viewership is fast becoming popular. The Sharjah Institute for Heritage and the Dubai

Oman is harnessing technology to preserve and share its heritage - from digital archiving to interactive storytelling and virtual tourism - bringing its rich history and culture to a wider audience

Culture and Arts Authority have both set up interactive exhibits to share the ancient and modern history of the nation.

In Saudi Arabia, drones and geospatial mapping are being used to create accurate models of monuments in the ancient city of Hegra in Al ‘Ula province.

Oman continues to be at the forefront of leveraging technology to connect to its rich past. Ranging from digital archiving to interactive storytelling and virtual tourism, there are a number of efforts in Oman to showcase its rich history and intangible cultural artefacts to a wider audience.

For example, educational applications allow students to explore interactive maps that trace frankincense trade routes or scroll through annotated manuscripts of Omani poetry. Interactive stations at the Oman Across Ages museum and the Oman National Museum ensure that visitors and residents have access to Oman’s rich traditions, strengthening cultural continuity in a modern context.

History is not just of passing interest but is an essential part of who we are. By using emerging technology to preserve our past, we ensure its presence for future generations.

NEPAL YOUTH ACTIVISTS EYE NEW LEADERS

AFTAB AHMED & HRITAM MUKHERJEE

A former DJ and his obscure Nepalese non-profit used a social media app popular with video gamers to drive massive protests and become the unlikely power brokers in installing the country’s new interim leadership.

Sudan Gurung, the 36-year-old founder of Hami Nepal (We are Nepal), used the Discord messaging app and Instagram to mobilise massive demonstrations that forced Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli to resign, in the deadliest political crisis to hit the Himalayan nation in decades, a dozen people involved in the demonstrations said. The group used VPNs to access banned platforms and issued calls to action that reached tens of thousands of young people, they added. “I was invited to join a group on Discord where there were about 400 members. It asked us to join the protest march a few kilometres from the parliament,” 18-year-old student Karan Kulung Rai, who is not part of the group, said. Hami Nepal’s early social media posts on Discord became so influential that they were referenced on national television.

As protests grew violent, the group also identified messages it termed ‘fake news’ and shared hospital phone numbers.

Hami Nepal members, who asked not to be identified as they had used proxy names online for security reasons, said Gurung and the group’s other leaders have since become central to high-stakes decisions, including the appointment of the new interim leadership till elections are held on March 5. They have already convinced the country’s president and army chief to appoint former Chief Justice Sushila Karki, known for her tough stance against corruption, as Nepal’s first woman prime minister in an interim capacity, three members of the group said.

“I will make sure that the power lies with the people and bring every corrupt politician to justice,” Gurung said in his first press conference since the protest. On Sunday, Gurung and his team were in meetings to decide key cabinet positions and were proposing that some government officials appointed by the previous administration be removed, members of Hami Nepal said.

“Meetings are ongoing between Karki and members of the group. We will finalise the cabinet soon,” one of the members said. Gurung and Karki did not immediately respond to questions sent to their mobile phones. The “process is being carefully carried out, so that it consists of skilled and capable youth,” Hami Nepal said on Instagram.

Gurung, who is older than the Gen Z age bracket, and his team have vowed not to take up any cabinet positions but want to be part of the future decision-making. — Reuters

Overcoming learning loss with action steps

THE return to school after the summer break is a critical period in the academic calendar. While it offers students a fresh start, it also presents challenges related to learning retention.

Extended interruptions in formal education can result in a phenomenon commonly referred to as ‘summer learning loss,’ which may negatively affect academic performance.

Understanding this impact and identifying effective strategies to compensate for lost learning are essential for educators and policymakers.

Research indicates that students often experience declines in reading, mathematics, and other core subjects during extended absences from school.

On average, students may lose approximately one month of learning over the summer due to reduced engagement in structured activities and limited access to educational resources outside the classroom. Consistent with these findings, an Austrian study of 182 lower secondary students (aged 10–12) with nine-week summer vacations found declines in arithmetic problem-solving and spelling, while gains were observed in reading (Salzburg Reading-Screening, SLS-8).

The extent of learning loss or gain appeared to be related to the amount of practice students engaged in during the break (Macher et al, 2015).

To mitigate the effects of summer learning loss and facilitate a smoother transition back into the academic year, schools can implement a range of evidence-based strategies.

Early diagnostic assessments are essential for identifying gaps in student knowledge and tailoring instructional plans, accordingly, providing actionable insights for



Early diagnostic assessments are needed for identifying gaps in student knowledge and tailoring instructional plans

targeted interventions (Briggs & Wellberg, 2022).

Enrichment programmes and remedial measures, including summer catch-up initiatives, play a vital role in reinforcing essential skills that may have weakened; participation in high-quality programmes combining enrichment with structured remedial instruction has been shown to reduce learning loss and enhance academic achievement (Augustine et al., 2013; Catapult Learning, 2021).

Integrated learning activities — such as project-based and collaborative approaches at the start of the school year — not only rebuild connections with curriculum content but also boost critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and student engagement (eSchool News, 2025).

Active parental involvement in academic support and home-based learning strengthens skill retention

and enhances children’s motivation and learning at school (Help Kids Recover).

Finally, programmes that blend academic interventions with enrichment elements, such as STEM learning, robotics, and social-emotional learning, have demonstrated effectiveness in closing achievement gaps and reducing learning loss.

In conclusion, returning to school after the summer break presents both challenges and opportunities.

While learning loss remains a significant concern, proactive strategies implemented by both schools and families can effectively support students in regaining lost knowledge and establishing a strong foundation for the academic year.

Recognising the significance of this transitional period is crucial for promoting sustained academic success.



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Discover a journey through words...



ABDULAZIZ
AL JAHDHAMI

The writer is author,
translator and a
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professional

CLOSE YOUR eyes for a moment and picture a blank page. Empty, yet filled with potentials. One word on that page can light a spark like a flame in the darkness, setting off a chain reaction of inspiration that exceeds time, distance and even hearts. What begins as a simple arrangement of letters becomes something far more powerful: a spell capable of creating entire worlds.

Each word carries its own unique power. Spoken aloud, words can provoke deep emotions and awaken long-forgotten memories. Written down, they become time capsules, preserving passing moments and embedding them into our collective story. With every sentence formed, that spell grows stronger, turning thoughts into stories. In this way, literacy becomes the art of unlocking those spells.

A powerful novel can take readers on countless journeys. A few lines of poetry can heal even the deepest wounds. A single sentence can ignite a flame that burns across generations. These are not just markings on a page; they are gateways to new worlds. The first time you read about space exploration, ancient civilisations, or unfamiliar cultures, you are stepping through those gateways.

Suddenly, you are not in the room anymore. You are floating through galaxies, walking ancient streets, or diving deep into forgotten histories. Though words may appear to be simple combinations of letters, they carry the extraordinary ability to transform everything. The right words, at the right moment, can lift you from despair to hope, from confusion to clarity, from loneliness to connection.

That is the true power of literacy; it is your passport to endless realities. Want to visit the moon? Open a book. Curious about the past? Read a story. Want to invent something groundbreaking? Learn how others did it. Literacy melts the barriers of time and space, creating a bridge to all of humanity's knowledge, dreams and imagination.

But the beauty of literacy doesn't stop at reading. It is also about creation. When you write, you become the architect of your own universe. You weave your thoughts and ideas into new realities where anything is possible. Literacy gives you the tools to shape, explore and share these worlds – all from within your own mind.

It is through literacy that the true magic of words comes alive. It marks a fire-starter, sparking fresh ideas and keeping the flames of curiosity and progress burning bright. What makes literacy so powerful is not just

Each word carries
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its ability to reveal other worlds, but its role in helping us create our own.

The more you read, the more you grow. Every book, article and piece of writing adds depth to your understanding and introduces new ways of seeing. Literacy is a continual unfolding of the mind, a blossoming of the soul.

It is a path guided by curiosity. With every word, you uncover new perspectives, new skills and deeper self-awareness. Literacy is not a destination; it is a lifelong adventure. Along the way, you will find new ideas to explore, new mountains to climb, and countless truths to discover.

When you read, you are not just gathering information. You are stepping into the lives of others, experiencing their wisdom, struggles and triumphs. You gain empathy, insight and a broader view of the world.

In a world often overwhelmed by noise and complexity, literacy stands as our compass. It is the lighthouse guiding us through the storm. It teaches us to think critically, to ask questions and to make sense of the chaos around us. Through literacy, we connect to each other, to our history and to our future. It is not just about reading and writing, but it is about understanding, growing and imagining what could be. And that is where the true magic lies.

LAB-GROWN
DIAMONDS ROBBING
SOUTHERN AFRICA
OF RICHES

HILLARY ORINDE

Botswana and southern African peers that built much of their prosperity on diamonds are scrambling for alternatives as cheaper, lab-grown stones threaten their economies.

Diamond-dependent Botswana is leading the way and launched a sovereign wealth fund this week to lay the “foundation for a more resilient, sustainable and diversified future beyond diamonds”.

It is exploring other avenues too, like boosting luxury wildlife tourism, launching into the medicinal cannabis market and exploiting its abundant sunshine for solar power.

President Duma Boko has even mooted taking a majority stake in industry giant De Beers and selling Botswana’s diamonds independently.

“Countries such as Angola, Namibia and South Africa are all exposed but not to the same degree as Botswana,” economist Brendon Verster at the Oxford Economics Africa think tank said.

The stones are the country’s main source of income and account for about 30 per cent of its gross domestic product (GDP) and 80 per cent of its exports, according to the International Monetary Fund. But, as consumers turn to cheaper diamonds created in China and India, the average price of a one-carat natural diamond is falling.

The price dropped from a peak of \$6,819 in May 2022 to \$4,997 by December 2024, according to the World Diamond Council.

Botswana, which is 70 per cent desert, was lifted from poverty by the discovery of diamonds in the 1960s. It is already feeling the effects of the lab-grown competition.

As its foreign reserves deplete, the government has turned to debt to fill the public coffers. Government funds ran so low that the health system teetered on the verge of collapse in August, leading Boko to declare a state of emergency.

“If left unaddressed, there is a real risk of the situation becoming not just an economic challenge but a social time bomb,” he said in July.

Highlighting the fears, global ratings agency S&P on Friday dropped its long-term ratings on Botswana one notch to “BBB” and declared a negative outlook, citing the rapid expansion of the lab-diamond market.

Synthetic stones had captured “approximately 20 per cent of the global market by value and up to 50 per cent by volume in the US engagement ring segment in 2025,” it said in a statement.

Diversification is “essentially now or never”, Verster said.

“We don’t really see anything that would cause a monumental shift back in favour of natural diamonds to curb the rising popularity of synthetic diamonds.”

Also suffering is tiny Lesotho, where diamonds contribute up to 10 per cent of its \$2 billion GDP and the larger, vital textile market has been hit by US tariffs. — AFP

Poverty fight must not stop

FACED with a slowing global economy and rising debts, many developing-country governments may be tempted to scale back anti-poverty programmes. That would be a grave mistake. Combating poverty is not just a moral imperative; it is also crucial for economic stability, conflict prevention and long-term development.

Recent research supports the economic case for reducing poverty, showing that a ten-percentage-point decrease in poverty rates can raise per capita growth by up to 1.2 per cent annually. For countries like the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Paraguay, that would mean an increase of 25 per cent or more in annual per capita growth.

Moreover, the experience of countries across Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean demonstrates that meaningful poverty reduction can be achieved even under severe budget constraints. To this end, governments must focus on three key areas.

The first is energy. Expanding access to affordable electricity is essential for manufacturing and agriculture, and thus for the sustainable growth required to reduce poverty. A major step forward in this regard is Mission 300, a groundbreaking initiative led by the World Bank and the African Development Bank (AfDB) that aims to provide electricity to 300 million Africans by 2030.

The second priority is investing in human capital. Studies have consistently shown that investments in early childhood programmes, quality education and accessible healthcare generate high returns. In Jamaica, for example, early interventions increased mid-career incomes by 37 per cent, according to a 2021 study. Similarly, a 2024 World Food Programme study found that school nutrition programmes can produce up to \$9 in cross-sector benefits for every dollar of investment. Notably, Kenya’s Home-Grown School Feeding Programme, which links education, nutrition and local agriculture, has boosted school attendance, improved health outcomes and enhanced students’ long-term earnings potential.

Lastly, investing in large-scale cross-border infrastructure can



Combating poverty is not just a moral imperative.

accelerate economic integration, create job opportunities and sharply reduce poverty. The \$15.6 billion Abidjan-Lagos Super-Corridor, which connects five West African countries with a combined population of 330 million, will cover 75 per cent of the volume of West Africa by 2030. Similar projects include a proposed \$531 million corridor linking the DRC, the Central African Republic and Chad, and the \$576 million AfDB-funded Nacala Road Corridor, which is already benefiting more than two million people in Zambia, Malawi and Mozambique.

While these strategies are cost-effective, scaling them up requires increased financing at a time when public budgets around the world are under growing strain. A hybrid capital instrument based on the International Monetary Fund’s Special Drawing Rights (SDRs, the IMF’s reserve asset), developed by the AfDB and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), offers a promising solution.

In 2024, the IMF allowed countries to use this innovative financial tool to reallocate their existing SDRs voluntarily to developing countries through the AfDB and the IDB, whose triple-A credit ratings and proven track records uniquely enable them to maximise the impact of these additional resources. The impact can be transformative, because each dollar equivalent of SDRs the AfDB and the IDB receive counts

as quasi-equity. So, by leveraging SDRs, we could deploy low-interest loans, guarantees, and blended-finance instruments that attract private investment in infrastructure, greentech and agriculture.

In Latin America, the IDB estimates that channelling \$1 billion in SDRs could unlock \$7-8 billion in development funds – enough to provide school meals to ten million children, healthcare services to 1.3 million women and children, and direct cash transfers to four million households for a year – advancing efforts to eliminate extreme poverty by 2030. In line with this approach, the IDB has already joined the Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty, committing up to \$25 billion to support policies and government-led anti-poverty and food-security initiatives that leverage innovative tools such as reallocated SDRs.

Even modest SDR reallocations could deliver outside returns, especially in Africa. Redirecting just \$1.5 billion in SDRs to the AfDB could generate \$10 billion in development financing. If invested in agriculture, these resources could double the productivity of 16 million farmers, increase food production by 40 million tonnes and lift 80 million people out of poverty by 2030, according to AfDB estimates.

An additional \$4.5 billion could be directed towards regional infrastructure, including the 1,300-km Lobito Corridor.

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SPORTS

SHORTTAKES



Oman's sprinter Ali al Balushi

AL BALUSHI ENDS WORLD ATHLETICS CAMPAIGN

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, SEPT 14

Oman's sprinter Ali al Balushi wrapped up his participation at the World Athletics Championships in Tokyo with a strong showing against a world-class field in the men's 100m event. Competing at the state-of-the-art Japan National Stadium, Al Balushi clocked 10.25 seconds to finish fourth in Heat 3 of the first round. The race featured elite names, with world number two Noah Lyles of the USA securing victory in 9.95 seconds, followed by Jamaica's Ackeem Blake who clocked 10.07s and Bahamas' Terrence Jones registered a timing of 10.16s.

Across the seven heats, South Africa's Gift Leotlela led the standings with a stunning timing of 9.87s – his personal best – followed closely by Nigeria's Kayinsola Ajayi who managed to end the distance within a 9.88 seconds as his personal best and Jamaica's Oblique Seville (9.93s). Lyles placed fourth overall in the preliminary round. In the final rankings, Al Balushi secured 38th position out of 56 sprinters worldwide, reflecting his continued progress on the international stage. The top finishers from each of the seven heats along with 3 fastest times took part at the semifinal and it was followed with a final in the same day on Sunday night.

Al Balushi's participation in Tokyo was earned through his remarkable gold medal performance at the World Athletics Continental Tour Gold in Beijing, where he posted a new personal best of 10.09 seconds. That achievement highlighted his growing stature in global athletics and secured his qualification for the championships.

Al Balushi will turn his attention now to the 2025 Islamic Solidarity Games which is scheduled to take place in Saudi Arabia from November 7 to 21. He will be joined by fellow Omani sprinter Mulham al Balushi and the national relay team, all of whom have qualified for the event.

Monsef crowned Oman Roll Ball Championship

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, SEPT 14

THE Iranian team Monsef was crowned champion of the third edition of the Oman Roll Ball Championship after an exciting 8-5 victory over Egypt's Smouha in the final match, held at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex (secondary hall) in Bausher. Smouha settled for second place, while India's O.Baba clinched third after defeating Oman's Salalah 12-5.

INDIVIDUAL AWARDS

Iran's Salman Arabi won the Best Player award for his standout performances, while his teammate Mohammad Askari was named 'Best Goalkeeper.' Smouha's striker, Ahmed Hassan, earned the Top Scorer award. The closing ceremony was presided over by Suleiman bin Hamad al Harthy, CEO of Oman Arab Bank.

THE FINAL MATCH

The final was thrilling from the outset, with Smouha's Ahmed Hassan opening the scoring early, followed by Abdelrahman doubling the lead to give the Egyptians an early advantage. Monsef responded quickly. Ali reduced the deficit in the 3rd minute, and Salman Arabi equalised in the 16th. Arabi then struck twice in quick succession (20' and 21'), followed by Sofina Sina's goal to end the first half 5-2 in Monsef favour.

In the second half, Smouha pressed forward and Motaz netted their third goal, but Iranian goalkeeper Mohammad Askari pulled off several crucial saves. Monsef extended their lead when Salman Arabi converted a penalty for the sixth goal. Smouha fought back through Murtada and Abdel Rahman to narrow the gap to 6-5. However, Arabi again converted from the spot for his fourth goal, before Bahrami sealed the win with the eighth in the 47th minute. Smouha missed a golden chance to return when player Abdiko squandered a penalty in the 49th minute, ending the match with a deserved Iranian triumph (8-5).

POST-MATCH REACTIONS

Monsef player Naveed expressed pride we are delighted to win the title here in Oman. It wasn't easy against a strong team like Smouha, but our belief in ourselves and team spirit helped us turn the result around. We gained valuable technical experience from this tournament.

For his part, Badr al Khuzairi, General



The Iranian team Monsef celebrate with the trophy after winning the third edition of the Oman Roll Ball championship title

Supervisor of Roll Ball Sports at the Oman Skating Sports Committee, said the championship has achieved great success from the very first moment the delegations arrived in Oman. We received very positive impressions from everyone regarding the organisation and hospitality. I can confidently say that the impact of the tournament has gone beyond the Arab level to reach the international stage. Evidence of this is that many Gulf and European teams have already contacted us to take part in the upcoming editions.

As for the participation of Omani clubs, Al Khuzairi explained that our local participation is primarily aimed at developing and preparing Omani teams,

so they gain the necessary experience and become capable of competing efficiently in international competitions. These participations represent an important step in preparing our players for exposure and continuous development.

Smouha's Ahmed Hassan, the tournament's top scorer, commented that the competition was very strong this year, and all teams showed high levels of play. Despite physical fatigue from the preliminary rounds, we reached the final and delivered a respectable performance. The tournament had a world-class level, and Oman proved its ability to host major events with excellent organisation and constant support from the committee.

Sohar top Elite League temporary, Samayil and Saham settle for draw

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, SEPT 14

Samayil and Saham played out a dramatic 2-2 draw at the main stadium of Nizwa Sports Complex, in a clash that opened Round 2 of the Elite League. The encounter was packed with goals, turning points, and late drama that left both teams sharing the spoils.

The game was thrilling from the start, with Samayil opening the scoring in the 34th minute through Dawood Suleiman al Jabri, who converted a penalty with precision to the right of the goalkeeper. However, Saham equalised in first-half stoppage time (45+1) when Mohsin Jowhar struck a direct free kick into the net.

In the second half, Samayil regained the lead in the 60th

minute through Khalid al Buraiki, who headed home powerfully from a corner. Yet, Saham refused to give up and pushed hard in the closing minutes, eventually finding the equaliser in the 89th minute when a cross from Mohammed al Balushi was mistakenly turned into his own net by Samayil defender Abdulaziz al Rawahi.

With this result, both teams shared the points, each collecting their first point of the round. The match highlighted the closeness in level and the determination of both sides to make their mark in the league. Saham registered its first point of the season, as did Samayil, placing them temporarily in ninth and tenth place in the standings.

Meanwhile, Sohar climbed



Sohar player controls the ball

to the top of the Elite League table after a valuable 1-0 victory over visiting Dhofar at Sohar Sports Complex in Round 2 of the competition.

The first half saw balanced exchanges, with the most notable chances being a shot from Mohammed al Mujaini that the Sohar goalkeeper saved, an effort from Omar Adel after a cross by Mohammed al Habsi, and a joint move between Keita and Raed Ibrahim cleared by Dhofar's defence. The half ended goalless, with controversy arising when referee Mohammed al Mayahi declined to award Dhofar a penalty in the 19th minute for a handball inside the box.

In the second half, both sides increased the tempo in search of a breakthrough, with the

coaches making several attacking substitutions. Sohar had early chances through Raed Ibrahim and his teammates, while Dhofar pressed forward, only to be denied by goalkeeper Majdi Shaaban's fine saves.

Finally, in the 83rd minute, Iraqi forward Amir Alaa broke the deadlock, sprinting down the right wing before unleashing a powerful strike into the far corner past goalkeeper Mazin al Kasbi, sealing the three points for Sohar.

With this win, Sohar raised its tally to 6 points to take the lead at the top of the table, while Dhofar remained without points after suffering its second consecutive defeat, dropping to 13th place, just above the bottom of the league standings.

SHORTTAKES



France's Jimmy Gressier celebrates with a France flag after winning the final. — Reuters

GRESSIER SHOCKS FIELD TO WIN WORLD 10,000M GOLD

TOKYO: France's Jimmy Gressier pulled off a huge upset by winning the men's 10,000m at the world championships in Tokyo on Sunday.

In the absence of Uganda's three-time winner Joshua Cheptegei, a new world champion was waiting to be crowned, but all the money was on one of the powerful Ethiopian trio. Berihu Aregawi, winner of multiple global silver medals, was targeting his first major gold, while Yomif Kejelcha and Selemon Barega, winner of the Olympic title here in 2021, also fancied their chances.

But they had not counted on Gressier's turn of pace come the home straight after 25 laps of the National Stadium.

The Frenchman won in 28min 55.77sec, with Kejelcha taking silver 0.07sec adrift and Sweden's Andreas Almgren claiming bronze (28:56.02).

It was a first victory over the distance for a European since Somalia-born Briton Mo Farah in 2017 — he also won in 2013 and 2015. Italian Alberto Cova won the event at the inaugural edition of the worlds in 1983.

Kenya's Edwin Kurgat pushed the pace through the halfway mark of the 25-lap race in hot and humid conditions.

His surge failed to drop runners from the pack, however, American Grant Fisher taking over at the head at a much slower pace that saw the pack once again bunch up. Almgren led with four laps to run, the Ethiopians biding their time and energy at the heart of the peloton.

With 800m to go, Almgren accelerated and the elbows came out as jostling commenced for better positions to launch a definitive attack. Barega, with Aregawi and Kejelcha on his shoulder, went through the bell together. Fisher responded to Kejelcha at 150 metres, but as the athletes fanned out for a better line Gressier raced through from out of nowhere for a stunning victory that left him totally shocked and in tears. — AFP



(L-R) Second-placed Ethiopia's athlete Yomif Kejelcha, winner France's athlete Jimmy Gressier, and third-placed Sweden's athlete Andreas Almgren celebrate with their medals and countries' flags after competing in the men's 10000m final during the World Athletics Championships in Tokyo. — AFP



India beat Pakistan by 7 wickets in Asia Cup clash

SPINNERS

LED by Kuldeep Yadav helped India thrash Pakistan by seven wickets in the Asia Cup on Sunday as the neighbours met on the cricket pitch for the first time since a military conflict between them in May.

Kuldeep returned figures of 3-18 and along with fellow spinner Axar Patel kept Pakistan down to 127-9 in a key Group A T20 clash in Dubai.

India lost two wickets after a fiery 31 off 13 balls from opener Abhishek Sharma, but skipper Suryakumar Yadav hit an unbeaten 47 to achieve the target with 25 balls to spare. Suryakumar put on 56 runs with left-hander Tilak Varma, who hit 31 before being bowled by Saim Ayub.

The captain stood firm and hit the winning six as Indian fans celebrated at

a stadium, which had lot of empty seats, and the players from both teams went off without handshakes. Abhishek came out roaring as he hit Pakistan pace spearhead Shaheen Shah Afridi for a four and a six and, despite the fall of Shubman Gill in the next over, kept up the charge. Swashbuckling Abhishek cracked four boundaries and two sixes before he mistimed another attempt for a maximum to be caught at long-off off spinner Ayub. India's bowlers set up the dominant win as Axar, who took 2-18, and Kuldeep combined to rattle the opposition batting, which suffered from a lack of partnerships. Hardik Pandya struck in the first over to dismiss opener Ayub for a golden duck and fellow quick Jasprit Bumrah sent back wicketkeeper-batsman Mohammad Haris for three.

Sahibzada Farhan, who top-scored with 40, attempted to rebuild the innings along

with Fakhar Zaman, who made 17, in a partnership of 39.

Axar broke the stand with his left-arm spin as he got Zaman caught out and in his next over had skipper Salman Agha out for three.

Left-arm wrist spinner Kuldeep came into the attack and struck twice on successive balls to pack off Hasan Nawaz (5) and Mohammad Nawaz (0) as Pakistan slipped to 64-6 inside 13 overs. Wickets kept tumbling, but number nine Afridi took on the opposition attack with four sixes in his unbeaten 33 off 16 balls to push the total past 120 and play out Pakistan's full 20 overs. India, with two wins from two, are nearly through to the next Super Fours stage of the tournament with their final group match against Oman on Friday. Pakistan play hosts United Arab Emirates next and despite the defeat are expected to make the next stage. — AFP

Marquez nears seventh MotoGP title after San Marino triumph

MISANO ADRIATICO: Marc Marquez is on the verge of winning his seventh MotoGP world title after triumphing in Sunday's San Marino Grand Prix and breaking the sport's all-time record for championship points.

Ducati rider Marc Marquez is on a whopping 512 points with six race weekends remaining and needs to earn three more than his brother Alex Marquez, who finished third, at the Japan MotoGP later this month to draw level with his great rival and motorcycling icon Valentino Rossi.

It would be his first championship victory since 2019 and crown a comeback from an injury nightmare which began when he broke his right arm at the start of the 2020 season. He claimed a career 99th

GP win across MotoGP, Moto2 and Moto3 from fourth on the starting grid, winning a brilliant battle with Aprilia's pole sitter Marco Bezzecchi who won Saturday's sprint after Marc Marquez crashed while in the lead.

"I gave everything I had, the mistake from yesterday gave me extra concentration, extra power, extra energy," said Marc Marquez.

"I was just there following him, trying to push him, always super close, because I say it's impossible to do 27 laps without any mistake, and in the end he did a small mistake.

"Super important for Ducati. I felt the pressure this weekend that for them it was super important to win both the Italian GPs, in Mugello and here. We did it so happy for all the



Ducati Lenovo Team's Spanish MotoGP rider Marc Marquez kisses his trophy as he celebrates his victory on the podium at the end of the San Marino Moto GP Grand Prix. — AFP

Ducatisti (fans)."

Just as during Saturday's sprint race Marc Marquez charged past Fabio Quartararo and his brother Alex Marquez at the green light to nestle in behind Italian Bezzecchi.

MARQUEZ DOMINANCE

But unlike on Saturday, when the Spaniard slid off the track after overtaking Bezzecchi, he made no such mistake once he snuck into the race lead during lap 12. He pounced on a slip from Bezzecchi who went wide on a corner during lap 12 and from there rode expertly to seal his 11th GP win of a phenomenal season in which he has also won 14 of 16 sprints. It was a shame for Bezzecchi who previously rode for Rossi's VR46 team and was hunting a second win

of the season, but he is closing in on third place in the championship standings after Marc Marquez's teammate Francesco Bagnaia crashed out.

"I think that besides the victory this is maybe the best race of my life because I was super competitive all the weekend with the pole position, the sprint, second place but close to Mark who is at the moment the strongest of the grid," said Bezzecchi. "I gave my all. I'm destroyed to try to give the fans the best show that I could." It was another disastrous weekend for two-time MotoGP champion Bagnaia who started in eighth, his lowest placing ever on the grid at Misano, and then slid off the track during the 10th lap. — AFP

SPORTS

SHORTTAKES



Australia's Aleksandar Vukic in action during his singles match against Belgium's Raphael Collignon.
— **Reuters**

GERMANY, FRANCE AND ARGENTINA QUALIFY FOR DAVIS CUP FINAL 8

PARIS: Germany reached the Davis Cup Final 8 with a 4-0 rout of Japan, France secured a convincing win over Croatia and Argentina qualified after knocking out last year's finalists Netherlands in their second-round qualifying tie on Saturday.

Austria also qualified with a dramatic 3-2 win over Hungary, while Belgium and Denmark took commanding 2-0 leads over Australia and Spain.

After Germany took a 2-0 lead on Friday in Tokyo, their victory was completed when Kevin Krawietz and Tim Puetz saved three set points in the second set to beat Japan's Yosuke Watanuki and Takeru Yuzuki 6-3 7-6(4) in the doubles. Justin Engel then beat Rei Sakamoto 6-3 6-7(2) 10-7.

Last year's semifinalists Germany are the first team to enter the Final 8 through the qualifiers, joining hosts Italy in the culminating round set for November in Bologna.

"Right now, the locker room is dancing and singing. We're looking forward to Bologna and hopefully we're getting one step further," Germany captain Michael Kohlmann said.

Argentina also qualified when Andres Molteni and Horacio Zeballos beat the Dutch duo of Sander Arends and Botic van de Zandschulp 6-3 7-5 to take an unassailable 3-0 lead in Groningen.

Hungary, who had lost both their matches to Austria on Friday, fought back with back-to-back wins in Debrecen.

Fabian Marozsan and Zsombor Piros edged the Austrian pair of Alexander Erler and Lucas Miedler 7-6(4) 7-6(2) before Piros beat Lukas Neumayer in a singles match to bring Hungary level at 2-2. — Reuters



Burnley's Lesley Ugochukwu fouls Liverpool's Florian Wirtz and is later sent off after receiving two yellow cards. — Reuters

Salah scores penalty as Liverpool top EPL

MOHAMED

Salah scored a stoppage-time penalty against Burnley on Sunday as Liverpool maintained their perfect record to return to the top of the Premier League. Scott Parker's men had doggedly kept the champions at bay but a Hannibal Mejbri handball in the dying seconds gave Salah a chance to win the match and he made no mistake.

Liverpool are the first side in Premier League history to win four consecutive games with winning goals scored in the final 10 minutes or later – with Sunday's coming in

the 95th minute. They are three points clear of Arsenal, who went top of the table on Saturday with a 3-0 win against Nottingham Forest. Arne Slot's Liverpool, chasing a record 21st English league title, have not been at their best this season but have found a way to win all four of their matches. The Dutchman said his team had struggled to create clear-cut chances against a side who defended deep.

They had 27 shots at Turf Moor but just four of those were on target.

"We kept playing, we kept moving the ball around," Slot told Sky Sports. "They got more and more tired which is normal when you have to defend for 80 per cent of time and then

we got as many attackers on as possible.

"Difficult game but all of them are in the Premier League. A clean sheet and from open play we hardly concede a chance. That's a good thing. "It is normal and a lot of new players, we will get better and better but in the meantime we have 12 points."

ISAK ABSENT

Slot left new signing Alexander Isak out of his squad after warning he would ease the forward into action gradually.

But he could still field an impressive attacking line-up including Salah, Cody Gakpo, Florian Wirtz and Hugo Ekitike. — **AFP**



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Pact inked for RO 188m electric battery project in Salalah Free Zone

THE Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ), together with Salalah Free Zone, signed a usufruct agreement covering the establishment of an advanced electric battery chemicals project by GFCL Electric Power, part of the global Anox GFCL Group.

The agreement was signed by Eng Ahmed bin Hassan al Dheeb, Vice Chairman of the Public Authority, Dr Ali bin Mohammed Tabuk, CEO of Salalah Free Zone and B C Jin, CEO of GFCL Electric Power.

The project, with a total investment exceeding RO 188 million, will be implemented in phases over 4 to 6 years, with around RO 73 million to be invested in the first phase.

Covering approximately 370,000 square metres, the facility will produce lithium iron phosphate, ammonium phosphate, iron salts and carbon materials used in batteries for electric vehicles, energy storage and modern electronic technologies.

The project is expected to support production of up to 100 GWh of batteries in phases, serving the EV sector and energy storage solutions.

Dr Ali Tabuk highlighted that the agreement reflects strong coordination with Invest in Oman and the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones, demonstrating growing

Officials from various stakeholders present at the signing on Sunday.

confidence in Oman's investment environment.
He described the project as a strategic addition to Salalah

Free Zone, emphasising its role in promoting green industries, attracting high-quality projects and positioning Oman as a

regional hub for advanced battery manufacturing.
Dr Saeed bin Khalifa al Qarini, Director General of Investment

Development at the Public Authority, noted that the project aligns with Oman's net-zero carbon ambition by 2050 and Oman Vision 2040 goals for economic diversification and sustainable industries.

He emphasised its potential to open global partnerships in the electric vehicle and energy storage sectors, enhance competitive advantages of economic zones and attract foreign direct investment in renewable energy-linked industries.

The project aims to establish a local lithium battery materials base, create direct and indirect employment, develop Omani youth skills and provide extensive investment opportunities in battery system components.

The Public Authority has linked essential service incentives to ensure sustainable local value, promote industrial innovation and empower Omani talent.

GFCL Electric Power also plans to support community development through strategic SME partnerships via a corporate social responsibility programme aimed at tangible local impact and business growth.

The signing ceremony was attended by Shaikh Dr Ali bin Masoud al Sunaidy, Chairman of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ), along with officials from the Authority, Salalah Free Zone and GFCL. — ONA

Oil exports hit 179m barrels by July, prices and output dip

MUSCAT: Omani oil exports reached approximately 178.746 million barrels by the end of July 2025, marking a slight decline of 0.2 per cent compared to the same period in 2024, when exports totalled 179.0368 million barrels.

Preliminary statistics from the National

Centre for Statistics and Information indicated that the average oil price fell by 12.1 per cent, reaching \$72.5 per barrel by the end of July 2025, down from \$82.5 per barrel in the same period last year. The data also showed a 0.4 per cent decrease in average daily oil production, which stood

at 991,100 barrels per day by the end of July 2025, compared to 994,800 barrels per day in the same period of 2024. Total Omani oil production declined by 0.8 per cent, reaching 210.1222 million barrels, compared to 211.8956 million barrels during the same period in 2024. — ONA

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Not later than 12:00 PM GST

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Not later than 12:00 PM GST

- Companies/institutions can pay the bidding document fee specified in the table above through bank deposit into the account of the National Ferries Company "Mwasalat" (Bank Sohar 00 103 000 2954).
- A copy of the receipt should be sent to the following email: tenders@mwasalat.om, including the following details: (Name and number of the bid, company name, commercial registration number, representative's name, office phone number, mobile phone number, email address registered with the bidder).
- Auction documents can be obtained via email during official working hours (from 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM) after receiving the required documents.
- Bidders are requested to send a copy of the commercial registration (CR) and work card via email to tenders@mwasalat.om, and the auction documents will then be shared via email.
- Participants can inspect the materials at the Mwasalat workshop building in Muscat (Al Azaliba) after sending a request for inspection via email to tenders@mwasalat.om, attaching the information of those authorized for inspection. Inspection times are limited to official working hours (from 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM).
- Companies/institutions wishing to participate in this bid must attach a bank check or unconditional financial guarantee of 500 Omani Riyals (five hundred Omani Riyals) or its equivalent in US dollars as a security deposit for entering the auction.
- Participants must submit their bids in the tender box located at the headquarters of the National Ferries Company S.A.O.C "Mwasalat" in Ghala - Muscat (Jebel Shams Building - Fifth Floor) in sealed envelopes labeled only with the number and name of the bid, and the envelope should not contain the name of the bidder or any identifying information. No bids will be accepted after the specified date and time.

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SHORTTAKES



Over the four-day event, NBO showcased its latest digital services, including instant account opening through self-service kiosks, debit card printing and on-the-spot applications for Systematic Investment Plans

NBO HIGHLIGHTS INNOVATION & PARTNERSHIPS AT COMEX 2025

MUSCAT: The National Bank of Oman (NBO) participated in the 34th International Technology Exhibition, Comex 2025, at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC) in Muscat, reaffirming its commitment to innovation and digital transformation.

Over the four-day event, NBO showcased its latest digital services, including instant account opening through self-service kiosks, debit card printing and on-the-spot applications for Systematic Investment Plans. The bank also introduced new kiosk services such as cheque leaf printing, KYC updates, digital signatures and customer feedback.

Visitors explored NBO's new mPOS and Full Function Machine (FFM), which offer services such as remittances and voice-guided accessibility features for balance inquiries and cash withdrawals.

Through the NBO app, they experienced services like SIP applications and virtual debit card issuance, highlighting NBO's focus on secure and convenient digital banking.

During the event, NBO signed several strategic agreements to expand its services and strengthen collaborations. An agreement with Oman Telecommunications Company (Omantel) will deliver integrated digital solutions, cybersecurity services and an AI platform for enterprise knowledge management.

Another agreement with Al Jabr will launch the second edition of the NBO Fintech Accelerator Programme.

NBO also partnered with the Public Prosecution to integrate its Payment Gateway, deploy POS machines and enable seamless Public Prosecution payments through the NBO app.

Further agreements were signed with Taageer to integrate its financial products and services with NBO's open banking framework, with the American International School of Muscat (TAISM) to enable API banking integration for payments, reconciliation and Direct Debit; and with Abraj Bousher Real Estate to provide tailored corporate banking solutions aimed at enhancing efficiency and customer experience.

Beyond the booth, NBO hosted workshops on digital fraud risk, AI-powered cyberattacks and customer experience, as well as sessions highlighting its corporate, digital and card services.

Through its participation at Comex 2025, NBO underscored its role as a fintech leader focused on driving innovation, building strategic partnerships and delivering seamless digital experiences.

MSX PARTNERS WITH INJAZ OMAN TO EMPOWER YOUTH

MUSCAT: Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) has signed a strategic partnership with INJAZ Oman to sponsor the Company Programme & Competition for the academic year 2025/2026. The initiative aims to equip Omani students with practical, hands-on experiences in entrepreneurship, fostering skills in innovation, leadership, teamwork and decision-making through the creation of real student-run companies. The agreement, signed at MSX headquarters in the presence of representatives



The agreement reflects a shared commitment to bridging the gap between education and the labour market

from both organisations, reflects a shared commitment to bridging the gap between education and the

labour market. It also highlights the financial sector's role in supporting sustainable development initiatives and preparing the next generation of leaders.

Commenting on the partnership, MSX CEO Haitham al Salmi said, "Our collaboration with INJAZ Oman aligns with MSX's strategic vision to empower Omani youth and cultivate future leaders capable of driving innovation. Investing in young talent is a direct investment in the long-term success of our national economy".

Abraj Energy to take part at MEOS GEO 2025

ABRAJ Energy Services, Oman's leading oil and gas services provider, will participate in the Middle East Oil, Gas and Geosciences Show (MEOS GEO) 2025, taking place from September 16 to 18 in Bahrain. The company's participation underscores its growing regional footprint and commitment to operational excellence, innovation and safety leadership.



At MEOS 2025, Abraj will showcase its advanced service portfolio, recent contract wins and regional expansion

At MEOS 2025, Abraj will showcase its advanced service portfolio, recent contract wins and regional expansion, including the successful deployment of rigs in Wafra Joint Operations and preparations to enter new markets across the MENA region.

These milestones reflect Abraj's strategy to scale its integrated drilling and well services to meet rising demand for efficient, reliable and technology-driven energy solutions. "MEOS 2025 is a platform where industry leaders and experts shape the future of energy in the region", said Eng Saif al Hamhami, CEO of Abraj Energy Services. "At Abraj, we see this as an opportunity to engage with decision-makers, exchange knowledge and contribute to strategies that balance efficiency, safety and sustainability.

Abraj continues to build momentum through new contract awards and regional expansion, reinforcing its role as a trusted partner for leading energy operators

Our commitment goes beyond delivering services; we strive to be an active partner in shaping the next chapter of the energy sector across the Middle East and beyond".

Abraj continues to build momentum through new contract awards and regional expansion, reinforcing its role as a trusted partner for leading energy operators. The company is advancing its footprint across Oman and the wider MENA region, supported by a robust pipeline of projects and partnerships that

underline its long-term growth trajectory and commitment to delivering reliable, innovative well services. Following MEOS GEO 2025, Abraj will also participate in the SPE Hydraulic Fracturing Technology Conference & Exhibition (September 23-25 in Muscat) and the MEIRA Annual Conference & Exhibition (September 24-25 in Dubai), reaffirming its commitment to engaging with industry leaders, investors and stakeholders on innovation, investor relations and sustainable growth.

Visit Oman strengthens partnerships at Comex 25

MUSCAT: Visit Oman successfully showcased its digital tourism initiatives at the Comex Global Technology Show, held from September 8-11 2025 at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC), highlighting the advancement of Oman's digital tourism ecosystem.

During the event, Visit Oman formalised strategic partnerships with leading Omani travel tech companies



and SMEs to scale digital distribution and enhance travel experiences for domestic and international visitors. Key

collaborations include Thawani for secure e-payment solutions, Oman Sail for tailored digital services for international sporting events, Mwasalat Oman to provide integrated transport options including green hydrogen-powered vehicles and Action Point Oman to digitise local entertainment activities.

Additional partnerships with My Ticket, YallaPass, Valo, Abundance Travel, Jawla, My Events and Global Shaleehat Co

(Massarah) will expand digital ticketing, accommodation and guided tour solutions through API integrations. Shabib al Maamari, Managing Director of Visit Oman, said: "Comex 2025 has been a powerful platform to demonstrate how technology can transform the tourism experience.

These partnerships reflect our vision to build a connected, accessible and digitally empowered travel ecosystem".

Nama Water Services signs agreement with HICIG China

BEIJING: Nama Water Services has signed a cooperation agreement with Chinese company HICIG to implement a pioneering training programme for 100 employees across various levels.

The programme will cover project execution, engineering design, planning and advanced technologies, aimed at building sustainable solutions and strengthening national talent. The agreement, signed on behalf of Nama Water Services by CEO Qais bin Saud al Zakwani, underscores the company's commitment to Omanisation and developing Omani expertise.

HICIG confirmed its support for increasing the participation of Omani

The agreement entails the implementation of a pioneering training programme, notable for its breadth and strategic dimension, targeting the training of 100 employees across various levels.



The agreement underscores the company's commitment to Omanisation and developing Omani expertise.

talent in current and future projects, ensuring a tangible and lasting impact on the local labour market.

Nama Water Services has already achieved Omanisation rates above 99%, highlighting its reliance on and empowerment of national talent.

Commenting on the agreement, al Zakwani said: "This initiative reflects our belief that employees are the foundation of every achievement.

Investing in Omani talent and providing them with global expertise ensures sustainable water services and strengthens the sector's capacity to meet national goals. This programme offers our employees hands-on experience with advanced

technologies and international best practices in project management, engineering and technology". Eng Abdullah bin Salem al Rasbi, Chief Projects at Nama Water Services, added that the programme will provide new opportunities for Omani employees to gain expertise in strategic projects and modern technologies, including digital engineering design, advanced planning tools and smart project management solutions.

"This combination of human capital development and technological innovation will enhance our ability to deliver modern water services that meet both national and global standards", he said.

SELECTIVEGROWTH



The partnership will contribute to the rollout of the Omani Proof-of-Concept Programme for Advanced Air Mobility (AAM), one of the most comprehensive initiatives of its kind worldwide.

PACT TO SUPPORT
ADVANCED AIR
MOBILITY IN OMAN

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 14

The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology have signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Odys Aviation, a global developer of hybrid-electric vertical take-off and landing (VTOL) aircraft.

The partnership will contribute to the rollout of the Omani Proof-of-Concept Programme for Advanced Air Mobility (AAM), one of the most comprehensive initiatives of its kind worldwide.

Under the MoU, Odys Aviation's Laila aircraft — designed for vertical take-off and landing, extended range, high payload capacity and advanced autonomous piloting — will serve as the programme's flagship model, with trial operations scheduled to begin in the first quarter of 2026.

The programme will unite Odys Aviation, Omani regulators, global aviation leaders and strategic partners to test hybrid-electric VTOL aircraft in real-world environments.

Eng Nayef bin Ali al Abri, Chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority, stated: "This partnership represents a pivotal strategic step in the trajectory of Oman's civil aviation sector... Through this pioneering programme, the Sultanate of Oman is not only preparing its infrastructure and economy for the future of air mobility, but is also contributing to setting international standards and shaping the future of advanced aviation at both regional and global levels".

Vincent Frascogna, VP of Business Development for Odys Aviation, said: "By engaging regulators, operators and technology providers in one integrated programme, the Oman Programme will establish a new benchmark for how advanced air mobility will move from concept to commercial deployment.

Oman is not only enabling rapid innovation; it is setting the standard for how advanced aviation will scale globally".

Seminar highlights
commercial arbitration

FAISAL AL AJMI
MUSCAT, SEPT 14

OMAN Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), on behalf of its Finance and Insurance Committee and in association with the Oman Commercial Arbitration Centre, conducted a seminar on Commercial Arbitration in Banking, Insurance and Finance Contracts on Sunday, September 14.

The seminar underlined the importance of mediation and arbitration in resolving such contract-related disputes. The seminar stressed their contribution towards establishing a robust business climate that is attractive and causing a safe and transparent investment environment assuring local and overseas investors of the availability of quick and fair mechanisms of dispute settlement.

Held under the auspices of Dr Abdullah bin Mohammed al Saeedi, Minister of Justice and Legal Affairs, the event was also attended by Faisal bin Abdullah al Rawas, Chairman of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

The seminar also witnessed the announcement of Oman hosting the Muscat Arbitration Days Conference by Oman Commercial Arbitration Centre during December 2-4 at St Regis Al Mouj Muscat. The conference, which will be held under the auspices of Abdulsalam bin Mohammed al Murshidi, Chairman of Oman Investment Authority, will attract around 45 regional and international speakers and approximately 1,000 participants.

Dr Khalid bin Salim al Saidi, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Oman Commercial Arbitration Centre, stated: "The event this year places particular focus on arbitration in banking, insurance and reinsurance contracts, emphasising its role as a successful alternative to traditional litigation. Speakers drew attention



Dr Abdullah bin Mohammed al Saeedi, Minister of Justice and Legal Affairs, presided over the seminar on arbitration held here yesterday

Arbitration in financial, banking and financing contracts is today a significant pillar in fostering trust in the finance sector, a sector which by its nature is founded on transparency, commitment and confidence".

BADER AL KHAROUSI

National Finance Company Legal Consultant

to the necessity of educating stakeholders regarding the concept of arbitration in the nature of contracts, setting out the advantages that it has to provide, including speed, efficiency and access to specialists familiar with the nature of the disputes at issue".

The forum emphasised that arbitration not only offers quicker dispute resolution but also a professional, expert mode that heightens the confidence of commercial and financial transactions.

OCCI Board Member and Chairman of the Finance and Insurance Committee, Mustafa bin Ahmed Salman, commented: "Arbitration and mediation are critical tools for solving conflicts in bank, insurance and finance contracts, which form the bedrock of trade and investment".

Bader al Kharousi, National Finance Company Legal Consultant

stated, "Arbitration in financial, banking and financing contracts is today a significant pillar in fostering trust in the finance sector, a sector which by its nature is founded on transparency, commitment and confidence".

The seminar featured a paper entitled, "The Reality and Challenges of Arbitration in Banking Disputes", by Dr Tariq bin Hilal al Busaidy, a professional arbitrator and proprietor of the Dr Tariq al Busaidy Law Office. He highlighted arbitration as a significant option to conflict resolution between banks or financial institutions and companies or clients, especially with heightened sophistication in banking products and investment instruments.

He stated that arbitration is a speedy, confidential mechanism and emphasised the significance of legal awareness and skill in banking and finance laws.

Oman, Malaysia agree to enhance capital market growth

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, SEPT 14

The Securities Commission Malaysia (SC) and the Financial Services Authority (FSA) of Sultanate of Oman have agreed to enhance the cooperation and development of capital markets and knowledge sharing and capacity building.

An agreement to this effect was signed by the two authorities represented by Abdullah bin Salim al Salmi, Executive President of the FSA and Dato' Mohammad Faiz Azmi, Chairman of the FC Malaysia last week.

The two-year collaboration and cooperation agreement seeks to advance a strategic partnership between the two authorities aimed



Abdullah bin Salim al Salmi, Executive President — Financial Services Authority and Dato' Mohammad Faiz Azmi, Chairman of the FC Malaysia, signing the agreement last week.

at promoting resilient, transparent and innovative capital markets. It will also focus on joint capacity building initiatives, knowledge exchange and the promotion of Oman and Malaysia as attractive investment destinations.

Speaking after the signing ceremony, Abdullah bin Salim al Salmi, Executive President of the FSA said that the key areas of cooperation through the joint programme include joint cross-market promotion of Malaysian and Omani investment opportunities to investors in both countries and assessing the feasibility of having a mutual recognition agreement between the SC and FSA Oman to promote the cross/dual listing of products and listed companies.

"Also, we will be focusing on joint development programmes including staff secondment and other training programmes, besides knowledge sharing on published capital market research, policy frameworks and market development strategies", he said.

"Our partnership with the Securities Commission Malaysia is a bridge between ASEAN and GCC capital markets.

With the signing of our joint cooperation programme, we are building on strong foundations and expanding collaboration in areas such as capacity building, sustainable finance and market innovation", he added.

As part of this cooperation, the SC welcomed the participation

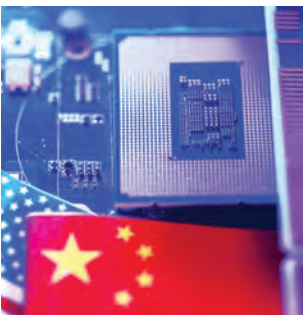
of FSA Oman regulators in the Young Regulators Development Programme, organised in collaboration with Durham University, United Kingdom.

Dato' Mohammad Faiz Azmi, SC Chairman said that the Joint Programme marks another SC milestone engagement with its counterparts in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), particularly the FSA Oman. "Through this collaboration, we aim to enhance knowledge exchange, promote each market's unique investment proposition — ultimately driving sustainable growth across.

Together, we are building a partnership that benefits our markets, investors and economies", he added.

SEMICONDUCTOR INDUSTRY

China probes US chip trade ahead of talks



China's commerce ministry opened anti-discrimination and dumping probes into US chip trade ahead of new talks in Madrid. The investigations target US policies restricting Chinese firms, accusing Washington of "protectionist" measures aimed at curbing China's high-tech development. The discussions will cover tariffs, export controls and issues including TikTok. — Reuters

GDP GROWTH

Italy keeps GDP growth despite US tariffs



Italy will keep GDP growth forecasts of 0.6% in 2025 and 0.8% in 2026, Economy Minister Giorgetti said, despite US tariffs. The government factored in trade war effects earlier this year. Italy aims to reduce its deficit below the EU's 3% ceiling without extra tightening. Giorgetti reiterated pledges to ease the tax burden on middle-income families. — Reuters

UK INVESTMENT

US banks, firms commit \$1.7 bn to UK



Major US financial firms, including PayPal, Bank of America, Citigroup and S&P Global, pledged \$1.7 billion to the UK ahead of President Donald Trump's visit. Investments aim to create 1,800 jobs across London, Edinburgh, Belfast and Manchester, strengthen transatlantic financial ties and expand operations in Northern Ireland and Manchester. — Reuters

OPINION

Study reveals shifts in inequality within the EU



DR MYTHILI KOLLURU

The writer is an assistant professor at the marketing and management department of the College of Banking and Financial Studies

In one of his speeches, Franklin D Roosevelt stated that progress should be measured by our ability to uplift those who are the least fortunate. He foresaw the dominating nature of world policy and the economic agenda. Income disparity, once a subtle economic undercurrent, today figures as one of the top global risks. The European Union consists of 27 countries and although it is considered a consolidated market with a novel structure (supranational) of political and economic integration, it has a diverse and dynamic landscape for observing income disparities. My colleague Tetiana Semenenko and I examined data on the Gini coefficient of equivalised disposable income from 2005 to 2019, which sheds light on the shifting economic landscape during and after the financial crisis. The Gini coefficient is the most frequently used measure of inequality. The Gini coefficient measures the distribution of cumulative income among a population. Recent studies across EU member states indicate that gaps between the highest and lowest earners, although not exceeding 40% in most countries, still vary significantly. Income inequalities are influenced by a complex interplay of several factors, including local economies, talent, effort and broader economic conditions. According to the OECD, understanding changes in the

Gini coefficient will enable policymakers and relevant authorities to make informed decisions for economic growth and development. The EU experienced marked divergence in household income growth, particularly among Baltic and Southern European countries, after the global financial crisis of 2008–2009. While all nations saw growth resume by 2014, the legacies of the crisis — widened gaps and incomplete convergence — have persisted. Together with a colleague, I analysed the trends and classified the EU-27 into clusters based on the standard deviation of Gini coefficient data. This classification yielded six focus countries: Italy, Spain, Germany, Slovakia, Hungary and Bulgaria. For each, the study tracked changes in income inequality over a fifteen-year period, encompassing both boom years and a deep recession. Italy and Spain, for example, experienced a moderate rise in inequality over the period. For Italy, the Gini coefficient hovered between 31.2% and 33.4%; Spain's ranged from 31.9% to 34.7%. By contrast, Bulgaria spiked at 40.8%, which was a European high. On the other hand, Slovakia and Hungary experienced substantial decreases in inequality, indicating that not all EU states follow the same trajectory, even after shared external shocks such as the 2008 crisis. Germany consistently maintained one of the

The Gini coefficient measures the distribution of cumulative income among a population. Recent studies indicate that gaps between the highest and lowest earners, although not exceeding 40% in most countries, still vary significantly.

smallest gaps between its richest and poorest citizens, while Bulgaria again ranked at the top for inequality by this measure. An intriguing finding of the study is the lack of a single clear trend in how income inequality reacted to the financial crisis. While the Gini coefficient for some countries peaked during or after the crisis, for others the highest or lowest points bore no connection to external economic shocks. Forecasts using advanced statistical techniques suggest a continuation of these patterns in most countries — slight increases or sustained high levels of inequality in countries like Bulgaria and Italy; and relative stability or further improvement in countries such as Slovakia. Research on the Gini coefficient brings a measure of clarity to a complex and dynamic target. For policymakers, the implications are clear: economic resilience, social policies and targeted interventions can help insulate vulnerable populations; however, the local context matters and broad averages can mask critical variations. The EU has undergone numerous dynamic changes on both the political and economic fronts, yet it remains the most competitive region in the world. Despite their competitive strength, the pursuit of income equality and social unity is of paramount importance. The learnings from the EU have value well beyond its borders.

FRANCE STRUGGLES WITH RISING DEBT AND WEAK GROWTH

LEIGH THOMAS, YORUK BAHCELI & GILLES GUILLAUME

The collapse of France’s latest government leaves the euro zone’s second-biggest economy lurching deeper into a morass of feeble growth, high borrowing costs and a debt burden becoming one of Europe’s heftiest. Lawmakers’ rejection of Prime Minister Francois Bayrou’s government in a no-confidence vote on Monday crushed any hope of making serious headway next year on France’s budget deficit — the biggest in the euro zone. Opposition parties toppled the veteran centrist over his plans for a 44 billion euro (\$52 billion) budget squeeze that will now inevitably be heavily watered down by whomever President Emmanuel Macron taps as his successor. “There is no upside scenario, there is no way out, there is no credible scenario where you end up with the same amount of fiscal consolidation”, said Frederik Ducrozet, head of macroeconomic research at Pictet Wealth Management. Finance Minister Eric Lombard has acknowledged the next government, which must draft a 2026 budget by October 7, would be less ambitious than Bayrou, a longtime debt hawk. Bayrou’s successor is also likely to rely more heavily on taxes than spending cuts to reduce the budget deficit with the Socialists — from whose ranks the next prime minister could come — calling for a 15 billion euro tax hike on the ultra-wealthy. But financial markets may frown on tax increases, especially broader measures, fearful they may choke off growth — already a worry in Britain. “What we’re increasingly seeing is a reluctance of market participants to buy the taxation route as a viable way to reduce big fiscal deficits”, said Russel Matthews, portfolio manager at RBC BlueBay Asset Management, which is betting against French bonds. Macron is not currently signalling plans to call a snap legislative election and polls indicate doing so would not necessarily give a majority to any one party and break the deadlock. With France’s politics in chaos and its public finances adrift, households and businesses are already hesitant to spend or invest. Slow growth is particularly problematic for a high-debt country like France, because it cannot simply count on growing its way out from under its debt burden, which reached 3.3 trillion euros in June or 114% of GDP.

French debt payments are set to reach more than 100 billion euros by 2029 — up from 59 billion in 2024 — becoming the single biggest budget expense if growth slows or deficit reduction is relaxed, the Cour des Comptes audit office warned earlier this year. France, which faces a credit rating decision from Fitch on Friday, now pays more for longer-term debt than Greece and Spain and nearly the same as Italy. — Reuters

Retail sector struggling under heavy tax burden

An increasing number of the UK’s retailers will be forced to close down if businesses are hit with a further round of tax increases in the autumn, the head of the British Retail Consortium (BRC), Helen Dickenson, has warned, as fresh data from the body found that nearly nine in 10 high street bosses are struggling with the tax burden. Dickenson said that the prices rise, job cuts and investment reduction that retailers have had to carry out in response to last year’s budget would “accelerate (and be) worse” if the Treasury opted to raid the sector again at October’s fiscal event. “What we saw last year was a step change in the cost base”, she said. “If there is another step change in the cost base, impacts we’ve already started to see over the last six to nine months would only accelerate”. Retail is among the worst affected sectors from the Chancellor’s decision to mount an unprecedented tax raid on the private sector at last year’s Budget. Along with the hospitality industry, retailers were especially exposed to the £25 billion hike to employer national insurance contributions (NIC), because of their reliance on large quantities of relatively low-paid and part-time staff. Parallel to the NIC’s rise, retailers also shouldered an above-inflation hike to the minimum wage, which the BRC has estimated will costs its members over £2.7 billion annually in higher wage bills. It chalked up the overall damage to the sector from the Budget at £7 billion. Several high street stalwarts — including Homebase, Hobbycraft and latterly River Island — have been pushed into administration since the changes were announced. And late in July, insolvency specialist Beggies Traynor judged the retail industry to have endured the third most extreme rise in businesses under “critical financial distress” over the past year. Dickenson warned that the failure of more household names from



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The writer is our foreign correspondent based in the UK

Retail is among the worst affected sectors from the Chancellor’s decision to mount an unprecedented tax raid on the private sector at last year’s Budget. Along with the hospitality industry, retailers were especially exposed to the £25 bn hike to employer national insurance contributions (NIC), because of their reliance on large quantities of relatively low-paid and part-time staff.



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her industry would be a “natural consequence” of another bout of tax rises. “It wouldn’t just be more of the same”, she said in reference to the effects that a higher tax burden would have on her body’s members. “It would have an acceleration and we would see more business failures. These are all well-loved businesses and recognisable brands”, she added, highlighting that when a retail chain closes “it isn’t just the closure of a business. It is the loss of something that is part of the heritage of the country”. Separately, the CBI’s latest business optimism index, found negative sentiment endures across sectors, with confidence having taken a hit every month since last year’s budget. The last positive reading it received for firms’ expectations on output volumes for the following three months was in August last year, it said. Meanwhile, on a separate issue, Shawbrook is lining

up a London IPO in this (second) half of the year in a much needed-boost to the capital’s public markets. The business lender is going ahead with plans that target a valuation of as much as £2 billion. The firm’s private equity owners had been seeking an exit but market volatility had deterred earlier plans for a London listing. The lender is controlled by private equity firms BC Partners and Pollen Street Capital. The report will raise hopes of a revival of London’s lacklustre stock market. A number of billion-pound London banking and fintech businesses from Zilch to Zopa are considering an IPO but have been waiting for the right market conditions to materialise. Shawbrook’s profit before tax fell to £294 million in the 2024 financial year. This was down from £302 million in 2023. But the firm did manage to boost its deposit and loan book, driven by commercial and retail markets.

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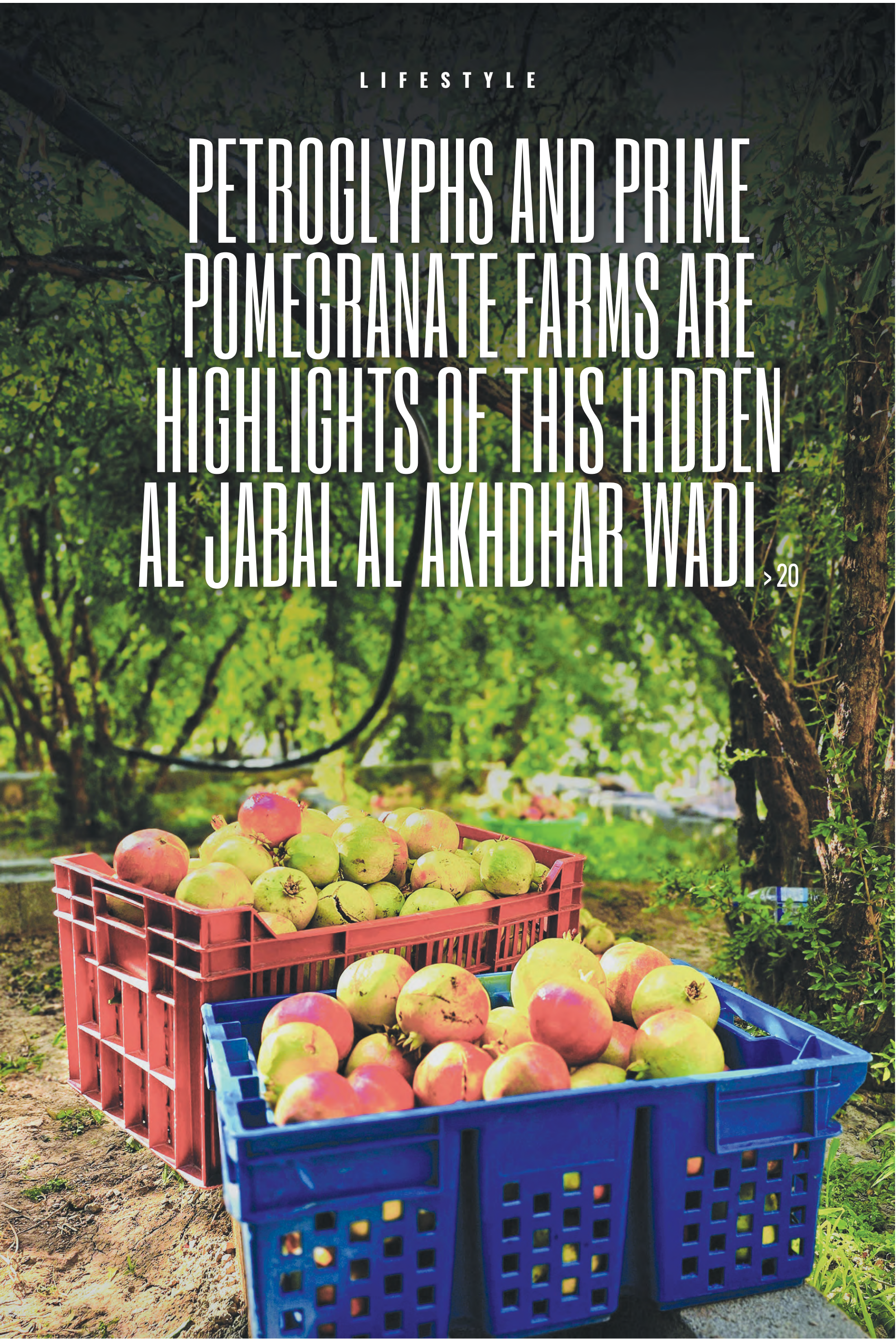
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ART/LIFE



L I F E S T Y L E

PETROGLYPHS AND PRIME POMEGRANATE FARMS ARE HIGHLIGHTS OF THIS HIDDEN AL JABAL AL AKHDHAR WADI > 20

FASHION

Siriano, Hudson unveil collections at New York Fashion Week



CHRISTIAN Siriano and Sergio Hudson hit the runway on Friday evening, showing off their spring/summer collections for 2026. Siriano’s collection, inspired by old Hollywood glamour, used German-American screen actress Marlene Dietrich as his muse, he said.

Models started down the runway wearing mostly black-and-white gowns and suits, with pops of colour appearing midway. At the end of the show, looks included large top hats and floor-length bubble-hem dresses in vibrant colours to match, with Canadian model Coco Rocha closing out the presentation. “I wanted the whole collection to feel like silver screen, like in a film and then ends like if the colour was turned on... It’s very old Hollywood, very glamorous, but a bit masculine, feminine, all those things”, said the 39-year-old designer, who got his start when he won the fourth season of the television fashion design competition show “Project Runway”.

Taking place at Macy’s, celebrities in the front row included Oscar winner Whoopi Goldberg, entertainment mogul Oprah Winfrey and pop singer Lizzo.

Meanwhile, designer Sergio Hudson said that the audience at his show would see a “reset” of his designs, stating that he was no longer listening to pressure from retailers to put more dresses, rather than suits — which he said he’s especially known for — in his collection.

Hudson’s designs featured custom zebra and cheetah prints, silk suits and lively colours married with precise tailoring, as models sported chunky gold hoops and large belts.

He said his embroidery, featuring sequins, crystals and beads, was inspired by African tribe scarification.

“Most people won’t really know that’s where the patterns took inspiration from. It’s just a beautiful, whimsical pattern to most people, but I know”, he said.

Celebrities in the audience included singer-songwriter Mary J Blige, actress Natasha Lyonne and gymnast Jordan Chiles.

New York Fashion Week, which started on September 11, will end on September 16. — Reuters

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



BOLLYWOOD

Bollywood actor Akshay Kumar poses for photos while celebrating his 58th birthday in Mumbai. — AFP



ENTERTAINMENT

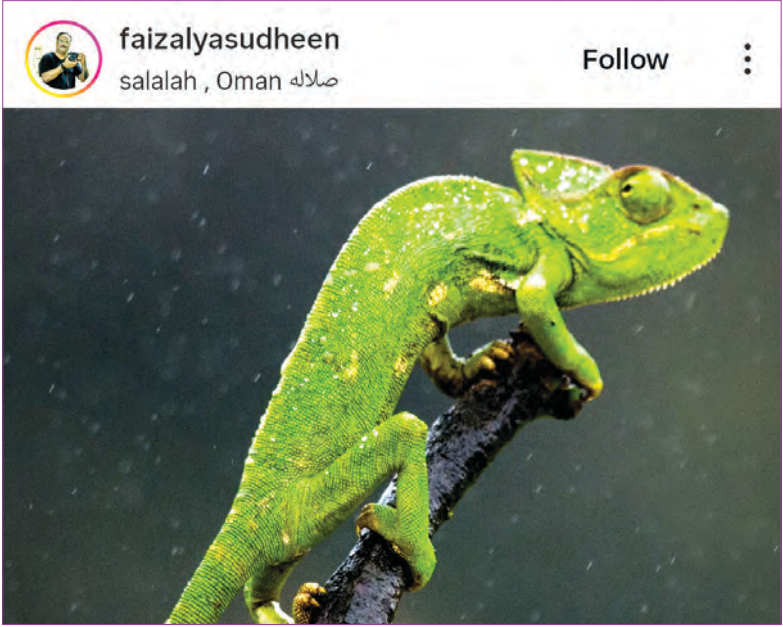
French author and musician Bilal Hassani poses after the closing ceremony of the Deauville American Film Festival in north western France. — AFP



FILM

US actor Justin Hartley attends BAFTA North America’s TV Tea Party at the Maybourne Beverly Hills. — AFP

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



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Beauty of Remote Places

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Berlin artist places
outsized humanoid bug
sculpture in Central Park



BERLIN-BASED artist Monira al Qadiri placed a giant aluminium beetle in New York’s Central Park, in a sculpture that locates the giant bug on the face of the bust of a woman.

Her work, some 5 metres tall, can be seen in Manhattan’s Central Park until August 2026, and it highlights the growing alienation between humans and nature.

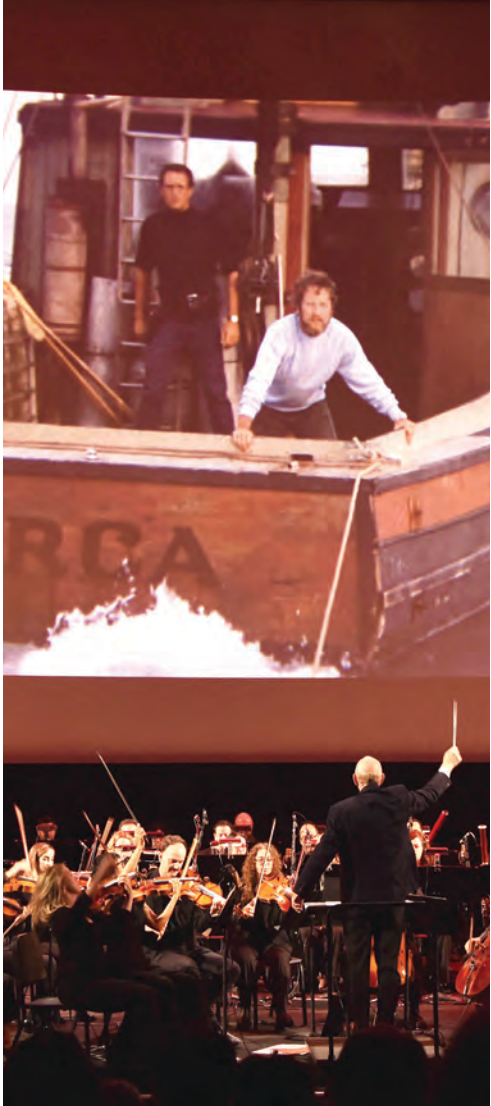
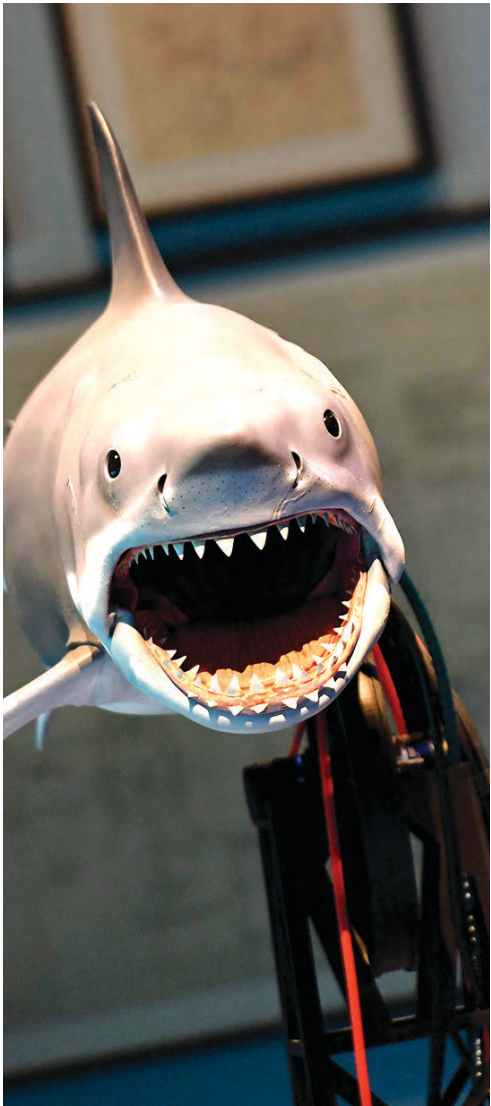
The sculpture, called “First Sun”, depicts a scarab and a person and is based on an Egyptian deity, according to the Public Art Fund, which oversees art in New York’s public spaces. She recreated the ancient Egyptian deity Khepri — god of the rising sun — as a contemporary monument,

underscoring the modern divide between humans and the natural world, the fund said.

The Kuwaiti artist, born in Senegal in 1983, is showing how certain animals were revered in ancient cultures — though today, insects are often feared or ignored. “The gleaming sculpture suggests a future where humans and other animals live in greater balance, where even the most humble insects are revered for the essential role they play in sustaining all life on Earth-including our own”, the fund said. “‘First Sun’ challenges us to recognise the divine in what we might otherwise overlook”, Al Qadiri was quoted as saying. — dpa



Something to get
your teeth into: ‘Jaws’
exhibit marks 50 years



TAKE ONE very large shark, a boat (we’re gonna need a bigger one of those) and a movie that ran way over budget and you’ve got all the ingredients of a career-making film for one of Hollywood’s most successful directors.

Now fans of “Jaws” — Steven Spielberg’s terrifying thriller about a man-eating shark — can re-live the movie as it celebrates its 50th anniversary in an exhibition at the Academy Museum in Los Angeles.

“The film certainly cost me a pound of flesh, but gave me a ton of career”, Spielberg told reporters as he toured exhibits of props and memorabilia from the movie that propelled him to the top ranks of Hollywood directors.

“I thought my career was virtually over halfway through production on ‘Jaws’, because everybody was saying to me: ‘You are never going to get hired again’. “This film is way over budget and way over schedule and

you are a real liability as a director’. “So I really thought that I better give this my all, because I’m not working in the industry again”. History had different ideas.

“Jaws”, starring Roy Scheider, Richard Dreyfuss and Robert Shaw, established a benchmark for thrillers, winning three Oscars and spawning three sequels as it catapulted Spielberg to stardom.

With more than 200 artefacts spread across several galleries, “Jaws: The Exhibition” is the largest display dedicated to a single film at the Academy Museum. They join “Bruce”, a life-size model of a shark that is on permanent display at the museum and the only one that was ever actually on set (Spielberg named the model after his lawyer). Production notes, stills, costume pieces and original set items from collectors — and from the director’s personal archive — were all tracked down for the exhibition.

“It really was a cinematic treasure

hunt”, curator Jenny He said.

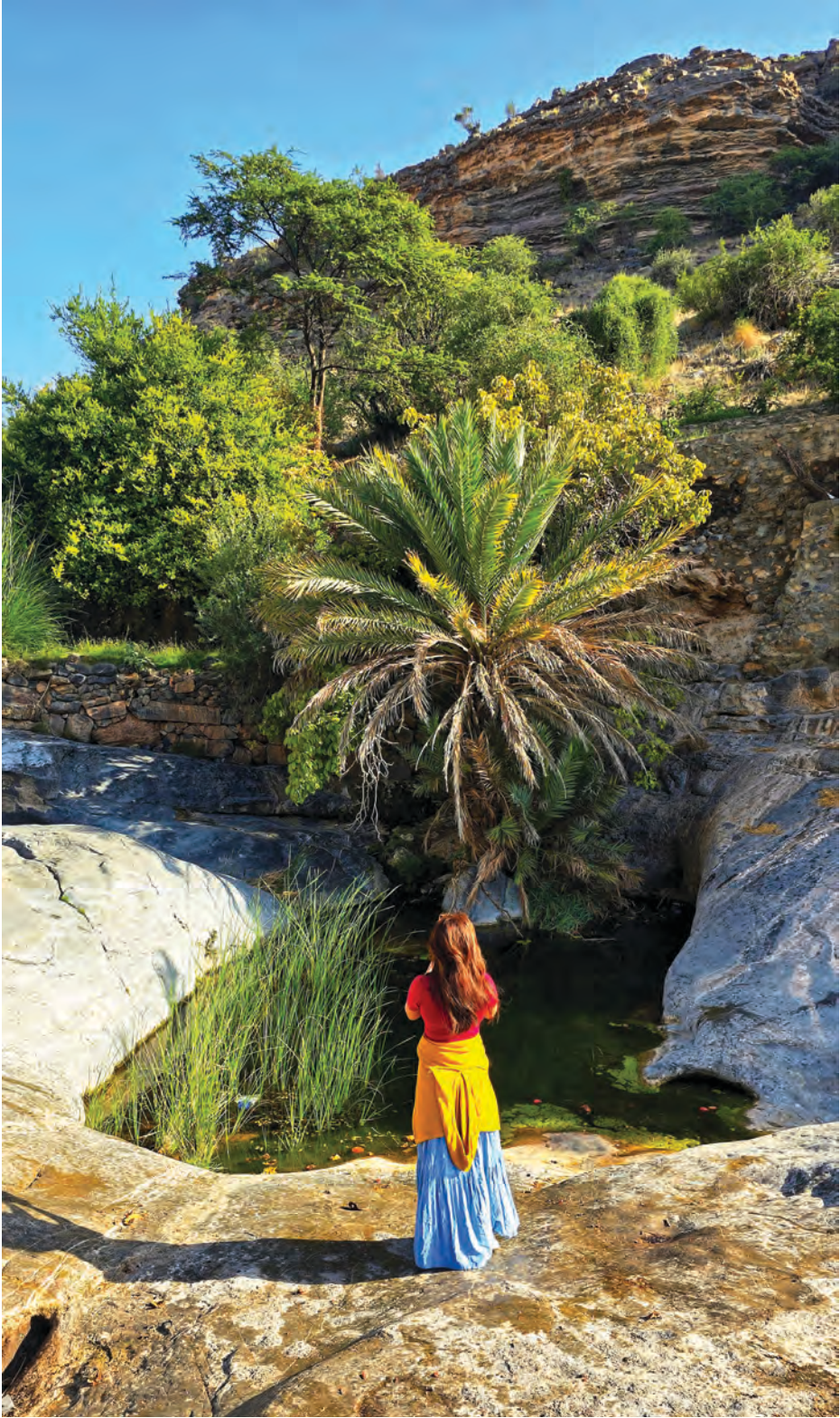
Museum staff focused on finding objects “that would put the story of Jaws together for our visitors in a tangible, physical way”, He said.

In addition to seeing behind-the-scenes footage of the production, the public will also be able to try their hand at reproducing the menacing, unmistakable “da-dum-da-dum” music that announces the arrival of the predator — music that earned composer John Williams an Oscar.

They will also be able to handle a replica of the shark used in the film.

Spielberg said the exhibition was a wonderful showcase of work by collectors “who somehow knew something that I didn’t”. “When we shot the opening scene of Chrissie Watkins being taken by the shark and we had a buoy floating in the water, how did anybody know to take the buoy and take it home and sit on it for 50 years?” “Jaws: The Exhibition” opens to the public on September 14. — AFP

FEATURES



days are long gone; the wadi has transformed into fertile farmland. Nonetheless, the name persists, a reminder of a bygone era.

Wadi Al Khamr’s history as a thriving grape-growing area is woven into its very identity. Nestled in a gorge, it’s easy to overlook its existence, yet this long, lush expanse holds many treasures. Among them is the family of Malik al Amri, a local tour guide who has explored over sixty villages in Al Jabal Al Akhdhar. His family’s land here remains somewhat of a hidden secret — not a typical village where residents reside year-round but a sprawling farm set amidst rugged terrain.

Descending through rough pathways, the wadi opens into a surprisingly charming agricultural landscape. Smaller than the more well-known Wadi Bani Habi, the gardens across the gorge are vibrant and diverse. Here, fruit trees flourish — walnuts, pomegranates, onions,

delighting visitors with a peek into the valley’s ancient past. A short walk from the entrance reveals a spring that supplies water year-round, vital for the local farmers. Hidden behind an old walnut tree and shielded by a lush date palm, the spring’s crystal-clear water is remarkable. Malik scoops some of the cool water into his hand and takes a sip, illustrating its purity. “It stays cool even during the hottest days and never runs dry”, he notes.

The water from the spring feeds into a dam and a large cistern nearby, used for irrigation and sometimes for refreshment on hot days. Following the meandering falaj (ancient irrigation channel) across various private gardens, one encounters an abundance of crops — garlic, onions, leafy vegetables and even grass for goats.

Malik explains that the location offers ideal conditions for farming: plenty of sunlight, elevation from the valley’s floodplains and protection from floods. Interestingly, Wadi Al Khamr is home to some of the most impressive pomegranate orchards. Local residents also tend to wild pomegranates, which are



PETROGLYPHS AND PRIME POMEGRANATE FARMS ARE HIGHLIGHTS OF THIS HIDDEN AL JABAL AL AKHDHAR WADI

BY YERU EBUEN

THE NAME itself carries a somewhat negative connotation, which may explain why Wadi Al Khamr has not quite gained the popularity of neighbouring villages. Yet, for those fortunate enough to discover this secluded spot, a world of untouched beauty and enduring tradition awaits. Forgotten by many, but lovingly preserved by local farmers, the farms here continue to flourish under careful stewardship.

It is in this lesser-known corner of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar that I experienced one of the most authentic pomegranate harvests in the region.

The name ‘Al Khamr’ — which translates to ‘alcohol’ — is controversial, especially in a predominantly Muslim country like Oman. In the past, this region was home to numerous grapevines and it’s possible that it was once produced. Today, however, those

garlic — an oasis of greenery in the mountains.

Malik is especially fond of Wadi Al Khamr. During harvest seasons, families gather here to work together and his cousin recalls that their farms once produced pomegranates weighing as much as a kilogramme. “Maybe it’s due to climate change or disease, but in the past, these trees bore very heavy fruit”, Malik’s cousin reminisces.

Now, Malik organises specialised pomegranate harvest visits for guests seeking an authentic off-the-beaten-track experience. “This is perfect for those looking for something beyond the usual tourist routes. Unlike villages like Seeq with designated paths, reaching the farms here involves hiking through rugged trails — but the panoramic views make it worthwhile”, he explains.

At the far end of the wadi stands a dam, used primarily during the low season for irrigation. Several families own land in Wadi Al Khamr and during the harvest, it’s common to see them visiting and tending their farms together.

UNCOVERING THE SECRETS OF WADI AL KHAMR

What makes this valley truly intriguing are its ancient markings and natural features. As a guide, Malik points out petroglyphs at the entrance of the wadi, which likely depict animals such as donkeys — not camels, as some may assume. These carvings hint at the long history of human activity here.

Throughout the landscape, fossils dot the terrain,

favoured for salads. The trees are laden with fruit and after climbing the floodgates, visitors will find the trees healthy and bountiful.

A DIFFERENT HARVEST EXPERIENCE

Though not as well-developed as the main pomegranate routes in the region, Wadi Al Khamr boasts its own charm. According to Ahmed, some of the trees here are nearly a century old, dating back to the days of their grandparents.

Under the shade of these venerable trees, Ahmed recalls family traditions and farming practices. “Much has changed since our grandparents’ time”, Ahmed reflects. “But certain customs, like respecting each other’s land and practices, still remain intact”. His cousin adds, “For example, if branches from one tree overlap with another’s, we carefully trace which belongs to whom and refrain from cutting or harming others’ trees. It’s a tradition of respect we keep alive”. They also practise a bidding process for the prized pomegranates: when a tree’s harvest begins, interested farmers or buyers place bids to own the rights to harvest that particular tree. The rule is clear — once successful, the owner can harvest the fruits but must not damage the tree or the branches. This respectful approach ensures the health of the orchards and fosters a sense of community trust across the region.

For those seeking an authentic pomegranate harvest experience away from busier routes, Wadi Al Khamr offers an inviting alternative. Malik from Cady Tours can take visitors to explore these hidden orchards and uncover the secrets of this ancient landscape. Just be prepared for a bit of hiking — but the view and the rich stories you’ll gather more than make up for the effort. For a guided trip in Wadi Al Khamr, you can contact Malik on Instagram through @cadytours.